

אַבְרָהָם רֵגֶלְסוֹן

מִסֵּעַ הַבָּבוֹת לְאֶרֶץ-יִשְׂרָאֵל

Abraham Regelson

**The Dolls' Journey
to Eretz-Israel**

CONTENTON**OW**

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Abraham Regelson

Senior Editors & Producers: Contento

Translated from Hebrew by Sharona (Regelson) Tel-Oren

Verses translated by Naomi (Regelson) Bar-Natan

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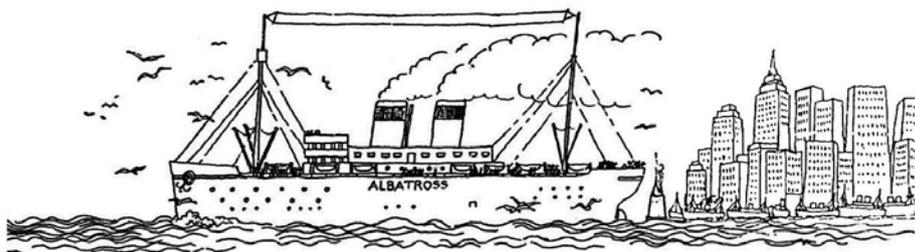
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The Dolls' Journey to Eretz - Israel

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Unless otherwise specified, most of the illustrations in this edition are by Aryeh Hatzor, from a 1954 edition of this book, in which he called himself simply “Aryeh”. Restored and updated graphics of illustrations by Neta Levran.

Four other illustrators from various previous editions are included in this edition, notably Nahum Gutman’s “Sabbath Table” (last illustration of Chapter Four); Ari Ron (second illustration of Chapter Two and last illustration of Chapter Seven; Bina Gevirtz’s “Joyous Reunion” last illustration of Chapter 11 and her depiction of the dolls on the final page of this book), and Aryeh Navon’s woodcuts in Chapters 12 and 13. Their entries are duly acknowledged in captions under their illustrations.

Also included are two new illustrations, (at the close of the Prologue and opposite the photos from the Yagur dramatic production), received just before going to press. Drawn in 2004 by Jerusalem illustrator Shlomit Oltchik, they were donated as a token of the artist’s enthusiasm for the book.

A Mini-Glossary

Abba	אבא	Daddy, Father
Imma	אמא	Mommy, Mother
Sabba	סבא	Grandpa, Grandfather
Savta	סבתא	Grandma, Grandmother
Aliya	עליה	Immigration to Israel (Literally: Ascent, going upward)
Eretz-Israel	ארץ-ישראל	Land of Israel (Thus it was called by the Jewish community before the establishment of the State of Israel.)
<i>Groosh, Lira/ Liro</i>	גרוש, לירה/ לירות	The currency of that time
Davar (the newspaper)	דבר	“The Word” (Davar also means: thing, matter, affair, something, anything)
Shalom	שלום	Used as Greeting for Hello and Goodbye, (literally) “Peace unto you”

*This edition is lovingly dedicated
to those who are no more—*

My parents, Abraham and Chaya Regelson

*My baby brother Yedidya,
forever eight months old*

*My son Imri,
with us until his fifteenth year*

S.T.

PROLOGUE

or...

A JOURNEY BACKWARDS THROUGH TIME

They call me Savta Sharona, my sixteen lovable grandchildren and six great-grandaughters, too. Small and full of years am I, brown-eyed, with silvery hair. "Tell us, Savta," they plead, "of that time when..." And from my storehouse of memories emerge family tales of long ago, from way, way before they were born, and I was turned into a Savta/Grandma.



It was "Imma" and not "Savta" that I was called before that, when raising their parents, my seven kids: Anva, Nadav, Nir, Adiel ("Didi"), Imri and the twins Reviva and Coreneth ("Vivi" and "Cori"). That was a saga in itself! — with the highlights and pressures of combining family life and musician-parents' careers. Both of us flautists in the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, a hectic time it was indeed, of rehearsals, concerts and tours — while in between there were diapers to change and launder (no disposables then!), meals to cook, parents'

meetings to attend, not to mention the often futile attempts at resolving squabbles! What with the tensions of life in Israel from one war to the next, and raising our boisterous brood, there were moments aplenty of both joy and sadness. No sad moment was it, however, but an everlasting heartbreak at losing our beloved Imri, who at fourteen was killed in a terrorist attack on the Coast Road in 1978. After that terrible trauma, we retired from the orchestra and moved from Jerusalem to the quiet Negev village, Omer. For a time I played with Beersheva's Sinfonietta, co-founded and produced the Negev Light Opera, taught flute in various places — and today I am fully retired, and of course, a Savta.

Going further back, before the time of my *aliya* to Israel and my marriage, it was in a drab Bronx tenement that I grew up as a child and teenager (how it came about that we got to NYC in those days is related in the Epilogue.) My father, a Hebrew poet and author, eked out a meager living for his family by free-lance translation and writing for the Yiddish press. My mother, like him fluent in English, Hebrew and Yiddish, was a gifted singer, her kitchen resounding with the music of cantorial twirls while she concocted unimaginably unique vegetarian delicacies for the family table. My brothers and sisters — Raim, Naomi, Leon/Yochai, Tamar — and myself, all attended NY public schools, played "stoop-ball" on the front steps of our apartment building, borrowed books from the public library across Crotona Park, saw films at Loew's Moviehouse on Southern Boulevard, and swam at Orchard Beach on sultry summer days. During WWII my

brothers served in the US Army, while I attended the LaGuardia High School of Music and Art (famed by the TV "Fame" series) and later the Juilliard School of Music. At the time of Israel's struggle for statehood, my sister Naomi and I became active in a Zionist youth movement, and lived for half a year at a New Jersey training farm, before our second aliya to Israel.

Come with me now, dear readers, still further back in time, to 1933, the year of the family's FIRST aliya to Eretz-Israel. We lived then in Cleveland (of Cuyahoga County in Ohio), and when Sharona had reached the age of three — (believe it or not, even Savtas were once three years old!) — her parents decided to immigrate to what was then early Jewish Palestine. Sharona had to leave her family of dolls behind, with her young neighbor/friend Phyllis. The voyage by ship was long and arduous, and the living conditions they encountered in the young, barren desert city of sand dunes and camels, little Tel Aviv, were harsh and primitive.

Imagine what a happy day it was for Sharona when the mail brought her a package from America, containing her beloved dolls! Her excitement inspired Sharona's Abba to write a book about the dolls' journey across the Atlantic, recounting in it the family's trials and tribulations of travel and absorption, with more than a pinch of imaginative hilarity thrown in, using biblically-flavored language.

At first *The Dolls' Journey* appeared in installments in the children's section of the Hebrew daily *Davar*, illustrated by the young artists Nahum Gutman and Aryeh Navon, and later came out in book form, in several

subsequent editions. Little Sharona had good reason then, to be proud — because she and her dolls were now the heroines of a well-loved book, remembered by many to this day! Israel's foremost songwriter, the



Sharona Regelson, age 4, with dolls, 1934.

late Naomi Shemer, when asked in a radio interview what her favorite childhood book was, singled out the Dolls, telling how she would giggle through countless rereadings. And Kibbutz Yagur — one of Israel's largest and most venerable kibbutzim — when celebrating its sixtieth anniversary, sought a play depicting the flavor of its early years, and chose to present a musical based on this book.

And now you too, dear readers, are invited to partake of this special flavor of those olden times, to learn how people lived and spoke back then, as well as to sense how Jewish folk (whether secular or observant) felt about their ancestral homeland. Above all, *enjoy* the entertaining adventures (part real, part imaginary) of the journey across the ocean to