

Most Common Jewish First Names in Israel

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Abstract

Samples of men's and women's names drawn from English language editions of Israeli telephone directories identify the most common names in current usage. These names, categorized into Biblical, Traditional, Modern Hebrew, and Non-Hebrew groups, indicate that for both men and women over 90 percent come from Hebrew, with the Bible accounting for over 70 percent of the male names and about 40 percent of the female. Pronunciation, meaning, and Bible citation (where appropriate) are given for each name.

The State of Israel represents a tremendous opportunity for names research. Immigrants from traditions and cultures as diverse as those of Yemen, India, Russia, and the United States have added their onomastic contributions to the already existing Jewish culture.

The observer accustomed to familiar first names of American Jews is initially puzzled by the first names of Israelis. Some of them appear to be biblical, albeit strangely spelled; others appear very different. What are these names and what are their origins?

Benzion Kaganoff has given part of the answer (1-85). He describes the evolution of modern Jewish naming practices and has dealt specifically with the change of names of Israeli immigrants. Many, perhaps most, of the Jews who went to Israel changed or modified either personal or family name or both as part of the formation of a new identity. However, not all immigrants changed their names. Names such as *David*, *Michael*, or *Jacob* required no change since they were already Hebrew names. Other immigrants felt more comfortable with their Western names and kept them.

For those who did change, the change may be more apparent than real. This has to do with a *kinnui* or symbolic name and *shem hakodesh* or sacred name. Since at least the twelfth century it has been the practice of Jews to have two names. The *kinnui* name (substitute name, pseudonym) is a related name in the vernacular for the Hebrew name (Kaganoff

126). The practice arose when Jews were legally unable to use their Hebrew names. Later, kinnui names, as in the United States, were used as a matter of preference. Many Chinese and some Greeks and perhaps members of other ethnic groups as well maintain a similar practice in the United States: one name is used within the ethnic group, another for American society at large.

The way that a kinnui name worked originally was something like this. Suppose a Jewish father wanted to name his new-born son after a grandfather named *Judah*. The son would be given the Hebrew name *Judah*, which would be used in religious affairs. But he would also be given a name in the vernacular (German, French, English, etc.) of *Leo*, because when Jacob blessed his sons, he compared Judah to a lion. Since *Leo* means "lion," it becomes an acceptable kinnui (link) name for *Judah*. Similarly, *Wolf* is linked to *Issachar*. Kaganoff describes various patterns of bestowing kinnui names (24–25).

What appears to be happening in Israel now has been not only a change of name but a sort of reverse kinnui effect. Immigrants have been re-assuming, as it were, the Hebrew names that have been lying dormant.

We can speculate that perhaps no more than ten percent of Western Jewish males bear Hebrew (or religious) first names, an even lesser percentage for women. The others have kinnui (vernacular) names. At the time this investigation was initiated (1980), there was no systematic evaluation of the types of name in everyday use in Israel (whether Western or Oriental vernacular or Hebrew) nor of the frequency of use of any name. There was only a great deal of speculation on how common a name might be. It is the purpose of this investigation to determine:

1. The proportion of Hebrew first names in Israel.
2. How these names can be categorized, as Biblical, Traditional, Modern Hebrew, or Non-Hebrew.
3. The frequency of each name, i.e. how commonly does it occur?
4. What comparisons between men and women show.

Method

I wanted a national sample. Since government records were not available at the time I started this investigation, I used telephone directories as

a source. A large proportion of households in Israel have telephones. Further, in Israel the name of the spouse may be included in the listing. Using a random sampling procedure from the directories, I drew two samples of 10,000, one for men, one for women. It should be pointed out that Israelis have two sets of telephone directories available, one in Hebrew, the other in English. I used the English set for this investigation.

Results

Initially, I tabulated each name by frequency, then grouped a number of names with variant spellings, for example, *Moshe, Moise, Moises*, with *Moses*; *Yaakov, Jacques, Yanko*, with *Jacob*. I attempted to determine the origin of each name as well. For men, I found a total of 1,950 names and variations; for women, 1,275.

Since space does not allow an evaluation of all of the names, I decided to work with the top 100. Because of ties at the 100 level, this actually worked out to 104 for men and 106 for the women. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the data, showing that *Moses, Jacob, Joseph*, and *Abraham* have the highest frequencies for men while *Sarah, Miriam, Rachel*, and *Esther* are at the top for women.

Since each sample contains 10,000 individuals, adding two decimal places to the frequency gives the percentage. Thus, *Moses*, with a frequency of 546 is equal to 5.46 percent of the sample; *Jacob*, 529, is 5.29 percent.

For men, the 104 top-frequency names account for almost 84 percent of the total sample. For women, the top 100 names account for just over 80 percent. Thus, for both sexes a fairly small number of names accounts for a high percentage of the total sample. These figures are similar to those I reported in 1980 for an American college campus (70-71), where 100 names each accounted for 87 percent of the men and 78 percent of the women.

Examination of the tables shows that the percentage of the total sample (or frequency) is very great for the top ten names and the frequency level drops off very quickly.

Classification of Names

Since evaluation of the names calls for some type of classification, I determined the following simple categories, based on the sources of the names:

Table 1. Frequencies of most common Israeli male names (and variations). Names in parentheses are common English spellings.

Name	Total	Name	Total
1. Moshe (Moses)	546	53. Nahum	34
2. Yaakov (Jacob)	529	54. Yona (Jonah)	34
3. Yosef (Joseph)	509	55. Gershon/Gershom	33
4. Avraham (Abraham)	478	56. Yoram	33
5. David	404	57. Gavriel (Gabriel)	32
6. Shlomo (Solomon)	377	58. Tziyon/Zion	31
7. Yitzchak (Isaac)	344	59. Ben-Tziyon/Ben-Zion	30
8. Chaim/Haim	288	60. Max	30
9. Shmuel (Samuel)	257	61. Amos	29
10. Tzvi/Zvi	211	62. Victor	29
11. Mordechai	202	63. Menashe (Manasseh)	28
12. Yisrael	186	64. Simcha	27
13. Aharon (Aaron)	163	65. Yoel (Joel)	25
14. Yehuda (Judah)	152	66. Naftali	25
15. Meir	142	67. Yigal (Igal)	25
16. Eliyahu (Elijah)	142	68. Morris/Maurice	24
17. Shimon (Simeon)	140	69. Ovadya (Obadiah)	23
18. Michael	120	70. Shabtai (Shabbethai)	23
19. Benjamin (Benjamin)	111	71. Shimshon (Samson)	23
20. Menachem	110	72. Eitan (Ethan)	22
21. Eliezer	99	73. Shraga/Sheraga	22
22. Shalom	96	74. George	21
23. Dov	88	75. Nachman	21
24. Reuven (Reuben)	83	76. Bernard	20
25. Yehoshua (Joshua)	80	77. Avner (Abner)	19
26. Ze'ev	79	78. Tuva (Tobias)	19
27. Raphael	78	79. Amram	18
28. Alexander	76	80. Ilan	18
29. Natan (Nathan)	75	81. Chanan/Hanan	17
30. Yechezkel (Ezekiel)	75	82. Oded	17
31. Nissim	73	83. Avigdor	16
32. Baruch	73	84. Boris	16
33. Eli	72	85. Paul	16
34. Shaul (Saul)	62	86. Yerachmiel (Jerahmeel)	16
35. Efrayim (Ephraim)	61	87. Betzalel (Bezalel)	15
36. Ezra	60	88. Hanoch (Enoch)	15
37. Leo	59	89. Herman	15
38. Mark	58	90. Kurt	15
39. Asher	52	91. Peretz (Perez)	15
40. Daniel	51	92. Zcharya (Zachariah)	15
41. Uri	51	93. Azriel	14
42. Pinchas (Phineas)	46	94. Gad	14
43. Rachamim	42	95. Kalman	14
44. Harry/Henry	41	96. Naim	13
45. Amnon	38	97. Noah	13
46. Yeshayahu (Isaiah)	38	98. Walter	13
47. Dan	37	99. Elimelech	12
48. Yehiel (Jehiel)	37	100. Giyora (Giora)	12
49. Albert	36	101. Nechemya (Nehemiah)	12
50. Emanuel (Immanuel)	36	102. Nissan	12
51. Yair	36	103. Uzi (Uzzi)	12
52. Gideon	34	104. Tzadok (Zadok)	12
		Total	8,392

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Table 2. Frequencies of most common Israeli female names (and variations). Names in parentheses are common English spellings.

Name	Total	Name	Total
1. Sarah	471	55. Victoria	39
2. Miryam (Miriam)	470	56. Bertha	38
3. Rachel	449	57. Carmela	38
4. Esther	417	58. Simcha	38
5. Chana (Hannah)	411	59. Yocheved (Jochebed)	38
6. Shoshana (Susanna)	290	60. Tzviya/Zviya	37
7. Rivka (Rebecca)	261	61. Gila/Gilah	35
8. Leah	253	62. Hadassa	34
9. Yehudit (Judith)	208	63. Adina/Adena	31
10. Rut (Ruth)	170	64. Ida	30
11. Haya	163	65. Nira	29
12. Aliza	139	66. Sylvia	29
13. Chava (Eve)	129	67. Tikva	29
14. Malka	128	68. Batsheva (Bathsheba)	28
15. Devora (Deborah)	119	69. Edith	28
16. Ilana	117	70. Ganya	28
17. Tzipora/Zipporah	113	71. Geula	28
18. Shulamit	111	72. Chanya	28
19. Tova	110	73. Dorit	27
20. Rina	106	74. Ada	26
21. Yafa	104	75. Bilha	26
23. Batya	97	76. Michal	26
23. Zehava	92	77. Nili	26
24. Pnina (Penninah)	92	78. Ronit	26
25. Helene (Helen)	89	79. Brurya	25
26. Dalya	88	80. Tziyona/Ziona	25
27. Belah	86	81. Ziva	22
28. Naomi	85	82. Irit	21
29. Rosa	83	83. Mathilda	21
30. Elisheva (Elizabeth)	78	84. Adela	20
31. Frieda	77	85. Ayala	20
32. Tamar (Tamara)	76	86. Nitza	20
33. Aviva	72	87. Olga	20
34. Sonia/Sophie	72	88. Drora	19
35. Clara	68	89. Haviva	19
36. Dina	65	90. Marcelle	19
37. Bracha	62	91. Nava	19
38. Fanny	58	92. Amalya	18
39. Margalit	56	93. Shifra	18
40. Nehama	56	94. Bina	17
41. Tzila (Zillah)	56	95. Liebe	17
42. Ahuva	55	96. Rita	17
43. Edna	55	97. Lydia	16
44. Mazal	54	98. Ofra	16
45. Ora	52	99. Paula	16
46. Yael (Jael)	52	100. Bluma	14
47. Lily	51	101. Dafna	14
48. Yona (Jonah)	50	102. Levana (Lebana)	14
49. Nurit	46	103. Martha	14
50. Sima	45	104. Meira	14
51. Mina	44	105. Pessia	14
52. Varda	43	106. Yardena	14
53. Dora	42		
54. Regina	40		
		Total	8,121

- A. Hebrew: The Bible (including the Apocrypha)
 - 1. Well-known personalities
 - 2. Less-known personalities
- B. Hebrew: Non-Bible
 - 1. Traditional (including those of Aramaic origin)
 - 2. Modern
- C. Non-Hebrew
 - 1. Historically used
 - 2. European languages (especially Russian, German, Yiddish, and English)

Table 3 consolidates these data.

Table 3. Number of different names in major categories.

	Hebrew: Bible			Hebrew: Non-Bible			Non-Hebrew			Tot
	Well-	Less-	SubT	Trad	Mod	SubT	Hist	Eur	SubT	
Men	50	23	73	15	1	16	2	14	16	*105
Women	29	11	40	16	25	41	-	25	25	106

*Shabtai (Sabbethai) was counted twice, one under *Bible: Less-known* and also under *Traditional*.

A. Hebrew: Bible and Apocrypha Sources

Examination of the tables shows the whole procession of Jewish history reflected in the choice of names.² For men, the Bible was the source of 73 of the 104 names; for women, 40. In both groups the actual frequency of individuals bearing these names is much greater so that the percentage of the total sample is very high. The classification of well-known/less-known is admittedly subjective and inclusion of a name in one category or the other might vary between individuals or between Americans and Israelis. *Nechemya* (Nehemiah), for example, is well known among Israelis but not so well known among Americans.

In the following presentation, the entries have several parts:

- 1. Usual spelling in English by Israelis.
- 2. Familiar spelling in English for non-Israelis, in brackets, as

Aharon (Aaron). Where the only difference in spelling of a name is the addition of a final *h* as in *Bilha* versus *Bilhah*, or *ph* instead of *f* as in *Shifra* vs. *Shiphra*, only one spelling appears. In the descriptions within each entry, however, the more common English forms are used.

3. Approximate pronunciation in Hebrew,³ in square brackets. Note that *ch* is pronounced as in Scottish *loch* or German *ach*.
4. Meaning, e.g., for *Abraham* 'father of a multitude.'
5. Information on the person involved, e.g., Abraham was the 1st Patriarch.
6. Bible citations where applicable (includes the Apocrypha).
7. The symbol # indicates that there is more than one person with that name. The individual selected is the one deemed most appropriate for onomastic purposes. There are at least 30 Zecharias and 10 Yehiels in the Bible! (Odelain & Séguineau 395; 190).
8. The letter *M* or *W* followed by a number indicates where in Table 1 or Table 2 further information on frequency may be found. For example, *Aharon* (Aaron), M13, ranks thirteenth in frequency in Table 1.
9. The abbreviation *Theo* after a name indicates that it is a theophoric name, i.e., one which invokes the name of God. Those names beginning with *El* as in *Eliezer* or *Ye* as in *Yehoshua* and those ending in *el* as in *Shmuel* or *ya* as in *Batya* are clearly theophoric. For some names, however, such as *Hanan* 'gift' or *Tzila* 'shadow,' the "of God" has to be inferred, as has been shown in brackets with those names. This interpretation is somewhat subjective and may be interpreted differently by various Bible authorities. These inferred theophoric names are noted with *Theo-I* at the end of the entry.

1. Well-Known Bible Personalities

For men in this classification there are 50 names.

Early Figures

Chanoch/Hanoch (Enoch) [chah-NOCH] (to educate, to train).
Grandson of Adam and Eve. Gen. 5.18#. M88.

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Noah [NOH-ahch] (rest, peace). Main figure in the flood story. Gen. 5.29#. M97.

The Patriarchs (These four names account for over 15 percent of all the names in the male sample.)

Avraham (Abraham) [ahv-rah-HAHM] (father of a multitude). 1st Patriarch. Gen. 17.5. M4.

Yitzchak (Isaac) [yitz-CHAHK] (he will laugh, laughter). 2nd Patriarch; son of Abraham. Gen. 21.3. M7. Theo.

Yaakov (Jacob) [yah-ah-KOHV] (supplanter, heel). 3rd Patriarch; son of Isaac. Gen. 25.26. M2.

Yisrael (Israel) [yees-rah-EHL] (wrestled with God). Jacob's name after struggle with God. Gen. 35.10. M12. Theo.

Jacob's Sons

Reuven (Reuben) [reh-oo-VEHN] (behold a son). 1st son of Jacob and Leah. Gen. 29.32. M24.

Shimon (Simon) [sheem-OHN] ([God] heard). 2nd son of Jacob and Leah. Gen. 29.33#. M17. Theo-I.

Yehuda (Judah) [yeh-hoo-DAH] (praise [to the Lord]). 4th son of Jacob and Leah. Gen. 29.35#. M14. Theo-I.

Dan [DAH] ([God] has judged me). 5th son of Jacob, 1st by Bilha, Rachel's maid. Gen. 30.6. M47. Theo-I.

Naftali [nahf-tah-LEE] (I have prevailed [over my sister]). 6th son, 2nd by Bilha. Gen. 30.8. M66.

Gad [GAHD] (fortunate one). 7th son, 1st by Zilpah, Leah's maid. Gen. 30.11#. M94.

Asher [ah-SHEHR] (happy). 8th son, 2nd by Zilpah. Gen. 30.13. M39.

Yosef (Joseph) [yoh-SEHF] (God will add). 11th son, 1st by Rachel; chief steward to Pharaoh. Gen. 30.24#. M3. Theo.

Binyamin (Benjamin) [been-yah-MEEN] (son of my right hand). 12th son, 2nd of Rachel. Gen. 35.18#. M19.

The names of the other sons, *Levi*, *Issachar*, and *Zebulon*, appear but not among the first 104.

Associated with the Patriarchs

Eliezer [eh-lee-EH-zehr] (God is help). Abraham's loyal servant. Gen. 15.2#. M21. Theo.

Yosef's (Joseph's) Sons

Menashe (Manasseh) [meh-nah-SHEH] (cause to forget). Elder son. Gen. 41.51#. M63.

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Efrayim (Ephraim) [ehf-RAH-yeem] (fruitful). 2nd son. Gen. 41.52. M35.

Moses and Those Associated with Him

Moshe (Moses) [moh-SHEH] (from Egyptian “son” or Hebrew “drawn out of the water”). Leader, prophet, and lawgiver. Exod. 2.10. M1.

Amram [ahm-RAHM] (my father/uncle is great; or my nation is great). Father of Moses. Exod. 6.18#. M79.

Aharon (Aaron) [ah-hah-ROHN] (teaching, shining, singing). Older brother of Moses and Miriam; high priest. Exod. 6.20. M13.

Gershon/Gershom [gehr-SHOHN, gehr-SHOHM] (stranger). Son of Moses and Tzipora. Exod. 2.22#. M55.

Pinchas (Phineas) [peen-CHAWS] (the Nubian [dark-complected]). Grandson of Aaron; high priest. Exod. 6.25#. M42.

Betzalel (Bezalel) [beh-tzahl-EHL] (in the shadow [protection] of the Lord). Famous craftsman. Exod. 31.2#. M87. Theo.

Yehoshua (Joshua) [yeh-hoh-SHOO-ah] (God is my salvation). Moses' commander and successor. Exod. 17.9#. M25. Theo.

The Judges

Gidon (Gideon) [geed-OHN] (to cast down). Patriot; destroyed altar of Baal. Judg. 6.11. M52.

Shimshon (Samson) [sheem-SHOHN] (little sun). Folklike hero. Judg. 13.24. M71.

The Priest

Eli [eh-LEE] ([God] is exalted). A high priest. 1 Sam. 1.12. M33. Theo.

The Kings

Shaul (Saul) [shah-OOL] (asked, requested [of God]). 1st king. 1 Sam. 9.2. M34. Theo-I.

David [dah-VEED] (beloved). 2nd king. 1 Sam. 16.19. M5.

Shlomo (Solomon) [shloh-MOH] (peace). 3rd king, son of David and Bathsheba. 2 Sam. 12.24. M6.

Saul's Commander and David's Son

Avner (Abner) [ahv-NEHR] (father of light; or father's light). Commander of Saul's army. 1 Sam. 14.50. M77.

Amnon [ahm-NOHN] (faithful). 1st son of David. 2 Sam. 3.2#. M45.

The Major Prophets

Shmuel (Samuel) [shmoo-EHL] (his name is God; or God has heard). 1 Sam. 1.20. M9. Theo.

Natan (Nathan) [nah-TAHN] ([God] has given). 2 Sam. 7.2#. M29. Theo-I.

Eliyahu (Elijah) [eh-lee-YAH-hoo] (the Lord is my God). Prophet at time of King Ahab. 1 Kings 17.1. M16. Theo.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) [yeh-shah-ah-YAH-hoo] (God is salvation). Isa. 37. M46. Theo.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) [yeh-chehz-KEHL] (may God strengthen). Ezek. 1.3. M30. Theo.

The Minor Prophets

Yoel (Joel) [yoh-EHL] (the Lord is God). 2nd minor prophet. Joel 1.1#. M65. Theo.

Amos [ah-MOHS] (burdened). 3rd minor prophet. Amos 1.1. M61.

Ovadya (Obadiah) [oh-vahd-YAH] (servant of God). 4th minor prophet. Obad. 1.1#. M69. Theo.

Yona (Jonah) [yoh-NAH] (dove). 5th minor prophet; hero of the whale story. Jon. 1.1#. M54.

Nachum (Nahum) [nah-CHOOM] (comfort). 7th minor prophet. Nah. 1.1. M53.

Zcharya (Zechariah) [zchahr-YAH] (God has remembered). 11th minor prophet. Zech. 1.1#. M92. Theo.

The Angels

Gavriel (Gabriel) [gahv-ree-EHL] (man of God). One of 2 archangels. Dan. 8.16. M57. Theo.

Michael [mee-chah-EHL] (who is like God?). Dan. 12.1#. M18. Theo.

Raphael [reh-fah-EHL] (God heals). Tob. 4.17. M27. Theo.

Other Bible Figures

Daniel [dah-nee-EHL] (God is my judge). Dan. 1.6#. M40. Theo.

Mordechai (Mordecai) [mohr-deh-CHAY] (of Babylonian and Persian origin; Marduk was a Babylonian god). cousin and fosterfather of Esther. Esth. 2.5#. M11.

Ezra [ehz-RAH] (help). Priest and scribe. Ezra 7.1#. M36.

For women there are 40 names drawn from the Bible, of which 29 are well-known figures:

The First Woman

Chava/Hava (Eve) [cha-VAH] (life). Wife of Adam. Gen. 3.20. W13.

Wives of the Patriarchs

Sara [sah-RAH] (princess). Wife of Abraham; mother of Isaac. Gen. 17.15#. W1.

Rivka (Rebecca/Rebekah) [reev-KAH] (noose). Wife of Isaac; mother of Jacob and Esau. Gen. 24.15. W7.

Leah [leh-AH] (possibly meaning “weary”). 1st wife of Jacob; older sister of Rachel. Gen. 29.16. W8.

Rachel [rah-CHEHL] (ewe, lamb). 2nd wife of Jacob; mother of Yosef and Benjamin. Gen. 29.16. W3.

Associated with the Patriarchs

Bilha [beel-HAH] (possibly meaning “confused” or “lacking in understanding”). Rachel’s maid; concubine of Jacob; mother of Dan and Naphtali. Gen. 29.29. W75.

Dina [DEE-nah] ([God has] judged/vindicated). Only daughter of Jacob (and Leah). Gen. 30.21. W36. Theo-I.

Moses’ Family Members

Yocheved (Jochebed) [yoh-CHEH-vehd] (meaning uncertain. Neither Sarna [10:130] nor Stamm [12:805] see it as a divine name, nor do they give it a meaning; Odelain & Séguineau [212] give the meaning “Yah is glory” with a question mark; Gottlieb [143], Kolatch [446–447], and Sidi [166] do accept that meaning). Mother of Moses. Exod. 6.20. W59.

Tzipora (Zipporah) [tzee-POH-rah] (bird). Wife of Moses. Exod. 2.21. W17.

Miryam (Miriam) [meer-YAHM] (possibly meaning “sea of bitterness”). Sister of Moses and Aaron. Exod. 15.20#. W2.

Elisheva/Elisheba (Elizabeth, Betty) [eh-lee-SHEH-vah] (God is my oath. Betty is probably from the English form). Wife of Aaron. Exod. 6.23. W30. Theo.

Belah [beh-LAH] (Gottlieb [132] traces it to a Yiddish form to Batsheva; Kolatch [290], also to a Yiddish form of Isabella and then to Elizabeth—he also suggests a Hungarian root meaning “nobly bright”—and to Latin “beautiful one”; Sidi, to the Latin only. Possibly, the name is related to all 4 sources). W27. Theo.

Shifra [sheef-RAH] (pleasing). One of the heroic midwives who defied Pharaoh’s decree. Exod. 1.15. W93.

Other Bible Women

- Devora* (Deborah) [dvoH-RAH] (bee). Prophetess and judge; with Barak defeated Sisera. Judg. 4.4#. W15.
- Yael* (Jael) [ya-el] (possibly from Ugaritic “wild goat”). Killed Sisera. Judg. 4.17. W46.
- Pnina* (Penninah) [pnee-NAH] (pearl). 1st wife of Elkanah (Samuel’s father). 1 Sam. 1.2. W24.
- Pessia/Pessye* [PESS-yeh] (according to Gottlieb [139], a Yiddish form of Pnina ‘pearl.’ See above). W105.
- Chana* (Hannah) [chah-NAH] (grace [of God]). 2nd wife of Elkanah; mother of Samuel. 1 Sam. 1.2. W5. Theo-I.
- Chenya/Chenia/Henia/Henya* [chen-YAH] (grace of God). Wife of Elkanah; mother of Chana above. W72. Theo.
- Michal* [mee-CHAL] (who is like God?). Daughter of Saul; wife of David. 1 Sam. 14.49. W76. Theo.
- Bathsheva* (Bathsheba) [baht-SHEH-vah] (daughter of an oath [to God]). Wife of David; mother of Solomon. 2 Sam. 11.3. W68. Theo-I.
- Tamar* [tah-MAHR] (palm tree, graceful). Daughter of David. 2 Sam. 13.1#. W32.
- Rut* (Ruth) [root] (companion). Moabite widow who went with mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem. Ruth 1.14. W10.
- Naomi* [nah-oh-MEE] (pleasant). Israelite widow who returned from Moab with Ruth. Ruth 1.2. W28.
- Esther* [ehs-TEHR] (from Persian “star”). Heroine. Esth. 2.7. W4.
- Hadassa* [had-DAH-sah] (myrtle). Esther’s Hebrew name. Esth. 2.7. W62.
- Shoshana* (Susanna) [shoh-sha-NAH] (lily). Heroine. Sus. 2. W6.
- Yehudit* (Judith) [yeh-hoo-DEET] (praise [to the Lord?]). Heroine who killed Holofernes. Jth. 8.1#. W9.
- Yona* (Jonah) [yoh-NAH] (dove). 5th minor prophet; hero of the whale story. Jon. 1.1#. Name is currently used by both sexes. W48.

2. Less-Known Bible Personalities

While the names just discussed are relatively well-known and also have meaning (e.g., *Abraham* ‘father of a multitude,’ *Daniel* ‘God is my judge,’ *David* ‘beloved’), the primary association that most people would have is with the Bible figure who bore that name rather than the intrinsic meaning of the name. This second group includes figures who are less well-known. Perhaps the popularity of these names is due to the meaning, the sound, or what the individual symbolizes. There are 23 names:

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- Avigdor* [ah-veeg-DOHR] (my father is my protector). He appears in 1 Chron. 4.4 as father of Gedor. The Hebrew for “father of” is *Avi*. The name *Avigdor* is also associated with Moses. M83.
- Azriel* [ahz-ree-EHL] (God is my help). Manassite. 1 Chron. 5.24#. M93. Theo.
- Baruch* [bah-ROOCH] (blessed [by God]). Friend and secretary of the prophet Jeremiah. Jer. 32.12#. M32. Theo-I.
- Ben-Tziyon/Ben-Tzion* [BEHN-tzee-YOHN] (son of Tzion). See Tzion below. M59.
- Elimelech* [eh-lee-MEH-lech] (my God is king). Naomi’s husband. Ruth 1.2. M99. Theo.
- Eitan* (Ethan) [ehy-TAHN] (strong, firm). Grandson of Judah. 1 Chron. 2.6#. M72.
- Chanan/Hanan* [chah-NAHN] ([God is] gracious). One of David’s mighty men. 1 Chron. 11.43#. M81. Theo-I.
- Yigal* (Igal) [yeeg-AHL] (God will redeem). One of Moses’ 12 scouts. Num. 13.7#. M67. Theo.
- Emanuel* (Immanuel) [ee-mah-noo-EHL] (God is with us). Not a specific person but a reference to a person to be born. Isa. 7.14. M50. Theo.
- Yair* (Jair) [yah-EER] (God enlightens). One of the minor judges. Judg. 10.3#. M51. Theo.
- Yehiel* (Jehiel) [yeh-chee-EHL] (may God live). One of David’s musicians. M48. Theo.
- Yerachmiel* (Jerahmeel) [yeh-rahch-mee-EHL] (God will have mercy). Son of King Yehoyakim (Jehoiakim). Jer. 36.26#. M86. Theo.
- Yoram* (Joram) [YOH-rahm] (short form of Yehoram [Jehoram] ‘God is exalted’). King of Judah. 2 Kings 8.21#. M56. Theo.
- Menachem* (Menahem) [meh-na-CHEHM] (comforter). A cruel king. 2 Kings 15.14. M20.
- Nechemya* (Nehemiah) [neh-chechm-YAH] (God comforts). He rebuilt walls of Jerusalem. Neh. 1.1#. M101. Theo.
- Oded* [oh-DEHD] (restorer). Prophet who obtained release of prisoners. 2 Chron. 28.9#. M82.
- Peretz* (Perez) [PEH-rehtz] (burst forth). Son of Judah and Tamar (not the same Tamar as the daughter of David). Gen. 38.29#. M91.
- Shabtai* (Shabbethai) [shahb-TAHY] (sabbath). Levite leader. Neh. 11.16#. M70.
- Tuvya* (Tobijah) [toov-YAH] (God is good). One of the returning Babylonian exiles. Zech. 6.10#. M78. Theo.
- Uri* [OO-ree] (my light). Leader of the tribe of Judah, father of Betzalel. Exod. 31.2#. Also a short form of Uriah. If so, it would be a theophoric name. M41.
- Uzi* (Uzzi) [OO-zee] (my strength). Priest, descendant of Aaron. 1

- Uzi* (Uzzi) [OO-zee] (my strength). Priest, descendant of Aaron. 1 Chron. 6.6#. M103.
- Tzadok* (Zadok) [tzah-DOHK] (just, righteous). Priest at time of David. 2 Sam. 8.17#. M104.
- Tziyon/Zion* [zee-YOHN] (meaning not clear, but does refer to a hill of Jerusalem; also the people of Israel). 2 Sam. 5.7; Amos 1.2. M58.

As with men some of the names of women drawn from the Bible represent less-known figures. Here, the meaning of the name may have been an important factor in its selection:

- Ada* [ah-DAH] (ornament). Wife of Lamech. Gen. 4.19#. W74.
- Adina/Adena* [ah-DEE-nah] (noble, delicate). There is a male name Adina in the Bible (1 Chron. 11.42) which is spelled slightly differently in the Hebrew. It is assumed that this form is derived from it. W63.
- Batya/Bitya* (Bithia) [BAHT-yah] (daughter of God). Daughter of Pharaoh; according to legend she found Moses and cared for him devotedly. While strictly speaking the name Bithia is not in the Bible, it has been associated with Pharaoh's daughter. Exod. 2.6. W22. Theo.
- Edna* [ehd-NAH] (enjoyment, delicacy, delight). Tob. 7.2. There is also a separate English root. W43.
- Yardena* (Jordana) [yahr-DEH-nah] (feminine form of *Yarden*, referring to the river; can also mean "descendant"). W106.
- Levana* (Lebana) [leh-vah-NAH] (moon, white). Returning exile from Babylon. Neh. 7.48. Originally a male name. W102.
- Nili* [NEE-lee]. An unusual name; an acrostic standing for the Hebrew *netzach yisroel lo yishaker* 'The Glory of Israel will not lie' from 1 Sam. 15.29. This was the name of the Jewish intelligence organization in Palestine during WWI which aided the British against the Turks. W77.
- Shulamit/Shulamith* [shoo-lah-MEET] (peaceful). Refers to Abishag, nurse-companion of King David. Song 6.23 (7.1 in Masoretic text). W18.
- Tikva* [teek-VAH] (hope). Father-in-law of Hulda, the prophetess. 2 Kings 22.14#. Originally a male name. W67.
- Tzila* (Zilla) [tzee-LAH] (shadow, shade [of God]). Wife of Lamech; mother of Tubal-Cain. Gen. 4.19. W41. Theo-I.
- Tziyona/Ziona* [tzee-YOH-nah] Feminine form of Tzion. See above under male names. W80.

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From consideration of names in the Bible we can shift to the names whose origin is Hebrew, but not directly from the Bible.

1. Traditional Names

This first category includes those names have been used historically. Many can be traced back some time. Some names refer to desirable attributes such as:

Meir [meh-EER] (light). M15.

Naim [nah-EEM] (pleasant). M96.

Shalom [shah-LOHM] (peace). M22.

Shraga/Sheraga [SHRAH-gah] (light). M73.

Simcha [seem-CHAH] (joy). *Simcha* is a somewhat confusing name. It can be either male or female. For Sephardim (Jews originating in Spain, North Africa, Turkey, and the Middle East), it is mostly female; for Ashkenazim (Jews from Europe), it is mostly male. My figures are based upon the best estimate of the data involved. M64.

The following are animal names but they can also be interpreted as kinnui names, i.e., they are generally understood to be traceable to the metaphors used by Jacob in his blessing of his sons:

Dov [DOHV] (bear). Kinnui for Issachar. M23.

Ze'ev [zeh-EHV] (wolf). Kinnui for Benjamin. M26.

Tzvi/Zvi [TZVEE] (deer, gazelle). Kinnui for Naphtali. M10.

Some Hebrew names refer to season or time of the year:

Nachman [nahch-MAHN] (comforter). Given to a son born at time of the 9th of Av, anniversary of the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem. M75.

Nissan [nee-SAHN] (beginning, start; also the month in spring when Passover occurs). Given to a son born at this time. Variant of *Nissim* 'miracles.' M102.

Nissim [nee-SEEM] (miracles). Given a son born on Purim or Chanukah. M31.

Rachamim [rah-chah-MEEM] (mercy, compassion [of God]). given a son born at the time of Yom Kippur. M43. Theo-I.

Shabtai [shahb-TAHY] (sabbath). Given a son born on the sabbath; also listed under *Less-Known Bible Personalities* above. M70.

Chaim/Haim [CHAH-yeem] (life). Sometimes given as a new name to one who is ill in the hope he will recover. M8.

Chaim/Haim [CHAH-yeem] (life). Sometimes given as a new name to one who is ill in the hope he will recover. M8.

One name not neatly categorized is:

Giora [Giyora] [gee-YOH-rah] (convert). Leader of the revolt against Rome. M100.

For women, there are 16 traditional names. They show:

Pleasant Qualities

Amalya (Amalia) [ah-MAHL-yah] (work of God). W92. Theo.

Bina [bee-NAH] (intelligence). W94.

Bracha [bra-CHAH] (blessed [by God?]). Also feminine of Baruch, male name above. W37.

Haviva [cha-VEE-vah] (beloved). W89.

Nechama [neh-CHAH-mah] (comfort). W40.

Mazal [mah-ZAHL] (star, destiny, luck). W44.

Simcha [seem-CHAH] (joy). Also used as a male name. See note under Simcha above. W58.

Ganya [GAHN-yah] (garden of God). W70. Theo.

Others

Haya [CHAH yah] (life). Feminine of *Haim*. See above. W11.

Malka [mahl-KAH] (queen). Often given to a girl born at Purim in recognition of Queen Esther. W14.

Margalit [mahr-gah-LEET] (pearl). From Greek *margaron*. W39.

Martha [mahr-TAH] (lady, mistress of the house). From Aramaic. W103.

Meira [meh-EE-rah] Feminine form of *Meir* (light). W104.

Tzviya/Zviya [tzvee-YAH] (deer, gazelle). May also be feminine kin-nui for *Naphtali*. W60.

Aramaic names (There are two names from Aramaic times. Usage for centuries has confirmed them as acceptable Jewish religious names.)

Brurya [broor-YAH] (pure, clean). 2nd century Talmudic scholar, wife of Rabbi Meir. W79.

Sima [SEE-mah] (treasure). W50.

2. Modern Names

While the names discussed above have been taken from the Bible or traditional sources, modern names are used in Israel. Some were ac-

Diaspora names modified into Hebrew

These names provide examples where individuals were trying to demonstrate their new identities by shedding their Diaspora, often Yiddish, names. In my sample this process is shown only with women's names.

Ahuva [ah-HOO-vah] (beloved; from Yiddish *Lieba* 'love'). W42.

Aliza [ah-LEE-zah] (joy; from Yiddish *Frieda*). W12

Gila [gee-LAH] (joy; from Yiddish *Frieda*). W61

Rina [ree-NAH] (joy; from Yiddish *Frieda*). W20

Tova [toh-VAH] (goody; from Yiddish *Gittel*). W19.

Yafa [yah-FAH] (beautiful; from Yiddish *Shayna*). W21.

Zehava [zeh-HAH-vah] (goldie; from Yiddish *Golde*). W23.

Newly-created Hebrew names

Since the formation of the State of Israel a number of new Hebrew names have been created. In these two samples of the top 100 names of each sex, there is only one newly-created male name. The others are for women. The man's name is:

Ilan [ee-LAHN] (tree). M80.

There are several categories of women's names.

Pleasant Qualities

Aviva [ah-VEE-vah] (spring, youthfulness). W33.

Nava [nah-VAH] (beautiful, pleasant). W91.

Ora [oh-RAH] (light). W45.

Ronit [roh-NEET] (song). W78. Ron and Roni can also be male names but were not found within the 1st 104 male names.

Ziva [ZEE-vah] (radiant). W81.

Ideals

Dorit [doh-REET] (of this era). W73.

Drora [DROHR-rah] (freedom). W88.

Geula [geh-OO-lah] (redemption). W71.

Flower or Horticultural Names

Carmela [cahr-MEH-lah] (feminine form of Carmel). W57.

Dalya/Dalia [DAHL-yah] (a flowering branch, but not a dahlia, which is

Flower or Horticultural Names

- Carmela* [cahr-MEH-lah] (feminine form of Carmel). W57.
Dalya/Dalia [DAHL-yah] (a flowering branch, but not a dahlia, which is named for Swedish botanist Anders Dahl). W25.
Ilana [ee-LAH-nah] (tree). W16.
Irit [ee-REET] (flower, asphodel). W82.
Nira [NEE-rah] (furrow). W65.
Nitza [nee-TZAH] (bud). W86.
Nurit [noo-REET] (ranunculus, red or yellow buttercup). W49.
Varda [VAHR-dah] (rose). Many *Vardas* probably represent translations of non-Hebrew names of the Diaspora. W52.

Animal Names

- Ayala* [ah-yah-LAH] (deer). W85.
Ofra [ohf-RAH] (young deer). There is also a male name in the Bible, 1 Chron. 4.14, with a similar spelling in English but a different spelling and meaning in Hebrew. W98.

C. Names from Non-Hebrew Sources

A number of names have come from non-Hebrew sources. Two of these have been used in Jewish culture so long (since the period of Hellenic influence) that they have attained the status of acceptable religious names, i. e., they can be used in ceremonies such as bar mitzvah and marriage. Others have come more recently from Europe.

1. Historically Used

- Alexander* [ah-lex-AHN-dehr] (from Greek "protector of men," named after Alexander the Great). M28.
Kalman [KAHL-mahn] (from Greek "good name," popular name of an eminent medieval family). M95.

2. Derived from European Languages

- Albert* (from German "noble, industrious"). M49.
Bernard (from German "bear," kinnui for *Issachar*). M76.
Boris (from Russian "fighting warrior"). M84.
George (from Greek "farmer"). M74.
Harry/Henry (from Norman-French/English "ruler of the house." In some [many?] cases, Harry or Henry, because of the key letters *H* and *R*, was taken from the German-Yiddish *Hirsch* 'hart,' which is a kinnui for *Naphtali* 'hart') M44.

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Mark (from Latin “warlike”). M38.

Max (from Latin “the greatest”). M60.

Morris/Maurice (from Latin “Moorish” [i.e., dark-skinned], also used by Jews to represent the Hebrew name *Moshe*). M68.

Paul (from Latin “small”). M85.

Victor (from Latin “victor”). M62.

Walter (from German “powerful”). M98.

For women there are 25 names, which can be categorized as follows.

Positive Qualities

Adela (from German *Adelaide* ‘noble’). W84.

Bertha (from German “shining”). W56.

Clara (from Latin “shining”). W35.

Edith (from Old English “rich warrior”). W69.

Fanny (affectionate form of Frances, originally German “free”). W38.

Frieda (from Yiddish, from German “joy”). W31.

Helen (from Greek “light”). W26.

Ida (different roots, some go back to Crete; also heroine in Tennyson’s *The Princess* and Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Princess Ida*). W64.

Liebe [LEE-beh] (Yiddish from German *liebe* ‘love’). W95.

Olga (from Russian form of Scandinavian *Helga* ‘holy’). W87.

Sonia/Sophie (probably Eastern European diminutive of Greek *Sophia* ‘wisdom’). W34.

Victoria (feminine form of Latin “victorious”). W55.

Nature

Bluma [BLOOM-ah] (from German-Yiddish “flower”). W100.

Dafna [DAHf-nah] (Hebrew form of Greek *Daphne* ‘laurel’). W101.

Lily (from Latin “lily”). W47.

Rosa (from Latin “rose”). W29.

Sylvia (from Latin *sylvus* ‘wood’). W66.

Mathilda (from German “mighty in battle”). W83.

Mina [MEE-nah] (from *Wilhelmina*, German feminine form of *Wilhelm* ‘helmet of resolution’). W51.

Other Names

Dora (from Greek “gift of God”). W53.

Lydia (from Greek, referring to a woman from Lydia, area on Aegean Sea). W97.

Other Names

Dora (from Greek “gift of God”). W53.

Lydia (from Greek, referring to a woman from Lydia, area on Aegean Sea). W97.

Marcelle (feminine of *Mark* ‘warlike’). W90.

Paula (feminine of *Paul* ‘small’). W99.

Regina (from Latin “queen”). W54.

Rita (probably affectionate form of *Margarita* ‘pearl’). W96.

Theophoric Names

As mentioned earlier, many biblical names can also be described as theophoric: there is a reference to God within the name. In the men’s sample there are 34 theophoric names. Of these, 17 are in the *Well-known* group plus 5 implied; the *Less-known* male group has 10 plus 2 implied; the female *Well-known* group has 4 plus 3; the *Less-known* group, 1 plus 1; the *Traditional* female group, 2. No theophoric male names appear in the *Traditional* group. Table 4 shows that for men theophoric names constitute about a third of the names; for women, about a tenth.

Table 4. Number of theophoric names by category.

	Bible				Non-Bible		Total
	Well-Known Clear	Implied	Less-Known Clear	Implied	Traditional Clear	Implied	
Men	17	5	10	2			34
Women	4	3	1	1	2		11

Expletive Names

Expletive names describe an attribute or characteristic of an individual. Many of the non-theophoric names can also be categorized this way. Thus, *David* means “beloved,” *Solomon* “peaceful,” and *Bina* “intelligent.” Because agreement on these may not be clear-cut, an exact number is not given.

Discussion and Conclusions

It is obvious that for both men and women the Bible has been a

the non-Bible names are also important. They commemorate virtues, heroes, seasons of the year, and love of nature.

The question of how important the non-Hebrew names are can now be answered. The frequencies for the 104 men's names total 8,392 or almost 84 percent of the entire men's sample of 10,000. The frequency of the non-Hebrew names in the first 104 totals 483, just under 5 percent of the first 104 total frequency. If *Alexander* and *Kalman* are properly deducted (as described above with those used by Jews in the *Historically Used* category), the frequency total of non-Hebrew names decreases to 393 or just under 4 percent.

For women, the total of non-Hebrew names in the first 106 is 932 or just over 9 percent (out of a total frequency of 8,121 for the first 106 women's names), indicating a somewhat higher proportion of non-Hebrew versus Hebrew names than for men. In evaluating the percentage of non-Hebrew names used by Jews in Israel versus Jews in one of the Western countries, it is obvious that non-Hebrew names have a much smaller role in Israel. On the basis of the two samples in this investigation, it might be possible to speculate that about 95 percent of male Jewish Israelis bear Hebrew names; and about 90 percent of the females. This research suggests that Israelis, in the process of building their new state, have kept alive, brought back, or created anew a very large percentage of Hebrew names that reflect their identity in terms of religion, history, goals, and ideals.

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Notes

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2. In evaluating the names, I consulted a number of sources, including Alcalay, Brown, Davies and Davies, Dunkling and Gosling, the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Hanks and Hodges, Hertz, Kaganoff, Kolatch, *New Oxford Bible with the Apocrypha*, and Sidi.

3. I have drawn on Sidi for guidance on the pronunciation of the names and wish to acknowledge her contribution.

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