

Rabbinical Genealogy: Sources at the Center for Jewish History

Introduction

Many people have an ancestor who was a rabbi, or whom they believe was a rabbi. Because Judaism is decentralized, with many yeshivot, rabbinical schools, denominations and leaders, there is no one repository for the personal papers of rabbis or biographical information about them. Further, a learned ancestor may have been called “rabbi” or may be remembered as such, even if he did not lead a congregation or possess a degree from a rabbinical school.

There are several obstacles for researchers of rabbinical families:

- The lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language.
- Vital records were kept in the Russian Empire only in the early 19th century, except for censuses compiled in the 18th and 19th Centuries.
- In Lithuania some Jewish families hid their Yikhus (lineage); and since there was frequently no oral history, much information was forgotten over time.
- Rabbinical families did not include sons and son in laws who were not scholars in their pedigrees.
- Families who are descended from rabbis who refuse to publish their pedigrees.

However, the compilation of many rabbinical family genealogies makes it easier for rabbinical researchers to trace their rabbinic ancestor/s. Moreover, books composed by rabbis often include genealogical information in their introductions that assists researchers.

The Center for Jewish History partners—American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—hold the personal papers of many rabbis. These collections can be identified by using CJH’s online catalog at <http://search.cjh.org>. The sources below contain biographical information; for congregational records, see our Synagogue Records fact sheet.

The Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute Resources

American Jewish Yearbook 5668 (1907-1908) (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1907). Contains a city-by-city Directory of National and Local Organizations in the United States, including synagogues.

In NYC, some congregations are also listed by associated town as well as by the name of the congregation.

Freedman, Chaim. Beit Rabbanan: Sources of Rabbinical Genealogy. (Petah Tikvah: Chaim Freedman, 2001). **BM 750 .F64 2001**

Freedman, Chaim. Eliyahu's Branches: Descendants of the Vilna Gaon. (NJ: Avotaynu, 1997). **BM 755 .E6 F74 1997**

Meizlish, Penina. Rabanim she-nispu ba-Shoah: biografiyot shel rabanim □e-admorim mi-Polin u-mishe 'ar artsot mizra□ Eropah she-nispu ba-Sho□ah. (Yerushalayim: [Lashon limudim], 2006). Includes biographies of Polish rabbis who perished in the Holocaust. **BM750 .M38 2006**
Also available online at <http://www.horabis.blogspot.com/> (Hebrew/English interface)

Rosenstein, Emanuel and Neil. Latter Day Leaders, Sages and Scholars. (NJ: Computer Center for Jewish Genealogy, 1983). **BM 750 .L3**

Rosenstein, Neil. The Lurie Legacy: the House of Davidic Royal Descent. (NJ: Avotaynu, 2003). **CS 409 .L87 2003**

Rosenstein, Neil. Rabbi Elijah (1720-1797), the Gaon of Vilna and His Cousinhood. (NJ: Computer Center for Jewish Genealogy, 1997). **BM 755 .E6 R67 1997**

Rosenstein, Neil. The Unbroken Chain (2 vol). (NJ: Computer Center for Jewish Genealogy, 1990). **CS 432 .J4 R67**

Rosenstein, Neil and Dovberish Weber. Stones of Remembrance (Avnei Zikaron). (NJ: Computer Center for Jewish Genealogy, 1999). **CS 873 .R67**

American Jewish Historical Society Resources

Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook. Vol. 1-49. (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-). Lists annual meeting attendees. **BM 11 .C2**

Kallah Convention of Texas Rabbis . Year book. ([Fort Worth, 1928]-). Short presentations by selected rabbis with names and photos of rabbis. List of attendees. **BM 111 .K15**

National Jewish Welfare Board, Military Chaplaincy Records, 1917-1984. Includes detailed questionnaires completed by chaplains providing name, date/place of birth, date of entry into the U.S., date of citizenship, marital status and wife's name including maiden name, education, rabbinical positions held, military service record and a short history. Photographs are frequently included [Boxes 42-45]. Questionnaires are arranged alphabetically in two alpha series. **AJHS I-249**

Rabbinical Alliance of America . Registry. 1949, 1953/54. Alphabetical list of ordained rabbis who are members with names, addresses, and names of congregations. **BM 60 .R2**

Rabbinical Assembly of America. Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America. 1927. Presentations at the annual conference. Pages 97-107 list alumni of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and additional members of the Rabbinical Assembly. **BM 11 .R1**

Stephen Wise Collection. Rabbi Stephen Wise, 1874-1949, was the founder of the Free Synagogue of New York. He also helped to found the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, the NAACP and the ACLU. This collection of his personal papers is organized by subject, including: personal affairs; speeches, sermons and articles; American Jewish Affairs; refugees; Zionism; and individual correspondence. There is a surname index to the collection. **AJHS P-143**

American Sephardi Federation Resources

Belinfante, Randall C. History of Abarbanel: With genealogy, and mailing lists of family members. Information about the Abarbanel Family. **CS942 .A22 2002**

□a'nunu, Shim□on. Entsi□lopedyah Arze ha-Levanon: entsi□lopedyah le-toldot ge'one □e-□akhme Yahadut Sefarad □eha-Mizra□. (Yerushalayim: Hotsa'ah le-or □e-hafatsah Yefeh Nof-Y. Pozen, 5766 [2006]). Includes biographies of Sephardic rabbis. **BM 750 .V376 2006**

Leo Baeck Institute Resources

Biographisches Handbuch der Rabbiner. (Muenchen: Saur, 2004-) Biographies of rabbis from Germany, Bohemia, and Poland. **REF BM 750 B 561**

Eliav, Mordecai. *Bet ha-Midrash la-rabanim be-Berlin 1873-1938: ha-reka' le-hakamato ve-talmidav bimerutsat ha-shanim*. (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute, 1996). Biographies of Rabbis from Berlin 1873-1938. **REF BM 755 H43 E43 1996**

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. *Rabbinic Alumni Directory of the Rabbinic Alumni Association of Hebrew Union College/Jewish Institute of Religion*, 1980. (Cincinnati: 1980).
BM 652 .H42

The Leo Baeck Institute possesses hundreds of memoirs and biographies of individual rabbis, and histories of the rabbinates of particular cities or regions. Consult the LBI catalog on CJH's public computers or at www.lbi.org by typing the family name or town name into the subject category, or by browsing the listings under the subject "rabbis."

YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Resources

Archives Nationales Commission Franquise des Archives Juives . *Dictionnaire biographique des rabbins et autres ministres du culte israélite: France et Algérie: du Grand Sanhédrin (1808) à la loi de Séparation (1905)*. (Paris : Berg international, c2007). In French. **REF BM750 D53 2007**

Alfasi, Yitshak. *ha-Hasidut mi-dor le-dor*. (Yerushalayim: Mekhon Da'at Yosef, 755-758 [1994 or 1995-1997 or 1998]). **BM 198 .A51 1995**

Alfasi, Yitsaḥ. *Mamlekhet ha-ḥokhmah: toldot Bet-Ropshits - Dz'ivov (624 tse'etsa'im)*. (Yerushalayim: Karmel, 1994). Includes history of Ropshits - Dzykow Hassidic dynasty in Poland.
00087812

American Jewish Yearbook 5668 (1907-1908) (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee, 1907). Contains a city-by-city Directory of National and Local Organizations in the United States, including synagogues. In NYC, some congregations are also listed by associated town as well as by the name of the congregation. **REF DS 101 .A5**

Ehrlikh, Yisrael. *Shevet mi-Yehudah: Nerot neshamah li-yeme zikaron ule-et-sefod li-shelume-emune-Yisrael mi-dor-dor*. (Tel-Aviv: Hotsa'at Morashah, 1997). The surname index refers to the book's listings of rabbis and their Yahrzeits, or death dates. **REF BM 750 .E744 1997**

Eisenstadt, Benzion. Dor rabana □ □e-sofra □. (Warsaw: Bi-defus Hal □er □e-‘Aizen sh □ad □ [1895-1903]). Biographies of rabbis in America (in Hebrew). **REF DS125.3.A2**

Feder, Y. Shim'on. Seyfer Mishpo □eš raronim in Ungarin: □api □lekh ar □i □len bashriben in "Der Id". (Bene Bera □: Seminar Be'er Ya'a □ov, 754-756 [1993 or 1994-1995 or 1996]). Includes Hungarian rabbis' genealogy. **YIVO 00087246**

Friedmann, Nathan Zebi. Otsar ha-rabanim. ([Bnei-Brak?]: Agudat Otsar Ha-rabanim, [735]). Rabbis' encyclopedia. Includes indexes. **REF 750 F75 1975**

Gotlib, Shemu'el Noah ben Duber. Sefer Ohole-shem: yekhalkel toldotehem ve-adres' othem shel rabane ir va-ir, medinah u-medinah. (Pinsk: M. M. Glauberman, 1912). A listing of scholars by city.

BM 750 .G6

Sefer □akhme Polin : otsar toldot □e-sipurim ye □arim meha-ge □onim □eha-tsadi □im she-he'iru et erets Polin. (Yerushalayim : Yiśra'el Avraham Grinboim, 769- [2008 or 2009]). Includes biographical information about rabbis in Poland. **REF BM 750 G73 2009**

Halperin, Raphael. Atlas ets-hayim. (Bene-Berak: Ruah Yaakov, 1978-1987). This incomplete set includes biographical information on rabbis. **BM 750 .H3**

Kohen-Zedek, Joseph. Sefer dor yesharim: □o □er me-geza' Lurya □e-netser me-shorshe □ribish ha-‘eshel ha-gadol Rashi . (Berdichev: ha-Me'orot, [1898]). Genealogy of the families Loria, Pollak, Helin and Katsenellenbogen, which claim descendant from Rashi and produced a large number of rabbis and rabbinical writers. **000059326 (HEB)**

Refa'el, Yitshak. Entsiklopedyah la-Hasidut. Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, 1980. **BM 198 .E5**

Olitzky, K. M., Sussman, L. J., Stern, M. H. Reform Judaism in America : a biographical dictionary and sourcebook. Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1993. **REF BM 750 R39 1993**

Schwartz, B. Sefer Artsot ha-hayim: h.h. shem ha-gedolim li-gedole Yisra'el asher higi'u el hofe erets ha-hadashah Amerikah. (Brooklyn, New York: D.B. Shvarts, 1992). **BM 750 .S367 1992**

Rand, Oscar Z. Toldot anshe shem: Toldot ha-rabanim □e-ha-admorim ha-mefursamim she-nismekhu mi-ge'one □e-tsadi□e eropah. (Nyu Yor□: Be-hotsa'at □ever ha-ma'arekhet 'al yad □evrat toldot anshe shem, 710- [1950-]). Biographies of rabbis. **REF BM750.R3**

Spira, Roman. Rabbis and Jewish Scholars in Poland in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries: Biographies. R.Spira, 1985. **YIVO 83718**

Spitzer, Shlomo J. Die Rabbiner Ungarns, 1944: die orthodoxen Gemeinden = Orthodox rabbik. (Budapest: MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport, 1999). Biographies of Hungarian rabbis.

REF BM750.H9 S65 1999

Stern, Abraham. Sefer melitse esh: kolel toldot tahalukhot ve-kurot haye gedole yisrael. (Nyu-York: Grosman, [1962]). A listing, by Yahrzeit date, of rabbis and their biographies. Check Ehrlikh first for the Yahrzeit. **BM 750 .S7**

Samuel Ephraim Tiktin Collection. Papers of a Yiddish and Hebrew writer, 1930's to 1940's, including several hundred biographies of rabbis from the United States, Palestine, Poland, Germany, England, Hungary, and other countries, compiled for the never-published Universal Rabbinical Biographical Encyclopedia. **YIVO RG 495**

Eichenbaum, Jacob. Tsiyunim metsuyanim be-vate ha-□evarot: ha-yashan □ehe-□adash asher le-'adat Yiśra'el be-'ir Odessa. (Warsaw: [s.n.], 648, 1888). Includes Odessa's rabbis' genealogy sources. **000049217 (HEB)**

□□ers□i, Yits□a□ Me□ir. Sefer Admore malkhut Bet □shernobil. (Flushing, N.Y. : Genealogy research Center of the Twersky Chernobyl Dynasty; Lakewood, N.J. : Makarov-Chernobyl Foundation, 5763 [2003]). Grand rabbis of the Chernobyl dynasty. **0000113079**

Vunder, Meir. Me'ore Galitsyah: entsikklopedyah le-hakhme Galitsiyah. (Yerushalayim: Makhon le-Hantsa□at Yahadut Galitsyah, 1978-). An encyclopedia of Galician rabbis and scholars, including genealogical tables. Table of contents in English. **BM 750 W8**

Rabbinical Manuscripts: The YIVO Library has a large collection of rabbinical manuscripts in Hebrew, some of which date back to the 16th century. These are usually responsa and religious texts rather than

genealogies, but some do contain genealogical information. See YIVO's "Rabbinics" card catalog under the author or title.

Web Resources

Rabbinic Genealogy SIG. The Rabbinic Genealogy Special Interest Group (SIG) is a forum for those interested in rabbinic genealogy or researching rabbinic ancestry within any geographic area or time period. <http://www.jewishgen.org/rabbinic/>

Jewish Religious Personnel in the Russian Empire 1853-1854. An index to Prof. Genrich Markovich Deych's book, *Sinagogi, Molitvenne Doma i Sostoyashchie pri nikh Dolzhnostne Litsa v Cherte Evreiskoi Osedlosti i Guberniyakh Kurlyandskoi i Lifyandskoi Rossiiskoi Imperii 1853-1854* [=Synagogues, Prayer Houses and their Employees in the Pale of Settlement and Kurland and Livonia provinces of the Russian Empire, 1853-1854]. <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/misc/deych.htm>

American Jewish Year Book Cumulative Index of Obituaries. A compilation of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) from volumes 51-96 which includes names of over 3,000 prominent Jews who perished between 1948 to 1998. <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/ajybweb.htm#Index>

The JewishGen Yizkor Book Necrology Database. Lists of Holocaust martyrs published in the Yizkor Books appearing on the [JewishGen Yizkor Book Translation Project](#).

<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/yizkor/>