

## Book Notice

*Jewish First Names*. By David C. Gross. Hippocrene Books, 171 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Pp. 113. 1999. \$11.95.

This is one in a series of books on first names; others published so far by Hippocrene include *Arabic First Names*, *Polish First Names*, and *French First Names*. This volume lists more than 1,300 names but does not (unlike others in the series) list prominent bearers of a name. The names are drawn largely from Hebrew with some additions from Yiddish and other languages. Entries include:

Elisheva From Hebrew, meaning "God's Oath." Akin to Elizabeth  
Barak From Hebrew, meaning "lightning."

I was a bit surprised not to find *Alexander* among the names listed since it ranked 28th in a recent survey of names in Israel (Lawson 1991, 106). Despite its Greek ancestry, it was sanctified as a Jewish name (along with *Kalman*) by 12th century rabbis. The root of *Kalman* is not Latin but Greek and means 'good name' (Kaganoff 1977, 49). *Jewish First Names* is useful, but I cannot help but point out that Smadar Shir Sidi's *The Complete Book of Hebrew Baby Names* (1989) is more complete with some 5000 names and in addition gives pronunciation, the time period of the origin of the name, and its current frequency. Indeed, any name book appearing today would perform a valuable service if it indicated pronunciation, especially for those names which are less familiar.

### References

- Kaganoff, Benzion C. 1977. *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History*. New York: Schocken.
- Lawson, Edwin D. 1991. "Most Common First Names in Israel." *Names* 39: 103-24.
- Sidi, Smadar Shir. 1989. *The Complete Book of Hebrew Baby Names*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

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