

Differences between Russian and Hebrew texts in 19th century vital records in Russian Empire

The most of vital records of Jewish births, marriages and deaths issued in Russian Empire appear in two languages – Russian and Hebrew. Sometimes there are differences between Russian and Hebrew parts of the record that can be seen when one checks the both of them. As a rule, a public rabbi, appointed by the government, made the records. However, quite often, he filled in only the Hebrew part of the form and his assistant or somebody else filled in the Russian part. Sometimes it was the cause of the differences mentioned above. It is not that one part contradicts another, but one adds to another, i.e. if the researcher takes into account only one part, he is risking to miss valuable information that the other part may contain.

Mostly, Russian text lacks mention of person's belonging to Cohen or Levi tribe, which Hebrew text generally contains. Sometimes, the person's second name, place of residence, occupation or last name is omitted. Hebrew text often contains various abbreviations meaning that the person is a son of a rabbi, or is dead, etc. Moreover, as a rule, the Jewish names are distorted in Russian and sometimes, if one cannot read Hebrew, he needs to seek for help from other genealogical sources to identify them.

On the other hand, in some cases Russian text has more information than Hebrew one. The difficulty of reading Hebrew text intensifies because in many cases it contains Russian words written in Hebrew letters, such as a town, a hospital, petty bourgeois, names of diseases, etc.

Therefore, when one seeks to find in these records as more information as he can and not to miss important details, he should not ignore neither part of it. When ordering the scanned images of vital records at the archives on the territory of former Russian Empire, one should stress that he wants the two parts of the record. If asking for help with translation, it is preferable to choose experienced translator, who knows both languages. Following are some examples demonstrating the mentioned differences in 19th century Mogilev vital records. Each kind of records (births, marriages, deaths) had its own structure and was filled in officially confirmed forms. Quite often, the columns of the form in its Hebrew part have no titles but mostly they match the Russian ones. In the presented examples, we will concentrate on the columns where the differences are important. The list of frequently used Russian words written with Hebrew letters at the bottom of this article may help to understand Hebrew texts better.

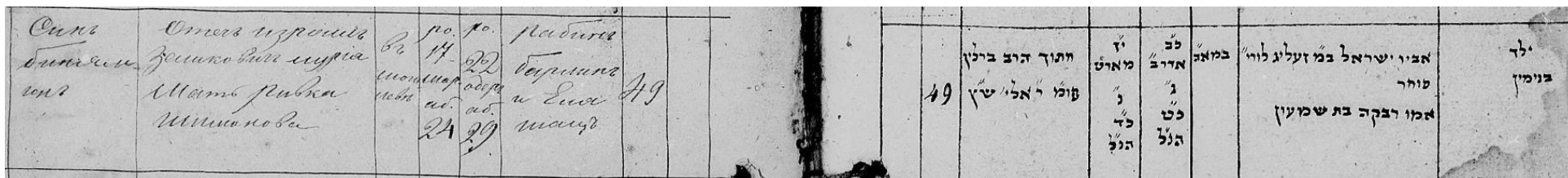
1838 Mogilev births

The form's column titles



Who was born and his name	Status and names of the father and mother	Place of birth	Day and month of birth and circumcision		Who did the ceremony of circumcision	# of record				# of record		Who did the ceremony of circumcision	Day and month of birth and circumcision		Place of birth	Status and names of the father and mother	Who was born and his name
			Chris.	Jew.		M	F			F	M		Chris.	Jew.			
						Male	Female			Female	Male						

Example 1



Status and names of the father and mother (translation from Russian text)	Status and names of the father and mother (translation from Hebrew text)
Father - Israil, a son of Zelik Luria Mother – Rivka, a daughter of Shimon	His father - Israel B”M (“Bar Minan” – deceased person), a son of Zelig Luria, a merchant His mother - Rivka, a daughter of Shim'on

Here, in Hebrew text there is a mention that the father died before the child was born. There is also information that the grandfather was a merchant.

Here in Russian text information that the father is a Cohen, and the mother is a daughter of a Cohen is missing.

1891 Mogilev marriages

The form's column titles

№	Лѣта.		Кто совершилъ обрядъ обрученія и бракосочетанія (хипу).	Число и мѣсяцъ.		Главные акты или записки и обязательства между вступающими въ бракъ и свидѣтели оныхъ.	Кто именно съ кѣмъ вступилъ въ бракъ, также именное состояніе родителей.				
	Женскаго.	Мужскаго.		Христіанскій.	Еврейскій.						

№	Age		Who conducted the marriage ceremony (Chupa)	Day and month		Main acts or notes and undertakings between the groom and bride and their witnesses	The names of the groom and bride, and their parents' names and status	№	Age		Who conducted the marriage ceremony (Chupa)	Day and month		Main acts or notes and undertakings between the groom and bride and their witnesses	The names of the groom and bride, and their parents' names and status
	F	M		Chris.	Jew.				F	M		Chris.	Jew.		

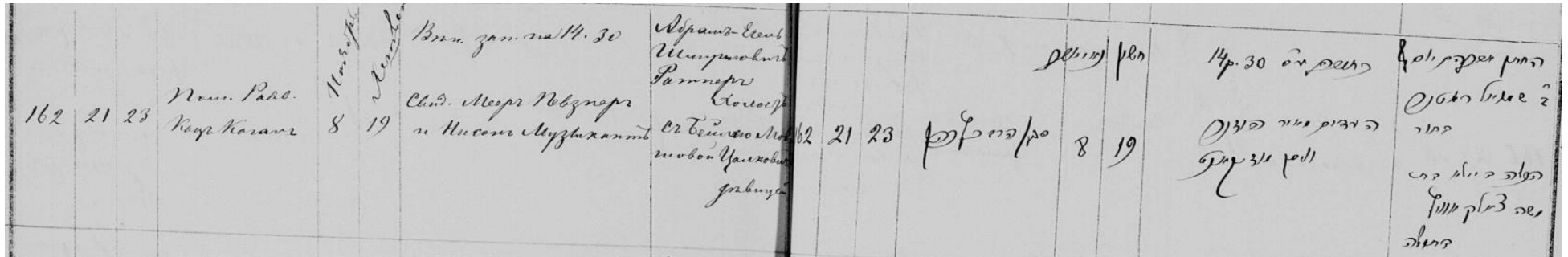
Example 5

110	25	23	Морис	"	"	Александръ Морисъ Давидъ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ Александръ Морисъ	25	23	Сид	"	"	Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид Сид	(Сид) Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ Морисъ
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The names of groom and bride, and their parents' names and status (translation from Russian text)	The names of groom and bride, and their parents' names and status (translation from Hebrew text)
The groom – Alter (Yidel) Dovid Abram , a son of Khazkel Agrest from Knyazhitzy, bachelor The bride – Eshka, a daughter of Aron Lachman, maiden	The groom – Alter (Yidel) David, a son of Yekhezkel Agrest from Knyazhitzy, bachelor The bride – Eshka, a daughter of Aharon Lachman, maiden

Here in Hebrew text the third name “Abram” of the groom is missing.

Example 6



The names of groom and bride, and their parents' names and status (translation from Russian text)	The names of groom and bride, and their parents' names and status (translation from Hebrew text)
The groom – Abram Yesel, a son of Shmuil Ratner, bachelor The bride – Beilya, a daughter of Moshe Tzalka, maiden	The groom – Avraham Yosef, a son of Shmuel Ratner, bachelor The bride – Beila, a daughter of Moshe Tzolek Avitz , maiden

Here in Russian text the last name of the bride' father –Avitz – is missing.

1891 Mogilev Deaths

The form's column titles

№		ГДѢ УМЕРЪ И ПО- ГРЕБЕНЬ.	Мѣсяцъ и число.		Лѣта.	БОЛЕЗНЬ, ИЛИ ОТ- ЧЕГО УМЕРЪ.	Кто умер
Женскаго.	Мужскаго.		Христи- анскій.	Еврей- скій.			

№		Place of death and burial	Month and day		Age	Disease or the cause of death	Who died (name of the deceased)	№		Place of death and burial	Month and day		Age	Disease or the cause of death	Who died (name of the deceased)
M	F		Christ.	Jewish				M	F						
a	e							a	e		C	J			
l	m							l	m						
e	a							e	a						
e	l							e	l						

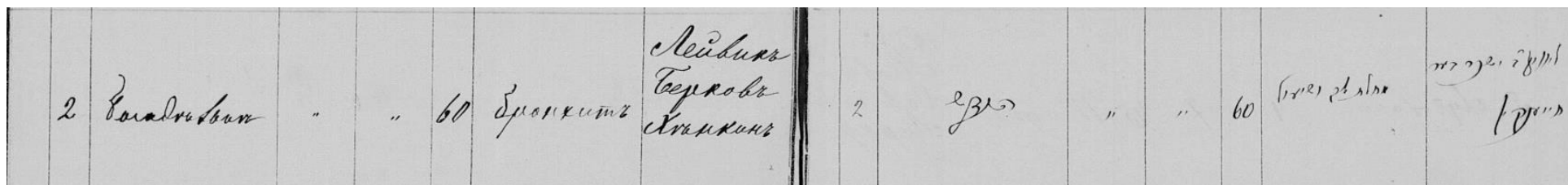
Example 7

254	Kopil, a son of Yevna Lurye	27	7	78	Болезнь	254	קופיל	27	7	78	בן יונה לורי
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Name of the deceased (translation from Russian text)	Name of the deceased (translation from Hebrew text)
Kopil, a son of Yevna Lurye, 2nd Guild Merchant of Mogilev	Kopil, a son of Yonah Lurye

Here in Russian text we find the occupation and status of the deceased, which is not mentioned in Hebrew part.

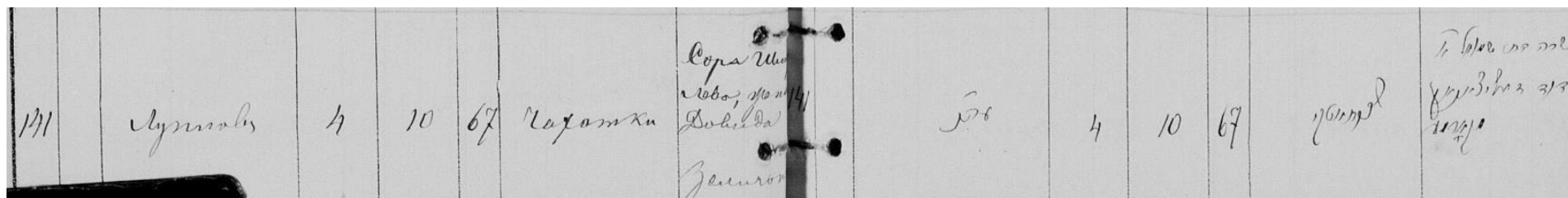
Example 8



Translation from Russian text		Translation from Hebrew text	
Disease or the cause of death	Name of the deceased	Disease or the cause of death	Name of the deceased
Bronchitis	Leivik, a son of Berka Chenkin	Heart disease and cough	Leivik, a son of Yisachar Ber Chenkin

Here we see differences in the names of the disease and absence of the deceased's father's first name Yisachar in Russian text.

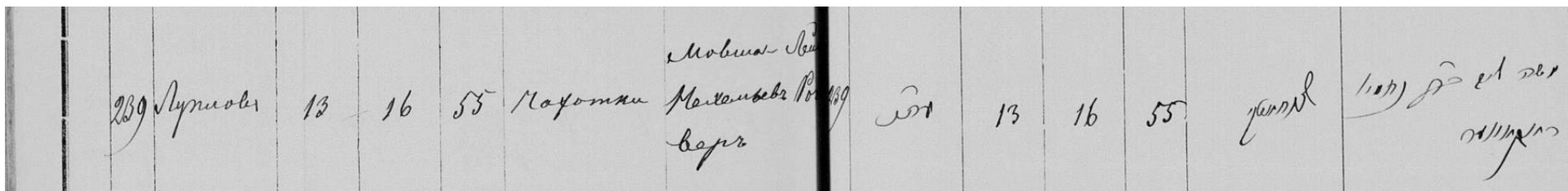
Example 9



Translation from Russian text		Translation from Hebrew text	
Place of death and burial	Name of the deceased	Place of death and burial	Name of the deceased
Luplov	Sorah, a daughter of Shmuila, the wife of Dovid Zelitchonok	Psychiatric hospital	Sarah, a daughter of Shmuel, the wife of David Zelitchonok from Korma

Here in Hebrew text we can find the place of residence (Korma) which does not present in Russian part. On the other hand, the place of death in Russian text is "Luplov", which is Mogilev's suburb, and in Hebrew text, it is "psychiatric hospital". The truth is that location of the Psychiatric hospital of Mogilev in 19th century was in Luplov (Lupolovo), so is it nowadays.

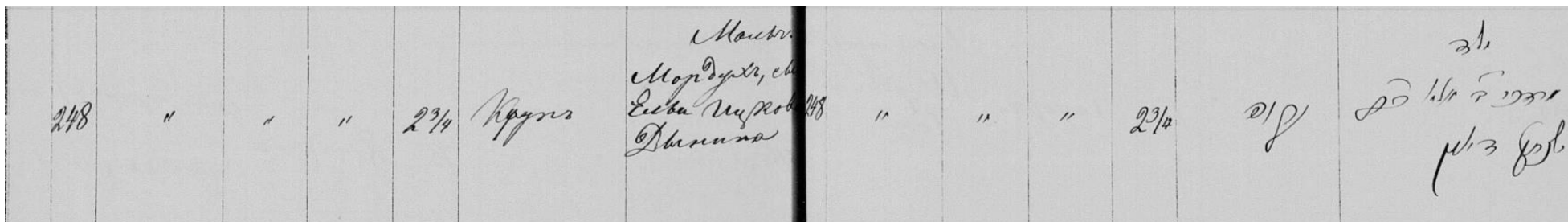
Example 10



Translation from Russian text		Translation from Hebrew text	
Place of death and burial	Name of the deceased	Place of death and burial	Name of the deceased
Luplov	Movsha Leiba, a son of Nechemia Rogover	Psychiatric hospital	Movsha Leiba, a son of rabbi Nechemia Rogover

Here we find in Hebrew text that the father of the deceased was a rabbi, and the differences in “Place of death and burial” column are explained above.

Example 11



Name of the deceased (translation from Russian text)	Name of the deceased (translation from Russian text)
Boy Mordukh, a son of Eliah, a son of Yitzka Dynin	Boy Mordechai, a son of Eliah, a son of rabbi Yitzhak Dynin

Here we find in Hebrew text that the father of the deceased was a rabbi.

A list of frequently used Russian words in Hebrew texts

exhaustion	истощение	איסטאשצעניע
charitable institution	богоугодное заведение	באג' זאוועדנ'
hospital	больница	באלניצא
town	город	הארעד
reserve soldier (private)	рядовой запаса	א"ח זאפ'
reserve soldier (lance-corporal)	ефрейтор запаса	זאפ' יעפרייטאר
petty bourgeois	мещанин	מיסצאנין
scarlet fever	скарлатина	סקארלאטין
diarrhea	понос	פאנאס
heart paralysis	паралич сердца	פאראלייץ סערדצע
heart disease	порок сердца	פאראק סערדצע
phthisis	чахотка	צחאטקי
whooping cough	коклюш	קאקליוש
cancer	рак	ראק

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