

Name Worksheet

Ester, Anna, and 'Abdallah



In many times and places, Jews have drawn baby names from a mix of sources.
 We can observe distinctly Jewish Biblical Hebrew names, local versions of
 Biblical names, and local non-Biblical names in common usage at the same time.
 Some examples:

| | Biblical Hebrew | Local variants of Biblical | Local non- Jewish |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 10th Century Cairo | Ephraim, Miriam | Da'ud, Rebekah | 'Abdalla, Jamila (Arabic) |
| 13th Century England | Jechiel, Zippora | Elias, Anna | Peter, Joie (English, French) |
| 16th Century Rome | Aron, Ester | Giuseppe, Rebecca | Angelo, Allegrezza (Italian) |

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Some examples from contemporary America:

Biblical Hebrew: Tamar, Eliyahu

Local variants of Biblical: Hannah, Jacob

Local non-Jewish: Sophie, Max

A new category: Modern Hebrew: Dalia, Ilan

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Write the answers to as many of these questions as you can. We don't expect you to know all of the answers. We'll be researching what you don't know.

Your Name:

Which category is your first name in?

Hebrew name:

Do you have a Hebrew or Jewish ritual name? What is it?

How does your Hebrew/Jewish ritual name compare to your regular name?
Circle one of these 5 options:

1. the same as your regular name (like Miriam and Miriam)
2. a different pronunciation of your regular name (like Yaakov and Jacob)
3. a name starting with the same letter (like Avraham and Andrew)
4. a similar meaning (like Yaffa and Sheina – both mean pretty)
5. a totally different name (like Rachel and Charlotte)

Naming after relatives:

Was your first name given in honor of a relative? Was your Hebrew name given in honor of a relative? If so, who?

Was that relative(s) alive when you were born (common among Sephardi/Mizrahi Jews)?

Was the naming in *memory* of the relative(s) (common among Ashkenazi Jews)?

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Did that relative(s) have the same name as you? A name starting with the same letter? A name with a similar meaning?

Now look at these fun facts:

Onomastic Wordplay

Coded Jewish Names



Historically, some Jews have used names popular in their surrounding society and interpreted them as similar-sounding Hebrew words. For example, the Yiddish name *Shneyer/Shneur* comes from the Spanish/French *senior*, meaning "elder, master," but Jews interpreted it as Hebrew *shnei or* – two light[s]. This practice continues among American Jews today:

Aiden: Irish for little fire, interpreted as Eden
Amalya: international, interpreted as work of God
Eliana: Greek, interpreted as my God answered
Evan: Welsh version of John, interpreted as rock
Liam: Irish version of William, interpreted as my people
Lila: Persian for lilac tree, interpreted as night
Maya: international, interpreted as water

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Divine Inspiration



Many names used by Jews (and others), both ancient and modern, are *theophoric*, meaning they reference God. Some examples:

Boys:

Azriel (my help is God)
Daniel (God is my judge)
Eliav (my God is father)
Elior (God is my light)
Gabriel (strength of God)
Uriel (God is my light)

Girls:

Ariella (lioness of God)
Batya (daughter of God)
Danya (judgment of God)
Elisheva (God is my oath)
Galia (wave of God)
Talia (dew of God)

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Do any of your personal names (first, middle, Hebrew) or the names of anyone in your family fall into these categories? Which ones?

Family name (also known as a surname or last name):

Do you know the origin and meaning of your family name?

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Some family names are historically Jewish, but others became part of Jewish communities more recently. Do any of these recent adaptations apply to your family name? Circle those that apply.

1. Was changed to sound more American (or British, etc.).
2. Entered our family through an ancestor who converted to Judaism.
3. Entered our family when a non-Jewish ancestor married a Jewish ancestor.
4. Hyphenated combination of two family names.
5. Was changed to sound more Israeli.