



## MGC Resources and Online Resources for Jewish Genealogy

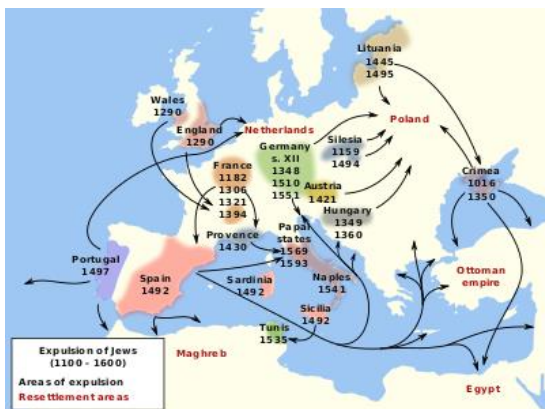
The Midwest Genealogy Center (MGC) of the Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL) in Independence, Missouri, has an impressive collection of books and other resources related to Jewish genealogy. The resources are in various formats: Books, Periodicals, Microfiche, and Online Resources accessible through the MCPL subscription to various databases. In addition, many other genealogy websites are freely accessible online.

### General Review and Terms to Know

**Ashkenazic Jews** (Ashkenaz in Medieval Hebrew stands for Germany)—they were in medieval France and Germany, then they spread to Poland, Russia (Russian Empire), and Austria (Austro-Hungarian Empire). In the Russian Empire, they lived primarily in the Pale of Settlement (provinces, which are now in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova.) Most Jewish-Americans are descended from the Ashkenazic Jews of Central and Eastern Europe.

**Sephardic Jews** (Sepharad in Hebrew stands for Spain—Hispania or Iberia)—they were expelled from Spain in 1492. Then they settled in various countries around the Mediterranean Sea, Holland, and other places. There are also two other main Jewish ethnic groups covering the Middle East (Mizrahi or Oriental Jews—Mizrach means East in Hebrew—Sephardi in broader meaning), and Ethiopia (Beta Israel or Ethiopian Jews.) Almost all Jewish-Americans are either Ashkenazic or Sephardic Jews.

- Language Differences (Jewish and Hebrew):
  1. Hebrew—People in Israel speak Modern Hebrew (Semitic language)
  2. Jewish (Yiddish) – Jews around the world speak Jewish (Yiddish)—Ashkenazi (Germanic)
- Shtetl (pl. Shtetlach) and Kehila (pl. Kehilot)—Jewish communities in towns with large Jewish population
- Jews lived in towns (financiers, merchants, innkeepers, see also Magna Carta in 1215, articles 10, 11)
- From Britain, Jews were expelled in 1290 and did not return until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Diaspora—Jews living anywhere in the world outside of Israel



### Edict of Expulsion

Source: Wikipedia

- First Jews came to the US in 1654 from South America, settled in Dutch colony in New Amsterdam (NY)
- Mass immigration to the US in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. and 1<sup>st</sup> half of 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Most came through Ellis Island as a Processing Immigration Center in NY - records are preserved, and may show the last residence, and original first and last names

- Most of them sailed from Hamburg and Bremen in Germany, and the Hamburg Passenger Lists are preserved - see the Ancestry website – free at any branch library in the MCPL system
- Landsmanschaft (or Landsmanshaft)–Jewish helping societies–to help Jewish immigrants establish themselves in a new country (US) formed primarily from and for the immigrants from the same region or town

## Names

- In the 19th Century males had usually two first names–first one was religious & second their called name
- Names were given after deceased relatives (primarily recently deceased - Ashkenazic Jews)
- They used ‘Ben’, which means ‘Son of’ (David ben Aaron). Names were changed with every generation.
- Most Jews did not have surnames until 18<sup>th</sup> cent. (Joseph II. Holy Roman Emperor issued Imperial Decree in 1787 to adopt German surnames). They used patronymic, metronymic, or other characteristics (geographical, occupational) for their names.
- Sephardic Jews used last names earlier than Ashkenazic Jews
- Upon arrival to the U.S. many Jews changed or anglicized their names
- Only three Jewish surnames are recognized as the natural, original Jewish surnames, by evolving from the tribal ancestry: Cohen, Levy, Israel, and their variations (Cohen-priest, Levy- the tribe of priests, Israel-all other Jewish population)
- Cohen and Levy are the most common Jewish surnames in the US

## For Genealogy Research

**Important Genealogical Value - Place of Origin.** This means where the Jewish ancestor was born, resided, and then searching for the records there. The resources listed below can help in your journey of discovery. Search also the online catalog and [MGC website](#).

### **Guidance Books:**

[Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy](#) (a leading publisher for Jewish genealogy)—gives the essentials of Jewish genealogical research, research techniques, review of researching Jewish ancestry in many countries of the world. Each country has a special chapter, with added photos of Jewish synagogues, domes, and museums. At the end of the book is an added German, Hebrew, Polish, Russian, and Yiddish alphabet, and it contains maps of places and countries where Jews settled and resided.

[The Source: a Guidebook of American Genealogy](#)—general review and help for Jewish research

[Getting Started in Jewish Genealogy](#)

[How to Trace Your Jewish Roots](#)

[Finding Our Fathers: a Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy](#)—gives time frame when Jews appeared in each country

[From generation to generation: how to trace your Jewish genealogy and family history](#)

[In Search of Your German Roots](#)

[Germanic Genealogy. A Guide to Worldwide Sources & Migration Patterns](#)—good for German Jews

[Jewish Roots in Poland: Pages From the Past & Archival Inventories](#) (in cooperation with the Polish State Archives)

[Finding Your Jewish Roots in Galicia: A Resource Guide](#)—gazetteer at the end, names of Jews in U.S.

Emergency Passport Applications, 1919-1926, also sample letters for writing to Polish Archives

[Jewish Roots in Ukraine and Moldova: Pages From the Past & Archival Inventories](#)—more than 1440 Shtetls listed

[Where to Find Your Arab-American or Jewish Genealogy Records: Also, Mediterranean, Assyrian, Iranian, Greek, and Armenian](#)

[Avotaynu – International Review of Jewish Genealogy](#)—this journal gives valuable information for research in Central and Eastern Europe, including Germany (great resource - not only for Jewish ancestry)

[Landsmen](#)—published by Suwalk-Lomza Interest Group for Jewish Genealogists. Suwalk and Lomza are former Polish gubernias (provinces) now in northeast Poland and southern Lithuania

#### **For Emigration:**

[Migration from the Russian Empire: Lists of Passengers Arriving at the Port of New York](#)—6 volumes, passengers arriving in the US from Russian Empire from 1875-1891 (including Poland, Lithuania, etc.)

[Germans to America: Lists of Passengers Arriving at U.S. Ports](#)—Series of extensive lists

#### **Books of Special Interest:**

[The New Encyclopedia of Judaism](#)—valuable source for not only research of Jewish families but also for learning about Judaism, and every aspect of Jewish religion. Books contains many illustrations and pictures of synagogues, Torah ornaments, illustrated manuscripts, biographical entries on biblical figures, rabbis, commentaries on prayers, description of customs and folk traditions

[The Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Jews in the United States, 1655-1905](#)

[First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies](#)—Jews arriving during 1654-1838

[A Century of Dedication: The Story of Beth Shalom of Kansas City, 1878-1978](#)—story of a Congregation Beth Shalom established in Kansas City. There are many photos of members of the organization.

[From the Banks of the Rhine to the Banks of the Mississippi: The History of Jewish Immigrants and Their Individual Stories](#)

[The Jewish Presence in Early British Records, 1650-1850](#)

[Jewish Memorial \(Yizkor\) Books in the United Kingdom: Destroyed European Jewish Communities](#)

[From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish life in America](#)

[Sephardi Lives: A Documentary History, 1700-1950](#)

[My Ancestors Were Jewish](#)

[Jewish American Family Album](#)

#### **For Request of Vital Records:**

[International Vital Records Handbook](#)—writing to consulates/embassies and departments of vital records all around the world

#### **Dictionary:**

[Comprehensive English-Yiddish Dictionary](#)

[Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary](#)

#### **Books of Places, Personal Names, and Atlases:**

[Shtetl Finder: Jewish Communities in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries in the Pale of Settlement of Russia and Poland, and in Lithuania, Latvia, Galicia, and Bukovina, with Names of Residents](#)

[Dictionary of Jewish Surnames From the Russian Empire](#)—series of books of surnames from Russian Empire, also Germany, Galicia, Kingdom of Poland, Mediterranean region

[Comprehensive Dictionary of English & Hebrew First Names](#)

[The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History](#)

[Genealogical Gazetteer of Galicia](#)

#### **For Reading Records and Letter Writing:**

[Translation Guide to Nineteenth-Century Polish Language Civil Registration Documents](#)

[In Their Words: A Genealogist's Translation Guide to Polish, German, Latin, and Russian Documents](#)

[Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide](#)

## **Cemetery Books:**

[A Field Guide to Visiting a Jewish Cemetery](#)—great for reading tombstones

[Gone But Not Forgotten: A History of the Burials in the Jewish Cemeteries of Kansas City, Missouri, 1866-1999](#)

## **War Books:**

[The Jewish Confederates](#)

[Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate](#)

[Jews in American Wars](#)

[The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory](#)

[Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military](#)

## **Jewish Resources on Microform**

[List of 56,000 Jewish Burials](#)—only U.S., in alphabetical order by last name

[Jewish Cemeteries Throughout the World](#)—description and condition of the Jewish cemeteries in the world (even small islands with Jewish tombstones from the 16<sup>th</sup> century)

[The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860](#)

[Jewish Registers in Germany, 1815-1938](#)—Vacha, Thüringen

[Michigan Jewish History](#), 15 volumes—articles start from the first Jews in the US in 1650s, follow Jewish pioneers in MI, first physicians, school for midwives, orphanages, etc.

## **Online Resources**

Ancestry Library Edition—free at any MCPL branch

[JewishGen.org](#)—Packed with the research tools, excellent gazetteer, calendar conversion, check also the 'Get Started' tab and FAQ

[FEFH.org](#)—Foundation of East European Family History Studies, click Religions tab, Jewish link

[IAJGS.org](#)—International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies

[Center for Jewish History](#) (New York, U.S.)—click to link 'About the Center' and 'Our Partners'

[The Eastern European Archival Database](#)

[Jewish Records Indexing Poland](#)

[SteveMorse.org](#)—for Holocaust and Eastern Europe, Hebrew and Yiddish alphabet and translation

[FamilySearch.org](#)—catalog, microform collection, and other helpful articles (Wiki link – for reading and letter writing)

[GeshetGalicia.org](#)—for research in the former Austria-Hungary

[Yad Vashem.org](#)—the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem (research, etc.)

**Yizkor Books**—Memorial books (Yizkor means in Hebrew 'Memorial' or 'Remembrance') —history of Jewish communities from their beginnings until their end - some are online (NYPL.org) or even translated on JewishGen.org

## **Places to Visit**

US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC—extensive collection of material

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, NY—library and archival collection