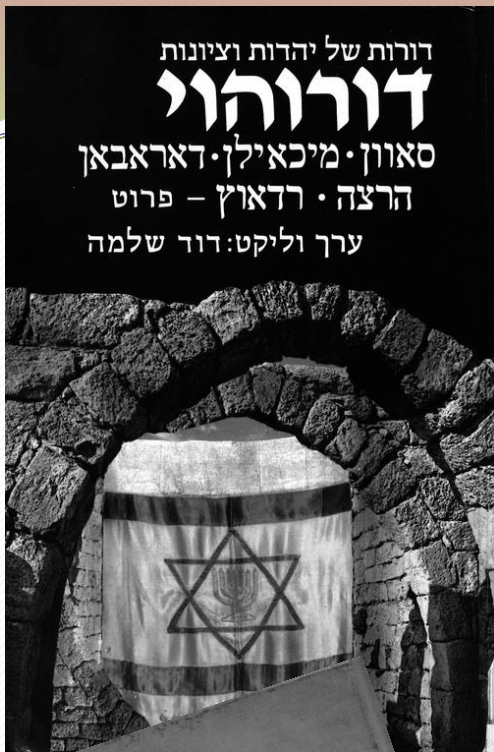


# Discovering the Treasures of the Yizkor Books: Using Yizkor Books in Genealogy Family Research

Presented by Sheli Fain and Yefim Kogan  
39<sup>th</sup> IAJGS International Conference of Jewish Genealogy,  
Cleveland, Ohio

July 30, 2019 at 4:30 – 6:00



# “Be your own historian!”

- “Be your own historian! Don’t depend on others to tell your story. Record, make notes and collect [materials]”  
Shlomo Anski, 1915
- Kiev Editorial Committee for the Collection and Research Materials appealed after the Pogroms: “Brothers! We request people to tell.. We request that everything must be told and written down!”
- “Remember the days of yore, learn the lessons of the generation that came before you”- Deuteronomy 32:7

# Who wrote the Yizkor books?

- Compiled through the **collective efforts** of former community residents.
  - Articles/chapters are authored by different townspeople and published with the help of an editor.
  - (i.e. The Killiya Yizkor Book, the Belti Yizkor book, Dorohoi, Jedwabne, Lublin)
- Authored by one **person**, usually a historian such as the **Jews of Kishinev by Itzhak Korn**, recently published by Jewish Gen and available in English.
- **Individual memoirs** such as the fine work by Haim Zaidman entitled the “Duty to Remember” about Harlau, a small town in Eastern Romania.



# Language

- Most Yizkor books were written in Hebrew or Yiddish or in Yiddish with the Hebrew translation
- Documents in Romanian, Russian, Polish, Hungarian or other languages

## Yizkor Books - Valuable sources of information about Jewish communities and its people

- The books are in general divided into four parts:
  - Town and people before the WWII – history of the locality
  - Town and people during the WWII
  - Fate of the town and its survivors after the war
  - Necrology



A family researcher may find:

- **Names of relatives**
- **Pictures**
- **Maps**
- **Descriptions of common local professions**
- **Necrology**

## Illustrations from Yizkor books

- Bivolari, Romania
- Map of Edinetz, Bessarabia
- The Great Synagogue of Cluj
- A high school promotion picture, Cluj, Romania
- A theatre group in Khotyn, Ukraine





## More than 1200 Yizkor Book titles

- Published in very small quantities and intended mainly for family and friends.
- Mostly published immediately after the war, in the '50s, the '60s, and the '70s
- Copies were sent to YAD VASHEM, YIVO, US-HMM

# A Guide to Finding Yizkor Books

- **Yizkor Book Database**

<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/database.html>

- **Libraries with Yizkor Book Holdings**

<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/database.html> Libraries with Yizkor Books

- **New York Public Library Yizkor Book Digital collection:**

[https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/yizkor-book-collection?&keywords=&sort=mainTitle ns+asc#/?tab=about&scroll=6](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/yizkor-book-collection?&keywords=&sort=mainTitle%20asc#/?tab=about&scroll=6)

- **Yizkor Book Translations in Print**

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/ybip.html>

# Yizkor Book Database

- **Database Description**
- Over 1,000 titles
- Contains the following information:
  - A description of Yizkor Books for that location.
  - Libraries with these books.
  - Links to any translations that may exist on the Yizkor Book Translation Project web site.

## How to search the database – when you know the *Town*

- <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/database.html>
- Enter **Town** in the *Yizkor Book Bibliographic Database* and choose the [type of search](#)
- 3 Search methods:
  - Town – Daitch Mokotoff Soundex system
  - Town – exact spelling
  - Global Text Search (name of author/s, editors, publishers or contact person)

# Library Holdings

- The libraries with Yizkor books are listed in:  
<https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/database.html> under  
Libraries with Yizkor Books
- It includes call numbers from a number of large university, special and public libraries in the USA, Israel, Great Britain and Canada.



# New York Public Library Collection

- The Yizkor book holdings of the Dorot Jewish Division
- Digitization by the New York Public Library in partnership with the National Yiddish Book Center (almost 700 titles)
- You can download to your computer to read.
- You can order a print from the library.

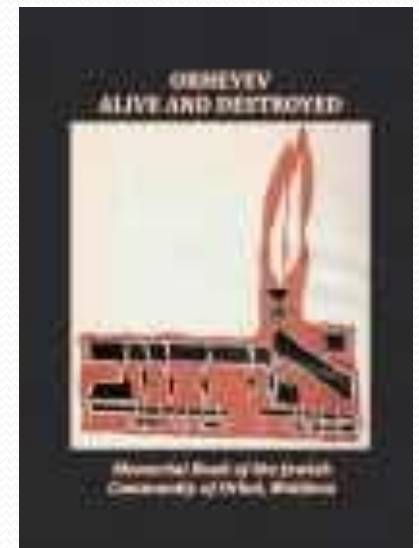
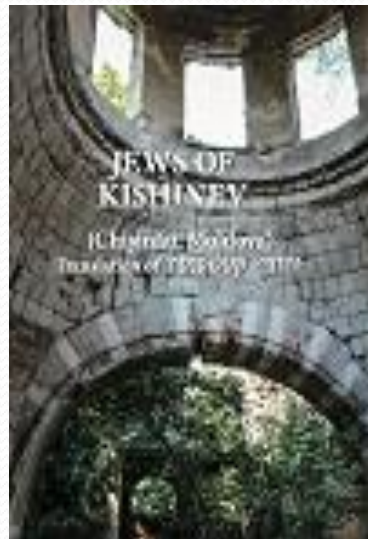
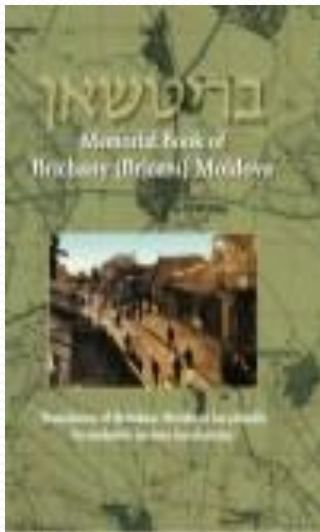
# New York Public Library Yizkor Books - Digital Collection

- [https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/yizkor-book-collection?&keywords=&sort=mainTitle\\_ns+asc#/?tab=about&scroll=6](https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/yizkor-book-collection?&keywords=&sort=mainTitle_ns+asc#/?tab=about&scroll=6)
- [Home](#)
- [About Yizkor Books](#)
- [Finding Yizkor Books](#)
- [Access](#)
- [Further Research Bibliographies](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

# Yizkor Book Translations in Print

- A complete listing of all the books in print is available at:  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/ybip.html>
- Since 1994 JewishGen volunteers and professionals have been translating Yizkor books and publishing them on the web.
- Over 75 titles have been published in hard cover and more than 6000 books sold.
- The list gives the book price and ordering information.

# Yizkor Book Translations in Print



# Yizkor Book Master Name Index (YBMNI)

- More than 90,000 entries, indexed from 132 different Yizkor Books
- <http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/yizkor/Names/>
- It directs researchers to the Yizkor book itself, where more information is available.



# A Search result from the Master Name Index – when only the *Name* is known

- **A search for: Leibenzon**
- **Lithuania (Country), Lithuania**
- Various spelling of the place name:
  - Lietuva [Lith], Литва *Litva* [Rus], Litwa [Pol], Litauen [Ger], ליטא *Lita* [Heb], ליטע *Lite* [Yid], Lithuania [Eng].  
Upon breakup of the Russian Empire, Lithuania became independent in 1918. It was annexed by the USSR in 1940, and became independent again in 1991.
- Original Title:
  - *Yahadut Lita (vol. 1)* English Title: Lithuanian Jewry Editor: N. Goren et al. Published: Tel Aviv 1959 Publisher: Am-Hasefer
- Pages: 648 Languages: H
- Translation link:
  - <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/lithuania01/lithuania01.html>
- List of Libraries - See WorldCat site: <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/668203064>
  - YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Library, New York, NY, United States,
  - Call No: +DS135 L5 Y3
- More libraries are listed

# NAME LISTS FROM YIZKOR BOOKS

- [https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source\\_view.php?SourceId=45402](https://www.ushmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=45402) (US Holocaust Memorial Museum web site link to Jewish Gen Database)
- NAME LISTS FROM YIZKOR BOOKS (ID: 45402)
  - [VIEW ALL NAMES IN THIS COLLECTION](#)
  - [SEARCH NAMES WITHIN THIS COLLECTION](#)
- It directs to the index
- The index can be printed.

# NAME LISTS FROM YIZKOR BOOKS – SAMPLE RECORD

- Borenfreund, Israel
  - **Sex:** Male
  - **Holocaust Fate:** Murdered
  - **Page Number:** 10
  - **Name Source:** Nowy Sacz Society in New York
  - **Other Notes:**
    - Book introduction and a book page containing the name are available on request.

# Who uses Yizkor books?

- Family members who want to find material about ancestors or relatives and Yefim will share his experience.
- Historians , anthropologists and other researchers and students of Jewish life in Eastern Europe.

# How to use Yizkor Books in family research?

Ideas/methods which may help you in your research



**Name:** Kogan (various spelling: Cogen) – a Kohen

**First name:** Shabsa (grandmother's father) – a Rabbi;

**Shabsa's father's name:** Yerikhim

**Place:** Kaushany, (Căușeni) Bessarabia



# Results of search

- Shabsa's children were born in Kaushany.
- In one child's birth records I found that Shabsa was a Dubossary meschanin (Middle Class).
- Searched in the Dubossary Yizkor book, (Dubossary was in the Kherson gubernia (not Bessarabia)  
<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Dubossary/dub298.html>
- Found the article "[The Great Scholar and Rabbi Yerucham son of Rabbi Shabtai Hachohen](#)"

# Results of search



- According to the article Yerikhim's father is Shabsa
- It is very likely that this Yerikhim is in fact my great greatgrandfather.
- Finally, there was a photo of Yerikhim in the Yizkor Book, and looking on photos of Yerikhim and Shabsa it is clear that they are related

## Second story – looking for family in Kaushany

- Read the chapter “Kaushany” in Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Romania, Volume II  
[https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas\\_romania/rom2\\_00394.html](https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/pinkas_romania/rom2_00394.html). No information about my family
- Consulted the Bendery Yizkor book (Bendery is 20km from Kaushany)
- <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Bender/ben145.html> and I found a line about my mother’s uncle Berl, Boris Spivak.

## Ideas for your research:

- You may find information about your relative(s) in a different Yizkor book, not necessarily for the town she or he used to live.
- You need to read the Yizkor books carefully with some criticism.
- There may be errors, because in many cases people who wrote them were not professional researchers, they wrote what they knew.
- Here is a simple mistake: from Bendery Yizkor Book:  
<https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Bender/ben181.html>
- “David Abramovich Natanzon was born in Tiraspol [Podolia] in 1877.” Tiraspol was never part of Podolia gubernia, but Kherson gubernia.

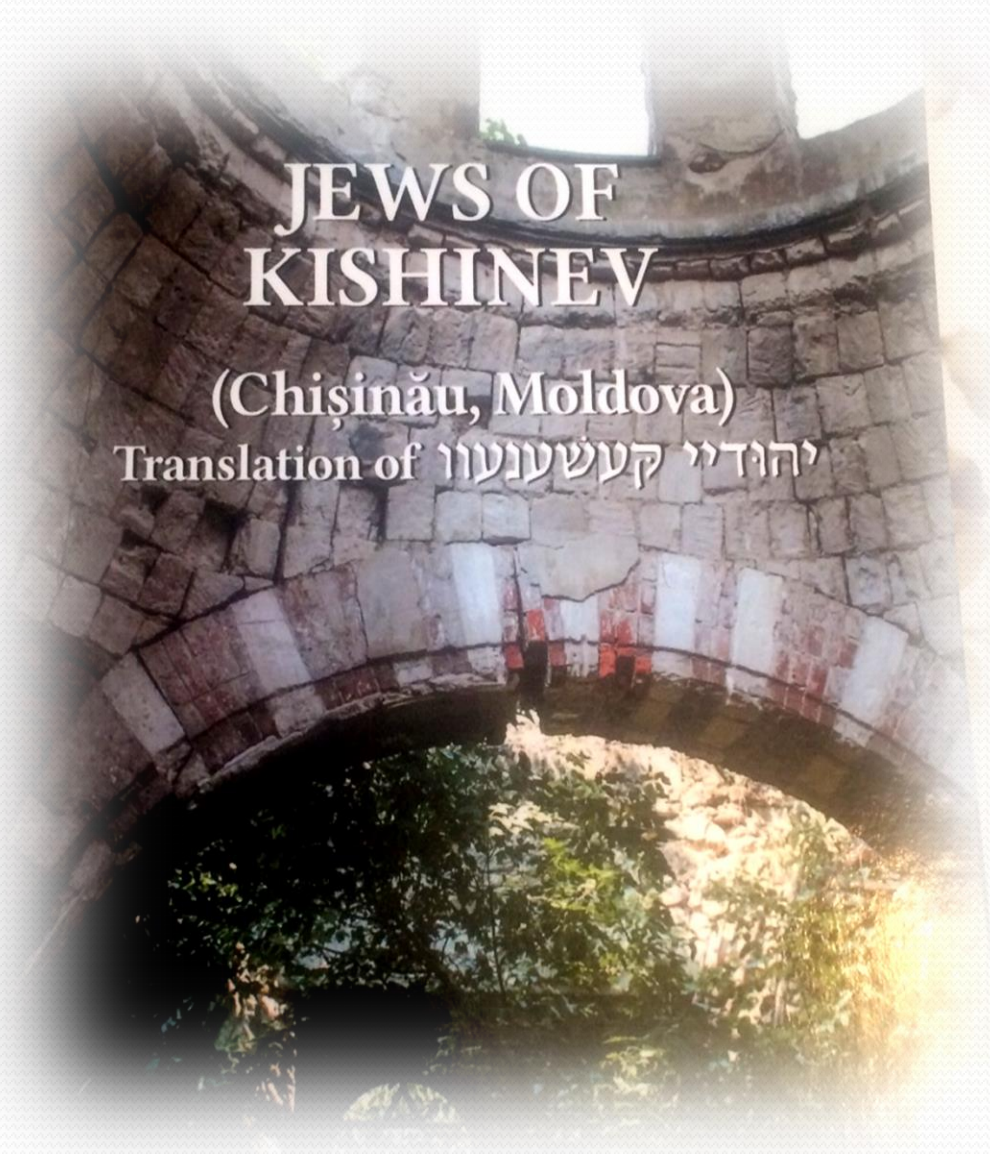
# Ala's story

- **Ala Gamulka (Tulchinskiy) – translator and educator**
- Yizkor Books sometimes produce surprises!
  - In the **Rokitno** Yizkor book I found a list of Holocaust victims and I was able to confirm the surname of my mother-in-law's sister.
  - In the **Manievitch** Yizkor Book I found, by accident, a picture of my husband's cousin who perished there. He remembered the teenaged cousin from his boyhood.



# Inspiration and continuation

- “We have the responsibility to remember: Once we remember, we need to embrace life and with the lessons learned from our collective memory, live life to the fullest.”
- *Felicia Carmelly: Across the Rivers of Memory*”



# Thank you for your participation

- I encourage all genealogists – professionals or amateurs to read as many Yizkor books as possible
- I call on all people who are here today to participate in the translation projects or support a translation publication in order to make these valuable books available for future generations!