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Names and Narcissism: A Clinical Perspective on How Parents Choose Names for Their Newborn

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Parents express themselves through the names they give to their children. This article, based on clinical background and practice, looks at the names parents give their children in order to examine the emotional and psychological processes motivating these parents. Specifically, we will look at narcissism, since patients with narcissistic deprivation, in particular, tend to give their children names which often reflect their own deprivations.

After a short presentation of healthy and pathological narcissism, and an onomastic-linguistic description of Hebrew given names as the semantic and morphological product of condensation and displacement, we merge the two presentations. We analyze authentic clinical cases to illustrate the interplay within this framework between early self, self-object experiences, and conflicts that emerge in the process of providing names and vice versa.

The data for this paper is drawn from psychotherapeutic encounters with Israeli — Jewish patients.

KEYWORDS Given name, narcissistic deprivation, psychoanalysis, displacement, name-formation

Introduction

"Each man has a name" is a famous Hebrew poem written by the Hebrew poetess Zelda[1] on the complexity of human existence and its various layers. These are expressed poetically by repeating the form: "Each man has a name, given him by"

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listing, in turn, the different name providers throughout the life span. Zelda starts off with God, and parents, she then goes on listing the way of smiling, the mountains, etc. Zelda then iconically ends the list (and poem): "Each man has a name given him by the sea and given him by his death." The poem is commonly read on many occasions, especially public ceremonies commemorating Israeli fallen soldiers.

Names are with us throughout our lives (changing one's name, for a variety of personal, cultural, or religious reasons, though a possibility, is not the norm, see Lawson, 1984: 55). The name of the central memorial site for the holocaust victims is "*Yad Vashem* — Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority" — meaning: Monument and Name. A personal name is thus the most private and particular symbol of an individual and sometimes of a nation. It is given to the person when s/he is born and engraved on her/his tomb. In traditional societies, people are named after their parents or grandparents, thus the choice of names is culturally based. However, in modern times and less traditional societies, parents are free to choose any name they wish for their newborn.

Regarding Jews — the majority of Israeli society — the focus of our clinical study — those in Europe got official first and family names at the beginning of the emancipation (nineteenth century, see e.g. Zgusta, 1993). They often had two first names, an official one and a Jewish one that was registered in the records of the Jewish community. The provision of family names is quite a late notion: only in modern times did people have family names (general practice of giving names in sixteenth-century Europe, see, e.g., Zgusta, 1993).

Due to the intimate link between the individual and her/his name, and bearing in mind that in most cases this particular name is electively chosen by the parents, the main concern throughout the psychological and sociological literature (see, e.g., Goldberg, 1997) relates to the way persons and communities perceive names and their self-evaluation of it (for an overview, see Lawson, 1984: 47; Seeman, 1976). As early as 1937, Gordon Allport stated that the name of a person is one of the most important components of his/her selfhood, while Joubert's (1993) contribution was linking names to the person's perception of individual self-image. Strümpfer (1978) studying university students and Joubert (1991) investigating adolescents found that those subjects who liked their names were rated higher in self-image, self-esteem, and social standing than those who disliked their names.

An interesting finding by Christenfeld and his colleagues (1999) revealed that initials often have negative connotations[2] (*DIE*, *PIG*, etc.) and these are often linked to increased mortality, poor health, and shorter lifespan than initials associated with more positive meanings (such as *HUG*, *VIP*, *HPY*). These researchers explained their findings using "labeling theory," which states that labeling individuals positively leads to positive self-esteem — positive internal evaluation of behavior, thoughts, and feelings — and subsequently leads to positive reinforcement. Furthermore, they found that those subjects with positive initials lived four and a half years longer than those people bearing "neutral" initials. Individuals bearing "negative" initials lived almost three years less than those bearing "neutral" ones. From this study it appears that there is also a significant quantitative difference in life span of seven years between individuals who have "positive" initials compared to those who have "negative" initials.

Many parents express themselves through the names they give to their children. It has even been noted that the provision of names related to historical and public events may have an effect on the formation of children's identity (for reference, see Nadav *et al.*, 2008: ch. 3). Names often have a mystical element. In Judaism it is not uncommon to change the name of a person who is suffering from a serious illness, or has a doomed, ugly fate. The psychoanalytic literature dealt with name change (for review relating to Jewish and Israeli names, see, e.g., Falk, 1975).

In this article we will look at the names parents give their children, in order to examine the emotional and psychological processes motivating parents in giving names to their children. Our clinical experience has shown that issues related to name-giving can often help us investigate and diagnose the name-giver's emotional, psychological, and psychopathological dispositions.

Specifically, we will look at narcissism, since patients with narcissistic deprivation, in particular, tend to give their children names often reflecting their own deprivations. Clinical illustrations will be provided. The personal details of cases have been changed due to patient confidentiality, so as to prevent recognition.

The narcissistic personality and narcissistic deprivation

Many investigators have regarded the narcissistic personality (Kohut and Wolf, 1978; Kohut, 1977; 1984; Wolf, 1980; Kernberg, 1987; 1992: 315–343; Winnicott, 1979; Miller, 1981) as the cornerstone of personality.

The narrative on the mythology of Narcissus describes him as having many admirers, but he, in turn, was never able to return true love to them. As a punishment, the Gods allowed him to experience love that he could never actualize. In his continual, despaired search for love, he fell in love with his own image, which he saw reflected in the waters (Chessick, 1985: 3–4).

It goes without saying that giving birth is a vital narcissistic drive. Giving names to one's newborn follows this drive. When parents deliberate on choosing their child's name, this may be seen as a healthy process, indicating positive parenting.

Freud (1914) in his classic article "on narcissism" claims that the person does not give up his or her complete narcissism in normal adjustment. However, when this full narcissistic state is taken away from him or her, s/he tries to compensate for his or her injured and damaged self.

Kohut and Wolf (1978) describe the self as vacillating between coherence and fragmentation. A self that is coherent, vital, and ordered will allow the individual to deal with aspirations and failure appropriately and effectively, while a fragmented, weak, and non-vital self will limit the ability of such persons in dealing effectively with intersubjective relations.

For a healthy self to emerge, the child must have both a supporting and an encouraging environment and "Transmuting internalization" (Kohut and Wolf, 1978), i.e., exposing the child to gradual frustration. Thus it needs to sense love, admiration, uniqueness, and importance. Normally, the newborn receives these qualities unconditionally. The normal process of separation-individuation allows for gradual frustration so that the child internalizes healthy selfobject (Kohut and Wolf, 1978). Healthy narcissism is developed by parental wonderment of the child, where unconditional positive acceptance is given. Here a flexible structure is provided to the child, which

allows him/her to cope with emotional difficulties, where s/he internalizes and incorporates inner full parental images.

If the child lacks the parent's expression of admiration, s/he will seek it out elsewhere. Kohut and his followers (Kohut and Wolf, 1978; Kohut, 1977; 1984; Wolf, 1980) point out that narcissistic injuries develop because of empathetic failure of the primary caregiver.

According to Winnicott (1979), infants' lack of a maternal primary care provider, unconditional positive love and acceptance might lead to such a disposition (see also Miller, 1981). Such infants often grow-up as "parental-children,"[3] leading them to become deprived of their own needs, since they are perceived as sad, missing their lost childhood. Parents of these children, on the other hand, tend to be over-involved in their children's lives, lacking borders, and therefore show problems with separation, incapable of sharing their love with their children. They are not able to offer emotional sustenance to their children at critical stages of their development. Passing through this stage may lead to narcissistic depreciation.

Ronnie Solan (1989; 1992; 1993) defines pathological narcissism as an inflexible "splitted envelope", as opposed to normal narcissism, which she sees as integrative, with a flexible envelope. In pathological narcissism, there is a reactivation of images expressed by the split of opposing forces. When there is a pathological narcissistic envelope, the images of integration and separation will be missing. In these cases, this "envelope" will tend to revert to the basic status that covered the split from the very beginning (see also Gerzi, 2005).

The fourth edition of the standardized manual used by clinicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists for diagnosing clinical symptoms (DSM-IV) describes the narcissistic

Pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

1. Has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements);
2. Is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love;
3. Believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions);
4. Requires excessive admiration;
5. Has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations;
6. Is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends;
7. Lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others;
8. Is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her;
9. Shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes.

FIGURE 1 The narcissistic personality disorder according to DSM-IV.

personality disorder. It will serve us (see "Names given by narcissistic parents") in presenting our clinical description and analysis of "names given by narcissistic parents":

Narcissistic symptoms serve to compensate for the parental deprivation, building up a defensive wall that prevents further injuries to the self.

As we shall describe later, name-giving and name-bearing could be an outcome of such narcissistic dispositions and symptoms. Names given to children by their parents are indeed a complex issue, involving the developmental and personal history of the person giving the name. As clinicians, we should be tuned into the names our patients give to their children, since such information may, in certain cases, reveal the patient's intrapsychic motivations and orientations. It therefore enables us to understand our patients' psychological processes so as to treat them effectively. By initiating discussion about their attitudes towards names, we can allow patients to investigate various aspects of their own parental characteristics and their relationships with their own parents. Thus, the name given by a narcissistic parent to his/her newborn child may indicate projection of parental conflicts and may show unresolved issues with his/her own parent. In this context, the name that parents give to their newborn can be seen as parental compensation for the needs which they themselves could not get from their own parents and consequently cannot provide for their child.

The name as a linguistic entity

Each person has a name. In most societies that name is the end process of free choice of a single name out of a closed or an open selection of names. In most such societies it is parents who choose and decide upon that name. As we set out to demonstrate throughout our paper, this (linguistic) choice carried out by the narcissistic personality parent enacts their pathology. As Freud (1890: 293) upheld, the name (language) is then a symptom. Yet it is a symptom incarnated in the form of a linguistic entity: constructed from a fixed series of phones (sounds) and in many cultures and languages related to common nouns, and so bare their meanings (e.g. *Rose*, *Julia*). In order to grasp the psychic processes emerging in the process of name-giving, we must first glance at the linguistic apparatus for generating and choosing a name. As our study relates to Hebrew names given in Israel, we shall concentrate on the Hebrew inventory.

We claim that the process whereby the name-giver — usually parents — attaches a name to the newborn results in a neologism, a string of sounds newly coined for each child afresh. Opposed to common nouns which are lexicalized (in the dictionary) and subject to inflectional rules, given names — as all proper names — are not being lexicalized and are isolated in Hebrew from inflection.[4] This nearly nullifies any restriction on the means for their generation, thus making them open for endless possibilities. Hebrew given names could then be created in the context of the form: a new phonetic sequence, or in the realm of content: attaching new content to an existing form. Figure 2 outlines the major means for generating Hebrew neologisms and Hebrew given names. Clearly, within this framework, each and every language or nomenclature sets its own morphologic and semantic objects and rules.

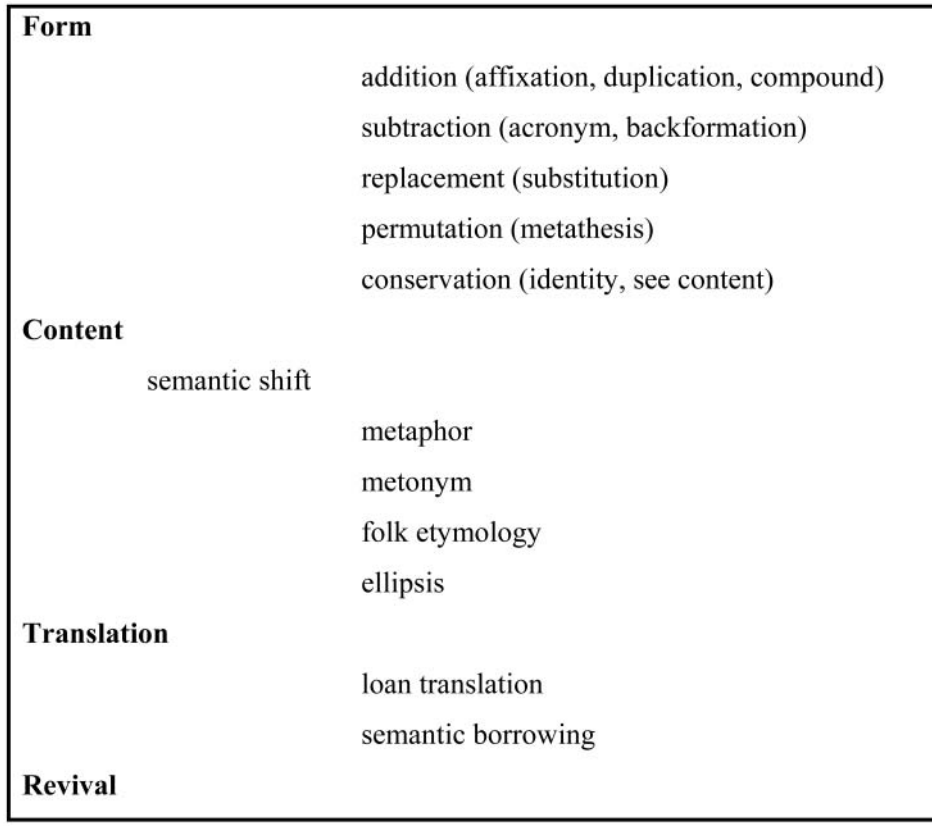

FIGURE 2 Major linguistic means for generating neologisms.

Names as psychic and linguistic condensation and displacement

In his 1900 monumental monograph *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud explains that the difference between dream-content and dream-thoughts is the work of two central mechanisms: condensation and displacement. Condensation is not omission (1900: 281), but as Strachey explains: "fuse into a single action all events of interest which occur simultaneously" (Freud, 1900: 179 fn. 1). As to displacement, Freud explains:

> Replacing of some one particular idea by another in some way closely associated with it, and they were used to facilitate condensation in so far as by their means, instead of two elements, a single common element intermediate between them finds its way into the dream. (Freud, 1900: 339)

We claim here that these same mechanisms, condensation and displacement, generate the process of naming — choosing the given name of the newborn. Due to shortage of space, it is sufficient to point out two relevant phases mentioned by Freud. Firstly, Freud's contested that "the work of condensation in dreams is seen at its clearest when it handles words and names" (1900: 295, see also Seeman, 1979[5]). Secondly, Freud's last paragraph in *The Interpretation of Dreams* refers to dreams as wish fulfillment and the shift of tenses (past / future, Freud, 1900: 621). Thus shift,

displacement, including the locus of wish, seem also to be the basis of commemorating names such as naming a newborn (future) after a deceased relative (see Seeman, 1979: 244–245).

In sum, this short overview explains how the magnitude of the gap between the extent of the dream content and its interpretation is much smaller than these proportions regarding the motives (conscious and explicit, unconscious and implicit) for the name chosen and their condensation into a single word: the given name.[6]

Accordingly, each parent and each couple go through a unique internal (psychic) and external (linguistic) process, condensing the initial idea or symptom of the name to the end result — displacement onto the newborn bearing the name chosen. As the one and same cigar may symbolize in different dream-stories various real and imagined objects, so can one and the same known name (phonetic string) stand in each case for unique materials formed in the coinage of the name, for the specific newborn by its parents. The Hebrew name *Lior* given to four newborns will serve to exemplify our claim:[7]

1. When parents explain "light for me", we, as linguists, could describe the following. Their choice originated from a semantic one, expressing a concept. To reflect this concept, they merged (see addition in Figure 2) the two components *li* ("mine") and *or* ("light"). *Li*, in turn is a form indicating first person singular possessive: "mine," arriving at a fashionable Hebrew name *Lior*. From a psychological point of view, incorporating *li* hints a narcissistic need, see symptom 3 in Figure 1 and see also Seeman, 1976)
2. Commemorating grandfather *Leon*. *Leon* is an elderly foreign European name (see Weitman, 1988). Here the parents hitched on to the phonetic similarity between *Leon* and *Lior*. This is a semantic process (shift) of folk etymology (see Figure 2) where the speaker affiliates words unrelated etymologically and linguistically as if they share form and meaning. Here linguistic (Hebrew) and social (Israeli) adjustment is at work.
3. The source name here was the elder daughter's name: *Orli*.[8] When the son was born, the parents switched these components of *Orli*, arriving by metathesis at *Lior* (see Figure 2).
4. As seen in the above listed examples, *Lior* is a boy's given name (examples 2 and 3). Currently, it is a unisex Israeli name.[9] Interviewing the father of three revealed that the primary criteria for the choice of the names for all three children was that they were unisex names. In the case of the middle daughter, named *Li-Or* (coming after an elder brother), the parent explained that a hyphen was added between the two components (*li* + *or*) to give the name a more feminine touch. The parent did not explain the connection between hyphen and femininity (on psycholinguistics aspects of sex identification and unisex names, see Seeman, 1976: 916; Barry and Harper, 1982).

We should now like to show how these possibilities are (consciously and unconsciously) processed by the narcissistic patients encountered in the clinic.

Names given by narcissistic parents

Here we adopt the criteria provided by the DSM phenomenological manual for discriminating pathological narcissism (see Figure 1). Our main argument in this

paper is that choosing a name for a child could be perceived as one of the ways in which pathological narcissism takes place. We wish to emphasize that it is not the names themselves that are necessarily narcissistic but the process carried out by the narcissistic parent arriving at such names. Names indicating brutal devaluation and violation of the process of sublimation in name-giving may reflect clear cases of parental, pathological narcissism.[10]

In giving a name, such parents unconsciously regress to earlier psychological conflicts, reactivating some archaic structures. Introjected structures of earlier relationships and the permanent pattern are thus formed. Name-giving can then be perceived as one of the means by which such pathological structures are displaced over to the newborn.

We now show how narcissistic elements of parents express themselves in name-giving (to their newborn). To do so, we look at names emerging and treated in the clinical setting. From our clinical experience, it appears that, through clinicians' careful listening to the way parents explain their choice of names, better diagnosis and treatment of the problematic aspects of the parenting involved can be understood.

Kernberg (1987; 1992: 315–343) emphasizes that the grandiose self comprises the main part of the ego, and that through projection of aggression the negative mental images of the self towards other people takes place. He states that grandiosity (of the self) entails devaluation (of the other). Similarly, idealization reflects projection of grandiose self to others.

The clinical data was collected in the intake phase (first patient-clinician encounter). As a routine part of this intake, the clinician would ask the patient to tell the story of his/her name. Patients who are parents were also asked the names of their children and the grounds for them choosing those names.

Below are descriptions and analyses of such cases.

Idealization and glorification of the self

An outstanding phenomenon of grandiose names is manifested in personal initials composed of the given names and surnames. Our clinical data show that patients with grandiose sense of self tend to give their children a name that its initial forms with the initial of the surname, a meaningful acronym conveying the meanings of excellence, self-importance, and superiority, e.g., such as the combination A. A., and A. B. (see Christenfeld *et al.*, 1999 as mentioned above, see also Lawson, 1984: 54).

A well-known case which we here attribute to idealization is the naming of the Kidasa "peace triplets." Soon after the historical peace treaty between Israel and Egypt (October 1979) triplet boys were born in Lod Israel. The parents — Arab Israelis — decided to call the children after the three leaders of this treaty: Menachem Begin (Israel's prime minister), Anwar Sadat (President of the Republic of Egypt), and Jimmy Carter (president of the United States of America). They named their children Begin, Sadat, and Carter accordingly. In an interview to the press, the father stated that "When the boys were born I truly believed in coexistence." The father, Ibrahim, and his wife, Hitam, thought they would raise their three sons in a new society, one that has put down its weapons and chosen to focus on building the peace.[11] We considered this a case of idealization since the parents chose a novel initiative that

did not take into consideration the cultural consequences of giving (two of) their sons non-Arabic politically and emotionally loaded names. Moreover, rather then selecting the given names of those leaders, the parents preferred the family names as the given names for their boys. Taking into consideration the delicate social-political circumstances in the Jewish-Arab city of Lod, it could have been foreseen that such a choice would be problematic.[12]

In many cases, narcissistic individuals try to identify with strength and power in order to build up awe and wonderment. Thus the names they choose may be consciously or unconsciously glorifying the self, for example, the name *Ilai* (biblical proper name, literally "supreme"), who was a commander in David's army and was considered a heroic figure.[13] This eludes greatness, power, strength and charisma of David's army heroism, someone very special (symptom 3 in Figure 1), above the status of ordinary people (symptoms 1, 2 in Figure 1).

Glorifying names as manic defense

Narcissistic individuals have a feeling of emptiness as part of the depressive structure of the narcissistic personality (Kohut and Wolf, 1978; Miller, 1981). In order to decrease the aversive element of that depression, they can adopt a version of manic defense (symptom 2 in Figure 1). Such persons have a tendency to overvalue and glorify themselves, so as to gain the feeling that they are meaningful and seen positively by others (symptom 4 in Figure 1).

Accordingly, by giving their child a special name parents may perpetuate their own needs for continual self-glorification. This is even more accepted when expressed through collectively glorifying national or cultural images. For example, a patient came to the clinic for consultation concerning his son's behavioral problems. At intake, the clinician paid attention to the fact that this patient bore a unique given name: *Mashiah* ("Messiah"). The patient was asked for the story behind his name, and his attitude towards that name. He spoke about his father who, shortly before the patient's birth, immigrated to Israel, having lost all his family and money he possessed in his home country. The patient described him as a patriarchal and strict father. It appears that, in this case, the choice of this name *Mashiah* ("Messiah") served as a manic defense, compensating the father for his own many losses and depression. The father's need for salvation was displaced on to the Jewish cultural meanings of *Mashiah* ("Messiah") and in turn displaced over to the newborn (Ephratt, 2007).

A woman was referred to the clinic by the social services for parenthood evaluation. She was described by them as a young problematic woman: "a woman married to a drug addict." Her husband was a young juvenile, who physically abused his wife. Towards the coming birth of their first child, he abandoned her. She gave birth to a baby girl, whom she named *Bat-El* (*bat* "daughter" and *El* "god," resulting in the compound "daughter of God," see addition in Figure 2). She said, referring to the name: "Not that her father was God, he was far from being God, but I thought the name was nice." The need to relate to mighty forces characterizes people lacking internal whole parental images and so, to compensate for this absence, they are drawn to glorifying people and fantasies. Theophoric names — names having "God" as a constituent (see Fowler, 1988) no doubt indicate power and strength. The

patient, feeling herself hopeless, chose to name her daughter *Bat-El*, wishing to gain glorification via this name.

Names presenting parental empathetic deprivation

One of the cardinal features of people with narcissistic disorders is their lack of empathy towards others in their surroundings, especially towards children (symptom 7 in Figure 1). They are totally preoccupied with their own needs to be different or special. As mentioned previously, this often results in choosing unique names that sometimes can be seen to be exaggerated. Lacking empathy, they are unaware of the possible future personal, social, and cultural outcomes of the name they give to their children, having to cope with such outstanding and exceptional names.[14] Generally we are talking about rare names. A girl who had an eating disorder once came to the clinic for treatment. Her name was *Chayit* ("lived" past tense verbal inclination). This patient was born premature. Since there was a chance of her dying, her parents decided to choose a name that would magically give her life. In therapy, the question arose as to whether unconsciously her parents may have actually wished for her death.

In certain cases, the rareness of the names is its exceptional context. For example, a patient of Yemenite background called her daughter *Levana* ("white"), even though her skin was dark, which made her a mockery in the eyes of her friends.[15] The daughter, out of duty to her parents, felt that she could not change her name when her parents were alive, yet did so shortly after their death.

A case originating from lack of empathy is the name *Rotel*, a newly coined linguistic form not related to the Hebrew lexicon. This name, as explained by the mother, is a fusion of the Israeli common modern name *Rotem* ("Ratema / broom plant") and the old-fashion Jewish feminine given name *Gitel* ("good," from Yiddish) (see "addition" in Figure 2, and see Weitman, 1988). On the emotional level this name condensed the following family story: the mother had run away from her impinging mother (*Rotel*'s grandmother), leaving her homeland and immigrating to Israel, where she met her future husband (*Rotel*'s father) and got rushed into marriage. The family came for consultation because of *Rotel*'s (only child) social difficulties. Right at intake, it was disclosed that the family moved to a new city, an act that was not in accordance with *Rotel*'s needs (which *Rotel* made known: explicitly expressing her disagreement). It seems that the unsolved, non-empathic grandmother-mother relationship was re-enacted in the mother-daughter relationship.

The name *Rotel* is then explained as a condensation, displaced onto the newborn. From a pathological narcissistic point of view, the name seems to reflect an ongoing unconscious struggle between symbiosis and differentiation (between the mother and the grandmother), without being able to foresee possible future social difficulties.

In such cases, lack of empathy by parents overlooked the possible lifelong difficulties that these names may create for their children.

Names representing devaluation

In some cases, parents want to devalue the importance of their children, thereby wanting to take power away from them. They do so by choosing negative or special names for their newborns (see symptoms 8, 9 in Figure 1).

A case motivated by parental narcissistic devaluation is the case of a father naming his daughter *Rahab*. The latter was the eighth daughter born to her parents. The father, belonging to a traditional community, could not tolerate the fact that he did not have a baby boy. In his society this was considered a great shame, which no doubt stuck onto his personality narcissistic injuries. Faced with the agonizing birth of the baby girl resulted in him accusing his wife of adultery, by which he detached himself from the birth of the baby girl. This incompetence to endure the shame and feelings of devaluation and shame was reflected in the name he chose for that daughter (the patient). *Rahab* is mentioned in the Bible when Joshua, entering Jericho, sent two men to spy the land. And so the narrator tells us "and they went, and came into an harlot's house, named *Rahab*, and lodged there" (Jos. 2:1, King James translation).

Rahab is since referred to as the first prostitute. Since that allusion, no one has ever duplicated this name.[16] By thus naming his daughter, the father reflects his devaluation for his wife and daughters (hence, all women). In fact, this is a displaced revenge against what he perceives as injustice and bad fate inflicted by God.

The name of *Hagar* given in a Jewish religious family is a case in point. The Bible presents Hagar as an inferior woman who was chased out and sent away into the desert (Genesis 17:21). A thirty-one-year-old married woman named *Hagar* came for therapy for marital problems. She revealed that her name was given to her by her mother at the time she discovered that her husband was having an extra-marital affair. Her mother told her that she had felt betrayed, cheapened, and humiliated by her husband's act. To express her narcissistic and damaged feelings, we propose that our patient's mother may have named her daughter *Hagar*. The mother-daughter relationship that was then established remained estranged and problematic throughout life, expressed in the fusion of boundaries and lack of empathy. The connection to the biblical story of *Abraham, Sara* and *Hagar*, the weak part of the story, demonstrates devaluation.

Summary

The President (the title at the time) of Israel's High Court of Justice ruled:

> The name of the person is a part of his personality. It is his social self, the key with which he makes his way in the paths of his community. It is not merely a code for identification. It is an expression of his personality, emotion, duty, tradition and designation. (HCJ 693/91 Michal Ephratt v. Commission of Population Registry, Ministry of Interior [1993] IsrSC 47(1))

In this paper we have outlined one of the many different interrelationships between personal names and the self. As we have shown, giving birth is a vital narcissistic drive. Giving names to one's newborns follows this drive. Yet the specific choice of name (for the newborn) is an integral outcome of developmental issues of both personality and personal background. When parents choose their child's name, this may be perceived, on the one hand, as a healthy process indicating positive parenting, or it may reflect narcissistic injuries.

An important aspect of emotional health involves separation and identification with the parental figure. We maintain that, by providing symbols in the process of

giving names, narcissistic parents bring to the fore their own conscious and unconscious wishes, desires, and needs to merge or to be idealized. Sometimes, the process of idealization and separation is damaged and narcissistic deprivation takes place. As shown, this can take the form of idealization of the self; glorification of the self (as manic defense); parental, empathetic deprivation and devaluation.

The paper is clinically oriented, incorporating specific descriptions and analyses of concrete cases encountered in treatment in the Israeli setting. It is expected that similar findings hold true concerning other societies, too (assuming given-names, in such societies, are electively chosen by the parents).

Our hypothesis is supported by clinical tools including the theoretical background, illumination of specific cases encountered in the clinic, analysis of them, and the integration of linguistic etiology (semantic or morphological as the case requires).

The process of providing a name has its importance in clinical and research areas: it allows us to look at pathological processes in a more concise and defined manner, such as considering the significant early prognostic aspects of the patient's pathology, early in the intake process. It also gives us indications of patients' dynamics, including their relationship with their own parents, thereby allowing for appropriate treatment mode.

Finally, this paper demonstrates the unique link between the onomastic-linguistic interest in proper names and the clinical psychopathological manifestations of name-giving by narcissistic parents. Trying to combine two different disciplines allows us to broaden our perspective, giving a new meaning to the role of onomastic-linguistics, and hopefully enables us to get an innovative perspective of the subject for future research and study.

Notes

[1] For English translation, see Carmi (1981: 558). On the choice of the masculine (e.g. "man," "his"), see Golan (2004: 160–166).

[2] The researchers used colleagues for evaluating a given list of initials as "negative," "positive," and "neutral" names.

[3] Parental-children are children who took on adult responsibilities, such as caring for their parents and so considered clinically as though they lost their childhood.

[4] Hebrew proper names do not decline according to case or any other morphosyntactic categories.

[5] Seeman, 1979, as Freud, looks at names as symbols alongside visual symbols. Surprisingly, Seeman does not mention Freud. We should also point out that her use of the mechanisms of condensation and displacement is restricted to the form (rather than content) phase of naming.

[6] When Freud deals with displacement he talks about the inverse psychic relation between the intensity of the dream-thought and of the dream-content (see "overdetermination," 1900: 307–308). It seems quite possible that this same process takes place regarding names, especially, commemorating names and names denoting respected personal or common values (see also Seeman, 1979: 144–145; Lawson, 1984). Yet this assumption was not studied.

[7] For a detailed outline, see Ephratt, 2007.

[8] This girl's given name is constructed from the same components as *Lior*, only the possessive form is proclitic (rather than enclitic).

[9] Kranzler (2006 lecture at University of Haifa) defined unisex names as those names that appear at least ten times for each of the two sexes annually. For this category we matched the names of our data with the list obtained by Kranzler. Lawson, 1984: 50 titles this category "androgynous names."

[10] Examples of names resulting from severe brutal devaluation are scarce and thus cannot be reported here without violating privacy and discretion.

[11] <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1157260.html>

[12] The reader is invited to refer to the press concerning the tragic story that followed: Anwar Sadat was assassinated by his own people, Menachem Begin ended his life in solitude and depression. Sadat

Kidasa spent his life in a rehabilitation institute; Begin Kidasa was murdered. (<http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1169298.html>)

[13] The name *Ilai* is documented in the Bible only once (Chronicle I 11:29) yet in Modern Hebrew it is one of the most common boys' given names (it was the twenty-seventh most popular name for Jewish boys born in Israel in 2008).

[14] There are also studies showing the well-being of people having unique names, e.g. Zweigenhaft (1983) found that they scored higher on personality and intelligence variables and attained higher status.

[15] No doubt each case is personality and context sensitive; e.g. the last name "White" among the Afro-American community in the States.

[16] From a morphological-linguistic point of view this is a case of a revival of a name (see Figure 2): in that the name used (documented) in an early source and not but not used in subsequent periods is reintroduced-given as a name to a newborn.

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