

Comparing Jewish Resources on Ancestry.com, FamilySearch, Findmypast, MyHeritage and JewishGen

Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County

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Each of the giant genealogy websites—Ancestry, FamilySearch, Findmypast and MyHeritage—offers unique tools and/or record collections relevant to researching Jewish ancestry. This presentation provides a comparative overview of the Jewish resources across all four of these sites and tips on when searching one of the sites over another might be advantageous, including an examination of JewishGen data found on Ancestry.

Ancestry.com

- Partnerships with JewishGen, US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, American Jewish Historical Society, Miriam Weiner Routes to Roots Foundation, Arolsen Archives, and other genealogy websites.
- USHMM's World Memory Project has indexed 1.9 million records and will always remain free to search. Volunteer to index these Holocaust records at <https://www.ushmm.org/online/world-memory-project/>.
- Ancestry digitized two of many Arolsen Archives' record sets. This German-based repository is an international documentation center on Nazi persecution and liberated survivors. Search the Arolsen Online Archive directly and free at <https://arolsen-archives.org/en/search-explore/search-online-archive/>. The only two record sets that Ancestry houses are:
 - **Europe, Registration of Foreigners and German Persecutees, 1939-1947 in German** (10M) <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/itslistsofpersecutees/>
 - **Africa, Asia and Europe, Passenger Lists of Displaced Persons, 1946-1971 in German** (1.7M) <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/itspassengersfromeuropeafricaasia/>.
- Card catalog has 383 databases with keyword *Jewish*. Searching for *Jewish* in title drops results to 104. Sample of records include:
 - **Poland, Jewish Records Indexing: Births (604k), Deaths (515k), and Marriages (272k)**
 - **East Europe, Registers and Listings from 10 Jewish Ghettos, 1939-1943** (339k)
 - **Romania, Jewish Names from the Central Zionist Archives (168k) also for Hungary (136k)**
 - **Austria, Vienna, Jewish Registers of BMD, 1784-1911** (206k)
 - **Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Jewish Refugees Evacuated from the Soviet Union, 1941-1942** (152k)
 - **Jewish Holocaust Register of Survivors Printed in Pinkas HaNitzolim I & II, 1945** (119k)
 - ***U.S., WWII Jewish Servicemen Cards, 1942-1947** (106k) – *See 2018 Ancestry blog post about this collection at <https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2018/04/19/exploring-the-u-s-wwii-jewish-servicemen-cards-1942-1947-collection/>.
 - **U.S., Industrial Removal Office Records, 1899–1922** (84k)
 - **Staten Island, New York, Hebrew Free Burial Society Records (HFBA), Silver Lake and Mount Richmond Cemeteries, 1899-1991** (46k)
 - **U.S., Boston Arrivals of Jewish Immigrants from HIAS Records, 1882-1929** (29k)
 - **AJHS Selected Insolvent Debtor's Cases, 1787–1861** (3.5k)
 - **New York, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Remittances for Polish, Russian, and Romanian Jews, 1915-1918** (2.5k)

- “Master Jewish Search” for All Collections, North America, Europe, More Countries and Holocaust at <https://www.ancestry.com/cs/jewishgen-all> is a portal to search Jewish Community Locator; Jewish Name Variations by Country; and to see list of Free Jewish Collections.
- A Jewish ethnicity option is available under “Collection Focus” when searching “Reference, Dictionaries & Almanacs.”
- Jewish Roots Message Board: <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/topics.ethnic.jewish.jewish-roots>. Other Ancestry Message Boards include Jewish & Catholic Inter marriages; Jewish Holocaust Research; Jewish Research in Europe Pre- and Post-WW2; and Jewish-American Research.
- “European Jewish” DNA ethnicity category breakdowns for “Western & Central Europe” and “Central & Eastern Europe:” <https://www.ancestry.com/dna/ethnicity/european-jewish>
- Ancestry blog post, “Is AncestryDNA for Helpful for Jewish Genealogy?” <https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2017/07/21/is-ancestrydna-helpful-for-jewish-genealogy/>
- Fold3 Holocaust Collection <https://www.fold3.com/browse/115/> contains 2.5 million NARA records including **Nuremberg Testimonials, Dachau Entry Registers, and State Department Records for Russia.**

FamilySearch.org

- Jewish Genealogy Wiki at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Jewish_Genealogy.
- Article about searching for Jewish records in FamilySearch Catalog at https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Jewish_Records_in_the_FamilySearch_Catalog.
- Catalog contains over 8100 entries with keyword *Jewish*. Over 3000 links to digital content on/off site.
- Search Catalog by location, then drill down to specific locale, to find both Jewish and non-Jewish records.
 - Example of a browsable collection of value to Jewish genealogists are **Ukraine, Moldova, Poll Tax Census (Revision Lists) and Census Lists, 1796-1917** (396k) for the province of Bessarabia, Russia; later part of Romania and then Moldova and Ukraine. These lists provide social estate, age, full name, place of birth, residence and presence of children of both genders. Text in Russian.
- Records associated with concentration camps and Nazi persecution of Jews include:
 - **War Crimes Case Files, 1945-1959**
 - **Totenbuch, Konzentrationslager Mauthausen, Jan. 7, 1939-Apr. 29, 1945 (Death Register, Concentration Camp Mathausen)**
- Published digital collections include:
 - **Virginia, Jewish Cemetery Records Index, ca 1800-1986**
 - **Austria, Vienna, Jewish Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths, 1784-1911**
 - **Germany, Brandenburg, Bernau bei Berlin, Jewish Records, 1688-1872 (browse only)**
 - **Hungary, Jewish Vital Records Index, 1800-1945**
 - **Italy, Mantova, Mantova, Jewish Records, 1770-1899**
 - **Slovakia Church and Synagogue Books, 1592-1935**
 - **Estonia Church Books and Synagogue Registers, 1835-1940 (browse-only)**
- “Todd Knowles Collection” includes 1.5 million Jewish names in six separate family trees divided into Jews of Africa and the Orient, British Isles, Europe, North America, South America and the Caribbean, and Southern Pacific. Access from Search > Genealogies. Enter a name and select Community Trees near Search button. See https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/The_Knowles_Collection and <http://knowlescollection.blogspot.com/>. A list of all sources is not currently online but can be requested from Todd at tknowleswt@familysearch.org.

Findmypast.com

- Jewish family history landing page at <https://www.findmypast.com/jewish-family-history>.
- Catalog only shows two entries with keyword Jewish:
 - **Massachusetts, Jewish Cemetery Association Interment Index, 1853-2013 (56k)**
 - **South Carolina, Charleston, Jewish Cemeteries, 1762-1903 (121)**

- **Kindertransport records** for children rescued from Nazi-occupied Europe, including Jewish children.
 - Browse-only (41 volumes from government depts) and indexed collections.
- Search by surname, country, or shtetl in **“Britain, Enemy Aliens and Internees, First and Second World Wars”** at <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/britain-enemy-aliens-and-internees-first-and-second-world-wars>. 267 results for “Russia” as keyword.
- PERSI (Periodical Source Index) includes more than 50 titles with *Jewish* in title.
- British, Irish, US Newspaper Collections don’t show any titles that include *Hebrew* or *Jewish* but may report on Jewish individuals, families, neighborhoods or organizations.

MyHeritage.com

- Partnerships with Israel Genealogy Research Association (IGRA), Israel Genealogical Society (IGS), Israeli State Archives, and Yad Vashem.
- Museum of the Jewish People/Beit Hatfutsot (Tel Aviv) gives 1-year MyHeritage subscription to kids to build family trees.
- In MH tree, you may select Holocaust as cause of death. Profile page will add a yellow star.
- Global Name Translation search tool translates names across 42 languages, including Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, Polish, Czech, German, Hebrew/Yiddish.
- Grave markers at every cemetery in Israel are now digitized, searchable and indexed on BillionGraves and MyHeritage. Search in English and get the image and gravestone inscription in multiple languages. (On IGRA’s paid database, there is an index in Hebrew and English, but no images.)
- MyHeritage DNA ethnicity analysis includes five major Jewish groups — Ashkenazi, Ethiopian, Yemenite, Sephardic from North Africa, and Mizrahi from Iran and Iraq.
- Jewish record collections:
 - **Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony** (10+ million) — NOTE: These cannot be searched but appear as record matches. *This list does not appear in the catalog at this time.*
 - **Jewish Holocaust Memorials and Jewish Residents of Germany 1939-1945** (849k)
 - **Israel Genealogy Research Association BMD** (409k)
 - **German Minority Census, 1939** (410k)
 - **The Jewish Chronicle** (214k)
 - **Mandatory Palestine Naturalization Applications, 1937-1947** (207k)
 - **Lithuanian Internal Passports, 1919-1940** (112k)
 - **List of Partisans from Belarus** (17k)
 - **Piotrków Trybunalski Poland Births** (28k), **Deaths** (10k), **Marriages** (4k)
 - **Yeshiva College Yearbooks**, various collections
 - **Avelim – Israeli Obituaries** (41k)
 - **Eretz Israel Telephone Directory, 1944** (16k)
 - **Hevron and Adivi Cemeteries, Israel** (663)

JewishGen.org

Free to search databases with a guest user ID—some advanced features limited to those who donate \$100 or more annually including access to search in multiple fields.

- 30+ million records, research tools and other resources to help those with Jewish ancestry research and find family members.
- Ancestry and JewishGen are two separate entities that entered into a partnership in 2008, resulting in an agreement that Ancestry would host JewishGen servers, and JewishGen would provide a specified number of records to be available at no cost on both sites.

- JewishGen’s strength is the ability to connect people with the JG Family Finder, discussion groups, SIGs, and social media.

Should you use Ancestry.com or JewishGen to search JewishGen collections? BOTH!

1. Copies of a portion of JewishGen data are on Ancestry and can be searched for free.
2. Some databases hosted on JewishGen are not on Ancestry.com, such as the JewishGen Gazetteer, JewishGen Family Finder, JewishGen Memorial Plaques Database, message archives, Jewish Records at the FHL and Family Tree of the Jewish People.
3. Many JewishGen databases continue to be updated on JewishGen but have not been updated regularly at Ancestry.com.
4. JewishGen offers more search options and more flexible search results for the complexities and peculiarities of Jewish names.
5. On Ancestry, you can directly attach records to a family tree. On JewishGen, although you can upload a family tree in GEDCOM format to the Family Tree of the Jewish People, you cannot attach records to it. Records found on JewishGen can only be downloaded to a hard drive or mobile device.
6. Ancestry.com has divided some JewishGen databases into smaller collections. For example, the JewishGen Holocaust database includes more than 2.75 million entries from 190+ component datasets. On Ancestry.com, these are divided into smaller collections.
7. JewishGen offers Discussion Groups at <https://groups.jewishgen.org/g/main>. Ancestry has a Jewish Roots Message Board at <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/topics.ethnic.jewish.jewish-roots> and other Ancestry Message Boards include Jewish & Catholic Intermarriages; Jewish Holocaust Research; Jewish Research in Europe Pre- and Post-WW2; and Jewish-American Research.

	JewishGen.org	Ancestry.com
JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR)	3.45 million	1,195,945
JewishGen Holocaust Database	2.75 million from 190+ lists	1.5+ million from 34 lists
Yizkor Book Necrology Database	353,000 from 422 books Will continue to be updated.	196,665
Yizkor Book Master Name Index	90,000 from 132 books Will continue to be updated.	17,306

Tips for Searching for Jewish Records on the Giants

- Use site catalogs to search for specific collections of historical records.
- Don’t limit search to only *Jewish* collections. For example, passenger manifests do not contain the word *Jewish* in the title, but people can be identified in the record as *Hebrew*. Depending on the area, Jews may be named in church records.
- Some collections, especially at FamilySearch, have not yet been indexed. Image-browse through these page-by-page. Individual record volumes or collections may have handwritten indexes or tables of contents at the beginning or end.
- Searching on major genealogy websites: add *Jewish* as a keyword to name searches for ancestors.
- Be creative with searching a variety of keywords to locate additional Jewish records such as Hebrew, Hebraic, Ashkenazi, Sephardic, synagogue, rabbi, Israel, Zionists, labor unions, Holocaust, Shoah, concentration camp, mohel, etc.