

The Keeper of the Names

Milan Goldberger · Menashe (מנשה)

Ben's grandfather · Goldberger line · 1928 – 2023



Born on Hoshana Rabbah in Vukovar, Milan Goldberger escaped occupied Denmark at fifteen, crossed the Atlantic alone at seventeen, raised thirteen children in New York, and carried the family's memory of its cantors.

BORN	5 October 1928 (Hoshana Rabbah 5689), Vukovar
DIED	10 December 2023 (third light of Chanukah 5784), Jerusalem; buried Mount of Olives
HEBREW NAME	Menashe son of Reb Yaakov
FULL NAME	Milan Emanuel Goldberger
ARRIVED	Philadelphia, 21 January 1946, on the Formosa from Copenhagen
MARRIED	Sulamith (Sue) Lebovics, Bronx Borough Hall, 14 August 1950
CHILDREN	Thirteen
WORK	Furrier, oil-burner mechanic, diamond cutter, building manager

Milan Emanuel Goldberger was born at Vukovar on 5 October 1928, Hoshana Rabbah 5689, the eldest son of the cantor **Eugene Goldberger** and **Helena Berkovits**. By family account he may have been born on the road, during his father's tryout visit for the Vukovar post. His Hebrew name was Menashe, after his grandfather **Emanuel**. He spent his early years at Troppau and then, from about 1934, in Copenhagen, where his father had become chief cantor. At home his parents spoke Hungarian to each other and German to the boys, who grew up Danish.

On 9 April 1940, at eleven, he watched from his window as German planes flew over Copenhagen. He went on to study at a Copenhagen business college and once saw an underground bomb blow out the windows across the street. In October 1943, at fifteen, he scouted the street for the family when the Gestapo came. In his own memory the Germans arrived with a truck at night while the family hid silently in the bedroom, and they later waited in the bushes near the airport before sailing in a small fishing boat, pretending to fish as a German plane passed over. The Swedish police reports show the whole family leaving Copenhagen at 9 p.m. on 2 October 1943 and landing at Limhamn that night. In Gothenburg, while his younger brothers went to school, he was put to work, apparently for a furrier.

On 21 January 1946 he landed alone at Philadelphia from the Swedish ship Formosa: seventeen, a student, stateless, his passage paid by his father, bound for the Ner Israel rabbinical college in Baltimore. In 1949 he met **Sulamith "Sue" Lebovics** on the beach at Rockaway, and they married at Bronx Borough Hall on 14 August

1950; he was then a fur designer living in Montreal. Thirteen children followed, the eldest born in Maryland during the Baltimore years.

He made his living with his hands and his wits: as an oil-burner mechanic, for about ten years in the fur trade making mink coats, in plastic slipcovers, in diamond cutting, and managing apartment houses in Harlem. He was naturalized in Brooklyn in 1956, the petition describing him as a furrier, five feet eleven, with brown hair and eyes. The family lived in Long Beach, New York, where his father stayed with him for a time. In 1987 he made aliyah to Jerusalem to care for his ageing parents.

It was Milan who kept the family's memory of its cantors: the alternating names, Menashe ben Yaakov ben Menashe ben Yaakov, which, as he said, "went back and forth." That memory became the key that later identified his great-great-grandfather **Markus (Yaakov) Goldberger** in the registers of a Slovak village. At about 88 he recorded his own testimony with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Sue died in 2019. Milan died on 10 December 2023, the third light of Chanukah 5784, and was buried beside her on the Mount of Olives.

His story is told by his own Yad Vashem interview and by the records of his new life: the Philadelphia arrival card of 1946, the Bronx marriage certificate of 1950, the Brooklyn naturalization petition of 1956, and his matzevah in Jerusalem.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Arrival card, Philadelphia, 21 Jan 1946, M.S. Formosa from Copenhagen: Milan Emanuel Goldberger, 17, student, stateless; mother Helena in Copenhagen; passage paid by his father

Marriage certificate (license BX 6377), 1950

Petition for Naturalization No. 554178, EDNY 1956



Milan & Sue (1980s)



Milan at home in Jerusalem, 1994

Milan (Menashe) Goldberger

Vukovar 1928 – Annals 2023 · His testimony, in English
Yad Vashem video interview – Jerusalem, c. 2017 · Yad Vashem collections, document 3385457

About this transcript. Milan gave this interview to Yad Vashem in English, at about 80. The text below comes from the video's automatic captions and has not been corrected: the interviewer's questions and Milan's answers run together without speaker labels, and some words are misheard (marked [unstable]) where the captions gave up). Timestamps match the video, so any passage can be checked against his own words. The names of living family members are withheld. This is a family-working copy; the video is the authoritative record. © Yad Vashem.

Summary

Family and birth

Milan was born in **Vukovar** (then Yugoslavia) in **1928** and left as a baby. His father, **Eugene Jacob Goldberger**, came from a family of cantors in which the names alternated. "Menashe ben Yaakov, Yaakov ben Menashe"; Eugene was born when his own father was about 65, in a second marriage, and Milan never knew that side of the family, whom he believed "Hiller took." His mother, **Hannah**

His Yad Vashem testimony: summary + full transcript (PDF)



Matzevah, Mount of Olives

Read online, with every record: https://ouryichus.com/featured.html#g_milan · Family tree card: https://ouryichus.com/tree.html#p/g_milan
Ben Soffer (Goldberger) Family Archive · ouryichus.com