Sephardic Family History Research Guide

Sephardim
Spanish Jews, who had lived on the Iberian Peninsula since 6 B.C.E., began to call themselves Sephardim during the early Middle Ages. After the expulsions from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), Jews fled to numerous places within Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the New World. The word Sephardim came to refer to the Jews of these countries whose origins still remained in Spain or Portugal and who spoke Ladino and other Spanish regional dialects.

Sephardic Genealogy
Since the Sephardic world is so diverse and widespread, it is difficult to make generalizations about Sephardic genealogy. The sources, methods, and results of genealogical research on a family in Amsterdam, for example, differ greatly from research on a family in Aleppo or Salonika. However, there are several common characteristics:

- Sephardic family names are much older than most Ashkenazi names. With Hebraic, Aramaic, Spanish, or Arabic roots, Sephardic surnames are often traceable to the 11th century and even earlier.
- In Sephardic naming customs, children can be named for both the living and the dead. Often, the firstborn son is named after the paternal grandfather, and the firstborn daughter is named after the paternal grandmother, so that given names may appear in every other generation.

Resources at the Center for Jewish History

General References

*Etsi*: journal of Sephardic genealogy (French/English)  Genealogy Institute CS956.J4 E87


Resources by Country

Argentina – see our separate Research Guide

Barbados
*Barbados Jewish Community Collection.* Records from Congregation Nidhe Israel and an index of names and ages from a 1715 census of Barbados. AJHS I-139

Brazil

*Samuel Oppenheim Collection.* Samuel Oppenheim’s research notes about Colonial American and Brazilian Jewry, from court records, synagogue records, and the records of the Dutch West India Company. The collection is housed in 42 boxes; the finding aid contains sections on individuals (alphabetical by surname), groups, and localities. AJHS P-255


Vol. 1 *Judizantes e Judeus no Brazil*, 1500-1808. Biographies of Jews and converts
Vol. 2 *Judeus no Brazil*, 19th century. Biographies
Vol. 3 *Testamentos e Inventarios*, 1684-1934. Wills and Inventories of estates
Vol. 4 *Processos de Naturalizacao de Israelitas*. 19th century naturalization records
Vol. 5 *Judaismo e Judeus na Bibliografia em Lingua Portuguesa*. Bibliography of Portuguese publications on Judaism
Vol. 6 *Genealogias Judaicas*. Genealogies of Brazilian Jewish families
Vol. 7 *Processos de Inquisicao de Lisboa*. Records of the Inquisition of Lisbon, including the date of the auto-da-fe, name of person, crime, and sentence. **AJHS F2659.J5 W68**


**China**


**Curacao**

*Curacao Jewish Community Collection*. In addition to congregational records, this collection includes births, 1723-1891; deaths 1883-1912; and lists of community members. **AJHS I-112**


**England**


**Germany**

*Hamburg Jewish Community Collection*: Includes copies of Sephardic gravestone inscriptions in Altona, Gluckstadt and Emden; a 1696 index of marriage contracts of the Sephardim in Hamburg; and a German translation of the minute book of the Sephardic Beth Israel congregation. **LBI Archives MF77, microfilm reels 1-2.**

*Jacob Jacobson Collection*: 18th and 19th century records from the Jewish community of Altona, including the minute book of the burial society of Sephardic Congregation Neve Shalom. **LBI Archives MF 447, microfilm reels 1-37.**

**Greece**

*Jewish Community Collection of Salonika, 1910-1939*. Includes population registration books with records of vital statistics, 1920-1939 and lists of Salonika Jews, ca 1939. **YIVO Archives RG 207**
India
ASF DS135 .I62 C344 1986

Italy
Roth, Cecil. *The History of the Jews of Italy.* (JPSFA, 1946) 
ASF DS135 .I8 R6 1946

Stille, Alexander. *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism.* (Summit, 1993) 
ASF DS135 .I9 A17 1991

Jamaica
YIVO 00090579.

Mexico – see our separate Research Guide

Netherlands
ASF BM327 .A62 A587 1991

YIVO 00090959


North Africa
Genealogy Institute CS3010 Microfiche


ASF BM750 .D53 2007 ; YIVO REF BM750 D53 2007

ASF DS135.T7 A88 2000 fb


Spain and Portugal
Abecassis, Jose Maria. *Genealogia hebraica : Portugal e Gibraltar, sés. XVII a XX.* 5 volumes of documented family trees, from the 17th to the 20th centuries. REF DS135 .P7 A37 1990


**Sudan**

*Archives of Mr. Eli S. Malka*. (Edited by Eli S. Malka and Randall C. Belinfante). *ASF Archives* DS135 .S85 A5 M35 2001


**Syria**


**Turkey**

*Archives of Morris Tarragano*. Compiled by Dr. Esther Fleischman and Randall C. Belinfante. *ASF* DS135 .T79 A5 T38 2001

**Web Sites and Online Databases**

http://sephardiclibrary.org/genealogy.html
American Sephardi Federation Genealogy Databases

http://dutchjewry.huji.ac.il/eng-default.htm
Center for Research on Dutch Jewry, Hebrew University

www.sefarad.org
European Sefardic Institute

The Historical Jewish Press website built by the Tel Aviv University jointly with the National Library of Israel for those who are researching their families in the Mediterranean countries and especially in North Africa.

http://www.sephardiegen.com/
Jeffrey Malka’s site of Sephardic genealogy. Check the links below for special interest within this Website:

http://www.sephardiegen.com/databases/BeirutCemeterySrchFrm.html (English version)
http://www.sephardiegen.com/databases/BeirutCemeterySrchFrmFR.html (French version)
Jews from Lebanon. Searchable database includes the details of 3,184 tombstones

http://www.sephardiegen.com/databases/databases.html
Sephardic Genealogy Databases. Includes many searchable Sephardic databases, such as Dictionary of Bulgarian Jewish surnames, Records of the Portuguese Inquisition Trials (1583-1656) & (1716-1717) at the CAHJP, and Algerian Cemeteries.

www.sephardiegen.com/databases/indexSrchFrm.html
SephardicGen: Consolidated Index of Sephardic Surnames
http://www.joodsmonument.nl/page/274305?lang=en
Jews from the Netherlands (Sephardim)

www.farhi.org
Les Fleures de L’Orient. Sephardi families from the Ottoman Empire and Middle-East, 200,000 individuals

www.nljewgen.org/eng/index.html
Netherlands Society for Jewish Genealogy: Sephardic burials at Jodengang cemetery in Middelburg 1656-1727

www.jewishgen.org/SefardSIG
Special Interest Group on Sephardic Jewry

www.sephardim.com/search.shtml
Sefhardic names search engine

http://iraqijews.awardspace.com/
This site is dedicated to the Jews of Iraq who left Baghdad during the 1960’s and 1970’s.

Other Records
Archivo Historico Nacional
Serrano 115, 28006 Madrid, Spain
phone (34) 91 768 85 00, fax (34) 91 563 11 99
The archives holds Inquisition records including papers of the Supreme Council of the Inquisition.

Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center-Or Yehuda
83 Mordechai Ben Porat Ave.
POB 151, Or Yehuda 602610, Israel
Tel: 972-03-539278
Fax: 972-03-533-9936
www.babylonjewry.org.il

Ben Zvi Institute
Abarbanel 12, Rechavia, Jerusalem
P.O. B. 7660
Jerusalem 91076, Israel
Tel: 972-02-5398888
Fax: 972-02-5638310
http://ybz.org.il/
Email: ybz@ybz.org.il

Oriens Judaicus Series—Sources for the History of Jews in Muslim Lands
Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People
Giv'at Ram Campus, Hebrew University, Jerusalem
P.O.B. 39077, Jerusalem 91030, Israel
Tel: 972-02-6586249
Fax: 972-02-6535426
http://sites.huji.ac.il/archives
Email: archives@vms.huji.ac.il
Partial community archives from Algeria, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, and other countries.

Damascus (Syria) Jewry Organization in Israel
Rosh Pina St. 3, Tel-Aviv, Israel 66058
Tel: 972-03-6881567
Fax: 972-03-6880027

The Jewish Community Council of Alexandria
No. 69 Nebi Daniel Street, Alexandria, Egypt
Telephone: +20 3 484-6189 or +20 3 486-3974
E-mail: JCCA president: Ben Gaon alexandriajewishcommunity@yahoo.com

Yeshiva University Library
Special Collections
500 West 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
Tel: (212) 960-5451
http://www.yu.edu/libraries/index.aspx?id=34
Email: archives@yu.edu

Jamie Lehmann Memorial Collection contains records of the Cairo Jewish community from 1886 to 1961. The Sephardic Reference Room houses an extensive collection of books, periodicals, and audio materials in Judeo-Arabic, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Hebrew, and English.