

# 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**

Faigenboim, Guilherme, Valadares, Paulo, and Campagnano, Anna. *Dicionário Sefaradi de Sobrenomes*. (Sao Paulo, Fraiha, 2003) **Genealogy Institute CS3010 .F35 2003**

Gandhi, Maneka. *The Complete Book of Muslim and Parsi Names*. New Delhi: Indus, 1994. **REF CS2970 .G36 1994**

Malka, Jeffrey S. *Sephardic Genealogy: Discovering Your Sephardic Ancestors and their World*. (Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2009) **Genealogy Institute CS66.J4 M35 2009**

Tagger, Mathilde and Kerem, Yitzchak. *Guidebook for Sephardic and Oriental Genealogical Sources in Israel*. Bergenfield, New Jersey: Avotaynu, 2006. **Genealogy Institute CS21 .T34 2006**

## 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

*Geracoës/Brasil*, the journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Brazil (1995-1998). **Genealogy Institute CS300 .G47**

*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**

Mello, Jose Antonio. *Gente da nação: Cristaos-Novos e judeus Pernambuco, 1542-1645* (Editora Massangana, 1989).  
**AJHS F2601 .M4315 1985**

Wiznitzer, Arnold. *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World* (Kahal Kodesh sur Israel of Recife and Magen Abraham of Mauricia, Brazil) (AJHS, 1954). **AJHS F2659.J5 W5**

Wolff, Egon. *Dictionario Biographico*. (Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, 1986-1992), 7 volumes.

Vol. 1 *Judizantes e Judeus no Brazil*, 1500-1808. Biographies of Jews and converts

Vol. 2 *Judeus no Brazil*, 19<sup>th</sup> century. Biographies

Vol. 3 *Testamentos e Inventarios*, 1684-1934. Wills and Inventories of estates

Vol. 4 *Processos de Naturalizacaos de Israelitas*. 19<sup>th</sup> century naturalization records

Vol. 5 *Judaismo e Judues na Bibliografia em Lingua Portuguesa*. Bibliography of Portuguese publications on Judaism

Vol. 6 *Geneologias 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-de-fe, name of person, crime, and sentence. **AJHS F2659.J5 W68**

Wolff, Egon and Frieda. *O Cristao-Novo na obra De Carlos* (Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro, 1990). A description of New Christians, converted from Judaism, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century, including biographical sketches of the first families of Rio De Janeiro. **AJHS F2646.9.J4 W65**

## **China**

Kublin, Hayman. *Studies of the Chinese Jews: Selections from Journals East and West*. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1971. **ASF DS135.C5 K83 1971**

White, William Charles. *Chinese Jews: a compilation of matters relating to the Jews of Kai-feng Fu*. (Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966) **YIVO 000023115**

## **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**

Emmanuel, Isaac Samuel. *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curacao*. (Bloch, 1957) **AJHS F 2049 .E55**

Emmanuel, Isaac Samuel. *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles (2 volumes)*. (American Jewish Archives, 1970) **REF F2049 .E44 1970**

## **England**

Barnett, Lionel, ed. *Bevis marks records: being contributions of the history of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of London* (London, 1940-49). Part II includes abstracts of ketubot (marriage contracts) from earliest times until 1837, with index. Part III includes abstracts of ketubot and civil marriage registers for 1837-1901. **AJHS BM295.C7 A3**

## **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*: 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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**

Ezra, Esmond David. *Turning Back the Pages: Chronicle of Calcutta Jewry*. (Brookside Press, 1986)  
**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**

Barnett, Richard and Wright, Philip. *The Jews of Jamaica: Tombstone Inscriptions 1663-1880* (Ben Zvi Institute, 1997).  
**YIVO 00090579.**

**Mexico – see our separate Research Guide****Netherlands**

Belinfante, Judith C., et al. *The Esnoga: A Monument to Portuguese-Jewish Culture*. (D'ARTS, 1991).  
**ASF BM327 .A62 A587 1991**

Bodian, Miriam. *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation: Conversos and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam*. (Indiana University Press, 1997). **YIVO 00090959**

Verdooner, D., and Snel, H.J.W. *Handleiding bij de index op de Ketuboth van de Portugees-Israelietische Gemeente te Amsterdam van 1650-1911*. **REF DS135 .N5 A7 1990**

**North Africa**

Abensur, Philip. *Noms des juifs du Maroc: Moroccan Jewish Surnames*. A surname index to Abraham Laredo's *Les Noms des Juifs du Maroc* (Institute Arias Montano, 1978). (Avotaynu, c1994) **Genealogy Institute CS3010 Microfiche**

Attal, Robert. *Registres Matrimoniaux de la Communauté Juive Portugaise de Tunis aux XVIIIe et XIXe Siècles* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1989). (French) **REF DS135 .T72 T863 1989**

*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). (French)  
**ASF BM750 .D53 2007 ; YIVO REF BM750 D53 2007**

Attal, Robert. *Registre Matrimonial de la Communauté juive portugaise de Tunis (1843-1854)*. (=Marriage records of the Portuguese Jewish Community of Tunis. 1843-1854). Oriens Judaicus. (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2000).  
**ASF DS135.T7 A88 2000 fb**

Toledano, Joseph. *Une histoire de familles : les noms de famille juifs d'Afrique de Nord des origines à nos jours* (Ramtol, 1998). **YIVO 00092990**

**Spain and Portugal**

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

Baron, Salo Wittmayer. *Historia e Historiografia do Povo Judeu*. (Editora Perspectiva, 1975) **ASF DS102.5 .B32 1975**

Costa, Isaac da. *Noble Families Among the Sephardic Jews* (London, 1936). **AJHS DS135.S7 C6 ; ASF DS135. S7 C6**

Gerber, Jane S. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience*. (Free Press, 1994). **ASF DS135 .S7 G47 1994**

Netanyahu, Ben Zion. *The Origins of the Inquisition in fifteenth century Spain*. (New York: Random House, 1995).  
**ASF BX1735 .N48 1995**

Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Marranos*. (Sepher-Hermon Press, 1992) **ASF BM190 .R62 1992**

### Sudan

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

Malka, Eli S. *Jacob's Children in the land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan*. (Syracuse University Press, 1997).  
**ASF REF DS135 .S85 M35 1997 ; YIVO 00090249**

### Syria

Sutton, David. *Aleppo: city of scholars*. (1<sup>st</sup> ed. Mesorah: 2005). **ASF DS135.S95 S98 2005**

### 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](http://www.sefarad.org)**

European Sefardic Institute

**<http://www.jpress.org.il/cross-section/allpub-en.asp>**

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.sephardicgen.com/>**

Jeffrey Malka's site of Sephardic genealogy. Check the links below for special interest within this Website:

**<http://www.sephardicgen.com/databases/BeirutCemeterySrchFrm.html>** (English version)

**<http://www.sephardicgen.com/databases/BeirutCemeterySrchFrmFR.html>** (French version)

Jews from Lebanon. Searchable database includes the details of 3,184 tombstones

**<http://www.sephardicgen.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.sephardicgen.com/databases/indexSrchFrm.html](http://www.sephardicgen.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**

Sephardic 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

**<http://en.www.mcu.es/archivos/MC/AHN/index.html>**

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: 972-03-5339278

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](mailto: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](mailto: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  
**<http://www.misham.org/index.php?S=english>**

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](mailto: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](mailto: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.