My Grandfather Came from Poison

Meredith Hoffman, GenerationsWeb
m.hoffman@generationsweb.com / http://consultant.generationsweb.com (blog)

Resources for working with Jewish personal, family, and town names

Books and articles

Following the Paper Trail: A Multilingual Translation Guide, Shea & Hoffman
(available at Avotaynu [www.avotaynu.com])

Articles from *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy* (eds. Sallyann Amdur Sack & Gary Mokotoff):

Mokotoff, Gary, "Shtetl Geography," 16-22.

Daitch, Randy, "Holistic Geography," 23-29.

Sack, Sallyann Amdur, "Family Names," 30-34.

Blatt, Warren, "Jewish Given Names," 35-42.

Wynne, Suzan F., "Austro-Hungarian Empire," 179-184.

Sack, Sallyann Amdur, "Ottoman Empire," 185-188.

Soshnikov, Vladislav, "Russian Empire," 189-195.

Map: "Pale of Settlement Including the Kingdom of Poland," 196.

A series of books on Jewish names, published by Avotaynu (www.avotaynu.com):

Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names, Alexander Beider

Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland, A. Beider

A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire, rev. ed., A. Beider

Handbook of Ashkenazic Given Names and Their Variants, A. Beider

Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from Galicia, A. Beider

Russian-Jewish Given Names: Their Origins and Variants, Boris Feldblyum

A Dictionary of German-Jewish Surnames, Lars Menk

Dictionary of Sephardic Surnames, 2d ed., Guilherme Faiguenboim, et al.

Articles in *Avotaynu* on Jewish names

Beider, A. "Jewish Patronymic and Metronymic Surnames in Russia." *Avotaynu* VII:4 (W 1991), 3-15.

Beider, A. "Jewish Given Names in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania." *Avotaynu* XIII:2 (Su 1997), 20-25.

Blatt, Warren. "Jewish Given Names in Eastern Europe and the U.S." *Avotaynu* XIV:3 (F 1998), 9-15.

USEFUL LINKS FOR PERSONAL & FAMILY NAMES

- Warren Blatt's slide presentation on "Jewish Given Names":
  www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/GivenNames/
- "The Names of the Jews: A Preliminary FAQ," Joachim Mugdan
  old (1994) but still useful commentaries on various issues in Jewish names
  www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/namfaq0.htm
- Male and female given names in Russian (Cyrillic), Polish (Latin), and Hebrew alphabets:
  www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/poland/FemaleNames.gif
  www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/poland/MaleNames.gif

USEFUL LINKS FOR TOWN NAMES AND INFORMATION ABOUT TOWNS

- To learn about the changing civil geography of your towns, see the Eastern Europe FAQ on
  JewishGen: www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/eefaq.html
- Use the JewishGen Town Finder (aka Communities Database) to search for your town by Sounds
  Like: www.jewishgen.org/Communities/Search.asp
- When you've identified your town, use the Town Finder again to learn about the town:
  → Click on the town name in the Town Finder listing to go to the Locality Page for the town
- For more information on your town, click the KehilaLinks link on the Locality Page to mine the
  information about your town and region
- You can also search for town names in the main listing in the JewishGen KehilaLinks pages:
  kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/

SOME APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS

- Spelling doesn't count, spelling doesn't count, spelling doesn't count
- Be creative about figuring out how a name might have been spelled
- Be creative about figuring out how a name might have been mis-indexed
- Learn to use Soundex (fuzzy) searches for names and towns
- Use personal naming conventions (different for Ashkenazi and Sephardi)
- Learn to recognize the "holy" and vernacular variants of your ancestors' personal names
- Be aware of the alternate surnames your ancestors might have used
- Learn to recognize patronymics
- Check the names on matzevot (gravestones)
- Learn to "hear" in Yiddish
- Learn how your ancestors' names would have been spelled in the old country
- Learn strategies for using online searches to find name variations
- See if your ancestors are buried in a landsmannschaft cemetery
- Post a query about a town name that you can't figure out to the JewishGen Discussion List

THE JEWISH GIVEN NAMES DATABASES www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/

Read the page on How to Search: www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/howto.htm

The main search engine: www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/search.htm

You can search from European-to-Foreign or Foreign-to-European.

For example, you can search for Leib from Poland to 10 different countries:

Use the suggested search parameters for most basic searches

1. EUROPEAN-TO-FOREIGN SEARCH

European Country: Poland

SearchName: leib

SearchField: Hebrew+Yiddish+EuroSecular

Search Type: Global (Plain) text

Foreign Country: United States

Search

Legal/Hebrew: Aryey Leyb\Leyba\LEO\LEON **Gender:** M **Legal Origin:** Calque < LEIB//'NEW' names   Click here for more details

Yiddish: Arye / / LEO / LEON / Leyb / Leybe

Yiddish Origin: < Yiddish/German 'lion'

Yiddish Nickname: / / Levek / Levik / Levin / Levke / Levko / Leybl / Leybela / Leybele / Leybish / Leybka / Leybke / Leybo / Leybush / Liba / Libe / Lebele / Liva

Local Secular: Arja / Arij / / Laib / Lajb / Lajba / Lejba / Lew

US Name: / / Louis

Legal/Hebrew: Elyaqum Leyb\Leyba\Leybln\Lebln\Lebn **Gender:** M **Legal Origin:** Talmud: Avoda Zara 58a   Click here for more details

Yiddish: Alyokum / Elyokum / Elyukum / / Leyb / Leybe

Yiddish Nickname: Kume / Lyokum / Yakum / / Lebn / Lebln / Levek / Leybele / Leybln

Going the other way, for example, you can search for Louis in the US (or any of 10 other countries) for possible names in Poland (or any of 17 other countries):

2. FOREIGN-TO-EUROPEAN SEARCH

Foreign Country: United States

SearchName: louis

Search Type: Global (Plain) text

European Country: Poland

Search

Searching for Text LOUIS
Number of hits: 25
Run on Saturday 9 April 2011 at 02:14:02

Legal/Hebrew: Arie **Gender:** M **Legal Origin:** Hebrew calque < Lejb   Click here for more details

Yiddish: Arie / Ariya

Yiddish Nickname: Ari / Lejb / Lew / Lewe

Local Secular: Arie / Arij

US Name: Alfred / Arthur / Harry / LOUIS / Leo

Legal/Hebrew: Arie Leyb\LEO\LEON **Gender:** M **Legal Origin:** Hebrew calque < Lejb//'NEW' names   Click here for more details

Yiddish: Arie / Ariya / / LEO / LEON / Leyb / Leybe

Yiddish Nickname: / / Levek / Lew / Lewe / Leybele / Leybus

Local Secular: Arie / Arij / / Lajb / Lajba / Lejb / Lejba / Lejbisz / Lew

The Consolidated Jewish Surname Index   www.avotaynu.com/csi/csi-home.htm

Searches 42 different online databases using D-M Soundex and includes more than 7.3 million records covering about 699,000 surnames.

When you first access the site, read the short, important instructions.

Enter Surname to be Searched: chodosh   (Search) (Clear)

The results of a search gives you a list of names that match the soundex code for that name. The codes in the Databases column show what database to visit to search for the corresponding name in the Name column.

The left column has the soundex code. The second column is the name variant that occurs in each database. Each entry in the right column is a code(s) that designates one or more databases.

Avotaynu Soundex Search Result

mn shows the codes for the various databases in which the surname appears. Scroll the screen down below the list of surnames to database, there is its code, followed by a brief description. This description has a link to a more detailed description of the database. I database. Some databases are on-line, others are in books or microfiche.

Searching for surname CHODOSH with soundex code 534000.

Soundex	Name	Databases
534000	CADES	Kp
534000	CADICH	W
534000	CADITZ	J

At the bottom of the search page is the list of databases that these codes refer to.

For example, here we see that the name CHADESH is found in databases B and D.

We find the corresponding code(s) in the list of databases and see that this spelling (CHADESH) is found in the All-Poland Database (B) and the All-Belarus Database (D). You can click on the link to a database, where you can enter the specific name variant to search for.

534000	CHADESH	BD
534000	CHADESSA	A
534000	CHADEYS	g
534000	CHADOCH	C

[Show original 30 records] [Show next 30 records]

Enter a Surname for a new Search: _____ (Search) (Clear)

List of Databases and Number of Surname Entries in CJSI

Visit our Home Page for more information about Avotaynu

A. Jewish Records Indexing - Poland (231,973 surnames). An index to over 2,400,000 Jewish birth, marriage, divorce and death records located in the archives of Poland. An atabase

B. All-Poland Database (79,327 surnames). An additional 600,000 records for Poland, from a variety of sources, including: vital records, business directories, voter lists, passen purces. *Online database*

C. All Lithuania Database (46,656 surnames). More than 400,000 records from many different sources, including Revision Lists (censuses), vital records, tax, voters, and ceme pdated. *Online database*

D. All Belarus Database (55,652 surnames). More than 300,000 records from many different sources, including vital records, voter lists, business directories, ghetto records. An atabase

Mining the information in the JewishGen Town Finder (aka Communities Database)

www.jewishgen.org/Communities/Search.asp

From the Town Finder search results page, access the town Locality Page by clicking on the JewishGen logo next to the town name.

On the Locality Page you'll find links and valuable information about the town:

- Alternate names in every relevant language, including Yiddish names (which are not always the same as the official names) and many variants that you may find in documents.

- A brief history of the civil affiliations (town, district, province, and country) of the town before WWI, between the wars, after WWII, and today (after the break-up of the Soviet Union). You need to know this information for the time and place of a document in order to know where that document might be found today.

- A map, which is clickable and interactive.

- An accompanying list of nearby Jewish communities. The links to nearby Jewish communities can often help you to identify a particular community out of similar named towns by its proximity to other towns you know are associated with your ancestor.

- At the top, links to the JGFF (JewishGen Family Finder) database for the community, to any Yizkor books available, and to the KehilaLinks page for the town.

- At the bottom, a link to directly search the appropriate country database(s) for the town in question.

- Also, links to a variety of books, articles, and online references, including any relevant SIGs and other external databases