

The Jewish Connection – Mythology or Reality?

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Introduction

How should one pursue one's possibly Jewish relatives in the genealogical record? Like most specialized fields in genealogy, the first rule of thumb is: continue using best genealogical practices to find information and evaluate evidence. For this, the context within which records were created is key.

What does being Jewish mean?

- Belief system
- Culture/lifestyle
- Endogamous group/segregated population

How does one tell if one's relatives were Jewish?

- Records – manifests, census enumerations, cemeteries
- Surnames – historically, late adoption and many of changes
- Is that name Jewish? Not a good indicator by itself

What information will help track Jewish ancestors?

- Rabbinical genealogy
- Naming customs
 - Sephardic – name after living or deceased relatives
 - Ashkenazic – name only after deceased people
 - Hebrew (spiritual) name and vernacular names
- Tombstones – provide father's name
- Synagogue and community records
- European vital records
- Holocaust records

What are the challenges of Jewish genealogy?

- Changing names
- Changing town names
- Changing old country political boundaries

- DNA – endogamy affects autosomal test results

Sources

Genealogy Best Practices

Board for Certification of Genealogists. *Genealogy Standards*, 50th Anniversary Edition. Washington, D.C.: Ancestry, 2014.

Thomas W. Jones. *Mastering Genealogical Proof*. Arlington, VA: National Genealogical Society, 2013.

General Jewish genealogy sources

JewishGen: <http://www.jewishgen.org>

Avotaynu: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy – journal,
<http://www.avotaynu.com>

Arthur Kurzweil. *From Generation to Generation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

Gary Mokotoff. *Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy: 2014 Edition*. New Haven, CT: Avotaynu, 2014.

Dan Rottenberg. *Finding Our Fathers: A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy*. Baltimore: genealogical Publishing Company, 1995.

SallyAnn Amdur Sack and Gary Mokotoff, editors. *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy*. Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2004.

The Museum of Family History, <http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com>

Sephardic genealogy

Genie Milgrom. *My 15 Grandmothers*. Genie Milgrom (self-published), 2012.

Genie Milgrom. *How I Found My 15 Grandmothers: A Step by Step Guide*. Genie Migrom (self-published), 2014.

Jewishgen. “Sephardim - Conversos – Marranos: Historical Overview,”
<http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/sefard5.htm>

Sephardic Special Interest Group, <http://www.jewishgen.org/Sephardic/>

Early American Jewish genealogy

Malcolm Stern. *Americans of Jewish Descent*. 1960

Online version: <http://americanjewisharchives.org/publications/fajf/>

Jewish names

Alexander Beider. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland*. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1996.

Alexander Beider. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire*. Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1993.

Warren Blatt. "Jewish Given Names," slide presentation. *JewishGen InfoFile*, <http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/GivenNames/>

Joachim Mugdan. "The Names of the Jews: A Preliminary FAQ." *JewishGen InfoFile*. <http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/namfaq0.htm>

Rabbinical Genealogy

Rabbinic Genealogy Special Interest Group, <http://www.jewishgen.org/Rabbinic/>

Reading Jewish Tombstones

JewishGen. "Reading Jewish Tombstones." *JewishGen InfoFile*. <http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/tombstones.html>

Translating records

ViewMate application, <http://www.jewishgen.org/ViewMate/>

Jewish synagogue and community records

American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, <http://www.americanjewisharchives.org>

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, <http://archives.jdc.org/>

Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, <https://cahjp.huji.ac.il/>

Center for Jewish History, NY, <http://www.cjh.org>

JewishGen.org, <http://www.jewishgen.org>

YIVO Institute, NY, <http://www.yivoinstitute.org>

Records in Eastern Europe

FamilySearch, <https://familysearch.org>

Routes to Roots, <http://www.rtrfoundation.org>

Jewish Records Indexing – Poland, <http://www.jri-poland.org>

Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, <https://cahjp.huji.ac.il/>

JewishGen Special Interest Groups, <http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/sigs.htm>

JewishGen Hosted Groups, <http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/hosted.htm>

Holocaust

Yizkor Book Project, <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/>

Pages of testimony, "Shoah names database," <http://www.yadvashem.org>

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, <http://www.ushmm.org>

Finding your town

Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogical Institute. "Finding Your Ancestral Town," June 2011, <http://www.cjh.org/pdfs/FindingYourAncestralTown07.pdf>

JewishGen Communities Database,
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/Search.asp>

KehilaLinks, <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/>

Gary Mokotoff, SallyAnn Amdur Sack, with Alexander Sharon. *Where Once We Walked*. Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2002.

Changing boundaries

Foundation for East European Family History Studies Map Library,
<http://feefhs.org/maplibrary.html>

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Emily Aulicino. *Genetic Genealogy: The Basics and Beyond*. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2013.

Jeffrey Mark Paul, Gaye Sherman Tannenbaum, and Jeffrey Briskman. "Differences in Autosomal DNA Characteristics between Jewish and Non-Jewish Populations," *SurnameDNA Journal*. <http://www.surnamedna.com>

Further education:

JewishGen.org Learning Center (online classes),
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Education/>

JewishGen Discussion groups,
<http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/DiscussionGroup.htm>

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies annual conferences,
<http://www.iajgs.org/blog/>

Jewish genealogy societies, <http://www.iajgs.org/blog/membership/member-societies/>

Blogs: see list on GeneaBloggers website (search on Jewish, DNA),
<http://www.geneabloggers.com/genealogy-blogs/>

FaceBook: numerous pages, including “Tracing the Tribe,”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/tracingthetribe/>