



(ING IMAGE/ASAP)

LOOKING FORWARD AFTER 170 YEARS

THE NEXT generation: Motti Shor walking the vineyard with his grandson. (Photos: Courtesy)

From left:



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

Imagine a family journey lasting 170 years, starting from Hagai Street in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, traveling via Rappaport Street, Beit Yisrael and arriving on Haruvim Street, Mishor Adumim. I am referring to the Shor family, which opened their winery back in 1847-48 and is still making wine today. This is Israel's oldest existing wine-making family.

Initially it was called Shor Winery, then it became AM Shor Bros and over time, as the family grew, it split into four different wineries: Arza, Hacormim, Shimshon and Zion, each with exactly the same roots. Shimshon Winery was eventually sold and is today known as the Jerusalem Vineyard Winery. The surviving Shor wineries continue to be owned and managed by the family.

It is an extraordinary story. It began when Rabbi Mordechai Avraham Galin arrived from Ukraine in 1835 and settled in Safed. The family moved to the Old City of Jerusalem, where he became head of the Tiferet Yisrael Yeshiva. His son, Yitzhak Galin, understood that the family could not live on charity alone, so he chose wine as a profession. His sister had married Baruch Shor, who by chance happened to have a rare license given to him by the Ottoman Turks for trading

in alcohol. So, the family changed their name to Shor, used Baruch's license and opened a winery in 1848 in the Old City of Jerusalem. The first evidence of the family's involvement in the wine trade was the census commissioned by Moses Montefiore in 1849.

Then it was a very different world. It was a domestic winery, in the Muslim quarter, adjacent to the Kotel Hakatan (Little Western Wall). They had to place barrels along the Holy Wall in case a worker inadvertently touched it. Retracing the steps of the family, I saw the entrance to the Rand House, where the winery was originally situated. You can see where the mezuzah had been, which has since been gouged out.

In those days there was no bottled wine, no labels, no brands and no kashrut certificate. Wine was sold in barrels or small casks. You bought from someone you knew, usually from your family or your community. Grapes came from Hebron, with the vineyards owned by Arabs. Payment was made in advance to reserve the crop. Some of those anonymous local grapes used, which were ignored for over 150 years, are now creating interest. Wine was categorized as sweet or sour, but over 95% was sweet.

Later on, when the first glass bottles were produced, a family would most likely have only one, which they would have to refill again and again. The story goes that young daughters (the boys were studying or working), would have the task of being sent to the winery to fill the precious bottle. They would then wrap it in

cloth for the swift, furtive walk home, so no one would render the precious wine not kosher by looking at it!

THERE ARE some priceless family stories handed down. Grapes were delivered to the winery on a drove of donkeys traveling from Hebron. The children used to run after the baskets hoping to be able to grab the odd bunch of grapes. The Shor family used to wake up in the morning to a courtyard of braying donkeys. Sometimes camels were used to bring the precious cargo but they could only enter via the Damascus Gate, where they had the adequate height to walk unimpeded.

The third generation was Shmuel and the legendary Rosa Shor. She was a formidable woman. She opened a wine store called Khamra Rosa on Hagai Street, near the cotton market. It probably was not the first shop selling wine and spirits, but because of Rosa's character, it was the most famous. When her husband died, she took over the management of the winery. Her memory lives on. Arab elders still give respect today to a visiting member of the family, as soon as they hear they are related to Rosa.

In 1925, the Shor Winery had to move from the Old City by the request of the British Mandate. They had prepared for this by purchasing property in Beit Yisrael. The winery moved, but the Shor family were still in the Old City when the pogrom of 1929 took place. In the new winery, the living quarters were on



From left: **KONDITON**, HACORMIM Winery's most well-known brand. **THE 1848 Winery Special Reserve**; the winery has won many gold medals in international competitions. **HAYOTZER WINERY Lyrica**, a pioneering label of Mediterranean wines.

the top floor, the winery on the ground floor, and the cellar – previously a water well – was in the basement.

Glass became cheaper and wine gradually came to be sold in bottles. Bottling was done manually. Alicante became the main variety. Early labels were strictly informative with basic typed information on a white background and were later used for marketing purposes.

After they moved to Beit Yisrael, they occasionally had to load up a donkey to send wine to the shop in the Old City. According to family folklore, a youthful Shor was told to take the donkey and deliver the wine. "But I don't know the way" he whined. "Don't worry, the donkey does," was the adult's reply. Sure enough, the donkey navigated the alleyways and the wine was delivered successfully.

The donkey folklore came alive for me, during my visit to the Old City to follow the family's footsteps. I came across a photo of a donkey unmistakably carrying bottles of wine, hanging on the wall of an Arab restaurant nearby. Hilariously I was swiftly told "no, they are milk bottles," by the owner, presumably, as a Muslim, forbidden to drink alcohol!

TWO THINGS surprised me about this haredi, Ashkenazi family. Firstly, the family spoke Arabic, which was logical and practical, so they could communicate with their neighbors and suppliers. Secondly the family served in the IDF. Unfortunately, in the



PHILIPPE LICHTENSTEIN, trained winemaker of Hayotzer Winery.

War of Independence, they had to recover from devastating blows.

In 1944, the British Mandate ruled that companies could not be named after families, so the name was changed from AM Shor Bros to Zion Winery. After the founding of the State of Israel, as the family grew, the two brothers decided to split. Avraham Meir Shor decided to focus on wine and grape juice, and Moshe Shalom Shor concentrated on spirits and liqueurs. There was a wall between the two production centers in the same building, and the folklore tells how sometimes the pervasive smell of arak would reach over into the winery.

Moshe Shalom's various initiatives developed into a number of partnerships, including a joint venture with the Teperberg family. There was a long period when the Shor family owned five or six wineries with different names at a time when there were not many wineries in Israel! However, what is relevant to today is that Arza, Hacormim and Shimshon wineries were founded in the 1950s by Moshe Shalom's children.

The next generation dealt with the growth of the wineries. Bottling plants replaced manual work, and in 1982 the three remaining Shor family wineries (Arza, Hacormim and Zion) found themselves on the same street of Mishor Adumim, the industrial estate near Ma'aleh Adumim.

Arza Winery has grown to become the fifth largest in the land. It is managed by the sixth and seventh generations: Motti Shor, who is smart like a fox, and his son Elchanan, who is a creative, innovative marketer. Their winery is devoted to quality table wines and is called Hayotzer (Hebrew for "creator"). They firmly believe that wine is an art and that the winemaker is the artist. They appointed Philippe Lichtenstein as winemaker. French born, he is one of the most experienced winemakers in Israel. He makes wine in an old-world style. The wines scored 93 and 92 points in *Wine Enthusiast* magazine, and are pretty high scores for Israeli wine. They also have an interesting new initiative called David's Land Vineyards, which explores the different terroirs of Israel.

Zion Winery became the sixth largest in Israel. Here, the CEO is Moshe Shor, sixth generation, who is a bulldozer. He has virtually rebuilt the winery with all the equipment and technology a modern winery should have. His son, Yossi, founded a boutique winery called 1848 devoted to quality, which is run separately and independently. They have employed a young French-born winemaker, Ilan Assouline, who graduated in Bordeaux. Their wines have won many gold medals in international competitions.

Then there is Hacormim Winery managed by Eli Shor, of the seventh generation. It is not as big as the other two, but it still a reasonably large winery. This winery has yet to change and develop and go through the revolution the other Shor wineries have gone through. However, they have appointed a new winemaker, Zvi Skaist (ex Barkan, Carmel and Jerusalem), so there is hope that changes are on the way.

Arza, Hacormim and Zion are historic wineries with deep roots in the Israeli wine story. They are still mainly producers of liquid religion (grape juice and kiddush wine) and inexpensive supermarket wines. However, it is the Hayotzer and 1848 wineries that have brought the



ROSA SHOR, legendary wine-shop owner and winery manager.



THE OLD Shor Winery in Beit Yisrael, western Jerusalem.

Shor family into the 21st century. Baroness Philippine de Rothschild once said "making wine is easy. It is just the first 200 years that is difficult." Well, after 170 years, seven generations, and now with five wineries, the Shor family is well on its way! Far from dwelling on the past, it is gratifying to see the family investing in quality and planning for the future. ■

The writer has advanced Israeli wines for over 30 years. He is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore.com