

# Jewish**Gen**Bessarabia SIG

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# Translating Russian Documents for the non-Russian speaker

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# Russian (Cyrillic) Alphabet

A a	Бб	<b>B</b> 6	Гг	Дд	E e	Ëë	Ж ж	<i>3 3</i>
Ии	Йй	Kκ	Лл	Мм	Нн	<i>O o</i>	Пп	P p
Cc	T m	<b>y</b> y	Фф	Xx	Цц	Чч	Шш	Щщ
ъ	bl	b	Э э	Юю	Я я			

There are 20 consonants, 11 vowels and 2 nonvocalized letters. There are two other vowels that are no longer used, but were prevalent prior to 1917. We'll see them later. The first three entries on the bottom line are never capitalized.

# These sound approximately as they would in English

	A a	Еe	Кк	Мм	Oo	Тт
Name of letter	ah	yeh	kah	em	oh	teh
Sounds like	f <u>a</u> ther	p <u>e</u> n or <u>ye</u> t	<u>k</u> ey	<u>m</u> an	m <u>o</u> re	<u>t</u> able

These look like English, but don't sound like they would in English

Вв Нн Рр Сс Уу Хх

Name of letter	veh	en	er	es	00	khah*
Sounds like	<u>v</u> ery	<u>n</u> ow	<u>r</u> at	<u>s</u> and	c <u>oo</u> l	Ba <u>ch</u>

<sup>\*</sup> Russian has two different letters that could be transliterated as ch. The one that sounds like German or Hebrew (as in Baruch) is usually written as kh.

# The rest of the alphabet

	Бб	Гг	Дд	-	Ëë		жЖ	3 3
Name	beh	geh	deh		yo		zheh	zeh
Sounds like	<u>b</u> oy	girl	<u>d</u> ay		<u>yo</u> gur	t	<i>mea<u>s</u>ur</i>	e <u>z</u> oo
Ии	Йй		Пл	Π	П	Þ	ф	Цц
ee	ee kra	tkoye e	el	pel	i	ej	f	tseh
m <u>ee</u> t	sa <u>v</u>	<u>!</u>	end	<u>p</u> ar	ct	<u>f</u> a	ın	ca <u>ts</u>
Чч	Шш	Щщ	Ы		εЄ		Юю	R R
cheh	shah	shchah	yeri <sup>*</sup>	k	eh		yu	ya
<u>ch</u> ild	<u>sh</u> e	fre <u>sh</u> <u>ch</u> eese	<i>h<u>i</u>t</i>		<u>e</u> nter		<u>you</u>	<u>ya</u> rd

<sup>\*</sup>This is an older name for this letter. In modern Russian, it is named by how it sounds.

#### Non-vocalized letters and obsolete vowels

- ь (мягкий знак) soft sign follows some consonants. It is very common. For example, "дочь" (daughter) or the last name "Фельдман" (Feldman).
- ъ (твёрдый знак) hard sign prior to 1917, this sign appeared at the end of many words that ended in a consonant. It has mostly disappeared. However, it still appears in the middle of some words, such as съедать (to eat) or объект (object).

For example, the word "брат" (brother) would have been written as "брать". This should not be confused with "брать" (to take).

- I i (десятеричное i) "tenth" i. (Depending on how we count, it was the tenth letter of the alphabet.) This has been replaced by И и.
- **b b** (ят). This has been replaced by **E e**. It is rarely seen as a capital.

# Strategies for learning to pronounce words

<u>Good news</u>: <u>Unlike English</u>, Russian is mostly phonetic. Consonants are pronounced the same way almost every time.\* Vowels may change somewhat depending on whether the syllable is stressed or not.

There are many websites and YouTube videos that will help you learn the alphabet. Just Google "Russian alphabet" or "Russian cursive alphabet".

Go to Google Translate, which should be available on your computer or as an app for your phone. Type in any English word or short phrase. GT will give you a Russian equivalent. Try to pronounce it. Then have GT pronounce it for you. Don't worry too much about the vowels.

<sup>\*</sup> The main exception is the letter "r" (ge). When appearing between "eh" and "oh" or between two "oh's", it is pronounced like "veh". For example, "ero" (his) is "yevo", not "yego". This occurs mostly at the end of masculine and neuter adjectives in the genitive case.

# Russian cursive alphabet

Aa Aa	MM Mu	чч Ч 7_
Бб Бб	нн Ж н	шш М й
BB B b	00 0 0	Щщ Ш, щ
rr Tl 2	пплл	ъ 7.
$д$ д $D$ $g$ $\partial$	Pp Dp	PI Ñ
Ee E e	Cc Cc	ь (-
жж Ж	TT Mmf	Ээ Ээ
33 33x	уу У у	Юю 10 ю
ин U и	中中的的的	яя Я я
KK KK	хх Х х	I i "j i
Лл Л л	цп И ч	\$ 2

#### Notes:

- Underbar on lower case III and overbar on lower case T are not always used.
- Lower case a and o can look alike.
- Lower case φ can look like ep or cp.
- Both versions are capital  $\Gamma$  are used frequently. Also true for lower case  $\pi$  and  $\tau$ .
- "Hooks" on lower case  $\pi$  and M can be too big, which makes them look like other letters.

# A very brief look at some Russian grammar

Bad news: Unlike English, Russian nouns and adjectives are *declined* into one of six cases – nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental and locative (prepositional) – depending on its use in the sentence. For example, the nominative case is used for the subject of the sentence, the accusative case is used for direct objects. Different prepositions require different cases. There are three genders – masculine, feminine and neuter – as well as singular and plural. Each combination of case, gender and number may have a different ending.

Good news: You don't need to know the specifics. Just realize that if you see a word that has a different ending from what a dictionary or app tells you, it may be that the word is being used in non-nominative case. For example:

<u>Книга</u> лежит на столе. The book (nom.) lies on the table (loc. of стол). Я читаю <u>книгу</u>. I read (or am reading) a book (acc.)

Odds and ends: There are no articles (the, a, an) in Russian. There is no verb "to be" (is, are, am) in the present tense, but there is in the past (was, were) and future (will be) tenses. There can be intermittent use of hyphens – words may continue onto the next line without any connector.

# Family members

сын (сыновья)	son
дочь (дочери)	daughter
отец (отцы)	father
мать (матери)	mother
брат (братья)	brother
сестра (сестры)	sister
внук (внуки)	grandson
внучка (внучки)	granddaughter
муж (мужья)	husband
жена (жены)	wife

дядя (дяди)	uncle
тётя (тётки)	aunt
племянник (племянники)	nephew
племянница (племянницы)	niece
дедушка (деды)	grandfather
бабушка (бабушки)	grandmother
родственник (родственники)	relative

I've included the plural of each word since some of them are irregular.

# Other useful vocabulary

день / месяц / год (лет)	day / month / year (age)
его (pronounced "yevo")	his
ея (now spelled eë)	her
умер / смерть	died / death
родились / рождение	born (m.) / birth
брак / замужняя	marriage / married (f.)
развод / вдова по разводу	divorce / "widow by divorce"
вдова /вдовец	widow / widower
холост / девушка (девочка)	bachelor / maiden
в неизвестной отлучк	in an unknown place (MIA)
первый / второй / третий	first / second / third
еврейский	Jewish / Hebrew
ревизские сказки	revision list

These words may appear in abbreviated form, such as род. for родились.

### Numbers and Months

один	1	шестнадцать	16	Январь	January
два	2	семнадцать	17	Февраль	February
три	3	восемнадцать	18	Март	March
четыре	4	девятнадцать	19	Апрель	April
АТВП	5	двадцать	20	Май	May
шесть	6	тридцать	30	Июнь	June
семь	7	сорок	40	Июль	July
восемь	8	пятьдесять	50	Август	August
девять	9	шестьдесят	60	Сентябрь	September
десять	10	семьдесят	70	Октябрь	October
одиннадцать	11	восемьдесят	80	Ноябрь	November
двенадцать	12	девяносто	90	Декабрь	December
тринадцать	13	сто	100		
четырнадцать	14	двести	200		
пятнадцать	15	тысяча	1000		

### Social classes

There were at least three different social classes prior to the Revolution. You may encounter these terms as you translate.

Мъщанин (second letter is "yat")

Middle class, townsman, petty bourgeoisie, etc.

Купец

Merchant. (Upper class.)
Sometimes there is a guild
(гильдия) mentioned (1, 2 or 3).
You also might see a relative
(son, brother, grandson, etc.) of
a merchant.

Земледелие (Колонист)

Agricultural. Many farmers lived in colonies.

#### **Surnames**

The history of Russian surnames is complex and best left for another lecture. (Alexander Beider has several books on this.) However, you'll find that surnames in Russian often consist of a "root" and a "suffix".

Some common suffixes are:

-ман, -штейн, -берг or –барг, -бойм, -бройт, -скій, -ович, -ник, -ер

Some common roots are:

Брон-, Вайн-, Вайс-, Гольд-, Зильбер-, Клейн- or Клей-, Мил-, Ройзен- or Розен-, Ройт-, Трахтен-, Фельд-, Цукер-, Шварц-, etc.

Examples are: Бронштейн, Вайнберг, Вайсман, Милер, Шварцман, Гольдбарг, Ройзенштейн, Трахтенбройт, etc.

Some of the roots can be suffixes as in: Ройзенфельд or Вайнгольд

Of course there are many surnames that don't follow this pattern. But this can help decipher some names.

# Common given masculine names

Here are some of the most common masculine given names. Each of them may have several variants.

- Абрам, Аврам, Алтер, Айзык, Арон
- Бер, Берко, Бенямин, Беюмен, Борух
- Вол, Волько, Вольф
- Герш, Гершко, Гершон, Гдал
- Дувид, Данил
- Зелман, Зейлик, Занвел, Зис, Зус
- Ицек, Ицко, Ихил
- Іос, Іосиф, Іойна, Іойл
- Келман, Копел, Кива
- Лейб, Лейба, Лейзор, Лейзер
- Меер, Мойше, Мошко, Мордко, Мортко, Михел, Мендел
- Нахман, Нухим, Нусин, Ноех

- Овшій
- Пейсах, Пинхас, Пинкус
- Срул, Симха, Сухер, Симха
- Ушер
- Фройм, Фишел, Файвел,
   Файбыш, Файвыш
- Хайм, Хаскел, Хуна
- Шмул, Шмил, Шулим, Шая, Шліома, Шапса, Шимон
- Эль, Элья, Эхил
- Юдко, Юкел
- Янкел

"Traditional" Russian names such as Иван, Николай, Владимир, Александр, Борис, Дмитри, etc. are rarely used by Jews.

# Common given feminine names

- Алта, Анна
- Бейла, Брайна, Брана, Блюма, Бася
- Витя
- Гитля, Геня, Голда, Гудля
- Двойра, Добрыш, Двося, Дина
- Ента
- Зисля, Зися, Злата, Зельда
- Ита
- Лея, Либа, Ливша
- Марьям, Мария, Малка, Малья, Миндля, Минця

- Неха, Нехама, Неся
- Перля, Песя
- Рухля, Рывка, Рейзя, Роза
- Сура, Сима, Сойбля, Сося
- Товба
- Фрима, Фрейда, Фейга
- Хана, Хава, Хая, Хайка, Хинка
- Цырля, Цыпа, Цывья, Цызья
- Чарна
- Шейна, Шейндла, Шифра
- Эстер, Эстра, Эйдля, Этя, Этля

# Revision list (ревизская сказка) for Bessarabia region (область), Teleneshti city (город) December (Декабря) 26, 1848

РЕВИЗСКА  1842 -го Года Декабра 26 дия Бесса			newysi
Семын. МУЖЕСКІЙ НОЛЪ	По последней ревизіи состояло и после опой прибыло.	Изъ того	Нынѣ на
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ТРАНСПОРТЪ			57.
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#### Columns:

- Household (семьи) number
- Name (мужескій поль)
   (male) middle class
- Age (льта) at last revision
- "When exactly"
- Age at this revision

If there is no age at last revision, it usually means that person wasn't born yet. If there is no age at the current revision, it might mean the person died. Or they could be "missing in action" or joined the military.

#### РЕВИЗСКАЯ СКАЗКА

1848 -го Года денабря Яв дня Бессарабской Области Города М. тененен в

Семьи.	женскій полъ	Во временной отлучкъ.	Нынь в
M	M B III A II K II	Сь котораго времени.	Авта.
	ТРАНЕПОРТЪ	*	.41.
19.	Менра мортновича Вторабрачная		
	Mensa majonikobura Dorb Nesi-	<i>n</i>	6.
•	Мортко Гока мещнов ига писта		
	руженьный	••	22.
	repu Naw	7	3,
	Rypa	••	1.
			* 1

#### Columns:

- Household (семьи) number
- Name (женскій поль)
   (female) middle class
- Age at this revision (but usually not the age at previous revision or reasons for absence)

19	Меир Мортковичь ЗЕЙКАНЕР	33	46	Meir Mortkovich ZEYKANER	* родился в тысяча	
	Меира Мортковича сыновья от 1 <sup>ой</sup> жены	12	25	Meir Mortkovich's sons from first wife	восемьсот тридцать девятой году	
	Мортко Іос			Mortko Yos	ham in 1920 (after	
	Шлоймы	7	20	Shloimi	born in 1839 (after previous revision)	
	Фройм	5	18	Froim		
	Аврум	*	9	Avrum		
Меир Мортковичь вторабрачная жена Голда			45	Meir Mortkovich's second w	rife Golda	
Меир Мортковичь дочь Лея			6	Meir Mortkovich's daughter Leya		
-	ртко Іос Меировичь жена ел Лея		22	Mortko Yos Meirovich's wife Leya	e Rukhel	
Мортко Іос Меировичь дочери Хася			3	Mortko Yos Meirovich's daughters Khasya		
	Cypa		1	Sura		

Note: Surnames are always transliterated in all capital letters.

# Marriage record from Kishinev 1903

J@	Atra.		Кто сопершийъ	Число и `ифелцъ.		Глиние акти или запи-	Кто иненно съ къпъ пступаетъ		
	Myzcz.	Женск.	обрядъ обруче- иля п бракосо- четанія (хипу)	Христіян- скій.	Kapen. cxid.	ен и обликтельства между иступлющими въ брасъ и свидътели опыхъ.	въ бракъ, такжо имена и состо- япіе родителей		
297	28	•	Pablitus Pac. Con- Nenaulb.		<i>I</i>	Despoises na 48 pys. cepes.  esugnamenti:  Usinapres u:	LONDENTIR MUPARMANDE CHIÂ LUNGUJAHUMB LUNGULA DIRBO OTTHO- LURINO MUPARMONDE CHOW PABBUHA OTTA 27 TOLA 1903 a Sa 4586/ GRBUHA CYPA-DOS POLLUB, GOLS ICULU. LUNGUJ. LUNGUKO RPUHULMIJA.		

#### Columns in marriage document

**Льта:** Мужск. / Женск. Age: Man / Woman

Кто совершилъ обрядъ обрученія Who performed the rite of betrothal и бракосочетанія and marriage

Число и мьсяцъDate and monthХристіанскій / ЕврейскійChristian / Hebrew

Плавные акты или записи и Major certificates or records and обязательства между obligations between those being вступающими въ брак и joined in marriage and witnesses свидьтели опыхъ

Кто именно съ къмъ вступаетъ въ Who exactly marries whom, also бракъ также имена и состояніе the names and status of the parents родителей

Раввин Ръс. Чопленах

Rabbi Res.(?) Choplenakh

**Тюль** 25 / **Аба** 19

July 25 / Av 19

Актъ ксуба деоройсо (?) на 48 руб. сереб. Свидьтели Мойше Гиншпаргъ и Б. Енгольцъ

Marriage contract (ksube). Dowry of 48 rubles of silver.\*

Холостъ Тираспольскій мьщанинъ Шлема Элевъ Молдавскій/ по отношенію Тираспольскаго Раввина отъ 27 Іюля 1903 г. за № 586 / девица Сура-Добрышъ, дочь Киш. мъщ townsman Moshko Krinshpun Мошка Криншпуна

Witnesses are Moyshe Grinshparg and B. Yengolts

Bachelor Tiraspol townsman Shlema Elyev Moldavskiy / by order of Tiraspol Rabbi on 27 July 1903, #586 / maiden Sura-Dobrish, daughter of Kishinev

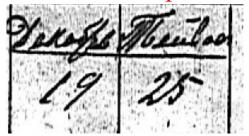
<sup>\*</sup> Dowry for a woman who had not been previously married was 48 rubles. It was only 24 rubles for a widow or divorcee. (Sort of like buying a used car.)

# Typical birth record from Bendery in 1877 (in bad handwriting)

Число и прозить розденія и образовія Кристіам Еврей-	отца ја катери.	Кто родался и на- кое ему или eli - дано имя.
Veresta Flection	luga elkoluele sa Kazusekek ra kazusekek ro a esegula or	elacers.

### Column headings on birth record

- Число и месчц рождения и образения
- Христианский / Еврейский



- Где родилисьВ Бендерах
- Состояние отца, имена отца и матери
- Кто родился и какое ему или ей дано имя

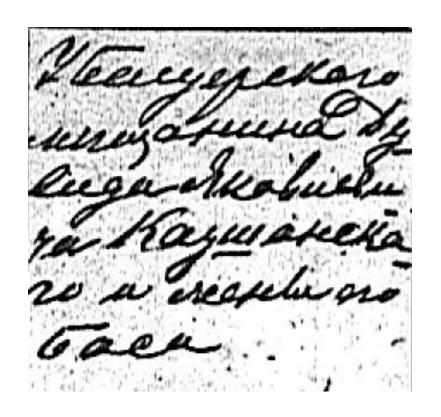


- Day and month of birth and circumcision
- Christian / Hebrew

Декабрь (December) 19, Тейвас (Tevet) 25

- Where born (written vertically in the column)
  In Bendery
- Status of father, name of father and mother
   \*shown on next slide
- Who was born and what name was given to him or her

сын(ъ) Хаим(ъ) Ицко son Khaim Itsko



У Бендерскаго мъщанина Дувида Яковіевича (?) Каушанскаго и жены Баси

To Bendery townsman (middle class) Duvid Yakov Kaushanskiy and his wife Basya

#### Notes:

- All nouns and adjectives, including names, are in the genitive case since they follow the preposition "У", which requires that case. The ending "аго" is now spelled "ого". The nominative cases of these words are Бендерскій, мьщанин, Дувид, Яковіевич, Каушанскій, жена and Бася.
- The "middle name" of the father is a patronymic, thus ending in "—вич". When translating, leave this part out.

# Family list Kishinev 1910

Кишиневской Мљщанской	Wnpo	1861 T	посемейный	списокъ сосі	тавлент вт	1910 a	году
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	,
Прозваніе (или фамилія), имя и отчество лиць мужескаго пола	Лѣта, по- казанныя	Лѣта къ 1 января того года, въ ко-	РАСТЪ Годъ, мѣсяцъ и дені рожденія по метрик	гмѣтка о прибыли и убыли пиъ мужескаго пола послѣ пата списка	Лица женскаго пола къ семействамъ надлежащія	Возрастъ къ 1 января того года, въ которомъ составленъ посемейный списокъ	От и у ска с
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							1915

	Me	en		
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Ихель Дувидова сыновья Ушеръ		31	къ 1 окт 96г. – 18г.	Ikhel's son Usher
Ойзера Дувидова сыновья Давидъ Срулъ-Іосифъ Хаим-Водьфъ Шмиль-Мееръ Даниль		22	1880г. 7 Апр. №203 ум. 12 Іюня 1885г. №240 1882г. 29 Іюня №359-360 ум. 1890г. 16 Іюня №316	David Srul-Yosif Khaim-Volf Shmil-Meer Danil

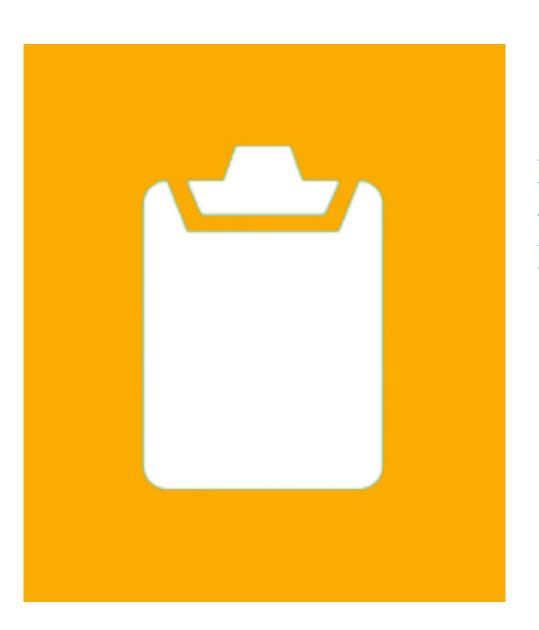
Elik in unknown place since 1854. Usher was 18 on October 1, 1896. David was born on April 7, 1880. Srul-Yosif and Khaim-Volf are twins (близнецы), born June 29, 1882. Srul-Yosif died June 12, 1885. Danil died June 16, 1890.

#### Women

Дувида жена 2 брач. Лея	90	Duvid's second wife Leya
Ихеля жена Ривка дочь: Товба	54 36	Ikhel's wife Rivka Daughter: Tovba
Ойзера жена:		Oyzer's wife: Etlya
Этля дочери:	47	Daughters:
Сура-Ривка	24	Sura-Rivka
Милька	22	Milka
Маня	19	Manya

This family list seems to be based on one taken 50 years earlier (1859 - 60). People who were in the 1859 revision are presumed to still be *alive* in 1910, unless a death has been recorded in a document. Hence, Duvid is listed as 110 years old. Similarly, some of the women, such as Tovba, are likely married. But without official documentation, they are still listed here. If they are married, they would be listed with their husband's family.

See my article about this data set on the BessarabiaSIG website.



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