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Featured Lesson: False Positive



“מהיכי תיתי” – from where do you know this? It is important to not only note the source of your information, but to also make sure that it is applicable to your research. Sometimes information that seems to match the research is in fact not related to it at all. This is called a false positive. It is an error in reporting in which a response improperly indicates the presence of

relevant data, such as a ship manifest for a specific individual, when in fact the reported data does not apply to the individual in question. Inexperienced researchers may not perform the due diligence to determine the presence of false positives, and

MIDRASHIC GENEALOGY

by Geilan Grant

“... the sons...Abraham had [he] ... sent them away ...eastward.”

- Genesis 25:6

The Radal to Genesis Rabbah 61:7 suggests that Abraham sent his other sons away to China. He cites Maseches Sofrim that claims Abraham settled the *bnei Ketura* in a big walled city. He further suggests that it refers to the Great Wall of China. This was prior to the wall built by Emperor Qin Shi Huang.

Cont. on next page

How Do You Know? Hind-“cite” is 20/20

Citing your source means to quote the authority that provided the information. Document your sources as you record your findings; don't rely on your memory. Why document and record your sources? Here are some reasons:

1. To help you find your sources if you need to look them up again.
2. To prevent you from performing redundant research in a source that was already consulted.
3. To determine if newly available records were already consulted.
4. To resolve conflicts or contradictions about the information.
5. To substantiate and support your conclusions with appropriate legitimate evidence.
6. To give your work validity and credibility. Others interested in your genealogical information can judge the accuracy of your research for themselves.
7. To avoid plagiarism.
8. To inform another researcher where to find a fact.
9. To allow others to check your facts and perhaps learn from you.
10. In the excitement of "the find," you may say to yourself, "I'll go back later and record my source." Certain sources can be difficult to find later, such as websites and online databases.

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instead record the false positive as fact. As an example, a search for the passenger arrival of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein yields a NY arrival for a Moische Feinstein, of the proper age, departing Bremen 3 November and arriving on 14 Nov 1912 (figure 1, below). Perhaps Rabbi Feinstein made a trip to America in his earlier years? Making the assumption that this refers to the Rabbi Moshe Feinstein being

researched would be incorrect. This is a false positive. How can that be determined? How can it be shown that this ship manifest is not an arrival record of the Rosh Yeshiva of MTJ. A careful examination of the manifest will reveal that it is not referring to him. It lists his last residence as Pinsk, living with his father, Abraham. As per Reb Moshe's tombstone, his father's name was Dovid and his town was Lyuban (in the Minsk Gubernia of

Belarus). He was not from Pinsk. Always be careful to thoroughly check all leads for accuracy and relevance. Further research shows the actual ship arrival (figure 2), although the surname recorded on the manifest is Fainchtein, Movcha. His last residence is Lubau and his wife and children on the manifest properly match the names of his family. This second record is a true positive.

IMMIGRATION SERVICE

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

26 S. S. *Barbarossa* sailing from *Pleasant* November 3rd 1912

No. on List	NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Calling or Occupation	Able to— Read, Write	Nationality, (Country of which citizen or subject.)	Race or People	* Last Permanent Residence		Final Destination, (Excluded before permanent residence)	
	Family Name	Given Name	Yrs. Mos.						Country	City or Town	State	City or Town
21	<i>Polonietz</i>	<i>Joseph</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>in your domain</i>							
22	<i>Feinstein</i>	<i>Moshe</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mr. J. Lambert</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Hebrew</i>	<i>Russia</i>	<i>Pinsk</i>		<i>Mr. Abraham Feinstein</i>
23	<i>Lab. H. B.</i>	<i>Moshe</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>to 1</i>							<i>Mr. Dovid</i>

Figure 1 - Line 22: Feinstein, Moische

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES

ALL ALIENS arriving at a port of continental United States from a foreign port or a port of the insular possessions of the United States, and all aliens arriving at a port of said insular possessions from a foreign port, a port of continental United States, or a port of the insular possessions of the United States.

List 12

S. S. *AQUITANIA* Passengers sailing from *CHERBOURG* 9th JANUARY, 1917

No. on List	HEAD-TAX STATUS	NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Calling or Occupation	Able to— Read, Write	Nationality, (Country of which citizen or subject.)	Race or People	Place of birth		Issued	Data concerning verifications of landings, etc.	*Last permanent residence	
		Family name	Given name	Yrs. Mos.						Country	City or town, State, Province or District	Place	Date	Country	City or town, State, Province or District
10		<i>FAINCHTEIN</i>	<i>MOVCHA</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>RABBI</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>U.S.S.R.</i>	<i>HEBREW</i>	<i>RUSSIA</i>	<i>LUBAU</i>	<i>SEC 4 (D) NOV 17</i>	<i>RIGA</i>	<i>RUSSIA</i>	<i>LUBAU</i>
11		<i>FAINCHTEIN</i>	<i>STIMA</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>WIFE</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>U.S.S.R.</i>	<i>HEBREW</i>	<i>RUSSIA</i>	<i>LUBAU</i>	<i>SEC 4 (D) NOV 16</i>	<i>RIGA</i>	<i>RUSSIA</i>	<i>LUBAU</i>

Figure 2 - Line 10: Fainchtein, Movcha

Sources for Biblical Genealogy

סדר עולם רבא - Seder Olam:

The Talmud (Yevamos 82b) quotes R' Jochanan as stating that the author of Seder Olam was R' Jose (רבי יוסי בן הלפתא). Seder Olam is about 100 pages long and describes Jewish History from Adam until the times of the Second Temple. There are three sections, 10 chapters each. Chapter 30 contains an abridged history of the 500 or so years prior to the author's time period.

The commentaries included in most printed volumes include those of:

- R' Jacob Israel Ben Tzvi Ashkenazi, known as R' Yakov Emden (1697 – 1776): יעב"ץ, יעקב עמדן
- R' Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, known as the Vilna Gaon (1720 - 1797): הגאון רבי אליהו (הגר"א), הגאון מווילנה

Seder Olam is also known as Seder Olam Rabba, to distinguish it from a work published perhaps 500 hundred or more years later, called Seder Olam Zuta (סדר עולם זוטא). That work focuses on the Babylonian exilarchs (ריש גלותא).



Seder Olam - Hamburg 1757



ציונו של רבי יוסי, יחד עם אביו Tomb of R' Yosi and his father

אחד מי יודע: Who Knows One?

In what year was the world created?

There is a debate recorded in the Talmud regarding when the world was created (see Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashana 10b - 11a). Rabbi Eliezer is of the opinion that it was created in *Tekufas* (the season of) Tishrei and Rabbi Yehoshua is of the opinion it was created in *Tekufas* (the season of) Nissan. See the commentary of Tosfos (Rosh Hashana, 8a s.v. "le'Tekufas" which states that as Adam was created on Friday, the 6th day of Creation, the world was created on Sunday, the first day of Creation. The date of that Sunday, based on the above-mentioned disagreement, was either 25 Elul or 25 Adar.

When numbering the years of the calendar, all agree that for purposes of counting years, we follow the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer and count from Tishrei (see Rosh Hashana 12a). That means that Creation began on 25 Elul and that every 1 Tishrei marks a new year in the count. The date of 25 Elul is called *Molad Tohu* (the Desolation Birth) based on the world being *Tohu v'Vohu* (desolate) at Creation. The "year" before the creation of Adam is called the Desolation Year. In what year did that 25 Elul occur in our count? Was it Year minus-1, Year 0, or Year 1? In other words, when was Adam created - in Year 0, Year 1 or Year 2?

Furthermore, the counting system in use today has undergone change in our history. Right now, in January 2016, we count the Hebrew year as 5776. But, what is it 5776 years from? Is it from the Desolation Year or the Creation of Man? There is a very lengthy discussion in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Arachin, 12a - 13a, regarding the years during which significant events occurred in our history. Included in the discussion are the correct dates for the Sabbatical Year (*Shmittah*) and the Jubilee Year (*Yovel*). The Schottenstein (ArtScroll) edition of Arachin, footnote 12 to folio 13a in Arachin (page 13a²) describes two methods that were used to count years. In the East, they counted from the Creation of Man, while in the West, they counted from the Creation of the World (the Desolation Year). This distinction leads to a further possible discrepancy of one year, when switching between these two methods.

Many historical dates referenced in current literature seem to utilize Year-0 as the Creation of Man. This means that when a reference records Adam having lived 930 years, it is from years 0000 - 0930.

Standards

Standards in Citation

The first step in starting your genealogy should be to acquire a working knowledge of source citation.

A good reference is the book entitled "Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian" by Elizabeth Shown Mills. Understanding proper citation is even more important than interviewing all known living relatives. If you do not know how to properly source your information, your interviews may not be recorded in a way that you can factually reference in the future.

The book will instruct you in:

- ❖ the sound analysis of evidence
- ❖ the correct form of citing your sources

For further guidance on proper citation, you can refer to "Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace - Third Edition", also by Elizabeth Shown Mills.



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