Translating Russian; Tip 1 Cyrillic Alphabet – Exploring Raduraksti

This is the third post in the series, *Exploring **Raduraksti**.* Raduraksti is the website created by the Latvian State Historical Archives to provide access to their vital records holdings.[i] Learn how to access these records in **Latvian Jewish Vital Records**. Next become familiar with the format of a birth record and learn where to find names and dates in **A Jewish Birth Record from Latvia**.

This post will help you become familiar with the Russian Cyrillic alphabet; both print and script formats. The Latvian vital records are written in both Russian Cyrillic script and Hebrew Script. We will concentrate on learning the shapes of the handwritten Cyrillic alphabet.

Tip 1: Explore Russian language resources at FamilySearch.[ii]
- Watch the PowerPoint presentation: Reading Russian Handwritten Records Lesson 1: The Russian Alphabet.
- Pay careful attention to the different formations of the cursive letters as well as the archaic letters in Lesson 1. The archaic letters may be present in records you will be translating. These letters were replaced after the Russian Revolution and no longer appear in modern dictionaries.[iii]

| Archaic Letter	New Letter	Sound
Ѣ	Е, е	ye
ъ	[none]	
I, i	И, и	ee
Ѳ, ѳ	Ф, ф	f
V, v	В or И	v or ee

- The document Russian Alphabet (with English, Polish and German Equivalents) gives sound equivalents for all three languages. It includes the archaic letters.
- Explore examples of Russian cursive letters with their printed counterparts in The Russian Alphabet from FamilySearch.[iv]

To Do:
1. Print alphabet charts.
2. Study the Cyrillic print and cursive forms.
3. Make a folder or binder to hold these reference sheets for transliterations.

Practice: Head over to **Google Translate**. On the left side, choose Russian. On the right, choose your native language. Click the drop down arrow to the right of the microphone and choose 'Russian – Handwrite'. In the pop up window, you can practice writing cursive letters.

As you write, Google will attempt to guess which letters you are writing and combine them into possible words.
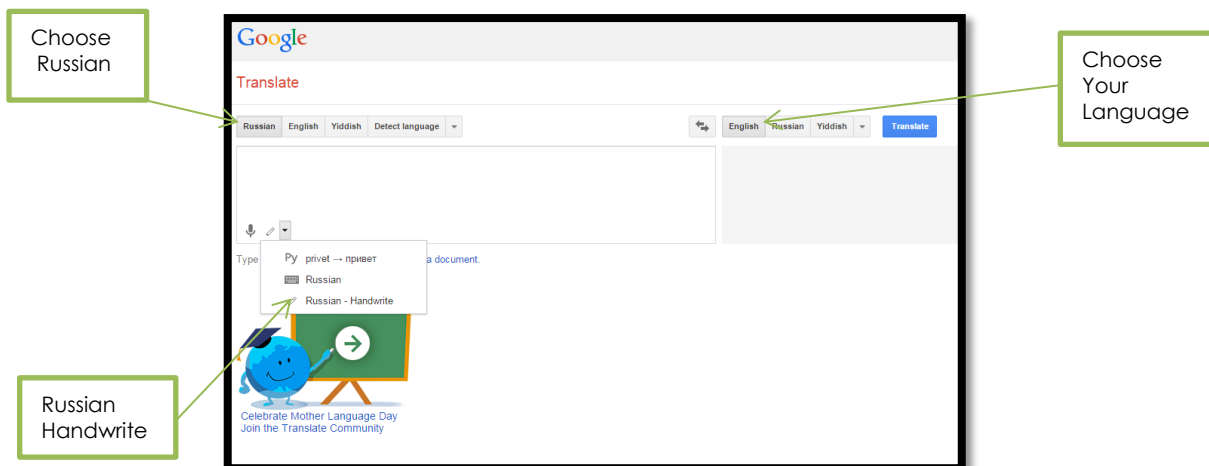
Here I have practiced writing the name Mendel in script. Below the writing area you will see Google's possible word choices in Russian Cyrillic print. Using one of the alphabet charts we have printed, it is possible to pick out the corresponding word below. The second from the left on the bottom is the name мендел in print.
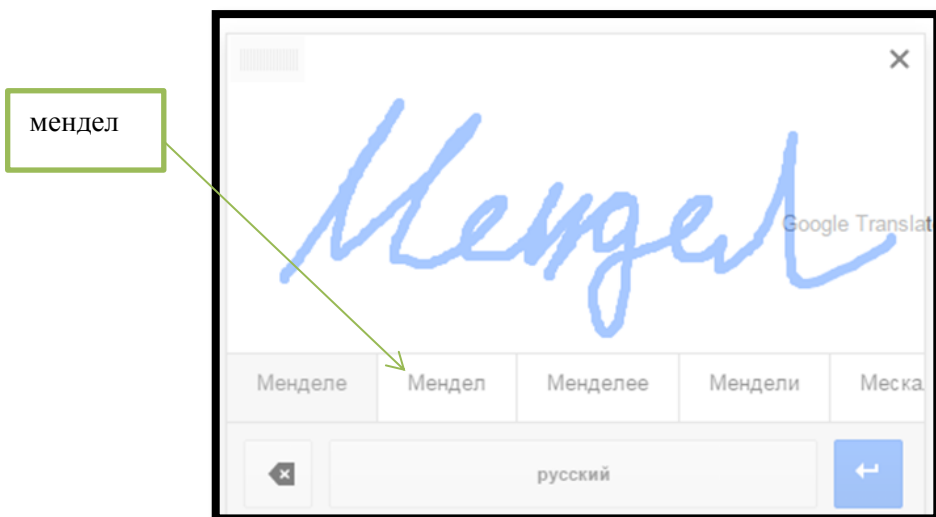
If I click on мендел, it brings up the translation, Mendel.
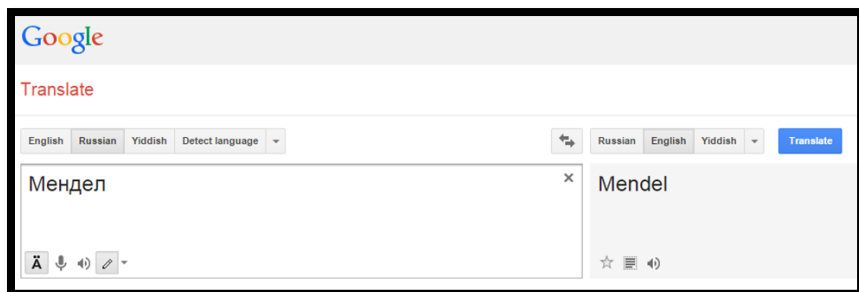
Now you can recognize Cyrillic script and find its' print pair. Put together several print letters and we have a word. When we have a print version of a word, we can move on to translating our record.

For more on Raduraksti, click here.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Jennifer

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[i] Latvian State Historical Archives, *Raduraksti* (www.lvva-raduraksti.lv/en.html : accessed 13 February 2015), Project page.

[ii] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org : accessed 19 Feb 2015); Learning Center, Russia.

[iii] Ermal Garinger Academic Resource Center, The University of Kansas, *Russia's Great War & Revolution* (http://russiasgreatwar.org/media/culture/orthography.shtml : accessed 24 Feb 2015); The Writing on the Wall: The Russian Orthographic Reform of 1917–1918.

[iv] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *FamilySearch* (www.familysearch.org : accessed 19 Feb 2015); The Russian Alphabet.