The Origin of Jewish Family Names

ZVONKO R. RODE

[I] INTRODUCTION

IN BIBLICAL TIMES THE JEWS had only one name, which was accompanied by the name of their father. These names were either descriptive or combinations expressing a certain relationship to the deity. In post-biblical times (from the fourth century B.C. until the end of the Roman empire) Jews frequently adopted Greek in lieu of Hebrew names, since Greek became the common language of the Jews in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, where most of them lived during that period. In the western part of the Roman empire Latin names also came into use, and in Palestine and Syria, as well as in Mesopotamia many Jews had Aramaic names, a vernacular closely related to Hebrew.

The first Jewish family names appeared as surnames among the Jews in North Africa, Spain, France and Italy in the tenth and eleventh century of the Christian era. However, in the beginning, these surnames were not hereditary and were confined to individuals, not to the entire family. Moreover, such family names were in use mostly by scholars, poets and other prominent persons. Occasionally, such surnames became true family names, particularly where the descendants of a famous person tried to retain a prominence based upon their heritage. However, in Central and Eastern Europe Jewish family names did not come into use until the early eighteenth century, and even then their use was restricted to the wealthy and influential families. By the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Governments of Austria, France, Prussia and Russia enacted special decrees ordering that all Jews assume permanent family names. In Russia, which included Poland, the name-giving procedure was slow and in some cases resisted by traditional and conservative Jews, but by the end of the nineteenth century all European and the majority of Oriental Jews had established family names.

[II] THE SOURCE OF JEWISH FAMILY NAMES

The family names adopted by the Jews since the Middle Ages and

those assigned to the Jews by government decrees in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be grouped as to their sources into the following categories: [1]

(a) *BASED UPON BIBLICAL FIRST NAMES*

The biblical first names played a very great role in the name-giving process inasmuch as most of the Jewish first names for males followed biblical examples. To a smaller extent, females were named after biblical personalities. However, as a rule, the Jewish given names for males were biblical names at least during the long period of the Middle Ages. No wonder that these names influenced to a great extent the adoption of family names, as the following examples of family names may show:

Abel, Abraham, Amram, Aryel, Aaron, Asher, Baruch, Benjamin, Daniel, David, Eleazar, Emmanuel, Ephraim, Gabriel, Gedaliah, Gershon (or Gerson), Hayim, Hillel, Isaac, Israel, Jacob, Joachim (Johanan), Joel, Jonas, Joseph, Joshua, Kaleb, Levi, Manasseh, Meir (Meyer), Menahem, Michael, Perez, Pinchas, Raphael, Solomon, Samuel, Samson, Simson, Uriel, Zadock, Zachariah, Zeeb or Zeev, and many others.

Post-biblical names, that is, names appearing in the talmudic literature of the period between the second and seventh centuries of the Christian era, were seldom a source for family names. An example of a post-biblical name would be Akiba, but this name has been considered during the centuries as a biblical name, even though it does not appear in the Bible.

(b) *DERIVATION FROM HEBREW BIBLICAL NAMES*

Many Jewish family names have their roots in biblical names, but they have been abridged or slightly transformed in the Jewish vernacular and, so transformed, became family names of the Jews at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Here are a few examples of biblical names and their derivatives:

Abraham: Abram,[2] Brahm, Braun, Bramm
Benjamin: Bohn, Bonem, Bonnin, Benoni and others
Hayim: Haim, Heim, Heimer, Heimler and others
Jacob: Kaplan, Kappel, Koppelmann, Kuwie, Kubin
Isaac: Eisig, Eisack, Essig, Itzig, Sack, Sacks
Israel: Isserles, Isler, Srulman
Levi: Lewin, Lehmann, Liebmann, Loeb

---

[1] This categorization follows closely the classification used by Gerhard Kessler in *Die Familiennamen der Juden in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1935).

[2] Kessler, *op. cit.,* p. 20.

Manasseh: Mannes, Monash, Mann
Menahem: Mendel, Mandel, Menkes, Magnin, Munk
Mordecai: Model, Mottel, Marcus, Marx
Moses: Maisel, Mosse, Moos, Moscheles, Mosin
Pinchas: Pick, Pincherle, Pinneles
Solomon: Salom, Salmon, Salinger
Samuel: Schmal, Schmolka, Semmel, Semmler
Zachariah: Sacher, Sacharow, Sacks

(c) *TRANSLATIONS OF BIBLICAL NAMES*

Asher was traditionally associated with a lamb; hence his name is translated into the German Lamm, or Laemmle, also Lemky and the like.

Baruch means the blessed one, and his name is translated into family names such as Selig, Seligmann, Benedict, Bendix, Bondy and Felix.

Benjamin is in the Bible compared with a wolf (Zeev):[3] hence the Benjamins became known as Wolf, Woelfi, Volpe, Lopez (Spanish), Wilk (Polish).

Hayim became Vita or Vitalis (meaning life), then Veit, Feitel and Victor, and finally in Arabic, Avigdor.

Elkayim was translated into the German Gotthold, or Gottschalk, and also Goetz.

Ephraim was traditionally associated with a fish:[4]therefore, persons whose Hebrew name was Ephraim took the German, Yiddish or Slavic equivalent and became known as Fisch, Fischmann, Fischel, Rybowitz (Polish ryba = fish); also Karp, Karpf, Karpin, Koerpel, Hecht (pike), Heilbutt (halibut), Lax, etc.

Jonah is associated with a dove;[5] hence the name Taub and Taubmann reflect the German translation of dove for people whose name was Jonah; however, Taube is also in German and Yiddish a female's name, as is Palomba (dove) among Spanish - speaking Jews.

Joseph had been blessed by Moses and compared with a bull;[6] therefore some persons named Joseph may have chosen as their family name the German name Stier or Ochs, the Hebrew name Shor or Germanized Schorr, and also the Polish equivalent Byk.

Issachar has been compared with a bear;[7] the frequent names Bear,

---

[3] 49 Genesis 27

[4] Kessler, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[6] 33 Deuteronomy 17, 18.

[7] In 49 Genesis 14 Jacob compared Issachar with an "ass"; however, it appears that the post-biblical rabbinical literature and some translations of the Bible gave another interpretation to this word. The English Catholic Bible by Robert Knox (1954) translated the word as "beast of burden."

Baerman, Berl, Perl, Behrens, Bernet and other similar derivative names are substitutes for Issachar. It should be noted, however, that Perl is also a feminine name meaning the same as the Greek Margaret (in post-biblical Hebrew, Margolith), namely, a pearl.

Mordecai was originally an Akkadian (Babylonian) name originating from Marduck, the chief God of Babylonia. This name has been assimilated into Hebrew and widely used by Jews during the centuries. For some reason no longer apparent today, the name was translated into German as Gimpel or Gimbel.[8] Gimpel meant in medieval German a limping person, and also an uneducated, simple man. The Gimbels, Gumprechts and Gomperts seem to derive their name from Mordecai, or from an ancestor who actually was lame.

Napthali is linked in the scriptures to a deer;[9] hence those whose name was Napthali took or received the surname Hirsch (German: deer); Hirschl, Hirzel, Herzl, Herschel, Hertzka, Herzog, Hartmann, Hersch, Hesslein, Cerf (French), Jellinek (Slavonic: little deer).

Moses was considered God's selected prophet. Moses was therefore translated by talmudic or rabbinical authorities to "God's man" or Gottesman, Gutmann (the latter name is used by pious Jews who do not use the name of God but substitute "Gut" for "Gott").

Nahum and Nehemiah, meaning "God is my faith," became, in the German and Yiddish tradition, Fromm, Frommer and Froman.

Simson's name comes from the sun; the German and Yiddish equivalent for Simson became therefrom Sonnenmann, Sonnenfeld, Sonnenschein, Sonnenthal, and the like.

(d) HEBREW NAMES WITH GERMAN OR YIDDISH ENDINGS

Many Jewish family names originated from a combination of Hebrew biblical and German or Yiddish petnames or endings. Examples of such combinations follow:

Abraham: Abel, Abeles, Eberl
Aaron: Ohrlich, Ehrlich (in Spanish, Aroyo and Aruetti)
Hayim: Hayek, Hacke, Heimel, Heumerl
David: Tevele
Elhanan and *Johanan*: Hantke, Hendel, Haendler, Handler
Manasseh or *Menachem*: Mandl, Menzel, Mentzer
Henoch: Hoenig, Honig, Noschkes
Jacob: Jaintel, Jajteles
Joseph: Jossel
Juda: Juderl, Guederl, Guedemann (but Guetel or Gitel is also a feminine name, and some names may have derived from the mother or wife)

---

[8] Kessler, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[9] 49 Genesis 21.

Israel: Siechel, Siegel
Isaac: Itzek, Siegel, Segal
Levi: Leibel, Loebl, Leibusch
Michael: Meisl, Machlin
Moses: Mosler, Meisl
Nathan: Natonek, Netter
Sabbetai: Schepsel, Schabsel
Solomon: Schlomke, Salkind
Simon: Semler, Simche, Schimmel; probably also Suess and Suesskind. However, there is in evidence also a feminine name Suesse (root: Shoshanna or Susanna, meaning lily), and Suesskind may therefore also mean a child of Suesse.

(e) *EQUIVALENTS OF HEBREW NAMES*

The Germanization of Hebrew names was sometimes carried further, so that the root of the name remained almost undetectable. Here are some examples of this transformation:
Abraham: Appel, Apfel, Appelman
Asher: Amsel, Amschel, Axel, Axelrad
Aaron: Arndt, Arnold, Arnhold, Ehrmann
Baruch: Borchard, Berg, Bergl, Berger, Bergmann, Borge, Broch, Burger, Bruch, Buchmann, Brecher
Gabriel: Gebert, Gebhardt
Gershon: Gersch, Gerstmann, Gerstel, Geronimo (Italian), Kersten
Hayim: Heim, Heine, Heinemann, Heinrich, Heimann, Heilmann, Heumer
Isaac: Eiss, Eisen, Eisenmann, Eisler, Eisner, Essinger
Isaiah: Schein, Scheiner, Scheyer (from the Hebrew pronunciation Yeshayah)
Jacob: Kaplan, Kappel, Koppelman, Kafka
Levi: Loew, Loewinger, Liebmann, Lipmann, Philipp, Liebert, Liebermann, Liebling, Lehmann, Littmann
Manasseh: Magnus, Magnin, Mann
Meir: Maier, Meyer, May, Licht, Lichtmann, Lichtenstern (Ir means light in Hebrew)
Menahem: Menkes, Mencken, Munck, Muench
Mordecai: Mark, Marks, Markuse
Nahum: Naumann, Neumann
Nathan: Netter, Nothmann
Pelet: Feld, Feldmann, Feldstein
Reuben: Rubin, Rubinstein, Rabin
Samuel: Schmuckler, Schneller
Solomon: Salinger, Selinger, Schalinger
Zevi: Ziffer, Zifferer, Zippermann (this name may also have been derived from Zipporah, a feminine name)

(f) *NAMES INDICATING PLACES*

In the eighteenth century and later, by the time of the compulsory actions for the establishment of Jewish names, many Jews already used surnames (not always hereditary and not always uniform among family members). A great many of the surnames indicated the geographical place from which a family originated. Since Jews were traditionally a migrant people (peddlers who traveled around and frequently changed their domiciles) and since for generations many Jewish families had been expelled from their residences only to find another place to live, it is understandable that many Jews, in addition to their traditionally Hebrew names, appropriated surnames showing where they came from. It appears that at the time of the name-giving, more than half of all the Jewish families in Germany, Austria, and Poland were either known, or had selected surnames indicating the names of their past or present domiciles, or sections of the cities where they lived, or the names of buildings where the families dwelt.[10] Some of these descriptive family names originating from geographical locations are listed below:

Alsberg, Ansbach, Arnstein, Aub, Auernheim, Allenstein, Auspitz, Austerlitz, Asch (acronym for Eisenstadt, a populous Jewish community in eastern Austria);

Bachrach (also shortened to Bach), Bachenheimer, Bamberger, Beisinger, Bergheimer, Biberfeld, Bieber, Bing (from Bingen), Binswanger, Bleichroeder, Bodenheimer, Braunschweig, Bruchsal, Bielski, Birnbaum, Bernauer, Brandeis, Breslauer, Broder, Brody, Bruenner, Bursztyn, Bunzel (from Bunzlau);

Cannstat, Carlebach, Cassel, Coblenz, Caminer, Chorin, Collin (from Kolin, Bohemia), Conitz (Konic, Poland), Cracauer (Krakow, Poland), Czarnikow, Castelnuovo, Castiglione, Cremona (the last three in Italy);

Dahlheimer, Darmstaedter, Dernburg, Dessauer, Deutz, Dinkelspiel (Dinkelsbuehl, Germany), Dembitz, Danziger, Duernstein, Dresner, Dresdner, Dubinski, Dzialoszinski, and Treves or Dreyfus (from Troyes, France);

Ellinger, Eisinger, Emmerich, Eppinger, Epstein, Eitingon and Ettinger (from Oettingen, Germany), Erlanger, Erlenbacher, Eyck, Eibenschuetz, Eidlitz, Eisenstaedter, Eisenstein, Elbogen;

Fernbach, Flegenheimer, Floersheim, Frankenthal, Frankfurter, Friedberg, Fuld, Fuerth, Falkenburg, Feuerstein, Filehne, Flatauer, Freystadt, Friedheim, Friedlaender, Fuerstenberg, and Fano (Italy);

Geldern, Geottinger, Grabet, Griesheimer, Gruenewald, Gundelfinger, Guenzberg, Ginzberg, Glogauer, Glogowski, Goldberg,

---

Grabowski, Guttentag, Guggenheim (from Jugenheim near Darmstadt, Germany), and Guastalla (Italy);

Halpern, Heilbronner (both from Heilbronn, Germany), Haber, Hamel, Hachenburg, Hallgarten, Hamburger, Hanauer, Hechinger, Heckscher, Herzberg, Hildesheimer, Hirschberg, Hirschhorn, Hochstaedter, Horowitz, Holischer, Horetzki;

Jablonski, Janowitz, Jaroczinski, Joachimsthal;

Kadelburg, Kaffenburg, Kassel, Katzenellenbogen, Kissinger, Koenigstein, Krishaber, Kalischer, Kolisch, Kaminski, Kempinski, Kisch (from Cheisch, Bohemia), Koenigsberg, Katlowski, Koritschan, Kornitzer, Krakauer, Kremnitzer, Krotoschiner, Kupferberg, Kuttner (from Kutno, Bohemia);

Lakenbach, Landau, Langenthal, Lichtenberg, Lindner, Luxemburg, Landsberg, Lasker, Laski, Leipziger, Lemberger (from Lemberg, now Lwow, Galicia), Liebschuetz, Lissa, Lissauer, Loewenberg, Lubinski, Lubin, Lurie (from Loria, Italy), Luzzatto, Lassalle (one of the founders of socialism took his name from Losslau, Silesia, but transformed it into French sounding name);

Mainzer, Mannheimer, Metz, Mosbacher, Mislowitzer, Modern (from Modran, Bohemia), Mohilewer, Morawetz (from Moravia), Muensterberg, Morpurgo (from Marburg, Germany), Modena, Modigliani, Montefiore (the latter three in Italy);

Neuberg, Neuberger, Neuhaus, Nordheimer, Noerdlinger,Neustadt;

Offenbach, Oppenheimer, Oettinger, Ottolenghi (from Oettingen), Oliver (from Oliva), Oedenburger, Ofner, Ostowski;

Perlberg, Pinczower, Pinsker, Podolski, Podhoretz, Posen, Posner, Poznanski, Prager, Praeger, Pilzer (from Pilica, Bohemia), Pressburger, Proskauer, Pribram, Pyritz, Popper (rabbinical acronym for Frankfurt: Popp), Pariser, Pontecorvo (Italy);

Reinach, Rosenberg, Rosenfeld, Rothenburg, Rothmuehl, Rothmiller, Rathenau, Raudnitz, Rawitz, Rechnitzer, Rogozinski (from Rogozno, Poland), Romberg, Rosenheim, Rudnicki, Ruppin;

Saalfeld, Schoenberg, Schoenfeld, Schott (from Schotten), Schwabach, Schwarzenberg, Sondheimer, Sobernheim, Sonnenberg, Speyer (also Spira, Schapiro, Saphir, Speier), Sternberg, Steinfeld, Steinhardt, Strasser, Strassberg, Strassburger, Stromberg, Sulzberger, Sulzer, Sagan, Schirokauer, Schocken, Schwerin, Smolenski, Spitzer (from Spitz), Stein, Steiner, Steinberg, Strelitz;

Thalheimer, Tannhaueser, Thurnauer, Tartakower, Taussig, Teltscher, Tietz, Torczyner, Trebitsch, Turner, Tucholski, Turower, Terracina (Italy), Toledano (from Toledo, Spain), Tolentino (Italy);

Viterbo, Volterra (Italy);

Warburg, Weil, Weinberger, Weingartner, Weisl, Werner, Wertheim, Wiesenfeld, Wiesenthal, Wischnitz, Wittgenstein, Worms, Wuerzburger, Warschauer, Warschawski, Weissenberg, Wilner (from Vilno, Lithuania), Wolkowitz, Wronkow (from Wronke, Poland);

Zeller, Zimmern, Zeulzer or Zilzer, and Zunz (from Zons, Germany).

(g) *NAMES INDICATING COUNTRIES:*

Frankl, Schwab, Hess, Sachs (also derived from Isaac), Preuss, Preis, Schlesinger, Boehm, Oesterreicher, Oystrak, Schweizer, Hollaender; Welisch, Wallach, Bloch (meaning "Welsh" French-Spanish or Italian Jew), Pollak, Englaender, Spitzer (from the area of Zips, Slovakia), Littauer, Litwin, Litvinov, Reuss, Reiss (means Russian), Tuerk, and Tuerkl.

(h) *HOUSE SIGN AND NEIGHBORHOOD NAMES*

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most people were still illiterate. They could not read street names (only very few streets had established names), much less personal names; but they could recognize signboards which identified certain houses and sometimes replaced the names of the proprietors. The stores in the cities of the eighteenth century also used signboards for identification purposes and the stores as well as the owners of the stores were better known by their signs than by their first or family names. As a result, within, and outside of the eighteenth century ghettos, people were better known by the signs which they displayed at their homes and stores so that they quickly acquired surnames from those signs. A few examples show Jewish family names which originated in German-speaking countries in this manner:

Adler (eagle), Blum (flower), Drach (dragon), Engel (angel), Flesch (bottle), Gans (goose), Gruenhut (green hat), Haas (hare), Krebs (crab), Lamm (Lamb), Nussbaum (nut tree), Ochs (steer), Pfau (peacock), Ring, Rothschild (red signboard), Schwarzschild (black signboard), Stern (star), Strauss (ostrich), Taub (dove). Also Einhorn (unicorn), Finkel (finch), Fuchs (fox), Hochschild (high signboard), Schildkraut (turtle), Stieglitz (goldfinch), Tannenbaum (fir tree), Weinstock (vine), Weintraub (grape), and Zeissl (sparrow).

Some neighborhood names fall also into this category. For example, Van der Porten (Dutch: designating a person or family living near the gate), Van Dam (at the dike), Altschul (near the old synagogue), Schulhof (school-yard), Teichmann (near a pond), Brunner (at the well), and so on.

(i) *PATRONYMICA*

Some of the family names originated from the simple equalization of the original Hebrew designation of one's father's name. Thus, among such names we find, for example: Benaroyo (son of Aron), Benario (son of Arieh), Bendavid; or in the German practice, Aronson, Bergelson (son of Baruch = Bergl), Isaacson, Josephson, Leiserson

(son of Eleasar), Mendelsohn, Phillipson, Robinson, Samuelson, Seligsohn, Wolfsohn.

According to the early German customs, some of these patronymica appeared in a Latinized form with the "-es" ending, such as Abeles, Ahrends (son of Aron), Lewis, Simmons, Berglas (son of Baruch), Hayes or Chayes (son of Hayim), Jeiteles (son of Jacob, from the diminutive form of Jeitel), Isserlis (son of Issachar), Jolles (son of Joel), Karpeles (son of Karpel = fish, attribute of Ephraim and Joshua), Moscheles, Teweles (son of Tewje, Yiddish diminutive of David).

During their migrations and sojourn within the eastern European Slavonic sectors, many Jewish names acquired patronymical endings according to the Slavonic usage. Thus, we have names such as Abramowicz, Aronovich, Berkowitz, Hershkovitch, Jacobovitz, Kaplowitz (son of Jacob, in diminutive form Kappel), Lebowitz, Mankiewicz (from Menke = Menahem), Meyerowitz, Rabinovich, Rubinow, Schmulevitz, Agronski (from Aron), Abramowski, Israelski, Jakobowski, Lipski, Minkowski (from Minke = Menahem), Mirski (from Meir), Markowski, Schmalinski (from Samuel), Tobianski.

Occasionally, the name of the mother appears in the family name: for example, Gluecksohn, Gutkind, Perles, Rivkind (from Rivke = Rebecca), Dworkin (from Dworje = Deborah), Suesskind (from Suesse = Susanna or Shoshanna).

(j) *TRADE AND OCCUPATIONAL NAMES*

Professional family names have often been adopted by Jews before the enactment of compulsory legislation. Such names became legal family names thereafter, and are very common; they show what kind of trades and occupations Jews had in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some of the names go back to the Middle Ages, particularly names within the Spanish and Arabic cultural area. Some of these names are listed below:

Goldschmidt, Schmucker (jeweler), Goldscheider, Goldmann, Silbermann, Perlmann (this name may also be deduced from the feminine name Perle [pearl]), Margolis and Margolith (meaning pearl in post-biblical Hebrew), Steiner, Steinschneider (stonecutter, gravestone carver), Fleischer and Metzger (butcher), Schechter (slaughterer), Kuttner (assistant to a slaughterer), Spielmann (musician), Taenzer (dancer), Springer (acrobat), Scherzer (jester), Fiedler, Fidelman and Geiger (violinist), Pfeifer (artist on wind instruments), Pauker (drummer), Kuenstler (artist), Schulmann (teacher; this name is also frequently used in the Hebrew form Melamed), Cantor or Singer (one who leads the chants in the synagogue), in Hebrew Hassan or Hazen, Schreiber (scribe), Parnas (head of congregation), Magid (preacher), Zoellner (collector of

customs, duties or taxes), Steuer or Steuerer (collector of taxes), Bader (barber), Baecker or Beck (baker), Binder (cooper), Bleicher (bleacher), Brauer (beer brewer), Brenner (distiller), Fischer, Gerber or Lederer (tanner), Glaser, also Polish Sklar or Sklarek (glazier), Kirschner (furrier), Klemperer (plumber), Koch (cook), Kreisler (hairdresser). Pelzer or Pilzer (furrier), Schneider (tailor), Stricker (rope-maker), Tischler (carpenter), Zucker and Zuckermann (confect-ioner), Sandler (shoemaker, from the hellenistic Hebrew word *sandelor*; however, Sandler may derive also from Alexander), Ackermann and Bauer (farmer), Huberman (owner of a farm, from medieval Huber: owner of a Hof or farm), Faktor (money lender), Schenker and Weinschenk (tavern owner); Handler, Kraemer, Greislen, Tandler are names indicating a merchant or dealer. Seidmann is a silk merchant, Leinkram owner of a linen store, Salzmann is one who sells salt, Tabacznik, a tobacconist, and Weizmann deals in grain. Messinger is a dealer in brass objects, Farbstein, Bleiweiss, Bluehweiss and Goldfarb are dealers in dyes; Nadel, Fingerhut, and Knoepfmacher are names that belong to the needle trade (the names mean needle, thimble and button-maker, respectively). Goldwasser has the same meaning as Goldscheider, indicating a jeweler who tests gold objects with nitric acid, i.e., gold water. Goldstein and Silberstein represent the jewelry trade. Of course, there are many more names coming from the professions, and they are not limited to the Jews. But certain Jewish names are typical for certain Jewish professions.

(k) *NAMES DESCRIBING PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS*

Names describing personal characteristics are very frequent among Jews and non-Jews. Hebrew characteristics of a person such as Gadol (big) or Katan (small) are frequent among Jews of Spanish or Oriental origin. The German and Yiddish speaking Jews have such names originating from the German and other European languages and occasionally from Hebrew; for example, Gross (big), Grossman, Magnus (Latin for "big"), Klein (small), Lang (tall), Kurz (short), Weiss, Weissmann, Albu (from Latin), Bial (Polish), Braun, Brauner, Gruen (green), Grau (gray), Graumann, Blau, Roth, Gelb (yellow), Schwarz (black), Schwarzkopf (black head), Tschernick, Chertok (Ukrainian for "black"), Kraus (curled), Weissbart (white beard), Schwarzbart (black beard), Rothbart (red beard), Altmann (old man), Jung, Schoen (handsome), Jaffe (Hebrew: beautiful), and so on. Another type of name shows spiritual characteristics or designates a special behavior of a person; for example: Scharf (sharp), Schnell (quick), Stolz (proud), Kluger (a wise man), Lustig and Froehlich (cheerful), Wunderlich (a remarkable, or an odd person), Aufricht

(sincere), Biedermann (simpleton), Ehrlich or Redlich (honest), Freund (friend or friendly), Froman and Frommer (pious), Kadisch (Hebrew: holy), Geduldig (patient), Zadik (Hebrew: just), Gerechter (Yiddish: just), Glueck and Gluecksmann (lucky), Gutwillig (cooperative), Wahrhaftig (truthful), Wohlmuth (good mood), etc.

(l) *NICKNAMES*

Close to these types of names are nicknames, which are sometimes slightly derogatory: for example, Schnabel (beak), Geldzaehler (one who likes to count money), Schorr or Shor (Hebrew: ox or steer;) but this is also a surname for Joseph. Other nicknames which became Jewish family names are Koenig, Kaiser, Prinz, Graf, Kroll (Polish and Slovak: king), Zupan (Slavonic: district chief, also overseer). In this category are to be included such names as Springer, Sommer, Herbst and Winter (indicating the seasons of the year when some Jewish peddlers may have arrived in a town or place), as well as Morgenstern, Morgenroth and Morgenthau designating a person arising early in the morning, sometimes calling other Jews to attend early morning religious services.

(m) *ARBITRARY NAMES*

When the governments of Austria, Prussia and Russia ordered that all Jews must adopt family names, there was some resistance among the more conservative elements of the Jewish communities in the East, as stated above. In such cases the authorities selected the names for these Jews, sometimes with the advice of the leaders of Jewish communities who cooperated with the authorities and knew personally the Jewish families in question. Such names were then forced on the families. These names were more often than not derisive and derogatory, inasmuch as they might have been considered as a hidden punishment for a non-obedience of government orders. This may explain some of the odd names such as Kanarienvogel (canary bird), Mausehund (mouse-dog), Regenwasser (rainwater), Raubvogel (predatory bird), Turteltaub (turtledove), Regenbogen and Regenstreif (rainbow), and many more of this type. Most names of this sort originated in Austrian Galicia where the name-giving procedure was in some instances accompanied by blackmailing and bribe-taking. It happened that those who failed to pay an extra fee received unpleasant and derogatory family names.

Other arbitrary names were combinations of old Jewish first names with a German or Yiddish ending. Names of this sort are, for example, Cohnreich (a rich Cohen), Ehrenthal, Ohrenstein (both from Aaron plus a German ending), Freudenthal, Kornfeld, Eliasberg, Feilchen-

feld, Gluecksmann, Goldmann, Perlmann, Josephsthal, Katzenstein (Katz is an acronym for Cohen Zedek, meaning a pious Cohen), Moosheim, Rubinstein, Wolfsheim (the latter may also originate from Wolf and Hayim). Some German family names end in "-stamm" (*stamm* is equal to "ancestry"), some in "-heim" (meaning "home" or "place"). The names Kohnstamm, Sternheim, Wolfsheim, Moosheimer fall into this category. Other artificial names are poetical expressions of some natural phenomena, such as Lichtenstern (bright star), Lilienthal (valley of lilies), Sonnenthal (sunny valley), Schoenfeld (beautiful field), Sonnenfels (sunny rock), Falkenburg (falcon's castle). However, some of these names are also place-names in Germany and Austria.

(n) *ACRONYMS*

Names formed from the initial letters of a person's name and surname, or of his profession, were quite frequent among the Jews of the Middle Ages and thereafter. For example, the name of the son of a rabbi whose name was Jehuda Levi may have been abridged to *B*en *R*abi *J*ehuda *L*evi or Brill,[11] the son of an Akiba may have been known as Back (*B*en *A*kiba).[12] The priestly family name *K*ohen was frequently accompanied by Zedek (pious or holy), which formed the acronym Katz,[13] as already mentioned. The family name Levi was sometimes accompanied by the prename Segan (priestly assistant), which gave the acronym Segal (*S*egan *L*evi), or Siegel.[14] Shaliach Zibbur (a leader in the synagogue) became a Schatz,[15] and a person from the community of Frankfurt was a Popp or Popper (F and P being interchangeable in the Hebrew pronunciation).[16] Of course, more often the full name Frankfurter became the family name of Jews coming from that city. Among the Jews of the eighteenth century, the community of Eisenstadt was known as Asch. The family name Ascher, therefore, sometimes indicates a person originating from Eisenstadt. The descendants of martyrs, that is, Jews who were killed by the Inquisition or as a result of riots and religious persecutions during the Middle Ages and thereafter, were named by the rabbis as Sera Kadosh (of holy descent), which abbreviated created the name of Sachs. However, this name may have also indicated that a person came from

---

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[12] *Juedisches Lexikon,* Vol. IV, p. 391 (1927).

[13] Kessler, *op. cit.,* p. 55.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 56. However, the name Segal, Siegel, Siegler and the like has been also used as a diminutive for Isaac, pronounced Eisig in Yiddish.

[15] Kessler, *op. cit.,* p. 68.

[16] *Ibid,* p. 51.

Saxony to some other area, or that his father's name was Isaac.

There are other acronyms which became family names; for example, Schick (*Sh'me Jehudim Kadoshim* = the names of Jews are holy) which were used and came into being among pious Jews who did not accept a new family name in order not to desecrate the "holy" Jewish name, but who were ready to take the acronym, perhaps as a symbol or as a silent protest against the name-giving authorities.

(o) *CHANGED NAMES*

Family names have been frequently changed among the Jews, inasmuch as they did not consider them to be hereditary until late in the eighteenth century. One of the reasons spelled out in the Austrian ordinance of 1787 which prescribed the compulsory acquisition of Jewish family names was the fact that Jews had an inclination of frequently changing their names to avoid payment of debts, taxes and other obligations. In the future, no change of names was allowed without the expressed approval of the appropriate authorities.[17]

In the nineteenth century after their emancipation in most European countries, many Jews found it expedient to change their Jewish sounding names into gentile names. Especially the Jews in Germany who became assimilated in the early nineteenth century changed their names in this fashion. Juda Loeb Baruch became Ludwig Boerne, the Hirsches became Heinrichs; the Levis, Lieberts; the Kohns, Kolmars and Korffs. In Hungary, toward the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, many Jewish names were changed to Hungarian names, since the government openly encouraged the Jews to adopt Hungarian names as a policy of magyarization of minorities. Here we encounter the Kemenys and Kovacs who were formerly Kohns, Fehers, formerly Weiss, Szueczs whose name was Suess, and Gabors who were formerly Gruenwalds.

In the United States the change of names became widespread particularly where the immigration and naturalization authorities suggested such changes because of the difficulty of spelling unusual foreign names. The change often included the same first letter of the foreign name with an anglicized continuation. A Rosenkrantz or Rosenzweig took the name Rogers, or simply Rose; a Silberstein became Simon or Silver; a Licht changed slightly to Light; a Mannheimer took the name Madison; a Teitelbaum, Taylor; a Weinstein, Winston; and a Weichselbaum, Wilson. However, in some instances Jews with difficult Slavonic names changed them into more familiar Jewish names; a Golombek (little dove, in Polish) changed his name to Goldman, a name which was easier to spell but was still a

---

[17] *Juedisches Lexikon,* Vol IV, p. 399.

Jewish name; and Lesczynski became Leiser or Lesser; while a Wolkowicz may have changed his name to Wolf.

This Americanization of Jewish names is still in progress, especially where business or professional considerations prevail. Nevertheless, many Jewish personalities in the United States never changed their Jewish names and still achieved high honors and positions. To name only a few: Brandeis, Cardozo, Morgenthau, Goldberg, Ribicoff, Javits and Kissinger. Other Jews or descendants of Jews changed their names only slightly in order to make spelling and pronunciation easier: Blum became Bloom; Goldwasser's decendants became Goldwaters, and a Bernstein shortened the family name to Burns.

The Jews in Israel have also been encouraged to change their German and Slavonic names into Hebrew family names; it became almost a duty to change one's name when one became a leading politician or high public servant in the Israeli government. Ben Gurion's original name was Green, Mrs. Meir's name was Meyersohn, and the former prime minister Eschkol's family name was Shkolnik. General Bar Lev's former name was Barlawski, and the former prime minister Sharett's name was Chertok. It appears that in the future the imposed German and Yiddish names will gradually be replaced by American names in the United States and Canada, and by Hebrew names in Israel.

[*III*] CONCLUSION

The family names of all nationalities disclose some interesting facts concerning the ancestors of their families. George Washington's name indicates that his direct ancestors were living in Durham County, England, where the town of Washington is located; and Lincoln's ancestors most probably came from Lincolnshire in eastern England. The names of the Jewish families disclose sometimes even more, because the Jews were often migrating from country to country and the family names are an echo of these Jewish wanderings during the centuries. Thus the family name Cardozo (the Portuguese spelling is Cardoso) reveals that the ancestors of this prominent American Jewish family were living in the sixteenth century in Portugal: from there they emigrated to the Netherlands or to its colonies, and from there to North America. The ancestors of the Goldwaters must have been living in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century in Poland or in the Polish-speaking area of Germany or Austria, where the German-Jewish name Goldwasser originated. The name also shows that the Goldwater's ancestors were jewelers or assayers who examined the purity of gold. The family name Kissinger discloses that the name stems from the town of Kitzingen or Bad Kissingen in Bavaria from where the family migrated to another place.

The foregoing is necessarily an attempt at revealing only a part of the fascinating area of Jewish onomastics. It should be noted, however, that onomastics cannot pretend to be exact like mathematics or geography because the origin of a name may have more than one source, as shown in many instances above. It should also be mentioned that many of the recited names are by no means exclusively Jewish, but quite frequently appear as names of non-Jews. Some names, such as Frank, Reiss, Huber, Mueller, Lang or Gross are even more frequent among German gentiles than among Jews. Nevertheless, the source in many cases may be the same in both instances; it shows always either an ancestor's name, a place, a profession, or a personal characteristic of one of the ancestors who took such family name. Only the arbitrary and Yiddish sounding names to which reference is made above may be considered as typical Jewish names.

MLA DISCONTINUES *ABSTRACT* SERIES

In a statement dated June 25, 1976, Wm. D. Schaefer, Executive Director of the Modern Language Association, informed all participating journal editors that, because of financial difficulties, the Association's *Abstract* system would be discontinued after publication of the 1975 volume: "Our efforts last year to create a $100,000 Emergency Fund through membership contributions raised only $18,000, and this year's campaign directed to Life Members and those who have been in the Association twenty years or more has raised only $20,000 toward a goal of $200,000."

Aside from financial problems, however, there had been those who, from the start, withheld support from the program: "Even after five years of compiling and printing abstracts, we have not been able to persuade all of our colleagues of their value, and there are still a significant number of members philosophically opposed to abstracts in our field. A related, but more important, problem has been that we have been able to convince only 400 journal editors of the value of printed collections of abstracts."

Names has supported the MLA *Abstracts* series from its inception.