

## The Y-DNA of the Males of Our Sasson Lineage

By Avi Sion

As we have seen, our Sasson family, the descendants of Haim Sasson and Farida Sardal, is an offshoot of one R. Israel Sasson. That is, Haim was a grandson of R. Israel. Haim's father was probably called Raphael, since he called his eldest son Raphael (at any rate, we shall use this name for him as a working hypothesis). R. Israel was born in Baghdad in about 1800-1810; and he migrated to Damascus in 1838 with his family; he died and was buried there in 1874. Israel's son Raphael was either born in Baghdad a bit before the migration or in Damascus soon after it (say, 1835-1840). Raphael's son Haim was born in Damascus in 1874.

We have already demonstrated with certainty that R. Israel Sasson is the grandfather of Haim, with reference to the autobiography of Eliyahu Sasson (the Israeli politician). Eliyahu was a known first cousin of our parents – as we know from several first-hand witnesses in our family, who met him in person and interacted with him and his family as such. Therefore, Eliyahu's father David was a brother of our grandfather Haim; and Raphael was the father of David as well as Haim. Unfortunately, Eliyahu has no surviving direct male descendant; so, we cannot confirm his relation to us by a genetic test. But we do not need such testing in this context, because the eye-witness testimony is indubitable.

Our genealogical problem at this stage was to find out who the ancestors of this R. Israel Sasson were – i.e. what larger family in Baghdad (and maybe before Baghdad) he descended from. Several different and contradictory theories have been floated in this regard; and we had no reliable way to choose among them, even if some seemed superficially more credible than others. It was therefore important for us to carry out a Y-DNA test on some direct male descendant of Haim Sasson, so as to resolve the issue scientifically once and for all.

For those who have no knowledge of genetics, I should say the following, in my own words (not that my knowledge is any more than elementary)<sup>1</sup>. Every human being gets his or her genetic makeup from his or her natural parents. Each human cell contains two intertwined DNA molecules (chromosomes), one inherited from the father and one from the mother. A male's cells contain two chromosomes labeled X and Y; a female's cells contain two chromosomes labeled X and X. Thus, males and females differ in that males are XY and females are XX. The Y-DNA of a male necessarily comes from his father; while the X-DNA of a male necessarily comes from his mother; but may originate either from her father or from her mother. The two X-DNA of a female come, one from her father's mother, and the other from her mother's father or her mother's mother.

These principles generally hold, though there are very rarely some special cases. In any case, the point to note here is that Y-DNA is always passed from father to son, and never to a daughter. Furthermore, in principle the Y-DNA is passed on essentially unchanged throughout the generations down the male line (if any). In practice, there may be mutations on the way; but the Y-DNA may be considered a generally reliable guide to ancestry. Thus, if we know the Y-DNA composition of a male, we may assume that his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so

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<sup>1</sup> For more detail, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction\\_to\\_genetics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_genetics).

on, all had the same molecular composition. The composition is a very complex matter; but note one important factor, the 'haplogroup'.

In November 2019, conscious, as already explained, of the need for a genetic test to resolve the issue of our ancestry, I sponsored one of my male cousins to perform a Y-DNA-111 test with familytreedna.com. Any of the following living cousins could have taken the test: Victor/Robert the son of Raphael, or Robert son of Jacques, or Victor or Isaac or Jack the sons of Maurice. Also, of course, the sons of these could have taken the test. As it happens, I first asked Victor, the eldest son of Maurice, to do it; and he immediately agreed to. His test results are in principle good equally for all these cousins, and their fathers, and our grandfather Haim, and his father Raphael, and R. Israel Sasson, and so on.

We got the verdict a few weeks later, and it identified Victor Sasson's **haplogroup** as **T-M70**<sup>2</sup>. There were, of course, many more details, but **this fact alone was already precious, in that it allowed us to eliminate a host of speculations about our possible family connections**. Thus, for instances, it differentiated our family from the famous Sheikh Sasson ben Salah family (which is **J2**), from the R. Israel Sasson-Ajami family (which is **E-M35**), and sundry others (e.g. those found to be **J1** and **R2**). However, there is still a possibility we might be related to the family of Hakham Sasson Shindukh, and/or other families for which we have no genetic information so far.


It is important to grasp that such negative comparisons, which eliminate possible hypotheses, are scientifically as important as positive results. Also important, of course, are positive comparisons. As it happens, Victor's Y-DNA-111 yielded **one relatively close genetic match** (genetic distance 5) – with a person called David Cobbeni, descending from a certain Shayon Kabanne Sasson (mid-19<sup>th</sup> Cent.), who had the same haplogroup. We contacted David. However, it turned out that he did not have much more information on his roots than that. This meant that **we unfortunately could not identify our common ancestor with precision**, and therefore could not learn more about our own ancestor R. Israel Sasson than we already knew.

Thus, for the time being, thanks to Victor's genetic test, we have new information: (1) on which known families we do not fit in with; and (2) on one family that we may possibly fit in with according to documentation, literature and chronology, but about which no genetic information is known so far that would settle the issue. This is roughly the situation as it stands today; but of course, it may and hopefully will further evolve over time.

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<sup>2</sup> We were initially informed more vaguely that he was K-M9. But noticing that most matches were more specifically T-M70, we asked for and got a further analysis, and the certified result was indeed T-M70.



# FamilyTreeDNA Certificate – Haplogroup

Family Tree DNA certifies that a DNA sample from

**Victor Sasson**

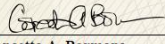
Sample # 918664

was analyzed for Haplogroup determination using the Single Nucleotide Polymorphism test. The analysis shows that you are positive for the following SNPs: **M70**. According to the current classification, you have been assigned to:

**Haplogroup T-M70**

Haplogroup T is presently found in southern Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. President Thomas Jefferson, formerly of Wales, was Haplogroup T.

March 22, 2020

  
Concetta A. Bormans



# FamilyTreeDNA Certificate – Y-DNA

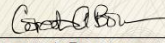
**Victor Sasson**

Your sample # **918664**

This Certificate confirms that you have had your DNA analyzed by Family Tree DNA. The outcome from each of the one hundred eleven Loci examined is reported in the table below. If your alleles for the one hundred eleven Loci match another person exactly, then you share the same Haplotype.

	DYS393	DYS390	DYS19	DYS391	DYS385	DYS426	DYS388	DYS439	DYS389-I	DYS392	DYS389-II	
Allele	13	23	15	11	15-16	11	12	11	13	13	30	
	DYS458	DYS459	DYS455	DYS454	DYS447	DYS437	DYS448	DYS449		DYS464		
Allele	16	9-9	11	13	27	13	19	32		11-13-14-16		
	DYS460	GATA-H4	YCAII	DYS456	DYS607	DYS576	DYS570	CDY	DYS442	DYS438		
Allele	11	10	23-24	14	14	14	17	35-36	11	9		
	DYS531	DYS578	DYF395S1		DYS590	DYS537	DYS641	DYS472	DYF406S1	DYS511		
Allele	11	8	16-17		8	11	10	8	12	9		
	DYS425	DYS413	DYS557	DYS594	DYS436	DYS490	DYS534	DYS450	DYS444	DYS481	DYS520	DYS446
Allele	12	20-20	21	10	12	12	13	8	11	23	19	16
	DYS617	DYS568	DYS487	DYS572	DYS640	DYS492	DYS565					
Allele	11	11	13	10	11	12	11					
	DYS710	DYS485	DYS632	DYS495	DYS540	DYS714	DYS716	DYS717				
Allele	32	15	8	17	13	25	27	19				
	DYS505	DYS556	DYS549	DYS589	DYS522	DYS494	DYS533	DYS636	DYS575	DYS638		
Allele	11	12	12	13	12	9	12	11	10	12		
	DYS462	DYS452	DYS445	Y-GATA-A10	DYS463	DYS441	Y-GGAAT-1B07	DYS525				
Allele	12	30	11		12	21	14	10				
	DYS712	DYS593	DYS650	DYS532	DYS715	DYS504	DYS513	DYS561	DYS552			
Allele	19	15	19	12	23	14	11	15	28			
	DYS726	DYS635	DYS587	DYS643	DYS497	DYS510	DYS434	DYS461	DYS435			
Allele	12	21	20	11	12	18	9	11	11			

March 22, 2020

  
Concetta A. Bormans