



Those with Ashkenazi Jewish descent will need to make some adjustments to the process.

If an Ashkenazi Jewish (AJ) DNA match is not showing as a 2nd cousin or better it is unlikely that you will find the relationship. An experienced Israeli researcher told me to ignore anyone without at least one long segment match of 23 cMs and at least 4-5 additional matching segments of at least <8 cMs.

Based on a recent study, which concluded that anything more distant than a predicted 3rd-4th cousin may be too difficult to find, we recommend that the ICW file initially eliminate any match more distant than a predicted 3rd cousin. Save your original file and if you need to go back and look at 4th cousins, you will have the information.

Please be aware that because of Ashkenazi endogamy your matches may be more distant than what is predicted. A 3rd cousin could actually be a 5th cousin.

Anyone working with Ashkenazi Jewish ICWs absolutely needs to get match lists from their closest matches. Knowing that you match A, B and C and that A, B and C all match each other does not tell you the strength of their matches to each other. You want all four of you to be 3rd cousins or closer. B and C could be 5th to remote with 22 cM shared TOTAL. Matching chromosome segments can help. You want to have A, B and C all share the SAME @15+ cM segment with you (and therefore with each other). This should be your manually executed ICW list.

We will post updates here as they are available.

8/24/2014:

History of why Ashkenazi heritage is so difficult to work with, thanks to June Byrne:

One serious problem with DNA testing of Ashkenazi Jewish heritage is that there are so many matches that you can hardly do anything with it. My husband tested Y-DNA and at 37 markers had hundreds of surnames. The problem is that Jewish surnames seldom go back prior to 1800. Prior to that they used patronymics. The Russian Empire forced everyone to take a surname in the early 1800s. The exact date depends on where they were. Many of the names are based on the town they were in. Human is a common surname which means son of Chaim. There are about 20 spellings. This means that any line with a man with a first name of Chaim in the Russian Empire in the early 1800s might have taken Hyman as a surname.

We contacted so many of these people and everyone knew less than we did so we quit. I have my husband's family back farther than anyone else I have ever found. But to do anything with it you need geographical information. But even that may not help. So many were removed and forced to live within the Pale that there is no stationary population to deal with. In the latter half of the 1800s, many moved to follow a specific rabbi, which causes more trouble. In the Russian Empire, the family was registered somewhere which might not have been where they lived. .



In the 1897 Russian Empire Census, they listed the place of registration. They also gave the surname, the patronymic, the maiden name of the wives, the age and town of birth. The censuses go back to about 1812 with less information in the earlier censuses. This sounds just wonderful until I tell you that about as much of that survived as did our 1890 census. Do not bother to contact the SLC Family History Library about it. They told me it did not exist but I have photocopies of some pages from the Kiev Archives. It has never been filmed. It is all in Russian, no matter what the country. It was supposed to have been taken in 1897 but it took several years to take the census because of the large area. But it was intended to include every person in the Russian Empire at that time which included a lot of different countries.

References

This is the last study that was done in 2012: See: <http://www.surnamedna.com/?articles=differences-in-autosomal-dna-characteristics-between-jewish-and-non-jewish-populations>

<http://www.surnamedna.com/?articles=history-adoption-and-regulation-of-jewish-surnames-in-the-russian-empire>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/finding-your-roots/blog/ashkenazi-jewish-dna-potential-piece-together-shattered-family-branches/>