**Abstract**

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**Lecture: A Talmudic Genealogy: A Case Study for the Modern Genealogist**

The 3rd century Amora Abbaye is one of the central figures in the Babylonian Talmud for whom there is a scattering of family information either supplied by Abbaye himself, his contemporaries, and from outside sources.

An attempt to draw his family tree is challenged by various issues that confront the modern genealogist. For example, 1) the use of nicknames like Abbaye “Little Daddy’ instead of his birth name Nahmani, i.e., a papponym avoided by the family in order to honor the memory of the elder namesake. 2) The choice of a family name, i.e., Mamluai, possibly derived from a place of origin, or perhaps a pejorative or stigmatic name conferred by others recalling a genetic defect in their DNA. 3) Family tradition of their lineage from a problematic priestly line that is related to that defect.

These are all issues that face the modern genealogist researching Jewish family history. The researcher must have knowledge of Rabbinics and traditions, geography and historic migrational patterns of the Jewish people, as well as language skills. In this paper I will illustrate this method by analyzing Abbaye’s family history, which according to their understanding, extends back to the biblical period. Amazingly, there are priestly families today that claim descent.

In this paper, I will discuss these issues and how they affect one’s identity and ability to cope with inherited problems. The key to trace Abbaye’s genealogy is found in an oft-quoted pejorative Aramaic statement directed at his son Rabbi Bebai:

משום דאתיתו ממלואי, אמריתו מילי מולאי

“Because you come from Mamluai, you say words that are defective”.