

We decided to take a walk around the cemetery perimeter around the outside low wall, adjacent to the neighbors' agricultural fields, and content ourselves looking in. The nearly one-meter high utilitarian concrete barrier that had been erected as a wall perhaps sixty years before was still largely standing to mark off the sacred ground. From the outside it seemed like it would be slim pickings. Few tombstones could be seen at all; others were barely legible or broken on the ground.

And then, after walking along one of the four sides, we found, standing bright in the sun, just two meters in from the perimeter wall at the southeast corner of the cemetery, something remarkable: one stone, standing tall amidst a few other dilapidated tombstones. Bright in the sunlight, moss growing a bit on it, a surviving stone that almost seemed to be calling from the past, "remember me." Here, in full glory, stood a possible link to history. We looked closely at the Hebrew text. Two words seemingly jumped out at us from the bottom of the stone, the line where the identity of the buried person below was revealed:

"Sarah Chana," it read. Now these were not two random names, for my grandmother's name—my mother's mother's name—was also Sarah Chana, as shown in the family tree earlier in this chapter. When our first child was born, my wife Jeanette and I named her Sarah, in honor of my grandmother Sarah.

שרה חנה



My mother and I knew this was not my grandmother's tombstone. I knew my grandmother from my childhood; she made it safely to Palestine with my mother in 1938 and I know exactly where she is buried in Israel. I try to visit her tombstone there every year. This stone was not that of my grandmother Sarah Chana. But it was her name. Not just her first name, but both her given names Sarah and Chana.

I wondered. I fantasized. Might this be *her* grandmother, the grandmother of my grandmother? As we knew, it was very common in East Europe for Jews to name children after their deceased ancestors. It would have made sense for my grandmother Sarah Chana to have been named after her grandmother Sarah Chana. Was this then my great-great grandmother's tombstone? But there was no inscribed surname, no last name, that could have addressed this question in a moment. Sarah and Chana were common names, and even the combination was not uncommon. It was hard to know. The odds of it being my ancestor's tombstone would be like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack.