Crossing the Ocean:

Finding Your European Family

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**What do we need to prepare?**

* Where are we going?
  + *Know your ancestral town*
* Who are we looking for?
  + *Names of family members in Europe with whom we are trying to connect*
* How will we communicate?
  + *Know the language you will encounter in records. Develop finding aids.*
* Do we have someone else’s luggage?
  + *Be sure you have the correct town and family.*

**Sources for Ancestral Town**

* + Oral History
  + Immigration Records
  + Naturalization Records
  + Marriage Records
  + Draft Records
  + Landsmanshaftn burial societies
  + Yad Vashem
  + Wills

**Verifying you have correct information**

* Be a skeptic
  + Look for original handwritten records
  + Find multiple records that support the fundamental information
* Secondary Recording can result in Transcription Error
  + Hard to Read Handwriting
  + Misheard
  + Filtered through recorder’s knowledge

**Name Equivalences**

Hebrew and Yiddish used interchangeably

Jewishgen Given Names Database for reference: [jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/](https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/GivenNames/search.htm)

Dov, Berel, Berko – all mean bear

Aryeh, Leib – all mean lion

**Connecting US Records to Overseas Records**

**Search Vehicles**

* Ancestry.com
* Familysearch.org
* Jewishgen.org
* Findagrave.com
* Stevemorse.org
* JRI-Poland.org
* All Lithuania Database [litvaksig.org/all-lithuania-database/search-ald](https://www.litvaksig.org/all-lithuania-database/search-ald)
* Latvian Jewish Database [jewishgen.org/databases/Latvia/](https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Latvia/)
* Jewishgen Unified Search [jewishgen.org/databases/all/](https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/all/)

**Search Tips**

* Pay attention to search options – starts with, sounds like, is phonetically
* Consider and test alternate spellings
* Start wide (fewer search variables) and then narrow
* Add search elements with more certain spellings to narrow
* **US Records**
  + Marriage Records for parents’ names
  + Naturalization records for name used on entry into country
  + Tombstones for father’s name
  + Census records for year of immigration
  + Immigration Records for name entering country, nearest relative (after 1906)
  + Death Records for mother’s maiden name (MNHS)
* **Overseas Records**
  + Yad Vashem for parents’ names
  + Family Lists for parent’s and family names
  + Revision Lists for family names
  + Birth Records for couple names, records of immigrant
  + 1897 All Russian Census for family names

**Going Overseas to Do Direct Research**

Verify if intact cemeteries exist

Check Jewish On-line Worldwide Burial Registry

Does a Kehilalink exist?

Is there a translated Yizkor book?

Check rtrfoundation.org for location and availability of records

Create finding aids using stevemorse.org

Verify rules of the archives- hours, can you take photos, getting copies, cost