Names, Identifications, and Social Change  
Naming Practices and the (Re-)Shaping of Identities and Relationships within German Jewish Communities in the Late Middle Ages

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I dedicate this work to my family, the ASSAF/LEVI family.
1. Naming practices and the demarcation of social boundaries

Jewish communities in the German-speaking territories underwent profound changes during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, both in terms of the internal organisation of Ashkenazi milieux and the relationship between Jews and Christians.¹

This period saw the emergence of a distinctive Jewish German culture, one aspect of which was the transformation of the Jewish onomasticon, most visibly expressed in the increasing adoption of German vernacular names. The new name-giving patterns, emerging during this period, also exhibit modifications in the division of roles within Ashkenazi families which took place as a result of changes in economic and kinship structures and redefined women's position within Jewish communities. These naming practices are in fact one of the few precious indicators we have for these changes.²

The role of semiotic practices – coining names, borrowing models, naming and designating persons – in shaping identities and social relationships is at the heart of this dissertation.


1.1. Names and identities in the scholarly literature

In recent decades, the analysis of naming practices has been recognized as a useful and valuable research tool in many fields in the humanities.\(^3\) Historians of medieval Europe in particular have turned to name analysis to cast light on processes of social and cultural change. The contribution of these tools to the study of medieval societies is most evident in the research on kinship and family history and in studies, dealing with the construction of collective identities in inter-cultural or inter-religious settings.\(^4\)

Historians of medieval Europe have focused on the role of personal names – mostly second names – in the construction of collective identities in various contexts: particularly religion, ethnicity, gender, and family.\(^5\) Underlying these studies is the assumption that names are not simple indicators of social change, but a social practice involving power relations and a strategy for reshaping social identities and

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\(^5\) Beech, Bourin, and Chareille, Personal Names Studies; for recent research on given names, see Rolker and Signori, Konkurrierende Zugehörigkeit(en).
relationships. This approach is a departure from earlier studies which often treated names as simple and transparent indicators of social affiliations, based on the analysis of the linguistic aspects of names such as semantics and etymology.

Beginning in the 1980s, historians of medieval kinship, like Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy, analysed shifts in naming practices on the micro level within specific families, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Regarding names as symbolic goods, they examined names as one component of a range of goods and services that circulated within kin groups. Such an approach to the analysis of naming practices yielded new insights about the role of names in processes of social change and of shaping group identities in late medieval Europe.

In the 1990s, a group of scholars, based in Paris and led by Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille, published a series of exhaustive studies examining onomastic patterns in medieval Europe, with a focus on the appearance of second names and models of personal designation in various sources. This large-scale research project uses statistical tools extensively, reconstructing major changes in naming practices

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over a long period of time. Within this framework, naming patterns – specifically the appearance of second names – are examined in relation to broader social change in kinship structures, literacy, and political structures. The analysis of a vast corpus of names enables historians to reconstruct major naming trends and to point at long-term changes. Yet some historians also realised that statistical analysis of changing trends, useful for identifying the outlines of processes of social change, is not sufficient when it comes to providing explanations.

In the present study, on the macro-level, I use statistical tools for recovering long-term changes in naming trends and for reconstructing major cultural trends. On the micro-level, my analysis concentrates on specific cases, including entire kin groups (where possible) in order to reconstruct name-sharing patterns or patterns of transmitting names, with a focus on the relations between maternal and paternal kin. Here, specific actors and the webs of particular relationships they find themselves in emerge, providing clues for adopting names and transmitting them.

Names are but one option for identifying persons. There is a crucial difference between looking for names and examining whole identification systems. For instance, designations that define persons through kin relations enable to locate persons within families and sometimes suggest their position within households. Names alone cannot fulfil this function. Scholars have often isolated this option (names), which has often led to studying names as an object in itself, thus disregarding their functions in identifying persons. Such functions are not absolute but relational, for names are but one option in a broader repertoire of signs through which persons can be identified and marked.

11 See also Beech, Bourin, and Chareille, *Personal Names Studies*.
12 Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’”; see also the introduction to Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*. 
Although the value of name giving practices as evidence has long been recognised in historical research, historians of medieval Ashkenaz have so far paid them little attention. The few studies available usually considered the product, not the process – that is, names as linguistic units, bearing meaning to be deciphered, but hardly naming as a social practice. Hence one explored names as indicators of historical change, but not their role in social processes – how they were used to shape relationships and identities, to mark paths between individuals within kin groups, or to construct family traditions within Jewish communities.

At this point, it is necessary to offer a few explanatory remarks on the concept of ‘identity’, which is prevalent in such studies. A central critique of the conventional identity discourse is that ‘identity’ is often perceived as immutable, homogenous, and stable entity. Theorists of identity have offered instead the concept of ‘Zugehörigkeit’.


Recent studies replaced the common term ‘Identität’ with the term ‘Zugehörigkeit’. See Christof Rolker, Das Spiel der Namen: Familie und Gesellschaft in Konstanz (ca. 1350-ca. 1510) (Schriftliche Habilitationsleistung, University of Constance, 2012); Rolker and Signori, Konkurrierende Zugehörigkeit(en).
‘identification’, which calls for specifying of the agents involved in identifying. The concept of identification is that of a process, bringing historical change and social dynamism back into the picture. Furthermore, underlying this approach is the assumption that several identities co-exist in particular social contexts. Identity theorists, stressing social roles, suggest that identities of individuals are formed within “the differences in perception and action that accompany a role as it relates to counterroles.” While conventional identity discourse underscores the uniformity of groups and the similarity between individuals belonging to a social group, the concept of ‘identification’ assumes that negotiation and interaction between actors are involved in the process of identity-construction and that “the emphasis is not on similarity with others in the same role, but on the individuality and interrelatedness with others in counterroles in the group or interaction context.”

The essentialist assumptions underlying conventional uses of the category ‘identity’ are also evident in an entrenched image of medieval societies, which sees them characterised by the dominance of ascribed identities. Medieval people were often understood in narrow terms of social estates. However, even when estate identities and their stability have been questioned, religious identities were conceived

18 Ibid., 227.
as more stable in medieval historiography, especially with respect to Jews and Christians. In this context, historical actors were often analysed with reference to specific roles and their identities tend to be reduced to the religious aspect.

Recent research in cultural studies has shown that semiotic practices can play a significant role within the formation of social groups and in the transformation of cultural repertoires within ‘societies in transition’. Historians of medieval Europe have demonstrated that similar processes occurred within Christian communities, with the crystallisation of Western Christendom as a supra-regional power during the high Middle Ages. An important sign of the consolidation of ‘Christian Europe’ as a cultural space was the gradual merging of naming practices, as saints’ names, particularly ‘universal’ saints, spread throughout European communities. In this setting, uniformity rather than diversity – on the structural level – became the vital force of identity construction. Jewish communities, on the other hand, in Europe in general and in German-speaking regions in particular, displayed no similar

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23 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, 244.
tendencies. Nonetheless, as I will try to show, they also underwent significant processes of change.

1.3. Ashkenazi names in historiographical discussions

The perspective which postulates a sharp distinction between Jewish and Christian collectivities confronting each other often imposed a nationalist reading on heterogeneous medieval realities and tended to reduce persons and groups to a single, admittedly, important dimension, of their identity – religious affiliation. Older studies on medieval Ashkenaz, however, brought to light unsuspected commonalities and close contacts between Jews and Christians. Nevertheless, nineteenth-century hopes of assimilation went hand in hand with a tendency to disregard the fact that cultural commonalities do not rule out fierce conflict, as research on medieval Iberia has amply shown. But more importantly, older pioneering work in this vein pointed out resemblances by gathering similar or shared names; this provided no clue to their meaning or function.

Work by non-Jewish German scholars, analysing personal names for understanding historical processes, was mainly employed to delineate continuity and the strengthening of ethnic identities. On the other hand, German Jewish scholars, due to the particular political conditions under which they lived and acted, developed a


25 Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages (New York: Atheneum, 1969); Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland; Zunz, Namen der Juden.

special sensibility to the meaning and function of naming practices within inter-group relations. Such works, discussed in the following, demonstrated that names, especially given names, played an important role in shaping identities and relationships between various milieux. Yet they often tended to build catalogues of names rather than examine naming models or look at how names operated rather than at what they seemed to indicate.

It was not until names carried by Jews were subject to external legal regulation that Jewish scholars took up this theme in their research. Following a royal decree of 1837, which prohibited Jews within Prussia from carrying “Christian” given names, the leading Jewish German scholar and founder of the Wissenschaft des Judentums Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) published the first treatise on the history of Jewish names. 27 Surveying name repertoires from various Jewish communities from Antiquity until 1781, Zunz has emphasised the symbiotic relations between Jewish cultural repertoires and the surrounding non-Jewish cultures. In this work, Zunz demonstrated that throughout their histories, Jews, having spoken the local languages – not Hebrew, also adopted names drawn from the cultures among which they lived.

Many scholars, especially throughout the twentieth century, have rejected Zunz’s earlier hypothesis. 28 Modern scholars have often perceived Hebrew as a tool for fashioning Jewish identities, while the vernacular has been often regarded as a more pragmatic tool for communication in daily contacts with non-Jews. 29 Thus scholars, usually focusing on the religious aspect of Jewish histories, tended to

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29 For example Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland, 105-106. This approach has been recently challenged by Kirsten A. Fudeman, Vernacular Voices: Language and Identity in Medieval French Jewish Communities (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). See also Przybilski, Kulturtransfer, 153-175.
identify the use of Hebrew and Hebrew names with an attempt to mark Jewish identity. In addition, the understanding of religious ideals and practices – specifically within Israeli nationalist historiography – as an essential element of Jewish history, which presupposes the existence of one Jewish people, inspired the association of ‘Hebrew’ with ‘Jewish’ and ‘vernacular’ with ‘borrowed’. This approach also intensified a marked gender bias: since Jewish women in the medieval period often had vernacular names, not referencing religious meanings to the same extent as male names did, female names were usually omitted from scholarly discussion, as if they lacked any meaning whatsoever.

In modern historiography, the spoken language used by Jews and the language of their names have become the litmus paper of their relationships with non-Jews; given names have become important ‘cultural indicators’. Scholars often tended either to reduce the role and meaning of vernacular names in Ashkenazi culture – for they perceived them as “foreign” elements, or to embrace them uncritically as self-evident markers of acculturation, without distinguishing between different types and modes of borrowing. For instance, historians have usually disregarded the distinction between adopting elements (specific names) and appropriating models for coining names. In terms of identification, the difference between borrowing a ready-made element and borrowing a model, on the basis of which a unique cultural product could be produced, is crucial. It is thus important to distinguish between the various types of names – both in Hebrew and in the vernacular – and between distinct onomastic models on which they were based.

31 Zunz, Namen der Juden, 70-71.
33 On the difference between cultural products and models, see for example Algazi, “Kulturkult”. 
1.4. Acculturation, self-distinction, and Jewish-Christian relations

Throughout the Middle Ages, distinct Jewish cultures developed in the various regions, in which Jews had lived. Although Jewish communities in the Mediterranean region, in Northern Europe or the Levant shared a Jewish religious identity, they still developed different cultures, and distinct religious traditions and self-images. The interactions between Jews and their non-Jewish surrounding in each region stimulated different cultural concepts and practices and contributed to the emergence of varying Jewish identities, which cannot be reduced to religious affiliation alone.

Different historiographical approaches to Jewish medieval history in these areas have developed. Well into the 1990s, the historiographical discussion of Jewish-Christian relationships in medieval Europe was dominated by two models, both heavily influenced by ideological positions and largely mutually exclusive. The one presupposed an assimilation of Jews into the surrounding non-Jewish culture and undisturbed co-existence between the groups. This model, generally favoured by the representatives of the ‘Wissenschaft des Judentums’ in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was mainly applied to Jewish communities under Islamic rule. The other model assumed segregation of Jewish communities from the rest of society. Some scholars maintained that such isolation, generally attributed to Jewish communities in Northern Europe, resulted from Christian hostility to the Jews; others emphasized a self-imposed seclusion.

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The categories with which nineteenth-century Jewish historians operated shaped this binary paradigm considerably. In the age of the Jewish Enlightenment movement (Haskala), Jewish engagement in the secular world was advocated, often leading to the adoption of non-Jewish habits. Against this background, Jewish scholars understood ‘acculturation’ as ‘assimilation’ in the sense of similarity, closeness to the majority culture. As the Jewish elite under Muslim rule during the Middle Ages, especially in Spain, was well integrated into the surrounding non-Jewish culture, nineteenth-century Jewish scholars set the phenomenon of Spanish Jewish courtiers as the model for medieval acculturation. Ashkenazi rabbinic elite, on the other hand, showed no similar tendencies and was therefore perceived as isolated from Christian society. Underlying this approach is the assumption that acculturation implies similarity and that this, in a medieval setting, could be looked for only in a cultural non-religious space, for religion was considered the distinctive aspect of medieval Jewish life.

Post-war Jewish historiographical trends tended often to a nationalist reading of history, which highlighted inter alia the frequent persecutions of Jews. An example of earlier works, which dealt with Jewish-Christian interactions, though still reflecting a rather binary perception of religious and cultural affiliations, is the study...
by Jacob Katz, published in 1961.\textsuperscript{40} When Katz referred to ‘normal’ social relations between these two groups, he immediately restricted this claim by saying that “behind such ‘natural’ relationships there always lurked the ideology of separateness based on the religious conceptions of both the Jewish and the Christian groups”.\textsuperscript{41} Based on the assumption that within medieval society religion was the “be-all and end-all”,\textsuperscript{42} Katz’s analysis leaves no room for social interactions, in which players from various religious groups might have breached the limits of their religious role and could have created a base for cultural exchange. In this manner, Katz and other scholars have often confined historical actors to a one-dimensional religious identity.

More recently, historians of the Middle Ages have re-evaluated the category of ‘acculturation’ and its meaning, particularly for medieval Jewish history.\textsuperscript{43} Instead of speaking simply of ‘borrowing’, cultural processes shaping Jewish-Christian relations can be better understood by the term ‘appropriation’; the latter suggests that models and symbols borrowed from another culture were adjusted and re-interpreted according to the needs of the borrowing culture – in this case, the Jews.\textsuperscript{44} Amos Funkenstein, who was active in the second half of the twentieth century, had long ago turned attention to what he termed ‘the dialectics of assimilation’, which posed a serious challenge to the use of binary categories in the analysis of interactions between religious groups. Funkenstein maintained that throughout their history, even

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{40} For recent historiographical synopsis, see Lasker, “From Victim to Murderer”. (in Hebrew); Cf. Ivan G. Marcus, “The Israeli Historiography of the History of the Jews in the Middle Ages: From National Positivism Towards a New Social and Cultural History”, ibid.: 109-140.
\textsuperscript{41} Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance, 7.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{43} See for example the introductory chapter in Ivan G. Marcus, Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).
\end{footnotesize}
when Jews distinguished themselves as such, they did so by using the language – in the wide sense of the term – of the surrounding culture.\textsuperscript{45} An important aspect of this analytical approach is that assimilation is an active process with an “inward motion”, which means that appropriated cultural items/models from the surrounding culture are assimilated into the culture of the borrowing group. This is to be distinguished from a process in which the group itself (the Jews) is assimilated into the ‘host-society’, while the minority group is submerged into a foreign culture and therefore expected to neglect and repress the older culture (as in case of coerced baptism). Instead, the minority group preserves its original culture, borrowing cultural models and products from the majority group and assimilating them into its own. A second aspect of the concept of ‘the dialectics of assimilation’, which seems inseparable from the first one, is that self-distinction does not contradict borrowing from another, even to a great extent, competitive culture.

Funkenstein has criticised the essentialist approach prevalent in Jewish historiography. This approach proposes that in spite of the changing circumstances of Jewish lives throughout history, there is an immutable core defining that which is “Jewish” and that which is to be distinguished from “external” influences – syntheses produced by interactions between Jews and non-Jews. He also suggested that instead of operating within a cluster of binary oppositions that distinguish between ‘essential’ and ‘contingent’, ‘autochthonous’ and ‘borrowed’ elements or models, these supposedly contradictory phenomena are, in fact, different aspects of the same process.\textsuperscript{46} Like ‘identities’, cultures are not immutable entities but dynamic processes

\textsuperscript{45} Funkenstein, “Changes”; “The Dialectics of Assimilation”.
\textsuperscript{46} “The Dialectics of Assimilation”, 10-11.
in which the relations between varied options and models are constructed, negotiated, and subject to historical change.  

Another important change in approach in this context pertains to the position of Jews, especially the view of medieval Jews as weak and passive vis-à-vis their Christian oppressors.  

The revision of this perception started with Katz’s book *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, showing that Jews felt resent and deep hatred towards their Christian neighbours, thus limiting contacts between members of the two groups as much as possible.

In recent years, the historiography of medieval Ashkenaz, dealing particularly with Jewish-Christian relations, has shifted focus from Christian to Jewish perspectives, adopting concepts and tools from anthropology, literary criticism, art history, and gender studies.  

Older studies written by Jewish historians often concentrated on inner-Jewish issues with little regard to broader changes that took place within Christian society. Such works relied mostly on Jewish sources.  

On the other hand, non-Jewish historians, specifically in post-war Germany, have tended to study Jewish-Christian relations mainly on the basis of Latin and vernacular German sources. The focus was thus on the examination of the history of Ashkenazi communities from the perspective of Christian players. Younger generations of historians, in particular,

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50 See for example Isaak Münz, *Jüdisches Leben im Mittelalter* (Leipzig: Kaufmann, 1930). See also Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*. For historiographical overview, see Marcus, “The Israeli Historiography”.

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historians, particularly in Israel and North America, began studying Jewish-Christian relations from medieval Jewish perspectives as well, while inquiry into areas of interaction between Jewish and Christian models has intensified.\textsuperscript{51}

A different, yet complementary, trend is evident in the German historiography of medieval Jewish communities during the last two decades, as scholars began to study interfaith relations and Jewish identities by exploring areas of Ashkenazi culture, which are not religious \textit{per se}.\textsuperscript{52} Many of those works found inspiration in research on culture, semiotics, and identity theories.\textsuperscript{53} This remains, however, a difficult task not least because ‘religion’ did not constitute a clearly delimited domain in medieval societies. The present work profits greatly from such recent trends in historical research and seeks to contribute to the ever-growing body of studies that investigate the formation of new cultural repertoires, produced through contacts between various groups. Specifically, I am interested in the crystallisation of medieval Ashkenazi culture, in the long-term processes by which Jewish identities were shaped, reshaped, and negotiated in medieval German-speaking regions.

1.5. Culture and religion

During the twentieth century, many works on medieval Ashkenaz were dedicated to the study of religious institutions and often tended to concentrate on learned elites and the texts they produced. Since the 1980s there has been an increasing interest in

\textsuperscript{51} Among the studies which have changed the discussions on medieval Jewish-Christian relations considerably: Cohen, \textit{Sanctifying the Name of God}; Yuval, \textit{Two Nations in Your Womb}; Marcus, \textit{Rituals of Childhood}.


Jewish cultures and the focus has gradually shifted to more varied and broader social contexts; not only educated men, but also women, children, and laymen have now been receiving attention. Valuable recent studies, dealing with Jewish self-perceptions and cultural repertoires, have tended to focus on contacts between Jews and Christians in a religious context, highlighting the role of rituals and beliefs in the fashioning of Jewish identities.\textsuperscript{54} Where one spoke of ‘culture’, one often meant something like religion in its wide, modern sense.

Other perspectives of Ashkenazi culture and Jewish-Christian relationship have been brought to the fore in recent work of several German-speaking scholars who have detected close contacts between Jews and Christians, showing that Jews (especially members of the upper social strata) took an interest in courtly literature and borrowed motifs from Christian urban elites expressed in wall paintings, personal seals, and ceremonial artefacts.\textsuperscript{55} Such scholarly efforts indicate clearly that borrowing took several paths and can also be found in various cultural spaces, which were not necessarily religious \textit{per se}. Moreover, this type of appropriation was apparently not polemic; the act of borrowing was not necessarily a tool for distinguishing oneself by rejecting the symbols of the other. This model has been prevalent in scholarly studies of cultural borrowing in a religious context nonetheless. Scholars have mainly proposed that within medieval Ashkenazi society, the borrowing of cultural models from the non-Jewish culture served to oppose Christianity, to distinguish Jews from Christians in a negative way.\textsuperscript{56} However, I will

\textsuperscript{54} For example Yuval, \textit{Two Nations in Your Womb}; Marcus, \textit{Rituals of Childhood}.
\textsuperscript{56} See for example Marcus, \textit{Rituals of Childhood}, 29-30.
try to show that in the case of coining names we can truly speak of another model of cultural borrowing that presupposed competence among Jews to select, adapt and use models for fashioning names prevalent in German-speaking communities.

1.6. Names, kinship, and gender

Recent research on medieval families and kinship within European communities has shown that analysing naming practices is a useful and valuable research tool for social historians. Thanks to the reconstruction of name-circulation patterns in a family context, important insights into kinship structures, gendered division of roles, family memorial practices, and the shaping of family identities have been gained. Such methods, though, have not been applied to medieval Ashkenaz. While the extensive work done over the past three decades on medieval Ashkenazi communities has significantly increased our knowledge of economic structures, shifts in family law, and women’s roles within their families, studies on Ashkenazi families are constantly challenged by the state of sources, relying to a great extent on rabbinic texts.


58 On Jewish naming practices in medieval Austria see the numerous studies by Martha Keil, especially Keil, “‘Petachja, genannt Zecherl’”; “Hendl, Suessel, Putzlein”. On other Jewish communities, see, for example, Simon Seror, Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989); “Les noms des femmes juives”. See also Shlomo D. Goitcin, A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World As Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza, vol. 3: The Family (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 6-14, 314-318.

Names provide a fruitful research site for studying processes of identification. Between the late eleventh and the late-fifteenth centuries, traditional name repertoires did not disappear, but there is clear evidence of dynamism. They therefore promise important insights into processes of identification – mediated through the relationship between generations; parents and relatives gave children names on the basis of preferences and decisions that may remain hidden from our eyes, but it is obvious that they were changing in the period under discussion.

Modern historiography has tended to focus on patronymics as affiliation markers and to stress the transmission of male names from deceased ancestors to newborns. It tended thus to reduce kin relationships to vertical, especially patrilineal relations, while the possibility that women took part in securing family continuity has not been considered; at most, they were considered as mediators between their male relatives. Furthermore, the uncritical reception of esoteric medieval texts on the magical properties of names, led scholars to presume that naming children after living kin was atypical in Ashkenazi culture. Nevertheless, medieval sources indicate an intensified circulation of names, including among living kindred, within late medieval families. More significantly, it shows that women played a visible role in transmitting names.

Studies on Ashkenazi families in the Middle Ages have usually tended to neglect broader kinship networks, focusing on the relations between husbands and wives and between parents and children. To avoid a simplistic reading of the growing name-circulation through women by understanding it in terms of gender

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relations within family households alone, the present study takes into account also women’s positions in their families of origin and their functions within broader kin relations.

1.7. Outline

One serious obstacle to social historical research of Ashkenazi communities is the dominance of normative (halakhic) sources, and the general lack of archives conserving the documentary traces of social practices. Reconstructing naming practices can provide some precious insights into social lives and actors’ orientations on the basis of materials other than normative sources produced by learned elites. My dissertation hence moves from the reconstruction of general trends in name giving, on the basis of aggregate data, to the analysis of name giving as embedded in specific family histories, in order to recover their social logic. Naming practices are studied here through the medium – the repertoire at actors’ disposal; through the products of this process – the names given; and finally, by embedding such processes in the thickest possible web of local social relations, in order to study indirectly how they worked.

The dissertation is divided into four main parts. The first section explores naming procedures and Jewish perceptions of personal names. Focusing mainly on rabbinic literature, I will demonstrate how naming practices reflected cultural assumptions prevalent in Ashkenazi society and how naming was actually used by Jewish religious authorities in order to redefine social relationships and to form Jewish identities, both in inner-Jewish constellations and in interfaith contexts. I will

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61 This applies fore and foremost to the works of Jewish and Israeli historians, though not only – depending greatly on the subject matter. An important exception is the vast work done by Michael Toch. References to his works can be found throughout the dissertation. More recently historians have tended to use a broader variety of sources, including Christian materials, yet many still incline to rely on normative and narrative texts.
argue that rabbinic elites in medieval Ashkenaz paid unusual attention to personal names, which is also evident from the efforts made to regulate certain naming procedures and the use of names within legal contexts.

The second part traces historical change in naming trends, primarily on the basis of Jewish memorial lists dated between 1096 and 1349, contained in the Memorbuch of Nuremberg. In this section, I shall examine the social functions and meanings of naming practices within processes that shaped relationships and identifications in two contexts: Jewish-Christian relations and gender relations within Ashkenazi communities. In the third part of the thesis, I explore how names actually functioned within kin networks and were circulated and used to redefine relationships. This part is based on the analysis of family constellations from the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries in regions in today’s Southern Germany. The main materials used for this analysis are tax lists and Jewish responsa (rabbinic legal opinions). Finally, the fourth part will offer a survey of overlapping practices for designating persons within both Christian and Jewish milieux, using urban administrative sources, which were produced between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Whereas earlier parts mainly concentrate on names, this section deals instead with personal designations. Therefore, in this context, proper names represent only one option for identifying and marking persons.62

Naming, as I wish to show in the present work, was a tool for shaping Jewish identities, while redefining social boundaries in various settings – not only in a religious context. One of the main arguments of the dissertation is that from the thirteenth century onward, given names played a vital role in redefining gendered identities within Ashkenazi families. This study reconstructs Jewish naming-practices and analyses shifts in name-giving patterns in medieval Ashkenaz from the late eleventh century to the late fifteenth century. On that basis, it examines the unexplored role played by naming within broader processes that formed group identities and shaped social relationships in those communities.

2. Naming and identifying persons: practices, norms, and rabbinic regulation

In medieval Europe, unlike in modern societies, name-giving customs and practices for identifying persons – in formal contexts – were not subject to any central regulation.63 New research on naming practices within Latin Christendom in the Middle Ages points out that church authorities rarely discussed name giving and that, in fact, there is very little evidence of ecclesiastical attempts to control such customs.64 Even if clerics encouraged certain practices, which they probably did, this sort of actions has hardly left trace in medieval sources.65 Furthermore, The act of naming was not perceived as theologically essential for the performance of baptism. Liturgical texts from the high and the late Middle Ages did not associate baptism with name giving; apparently, the link between these two was first mentioned during the fifteenth century.66

I wish to argue that Jewish sources, specifically in medieval Ashkenaz, suggest a very different picture. Rabbinic legal discourse on names, especially as it is documented in the responsa literature, reveals extensive treatment of proper names, mainly personal names, in various contexts. The evidence indicates the central role of names in Jewish thought, but more than that, it reveals the important part rabbinic

64 See the following note and also Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, “La dénomination dans les recueils d'exempla”, in Discours sur le nom: normes, usages, imaginaire (VIe-XVIe siècles), ed. Patrice Beck, Genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne, vol. 4 (Tours: Publication de l'Université de Tours, 1997), 23-47.
65 Rolker, Das Spiel der Namen, 51-58. An exception to this rule is the explicit opposition by church authorities to giving male names to females. Rolker suggests that this concerns the custom, becoming widespread in the later medieval period, to bestow upon girls feminised male names as Johanna, derived from Johannes, and so forth.
66 Ibid., 54-55.
authorities played in shaping name-giving customs and in regulating self-identification (or self-designation) practices in Jewish legal context. Ashkenazi rabbis took great care to implement orthographic standards and specific models of personal identification, particularly in relation to divorce writs. They were certainly operating with Talmudic models; yet an examination of the discussions on names across the centuries suggests, as will be shown in this chapter, medieval developments apparently unique to Ashkenazi culture. Still, increasing control on specific naming practices did not necessarily contradict everyday creativity; in fact, a dialectic relation between legal norms and social practices is occasionally apparent.

Focusing on naming procedures, magical perceptions of personal names, and discussions on names in legal context, in the following, I wish to consider how cultural assumptions shaped certain naming practices and to explore some links between name giving and various social practices. Also, I will look at how rabbinic notions of names and rabbinic regulation of naming might have contributed to processes of identification in terms of gender and religion.

2.1. Giving names to newborns: Procedures and meaning

2.1.1. Male sacred names and the circumcision ritual

In the central and late medieval period, Jewish males usually had two names: a Hebrew name for religious occasions and a vernacular name for everyday life. Every Jewish male child was given a Hebrew ‘sacred name’ (*shem qodesh*), mostly drawn from the Bible, at his circumcision.\(^67\) The sacred name was to be used in Jewish rituals; for example, Jewish males would be called by their sacred name to perform a

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\(^67\) The term ‘sacred name’ in this particular sense appears in Ashkenazi sources first in the fifteenth century. See the discussion later in this chapter.
public reading of the Torah in the synagogue. The sacred name was also the one to appear in Jewish legal documents such as marriage or divorce contracts, and on gravestones. Jewish females, generally excluded from playing important roles in sacred rituals, had no sacred name. Women thus usually carried only one forename – either in Hebrew or in the vernacular.

The association of bestowing a name upon males with the ritual of circumcision (Berit Mila) has its roots in the biblical story of Abraham. The covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants was marked in the flesh, for “every man child among you shall be circumcised”, and was symbolised through name change: “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham.” (Gen. 17:10, 5) Nevertheless, biblical traditions suggest no essential link between conferring a name on newborn males and the circumcision ritual; in fact, the Hebrew Bible reveals variable practices. The earliest evidence of the custom appears in the New Testament where it is told that both John the Baptist and Jesus received their names – each on the occasion of his circumcision. (Luke 1:59; 2:21) So far, scholars have been able to detect traces of such a practice within Jewish sources only much later, well into the early medieval period.

Apparently, the earliest text, which indicates clearly that naming became part of the Berit procedure, is an Ashkenazi treatise from the thirteenth century. In his

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68 See, for example, Moses ben Isaac Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, ed. Yonatan Shraga Domb (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1991), § 37.
69 See Keil, ““Petachja, genannt Zecherl!””, 20; Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 37.
70 All biblical citations henceforth are taken from the King James Version.
71 See for example Shaye J. D. Cohen, Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised?: Gender and Covenant in Judaism (University of California Press, 2005), 34. Cohen refers to a text, which was apparently written in Eretz Israel during the eighth century, where it is told that Moses’s parents “circumcised him on the eighth day, and they called his name Jekuthiel.” See Gerald Friedlander, ed. Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna (London: Paul, 1916), 378. The text is available online: https://archive.org/details/pirkderabbielie00frieuoft.
manual for circumcisers, Jacob ‘ha-Gozer’ (‘The Circumciser’) accounts for the custom to bestow a biblical name upon male newborns:

Why did they instruct us to call the boy by a name immediately after circumcision? Because until the moment of circumcision, a name of impurity and shame was his, an uncircumcised name. And now that he is circumcised and the commandment of circumcision has been performed, his name must be changed to praise him, a pure and holy name like the names of his forefathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ruben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Nathan, Samuel, and Ephraim.  

This passage offers twofold evidence: first, of the link between name giving and the circumcision ritual and second, of the practice to give newborn males specifically a Hebrew or biblical name at this occasion, which seems to have been common particularly in Northern European communities. Circumcised and named according to Jewish tradition, boys entered the male community of beney berit (‘Children of the Covenant’), which allowed them to participate in sacred rituals. The circumcision was attached not only to purity but to sanctity as well and these were directly linked to the names of the patriarchs. Giving Jewish males biblical names at their circumcision associated them with the “national” ancestors – whether mythical or historical ones – thus creating a living tradition that shaped one’s sense of belonging to a group based on religion and gender.

72 Jacob haGozer, Klalei ha-Milah le-Rabbi Ya’akov haGozer, ed. Jacob ben Mordechi Glassberg, 4 vols. (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1892), 94-95. (in Hebrew) The text is available online at: www.hebrewbooks.org/49231. The English translation of the passage is cited from Baumgarten, Mothers and Children, 63.


74 For an excellent account of birth rites, including name-giving rites, in medieval Ashkenazi communities see Baumgarten, Mothers and Children, 92ff.

75 To a concise examination of the meanings attached to the ritual, see Cohen, Gender and Covenant in Judaism.
If the role of the circumcision in forming distinctive groups, specifically in interfaith context, is self-evident, that of given names is less obvious in this context.\textsuperscript{76} In her study of family life in medieval Ashkenaz, Elisheva Baumgarten has stressed parallel lines between the ritual of circumcision and baptism. She argues that such commonalities have escaped the attention of scholars who mainly sought to highlight the Jewish and male aspects of the ritual. Instead, Baumgarten offers to understand the ceremony in anthropological terms as an initiation rite, rather than to treat it in particularistic terms, which would enable a fruitful examination across cultures.\textsuperscript{77} To the differences between the two ceremonies, mentioned by Baumgarten, I suggest to add the distinct role given names played within each. Naming, as mentioned earlier, was not essential for the procedure of baptising newborns. Moreover, there is no evidence that church authorities directed believers to bestow certain names upon their children – either males or females. Ashkenazi rabbis obviously encouraged conferring traditional Jewish names on males, which is also implied by legal discussions (which I shall examine later). From another perspective, the insistence on Hebrew names, typical for Ashkenaz, was not ubiquitous within the Jewish world. Apparently, Mediterranean Jewish communities did not necessarily follow similar rules and in fact, the double-name model, as it was shaped and commonly practised in medieval Ashkenaz, was not prevalent in those communities.\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{78} See Löw, \textit{Die Lebensalter}, vol. 2, 98. The double-name model was probably customary among French Jews as well, at least in northern communities. See Jacob ben Meir, \textit{Sefer ha-Tashar le-Rabenu Tam. Hilek ha-She'elot ve ha-Teshuvot}, ed. Ephraim Salman Margaliot and Shraga Fisch Rosenthal (Jerusalem1972), §25. See also Seror, \textit{Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge}, XV-XVI. While many Jewish males in medieval Arab communities bore Hebrew names, many others had classical Arabic names. On this matter see, for example, Yehoshua b. Haim Ha-Yerushalmi, “Jewish Names in
The act of naming, and the circumcision ritual in general, had more than a religious function and meaning; it also played an essential role in the social integration of the newborn into his family and community. Discussing the Berit procedure in his manual, Yaʿaqov (Jacob)79 ha-Gozer mentions that the father was being asked whether he confirmed his paternity and if he did, the circumciser announced the boy’s name, declaring him his father’s son (e.g. “Jacob son of Isaac”).80 Such rituals were not merely empty formalities; they had pragmatic aspects as well.

An unusual account of name giving from late medieval Ashkenaz is an excellent example. Dealing with laws of circumcision, the great scholar R. Yaʿaqov ben Moshe ha-Levi Moelin, known also as Maharil (1375-1427), recounts an incident involving a bastard,81 in which he was the rabbi in charge and his brother Gumprecht served as the circumciser. Since the boy was a mamzer, Maharil deviated from the usual procedure of the Berit ceremony and named the newborn Kidor alluding to the biblical verse “And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see their end shall be; for (ki) they are a very forward generation (dor), children in whom is no faith.”82 (Deuteronomy 32. 20) Ensuring that bastards are recognised was considered essential within Jewish communities, since all of a bastard’s offspring would share the


Throughout the dissertation, biblical names appearing in medieval Hebrew sources will be transliterated according to their pronunciation in the Hebrew Bible, although they were probably not pronounced the same way in medieval Ashkenaz.

80 haGozer, Klaley ha-Milah, 94; Shlomo J. Spitzer, ed. Sefer Maharil: Minhagim (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalyim, 1989), Hilchot Milah, § 19. Cf. Baumgarten, Mothers and Children, 63-64.

81 Mamzer – in the Jewish tradition defined as the illegitimate son of a married woman.

82 Cf. Rafael Weinberger, Toldot Shem: On the Meaning of Forenames in the Bible (Jerusalem: s. n., 2003), 76, 104. (In Hebrew)
stigma, but control and registration would be a complicated task in the late medieval world of small Jewish communities typical for Ashkenaz. Still, using a name as a public marker in this fashion is rarely documented.

2.1.2. The Hollekreisch and other given names

Beside the sacred name, a male child was given an everyday name (shem hol) in the vernacular, which could be connected to his Hebrew name but was not necessarily so. Unlike men, Jewish women had usually only one given name – either a Hebrew or a vernacular one. Fifteenth-century sources tell that on the first Shabbat after the parturient left her house, male and female newborns were named at a ceremony known as ‘Hollekreisch’ with family and friends attending the event. This was a local German custom, which was apparently inspired by Germanic traditions practised in contemporary Christian communities. The Hollekreisch ceremony was not officially acknowledged and unlike the Berit, the participants were women and children, which suggests its lower status.

This hierarchical relation of the Berit to the Hollekreisch is also indicated by another important aspect. The procedure of the Hollekreisch was performed in the vernacular – not in the sacred tongue, and the names given at the occasion were vernacular names – not Hebrew ones. One cannot overlook the gendered aspects of

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83 In the Hebrew Bible, it is said that “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 23. 2) On this matter, see also Ben-Zion Schereschewsky and Menahem Elon, “Manzer”, in Encyclopaedia Judaica, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 26 vols. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 13, 442-445.
84 Zunz, Namen der Juden, 48-51.
85 For a recent and detailed discussion on the ‘Hollekreisch’, see Baumgarten, Mothers and Children, 93-96; cf. Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland, 104. See also Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 19, 64.
86 Baumgarten, Mothers and Children, 93-96. See also Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland, 104-105.
87 In Jewish thought and mystics, the Hebrew has played an essential role, since it is believed that the world was created in the sacred tongue. On names and the holy language, see Weinberger, Toldot Shem, 103ff.
these traditions. If we observe these social institutions, looking through the lens of name-giving practices, we see a male identity crystallised through the sacred, the Jewish tradition and the Hebrew language, whereas females in this setting are more likely to be identified with the non-sacred, local, and vernacular world. Although Hebrew and the vernacular were competing cultural options, they were nonetheless also complementary, as the double-name model for males demonstrates. The reconstruction of the relations between these options is a key to understanding the role of names in shaping Jewish identities and in encoding cultural meanings attached to social practices.

The association of the custom to bestow a traditional Jewish name upon males with the circumcision ritual had a double impact. On the one hand, sacred male names constructed a Jewish male identity, demarcating boundaries between Jews and Christians. There was real fear of Jewish authorities of conversion to Christianity and a blur of the boundaries between Jews and Christians, while Christian proselytizing became more intensive.\(^88\) On the other hand, such names operated as gender markers, strengthening the distinction between Jewish males and females. Scholars have recently pointed out that the reshaping of Jewish-Christian relations after 1096 led to the reinforcement of a Jewish religious male identity.\(^89\) The sacred realm was increasingly male gendered, investing men with the role of securing the endurance of Jewish religious life according to Halakha, in face of external threats. One of the main theses of the present study is that naming practices in Ashkenazi communities became a significant tool for re-organising social relationships and constructing identities, both in interfaith settings and within the Jewish society itself.

\(^{88}\) Furst, “Captivity”; Haverkamp, “Baptised Jews”. 
\(^{89}\) See Einbinder, “Jewish Women Martyrs”; Marcus, “Hierarchies”.

2.2. Personal names and magical beliefs

Already in antiquity, Jews developed a magical understanding of personal names, endowing them with a unique role within their world-view. Some of those beliefs are prefigured in the Hebrew Bible, where many passages suggest the deep symbolical and spiritual meaning of names for their bearers. In the Bible, figures are often named after the circumstances of their birth, which made the forenames involved unique. This practice is portrayed as a tradition beginning with the first man, whom God formed from dust of ground, “afar min ha-’adama” (Gen. 2:7) and was hence called Adam. As in Abraham’s case, or more dramatically in Jacob’s, names did not only indicate important events in a person’s life; a change of fate also required a change of name. Central Jewish beliefs suggested, furthermore, that the relation between a person and his name was far more than simply symbolical, since a name could be identified with one’s soul.

Such beliefs, circulating in medieval Ashkenaz, implied that the core of one’s personality – the soul – and one’s name were perceived as a unity. Consequently, as long as the one lived, the other was also kept alive. An eleventh-century inscription from Worms, dedicated to a childless Jewish couple that built a synagogue for the community, suggests that their devout deed – for which they were commemorated – bought them “eternal name… [even] greater than sons and daughters”.

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one’s name alive, perpetuated, could secure one’s legacy – perhaps even better than biological continuity would. The important thing was to depart from the world, leaving a good name (reputation) behind – one that could be associated with positive traits and worthy deeds.\(^\text{94}\) Still, the common way to commemorate individual persons and to perpetuate their legacy was by transmitting their names to their descendants.\(^\text{95}\)

### 2.2.1. Name sharing

Identifying one’s name with one’s soul obviously enhanced the significance of name giving. Embodying past relations, the personal name left the mark of its former bearer on the new one. Consequently, all the parties concerned had to be closely considered. The wish to provide children with “successful” names, that would link them to honourable figures and bear a positive message, was balanced by the belief in a possible passage of the dead ancestor’s soul into the body of the offspring, bearing his name.\(^\text{96}\) In other words, there was a fear that the soul of a person would follow his or her name, which meant death for the living and an interruption of the heavenly rest of the dead. Such beliefs had practical implications.

While Spanish as well as Mediterranean Jews have tended to name their children after the living, modern scholars have assumed that Ashkenazi Jews avoided doing so.\(^\text{97}\) This hypothesis relies heavily on views expressed in the compilation by Yehuda (Judah) ben Shemu’el he-Hasid of Regensburg (d. 1217), called *Sefer*

\(^{94}\) Cf. Kohelet Rabbah, 87: 4.

\(^{95}\) By contrast, in early medieval Germanic culture, for example, beliefs in the unity of body and soul of the deceased prevented from passing on the names of the dead. On this, see Régine Le Jan, “Personal Names and Transformation of Kinship in Early Medieval Society (Sixth to Tenth Centuries)”, in *Personal names studies of medieval Europe: social identity and familial structures*, eds. George Beech, Monique Bourin, and Pascal Chareille (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2002), 31-49.

\(^{96}\) See for example Trachtenberg, ““In the name of...””, 78.

*Hasidim* (‘Book of Pious’), and in his last will. In the Book of Pious, it is said that superstitions harm only those believing in them and that while Christians name their children after the living without causing them any harm, Jews avoid doing so. But, it is argued, whereas Jews do not name their children after the living, they do give them names of the deceased. Interestingly, in his last will Yehuda himself took a radical stand, prohibiting his offspring from re-using either his own name or that of his father, Shemu’el (Samuel). This was, however, an exceptional case, the custom being to bestow ancestors’ names on children.

A comparative look into Christian communities in late medieval Tuscany reveals noteworthy similarities. While parents – particularly fathers – avoided bestowing the name of living kin on their children, they usually transmitted names of deceased relatives, especially of paternal kindred. The idea underlying this practice is related to the term *rifare* – meaning ‘to compensate’ or ‘to remake’, which suggests that by transmitting the names of the dead, the latter were being honoured and were thereby offered “compensation”, so that the boundaries between the living and the dead shall be maintained. Yet, this practice also implied the continuity of the lineage constructed through family heritage and marked through names common to both the living and the dead, linking thus individuals to their ancestors. In contrast to beliefs circulating in Ashkenaz, the Tuscan view did not suggest that names were attached to certain personal qualities transferred from one individual to another; names rather symbolised the social position which individuals assumed within their kin groups. This is an entirely different emphasis. Even if Tuscans and Ashkenazi Jews developed

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98 The last will was published in Judah ben Shmuel, *Sefer Hasidim*, ed. Reuven Margaliyot (Jerusalem: Mosad haRav Kuk, 1957). Yosef Rivlin has claimed that Yehuda of Regensburg’s last will gained influence especially from the sixteenth century. See Yosef Rivlin, “Matan Shnei Shemot le-Noladim”, in *These are the Names. Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, vol. 5, ed. Aaron Demsky (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011), 143-149.
100 Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’”, 301-306.
Tuscan perceptions of name sharing placed the group, the family affiliation at the centre, whereas Ashkenazi Jews highlighted the identity and the particular qualities of the individual name-donor.¹⁰¹

On the methodological level, historians of medieval Tuscany employed different tools from those used by their colleagues, studying medieval Ashkenaz. Analyses of Tuscan naming-practices were based on extensive empirical studies, while a variety of historical evidence – not only normative sources – was employed. In contrast, the uncritical reception of the passages from Sefer Hasidim and Yehuda of Regensburg’s last will led many scholars to assume that in Ashkenazi communities there was a “taboo” on naming children after living relatives; historians have commonly disregarded empirical evidence related to such practices. Perhaps this fits the general portrayal, favoured especially during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, of an “irrational” Ashkenazi society (unlike the Sephardic one) permeated by religious zeal and magical beliefs and inclined to cultural “isolation”.¹⁰²

However, as the analysis of naming practices in chapter IV shall demonstrate, name sharing among living kin, especially in the late medieval period, was actually common practice in German Jewish communities. This suggests that if magical beliefs concerning personal names were at some point of any concern to broader social circles, after the Black Death at the latest, social factors seem to have

¹⁰¹ Tuscan perceptions of name sharing, however, were changing in the early sixteenth century, as transmission was increasingly perceived as a moral and spiritual inheritance. See ibid., 307-308.
outweighed such beliefs. Another option would be that there was rather a spiritual and mental change; perhaps perceptions of naming and family underwent change, which might have been associated with the Black Death.\(^{103}\) This is, however, merely a hypothesis that cannot be dealt with within this framework, and yet it induces a new perspective for the research on late medieval Ashkenazi culture.

**2.2.2. The apotropaic power of name change**

The identification of one’s name with one’s personality did not only imply that a change of circumstances required a change of name. The relation between name and fate was two-sided: changing one’s name involved a personal transformation and changed the person’s fate.\(^{104}\) In the Babylonian Talmud, it is said that a person may avert evil fate by four means: charity, prayer, a change of acts, and a change of name. (Rosh ha-Shanah 16b). Believing that troubles befall those who have sinned, a change of name was understood as indication of a change of heart – it was an act of atonement.\(^{105}\) Apparently, lay beliefs, contesting such scholarly efforts to associate name change and personality transformation with penitence, had another vision of the process.\(^{106}\) The act of name change could help, for instance, to escape death by tricking the Angel of Death; according to some scholars, it was believed that the Angel of Death summoned humans by their given names and that if the person before him was called by a different name, the decree would be consequently annulled, for

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103 Klapisch-Zuber has suggested a close connection between modifications in name-sharing practices among Tuscan families and the sense of moral crisis that followed the Black Death. See Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’”, 298. Cf. Herlihy, “Tuscan names 1200-1530”, 577-582.
106 Lauterbach, “The Naming of Children”, 43-44.
no one by the right name was found in that specific place. This image of Death
calls to mind a bureaucrat working according to name lists.

Changing the name of the mortally ill to award off death was common practice
in medieval Ashkenazi communities. The new name was randomly selected from
the Bible by a religious authority, if possible with a quorum of ten men attending the
event. In this procedure, the new name should preferably have as few common letters
with the old one as possible and a higher numerical value than that of the former
name. There was, however, objection to using names carried by biblical characters
considered evil and in such cases, it was thus preferred to draw lots again. The
issue of name change raised important questions concerning legal identities and the
possibility of identifying individual persons. Medieval rabbis, dealing with names in a
legal context, often attended to such matters. A relatively vast corpus of literature
concerned with proper names was thus produced, disclosing a broad range of
information – from spelling conventions to legal norms; from naming practices to
everyday social contacts.

2.3. Who is who? Names in Jewish legal context

One of the most detailed discussions on naming practices produced in late medieval
Ashkenazi responsa concerns the proper manner of writing a person’s name in
divorce documents. Not only should the names of the man and woman appear in

107 Ibid., 44.
108 Similar practices were traced in other cultures, too. On this point, see Richard D. Alford, Naming
Press, 1988), 89-90. There is, though, no evidence that there was a similar practice among Christians.
109 Israel ben Pethahiah Isserlein, Sefer Leket Yosher, ed. Yoel Katan (Jerusalem: Mekhon
Yeruslayim, 2009/10), Part 2 (Yoreh De'ah), § 83. See also Trachtenberg, “In the name of…”, 205.
110 Israel ben Chayim Bruna, She’elot u-Teshuvot, ed. Moshe Hirshler (Jerusalem: Tiferet haTorah,
1959/60), § 101.
111 For example: Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 37; Yaacov ben Moshe ha-Levi Moelin, She’elot u-
Teshuvot, ed. Yitzchok Satz (Jerusalem: Machon Yerushalayim, 1979), § 107; Israel ben Pethahiah
Isserlein, Terumat haDeshen, ed. Shmuel Avitan, 2 vols., vol. 2 Pesakim u-Ketavim (Jerusalem: S.
Avitan, 1990), § 18, 134, and 266. The Gittin literature expands considerably in the later medieval
full, but also the names of their respective fathers. Any deviation from these strict requirements could invalidate the divorce act (get) and consequently, have severe implications for the legal and social status of the woman and her children from future marriages.\textsuperscript{112} Rabbinic discussions addressing this issue reveal how Jewish scholars conceived the relation between personal names and personal identification. By analysing a few examples, in the following, I shall seek to reconstruct such views and to look at how concepts of identity related to legal practices involving names.\textsuperscript{113}

2.3.1. Names – changed but not abandoned

A question addressed to R. Ya‘aqov Weil (15th century) was concerned with the accurate designation of a man whose name had been previously changed due to illness:

\textit{Originally, the man’s name was ‘Yosef’ and [later] it was changed to ‘Yisra’el’ because of illness, and everyone calls him ‘Yisra’el’. Only when signing, he signs ‘Yosef Yisra’el’ and also when he is called to read up the Torah, he is called [by the name] ‘Yosef Yisra’el’. It appears that ‘Yisra’el’ is his main name and therefore on the divorce writ, it should be written ‘Yisra’el alias Yosef’.}\textsuperscript{114}

The act of name change had more than a spiritual meaning; it entailed the reshaping of personal identification, how one presented oneself and was referred to by others. Social recognition of name change in this type of cases was encouraged by the belief

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{112}] On this matter, see Ben-Zion Schereschewsky and Menachem Elon, “Agunah”, in Encyclopaedia Judaica, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 22 vols. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 1, 510-520.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] On Jewish responsa literature as historical sources, see for example Mordechai Breuer, “Die Responsenliteteratur als Geschichtsquelle”, in Geschichte und Kultur der Juden in Bayern: Aufsätze, ed. Manfred Treml (München: Saur, 1988), 29-37.
\item[\textsuperscript{114}] Ya‘akov ben Yehudah Weil, She‘elot u-Teshuvot, ed. Yonatan Sheraga Domb (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim, 2000/2001), § 182.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
that the transformation, the change of fate, would not be secured without the actual use of the new name.\textsuperscript{115} The legal status of the new name as one’s main name, which therefore needed to be placed at the head of the personal designation, was largely a function of social practice. In fact, where names were concerned, it was primarily everyday customs that shaped legal practices and techniques for identifying individual persons.\textsuperscript{116} Therefore, for the purpose of identifying a person in a legal context, “the name by which others call a man”, says R. Moshe ben Yitsḥaq Minz (1415-1483), “is preferred to that with which he signs”.\textsuperscript{117} This indicates that social consensus, manifested in the practice of the majority, was the critical factor for personal identification. Moreover, it suggests the important role of oral communication (over written communication) in producing appellations and in telling who was who.

Two cases of name change, mentioned in the fifteenth-century treatise \textit{Seder ha-Get} (Order of Divorce), support this assumption. The first case involves a woman named ‘Esther (Esther) whose acquaintances humorously started addressing her as “‘Ester ha-Malka” (i.e. ‘Esther The Queen’) until they became accustomed to simply call her ‘Malka’.\textsuperscript{118} At some point, she began using the latter separately from her original name “‘Esther” and consequently, she became known primarily by that name. In her divorce writ, she was thus designated as “Malka called ’Ester”, the new name \textit{taken} preceding the original name \textit{given}.

The other case tells of a woman who converted to Christianity and later returned to Judaism. Her name prior to the conversion was “‘Esther” but after returning to the Jewish community she adopted the name ‘Pesslin’, apparently to alienate herself from her former (Jewish) identity – from that person who had

\textsuperscript{115} Trachtenberg, ““In the name of…””, 205.
\textsuperscript{116} Cf. Minz, \textit{She’elot u-Teshuvot}, § 64.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., § 37.
\textsuperscript{118} Jacob Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get ha-aroch ve-ha’katzar}, ed. Yitzchak Saz (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yerushalayim, 1983), 71.
converted to Christianity.¹¹⁹ In The Order of Divorce, it is noted that although the woman’s new name ‘Pesslin’ was German, in her divorce writ, it appeared before her Hebrew name, for people used to call her by that name; she was thus designated as Pesslin ‘Esther.’¹²⁰ Both cases show that individuals – specifically women – changed their names in daily social contexts, lacking any rabbinic involvement (as in case of grave illness). But as soon as such acts gained social acknowledgement, they involved the reshaping of personal identities, recognised by Jewish legal practice as well.

2.3.2. On the crossroad between cultures

Medieval Ashkenazi rabbis attended also to another practice of name change, which was dealt with in a similar legal context (divorce writs) but had a very different social impact: Jewish converts to Christianity whose religious transformation was accompanied by a change of name. How such persons should be identified in Jewish legal context? What is the status of their new Christian names within Jewish society? Legal opinions on such matters reveal the difficulties to categorise such persons, not only in terms of designation practices, but also in broader social and psychological terms. Rabbinic legal discussions on the issue enable a glimpse at more ambivalent social dynamics behind formal issues like designation models.

R. Ya’aqov b. Me’ir (1100-1171), known also as ‘Rabbenu Tam’, gave his legal opinion in a case involving a convert to Christianity, which deserves full attention.¹²¹ Following the invalidation of a divorce act for the lack of the man’s Christian name, Rabbenu Tam was asked (by the woman’s father) to give a second opinion on the matter, since the invalidation threatened to leave the woman “chained” (‘aguna). This meant that she could not remarry. On this background, Rabbenu Tam

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¹¹⁹ Ibid., §34 [32].
¹²⁰ She was not designated as ‘Pesslin alias ’Ester’, for her name had not been changed (due to illness), but was changed by herself. See ibid.
¹²¹ Meir, Sefer ha-Yashar, §25.
fiercely challenged the first opinion on the case, arguing that the husband ought to divorce his wife with his Jewish name only. As for his Christian name, he said, this must certainly not appear in Jewish legal documents at all.

The discussion on this case can provide interesting insights into the roles that personal names played in identity transformation. Rabbenu Tam maintained that converts were known among Jews only by their (former) Jewish names; their Christian names were unknown in Jewish society and even if they were, he said, they should not be mentioned.\footnote{We encounter cases in which sons of converts omitted patronymics, using instead the name of the grandfather. See, for example, Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get}, §21 [21]. Cf. Shmuel, \textit{Sefer Hasidim}, § 791.} Apparently, a particular type of speech complemented this silence, for we are told that when Jews spoke about converts, they would often mock them by distorting their Jewish names. Hence a ‘Menahem’, for instance, turned into ‘Melahem’, ‘Avraham’ became ‘Avran’, ‘Yehuda’ ‘Yehudah’, and so forth.\footnote{‘Yehudaḥ’, for example, apparently insinuate to the Hebrew word ‘hudaḥ’, meaning ‘compelled to sin’. See 2 Chronicles: 21, 11.}

This practice emphasises the ambivalent response, on part of Jews, to identity transformation in case of converts. In general, medieval Ashkenazi sources confront us with a society, which refused to fully accept the conversion of Jews to Christianity. In halakhic discourse, for instance, apostates were still considered and treated as Jewish in some contexts; this approach was inspired by the elementary expectation that those who had left (Judaism) might return one day. The bond between the Jewish community and converts, specifically in affairs related to matrimony (\textit{kiddushin}), was therefore not entirely broken; a woman whose husband converted to Christianity was required to get a divorce, if she wished to remarry.\footnote{ \textit{Meir ben Baruch Rothenburg, She’elot u-Teshuvot}, ed. Arie Moshe Bloch (Tel Aviv: s. n., 1968/69), Part 4, § 164. See also Gerd Mentgen, “Jüdische Proselyten im Oberrheingebiet während des Spätmittelalters. Schicksale und Probleme einer “doppelteten” Minderheit”, \textit{Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins} 142 (1994): 117-139. See also Jacob Katz, “‘Even though He Sinned, He is Still a Jew’”, \textit{Tarbiz} 27, no. 1 (1957/58): 203-217.} The use of derogatory names derived from converts’ former Jewish names, as described by Rabbenu Tam,
demonstrates the ambivalent attitude towards apostates: they were still associated with the Jewish community but at the same time denounced by its members.\textsuperscript{125}

The \textit{responsum} by Rabbenu Tam brings to light yet another aspect of the relationships between Jews and Christians. To strengthen his claim that only Jewish names should appear in the divorce writ, he stressed that even vernacular appellations by which Jews were known to Christians did not appear in Jewish legal documents, let alone Christian names. Jewish names – in the male case, those given at the circumcision – were the crucial element for legal identification. While this might have been the common pattern for the high Middle Ages, by the late medieval period one observes a significant change.

In the fifteenth century, R. Yisra’el Isserlein ben Petahya (d. 1460) explained that appellations given to Jews by Christians were irrelevant in Jewish legal context, unless Jews were known by those names among their co-religionists as well. Christians tended to adjust Hebrew names to the German dialects, usually by using either short forms (e.g. ‘Jekel’ for ‘Jakob’) or vernacular derivations of the Hebrew names like ‘Merkel’ for ‘Mordekhay’.\textsuperscript{126} In many cases, such names were used within the Jewish community itself, which eventually led to the requirement that both the Hebrew sacred name and the vernacular name ought to appear in divorce writs. Yet even if a Jewish man was known primarily by his vernacular name, it was nonetheless his Hebrew name which appeared first, for this was considered males’ main name from Jewish legal perspective.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{125} The question of how “split” really were the old and new identities of converts is beyond the scope of the present discussion. On this matter, see previous footnote and also Barbara Dohm, “Schmol von Donauwörth – ein jüdischer Konvertit des 15. Jahrhunderts”, in \textit{Campana pulsante convocati. Festschrift anläßlich der Emeritierung von Prof. Dr. Alfred Haverkamp}, eds. Frank G. Hirschmann and Gerd Mentgen (Trier: 2005), 125-144.
\textsuperscript{126} Isserlein, \textit{Terumat haDesHEN}, § 6.
\textsuperscript{127} Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get}, §20 [22].
This shift in designation practices obviously involved a real change in communication forms within Ashkenazi communities, as German dialects growingly assumed the role of the spoken language among Jews. The vernacular names, increasingly used in Jewish daily life, became an essential component of social and legal identities. In the transition from one cultural context to another, new names and appellations emerged originally in order to facilitate communication with non-Jews. Yet soon those names became an integral part of the Jewish repertoire, which is also supported by the fact that Ashkenazi Jews adopted a special rite for bestowing vernacular names upon newborns – the *Hollekreisch*. This is also evident through the practice of changing both the Hebrew name and the vernacular name in case of illness, observed in the fifteenth century.

One of several examples for this custom appears in a divorce writ from Nuremberg, in which the woman was designated as *Bela daughter of Yehuda alias Loew who is called ’Ahuvya alias Gottlieb*. In terms of supernatural beliefs, this may suggest a new role assumed by vernacular names in constructing personal identities. It is, however, plausible to assume that this custom was rather designed to draw, psychologically, stronger line between the old persona and the new one. Although the rejection of the old identity was closely associated with name change, it did not entail the elimination of former names – instead, those were added to the new names. In this respect, personal designations became more and more complex; they

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128 See, for instance, Judah b. Asher’s comment saying that when he left Germany on his studies to France, he had great difficulties, since he was not familiar with the language spoken by French Jews: Israel Abrahams, ed. *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1926), 165-166. Cf. Minz, *She’elot u-Teshuvot*, §74; Weil, *She’elot u-Teshuvot*, § 101, 190; Isserlein, *Terumat haDeshen*, 2 Pesakim u-Ketavim, § 131; Bruna, *She’elot u-Teshuvot*, § 119.

129 Margalith, *Seder ha-Get*, §21 [21].

130 Ibid., §128 [125].

131 However, this view has its roots in the biblical story of Jacob. Although his name was changed, his original name was not abandoned. See BT, Berachot 12b-13a.
tended to accumulate rather than to decrease names, thus increasingly reflecting individual histories.

Medieval designation practices, which used to identify persons in legal contexts, cannot be reduced to “official” names, which rather tend to be stable, as in case of modern practices. In medieval communities, where oral communication played a major role in legal procedures and naming practices were not yet subject to central regulation, identities – in that sense – were much more dynamic. It was often the social use of names that shaped personal identification, not standardised names.

In the small and dispersed communities, typical for medieval Ashkenaz, it could have been quite easy to change one’s name and identity given the constant migration and personal mobility. Hence the insistence of late medieval rabbis on more complex personal designations in case of divorce can be understood as increasing regulation – measures taken in order to minimise the risks of legal fraud. Unlike in the modern state administration, standardising and reducing names were not necessarily used to facilitate control; instead, the medieval Jewish legal practice acknowledged and used the variety of names, which had been created by social dynamics.

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133 Yuval, Scholars, 27-28.
134 Härtel, “Personennamen und Identität”, 6-10.
3. The language of names: Shaping group identifications

In his collection of *exempla* and *miracula*, the Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré (1201-1270/72) unfolds the story of “Rachel the Jewess who became a nun in Park near Louvain”. In the opening of his account, Thomas depicts Rachel’s fascination with Christian names at early age, leading to her intensified contacts with Christians:

*In parts of Brabant, I saw a nun of the Cistercian Order, a convert from Judaism, in whom the work of the Blessed Mary, mother of Christ, excelled most gloriously. In the house of [her] Jewish parents, before she turned five, she began to pay attention as to why there is a distinction between names of Jews and Christians alike, while persons of each nation were of one and the same appearance and language. The girl’s discernment was so remarkable. Still, she was clinging, as she later told me, more eagerly to listening rather to a Christian name than to a Jewish one. And especially she rejoiced in hearing the name of the Blessed Mary, as Christians were asking each other for something or taking an oath. Also, she used to steal bread from her parents’ table, [hide] it under each armpit, and hand it out secretly to the poor, so that by thanking her, she could listen to the name of Mary.*

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135 Julius Aronius has associated this narrative with an earlier one written by Caesarius of Heisterbach around 1220. However, as Aronius observed, while the two stories probably refer to the same events, they are very different both in content and in form. For example, while Caesarius describes the course of events quite prosaically, Thomas chose to use motifs of dream and divine intercession of the Virgin Mary who brought to the Jewish girl’s conversion and who gave her the Christian name ‘Catherine’. Also, there is no trace of the passage quoted above in Caesarius’s *Dialogue* and the narrative of the girl’s conversion is very different in each of these versions. See Aronius, *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden*, no. 414; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Caesarii Heisterbacensis monachi ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus miraculorum textum ad quatuor codicum manuscriptorum editionisque principis fidelis* (Cologne: Heberle, 1851), 2, 25. The text is available online: [http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/590193172.pdf](http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/590193172.pdf).

This reachly and lively depicted scene provides rare evidence of medieval reflections on personal names. Embedded in a complex of semiotic practices (dress, language), naming is assigned a crucial role in producing religious distinction. While physical appearance and the spoken language failed to mark different religious affiliations, according to Thomas’s narrative, given names functioned as indicators of such identities. Suggesting that names were perceived as tools for shaping collective (religious) identities, this account evokes the question of how distinct Jewish and Christian names actually were and on what level naming was used to redefine and negotiate social distance and differentiation.

The portrayal of Jews and Christians as physically indistinguishable fits well into a wider discourse on interactions between members of these two groups. Contemporaneous church efforts to impose dress codes that were to mark members of religious minorities (Jews and Muslims), so that they could be more easily distinguished from Christians, similarly evoke the concern over blurred boundaries

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exemplorum memorabilium sui temporis libri duo, ed. Georges Colvener (Douai 1605), 2.29.20. Available online at [http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.5322459700;view=1up;seq=1](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.5322459700;view=1up;seq=1). This version is mentioned, though not translated, by Aronius, Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden, no. 414. The text is also mentioned in Resnick, Marks of Distinction, 267. Resnick, however, interpreted parts of this passage differently. For instance, he translated “Despite her young age, the child inquired of her parents: ‘why should Jews and Christians have different names when the people of each race have one countenance and one language?’” From the entire account, we learn that the girl certainly did not pose that question to her parents; the author meant to present it as the child’s reflection only. Only few lines afterwards de Cantimpré stresses that the girl kept hiding everything she had been doing so that “neither of her parents could discover or hear anything concerning the girl’s thought [or reflection]”. “ita fagaciter latitabat, ut neuter parentum aliquid super cogitate filiae advertere posset vel audire.” See Cantimpré, miraculorum et exemplorum, 2.29.20 (296-297). In addition, Resnick argued that Rachel’s question actually refers to names in the general sense of ‘Jews’ and ‘Christians’, not to given names. This conviction does not coincide with what is said in the text. Thomas specifically refers to the given name ‘Mary’.

between the different groups. Studies of medieval European communities have amply shown that a variety of social practices, which stimulated close interaction between Christians and Jews and which were perceived by ruling elites (both ecclesiastical and lay) as potential threat to stable religious boundaries, were increasingly subject to institutional regulation from the central medieval period. Particularly Christian authorities took such measures, though not exclusively.

There appears to be no evidence that Christian authorities in Northern Europe sought to regulate naming practices as a means to control Christian-Jewish relations. On the other hand, Nina Melechen has shown that by the early fourteenth century, Jewish males in Castile were obligated to use a restricted pool of (biblical) given names, which implies that in the earlier period, Jewish male names in Castile were often indistinguishable from Christian names. Melechen argues that both regulation of Jewish naming-practices and the adherence of local Christian scribes to particular and complex models for designating Jews (but not Muslims) in legal documents suggest a struggle over symbolic status. While Muslims appearing in Toledan documents, for example, were mostly subordinate to Christians (acting as servants, clients, or tenants), Jews usually played economic roles “on an equal footing with Christians.” “By denying the Toledan reality of economic integration”, so Melechen, “the use of deliberately divisive language upheld the theoretical forms of organisation of Toledan and Castilian society.” Interestingly, restrictions pertaining clothing were not enforced by Castilian authorities, which in itself contributed to

139 See the discussion in chapter II.
140 Melechen, “Calling Names: The Identification of Jews in Christian Documents From Medieval Toledo”.
141 Ibid., 33.
142 Ibid., 34.
blurred boundaries between the two groups. In this setting, practices of personal identification were used to underscore the distinct status of Christians and Jews in that society and to reify the symbolic distinction between them.143

Thomas of Cantimpré’s account draws a different picture. The passage quoted earlier strongly suggests that Jewish and Christian names in Northern Europe were quite different. Thomas uses names as a category of religious distinction rather than a social or cultural one. His untrivial choice to highlight given names in a theological context concerned with conversion might be explained by the significance that Christians ascribed to name sharing with saints at that time. Such names were not merely symbols of religious devotion, but vehicles of divine grace that every believer could hope for, even expect from, his or her homonymous divine patron(ess).144 This was not something that Jews could share with Christians.145

Whereas the discussion in the previous chapter has shown how assuming several names could reflect a historical dimension of the personality, such practices could also imply the synchronic operation of multiple identities that attached individuals to several affiliation circles at the same time. There is a famous Talmudic comment saying that one of the virtues thanks to which the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt is that they had not changed their names – meaning, their biblical names.146 However, throughout their history, Jewish communities in various regions have appropriated onomastic elements from the majority cultures – through either adopting specific names or borrowing onomastic models.147 The Talmudic saying was probably a polemic argument directed against Hellenistic Jews; the Talmudic sages

143 Ibid., 31-32.
144 See Mitterauer, Ahnen und Heilige, 330ff.
146 Weinberger, Toldot Shem, 103f.
were not criticizing the name-change practice itself but rather the attempt to conceal religious Jewish affiliation through it.\(^{148}\)

Although choosing a name and its language can mean choosing between competing cultural options, these options need not be mutually exclusive. Hence the development of a double-name model among Jews enabled them to relate simultaneously to both the Hebrew and the vernacular culture. In this way, a broader name-repertoire could express a more complex cultural identity.\(^{149}\) Examining the relations between those different options, shaped under specific historical conditions, is essential in order to understand how names functioned within processes of identification. Already in works of the nineteenth century, scholars have regarded personal names as crucial indicators of cultural trends. Yet they were often treated as transparent pieces of evidence, as the language of names served as a simple indication of cultural identities and the relations between different milieux.\(^{150}\) The language, however, is but one aspect of the cultural and social product called names.

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\(^{148}\) Lauterbach, “The Naming of Children”, 48; Funkenstein, “The Dialectics of Assimilation”. On the change of the Berit procedure in the middle of the second century, introducing the practice of \(\text{peri}a\) (‘uncovering’), which basically prevented the possibility of stretching remaining foreskin tissues, which would conceal the circumcision. Such a practice was in use among Jews who wanted to cross cultural borders, while concealing their Jewish identity. Rabbinic authorities therefore modified what was until then the usual procedure of circumcision. On this issue, see Nissan Rubin, Time and life cycle in Talmud and Midrash socio-anthropological perspectives (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 51f.

\(^{149}\) On the usage of the double-name model in Antiquity, see Mitterauer, Ahnen und Heilige, 42, 47. Cf. Zunz, Namen der Juden, 27-29. On a similar model common in the ancient world, especially in Egypt and later in the Hellenic Empire, see Mitterauer, Ahnen und Heilige, 31-32, 83.

3.1. Sources and methodology

The earliest and most extensive documentation of Jewish names coming from German-speaking regions is encompassed within the *Memorbuch of Nuremberg.*\(^{151}\) Mostly compiled during the thirteenth century, the *Memorbuch* consists of a martyrology, which is the main part, followed by two necrologies from fourteenth-century Nuremberg. The martyrology itself contains over 5,000 names of Jews from several German regions, starting in 1096 with the pogroms, which occurred during the first crusade, and ending in 1349 with the violent attacks on Jews during the Black Death. The lists are recorded according to the date and place of the events referred to and organised in family units. Produced by Jewish scribes for a Jewish audience, the *Memorbuch* is the only medieval source, providing evidence on such a scale of Jewish names in the Hebrew language. Due to the fact that the memorial lists were composed in Hebrew, the methodological difficulty of determining whether we are dealing with translations of Hebrew names or not – a problem which historians of Antiquity, for example, must often face when primarily Latin or Greek sources are available – can be avoided.\(^{152}\)

The materials encompass names of victims who were often designated with patronymics. Those male names (the patronymics themselves) belonging to earlier generations are integrated into the data, while in each case they were added to the previous time interval. Hence patronyms from 1298, for example, were added to the name lists from 1264-1289 (table 1). The addition of patronyms to the database is


\(^{152}\) This is the case, for example, with late ancient Jewish funerary epigraphy in Rome. On this matter, see Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora*, ed. R. van den Broek, H. J. W. Drijvers, and H. S. Versnel, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 126 (Leiden - New York - Cologne: Brill, 1995), esp. 143ff.
one of the reasons for the larger samples of male names compared to female ones. The data is unevenly distributed in time: most of the materials come from 1096, 1348/49, and especially from the late thirteenth century. The time intervals are largely defined by the available materials, aiming at the evaluation of naming trends on a basis of approximately familial-generation length of 30 years. The materials from 1096 and 1348/49 provide samples of relatively similar scale, which enables to evaluate the weight of marked trends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1096</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1147-1196</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1221-1243</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1264-1289</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1298-1326</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>2408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348/49</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3328</strong></td>
<td><strong>1894</strong></td>
<td><strong>5222</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Name materials from the Memorbuch

Although such aggregate data is suitable for reconstructing general naming trends,\(^{153}\) it does not enable us to mark essential social specifications, uncovering very little about the broader context of social actors’ lives. On the other hand, the Memorbuch encompasses many female names, which are generally far less visible in medieval sources than male ones, thus enabling a comparative analysis through a

gender lens. There is still a bias inherent to this type of source, especially in case of males, since the *Memorbuch* mostly records males with their Hebrew names. It would be therefore difficult to draw conclusions about variations in the vernacular repertoire of male names, as only a small increase in their number can be observed.

Trends in naming practices will be examined on various levels such as the language used for names, models for creating names, semantics, and the links between given names and Jewish religious traditions. Although scholars often use the terms ‘Hebrew names’ and ‘Jewish names’ interchangeably, these are not synonymous terms, as the two categories do not necessarily overlap. Jews commonly used non-Hebrew names such as ‘Kalonymos’ or ‘Alexander’, which are of Greek origin. On the other hand, names of Hebrew origin were often used in the vernacular form, thus creating a category of hybrid names. Moreover, the common tendency to identify meaning with etymology is not only reductive, but also completely disregards the various aspects of names and most importantly – the significance of their actual uses in constructing their social meaning.

Within this framework, I shall pursue questions such as which options did Jews have to participate in the German-speaking culture when it came to naming? What were the relations between cultural products and models Jews brought with them and those of the local non-Jewish culture? How were the different cultural

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154 In contrast to the Ashkenazi case, memorial lists found in the Cairo *Geniza*, for example, mention relatively few female names. This was also the case with *responsa* literature written in the Muslim world. On this point see Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious*, 107-108. Cf. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 3: The Family, 5-6.

155 Such a synonymic use can be found for example in: Michael Wolffsohn, “Re-Judaisierung der deutschen Juden 1933-1939? Eine neue Methode: Vornamen als vordemoskopischer Indikator?”, in *Zwischen “nationaler Revolution” und militärischer Aggression. Transformationen in Kirche und gesellschaft 1934-1939*, ed. Gerhard Besier (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2001), 137-153; see also the introduction in Seror, *Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge*. On page XI Seror distinguishes between ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-Jewish’ names. The former category includes names of Hebrew and Aramaic origins or Greek names used by Jews already in the Talmudic era. The second category encompasses, according to him, all other names used. Joseph Shatzmiller, on the other hand, distinguishes between Hebrew and non-Hebrew names; he mentions three important categories of non-Hebrew names, though he does not apply them to his materials: shared names, names unique to Christians, and names unique to Jews. See Shatzmiller, “Le mond juif”, 92.
components used to construct complex identities which could express commonalities and at the same time mark distinction between Jews and Christians? How were names used to distinguish between social groups within the Jewish milieu, specifically between males and females?

3.2. Names and Jewish-Christian relations

3.2.1. The early Ashkenazi name treasure

The earliest comprehensive name materials from Ashkenazi communities are dated to 1096. The memorial lists from that year record a total of 797 persons: 529 males carrying 72 different names and 268 females carrying 39 names. Thus, in each group approximately 7 persons shared the same name, while the most popular name covered about 13% of the recorded population. Most persons appearing on the lists carried Hebrew names; 93.5% of the recorded males and 60% of the females had such names. Among males, half the recorded population carried one of 9 leading names: Shemu’el [Samuel] (71), Yitshaq [Isaac] (53), Yosef [Joseph] (24), ’Avraham [Abraham] (27), Yehuda [Judah] (27), Ya’aqov [Jacob] (26), Moshe [Moses] (24), and David or Mordekhay [Mordechai] (each occurring 16 times). Among females, every second person carried one of 5 names: Bela (34), Hanna [Hannah] (33), Raḥel [Rachel] (27), Rivka [Rebecca] (23), and Sara [Sarah] (17). The Ashkenazi name repertoire was

156 In Avraham Grossman’s book on early Ashkenazi scholars there are quite a few names, especially male ones. This sample corroborates with the findings based on the analysis of the 1096 lists from the Memorbuch surveyed below. Common male names were, for instance, ’El’eezer, ’El’e’azar, Moshe, Yekuti’el, Meshulam, Me’ir, David, Yehuda, Yosef, Ya’akob, Itsḥaq, Kalonymos, Shemu’el, and Shimshon. Female names appearing several times are Bela, Bona, Yehudit, Ḥanna, and Raḥel. However, the sample of female names is too small to mark any significant trends. See Avraham Grossman, The Early Sages of Ashkenaz: Their Lives, Leadership, and Works. From the Earliest Settlement to the Persecutions of 1096, 2 ed. (Jerusalem: Magness, 1989).
largely drawn from the biblical corpus,\textsuperscript{157} with the prevalent names alluding to central figures like the patriarchs and matriarchs.

Nevertheless, non-Hebrew names derived from Greek, Arabic, Latin, or German origin, also occur. On the 1096 lists, out of 29 non-Hebrew male names only one was German (\textit{Heilman}). Non-Hebrew names carried by males at this early stage were either of Latin (e.g. \textit{Vital}), Arabic (e.g. \textit{Ḥakim}), or Greek (e.g. \textit{Peter}) origin. Such names appearing on the lists belonged primarily to the latter category, as old Greek names such as \textit{Kalonymos}, \textit{Senior}, \textit{Alexander} or \textit{Peter} were used as ‘sacred’ names.\textsuperscript{158} The name \textit{Peter} appears twice in 1096 and would occur in Ashkenazi communities, though in small numbers, throughout the medieval period. This might seem surprising, given the marked religious connotation of that name in Christian context, associated with Peter the apostle. Nevertheless, it is plausible to assume that similarly to other Greek names, which were also used as sacred names, this name was associated with Jewish tradition.\textsuperscript{159} The name of \textit{R. Aḥa bar R. Peter} mentioned in the Talmud (\textit{Sanhedrin}, 76b) indicates that Jewish males carried that name already in the ancient period. The fact that compared to \textit{Kalonymos} and \textit{Alexander}, the name \textit{Peter} was quite uncommon (in the materials surveyed),\textsuperscript{160} might be explained by its meaning for Christians.

\textsuperscript{157} This does not exclude the option that names originally appearing in the Bible could allude to post-biblical Jewish traditions and figures.  
\textsuperscript{159} The word ‘Peter’, appearing in the Bible, means ‘firstborn’ – a term used both for humans and animals: “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” (Ex. 13:2) However, there is no evidence that the name was associated with this biblical term. 
\textsuperscript{160} In his methodological essay on statistics applied to medieval name corpora, Pascal Chareille explains that “while estimates of the occurrences of the most common names in the population studied can easily be made from data provided by the samples… the same is not at all true for rare names…. There is very little likelihood that a name that is rarely found in the population of a given region will show up in a sample.” See Chareille, “Methodological Problems”, 19. This, however, does not imply that relative rates of distribution cannot be inferred.
Non-Hebrew names were much more prevalent among Jewish females. Especially common were names of Latin origin such as Bela, Matrona, Gentil, Bonfilia and Bona. The Arabic name Maimona and the name Scholastra (of Greek origin) also appear a few times. We also encounter German names like Guta, Bruna, and Genana several times and names such as Golda, Guthilda, and Minna, appearing only once. The common use of names, which originate from Mediterranean cultures, and the relative small rate of German names may suggest certain continuity in naming practices for females, reflecting earlier traditions brought with Jewish immigrants to German lands, especially from Italy and France. Although more women than men carried vernacular names, including some borrowed German names, most of the females recorded in the 1096 lists had biblical names. In general, Hebrew played an important role in the early Ashkenazi name treasure, linking both males and females to Jewish religious tradition.

3.2.2. Expansion of the Jewish name repertoire

By the thirteenth century, the Ashkenazi name treasure experienced a marked expansion closely associated with the appearance of new names, especially during the thirteenth century. Some of those names were Hebrew, though many others were vernacular names, especially German.

Among females, we observe increased variation. While in 1096, 39 distinct female names were recorded, two centuries later, the female name-stock comprised 106 names. This expansion cannot be explained by the large sample alone, for a

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161 Another woman by the name of Minna (of Speyer) is mentioned in the Hebrew accounts of the Second Crusade. See Ephraim Bar Jacob of Bonn, The Book of Memoirs: Penitential Prayers and Lamentations, ed. Avraham Meir Habermann (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1970), 19.
similar tendency is also evident in 1348/49, with 76 different female names appearing in the lists. Throughout the period under discussion, the male repertoire of names was broader than the female one. In 1096, 72 distinct names cover a population of 529 males. At the turn of the thirteenth century, the name stock widened to include 138 male names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1096</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1221-1243</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1264-1289</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1298-1326</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348/49</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The female name repertoire

Male names were also widely distributed: 9-10 names were needed to cover half the recorded male population. In addition, we find a decrease in the concentration on only a few names. Whereas in 1096, the leading male name *Shemu’el* covered almost 13.5% of the males in that year, at the turn of the thirteenth century, the most popular name *Yitshaq* covered 9%, and in 1348/49, the leading name *Yosef* covered just 8% of the male population. Furthermore, the ratio of males to names declined from 7.3 in 1096 to only 4.3 in 1348/49. We thus find the stock of male names in the later period displaying a growing tendency toward individualisation, as fewer males shared the same name. However, during the thirteenth century (which provides the largest sample) this ratio increased, with nearly 10 males sharing the same name.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1096</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1147-1196</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1221-1243</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1264-1289</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1298-1326</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1348/49</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The male name repertoire

In 1096, the relative distribution of names among females was even narrower than among males, as 5 names covered half the recorded female population. Nevertheless, a tendency toward wider distribution is evident in the later period: between 1298 and 1326, 9 names covered half the recorded population and in 1348, 10 names were needed to do so. In 1096, the leading name Bela covered 13% of the female population, whereas Sara in 1298 and Guta in 1348 covered 8% and 11% of the women respectively. The ratio of females to names was 6.8 in 1096, rising to 10.7 two centuries later. By the mid-fourteenth century, the female name-stock displayed a tendency similar to that observed among males, the ratio declining to just 4.5 females to a name.

The wider distribution of names was closely associated with an increasing variation in the Ashkenazi name treasure, which became evident in the thirteenth century. In case of females, we find an increased use of vernacular names. In 1096, 40% of the women carried non-Hebrew names, whereas in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, 63% did so and the figure reaches 70.5% in 1348/49. In the male case, one can observe only a slow increase in non-Hebrew names throughout the
period. In 1096, 6.5% of the listed males carried non-Hebrew names, while two centuries later 11.5% of 1078 men had such names.

3.2.3. New vernacular names

The marked expansion of the Ashkenazi name-repertoire during the thirteenth century was closely related to the introduction of new names, many of them in the German language. Looking at the name lists from 1298-1326, out of 106 female names 86 were vernacular; 56 names appeared in the Memorbuch for the first time, 52 of these new names being vernacular. Among males, 35 out of 53 new names were vernacular. Clearly, in this period, onomastic innovation was associated with the practice of giving vernacular names.

During the thirteenth century, we encounter female names like Geila, Jachenet, Hizlin, Gotrat, Mija, Fro[h]kint, Adelkint, Seligkeit, Glück and Ella. While some of those names, such as Adelheit, Ella, Jutta and Guta had Christian
counterparts, others such as Adelkint, Fro[h]kint, Sussa, Vogel and Jachenet were distinctive for Jewish women.\(^\text{163}\) In the necrologies from Nuremberg, we come across the female name *Nusshild* several times, which seems to have been used only by Jewish women.\(^\text{164}\) Among Jewish males, names such as *Fro[h]kint, Fro[h]man, Lieberman, Liebrich, Minman, Süsskind* and *Sussman* appear at that time.

![Figure 2: The female name repertoire 1298-1326 (in numbers)](image)

These names are striking evidence of onomastic creativity and innovation. In the later medieval period, through the use of old Germanic mechanisms for generating names, new male names such as *Bärman, Widman* (the Germanisation of the Latin name ‘Vidal’), *Gutman, Liebertraut*, and *Leblang* emerged. A large stock of new names could be generated by taking everyday German words and putting two linguistic units together, thus fashioning both an individual name and a complex meaning.\(^\text{165}\) Many of the emerging names include a gender marker, often the ending ‘-man’. Such constructions allowed the coining of parallel male and female names. This


\(^{164}\) The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, F 73457, PH 2828.

\(^{165}\) On the Germanic onomastic model, see Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 70-72.
was a cultural option rarely found within the Hebrew repertoire. Hence we come across names such as Schonman and Schona, Sussman and Sussa, Minman and Minna.

In current scholarship, the creation of new vernacular Jewish names in this period is widely seen as a result of translating Hebrew names or adopting existing non-Jewish names. Nevertheless, the Ashkenazi case exemplifies a different model: the coining of German-Jewish names. In many cases, a unique Ashkenazi construction appears to be at work here.\textsuperscript{166} Furthermore, the evidence indicates that translation might have operated in both ways. New Hebrew female names such as Shoshana, Margalit, ‘Atara, and Yeqara were apparently modelled after their vernacular counterparts Rosa, Perla, Kronlin, and Edel.\textsuperscript{167} Coining new names is a clear case of cultural borrowing – a process presupposing competence to select, adapt, and use the required tools and cultural models for a new synthesis.\textsuperscript{168} It is precisely names created with borrowed tools that often distinguished medieval German Jews from their Christians neighbours. The names marked Jews as Jewish, but often in a language – in the wide sense of the term – which Christians could understand. This is a good example of crossing boundaries and affirming them at the same time, and of the dialectics of cultural contacts, in which borrowing and distinguishing oneself are sometimes part of the same process.\textsuperscript{169}

\textsuperscript{166} Dov Goitein refers to the creation of unique female names among Mediterranean Jews. There is no evidence of a similar practice among Jewish men in these communities. On this point, see Goitein, \textit{A Mediterranean Society}, vol. 3: The Family, 314-315.

\textsuperscript{167} The Hebrew word ‘Margalit’ meaning a gem appears in Talmudic sources, for instance in the BT, Avodah Zarah 8b, but apparently it was not used as a given name. In Ashkenazi communities, the name appears in the later medieval period.

\textsuperscript{168} On borrowing of cultural models, see Drory, \textit{Models and Contacts}.

\textsuperscript{169} Funkenstein, “The Dialectics of Assimilation”.
3.2.4. Religious messages encoded through names

Scholars often tend to automatically identify Hebrew names with ‘traditional’ names, to the extent that they discard changes in the Hebrew repertoire itself. Studies on Jewish names in medieval communities thus rarely pay attention to creativity, complexity, and change in trends or models, serving for the creation of Hebrew names. In the following, I shall focus on the religious aspect of trends in giving Hebrew names. By analysing change and continuity in such trends, I wish to point out the vital role of names in reshaping Jewish identities and Jewish-Christian relations.

Female names

From 1096 to 1349, the repertoire of female names related to the biblical corpus, encompassing names carried by leading figures such as the matriarchs Rivka, Rahel and Sara (the name Le’a appears rarely); the mother of Prophet Samuel, Hanna – herself regarded as prophetess by the Talmudic sages, and Prophetess Miryam [Miriam]; and the biblical heroine ‘Esther [Esther] whose name is associated with the holiday of Purim and who was also considered prophetess in Talmudic tradition (Megillah 14a). Less common, though not unusual, were names like Batsheva [Bathsheba], alluding to the biblical Queen and mother of King Salomon; Tseruya [Zeruiah], carried by a sister of King David whose sons are mentioned in relation to their mother (1 Chronicles 2:16); and Tsipora [Zipporah] – the name of Moses’s wife of whom it is told that she saved her husband’s life and circumcised her own son (Ex. 4:24-26). While most of these names were commonly used at some point, they were less common at other times.
In order to recover broad trends in giving Hebrew names, I have created a sample of 863 Hebrew female names and 4,285 male names taken from the "Memorbuch", the Hebrew notes contained within the "Judenschreinbuch" of Cologne, and the collection of sepulchral inscriptions from Würzburg, covering the period between 1096 and 1349. Table 5 (below) shows the female names, which appear most frequently, presenting the number of occurrences and the relative share covered by each name. Clearly, the names Ḥanna, Sara, and Ṛahl occupy the leading positions, while the name Rivka is ranked fourth with a considerable difference in the number of occurrences. In spite of the vernacularisation process, which culminated at the turn of the thirteenth century, these three biblical names made quite a remarkable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>1096</th>
<th>1298-1326</th>
<th>1348/49</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bela</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ḥanna</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raḥel</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guta</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minna</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jutta</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Batsheva&lt;sup&gt;170&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Table 4: Leading female names (in %)

<sup>170</sup> The figures include the name Pessa/Pesslin. It is uncertain, though, that this name was derived from or associated with Bathsheba. See the section on everyday use of names below.

career, revealing continuity in name-giving patterns. As table 4 (above) demonstrates, the name Hanna had the most stable career among all female names – both Hebrew and vernacular ones. The exceptional popularity of these three biblical names cannot be explained by family traditions alone. We are thus required to seek for other factors, which could account for the evidence. What did these religious figures symbolise within Jewish tradition? Which models could they offer for medieval Ashkenazi Jews? And which function such models might have filled within Ashkenazi culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>1096</th>
<th>1148</th>
<th>1131</th>
<th>1161</th>
<th>1155</th>
<th>1151</th>
<th>1142</th>
<th>1135</th>
<th>1131</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
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<td>Rachel</td>
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<td>Rebecca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathsheba</td>
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<td>Zipporah</td>
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<td>Zeruiah</td>
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</table>

| Percentage | 21.5% | 17%  | 15%  | 7%   | 6.3% | 6%   | 4.8% | 4%   | 3.6% |

Table 5: Common biblical female names 1096-1349

Let us begin with that, which at first sight seems quite obvious – namely, the fact that both Sarah and Rachel played a central role in Jewish tradition as two of the four matriarchs. Could this special status of the two figures account for the popularity of their names? To some extent, surely, but this is far from satisfactory. If this was the case, how can we account for the distinct career these two names made compared to those of the other two matriarchs – Leah and Rebecca? The name Le’a was not common in Ashkenaz in any stage of the medieval period. This was probably due to Leah’s story; she was the older and less attractive sister who became Jacob’s wife through deception and throughout her life she was deprived of her husband’s love, which was given to her sister. Even so, we still need to ask why the name Rivka was received only to a very limited extent. While this name was relatively common during the eleventh century (8.5%), it rarely appears in later materials. Therefore, we should
turn to other aspects associated with the two matriarchs Sarah and Rachel and inquire what they might have in common with Hannah’s figure. What can we learn about these three female characters from biblical and other textual traditions?

The biblical and Talmudic texts depict Sarah as a positive and a strong character, as the Talmudic sages often speak in her praise. For example, she is described as exceptionally beautiful (Gen. 12:11-14; Sanhedrin 39b; Megillah 15a) and modest (Bava Metzia 87a). Similarly, Rachel’s beauty receives attention in the biblical narrative (Gen. 29:17), as her character is generally portrayed in a positive light. A common feature for both Sarah and Hannah is that they are considered prophetesses (Sanhedrin 69b; Megillah 14a). These are quite limited characteristics shared by some of these figures. All three women, however, had an important thing in common: they were barren, but later gave birth by the divine will to sons who would play key roles in the history of their people. Sarah was the mother of Isaac, Rachel’s firstborn was Joseph, and Hannah gave birth to (the prophet) Samuel.

Focusing on their marital relations, Rachel – like Hannah – was one of two wives and was her husband’s favourite. Moreover, the two women are characterised as suffering figures. Hannah was restless and endured great suffer due to her condition, not being able to give her husband any children, while his other wife did (1 Samuel: 1, 6; 15). After her prayer was answered and she gave birth to her son Samuel, Hannah had to keep her vow to dedicate the boy, for whom she prayed, to priesthood (ibid. 26-28). Rachel was, one might say, a tragic character; she sacrificed her wedding for the benefit of her older sister Leah and she died giving birth to her second son Benjamin. To approach the evidence on the popularity of Rachel, Hannah and Sarah as name donors in Ashkenazi communities, I propose to focus on their motherhood, especially as it relates to sacrifice and suffering which, in my opinion,
can help us tracing interesting links between the three figures and might provide a fruitful framework for broader discussions on Jewish names.

Sarah is perhaps the biblical mother associated with sacrifice. She was the mother of Isaac – the ultimate sacrifice to God, who inspired medieval Ashkenazi messianic thought and provided an important model for a Jewish collective identity, especially in the period following the first crusade. The self-perception of Ashkenazi communities as a sacrifice on the altar is a dominant motif in the Hebrew chronicles of the First Crusade. Yet in the Jewish accounts of the 1096 persecutions and in the Bible, it is rather Abraham who plays the role of the parent from whom a great sacrifice was demanded – not Sarah. In fact, Sarah had no role in the biblical story of the Binding of Isaac. On the other hand, a Talmudic tradition tells that Sarah died of sorrow after realising that her son had been sacrificed. (Gen. Rabba, § 55, 5)

Recently, research on gendered images in the Jewish accounts of the First Crusade has suggested that the figure of Sarah might have provided Jewish women with an alternative (female) model to Abraham that could partly assume the role of Mary, mother of Christ.

Scholars have already shown that the image of Rachel played a crucial role in this context, while providing medieval Jews with a model through which they could respond to and develop polemic against Christian attacks on Judaism. Such an interpretation of Rachel’s image, setting her against the image of Mary – the (earthly) suffering mother who laments her son – on the one hand, and the female figure of

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175 Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God*, 111-127, esp. 120f.
unusual status who is close to God, on the other, relied on biblical and rabbinic traditions. In the Book of Jeremiah, Rachel symbolises the Nation of Israel lamenting her children: “Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.” (31:15) In the rabbinic tradition, her figure is perceived as a mediator between God and his people, as their defender, and as the mother crying for her children, deploring God to have mercy on them. This homiletic tradition was included by the great scholar R. Shelomo ben Yitsḥaq (1040-1105, Troyes), also known as Rashi, in his commentary to the Bible, which became essential for the study of the Talmud.176

How does Hannah fit into this scheme? Her son was not a martyr like Isaac and early Jewish traditions do not seem to ascribe her a similar role to that of Rachel, although she is considered, as I mentioned earlier, a prophetess. She was thus one of the seven women in Judaism who had a special relation to God, according to Talmudic tradition (Megillah 14a). Hannah can also be seen as a devout woman whose motherhood involved self-sacrifice, for she had to dedicate her only son, whom she yearned for so long, to God. The biblical author tells how “Hannah prayed, and said, my heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD, my mouth is enlarged over my enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.” (1 Samuel, 2:1) Shortly after that it says: “[...] the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many is waxed feeble.” (1 Samuel, 2:5) Rashi associated the mother of seven with Hannah and the unhappy mother with Elkanah’s other wife, Peninah. It is possible that the later martyr figure appearing in various Jewish and Christian sources, often referred to as “the

mother and seven sons” was somehow related to the biblical figure of Hannah. Interestingly, in post-medieval versions of the story, the woman martyr became known by the name Hannah. Yet in Antiquity and in the middle Ages, if she was named at all, she was called Miriam – not Hannah. Are there any traditions linking between Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah, which could provide further evidence?

The three women play a significant role in Jewish liturgy as well. In the prayers on the Jewish High Holy Days (the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement), the three virtuous barren women whose prayers had been answered by God are portrayed interceding in behalf of the children of Israel, pleading for salvation from God. Jeremy Cohen has pointed out that Christian theologians in ancient and medieval times identified Rachel, Sarah, and Hannah as prefiguring Mother Church. Ashkenazi Jews, he argues, were probably familiar with such Christian associations.

The three women are also mentioned in a Talmudic tradition, which argues that the world was created in the Jewish month of Nissan – not in Tishrey. This tradition, which is ascribed to R. Yehoshuʻa, justifies this claim as follows: In Nissan the world was created, and in the same month the patriarchs were born, and in Nissan they also died; Isaac was born on the Passover; on New Year's Day [i.e. first of Nissan] Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were visited, Joseph was released from prison, and the bondage of our fathers in Egypt ceased. In Nissan, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt, and in the same month we shall again be redeemed. (Rosh Hashana 11a) All three women discussed here and their firstborn sons were integrated into this tradition, while prefiguring in different ways not only the “beginning”, but

177 See Gershon David Cohen, Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 39-60. See also Cohen, Sanctifying the Name of God, 117-120. In the popular medieval work Josippon appears a version of that story where the mother is unnamed.
178 Sanctifying the Name of God, 113-114.
179 Ibid., 121.
also the “end” – that is, salvation. Referring to Hannah, Sarah, and Rachel, Jeremy Cohen has claimed that “the classical rabbis likened each of these three heroines to the “happy mother of children” of Psalm 113:9.”\textsuperscript{180} The “happy mother” has been often associated with “the mother and seven sons”, thus embedding her figure in the context of martyrdom.\textsuperscript{181} 

From the thirteenth century onward, as we have already seen, one observes growing emphasis on German names among Ashkenazi females, while the Hebrew name-repertoire was markedly decreasing. Despite these trends, an unusual continuity is seen in relation to three names: Hanna, Sara, and Rahel. I have argued that this phenomenon requires explanation, offering to consider the meanings and functions that these three figures carried and filled within Ashkenazi culture during the central medieval period. Assuming that there was a common feature to all three, which made their names especially attractive for Ashkenazi Jews, this was very likely the result of several factors working together: the three were associated with motherhood, sacrifice and sorrow, and were perceived as having a special relation to God, which in turn associated them with the promise for mercy and salvation. Such associations also made these characters ideal for the construction of a Jewish model that could challenge the Christian model of the devoted suffering mother and righteous woman, embodied in the image of the Virgin Mary. In this setting, Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah, could invoke female participation in Jewish religious culture, as their names played an important role in crystallising a (female) Jewish identity.

**Male names**

Throughout nearly the entire period under discussion, the top ten male names included Shemu’el, Yitsḥaq, Yosef, Ya’aqov, and ‘Avraham (table 6). All these

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{181} On the story and its medieval versions, see Cohen, *Rabbinic Cultures*, 39-60.
characters were central to Jewish traditions and, as the Talmudic tradition on Jewish
calendar quoted earlier suggests, they were all associated with the month of Nissan
and the redemption of Israel. Looking at Hebrew male names from medieval
Ashkenaz, the leading position of the name Yitshaq is especially notable; it can be
rated in the first place with 395 occurrences (9.2%). The name Yitshaq was very
common in medieval Spanish and French communities as well.\(^{182}\) Still, the central
role played by the image of Isaac in Ashkenazi messianic thought may have had part
in the popularity of the name. The link between name-giving practices and such
religious messages might be reinforced by the example of the name Pesah
[‘Passover’], which was created and exclusively used by Ashkenazi Jews in the
Middle Ages.

As far as we can tell, the name Pesah appears for the first time on the 1096
lists from Cologne. It is mentioned only once, in relation to an infant הקטן, who
was probably born on the holiday of Passover. In the following centuries, it occured
increasingly; it appears on the lists from 1264-89 (recording 926 males) and from
1289-1326 (recording 1,287 males) 10 times on each. It also appears in greater
numbers in the necrologies from Nuremberg from the late thirteenth and fourteenth
centuries.\(^{183}\)

\(^{182}\) See the name index to the volume: Fritz Baer, Kastilien (Farnborough: Gregg, 1970); Shatzmiller,
“Le mond juif”, 93.

\(^{183}\) On commemoration in Ashkenazi communities, see for instance Judah D. Galinsky,
“Commemoration and Heqdesh in the Jewish Communities of Germany and Spain during the 13th
Century”, in Stiftungen in Christentum, Judentum und Islam von der Moderne. Auf der Suche nach
ihren Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden in religiösen Grundlagen, praktischen Zwecken und
historischen Transformationen, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), 191-203.
Table 6: Common Hebrew male names 1096-1349

Although it was not circulated in high figures, the name Pesah is an excellent example of a new name, coined by German Jews, which became part of the Ashkenazi repertoire. We come across the name in various documents, including the responsa literature, on tombstones, and in medieval seals. A fourteenth-century Jewish seal from Augsburg belonged to a man called “‘Asher son of Pesah Shelomo”. On the outer rim, the German-Latin inscription says [S’LAMB]LIN·TER·IVDEI·V·AVGSBVRC (sic) – “Seal of Lamblin the Jew of Augsburg”, while in the inner rim the Hebrew inscription gives the name of the seal owner “‘Asher son of Pesah Shelomo”. The name appearing in the German document to which the seal is attached is Lamp. At the centre of the seal appears an imprint of a lamb. The association of the German name of the seal owner ‘Lamb’ with the Hebrew

name of his father ‘Pesaḥ’ seems plausible. This might suggest that the seal’s
design played not only on descent, but on Jewish polemic ideas too, connecting the
holiday of redemption – the Passover and the sacrifice made at the occasion (Ex.
12:3-7) with the sacrifice of Christ who is symbolised by and often depicted as a
lamb.

Along with the name Yitshaq, we encounter among the most prevalent male
names also Shemu’el, which is ranked second with 318 occurrences (7.4%). The name
of Prophet Samuel, who anointed King David and was regarded by Talmudic sages as
one of the three prominent (pre-kingship) leaders along with ‘Aharon [Aaron] and
Moshe, was popular in both Ashkenaz and Spain. A different case is the name
Ya’aqov [Jacob], which unlike Shemu’el or Yitshaq was widespread especially in
Ashkenaz. Jacob is the father of the nation who was chosen by God himself over his
older twin brother Esau. Interestingly, the name Ya’aqov played a very limited role in
Spanish communities. On the other hand, the name ‘Avraham, though quite
common in German Jewish communities, was much more prevalent among Spanish
Jews.

Hebrew names, which seem typical for Ashkenazi Jews, include ‘Eliezer and
Gershom carried by Moses’s sons, and the name of the High Priest ‘Eleazar, the son
of Aaron. ‘Aharon, though, rarely appears in German Jewish communities. The
name ‘Eleazar and the semantically related name ‘Eliezer were much more prevalent in Ashkenaz than in Spain. Not only biblical figures carried these names but
prominent Mishnaic and Talmudic scholars as well – for example, ‘Eliezer ben

185 Ibid.
186 Cf. Yuval, Two Nations in Your Womb, 68-76.
(Farnborough, Hampshire: Gregg, 1970).
188 On the other hand, the name ‘Aharon was relatively common among English Jews. Cf. Henry Paine
Hurkanos and 'Ele‘azar ben Pedat. Therefore, such names could have relied on more than one model. A prominent medieval German scholar by that name was R. 'Ele‘azar of Worms (1165-ca.1240) – one of the leading figures of Hasidey Ashkenaz.\footnote{See: Ivan G. Marcus, \textit{Piety and society: the Jewish Pietists of medieval Germany} (Leiden: Brill, 1981).}

Other typical Ashkenazi names are \textit{Yehi’el} (‘May God Live’), \textit{Barukh} (‘Blessed’), and \textit{Menaḥem} (‘The Consoler’), including related names like \textit{Naḥman}. In case of the name \textit{Barukh}, although there is a biblical figure by that name – \textit{Barukh ben Nerya}, the scribe of Prophet Jeremiah (36:4), this seems to have been a marginal option in the Jewish name repertoire in Antiquity. This can be supported by the fact that very few of the Talmudic scholars carried that name and probably none of the Mishnaic sages.\footnote{Aaron Hyman, \textit{Sefer Toldot Tanaim ve-Amoraim}, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: Express, 1910), 293.} It seems therefore that it was not the biblical model, which operated in this case. Perhaps it was the semantic meaning that made the name appealing. Another option, which does not exclude the first, is that the name \textit{Barukh}, spreading out in the early medieval period, was a Hebrew translation of the Latin \textit{Benedictus} or its French form \textit{Bendit}. The latter was common among French-speaking Jews, while its German counterpart \textit{Seligman} became widespread in Ashkenazi communities in the later medieval period.\footnote{It appears to have been less common among Spanish Jews who used the form \textit{Benito}. See for example the name index in \textit{Jews in the Kingdom of Aragon 1213-1327}; cf. \textit{Navarra Judaica II} 1334-1350.}

Apparently, the biblical name \textit{Menaḥem} exemplifies a similar case. This name was carried by one of the kings of Israel (Kings II, 15:17) who was a rather marginal character in Jewish tradition. On the other hand, the Jerusalem Talmud mentions it among the names of the Messiah (Berakhot 17a). The name was also associated with the day of fasting ‘Ninth of Av’ commemorating the destruction of the Temples; according to the same Talmudic tradition, on that day the Messiah shall be born. Such
associations, however, do not exclude the option that the name *Menhaem* (literally ‘The Consoler’) was successfully received, at least to some extent, on account of its semantic meaning. The name *Nahman* or *Nahmani* as well as *Nehemya* [Nehemiah], which are semantically related to *Menahem*, also occurred in medieval German communities and were apparently typical for Ashkenaz. Semantics was probably not the only factor operating in these cases; the name *Nahman* was carried by prominent Talmudic sages such as R. Nahman b. Ya‘aqov (ca. 250-320) and Nehemiah was an important biblical figure. A possible example for a name whose semantic content probably played a significant role in its circulation is the Hebrew name *Simha* (‘Gladness’) – apparently, a medieval creation. It was most likely created on the basis of the well-known verse from the Book of Esther: “The Jews had light, and gladness (*Simha*), and joy (*Sason*), and honour.” (8:16) The name *Simha* was typical for Ashkenazi males, while *Sason* was widespread in Spanish Jewish communities.

Are there any similar cases on the margins of the female name-treasure? There are very few examples, which suggest the encoding of religious messages through newly coined female names. One such example is the name *Segula* (literally meaning ‘Treasure’). This biblical term alludes to the choice of Israel by God, which was thus called ‘’Am Segula’ – meaning ‘The Chosen People’. (Deut. 7:6) Another example is the name *Tsiyona*, appearing in the thirteenth century in the necrologies from Nuremberg, for the first time, as far as we can tell.192 Perhaps it is no coincidence that the name *Tsiyona* appears in Nuremberg where the local Jewish community had close relations to the Jewish community in Jerusalem, which is also known as ‘Tsiyon’ [Zion].193

192 Around that time or perhaps later appears in Ashkenaz the male by-name *Tzion* [Zion]. An example is the important Ashkenazi scholar *Menahem Tzion*, who probably adopted this by-name after visiting the Holy Land. See Yuval, *Scholars*, 282-283.
3.2.5. Using names in daily interactions

Although there was a formal hierarchy between the Hebrew and the vernacular (in legal and liturgical contexts), especially in case of male names, this relation was constantly challenged by everyday practices. A recurrent issue in modern scholarly literature concerns everyday language used in medieval Ashkenaz. Scholars often claimed that Hebrew was the spoken language – specifically among Jewish males. Yet as various sources from the later medieval period suggest – which is also supported by the findings sketched in the previous sections – Ashkenazi Jews spoke local German dialects.

Everyday creativity associated with the growing use of the vernacular left its mark on Hebrew names as well; the original biblical forms were often neglected, even forgotten. This phenomenon required rabbinic attention in matters of divorce, leading to exceptionally detailed discussions in legal responsa. In some cases, there was an attempt to recover the original Hebrew given names based on vernacular appellations. The tension between everyday life, shaped by the spoken language, and legal practices, dominated by the Hebrew, is captured in Yisra’el Isserlein’s (15th c.) legal opinion concerning such a case: Regarding what you wrote about [the name] ‘Saerlein’ [...] And what if the name ‘Sara’ will be forgotten; [after all] in case of women, it is usual that the original name (shem muhaq) is forgotten in face of such everyday appellations (kinuyim), since they are not called to read up the Torah.194 Obviously, It was “easier” to keep male Hebrew names alive than female ones thanks to liturgy and the role it assigned to male ‘sacred’ names.

As the name lists from the Memorbuch show, the increasing use of German diminutive forms, particularly –lin, and short forms closer to the vernacular

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194 Isserlein, Terumat haDeshen, 2 Pesakim u-Ketavim, § 12.
transformed the repertoire of Jewish names, especially from the thirteenth century onward. Hence, the name Sara became Zurlin or Saerlin; Simha turned into Simlin; Rahel became Rechlin, etc. Similarly, in case of male names, Jekel/in was used for Ya‘aqov, Aeberlin for ‘Avraham, Moshe became Moelin, and so forth. In such cases, there were rarely legal doubts concerning the original Hebrew names.\textsuperscript{195} These names, though, clearly suggest the increasing distance from the biblical corpus. This is also demonstrated by the creation of vernacular short forms whose resemblance to the Hebrew origin was occasionally obscured. For example, by the thirteenth century, the female name Tsipora was often used in the form Pora or Porlin and the name Batheva turned into Pessa or Pesslin,\textsuperscript{196} rarely used in its original Hebrew form. Similarly, the male name Yehiel became Michel and Ya‘aqov often turned into Koplin.\textsuperscript{197} Furthermore, we encounter hybrid names such as Aberlieb and Zarlib or Recheltraut and Rechengold. In most cases, such names have been regarded by modern scholars as “affectionate names” (Kosenamen) allegedly used within familiar circles.\textsuperscript{198} Such an approach is probably influenced by modern perceptions of formal versus informal names, which seems inappropriate for understanding medieval practices.

The evidence suggests that such names were certainly not confined to “intimate” familiar circles and that it is not helpful, and even misleading, to classify them as affectionate names. Names such as Zarlib, Gutlin, Aberlib and so on were used not only in oral informal communication. Jews, just like Christians, were designated through such names in Christian sources. Furthermore, such names appear also in Jewish sources such as memorial lists and \textit{responsa} literature, but even more

\textsuperscript{195} Weil, \textit{She’elot u-Teshuvot}, §120.
\textsuperscript{196} Salfeld, \textit{Das Martyrologium}, 409.
\textsuperscript{197} Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get}, 55.
\textsuperscript{198} Keil, \textprime{}Petachja, genannt Zecherl\textprime{}", 133.
strikingly, they appear on medieval Jewish gravestones that belonged to women. Sepulchral inscriptions from the fourteenth century commemorated some females, using the names Zirlin (not ‘Sara’), Pora (not ‘Tsipora’), and Rechlin (not ‘Rahel’). On a tombstone from 1477 in Nuremberg, a Jewish woman was designated as Pess. Throughout her life, this woman was called Pesslin, never appearing by the name ‘Batsheva’. Interestingly, by the fifteenth century Jews recognised the name ‘Pesslin’ as a German name (Ashkenazi). As the examples show, what originally was a short form of Hebrew names later became an independent name, which in many respects was closer to the German dialects.

3.2.6. Jewish and Christian naming trends compared

Jews, as we have seen in earlier sections, borrowed names from their Christian neighbours. Not only women but also men carried borrowed names such as Falk, Gottschalk, and Gumprecht, which, in fact, were uncommon given names among Christians at the time. The name Anselm also appears among Jewish males, often accompanying the biblical name 'Asher' and in few cases one encounters names like Friedrich, Marquard, Burkhard, and Jordan. There are also cases, in which both Jews and Christians carried the same names, though those alluded to different traditions. One example is the name Jacob, becoming increasingly common among Christians in Germany in the late medieval period. In each milieu, it alluded to a different figure: the biblical patriarch in the Jewish case and the apostle in the Christian context. Similarly, the name Peter, which appears in both groups, alludes to

200 See chapter IV.
201 Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 34 [32].
202 See Friedenberg, Medieval Jewish Seals, no. 144. See also the name index in Arthur Süssmann, ed. Das Erfurter Judenbuch (1357-1407), Mitteilungen des Gesamtarchivs der deutschen Juden (1914).
distinct traditions. One example for homonyms with distinctive origins is the name *Eberlin*, which was very common in both groups. Whereas in the Jewish case *Eberlin* was derived from *Abraham*, in the Christian case, it originated from *Eberhard*. Among females, except for the names mentioned earlier such as *Guta, Adelheit, Ella*, *Perla, Richza*, and *Jutta*, we encounter names such as *Sophia, Mechtild, Euphemia*, and *Barbara*, though rarely.

Scholars have emphasised similarity between the two name-repertoires – especially in case of women, focusing on names shared by both groups. A comparative analysis on the structural level, though, reveals significant differences between the two groups. While the Jewish name treasure displayed increasing variation and wide distribution of names, in Christian communities – in Europe in general and in German territories in particular – the repertoire of names was significantly reduced from the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries onward, a clear dominance of saints’ and rulers’ names now emerging. Specific case studies from Rothenburg o.d. Tauber and Würzburg support this argument. The Christian names used for the following analysis were collected from the cities’ *Urkundenbücher*, covering the period between the mid-thirteenth and the mid-fourteenth centuries, while the sample of Jewish names was taken from the 1298 lists, appearing in the *Memorbuch*.


Rothenburg o.d. Tauber

Among females, the Jewish repertoire of names was broader than the Christian one, as fewer women shared the same name (table 7). The higher concentration on names among Christians is also demonstrated by the leading name *Elisabeth*, covering 14% of the recorded female population, compared to *Hanna* (or *Sara*), covering only 9% of the Jewish females on the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
<th>N/50%</th>
<th>Leading N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7: Female names from Rothenburg*

The male repertoire of names displayed tendencies similar to those observed among females, although the difference between the two groups was even greater in this case (table 8). The Jewish name treasure was significantly broader than the Christian one, as fewer men shared the same name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
<th>N/50%</th>
<th>Leading N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8: Male names from Rothenburg*

Among Christians, the name stock displayed a clear tendency toward high concentration on a few names, while only 5 names were shared by half the recorded male population, with the leading name *Heinrich* covering 19% of the males. On the
other hand, 9 names were needed to cover half the Jewish male population, while the leading name *Yitshaq* covered less than 10% of the recorded population.

**Würzburg**

The evidence from Würzburg supports these observations unequivocally. In case of females, the difference between Jewish and Christian naming practices is especially marked by the relative low distribution of names and the concentration on only a few names, which was twice as high among Christian women. As in Rothenburg, the most common names were *Elisabeth* among Christians and *Ḥanna* among Jews, covering 23% and 10% of the recorded population respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
<th>N/50%</th>
<th>Leading N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 9: Female names from Würzburg**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Pers./N</th>
<th>N/50%</th>
<th>Leading N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10: Male names from Würzburg**

Among men, the Jewish name treasure was considerably wider, with 71 individual names compared to 43 among Christian males. The number of names needed to cover half the male population was more than doubled among Jewish men. Correspondingly, the name *Heinrich* covered over 23% of the recorded Christian males, while its Jewish counterpart *Ya‘aqov* covered merely 10% of the male population.
Shared names

Can we trace commonalities in the Jewish and the Christian repertoires of names? There are few biblical names shared by both groups, though referring to different religious figures and traditions. A clear example is that of the name Jacob found both among Jewish and Christian men in late medieval Germany.\(^\text{206}\) As already mentioned, in Jewish tradition, the name alludes to one of the patriarchs, while in the Christian context it referred to one of the apostles. Thus, we are dealing with homonyms with different connotations. The evidence shows that Jews borrowed names from their Christian neighbours nonetheless. This practice is especially apparent in case of female names. In Rothenburg, we encounter several names carried by both Christian and Jewish women such as Adelheit, which was very popular among Christians (30 times) but rather negligible among Jews (3 times). Other examples are that of Elle, Otilie (or ‘Odilia’), Perla, Richza, and Sophie. Among Jewish females, the most common names in this category were Guta and Jutta – each appearing 13 times on the list. Both names, especially Guta, were popular among Ashkenazi women at the time.\(^\text{207}\) In Würzburg, three names appear in both groups: Guta, Jutta, and Sophie. The unusual name Liebesta also appears once in each group, but it is unclear whether those homonyms actually come from the same origin.

In case of males, Jews and Christians shared fewer names. The examples coming from Rothenburg are Peter and Wolflin – neither of which was widespread among the recorded male population. The latter, though, was not unusual in both groups during the late medieval period; the name Wolf was used as an everyday name among Jews, often accompanying the biblical name Benyamin. In Würzburg, the

\(^{206}\) Cf. Rothenburg, She’elot u-Teshuvot, part 4, § 283.

\(^{207}\) The name Guta became so common among Jewish women that we even come across a proselyte by that name in the first necrology from Nuremberg (13th c.).
name *Wolflein* appears again in both groups. Names shared by Jews and Christians, though quite unusual for Jewish males, are *Berthold, Poppo,* and *Heinz* (i.e. ‘Heinrich’) – one of the most common names among Christian males in German regions. Other sources than the *Memorbuch* reinforce the impression that borrowed names were less likely to be used by Jewish males than by females. This indicates that the general findings are not biased by the low rate of vernacular male names, typical for the Jewish memorial lists.

**3.2.7. Given names as religious markers**

Since relatively few names shared by Jews and Christians can be traced, apparently given names functioned as religious markers too.\(^{208}\) To recall the account by Thomas of Cantimpré, it suggested that Jews could be distinguished from Christians through their given names. The comparison between Jewish and Christian name-repertoires shows some similarities, especially in case of female names, but in most cases Jews and Christians indeed carried distinct names.\(^{209}\) Jewish men often had biblical names and even when they carried vernacular names – these were usually unique for Jews or they were rarely used among Christians. Jewish women, on the other hand, were often given German names, which were found among their Christian neighbours, such as Guta or Jutta. Such names, though, were not religious markers; indeed, most Christian

\(^{208}\) Recently Irven Resnick came to the conclusion thatt medieval Jewish “names were often not, then, generally adequate to differentiate Jews from Christians.” See Resnick, *Marks of Distinction*, 49. Except for not paying any attention to German-speaking regions in his study, Resnick based his conclusion on rather crude studies such as Seror’s on French Jews: Seror, *Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge*. Seror’s distinction between ‘names’ and ‘designations’ is not sharp enough and he made no distinction between different types of vernacular names. Also, in this study the primary categories are ‘Jewish’ vs. ‘non-Jewish’ names based on linguistic origins only and ignoring completely the models on which such names were based.

\(^{209}\) This changed in the early modern period, especially with the reformation, which elevated names from the Hebrew Bible. On changes in the Christian repertoire of names during that time, see Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 193-196.
women were named after saints such as Elisabeth, Margaret, and so forth. These names were very rare among Ashkenazi women.\footnote{Seror’s collection of Jewish names from France suggests similarly that such names were not prevalent among Jewish women. See for example Seror, Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge, 63, 173. Seror, however, included under the name ‘Marguerite’, for example, the Hebrew name ‘Margalit’ and its various forms. The relations between them are not entirely clear in that case; according to Seror’s list, the Hebrew ‘Margalit’ appeared earlier, in 1203 (in England), while ‘Margareta’ appeared in 1245 in Saint-Quentin. It is unclear whether the one was usually the translation of the other or not. The Latin form, however, was less common. Moreover, even if those words were semantically related, this does not mean that the names had the same reference. In the Christian case, the name was associated with saints’ cult. On the later point, see Mitterauer, Ahnen und Heilige, 250, 286, and in passim.}

Is there any direct evidence – except for Cantimpré’s text – of Jews or Christians making a claim about religious identification (identifying others as belonging to a specific religious group) based on given names? I would like to mention one intriguing case from fifteenth-century Regensburg, which I was able to trace. In the year 1470, a trial against a Jew named Kalman, the former cantor of the Jewish community in Regensburg, took place in the city.\footnote{For a discussion on this case and references to the sources, see Lucia Raspe, Jüdische Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Aschkenas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 89f.} Kalman, who first expressed willingness to convert to Christianity and was supported by the local church authorities, decided later not to be baptised and returned to the Jewish community. He was trialed as a turncoat (‘Renegat’) and was sentenced to death. During his examination, Kalman was questioned in regard to the attitude of local Jews towards St. Emmeram, the patron saint of the bishopric of Regensburg. His reply bears incredible testimony of competing Jewish and Christian narratives of holiness and devotion.

The Jews of Regensburg apparently believed that St. Emmeram, who was depicted in local Christian tradition as a martyr buried in Regensburg, was in fact a Jew and that his burial location is no other than the Jewish cemetery. According to Kalman: 
\begin{quote}
die Juden halten, das sand Haymran ein Jud sei gewesen und lig in irem freithof und hat kein stein ob im und hat neur ein loch. da mainen sy, der geschmack
\end{quote}
There are several indications for it that the Jews of Regensburg were convinced that Emmeram was a Jew – not a Christian. Where did this certainty come from? A striking argument appears in a local Christian account from the sixteenth century by Laurentius Hochwart, a canon (Domherr) from Regensburg. Hochwart claimed to have heard from the local Jews themselves what made them so certain about Emmeram’s Jewish identity: *hujus fabulae probationem nullam haberent, nisi quod ajunt Emmerami nomen Hebraeum esse, id quod עמרם id est: Ameram pater Mosi subindicat. Huius fabulae sum testis auribus, quam ex ipsis audivi, qui eam quasi rem seriam credunt.*

According to this testimony, that, which made Emmeram’s Jewish identity so compelling in the eyes of the Jews of Regensburg, was his name – a Hebrew biblical name, which only Jews would carry. This view coincides with the impressions by Thomas of Cantimpré, only that ironically, in this case it was used by Jews to contest Christian claims on sanctity and local history.

The episode from Regensburg calls to mind another case of disputed religious identification, this time among modern scholars, in relation to a well-known medieval figure: Sußkind of Trimberg (13th c). Generations of scholars have debated the religious identity of this peculiar figure of a German poet who mastered the German language and to whom life at courts of the Christian elite was not unfamiliar, yet he identified himself in his work as a Jew. Remarkably, the poet’s name seems to have escaped scholars’ attention or perhaps, it was dismissed altogether as evidence for the discussion. In any case, there is no doubt that the name Sußkind is an Ashkenazi
creation and that it was distinctively Jewish. Hence, there are two plausible options to interpret the evidence. First, that Sußkind of Trimberg was *indeed* a Jew, as some scholars have argued. The second possibility is that the poet’s Jewish identity expressed in his poem was, as other scholars maintain, fictive. If we are inclined to accept the second theory, we need to reflect on the puzzling choice of name the poet made here. If Sußkind of Trimberg actually sought to construct a Jewish figure, even if one of a very special type, why didn’t he adopt a biblical name, for instance, which would certainly be identified as “Jewish”? Could it be that names like *Sußkind* – German and Jewish at the same time – became ‘typical’ for ‘Jewish’? The name alone cannot solve the issue at hand, but considering Sußkind of Trimberg’s name seriously as evidence of his religious identity evokes interesting questions in regard to names and the construction of religious identities.

### 3.3. Naming and gender relations

The marked difference between naming practices for males and females have gained so far only little attention from scholars. The higher rate of vernacular names for Jewish women in the medieval period has been explained so far by the fact that they carried no sacred name, fewer restraints thus being present when it came to names girls received.\(^\text{215}\) However, as we have seen, between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries such practices changed significantly. It was in fact by no means “natural” for Jewish women to carry vernacular names. Scholars have often maintained that in general, the corpus of female names tended to be less traditional, more open to new trends.\(^\text{216}\) Hence ‘male’ has been commonly identified with ‘tradition’ and ‘female’

\(^{215}\) See, for example, Zunz, *Namen der Juden*, 70.

\(^{216}\) See for instance, Beider, *Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, xxviii.
with ‘fashion’.\textsuperscript{217} Several examples from medieval Europe challenge this simple dichotomy.

In post-conquest England, for instance, those were the women who preserved local ethnic traditions, including names, while it was often through women – mothers, wet-nurses, housekeepers – that the local language survived. Whereas continental names brought to England with the Norman settlers have spread out by the twelfth century, reshaping considerably the repertoire of male names, traditional English female names survived much longer.\textsuperscript{218} A different case, which does not involve inter-marriage between local women and male settlers, is that of several European communities in which the repertoire of male names was subject to changes before its female counterpart, with the earlier adoption of new Christian names in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{219} Also, in his work on Jewish names, Zunz claimed that in Antiquity, Jewish men tended to adopt non-Hebrew names due to their daily interactions with foreign administrators. Unlike men, Jewish women rarely had contact to the authorities, thus they mostly carried Hebrew names.\textsuperscript{220} This stresses that it was not necessarily so that women were those to adopt names from the foreign dominating culture. On the other hand, it suggests a connection between social and economic activities and naming practices. It is possible that more intensive interactions with non-Jews in everyday life would strengthen the tendency to give vernacular names, which would facilitate communication between persons from different groups.

In the following, I will look at how names were gendered and how name-giving practices redefined gender relations within Ashkenazi communities. Furthermore, I shall examine by what means gender identities were constructed

\textsuperscript{218} Clark, “Women's Names in Post-Conquest England”, 235-236.
\textsuperscript{219} Wilson, The Means of Naming, 87, 89.
\textsuperscript{220} Zunz, Namen der Juden, 29.
through differences in naming practices for males and females and which role given names assumed in broader processes of social change within Ashkenazi communities.

Anthropologists refer to three major techniques for gendering names: semantics – encoding a message through the words used as a name; form – using prefixes or suffixes as grammatical and social gender markers; and convention or tradition – as when certain names are regularly ascribed to men or women irrespective of their content, as a matter of a social convention, as is apparently the case, for instance, with the biblical repertoire of names. In the following, I will look at two modes for gendering names: grammatical form and semantic content. Concentrating chiefly on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, my observations will be primarily based on the analysis of name lists from the Nuremberg Memorbuch.

3.3.1. Semantical contents and feminine images

As the analysis of the name lists from the Memorbuch has shown, during the thirteenth century, a transition from Hebrew female names to vernacular, especially German ones, can be observed. Concentrating solely on German names within the vernacular name register, many of them fall into one of three categories: First, names referring to love or loveliness such as Minne (or Minna), Liebe or the hybrid names Sarlieb (Sara + lieb) and Adelieb; second, names referring to beauty or appearance – whether directly, e.g. Schonfrau or indirectly by alluding to flowers, precious stones etc. as in the case of Blume, Gima, or Jachenet; and third, positive character traits such as sweetness (Sussa), goodness (Guta), cheerfulness (Geila, Froda) or nobleness and gentleness (Edel, Adelheit). About one-third of the women listed in 1298 (352

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221 Alford, Naming and Identity, 66.
222 On the role of sweetness in constructing feminine images, see for example Kim Hall, “Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century”, in Feminist readings of early modern culture emerging subjects, ed. Valerie Traub (Cambridge u.a.: Cambridge Univ. Press,
out of 1086) carried such names. Except for Guta and Adelheit, which were also common among Christian women and indicate direct cultural borrowing, most of the names in question are found primarily, if not exclusively, among Jewish women.223 The fact that some of those names are newly coined ones, as in the case of Sussa or Schona, reinforces the impression that we are dealing here with living linguistic units, semantically transparent to their users.

This was not a passing phenomenon, for in the mid-fourteenth century 31% of the listed women were still carrying such names. Moreover, similar contents were encoded through vernacular names of Latin origin. The Italian names Bela and Dolce, for instance, covered together 6% of the women appearing on the 1298 lists. Generally, a considerable part of Jewish women in German communities had names which invoked aesthetic, even tender, images of beauty, gentleness, loveliness, sweetness and so on. Yet this phenomenon is neither “natural” nor ubiquitous. Two centuries earlier, conventional, semantically non-transparent biblical female names had been predominant. Furthermore, a comparison with the Christian female name repertoire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reveals significant differences. Most Christian women bore either saints’ names or old Germanic ones, the semantics of which, we assume, was irrelevant and perhaps even opaque to those who used them. In any event, the Christian female name repertoire displays no similar tendencies for ‘aestheticization’.224

224 For instructive materials corroborating this observation, see Engel, *Würzburger Urkundenregesten*; Schnurrer, *Die Urkunden der Reichsstadt Rothenburg.*
**Female names in Mediterranean Jewish communities**

A comparative look into Mediterranean and Spanish communities suggests the distinctive aspects of the German-Jewish case. In his study based on the Cairo Geniza, Shlomo Dov Goitein does not fail to pay attention to the distinctive female name-repertoire prevalent among Mediterranean Jews. Names such as *Jamila* (‘Beautiful’) or *Aziza* (‘Precious’) occur quite frequently, although generally, the percentage of names alluding to “feminine” traits seems relatively low.\(^{225}\) One of Goitein’s most striking findings is that approximately 70% of the females carried names suggesting authority and control, victory and overcoming.\(^{226}\) A very common name in the Geniza materials is *Sitt al-Kull*, ‘She who rules over everyone’ (*Sitt* means ‘Mistress’, ‘Female Ruler’). Names like *Nasr* (‘Victory’), *Sitt al-Dar* (‘Mistress of Her House’) or *Sitt al-Amain* (‘She Who Rules Over the Men’) appear. One, questionable explanation for this phenomenon offered by Goitein is that such names, which were not exclusively Jewish, might have expressed women’s “cry of protest against oppression”.\(^{227}\) Without being able to determine the exact factors playing a role in such cases (for instance, systems of marriage alliance), we can still maintain that those images do not correspond prevalent medieval representations of femininity.\(^{228}\)

Among Sephardic women we find many names alluding to aesthetic images, for instance, *Dolce, Bela* or *Bellida, Sol, Luna, Gentil* (which became *Jenta* in Germany), *Oro* and the Arabic name *Jamila* (‘Beautiful’). Yet names like *Ceti* (Arabic for ‘Lady’), *Dueynna* (‘Mistress’), *Matrona*, and *Regina* – one of the most popular

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\(^{226}\) Interestingly, images of fertility or modesty, which were highlighted as essential female qualities are not included in the female repertoire of names. On this point, see ibid.

\(^{227}\) Ibid., 314-316. It is not clear how serious Goitein is when offering this interpretation. He interprets those names as an expression of female pride, but it is difficult to see how this translates into assumptions about women’s “protests”.

\(^{228}\) In her essay on medieval spirituality, Caroline Walker Bynum has shown that medieval male authors produced non-typical images of femininity: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, Publications of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, UCLA 16 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
names, were quite common. 229 Regina was also a very common name among Jewish women in Southern France. 230 These Jewish, largely Mediterranean, cultures displayed a clear preference for female names with connotations of authority and rule. Among Ashkenazi women, on the other hand, such images were almost entirely absent with the exception of Kaisarin and Kronlin, making together seven appearances in the entire Memorbuch. What can this marked difference mean? One possible explanation lies in the gendered division of roles within medieval Ashkenazi communities, especially from the thirteenth century onward.

The division of gendered roles in Ashkenaz

A central aspect of such a role division is illustrated in the opening of the eulogy written by R. 'Ele'azar of Worms (c. 1176-1238) in memory of his murdered wife Dolce, whom he depicts as the ideal woman:

*Who can find a woman of valour as [was] my pious wife, Mistress Dolce: A woman of valour [she was] a crown to her husband, the daughter of nobles: A woman who feared God, she was renowned for her good deeds. Her husband put his confidence in her, she fed him and dressed him in honour: to sit with the elders of the land and involve himself in Torah study and good deeds. She was good to him, never bad, all the days of his life with her: She made him books from her labour and her name [was] Pleasant.* 231

Dolce of Worms provided for her family engaging in numerous economic activities such as adorning brides, sewing and spinning, thus enabling her husband to

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229 For example: Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien. Erster Teil Urkunden und Regesten.*
dedicate himself to Torah studies. She ran the household supporting all its members, putting food on the table and taking care of the needs of R. 'Ele'azar’s students as well. Dolce, the woman of valour (‘eshet ḥayil) was portrayed as a diligent supporter, a highly capable household keeper and yet a gentle and pleasant woman, as her name also suggests. 'Ele'azar of Worms used the Hebrew stem n.'m (ne'ima, na'emet, man'emet: ‘pleasant’) five times to describe Dolce and her works. He thus portrayed her by invoking an image of a pleasing and tender femininity while depicting her role, in reality, as supporting her husband economically.

While Dolce of Worms was the breadwinner in her family, she was not yet part of the later moneylending business landscape in which Ashkenazi women played an important role from the thirteenth century onward. At that stage, women’s social and legal status experienced some major shifts. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, 25% of the documented businesspeople in forty-one German-Jewish communities were women. Already in the thirteenth century a shift in women’s status is recognisable through changes in marriage contracts, women’s right to appear before courts and, in contrast to early Halakha, women were now entitled to inherit.

As R. Yitshaq ben Moshe of Vienna (13th century) remarked in his major halakhic work ‘Or Zaru’a: In present times these two matters [speak in women’s

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232 Shifts in the functions of moneylending within Jewish communities in the later period reshaped the economic structures of medieval Ashkenazi families. On this matter, see Yuval, “Getting Married in Ashkenaz”. A recent survey of Jewish credit business in the Middle Ages is offered by Toch, “Economic Activities”.


favour]: They do business and it would interfere with their livelihood, if they could not appear before court as men [do].  

The overall picture implies a tension between women’s improving legal and social status due to their active role in business and the images encoded in female names. I argue that this could indicate an attempt to redefine femininity in the face of a changing social reality. Moreover, according to a predominant Ashkenazi worldview, men scholars were to devote themselves to holy studies, while women were supposed to support them by taking care of everyday needs, as we have seen in case of Dolce of Worms. This role division generated a field of images, in which the woman, who is acting in the world, serves also as a mirror image of her unworldly husband, who is seeking to dedicate himself to Torah studies. Furthermore, the fact that men had a sacred name (shem qodesh) distinguished them from women. Whereas in early Ashkenazi communities more women used to carry biblical names, which connected them to a Jewish Hebrew tradition, later, most of them had vernacular and


236 On Ashkenazi women’s roles within their families and changes in their status see Grossman, Pious and Rebellious, 117-123, 242-243. See also Klein, “’Der Mann: ein Fehlkaufl”.

237 This role division survived also among Ashkenazi immigrants in Spain. In his ethical will to his sons, R. Yehuda ben ’Asher (c. 1250-1327/8), the son of R. ’Asher ben Yeḥiel (called ‘The Rosh’), requested that they marry within the family of his father saying that “the women of our family have grown accustomed to the ways of students, and the love of the Torah has entered their hearts, so that they are a help to their husbands in their scholarly pursuits.” See Abrahams, Hebrew Ethical Wills, vol 2, 183-186.
secular names. Unlike boys, girls were not necessarily encouraged to learn Hebrew. In Sefer Ḥasidim, it is said that: *They [women] must be taught the commandments that they are commanded to keep in whatever language they know. But the man is commanded to study in Hebrew and he has to learn everything.*

Given that Hebrew was traditionally associated with the realm of the sacred, the new name repertoire emerged, I would argue, in response to this intensified polarisation, as men were identified with the sacred and women with the profane.

This fits well the fact that in the thirteenth century, women’s devotion was subject to a growing regulation and they were more forcefully marginalised in the religious sphere in the late medieval period. Susan Einbinder has pointed to a striking shift in female representations within the Hebrew chronicles of Crusades and liturgical poems (*piyutim*) dealing with the events. While in the early accounts of the pogroms in 1096 women were portrayed as pious, playing an active role as martyrs, in later texts they were marginalised, becoming passive, even nameless. As Einbinder writes: "They [women] no longer actively defy the Christian enemy, but are idealised for their passive responses to violence. They are not attacked at home but on the geographical fringes of the Jewish world or in the markets and courts beyond it. Thus they become liminal figures whose activity in the Christian world is dangerous ritually and physically."

As this last point emphasises, there was rabbinic objection to women’s position related to their economic activity, which was perceived as threat to the right social order and the hierarchy between the sexes. If women were first

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238 By ‘secular’ I mean names neither alluding to Jewish tradition nor having any recognisable religious contents. By way of comparison, the name repertoire of Christian women in the later medieval period was predominated by saints’ names, thus emphasising women’s participation in Christian life and tradition. On female names in medieval Christian communities, see Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*. 251-52, 271, and 276-78; Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 105-106.

239 Cited in Baumgarten, “Medieval Ashkenaz (1096-1348)”.


depicted as pure and pious, they now became bold and rebellious in rabbis’ eyes. Avraham Grossman has suggested that an important cause for this change was women’s increasing role in family economy, leading to rabbinic attempts to restrict female power within Ashkenazi communities. Following the traumatic events of 1096, it was necessary to redefine the boundaries between Jews and Christians. Within this process of reshaping Ashkenazi collective identity, religion played yet another part – it became the medium through which a male identity was strengthened and the “correct” social order was to be established, if not restored. As I have tried to show, name-giving practices played an important role within this change not only as markers of gender identities, but also as a strategy for the strengthening of a Jewish male identity.

3.3.3. Gendering the name through form

Jewish female names could have been gendered through grammatical forms as well as through semantical contents. As with other nouns, the grammatical gender of proper names is often expressed by form. It is a widespread practice in many cultures to derive female names from male ones. Republican Rome, for instance, illustrates well such practice and to its extreme, for women had no other names than the ones based on male ones. Roman women bore the gens name in its feminine form; the daughter of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, for example, was thus called Pompeia. Already in early Christian communities, based on that model, a male name was sometimes transformed into a female one by adding the ending -a. An example for this, found also among Christian women in late medieval Germany, is the name Petronella,

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243 For instance: Marcus, “Hierarchies”; Einbinder, “Jewish Women Martyrs”; Furst, “Captivity”.
244 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, 250.
derived from the male name Petrus or Johanna derived from Johannes, alluding to John the Baptist. Another example is the Provençal name Astrug (‘Born Under a Favourable Star’) and its female counterpart Astruga – both popular among Jews in medieval Spain and Southern France. Such a model was also applied in Arabic, as in case of the name Maimon (‘Good auspice’) and Maimona. Interestingly, throughout the whole Memorbuch, we find among Ashkenazi Jews the female name Maimona, but not even once its male equivalent, which might point to continuity of female Mediterranean naming traditions in Ashkenazi communities.

Another example for that model comes surprisingly from the Hebrew name register and may well be a medieval innovation: The post-Talmudic male name Yaqar (‘Precious’ but also ‘Honour’) appears six times in the Memorbuch, the earliest of which is dated to 1096. In the fourteenth century, a woman called Yeqara appears in a necrology from Nuremberg. On the other hand, we come across the Hebrew name Simḥa (‘Gladness’), which despite its feminine form was carried by both men and women, even though in Ashkenazi communities (unlike Sephardic ones) it appears more frequently as a male name.246

Part of the onomastic innovativeness of the thirteenth century included new parallel male and female constructions in German. Female and male equivalents such as Sussa and Sussman, Minna and Minnman, Schona, Schonwip or Schonfraw and Schonman, Froda and Frohman, and finally Guta and Gutman emerged. I would like to argue that in these cases the male form was derived from the female one and not vice-versa. The contents of those names might suggest that this was the case, given

245 Ibid., 69.
246 Based on my analysis of 4042 names from the Memrbuch, out of twenty-four occurrences of that name sixteen refer to men. On the other hand, as the corpus of names based on the edition of Baer suggests, the name Simcha was markedly a female one among Sephardic Jews.
the images of femininity discussed above. More importantly, as far as I could trace those names throughout the period under discussion, the female name was always the first to appear. For instance, while the female name Sussa made its first appearance in 1241, its male counterpart Sussman appeared at the end of the thirteenth century.247 Similarly, the female name Minna appeared already in 1096, whereas the male form Minnman emerged 40 years later.248 This means we are probably dealing here with an onomastic mechanism significantly different from those encountered in other medieval North-European and Mediterranean cultures. This phenomenon demonstrates how prevalent techniques for gendering names did not always shape the Ashkenazi onomastic world.

It is easily assumed that names were unequivocally gendered in pre-modern societies; one expects a stable gendered repertoire of names to facilitate distinction between the sexes.249 Late medieval Jewish society in Ashkenaz offers some instructive cases, which allow us to examine how names were gendered and reveal some unexpected patterns. There is evidence of an unusual practice of cross-gender naming – that is, bestowing a female name to a male either in a variant form (for instance, a diminutive) or, even more strikingly, unchanged.250

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247 In 1248 a man called Sutemann appears in Latin records in Cologne. On this matter, see Beider, *Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names*, 466-467, 605-606.
248 Ibid., 381.
249 See, for instance, Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 207-208. It says regarding pre-modern Europe: “first names were clear gender distinguishers.” The few names, which did cross gender boundaries (unchanged) in the late medieval period such as ‘Maria’, were given to males as a second name. An example is Gian Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan (1402-1412); Cf. Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, 276-403.
In the 1298 lists in the *Memorbuch* we come across a R. Ḥannlin (חנילין) of Würzburg. Ḥannlin – the diminutive form of Hanna – was a very common name among Jewish women at that time.\(^{251}\) Another example comes from Sinzing in the second half of the thirteenth century where a Dolzlin bar Yaʿaqov was listed in the community’s memorial lists. Dolzlin is the diminutive form of the widespread female name Dolce (‘Sweet’ or ‘Pleasant’).\(^{252}\) Another man named Dolzlin appeared in Würzburg in 1298. At the same year, a Tamar bar Menahem was listed in documents from Constance and a R. Tamar was counted among the victims in Würzburg.\(^{253}\) This biblical name is rare indeed – probably because of Tamar’s story; as a female name, it appears only once in the *Memorbuch*, when a Tamar, the wife of ‘Uri bar Shelomo, was counted among the Jewish victims of the Black Death persecutions in Worms. Finally, on the lists of Jewish tax payers from Augsburg a man called Glüklin was listed in 1428. This name is the diminutive form of Glück, a German name carried by Jewish women at that time.\(^{254}\) It is plausible to assume that each of these men was named after a deceased female relative – a mother, grandmother or perhaps an aunt.

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\(^{251}\) Already in the Babylonian Talmud (e.g. in Bava Batra 124a) appears a Rabba bar Ḥanna חנה חניא. This Talmudic male name, which until today is common among men in Arabic cultures, is related to the name ‘Yoḥanan’ (‘John’). Yet the name חניא does not occur among Ashkenazi men in the medieval period and furthermore, it seems that the form ‘Ḥannlin’ did not appear among Jewish men in Antiquity. On the other hand, Beider claims in his lexicon for Ashkenazi names (p. 348) that ‘Ḥannlin’ was derived from ‘Ḥanokh’ (Enoch). The later occurs twice on the 1096 lists in the *Memorbuch* only in its standard form. Furthermore, all the medieval rabbinic discussions on names, mentioning the name Ḥannlin, ascribe it to women. If it were also a male name, we would have expected it to appear in discussions on names in divorce writs, for instance. The fact that a male ‘Ḥannlin’ was recorded only once in all the medieval materials studied by Beider might reinforce the impression that we are dealing here with a female name bestowed upon a male.

\(^{252}\) Salfeld considered this name to be a male one: Salfeld, *Das Martyrologium*, 392. The diminutive form was not common among women and therefore it might have been used as a gender marker.

\(^{253}\) Kalrl Heinz Burmeister, *Zur Geschichte der Juden am Bodensee 1200-1349. Medinat bodase*, vol. 1 (Konstanz: UVK Universitätsverlag, 1994), 46-47. Even if one insists on linking the (male) name Tamar to the biblical image of the righteous who “shall flourish like the palm tree” (Psalm 92, 12), this name was nevertheless carried by women, too. In any case, the fact that both women and men shared that name shows that the Ashkenazi culture was not necessarily concerned with creating a clear distinction between the sexes through naming.

\(^{254}\) In the *Memorbuch*, for instance, this name appears twice among Jewish women; once in the late thirteenth and once in the mid-fourteenth century.
as a gesture of commemoration. If this is correct, it implies that commemoration of a female kin gained precedence over gender transparency.

These examples of cross-gender naming raise questions about women’s role in transmitting family traditions through names. Homonymy is an important tool for marking affiliation and specific role differentiation within the family, which might be passed down to the next generations. In general, women’s role in transmitting family traditions through name sharing could be of two types: as mediators between their male relatives or as carriers of traditions running through the female line (cross-gender naming exemplifying an extreme case of homonymy would be a third option). However, in order to analyse such practices more closely, they need to be examined in higher resolution – namely within specific kinship constellations.

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255 In late medieval Ashkenazi communities, we come across men carrying female names as by-names. See discussion in chapter IV.
4. Naming in family context

To turn from the macro level to the micro level, the next step is to examine how names were mobilised to redefine the relationships between men and women, and among kin in general, within Ashkenazi families.\(^{257}\) Statistical analysis and the examination of formal and semantic patterns of name giving have shown that the female name-repertoire underwent transformation in the central medieval period, revealing how naming operated as a tool to strengthen gendered identities. Focusing on name-circulation patterns in the late Middle Ages, in the following, I will examine name sharing as a significant and creative tool for shaping kin relationships, seeking to account for shifts in naming practices observed in that period. Here, I shall be concentrating on three patterns: the transmission of names through women, including the practice of naming females after living older female kin; the uses of matronyms carried by men; and finally, name sharing between living collateral kin. Such practices can already be detected in sporadic cases, observed particularly from the late thirteenth century onward. By the fifteenth century though, the circulation of names among living kin has become widespread in Ashkenazi families, with women’s role as name-givers and name-transmitters becoming more visible.

4.1. Re-examining naming practices in Ashkenazi families

The practices invoked above have gained very little if any attention from scholars. Particularly the practice of name sharing among living kin has long been considered

\(^{257}\) For useful comments on methodological problems involved in name analysis, see Monique Bourin, “How Changes in Naming Reflect the Evolution of Familial Structures in Southern Europe (950-1250)?”, in Personal names studies of medieval Europe: social identity and familial structures, eds. George Beech, Monique Bourin, and Pascal Chareille, vol. 43 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2002), 3-13; Chareille, “Methodological Problems”.
atypical for Ashkenazi communities.\textsuperscript{258} While among Christians in medieval German communities and, furthermore, among Spanish Jews, it was common usage to bestow on children names of living relatives – including the parents themselves, scholars often claimed that this was strictly avoided by Ashkenazi Jews.\textsuperscript{259} This, it is argued, was based on magical assumptions found already in the Babylonian Talmud, which were adopted by medieval Ashkenazi Jews. Nevertheless, it is not clear to which extent Talmudic or medieval views on this matter were actually shared and practised by wider social circles at any stage throughout the medieval period.\textsuperscript{260}

The widespread view among modern scholars has been that Ashkenazi Jews in the medieval period constructed family affiliation and continuity through naming by sons taking their fathers’ names as patronymics and in many cases inheriting their given name from one of their deceased grandfathers.\textsuperscript{261} Modern historiography reduced kin relationships to vertical, especially patrilineal relations, by highlighting patronymic as an affiliation marker and stressing the transmission of male names from deceased ancestors to newborns. Consequently, the option that women were part of such practices of securing family continuity – except for their role as mediators between their male relatives – has been also left out.\textsuperscript{262} But more importantly, this

\textsuperscript{258} According to some scholars the identification of the personal name with a person’s soul was taken up by medieval Ashkenazi Jews and led to a taboo on sharing a name with a living person. Modern scholars have commonly held this view. Only to name a few of them: Beider, \textit{Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names}, 14; Goitein, \textit{A Mediterranean Society}, vol. 3: The Family, 6; Keil, ‘’Petachja, genannt Zecherl’’, 130; Mitterauer, \textit{Ahnen und Heilige}, 196; Trachtenberg, ‘’In the name of…’’, 78. On the other hand, in late medieval Tuscany, Christians avoided naming their children after living relatives. On this point, see Klapisch-Zuber, ‘’The Name ‘Remade’’’, 303.

\textsuperscript{259} On Sephardic communities see Goitein, \textit{A Mediterranean Society}, vol. 3: The Family, 6-8.

\textsuperscript{260} A famous example is Yehuda the Pious of Regensburg (c. 1150-1217) who is referring extensively to such themes in his last will: http://www.hebrewbooks.org/14561, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{261} For example, Keil, ‘’Petachja, genannt Zecherl’’, 128, 130; Kracauer, ‘’Die Namen der Frankfurter Juden bis zum Jahre 1400’’, 448.

\textsuperscript{262} Recent studies on kinship in pre-modern European communities have extensively re-considered many of the theses which have long predominated this field, especially the model developed by Karl Schmid and Georges Duby which maintained a shift towards patrilineal structures in the turn of the first millennium, suggesting a negative correlation between the degree to which institutionalised forms for organizing power were developed and the role played by kin relationships in organizing political power. New approaches to this research area are introduced for example in the collection of essays:
picture is inconsistent with naming practices gleaned from the sources, even in regard to the earlier period.

The evidence on name-circulation patterns in Ashkenazi families prior to the Black Death is relatively sparse. An analysis of the name lists contained within the Memorbuch of Nuremberg suggests though some general patterns. Examining the role of women as name-transmitters, the available data indicates that it was rather common practice to confer the name of a deceased maternal grandfather in order to perpetuate his memory. Thanks to the use of patronymics and to the fact that the Memorbuch is divided into family blocks, such practices can be traced in the memorial lists. Therefore, the total in the following analysis refers to all the cases in which a three-generation sequence is documented and we know both the name of the paternal or maternal grandfather and that of his grandson.

In 39 out of a total of 93 cases (42%) we can trace homonymy between a grandson and his paternal grandfather, and in 20 out of 48 cases (again 42%), we identify name sharing between a maternal grandfather and his grandson. In the mid-fourteenth century, four out of 17 cases indicate homonymy between a paternal grandfather and grandson and three out of seven indicate name sharing between a maternal grandfather and his grandson. The total of available cases is significantly smaller with regard to maternal grandfathers – primarily as a result of an inherent bias in the sources, which usually designate males rather than females with patronymics. Nonetheless, we see that at the end of the thirteenth century the rates of homonymy, involving either a maternal or a paternal grandfather, are similar.

What can we learn from the *Memorbuch* about name sharing between living relatives? I was able to trace 13 cases of homonymy between living male relatives; six involve fathers and sons, six a (mostly paternal) grandfather and grandson, and one a maternal uncle and his nephew. In addition, 12 cases of name sharing between female relatives are traceable. Among women, there are two cases of mothers and daughters carrying the same name, six cases concern a (mostly a maternal) grandmother and her granddaughter, two cases a great-grandmother and a great-granddaughter, one case refers to a grandaunt and her grandniece, and the last one to an aunt and her niece. Statistically, this is certainly not a high figure, but the phenomenon is important for our understanding of Ashkenazi culture.

These cases show that we are not dealing here with a straightforward and unavoidable taboo on naming children after the living, as the findings from the later period shall also demonstrate. There must have been a more flexible rule, making room for some complex social strategies for creating potential affinities. This is suggested, furthermore, by the analysis of specific examples from the *Memorbuch*, which allow the reconstruction of more complex naming-constellations. Sketching two family trees from the late thirteenth and the mid-fourteenth century, I will seek to tease out different levels on which given names could have been used to attach a person to certain family circles.

In 1298, a woman named *Dolce*, the daughter of *Yaʿaqov*, was killed along with her family during the *Rindfleisch* persecutions in Heilbronn (those who died in

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263 Most of the cases appear in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Such practices can be detected sporadically in other sources as well. For example, on the list of new Jewish citizens in Nuremberg, a *Mosse von Koburg* is listed in 1323, one of his witnesses being his father *Mosse*. Another case is that of *Aeberlein filius Abraham* appearing as a new citizen in Nuremberg in 1331, his father being one of his witnesses. See Moritz Stern, ed. *Nürnberg im Mittelalter*, vol. 3, Die israelitische Bevölkerung der deutschen Städte: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Städtegeschichte (Frankfurt a.M.: Kauffmann, 1896), 8, 11. In thirteenth-century Cologne we encounter a certain *Ephraim called Gumprecht* and his maternal uncle *Ephraim*: Hoeniger, *Das Judenschreinsbuch*, §114-115.
1298 are marked by diagonal line in the family tree below). As her kin list discloses, her name circulated within her kin group already in her lifetime, so that we find three more Dolces among her relatives. Dolce was listed together with her four daughters and her granddaughters, three of whom were named Dolce. Looking at Dolce’s family tree, this seems like a clear case of matrilineal name sharing among female relatives – both vertically and horizontally, between a grandmother and granddaughters through the mothers, and between female cousins. We come across further cases of name sharing in this family, as a daughter of one of those Dolces was named Minna after her maternal grandaunt. Minna, the daughter of Dolce of Heilbronn, and her husband Moshe had six children, among them, as already hinted, a daughter called Dolce and a boy named Moshe, like his father.

*Figure 3: The family of Dolce of Heilbronn*
The other family is that of Bela of Worms, daughter of ’Eli’ezer, who appears with her relatives on the victims’ list of 1348 (fig. 4). Fifteen family members are listed; some were recorded with patronymics, thus allowing us to learn more about naming practices across generations. Bela had three daughters: Yehudit, Sara and Guta. The latter had a son called ’Eli’ezer, who was apparently named after his maternal grand-grandfather. Yet the boy’s name could allude to more than one figure, for his father was also called ’Eli’ezer. In such a constellation, a name could refer to different persons, both living and dead, to a relative on the mother’s side and yet to the father himself as well.

![Figure 4: The family of Bela of Worms](image)

We do not know the name of Bela’s husband, but a marked pattern in that family might give us a hint. Each of Bela’s three daughters bestowed the name Menahem on one of her sons. Hence, we come across a remarkable horizontal circulation of a male
name in the family through the female line; perhaps all three boys were named after their maternal grandfather. If this was the case, it would imply an intensive ‘remaking’ of the name – a circulation of a symbolic asset within the family.²⁶⁴ In any event, the repeated use suggests that the name Menahem had some special meaning in Bela’s family. Again, we can glance at a complex constellation, in which various “needs” were fulfilled, as in the case of the family of Sara, another daughter of Bela. Sara and her husband Yesha’aya had a daughter called Rahel and four sons: Lipman, Menahem, like two of his maternal cousins, ‘Ele’azar whose name is related to the name ‘Eli’ezer – the name of his maternal grandfather – and Me’ir, who was apparently called after his (deceased) paternal grandfather.

We see that living relatives – both men and women – occasionally passed on their names to the next generations, and were hence commemorated already during their lifetime. Some parents – fathers as well as mothers, albeit rarely – chose to give their child their own name. This means that even for the earlier period (prior to the Black Death), patronymics were but one onomastic option for marking and constructing family affiliation or for securing the continuity of family traditions. Our examples illustrate how parents might have created a direct link between themselves (and perhaps earlier generations as well) on the one hand, and their children on the other, as well as between given names and family affiliation, in general. This has implications for gender role: while patronymic did not allow women to perpetuate their names, bestowing the name of a female relative – a mother, an aunt or a grandmother – on another female can be regarded as an attempt to achieve such continuity.

²⁶⁴ On the meaning of such naming practices, see Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’”, 298-301 and 305-308.
The emerging picture is no doubt a significant departure from practices described in the literature. It suggests, *inter alia*, that medieval and earlier views—generally advising against name sharing between living kin, often cited by modern scholars, were not necessarily practised. However, one could argue that cases such as those analysed above do not necessarily imply practices of naming children *after* living kin; homonymous living relatives, appearing in the sources, might have been named after a common deceased ancestor. Although this would be very likely in some cases, it seems that such a hypothesis would be insufficient in order to explain all of them. Furthermore, specific cases mentioned in late medieval sources, explicitly referring to a living name-donor, might well indicate that such practices existed and were apparently common or at least were not considered peculiar, discussed by contemporary scholars without drawing any special attention on their part.²⁶⁵

On another level, we are facing here the generally difficult issue of pursuing the intentions of historical actors. In most cases at hand, indeed we have no indication of the intentions underlying a particular choice of name. Yet as I would like to argue in the following, the fact that living relatives did share a name, even if it was meant to invoke the memory of a common ancestor, could play a significant role in the formation of specific family circles and in shaping relationships within kin groups.

4.2. Name sharing and social strategies

The act of name giving can be seen as a social strategy for creating potential affinities. A name can build roads within the social world, channels creating potential

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²⁶⁵ Margalith, *Seder ha-Get*, 66-67, 69, 70. In one case we are told of a woman who was named Sussa after her maternal grandmother was known by everyone as Susslin (‘Little Sussa’), apparently in order to distinguish her from her grandmother who might have been alive at the time. See ibid., 70d.
obligations and interactions, thus potentially linking social actors. Yet some roads may remain untaken, an unrealised social option, but in some cases, they may serve the actors well who could put names to good use. A literary example illustrates this well. In his novel, *The Bridal Canopy*, S.Y. Agnon sends his protagonist R. Yudl Hasid away to wander through Galician towns and villages asking for charity, so he could marry off his three daughters Pessili, Gittel, and Blume. His energetic wife Frommet advises him to pay a visit to her wealthy but miserly aunt Pessil and cry out loud: “Heavens above! my daughter has reached the age [of marriage], but you look away from her. Is she not your own flesh and blood? And was it not after one and the same grandmother that you were both named?” R. Yudl shows up at the aunt’s door hesitantly only to suffer total defeat.

The wife’s counsel embodies the social expectation for a gesture of solidarity (in this case, material assistance) on the part of relatives, let alone homonymous ones. The name invokes obligation both by virtue of common descent (the grandmother) and the past act of giving (a name) – to be reciprocated in the present through a material counter-gift. For Frommet’s strategy it is even immaterial whether naming their daughter was in fact intended to invoke the name of her aunt; by invoking it subtly (she explicitly only refers to the common descent, to the grandmother), she defines the past act as a gift. While name sharing is not necessarily the product of

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266 Pierre Bourdieu uses the analogy of a road map to explain kin relationships. He distinguishes “practical” relationships from “logical” ones. While a map can represent the total of existing routes, some roads practically remain unused by certain actors. Bourdieu criticizes analytical models (developed by anthropologists), which relied heavily on “official discourses”, thus constructing a hypothetical social reality. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology 16 (Cambridge : New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 37-38.


conscious calculation of future gains, a shared name may turn out useful in time of need, though this does not guarantee its effectiveness. Moreover, this scene reinforces the concept of a broader system of gifts, goods, and favours exchanged and circulated within a kin group, with names being one factor in such a system.\textsuperscript{269}

Considering names, especially given names, as symbolic goods, their circulation patterns are a key to understanding their social function.\textsuperscript{270} Embedded in a broader system of exchange, one needs to look at such patterns in relation to the circulation of other goods and services, obligations and counter-obligations, interactions and relationships between kindred. Therefore, I shall first survey general circulation patterns of family goods in late medieval Ashkenazi communities, showing how such patterns may have been related to practices of name circulation, especially to women’s increasing role in transmitting names. Moving to analyse several case studies, mainly from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Augsburg and Nuremberg, I will focus on three naming practices: the transmission of names through women, the uses of matronymys carried by men, and finally, naming children after siblings, particularly brothers. Three main axes which form the setting are the relations between parents-in-law, particularly fathers-in-law and sons-in-law (and between parents and their married daughters respectively), among siblings, and the relations between uncles and nephews.

Not only these pivots are closely related to the naming patterns I wish to discuss, but they have been also long neglected by family historians of medieval

\footnotesize{suggesting that within the limits (set by specific rules) of any social game, the actors also have the freedom to improvise, which enables to produce a wide range of optional moves in a given constellation. On gifts see: ibid., 4-9.}

\textsuperscript{269} This concept is illustrated in Gabriela Signori’s instructive article: Signori, “Family Traditions”.

\textsuperscript{270} See for instance Vernier, “Putting Kin and Kinships to Good Use: The Circulation of Goods, Labour, and Names on Karpathos (Greece)”.

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Ashkenaz who have usually stressed parent-child and husband-wife relationships.\textsuperscript{271} Especially siblings, as far as I know, have not yet gained any attention from scholars in this field.\textsuperscript{272} It should be emphasised that although occasionally, I shall be isolating specific roles and positions, various roles were embodied by the very same actors. A husband could also be a son-in-law, a son, a brother and an uncle, and his relative position in one context could impact his position in another. Thus, the position assigned to or taken by women as (married) daughters, for instance, would shape considerably their position as wives, mothers or sisters.\textsuperscript{273}

\textbf{4.2.1. The circulation of names and other family goods}

In her instructive study on name giving among leading Florentine merchant families in the late medieval period, Christiane Klapsich-Zuber has shown how naming practices interrelated to circulation patterns of family goods. Of particular interest for our discussion is that in this setting, shifts in family structures, stressing patrilineral affiliation and excluding women from the inheritance system, found expression also in the circulation of given names. Fathers played the leading role in giving and transmitting names, as children’s names were mostly drawn from the paternal stock of

\textsuperscript{271} Among the important contributions made in this field: Baumgarten, \textit{Mothers and Children}; Grossman, \textit{Pious and Rebellious}.


\textsuperscript{273} An illustration of how such a system could have operated is proposed by Michaela Hohkamp in her article “Sisters, Aunts, and Cousins. Familial Architectures and the Political Field in Early Modern Europe".
Thus family politics behind the choice of name can shed light on the relative position of men and women within their kin groups.

In several Christian communities – most notably in case of Florence mentioned above, it was common practice among urban elites to write a family book, the authors being men. Such books comprised business records next to “family memoires”, including birth dates and names given to children of the family (occasionally elaborating on the choice of names), and were passed down from one generation to the next. Though in a different form, family books are also known from fifteenth-century Nuremberg, written by some of the leading local patrician families. Although Jews, similarly to other merchants and financiers, kept business records and debtors’ lists – also referred to by the name “book of memory” (sefer zikaron), family biographic details do not seem to have played a role in those cases.

Yet rare evidence suggests that practices of certain similarity can be found among Ashkenazi Jews. One case is coming from Worms in the first half of the fourteenth century. In Sefer ha-Zikheronot, compiled by 'Ele'azar b. 'Asher ha-Levi, the author documented the names and birth dates of his nine children on the margins.

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274 Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’”.
275 On the Florentine ricordanze see: ibid. See also Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber Christiane, Tuscans and Their Families. A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427, 83.
277 Maharam Minz applies the term ‘Sefer Zikaron’ זכרון ספר which is in fact the equivalent of the Italian ricordanze, implying the documentation of business transactions and lists of debts. See Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §74.
of one of the pages. It seems that those family lists were handed over to 'Ele'azār's son. Another exceptional case of such Ashkenazi “family memoires”, which survived, comes interestingly from fifteenth-century Nuremberg. These notes were not comprised in an account book or business records, but were rather attached to halakhic texts and were apparently produced by a scholar.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, Natan Sack (or Zack) who belonged to one of the leading Jewish families in Nuremberg at that time, kept a record of births and deaths in his family. The earliest event mentioned by the author, dated to 1447, is the death of his father, R. Shime'on (Simon) Sack, in Nuremberg; a eulogy he wrote in his father’s memory is enclosed. Similarly, he wrote a eulogy in memory of his mother Pesslein who died thirty years later. Natan mentions the birth of his "stepbrother" (his mother’s son) Mendelein in 1461, followed by notes on the death of several kin: his stepfather (Mendelein’s father) in 1462, his father-in-law Liberman Nördlingen who died in 1479 in Würzburg, and finally, a certain Gotschalk and his wife Zorlin who died both in 1464 and whose relation to the author is unclear. But more interestingly, the author kept a record of his children’s names and dates of birth/death organised chronologically, mentioning four sons and four daughters: Shime'on (1464-1465), Natan (b. 1466), Jutlein (1467-1473), Shime'on (1469-1473),

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Maimlin (b.1471), a girl named Mindlein (b. 1473), Schonlein (1476), and 'Eli’ezer called Liberman (b. 1479). The author’s eldest son was named after his own father, R. Shime’on Sack: “My son Shime’on, May he live, was born [on the] 22nd of Nissan 1464 (רברד ל), and he is my firstborn”. This son died shortly afterwards in 1465, while another son who was born in 1469 was also named Shime’on – later to be renamed to Moshe apparently due to illness, since he died around the age of four.282 Natan’s youngest son,’Eli’ezer Liberman was apparently named after his maternal grandfather, Liberman Nördligen, who died shortly before his grandson was born. Finally, we come across name sharing between living father and son, as the author’s second son was called Natan.

Another section, appearing in the lower part of the folio opens with “My son Moshe, May he live, was born [on the] fifth of Elul [year unclear] and he is my firstborn”, thus implying that these family notes consist of two layers. It seems that a new sequence of births was recorded by a second hand – probably by one of the Natan’s sons, therefore suggesting that these family “memoires” were passed down from father to son. Three children are mentioned on this short list: Moshe, the firstborn, a daughter named Vogel, and another son called Me’ir who was born in 1490. This precious source sheds light not only on naming practices. It also raises important questions concerning the relations between family memorial practices, the transmission of names, and the preservation or construction of family identities through naming.283

This can be demonstrated by the account of Yosef of Rosheim (c. 1478-1554), the well-known leader of Ashkenazi Jewry in the beginning of the sixteenth century.

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282 For the Jewish practice of renaming children whose life was in danger, common also in the medieval period, see Lauterbach, “The Naming of Children”, 43-44.
283 See, for example, Patrick J. Geary, Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages (Ithaca etc.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 87-98.
In his book *Sefer ha-Miqna*, Yosef recounts a family tradition transmitted orally through R. Yoḥanan Luria (b. c. 1430). This was a genealogy, linking Yoḥanan to the great scholar Rashi through his mother Miryam, daughter of R. Shelomo Shapira (of Speyer) who was, according to this oral tradition, one of Rashi’s descendants. At this point Yosef himself comes into play, inscribing his ancestry into that genealogy. Yosef claimed to have heard from Yoḥanan Luria that “my grandmother (Yosef’s) Mistress Gutli, whose distinguished lineage (*Yiḥus*) came to her through her father, was a descendant of the Ga’on Maharar Shelomo Shapira and the evidence for that is that she had a son named Shelomo, Blessed be his memory – my uncle on my mother’s side, Mistress Roslin.” Within a complex strategy of self-representation, names play here an essential component for claiming common ancestry, thus enabling the social actors to locate themselves within a distinguished tradition and family history.  

A rare account of name giving, appearing in Ashkenazi rabbinic texts, portrays remarkable family dynamics behind the choice of names. In his fifteenth-century halakhic work *Seder ha-Get* (‘The Order of Divorce’), Mahari Margalit (d. 1492) recounts an explanation given by the great scholar Maharil for name-giving patterns. Being asked why the very same vernacular everyday name appears with different Hebrew sacred names, Maharil replied that *certainly each vernacular name should have one sacred name, only that at times the husband and wife disagree concerning the child’s name, for each wishes to name him after his own family and occasionally they reach a compromise – the everyday name shall be [given] after the wife’s family, and the sacred name after the husband’s or vice-versa.*  

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285 Margalith, *Seder ha-Get*, 66. This is a crucial piece of evidence that there existed medieval Ashkenazi family traditions, linking sacred Hebrew names with vernacular ones that were perhaps
Mahari Margalit relates this explanation to an extraordinary story on a married couple that negotiated the name of their newborn son. Each spouse wished the boy to be named after his or her own father – the paternal grandfather was called Me’ir (‘Illuminator’), whereas the maternal grandfather was called ’Uri (‘My Light’). They could not reach a decision, which name shall be given to their son, but instead, they reached a remarkable compromise. They named the boy Shne’or, meaning ‘Two Lights’, opting for a third name which semantically referred to both names and linked the boy to both families. These stories reveal how the right to name and to attach a child through his name to a certain family needed to be negotiated, suggesting also how name-circulation patterns could indicate the relative position of the spouses and their families in the system of alliance. Moreover, considering given names as symbolic goods circulating within a kin group, their transmission implies exercising certain rights over “property”, while women functioned as agents within the broader system of devolution of family goods.

passed down for generations. Thus, suggesting that the link between a sacred and an everyday name was not necessarily semantic or symbolic (or else “arbitrary”), as Zunz and many modern scholars following his footsteps have suggested; it could emerge historically pointing to family traditions. See Zunz, Namen der Juden, 51. Cf. Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland, 106-109; Kracauer, “Die Namen der Frankfurter Juden bis zum Jahre 1400”, 49; Beider, Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names, 7; Keil, “Hendl, Suessel, Putzlein”; 38-39; Robert Chazan, “Names: Middle Ages”, in Encyclopaedia Judaica, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 22 vols. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), vol. 14, 768. This is, furthermore, reinforced by a comment made by Maharam Minz in one of his responsa saying, “everyone acquainted with the Epstein family knows that a “Meshulam” in that family is usually called “Salman” as an everyday name.” See Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 37.

286 Salfeld remarks that this name was originally a Latin one (Senior), but during the Middle Ages it was transformed both on the linguistic and on the semantical level and became a Hebrew name with a meaning. See Salfeld, Das Martyrologium, 414.

287 Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 66-67.

288 In her study on naming patterns among Florentine merchant families, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber outlines an opposite trend – women, who were seen as mediators between two families, but did not fully belong to any of them, had correspondingly a very limited share in name circulation within their families; Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ’Remade’”.

I would like to argue that on a structural level of kinship, wives’ families of origin gained in weight in choosing names, which implies a changing balance between maternal and paternal kin groups. Such name-circulation patterns observed in the late medieval period coincided with general shifts in Ashkenazi kinship from the thirteenth century onward. Especially the shift of Jewish economy to moneylending involved the reshaping of Ashkenazi families.\textsuperscript{290} As moneylending became the main source of livelihood for German Jews, Jewish women increased their involvement in credit business and their participation in economic activity. Moreover, from the thirteenth century onward, the settling of Jews in German cities was preconditioned by the financial capacity to engage in moneylending. Thus, capital became indispensible for the establishment of Jewish households and both families – the husband’s and the wife’s – were now expected to share the burden in a more balanced way.

In this context, the practice of a bilateral dowry was introduced, with husbands and wives contributing a similar share to the marital property.\textsuperscript{291} Dowries were a crucial element of Jewish families’ working capital, essential to the moneylending business. Now that husbands brought into the marriage both the share promised to them in their fathers’ future inheritance and a dowry, the redefinition of women’s position within their families of origin became necessary. This constellation led to one of the major shifts in the legal status of Jewish women who now entered into the inheritance system.\textsuperscript{292} By the fifteenth century, it became common in German Jewish


\textsuperscript{291} “Getting Married in Ashkenaz”, 202-203; \textit{Scholars}, 29f; Klein, “Der Mann: ein Fehlkauf”, 73-75.

\textsuperscript{292} In earlier periods, Jewish women were entitled to inherit mainly in case there were neither sons nor progeny of sons – on the basis of the biblical model (Numbers: 27, 7-8). In thirteenth-century Cologne, we encounter heiresses: Hoeniger, \textit{Das Judenschreinsbuch}, § 13-14, 87.
communities for fathers to allocate their daughters (or rather their sons-in-law) a relative share in their inheritance by means of an “inheritance bill” given upon marriage.  

These shifts strengthened the position of women’s families in the system of alliances and redefined women’s position vis-à-vis their husbands. Marriage was increasingly considered as a partnership, as a pre-marital agreement from the fifteenth century illustrates, stating that “both spouses shall control their assets equally and none of them shall make any use of them without the knowledge and consent of the other.” This, however, did not entail (economic) equality between spouses, as wives did not exercise power over assets similar to that of their husbands. Women were entitled to redeem their ketuba (dower) – partly or fully, depending on the circumstances, upon divorce or upon the husband’s death. A widow could gain control over her late husband’s assets when she had been promised a sizable ketuba or if he had appointed her in his last will to manage the family business. The strategy of Ashkenazi families, unlike in contemporary Sephardic communities, was often to safeguard the family business intact as long as possible. However, a widow would

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293 Yuval, “Getting Married in Ashkenaz”, 199-205; Scholars, 29f. See also Yaacov ben Moshe ha-Levi Moelin, She’elot u-Teshuvot ha-Hadashot, ed. Yitzchok Satz (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1977), § 167, where he discusses a case of a man who had only daughters and these were entitled to a share in his inheritance together with their uncles.  
294 Weil, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 134. Marha Howell has suggested that in merchants’ families in the Low Countries married couples gained economic power mostly through mobile property, greatly depending on working capital rather than fixed capital. In this setting, wives were regarded and functioned as partners, even if unequal ones. Economic success demanded joint efforts and contribution of both spouses, while wives assisted their husbands in the family business. See Martha C. Howell, Commerce Before Capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95f.  
295 For instance, a rebellious wife, who would seek divorce, is entitled to receive only her dowry including her trousseau and also her wedding ring. She is deprived of the entire dower and of her part in her father’s inheritance. Her husband inherits her after her death. See for example Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 17; Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, § 187; Weil, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 20.  
297 On customs among Spanish Jews, see Elka Klein, “Splitting Heirs: Patterns of Inheritance among Barcelona's Jews”, Jewish History 16 (2002): 49-71. On Ashkenazi communities see, for instance, Klein, “Der Mann: ein Fehlkauf”, 90. Yet a new practice emerging in fourteenth-century Ashkenaz testifies to a different trend as well. In some cases, the huge sum promised to the wife in the ketuba (in case of widowhood) was, in fact, reduced by half by means of a complementary premarital agreement,
usually attempt to remarry and then could take with her only her ketuba, for women
did not inherit their husbands. A widower, on the other hand, inherited his wife and
could use her assets to improve his chances in his next marriage.

This is a different marital property regime from that which developed in late
medieval Christian communities in Northern Europe. In the Christian case, the
property of each spouse was kept separate; husband and wife did not inherit each
other. Thus, children would inherit each parent right after his or her death; quite
unlike Jewish communities where children could receive their share only after both
parents had died or when their mother redeemed her dower and what was left was to
be divided among the heirs.

In Jewish families, material assets were transferred to a significant extent from
fathers to children; fathers were those who transmitted property to their children and
they were also their children’s heirs. Women also transmitted material goods as
widows, and generally, women could and also did pass on symbolic assets such as
social ties, business contacts or names. On another level, there was a growing
participation of women in the inheritance system, for as daughters they also inherited
their fathers. This had implications on women’s roles within their families of origin,

which was made between the two families. Men and their families were seeking to prevent widows
exactly from gaining such a control over their late husbands’ assets. See the discussion in Yuval,
“Getting Married in Ashkenaz”, 194f.; cf. Tallan, “Medieval Jewish Widows”.

Yet part of the assets that the wife brought into the marriage was kept separate among Jews as well.
The wife’s dowry belonged to the category of nikhsey tson barzel, which means that while the husband
enjoyed the right of usufruct, he had no ownership rights and therefore had to return the exact value of
such assets with the dissolution of the marriage. On this point see BT, Bava Kamma 89a.

See for example Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 17.

R. Me’ir of Rothenburg (13th c.) discusses a case of a woman who on her deathbed bequeathed her
sister’s daughter a Jacket, to which her husband agreed. However, after her death, the man withdrew
and refused to fulfil his late wife’s wish. See Meir ben Baruch Rothenburg, Sefer She’elot u-Teshuvot,

See for instance Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, § 139, 163, 165; Isidor Kracauer, “Ein jüdisches
Testament aus dem Jahre 1470”, Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums 60
(1916): 295-301.
increasing the interest in daughters’ marriages and perhaps reshaping the relationships between siblings, too.\textsuperscript{303} In the following, I shall analyse two case studies in order to examine the roles played by daughters’ marriages in this setting, embedding name-circulation practices into the broader context of kin relationships.

\textbf{4.2.2 Case study I: The family of Smoe in Augsburg}

After the renewed admission of Jews to Augsburg after the Black Death in 1355, a large kin group makes its appearance in local records, most notably on tax lists. This family would prosper and play an important role in the community’s life up to the expulsion of the Jews from the city in 1438/39. The tax list for the year 1355, recording Jewish tax payers, is opened with Schmul, then mentioning his daughter Sprintz and her husband [Jacob] Koelner, followed by another daughter called Gutlin with her spouse Jacob, two sons-in-law of Schmul – Smarion and Eberlin, and his (sororal) nephew Penditt.\textsuperscript{304} Schmul (also called Smoe) was a prosperous moneylender, the owner of houses in Augsburg, and apparently also one of the leaders of the local Jewish community.\textsuperscript{305} According to some scholars, he belonged to the small group of pre-plague community members who had survived the Black Death and resettled in the city right afterwards.\textsuperscript{306}

\textsuperscript{304} Stadtarchiv Augsburg, Steuerbuch 1355, fol. 16c. This, however, does not imply that all persons belonged to one household.
Before using the tax lists as a source for the family history of Smoe, it is essential to remark briefly on these sources. The documentation of Jewish tax payers in Augsburg starts apparently in 1355 and ends, for our purposes, in 1438. The records are neither continuous nor complete. For instance, many of the lists do not note the sum of taxes. It is also difficult to assess the meaning of the lists for the understanding of household composition. The registration practices are unfortunately far from clear; often we cannot infer from the lists with certainty whether persons appearing together belonged to the same household or not.

A comparative look into a poll-tax list produced in 1428 suggests that persons who were bundled together on the regular lists could have belonged to separate households. In this context, it seems that we need to distinguish between a household as a unit of consumption and production which also assumes cohabitation, and a family business (or joint economic activity) which is an economic unit based on kin relations, but does not necessarily share accommodation. If this logic can be applied to cases in which relatives are mentioned together (in the same line) as tax payers, this could imply that they had joint assets; for example, that they were running together a family business. This would also explain why they were listed together – they paid shared taxes – without presuming that they shared a household, which according to

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307 We have tax lists from Augsburg for the years: 1355-59, 1362-64, 1367, 1368, 1376, 1377, 1380, 1382-84, 1386, 1389-96, 1400-02, 1404-26, and 1428-38. The lacunae are partly due to the Augsburger administration not producing such tax lists in certain years. On this matter, see Raphael Matthias Krug, *Es ist doch zum Jungsten ein end daran. Die Augsburger Steuerbücher im Spätmittelalter (1346-1430) als Medium städtischer Verwaltung* (Diss. Phil., Universität Augsburg, 2006), 73. Also available online: [http://opus.bibliothek.uni-augsburg.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/473](http://opus.bibliothek.uni-augsburg.de/opus4/frontdoor/index/index/docId/473).

308 Historians have reached some conclusions concerning the logic underlying the lists of Christian tax payers in Augsburg. It is unclear, however, whether the same rules applied to the registration of Jewish tax payers as well. See ibid., 79f. A specific example for questions concerning the relations between the registration of tax payers and household composition comes from the 1428 list. Two lists were produced: the regular yearly tax list and a poll tax list levied for the Hussite Wars. The latter was structured by households, thus enabling us to draw some conclusions on the usual tax list. Where the special tax list indicates separate households, regular registration seems to bundle together several household heads. Hence, members of Smoe’s kin group Laemlin, Baruch, Valklin und Sara are listed together in the regular tax list, even though each of the three men presided a separate household, whereas Sara was the wife of Laemlin.
the 1428 list, was not the case. In any event, the tax lists in combination with other
types of sources make it possible to reconstruct some significant family patterns.

As far as we can judge by the lists, Smoe and his wife Minne had six
daughters and two sons: Sprintz, Gutlin, an unnamed daughter who later married
Eberlin, another who became the wife of Smarion, Minne and Merlin, and two boys –
Enslin and another unnamed son. Smoe’s sons seem to have been younger than their
sisters, since they are first mentioned in 1367 and 1368 as the two sons of Smoe.
Enslin, Smoe’s son, makes his appearance in the 1377 lists and appears again in
1380, 1384 and then only from 1400 onwards with interruptions. This may be due
to the state of records, but it is more likely that Enslin did not live regularly in
Augsburg, but got married and settled down, at least for a while, elsewhere. This
might be reinforced by the fact that we have sixteen tax lists of Augsburger Jews from
Enslin’s first appearance up to the year 1400, but he is listed only in five of them.
Enslin’s brother, on the other hand, seems to have emigrated much earlier, probably
due to ex-local marriage, since there is no trace of him in the Augsburg tax lists after
1368. In this family constellation, those were not sons who gained high visibility, but
daughters or more precisely, sons-in-law.

Smoe’s daughter Sprintz and her husband, Jacob Koelner, appear together in
the lists of 1355 and 1356, and then Koelner appears alone in 1358 and 1359.
Evidently, the couple resided in Augsburg close to (or with) Sprinz’s family. In
1363, Smoe’s daughter Koellnerin appears alone on the tax lists, which might
suggest that Jacob Koelner had died prior to that date. She is mentioned in the same
fashion also in the following year, but then disappears from the lists, perhaps after

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309 In 1382, an unnamed son-in-law of Smoe from Freising also appears once in the records. This
designation may refer to one of the sons-in-law already mentioned in the records, to a second husband
of one of Smoe’s daughters or – which is less likely – to the husband of a seventh daughter.
310 Taxing also his house bei dem Rapport: Stadtarchiv Augsburg, Steuerbuch 1380, fol. 14ab.
311 There are no documented lists for the years 1360 and 1361.
remarrying and settling outside Augsburg. Her sister Gutlin is listed with her spouse Jacob during the first two years (1355-1356), but then both disappear from the records. This implicates contemporary uxorilocal residence; living with or near the bride’s family for two years, the couple then left to another locality.

A third daughter of Smoe married Smario(n), who is listed among the tax payers in 1355-1356, 1359 and 1364. Apparently, the couple resided for several years in Augsburg – the lacunae in the recorded presence perhaps caused by either some administrative deficiency or their absence from the city. Another daughter of Smoe whose name is not registered married Eberlin, who appears in the lists between 1355 and 1357. He is mentioned again in 1367 and 1368, making his next appearance in 1375 under different circumstances. In that year the Augsburger Achtbuch (register of criminals) recorded a ban imposed on Smoe and his family stating that the city council of the Town of Augsburg declares that the town shall be forbidden to the Jew S(moe), his wife Minne and their children eternally, since they had violated their vow to the city to stay here for ten years and had left the town early, before an agreement regarding the demand imposed by the emperor on the Jewish community was reached. Explicitly excluded from the ban were the wives and daughters of Baruch and Eberhard. The fact that in the following year the tax lists mention both Baruch and Eberhard, Smoe’s sons-in-law, but only them, suggests that they were indeed excluded from the ban along with their families.

312 There are also later references to a Smario, but it is not clear whether they refer to the same person. There were more than one Smarion in the Augsburger community. In 1364, a certain Smario is listed with his son Jacob.
313 In these years another Eberlin called Jude Eberlin de Landsberg appears on the lists as well.
314 Stadtarchiv Augsburg, Achtbuch 1375, I 16 Augsburg. This refers to the economic disaster befalling the Jewish community in 1374 due to especially high taxes demanded by the emperor Karl IV and the imprisonment of the Augsburger Jews as means of extortion. See Bernhard Schimmelpfenig, “Christen und Juden in Augsburg des Mittelalters”, in Judengemeinden in Schwaben im Kontext des Alten Reiches, ed. Rolf Kießling (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 23-38, esp. 34; Seitz, “Augsburg”, 49.
Smoe, on the other hand, does not appear on the list of that year, but he is mentioned again from 1377 onwards, probably after coming to an agreement with the town authorities that were to benefit from his resettlement. In 1379, the Achtbuch records yet another ban, similar to the earlier one, only this time it was imposed on the Jew Eberhart, his wife and children. Indeed Ebrhart was not recorded in the tax list of 1380, but the house of Eberlin was taxed that year. Since there was no other Eberlin/Eberhard on the tax lists between 1368 and 1380, this supports the assumption that Eberlin and Eberhard referred to very same person: Smoe’s son-in-law. Eberhard der Jude appears again as a tax payer in 1383 and is listed until 1386 – the last time his name shows up on the tax lists. We seem to encounter a pattern of a continuous settlement by one of Smoe’s daughters and her family in Augsburg.

We have more ample documentation regarding the families of Smoe’s daughters, Minne and Merlin. This is no coincidence. Minne, who shared her name with her mother, is not mentioned on the tax lists, but her husband Meister Moelin appears as a tax payer in 1364, and then again in 1368. In 1369, the couple left for Mainz where they established their own household. Minne’s husband was no other than the well-known R. Moshe Moelin (d. 1387) – one of Mainz’s most significant Jewish scholars in the period following the Black Death and father of the later leading Ashkenazi scholar Ya’aqov Moelin, known also as Maharil (1375-1427). The couple established their family branch far away from the Swabian Augsburg, in the upper

315 Stadtarchiv Augsburg, Achtbuch 1379, I 18 Augsburg.
316 The name Eberlin/Aeberlin used by Jews was apparently derived from the name Abraham; See Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 65. On the lists of new citizens in fourteenth-century Nuremberg, appears a certain Aeberlein filius Abraham in 1331. This name is found among Christians too, but in that case it was derived from the Germanic name Eberhard. While Eberlin was quite common among Ashkenazi Jews, Eberhard appears rarely. It is possible that the designation of Eberhard in the Achtbuch of Augsburg – where both Jewish and Christian names are documented – is the result of overcorrection, making Eberlin an Eberhard. However, the form Eberhard appears more than once on the Jewish tax lists from Augsburg as well. Thus, Jewish men may have used Eberhard, even if rarely, as their vernacular name – perhaps coupled with ‘Abraham’ as the sacred name.
317 The only list documented between these years is that of 1367, but Moelin does not appear on it.
Rhineland. Yet their descendants would maintain close relationship with the Augsburg community and some of them would later settle there.318

Unlike her sister Minne, who married a scholar and established her household far from her parents’ house, Merlin’s marriage to Borich de Zurch exemplifies a different model. Baruch is first mentioned on the tax lists from Augsburg in 1356. Until his death, apparently around 1389/90, he is listed almost without interruption.319 It seems that Baruch became the “right hand” of his father-in-law. Smoe and his son-in-law were among the prominent moneylenders of the Augsburg community who lent money to the city council as well. They operated together and their loans to the city amounted to 600 gulden – a considerable sum for contemporaneous Jewish businessmen in Augsburg.320

As we can see, Smoe’s daughters tended to stay with or near their family of origin at least during the early years of marriage – the years of their socialisation into their role as wives and mothers. This marriage pattern possibly enabled Smoe to structure a solid and complex social network with Augsburg at its centre, drawing sons-in-law into its orbit. As the case of Merlin and that of Sprintz illustrate, some daughters were to spend long periods of time – even permanently as in case of Merlin, close to their parents’ home. Although the available evidence makes it difficult to judge at which point newlyweds in the family established an independent household, it is clear that even afterwards the son-in-law could play – as Baruch did – an important role in the moneylending business of his father-in-law. Moreover, it would be Merlin’s and Baruch’s descendants who would later play an important role within

318 See the detailed discussion on Maharil and his family in the last section of this chapter, dealing with siblings.
319 Only on the lists of 1358 and 1368 his name is missing.
the Jewish community of Augsburg, and it would be their elder son Laemlein who would take up his maternal grandfather’s role, becoming a prosperous moneylender and a community leader in Augsburg. Living with or close to the parents-in-law could create various links between all the parties involved, including between the couple’s future children and their maternal relatives.

These relations found expression in name-giving practices as well (see fig. 5). Although this family lived in Augsburg for eight decades, we know relatively little about the names carried by its members. Nevertheless, we can still observe a few cases of name-circulation, including cases of women transmitting names. Already in 1382, while Smoe was still alive, one Smoe the grandson of Smoe appears on the tax lists in Augsburg, very likely the son of one of his daughters. In later generations the name Shemuelle (Smoe) will circulate in both Merlin’s and Minne’s families – we can trace at least four such cases (three of them among Merlin’s descendants). Another case of homonymy between (a deceased) grandfather and his grandson – only this time the name was transmitted through the patriline, is the case of Baruch, Merlin’s husband, and his grandson Baruch Augsburg. The latter would play an important role in the community of Augsburg and become a prosperous moneylender (and a rabbi) like his father Laemlein and his grandfather Baruch. Baruch Augsburg’s name, though, could have also evoked his maternal descent, since Smoe’s father was also called Baruch.

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321 “Augsburg”, 48-49.
322 Stadtarchiv Augsburg, Steuerbuch 1382, fol. 14.
323 “Augsburg”, 46.
324 Ibid., 48.
A circulation of female names can also be observed in this kin group. As already noted, Smoe and Minne had a daughter called Minne, like her mother. While homonymy between parents and children was not very common, it was by no means unusual, as the next case study shall also demonstrate. Another female name circulated in the family was the name of Sara, Laemlein’s wife and Merlin’s daughter-in-law, who apparently was a significant economic actor, for she appears on the tax lists several times, even as a married woman. Sara’s name will be later bestowed on her granddaughter Surlin, the daughter of her son Yosef, and her great-great-granddaughter Saerlin, the daughter of her great-granddaughter Roslin. Both Surlin and Saerlin are diminutive forms of Sara. Another daughter of Roslin was named Sprintz, like her maternal great-great-grandaunt, one of Smoe’s daughters. Finally, we observe another case of name sharing between living female kin in case of
Roslin’s sister Miryam and her niece Mirlin (‘Little Miryam’), Roslin’s daughter. Both shared their names with Merlin, Smoe’s daughter and Roslin’s great-great-grandmother.

When many Ashkenazi communities like Augsburg had to be rebuild after the disastrous outcomes of the Black Death, Smoe’s family may suggest how economic recovery and (social) reproduction could have been achieved through daughters’ marriages – especially in case of daughters who stayed close to their families of origin. Married daughters spent a few years or longer with or close to their parents, while sons-in-law were often integrated into the business of their fathers-in-law. In this setting, women played an important role in securing the continuity of their families of origin, transmitting social roles from their fathers to their sons and given names from earlier to younger generations, linking their bearers to their maternal relatives who played a prominent role in their lives.

4.2.3. Case study II: The family of Mayr in Nuremberg

In the last decades of the fifteenth century, three families led by Mayr Johel, Moshe of Schaffhausen, and Seligman Sack dominated the Jewish community in Nuremberg – one of the most important and largest Ashkenazi communities at the time. The three men acted as leaders of the community for many years, all prominent and prosperous moneylenders who owned most of the Jewish houses in the city. Members of these families, favoured by the town authorities, comprised the majority of the (new) Jewish citizens in Nuremberg in the late fifteenth century. An earlier analysis of the

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325 A fifteenth-century Hebrew source suggests that the diminutive form was in fact used also to distinguish between two (probably living) homonymous kin; Mahari Margalit recounts a case of a woman whose name, written in her divorce writ, was ‘Sussa’, but, he says, “everyone called her ‘Susslin’, for she was named after her maternal grandmother Sussa”. See Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 70.
326 According to Michael Toch, between 1391 and 1499 205 Jews were admitted as citizens in Nuremberg; 83 of them were strangers and 122 had close relatives in the city, while between 1468-98 – the period of time in which the three men mentioned above ruled the community – 16 out of 25 new
community social structure pointed out five large and complex households – three of which belonged to these families, and nine small ones, belonging to different families. Yet the re-examination of the evidence reveals that three of the smaller households should also be located within the large kin group to which both Mayr Johel and Seligman Sack, who were first cousins, belonged.

Seligman Sack was the son of Pesslein and R. Simon Sack. Pesslein (d.1477), daughter of Gutt and Johel, was fourth generation to an established family in Nuremberg, on her father’s side. Her paternal great-grandfather, Jacob Sangmeister, makes his first appearance in the records from Nuremberg in 1382, along with his three sons: Meir of Ingolstadt – later Pesslein’s grandfather, Symon and Mosse (fig. 6). In a late medieval reality of high mobility and constant migration of German Jews (whether desired or imposed), remarkably, this kin group succeeded to establish five generations in Nuremberg, leaving traces of a local family history extending over one hundred and twenty years. Considering the relative modest


327 See the article by Michael Toch whose reference point is the list of Jewish males (over 13 years old) made by the city authorities in 1489; “Die soziale und demographische Struktur”, 82-84. Moritz Stern in published the list from 1489: Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 92-94.

328 Following Shlomo Ettlinger, Toch mistakenly identified the two as brothers through their mother Pesslein. Although Pesslein was Seligman’s mother, she was Mayr Johel’s paternal aunt – not his mother. See Toch, “Die soziale und demographische Struktur”, 84. For a detailed reconstruction of this family history see the discussion below.

329 Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 28.


331 The first two generations (Jacob Sangmeister and his sons) are not included in the counting of generations. Throughout over a century of this family history, I was able to trace circa 90 persons belonging to this kin group, most of them traceable within Nuremberg itself.
starting point of this kin group, their status in the community in the second half of the fifteenth century indicates a notable process of economic and social mobility.\textsuperscript{332}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{family_tree.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 6: The family tree of Mayr von Ingolstadt}

The sources in Nuremberg mention Meir of Ingolstadt’s four sons: Johel, Symon, Lefi, and Joseph, and a daughter called Surl(in) Mairs tohter von Ingelstat. Apparently, Surlin got married in Nuremberg where she engaged in moneylending; it is notable that she – not her husband, is the one who appears on the tax lists, beginning in 1392.\textsuperscript{333} Surlin had a daughter and a son mentioned in the city records, both carried names linking them to their mother’s side; her son was named Jacob like

\textsuperscript{332} The sources suggest that Meir von Ingolstadt, though a man of means, was not counted among the wealthy Jews in Nuremberg. As his promissory notes amounted 250 gulden at the time of the remission of debts \textit{Judenschuldenentilgung} of 1385, he can be ranked in the lowest one-third of moneylenders in his community. See Michael Toch, “Der jüdische Geldhandel in der Wirtschaft des Deutschen Spätmittelalters: Nürnberg 1350-1499”, \textit{Blätter für deutsche Landesgeschichte} 117 (1981): 284-310. Here 286.

\textsuperscript{333} Stern, \textit{Nürnberg im Mittelalter}, 40, 44, 46, and in passim. She may have been married to a Mayr mentioned in 1409 as Lefi’s brother-in-law. On the other hand, in 1406 she paid taxes together with a Sanwel of Dynkelspuhel who appears only once on the tax lists; ibid., 49, 67.
his maternal great-grandfather and her daughter Zürl shared her name with her mother. On the tax lists both Surlin’s children were designated in relation to their mother – not their father.\(^{334}\) Naming patterns here follow a specific pattern of relationship: Surlin was the economically powerful party in her family and belonged to an established kin group in Nuremberg; on the economic/administrative level, her children were associated with her, also carrying names which linked them to their maternal family.

Both Surlin’s children resided in Nuremberg after getting married. Her son made his first appearance in the tax books in 1411, giving up his citizenship in 1432.\(^{335}\) Surlin married off her daughter Zürl to R. Salman Katz (known also as Maharzakh), one of the outstanding Ashkenazi scholars in his generation. The couple, which was living in Nuremberg, had two children mentioned in the records: a daughter named Lea after her paternal grandmother and a son named Lew, like one of his maternal great-uncles. Keeping daughters in Nuremberg, close to their family, and bringing in sons-in-law, particularly scholars, was a recurring pattern in this kin group.\(^{336}\)

Such a pattern is recognizable in case of Pesslein, Johel’s daughter and Surlin’s niece, who married R. Simon Sack, a disciple of R. Salman Katz in Nuremberg. Pesslein herself was an active and apparently a successful moneylender, since we hear that in 1444 she and her son-in-law Mayr lent the Margraviate Albert Achilles of Brandenburg (1414-1486) 300 florins.\(^{337}\) The debtor was the Prince-elector of Brandenburg and a very influential man, which indicates a circle of upper-
level clients and high-scale moneylending business. Pesslein had a key role of linking older generations of moneylenders in Nuremberg with younger generations of scholars, moneylenders and community leaders.

Pesslein was married to Simon Sack (ca. 1405-1447), who would later become known as Meister Simon Sack, the rabbi of the community and head of the yeshiva in Nuremberg from 1444 until his death, in 1447. Simon can be traced in Nuremberg in 1425 at the latest.\(^{338}\) It is likely that the couple married earlier to that date, since in 1436 they had at least one grown daughter and a grown son.\(^{339}\) The couple appears on the tax lists for the first time in 1429, which might imply that they lived a few years outside of Nuremberg after getting married.

The second Judenzinsbuch records a series of permits (each for one year) to live with Pesslein’s parents, given to the couple by the city authorities between 1429 and 1433.\(^{340}\) In 1434, Simon des Yohels aydem received citizenship in Nuremberg.\(^{341}\) Except for his father’s name ‘Yitsḥaq’ (‘Isaac’), we have no solid information on Simon’s origins, but he may have also come from Ingolstadt, like Pesslein’s family, for one of the couple’s sons was designated in 1436 as Menndel Jud des Saks sun von Ingelstat.\(^{342}\) On the other hand, his connection to Pesslein’s family in Nuremberg may have been established through his teacher, R. Salman Katz of Biberach, who was married to Pesslein’s first cousin, Zürl.

Salman Katz settled in Nuremberg in 1396 with his mother Lea of Biberach and his brother Ansel.\(^{343}\) In 1406, he gave up his citizenship and spent the next seven

\(^{338}\) Yuval, Scholars, 49f.
\(^{339}\) A daughter who was married first to Mennlin Lefen and a son named Mendel who was admitted in Nuremberg in that year. See Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, BB 13, fol. 109v. where it says that his daughter divorced her husband. See also Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 73; Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1042, note 1379.
\(^{340}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{341}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{342}\) Ibid., 73.
\(^{343}\) Ibid., 41. A short biography is offered by Yuval, Scholars, 21f.
years studying in various places. As he returned to Nuremberg to marry Zürl, he was about thirty – a very late age for marriage among Ashkenazi Jews at the time, which does not coincide with the prevalent model of early marrying students.\textsuperscript{344} Shortly afterwards, Salman Katz was appointed as the community rabbi (\textit{hochmeister}) and established his own \textit{yeshiva} there. After his death in 1444, Simon Sack, his student and relative, took his place.

The sources indicate that Simon and Pesslein had at least one daughter, who was first married to \textit{Mennlin Lefen} whom she divorced and later married a certain Mayr,\textsuperscript{345} and four sons: Mendel,\textsuperscript{346} Johel Sack who was named after his maternal grandfather,\textsuperscript{347} Natan,\textsuperscript{348} and Seligman Sack. It is notable that the name of Simon’s father ‘Isaac’ is absent. Although it is possible that the German name Seligman may have accompanied this Hebrew name as an everyday name,\textsuperscript{349} we still don’t come across this name except once among Seligman’s great-grandchildren.

\textsuperscript{344} For marriage patterns in Jewish communities in general, see the pioneer study by Jacob Katz, “Marriage and Sexual Relations at the close of the Middle Ages”, \textit{Zion} 10 (1944): 21-54. On marriage patterns among Jewish scholars in the Middle Ages, see Gadi Algazi, “Habitus, familia und forma vitae. Die Lebensweisen mittelalterlicher Gelehrter in muslimischen, jüdischen und christlichen Gemeinden - vergleichend betrachtet “, in \textit{Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der Gelehrten im späten Mittelalter} ed. Frank Rexroth, \textit{Vorträge und Forschungen}, vol. 73 (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke, 2010), 185-217, esp. 211-213. Another exception to this rule is R. Seligman of Coburg who married similarly around the age of 30. For a discussion on Seligman of Coburg see the section on siblings at the end of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{345} Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, BB 13, fol. 109v. Mayr is mentioned lending money with his mother-in-law Pesslein: Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1042.

\textsuperscript{346} Since Mendel Sack appears on the tax lists already in 1436, it is implausible to identify him as Natan Sack whose first child was born in 1464.

\textsuperscript{347} That son does not appear in the tax records. \textit{Johel Sack} appears in city documents from 1490 and 1492: Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. F, fol. 80; Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Rep. B 14/V, . It’s possible that he was already mentioned in a document from 1489. On the last point, see Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1018, note 1350.

\textsuperscript{348} Natan Sack was the son-in-law of Eliezer Liberman of Nördlingen and he lived at least awhile in Donauwörth, perhaps near his father-in-law. Regarding the identification of Natan see page 117 above.

\textsuperscript{349} A well-known contemporaneous financier and rabbi in Ulm was called Isaac Seligman (of Coburg). See case study I in the section on siblings at the end of this chapter.
The close relations between name-circulation patterns and the relative strong position of daughters living close to their families of origin and of active economic female actors is also suggested by the names of Pesslein’s sons from second marriage (fig. 7). We do not know her second husband’s name, but we do know that he died in 1462. The couple had three sons: Salman, named like his maternal uncle; Johel, who shared his name with his stepbrother, Johel Sack – both were apparently named after their maternal grandfather; and Mendelein (b.1461), who shared his name with his stepbrother, the son of Pesslein and Simon Sack. This seems like a rather unusual case of name sharing between brothers, but assuming that the identification of

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351 In 1466, *Salman der Bestin Judin sun* appears along with his mother and her third husband, *Meister Salman von Bingen*. Stern mistakenly identified Salman as the son of R. Salman of Bingen. I would suggest, furthermore, identifying the man mentioned in the sources from Nuremberg 1476 and in 1489 as *Johel der Pessen/Beslin sun* as Pesslein’s son too. See Stern, *Nürnberg im Mittelalter*, 92 (no. 13), 300.
the persons involved is correct, this would reinforce the impression that women in this family played an essential role in the transmission of names.352

Among Pesslein’s and Simon’s sons, it was Seligman Sack who played a central role in strengthening the family’s position in Nuremberg. He was a wealthy moneylender, a learned man, and a key-figure in the Jewish community of Nuremberg in the second half of the fifteenth century. In 1445, he was admitted as citizen in the city, designated as Seligman Jud meister Symons Juden sun; his wife is not mentioned in the records.353 The couple had at least two daughters – Preunlein, Fridlein, and probably a third daughter, who was married to a man called Lezar, and a son – R. Salman Sack.354 Preunlein was married to R. Mair Furstlein, a rabbinical judge in Nuremberg. From 1491 until his death in 1497, the couple was living with Seligman after coming to terms with the city authorities that he could have his son-in-law and his daughter bey im sein lebtag und seinen (Mair Furstlein’s) zins haben und halten mug.355 The couple left Nuremberg only with the expulsion, in 1499.

Another married daughter of Seligman, who was living at her father’s house with her husband, was Fridlein. Her spouse, Salman of Worms, was admitted as citizen in 1486, while his father-in-law derselb Seligkman Sagk dieweil er lebt fur sich und den benanten seinen aiden jerlich 35 guld... zu zins geben.356 After Salman’s death, Fridlein remarried in 1497 at the latest. In that year, her second husband, R. Israel Reinbach (d. 1505), was admitted as citizen in place of her late

[352] Another case is that of R. Jacob Margalit (d. 1492) and his brother on his mother’s side Jakob who appears with his mother and other members of the family on the tax lists from Nördlingen in 1498. The lists were published in Ludwig Müller, Aus fünf Jahrhunderten. Beiträge zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinden im Riess (Sonderdruck aus der Zeitschrift d. hist. Ver. f. Schwaben und Neuburg. Jahrgänge 1899 und 1900) (Augsburg: J.P. Himmer, 1900), 213.
[353] Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 76.
[354] Lezar appears in a document from 1476 as Seligman’s son-in-law. See ibid., 300.
[355] Ibid., 76.
[356] Ibid., 88.
spouse under similar conditions.\(^{357}\) Following the expulsion of the Jews from Nuremberg, Israel Reinbach moved with his family to Frankfurt where he served as the community rabbi. After joining him in Frankfurt, his “brother-in-law”, R. Meir Furstlein, acted as a rabbinic judge in the city.\(^{358}\)

\[\text{Figure 8: The Sack family}\]

* Broken line: uncertain

As Seligman’s daughters and their families lived with him, we see that some of his grandchildren also established families in Nuremberg, while having close relationships with their maternal relatives. One of them who was living in Seligman’s house made his first appearance in the city records, as he was mentioned in the list of Jews residing in Nuremberg from 1489, designated as *Feifas ein knab Selickmans*

\(^{357}\) Ibid., 91-92.
\(^{358}\) Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1019.
eniglein. In 1497, he became a citizen and after Seligman’s death in that year, it was the same Feyfis who entered into a contract with the city council in his grandfather’s place, renewing the agreement regarding the tax payment of Seligman’s sons-in-law as well.\textsuperscript{359}

A strong association of Seligman’s descendants through his daughters with their maternal relatives is evident through name-circulation practices as well. Among their children, we encounter a girl named Gutilin who shared her name with her maternal great-great-grandmother Gutt, Pesslein’s mother, and with one of her maternal cousin’s. Similarly, we come across the name Jacob – again, shared by two cousins – whose circulation within this kin group goes back to its “founder”, Jacob Sangmeister. The name Lew, which circulated in Pesslein’s family, also appears. Moreover, one of Seligman’s daughters named her son Salman – a name that was carried by many of her relatives, including her brother, R. Salman Sack (see the section on siblings). Finally, in 1497, the city records mention Seligman Sack the younger – apparently, Seligman’s grandson who was named after his living maternal grandfather. This is, furthermore, an important indication for the transmission of family names through women, which is also suggested by the case of Salman Sack the younger – again a son of one of the daughters in the family.\textsuperscript{360}

As already mentioned, Seligman Sack and his wife had also a son, R. Salman Sack. Salman was married to Jachet (Jachenet) from Frankfurt, the daughter of Isaac of Giengen. The couple had at least two sons and two daughters: Jacob, named like one of his cousins; Sanwel/Samuel – a name shared by one of his cousins; Besselein, who was named after her paternal grandmother, and Guta who, as already mentioned, shared her name with her cousin and was probably named after her paternal great-

\textsuperscript{359} This was apparently arranged before Seligman’s death. See Stern, \textit{Nürnberg im Mittelalter}, 91-92.
\textsuperscript{360} Cf. Wilson, \textit{The Means of Naming}, 176-177. See also the discussion on matronyms later in this chapter.
great-grandmother. Since 1478 Salman Sack lived in Frankfurt where he engaged in moneylending. Unlike his sisters, he left his parents’ home and his birth town Nuremberg and immigrated to a rather distant city on the Rhine. Yet in 1489, he appears as a rabbinical judge in Nuremberg where he was staying with his family as a guest.\footnote{Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 93 (no. 23).} In 1495, Salman Sack was admitted as citizen in Nuremberg,\footnote{Ibid., 91.} returning to his family and moving back to Frankfurt only with the expulsion, four years later.

Generally, we can trace local patterns of residence among the children of this large kin group, specifically the daughters. Throughout five generation, it appears that daughters were kept close to their families of origin and sons-in-law, often being scholars, married “into” their wives’ families. These daughters of moneylenders, themselves active businesswomen, had an important role in establishing the power of their families of origin and in securing their continuity. Each generation of this kin group saw its public office holders and prosperous economic actors. One important position that was held by several members of this kin group was that of the \textit{hochmeister}, the rabbi of the community, who acted as head of the Jewish court and the \textit{yeshiva}.$^{363}$ This office was held by Surlin’s son-in-law, Salman Katz, followed by Johel’s son-in-law, Simon Sack. Later, Seligman Sack’s son and his son-in-law served as rabbinical judges (though not as community rabbis) in the city.

Another key-position was the community leadership, which was held by two men in this kin group: Mayr Johel and Seligman Sack. The latter officiated as one of the community’s \textit{parnasim} (lay leaders) between 1471 and 1497. Even after the number of the \textit{parnasim} was reduced in 1492 from 3 to 2, Seligman Sack made it
through.\textsuperscript{364} This key-role enabled the players to influence the regulation of foreign migration and therefore to preserve the power of the family within the community and the city.\textsuperscript{365} Interestingly, in both branches of this kin group we encounter a circulation of by-names, which were used as a family marker.

The by-name \textit{Sack} was first carried by Simon Sack, Seligman’s father. The origin of this by-name is uncertain; it is possible that Sack/Zak (\textit{ז"ק}) was a short-form of \textit{ז"קד} (or perhaps of \textit{ק"קד} Saklin) the Hebrew transliteration of the German \textit{Isaak}, the name of Simon Sack’s father.\textsuperscript{366} Moreover, it is unclear how this by-name, which can be traced throughout four generations (in Nuremberg), was transmitted. Did all sons use that name or only some of them? Was the name supposed to delineate family affiliation in general or was it used to mark specific roles within the family? It is apparent that daughters did not carry their father’s by-name and that not all sons necessarily did so.

Although many of the males carrying the by-name \textit{Sack} were scholars, some of them were not, which undermines the possibility that this name was used as a social marker transmitted only to sons who played a specific role – e.g. scholars. Remarkably, such by-names, functioning as affiliation markers, could be transmitted also through the mother. At least two grandsons of Seligman Sack – \textit{Salman Sack the younger} and \textit{Seligman Sack the younger}, who carried this by-name, were apparently sons of his daughters.\textsuperscript{367}

\textsuperscript{364}Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1006.
\textsuperscript{365} On the specific functions and authority of the community leaders in fifteenth-century Nuremberg, see ibid., 1006-1007.
\textsuperscript{366} The use of the form \textit{ז"קד} was common among Ashkenazi Jews at that time. See for example Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get}, 59. It is improbable that the name originated in the Hebrew abbreviation \textit{ז"קד} (S"K), which stands for \textit{קדש זרע}, i.e. \textit{offspring of a martyr} (usually designated as \textit{ש"קד}). In the lamentation on Simon Sack composed by one of his sons, his father Isaac is designated with the addendum \textit{" Nºל blessed be the memory of a righteous}, but he is not referred to as a martyr \textit{ש"קד}; see the discussion above on the Sack family book.
\textsuperscript{367} See discussion on matronym in the following section.
A similar usage of by-names is evident in case of the family of Mayr Johel, Seligman’s first cousin through his mother, and another leading figure of the Jewish community of Nuremberg. Mayr Johel was the eldest son of Gold and her husband, an unnamed son of Johel. On his father’s side, Mayr Johel was the grandson of Johel (Pesslein’s father) and the great-grandson of Mayr of Ingolstadt, after whom he was probably named. It is interesting that Mayr was not designated through his father, Johel’s son, but in relation to his grandfather. The documents from Nuremberg designate him in 1439 as Mayer dez Yohels Juden eneklein. It seems that Mayr took his grandfather’s place, for he was admitted only a few days after his widowed grandmother died. As a child, Mayr was living with his grandparents and it is plausible that he did so until their death. In any case, he was closely associated with his grandfather, as his by-name Johel strongly suggests.

Mayr Johel had at least two daughters who lived in Nuremberg after getting married, whose names are not specified in the sources, and seven sons: Mardocheus, Joseph, Mosse Mayr, Johel Mayr, Hyrsch, Mayr Johel the younger, and Isaac. By-names derived from papponymy or patronymic were used in this family; while ‘Johel’ became a by-name carried by Johel’s grandson Mayr, his own given name became a by-name carried by his sons and grandsons. Like ‘Sack’, the name ‘Mayr’ became a family name.

368 We know that he was the eldest in his family thanks to an account written by his “uncle” Simon Sack, Pesslein’s husband. See Yuval, Scholars, 54.
370 Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 69. He was apparently the same grandson of Johel who was mentioned living with his grandfather in 1429 along with his mother and a wet nurse, while he was an infant. See ibid., 65.
371 Ibid., 69. Johel died in 1434.
Figure 9: The Mayr family

Naming practices within the Mayr family indicate marked patterns of name circulation, including name sharing among living relatives. Many of Mayr Johel’s sons shared their names with his paternal ancestors: Joseph was the name of his granduncle; Mosse was the name of his great-granduncle; and Johel was his grandfather’s name. The unusual case, though, is the homonymy between Mayr Johel, often called “the elder”, and his son Mayr Johel “the younger”.\textsuperscript{372} This pattern repeats itself in the next generation, as a homonymous son of Johel Mayr “the elder” appears.\textsuperscript{373} The circulation patterns of first names and their transformation into family names in some cases indicate the importance of given names as family and social markers within this kin group.

\textsuperscript{372} They are mentioned together in this fashion in a document from 1492 and another from 1493: Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. F, fol. 248; Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. G, fol. 295.

\textsuperscript{373} Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. E, fol. 115.
Generally, name-circulation patterns within this larger kin group testify to powerful kin relationships, which were to a great extent the result of large and complex households (comprising three generations) and more generally, of geographic proximity that intensified the relationships involved. Such patterns of household formation were certainly organised by external constrains, such as the migration policy of late medieval Nuremberg and the instability which characterised Jewish community-life in general after the Black Death.374 But they were also the result of early-marriage patterns that were to increase the family’s economic capacity and to enable some sons or sons-in-law to study. Such a desired state of affairs was, though, mainly the share of the powerful families of the community who had the means as well as the Christian authorities’ permission to accommodate their married children and their families.375

In this setting, daughters emerge as vital social actors who played a significant role in securing the continuity of their families of origin. Moreover, playing a notable role in transmitting and giving names, women marked not only themselves, but often also their children, as belonging to their families of origin; their children who spent most of their lives in close proximity to their maternal relatives were also closely associated with them, often by carrying their names.

4.3. Residence patterns and women’s roles within the family

Given the important role played by postmarital residence, specifically in case of uxorilocality, in repositioning women within their families and in casting their role as


375 Toch, “Die soziale und demographische Struktur”, 67-68. In 1448, the Jewish community in Nuremberg appealed for elementary residence permit (for one year) to newly married couples accommodated by their parents. See Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 293. Cf. Yuval, Scholars, 34-35.
name-transmitters, the question arises: how widespread the pattern of uxorilocality actually was in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Ashkenazi communities? By referring to uxorilocal or virilocal residence patterns I do not necessarily mean married couples living under the same roof with their parents or parents-in-law, although this was clearly the case in the early phase of marriage life.376 While newlyweds often lived awhile with one the families, they could later establish their own household and settle down also in close proximity to one of the families, in the same locality.377 Whether the early years of marital life or long-term residence was to take place close to the wife’s family or to the husband’s family could have far-reaching implications for the relative position of each spouse within the marriage.378 For instance, a young bride, spending the early years of her marriage with or in close proximity to her own family/parents, would be in a better position to negotiate not only premarital terms, but also her conjugal relationships, and in fifteenth-century Ashkenaz – often also the terms of her divorce.379

The processes that shape postmarital residence patterns and their implications have long occupied anthropologists.380 Such patterns are closely associated with

376 Cf. Derouet, “Dowry: Sharing Inheritance or Exclusion?”.
377 It is important to see that even in the larger Ashkenazi communities such as Nuremberg Jews usually lived in very close proximity to one another. Thus, we often come across cases of relatives who lived in the same building although running separate households. Such an example is the case of a woman named Roslin and her uncle Joseph in Donauwörth where the local Jews lived all in one apartment building called the Judenhaus. See Minz, She'ilot u-Teshuvot, § 74. See also Seitz, “Donauwörth”, 237.
378 Recent studies suggest how postmarital residence patterns in Ashkenaz – specifically uxorilocality – may have impacted both relationships between spouses and between in-laws. See Klein, “Der Mann: ein Fehlkauf”. Regarding Ashkenazi scholars, see Algazi, “Habitus, familia und forma vitae”, 211-213.
379 As Israel Yuval has been able to show, at least for some communities, the divorce rates in the late medieval Ashkenazi society were high. According to his estimation, two out of three couples divorced in Nuremberg between 1416 and 1442. See Yuval, “An appeal”.
household types, inheritance forms and gendered division of labour, but they also shape family ties, inter-generation relations and the position of women within the family and household. Among Ashkenazi Jews in late medieval communities, we find variable patterns of postmarital residence. Where early marriage was the predominant model, young married couples would usually join an existing household, establishing an independent household only after a few years. A young married couple would usually live either with the wife’s or with the husband’s parents, possibly even with both, alternately. At some point, they might settle down in a new location independent of both families, depending largely on available opportunities for livelihood or learning – in case of scholars – as well as on external forces such as urban politics.

The next section will be dedicated to reviewing the evidence for postmarital residence-patterns, focusing on how uxorilocality shaped kin relationships – especially those between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, and the relative positions of men and women within their families. Starting with the various accounts of the place of residence of newlyweds, offered by fifteenth-century rabbinic responsa, I shall turn to premarital agreements and seek to tease out the basic exchange which shaped them, in order to understand what a son-in-law would expect from his father-in-law (or

381 There is, however, evidence for different patterns as well. In some Ashkenazi communities, especially in the late fifteenth century, families would sometimes tend to form large and complex households, as we have seen in case of Nuremberg. Karl Bücher has suggested that in fifteenth-century Frankfurt, where taxes on Jewish assets were levied according to the total business capital found in the hands of each family, Jews apparently preferred to form complex households in order to avoid separate taxation in case of each family within larger kin groups, thus reducing the total amount of taxes. See Toch, “Die soziale und demographische Struktur”, 68-69. A recent study detects similar household patterns in fifteenth-century Ulm: Christian Scholl, Die Judengemeinde der Reichsstadt Ulm im späten Mittelalter innerjüdische Verhältnisse und christlich-jüdische Beziehungen in süddeutschen Zusammenhängen, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden, vol. 23, Zugl: Trier Uni, Diss, 2011 (Hannover: Hahn, 2012), 148.
382 Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, §187.
mother-in-law) and vice-versa, and which regulation mechanisms operated within this framework. I shall then discuss briefly a fifteenth-century rabbinic responsum dealing with kin terms, highlighting the relations between son-in-law and father-in-law. This halakhic discussion concerned with incest suggests the significant role ascribed to this specific affinal relation within Ashkenazi culture. Finally, I shall consider personal designations of Jews in urban records, concentrating on Nuremberg from the late fourteenth to the late fifteenth century.

4.3.1. Evidence on uxorilocality within the responsa literature

Fifteenth-century rabbinic responsa literature offers several examples of married couples living with or next to the wife’s parents, recurrently mentioning intensive conflicts between sons-in-law and their fathers-in-law and between husbands and wives. In one of Maharil’s responsa, he mentions that premarital agreements would usually refer to the location of the couple’s dwelling after getting married, for it is customary to write in the premarital agreement (te’na’im) at the time of the chuppah, and so it was agreed between them (the husband and wife) that they will spend such and such time with her father and such and such time with her parents-in-law and after that they will receive what is theirs and will choose their residence as they like. In this specific case, it was agreed that the couple would live first with the wife’s parents and then with the husband’s, although we do not know how long they were to stay with each family. Eventually, they were to receive their property – meaning their dowries, and then to choose a new location of residence according to their will.

384 Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, §187, 189, 190; Weil, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §9, 22, 135; Israel Bruna, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §267; Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §73. Cases of uxorilocal residence are also mentioned in ibid., §39a-c, where a case of patrilocality is also mentioned. Another case of patrilocality is found in Weil, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §135. For more cases of uxorilocality, see also Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §33, 51; Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, § 132; She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 61.

385 Shut ha-Hadashot, §187.
Apparently, such disputes between married couples over their place of residence were not exceptional. The above-cited premarital terms imply that such tensions were actually widespread and called for precautionary measures. In the case at hand, the expected conflict indeed broke out; a bitter quarrel between husband and wife over their place of residence brought them to seek Maharil’s legal opinion.

The question is how such postmarital patterns of household-formation effect husband-wife relationship and women’s position within their families. The assumption is that uxorilocality put women in a better position vis-à-vis their husbands – negotiating relatively favourable premarital terms, effecting the day to day marital relationship, in case they lived long enough in the proximity to the wife’s parents. Such a balance of forces would be revealed when marriages ran aground or when property rights were contested. In fact, the rabbinic literature suggests that in such cases, married women cooperated with their families of origin and were supported by them.

4.3.2. Premarital arrangements and exchange

Postmarital residence-patterns shaped considerably not only the relationships between husbands and wives, but also between in-laws. Economic relations between husbands and wives and between the two families were largely organised through prenuptial

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387 It involves specifically a scholar’s right to pursue knowledge away from his wife or in a place she does not wish to live. For a discussion on the case in this context, see Algazi, “Habitus, familia und forma vitae”, 212. It is, however, not the only issue at stake. Maharil specifically refers to the wife’s wish to stay close to her family and at the same time he mentions the very bad relationships between son- and father-in-law stating that “all the more so they ought to stay away from him (her father), for according to everyone’s testimony it is proved that he absolutely hates his son-in-law and constantly incites quarrels between them.” On this issue, see also the remark by R. Yehuda b. Asher, son of the Rosh, who instructed his sons to marry within his family, arguing that “If, with changing times, a man see fit to seek his livelihood in another city, there will be no place obstacles in the way of the wife accompanying her husband.” See Abrahams, Hebrew Ethical Wills, vol. 2, 185.
388 For example Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, § 189. The case is discussed in detail by Klein, “Der Mann: ein Fehlkauf”, 69ff. See also Weil, She elot u-Teshuvot, § 135; Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, § 187, 190; Bruna, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 167.
agreements, consisting of the marriage contract (ketuba) and premarital terms (tena’im). The latter settled property exchange and property rights, but also some elements of the relations between the couple and their families of origin. One clause mentioned in regard to premarital agreements is concerned not so much with the establishing of marriage, but rather with its dissolution. This can be demonstrated by an early fifteenth-century agreement from Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, which sought to secure the woman’s dowry, stating that first of all, the above-mentioned couple shall treat each other with love and friendship as man and wife should. But if – God forbid – there shall be a dispute between them within two years after the wedding, the aforementioned Yedidya (the groom) and his mother Ellin are obliged to hand over one hundred gulden to Mordekhay bar Me’ir in Frankfurt or another trustworthy there. And there shall the couple select two arbitrators and a middleman who would settle every quarrel and plague. Such prearrangements, specifically favouring the woman’s side, seem to have emerged around that time. Similar agreements were also to prevent economic disasters by formulating a precondition which prohibited the husband to gamble.

A question addressed to Maharil proposes a striking account of premarital arrangements. Using fictional names, it depicts the marriage setting of Re’uven’s son and Shime’on’s daughter. The young wife, and shortly afterwards the husband as

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389 These relations could be and were also controlled by other (postmarital) means such as last will, for instance. An example in Yuval, “Getting Married in Ashkenaz”, 197. See also Klein, “Der Mann: ein Fehlkauf”, 88.
392 Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, no. 190.
393 Grunwald, “Aus Rothenburg ob der Tauber”, 211. Such terms appear also in a premarital agreement from the fifteenth-century which survived and is available in the Stadtarchiv Nördlingen, Judenurkunden, 1457 Dez. 16. An account of this case is offered by Dohm, “Schmol von Donauwörth”, 133.
394 Moelin, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §61.
well, passed away during the second year of marriage, leaving the grieving parents to fight over inheritance. The father of the late bride describes in detail the premarital agreement made between the two parties:

*At the time of the engagement it was stipulated that Re’uven would pay for the couple’s expenses during the first two years of marriage. But as I went there with the bride, my daughter, blessed be her memory, more than 30 Persian miles, they (the groom’s relatives) came up with a reason, telling stories and making excuses and [the arrangement] was called off and the blessing (i.e. the marriage) did not take place. But on Sunday after the Shabbat, honourable men suggested that I would lead the couple to my home and provide them for two years, and hire a teacher for his son for one year, and that Re’uven will pay me 36 Hungarian gulden. And my joy was great to lead my daughter to my house and to her mother [with her groom], for I was thinking [to myself] I did not wish to leave her there [even] for the world, with her mother-in-law because of her stubbornness and testiness, thinking: if this is how it begins, [who knows] how it shall end. My daughter, blessed be her memory, was very young (yanika) and since childhood was accustomed to the best, and I was pleased with the above-mentioned sum, and I would have possibly been willing to settle for half the coins [paid], rather than leaving her with her [mother-in-law].*

The names are anonymised and we have no place or time, but the monologue of the bride’s father (and the claims of the groom’s father which are not cited here) offers some precious clues. The original agreement between the families was that the couple would live with the groom’s parents and not vice-versa, as often considered to be the rule in case of young students. For some reason, the groom’s family retracted, but eventually the parties came to terms that, while the couple will live with the bride’s parents, the groom’s father should pay – as settled – the couple’s expenses during the first two years (agreeing on a fixed sum of 36 Hungarian gulden).

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395 As Maharil explains, according to the enactments of the Jewish communities of the Rhineland (takanot SHUM), if the wife dies childless within the first two years of marriage, at least half of her dowry returns to her family. See also Yuval, “Getting Married in Ashkenaz”, 200-201.
396 A Persian mile equals about nine km. See “An appeal”, 185, note 139.
397 Apparently this responsum was addressed to R. Salman in Salzburg in the first quarter of the fifteenth century.
Whether the apparent refusal of the groom’s family to let the young couple live with them was influenced by the arrangements for another married couple in the family – for instance, when preferring to let a son-in-law in – or by other economic and social considerations remains unknown.

Although in the case at hand it was the groom’s father who covered the couple’s expenses, it was his father-in-law who took him and his wife to my home and I did them good as to my own family (bney beyti) and I sent him (the son-in-law) away to a yeshiva to study there... and I hired a teacher for him... The groom was about to live with his father-in-law, dining at his table. Yet his own father paid his expenses, including a year of studies. In this respect, this seems to be an unusual arrangement.

Except for financial support which fathers-in-law often granted their sons-in-law – though apparently not in this case, material goods in form of gifts were sometimes also part of the exchange. From Maharil’s responsum we learn about a book worth four Hungarian gulden promised by Shime’on to his son-in-law – a remarkably expensive gift promised instead of a girdle as customary. Sons-in-law could principally count on support on part of their fathers-in-law also at a later stage of marriage.398 As a case discussed by Maharam Minz demonstrates, if a wealthy father-in-law refuses to help his poor son-in-law and his family, he may be forced to do so by law.399

But what should a father-in-law expect in return from his son-in-law? Maharil’s responsum reveals one crucial component in the establishment of this relationship. Shime’on concludes his account of the deal between him and Re’uven, saying: I was thinking that granted that it is too little and would not cover half the

398 See Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §45. Minz’s responsum suggests that women who had no father were less attractive marriage-candidates due to what a husband could expect from marriage financial arrangements, in case the father was alive, such as the share his wife would have in her father’s inheritance. Also, a son-in-law could usually expect material assistance from his father-in-law.

399 Ibid., §65.
expenses, in any case I shall pay the rest from what is mine, for she is my daughter and he (the groom) shall be my son, if he would obey me. In exchange for the material support he received, the son-in-law would be integrated into his father-in-law’s household owing him obedience, as sons are obliged to display toward their father. ‘Obedience’ stands here for the transformation of affinal relations into like-consanguineal ones, turning the son-in-law into a son.

4.3.3. Personal designations as indication of social relationships

Personal designations tend to cover a much broader spectrum of kin relationships than names, including affinal relations. Perhaps unlike given names, which may mark kin relations that are not necessarily active, personal designations are usually a strong indication of practised social relationships. The identification of a man in the city tax records, for instance, as the son-in-law of someone, is a sign for spatial proximity to his wife’s family of origin and therefore for uxorilocality. Whether he is called after his father-in-law or his mother-in-law can cast light also on the economic status of women and the gendered division of roles within the family. In a Jewish social context (unlike in case of tax lists produced by Christian authorities), personal designations point to a social reality, in which particularly the relationship between fathers-in-law and sons-in-law was highly regarded. This is well illustrated by the following case.

In one of his responsa, Maharil makes an interesting remark on kin terms, specifically discussing the case of a son-in-law.\textsuperscript{400} He is trying to justify an Ashkenazi custom (nohag) to prohibit marriage between a man and his father-in-law’s wife.\textsuperscript{401} Ashkenazi scholars considered such practice incest, even though this was not

\textsuperscript{400} Moelin, \textit{She'elot u-Teshuvot}, §81.
\textsuperscript{401} Meaning by that that a man who was once the son-in-law of someone is forbidden to marry the latter’s widow or divorcee. This does not refer to his wife’s mother but to her stepmother.
mentioned in the Bible and was even explicitly permitted by the Babylonian Talmudic sages.\textsuperscript{402} (Yevamot 21b) Maharil proposes a socio-terminological argument:

\textit{It appears to me that the reason for [the prohibition concerning] a man’s father-in-law’s wife is that it is customary to call him the son-in-law of so-and-so by both his father-in-law and others; most of the people call him ‘the son-in-law of so-and-so’. [...] Furthermore a son-in-law is always honoured due to his father-in-law or vice-versa, and they are called after each other’s name – something that is not true about other affinal relations (hitunim) as in case of his stepson or his brother-in-law.}

Among all affinal relations, it is the one between a son-in-law and a father-in-law that is most intensively socially marked. They share names and honour, and this works, according to Maharil, both ways. Maharam Minz remarks that it is a man’s duty to assist his relatives, let alone his sons – and a son-in-law is also called “son”, like King David turned to Saul, his father-in-law, calling him “my father” (’avi).\textsuperscript{403} If we consider Maharil’s argument seriously, the fact that most people name a man after his father-in-law and vice-versa presupposes real social and spatial proximity as well, for in order to call a man someone’s son-in-law, the father-in-law should be a well-known figure locally.

Maharil’s observation that sons-in-law and fathers-in-law are called after each other is reinforced by designations of Jews in socio-economic context, appearing in

\textsuperscript{402} It was, however, prohibited in the Jerusalem Talmud due to “family honour”. This alludes to the complex issue of the relationship between intercourse and obedience. A child is obligated by the Torah to obey his father and mother. On the basis of the biblical story of Saul and his son-in-law David, who called the former “father”, the Talmudic sages considered a son-in-law “a son”. Thus, intercourse between a son-in-law and his “father’s wife” can be perceived as threat to the social order. Maharil rejects this logic by saying that other marriages, which involve similar constellations, are not forbidden, as in case of marriage between a man’s wife and his stepson. Although the Jerusalem Talmud for the same reason prohibited the latter practice, medieval Ashkenazi scholars followed on this matter the Babylonian Talmud and allowed it. That is, they did recognise that a son-in-law (and similarly, a stepson) has a special status articulated by calling him “son”, but did not confuse this extension with consanguineal kinship. Therefore, Maharil does not associate the prohibition concerning a father-in-law’s wife with the Jerusalem Talmud, but the overall picture rather leads to the impression that there was a specific cultural background for the Ashkenazi custom.

\textsuperscript{403} Minz, \textit{She’elot u-Teshuvot}, §65.
urban records at that time. Late medieval town records such as tax books offer ample evidence for designating persons through family ties. Especially models for designating Jews, used in urban sources, indicate the crucial role kinship played not only in identifying Jews in administrative records, but also in their (supra-)local social networks (see ch. V). In addition, tax books, which often record local family networks, are particularly suitable for the examination of postmarital residence patterns. The relatively well-documented administrative system of the town of Nuremberg in the late fourteenth century and throughout the fifteenth century offers some valuable materials. Particularly useful are the *Judenzinsbücher*, the records of Jewish tax payers, covering the years 1381–1433 (Book I) and 1434–1498 (Book II).  

On the earlier lists of Jewish citizens in Nuremberg we find several cases of in-laws admitted by the city together. For instance, in 1338, a certain Symelin von Winzheim was admitted together with his two sons-in-law and his son Symon sein aiden, Ysak von Wezsler gener suus, and Samuel filius Symelin. In the Nuremberg tax books, we come across many examples of men designated in relation to their fathers-in-law. To give an example, after marrying the daughter of a citizen of Nuremberg, Jeckel von Augsburg dez Gumprechts aydem was admitted in 1398 by the city and was living there until his death. Another instance is that of Joseph des Mosses von Guntzenhausen aydem appearing from 1401 onwards. Yet in this context, Maharil’s observation works mainly in one direction: it was usually the son-in-law who was “called after” his father-in-law. This seems to be the result of the tax

405 Ibid., 14.
406 His wife Gutt was the daughter of Gumprecht of Bamberg. See ibid., 42, 57, and in passim.
407 Ibid., 43 and in passim.
lists’ function and the context in which they were produced. When a son-in-law was “brought in”, his wife’s relatives were usually the main link to the city. Thanks to their legal status as Jewish citizens, the son-in-law could gain contemporary residence permit or even citizenship; his in-laws often guaranteed his tax payment to the city authorities. In other words, the wife’s family of origin would become in such cases the couple’s safety net.

One of the difficulties with using tax records to learn about postmarital residence and household-formation patterns lies in the relation between scribal practices and reality. Beyond the complex question of household composition, there is an inherent bias in the sources; they tend to make men more visible than women and do not always mark married sons and daughters as such. In interpreting them, I assume that when a man is described on the lists as “the son of” – without any further indication of his status or specific reference to coresidence with relatives, this suggests that he was a married man and stood at the head of a household. Therefore the designation of Johel, son of Meir of Ingolstadt indicates patrilocality, a conclusion supported by other evidence as well. Persons who appear on the tax lists owned property and the assumption is that in case of male designations, we are usually dealing with married men and in case of female designations, with either married or widowed women.

408 It is also possible that Maharil had a specific model in mind, which may have been prevalent among Jewish scholars, and that by shared honour between in-laws he was specifically referring to scholarship. However, this seems quite unlikely considering that Maharil claims to describe a general phenomenon. 409 There are cases where the son-in-law/husband does not appear on the tax lists, while the daughter/wife is the stronger party economically. An example for this is the case of Merlein dez Abrahams tochter appearing on the lists from Nuremberg in 1398 as a newlywed who was admitted by the city. Yet she – not her husband, is the one who appears in the records. While sons-in-law are highly visible in the sources, daughters-in-law appear seldom. Among the few exceptions found in the tax lists from Nuremberg are Hanna dez Abraham snur who appears under similar conditions as her sister-in-law Merlein mentioned above, and Gold seins [Johels] suns wirtin mentioned in 1429. These examples appear in Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 42, 46, 50, 65. 410 Liquid funds are especially relevant in this context. On this point see Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1006.
The examination of the tax lists (1381-1498) and notes on Jews who resided in the city without permission, contained in the council books (Ratsbücher, 1401-1499), makes it possible to distinguish between kin groups and to follow, to some extent, their formation over the course of a few generations. The analysis shows that the probability of living with or near the wife’s family was quite similar to that of living near the husband’s family. In 44% of the cases examined here (67 out of 153), the couple’s place of residence was determined by the residence of the wife’s family. A preliminary assessment based on the Augsburg tax lists from 1355 until 1383 yields a similar picture. Such a statistical analysis can be applied within certain limits; except in case of few relatively well-documented families, we have no indication of the number of children or of their patterns of residence. Still, the cumulative evidence shows that in the later medieval period, uxorilocality was a rather common pattern in Ashkenazi communities.

Matronyms and female economic actors

While naming patterns in the late Middle Ages indicate the important role played by married daughters in transmitting names, they also suggest the growing significance of female economic actors who became more socially visible in their positions as mothers and mothers-in-law. The sources offer two important indicators of such a process: designations of males in relation to their female relatives and the practice of men adopting the name of a female kin as a by-name.413 The designation of males – whether sons, husbands or sons-in-law, in relation to their female kin is often treated

411 Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 281-313.
413 Cf. Herlihy, “Land, Family and Women”, 92ff. Herlihy found correlation between the increasing usage of matronymic and the growing participation of women in feudal inheritance. The important economic functions of women – above all, their increasing role as land owners/transmitters, but also as household/land managers, specifically in case of households of knights and married clerks, as well as their role in royal administration, made them more visible in the records, linking their male relatives to them.
in the literature as indication of remarkable economic success gained by few women. One of the examples cited recurrently in this context is that of the well-known Anglo-Jewish financier Licoricia of Winchester (13th c.), whose sons were associated with her and whose business scale and success were certainly exceptional. In mid-fourteenth-century Regensburg, we encounter yet a woman named Chändel who was in a leading position within the Jewish community. She was “commissioned by the city to assess the taxes due from newly settling in Regensburg.”

The practice of designating males in relation to their female kin, becoming widespread among Ashkenazi communities in the later period, went hand in hand with a growing economic role played by women. Michael Toch has found that in the late fourteenth and throughout the fifteenth century, 25% of the (systematically) documented businesspeople in forty-one German Jewish communities were women. Furthermore, some businesswomen in those communities were engaging in large-scale moneylending – their financial capacity being sometimes much greater than that of their male counterparts. In Nuremberg, for instance, one of the wealthiest Jewish widows in the late 14th c. was Jutta Rapp whose father was

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414 See for example Keil, “Hendl, Suessel, Putzlein”, 7-8.
416 Friedenberg, Medieval Jewish Seals, no. 180, 193.
417 Toch, “Die jüdische Frau”, 40-42. Cf. Jordan, “Jews on Top”. The latter deals, however, mostly with small loans made by Jewish women to Christian women, while in case of German communities, there were also women who engaged in large-scale moneylending. Furthermore, in German communities, according to Toch, women’s business activity was patterned similarly to that of men’s. On this point see Toch, “Die jüdische Frau”, 42-43. On Jewish women’s economic activities in medieval Austrian, see Keil, “Business Success”; “Maistrin” und Geschäftsfrau”.
418 Toch, “Die jüdische Frau”, 42-43. Some examples are coming from Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Coblenz, Regensburg, and Constance.
designated on the tax lists as *der Ansel der Reppin vater*. A similar case is that of another wealthy businesswoman, *Sanwelín von Basel*, the widow of *Samuel von Pasel* who was a citizen of Nuremberg. On the tax list from 1388, we encounter one of her male relatives *Josliep von Hersfelden der Sanwelín freunde*. Another example is that of *Ell[e] de Eystet*, a prosperous moneylender who appears in 1382, paying 200 gulden together with her sons-in-law *Joseph und Jeklein ir eyden*.\(^{419}\) Generally, when the mother-in-law played an important economic role, it was very likely for her sons-in-law to be associated with her.

This was mostly the case with widows, though married women were also active economic players and could engage in moneylending either with their male relatives – often with a husband or a son-in-law, or alone. This can be illustrated in case of *Surlin* in Nuremberg, daughter of *Mayr*, mentioned earlier. Surlin had two children we know of: a daughter named *Zürl* like her mother and a son called *Jacob* after his maternal grandfather. It was quite unusual for children to be designated only through their mother as was the case with Surlin’s children; her son appears in the tax records as *Jacob der Surlin sun* and her daughter, after getting married, was designated as *der Surlin tochter sein [Salman von Pybrach’s] eliche wirtin*.\(^{420}\) It should be noticed that Surlin was, at least economically, the head of her household, for she was the one – not her husband, who appeared as a tax payer. Moreover, Surlin’s son (who was a scholar) adopted later his mother’s name as a by-name to become known as *Jacob Zorlin*.\(^{421}\)


\(^{420}\) Ibid., 52, 55, 56, 58.

\(^{421}\) Yuval, *Scholars*, 54, note 189.
I would like to call attention to this specific model. Although such matronyms appeared sporadically earlier,\textsuperscript{422} it seems that this practice has become a significant phenomenon, first during the late fourteenth and especially in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{423} Such matronyms were usually based on either a mother’s, a mother-in-law’s or, rarely, a wife’s name.\textsuperscript{424} Interestingly, most of the examples come from scholars’ families. A few known Ashkenazi scholars who carried this sort of matronyms are ‘Aharon Blümlein/Plumel in Krems (ca. 1360–1421) who apparently adopted his mother’s name (also transmitted to his daughter as a given name Plumel),\textsuperscript{425} Moshe Bonlin in Mainz (15\textsuperscript{th} c.),\textsuperscript{426} David Sprintz in Nuremberg (15th c.),\textsuperscript{427} and Moshe Zaret in Ulm (15\textsuperscript{th} c.), the son of Zareth or Zara Lichtenfelzerin – a prosperous moneylender in Nuremberg.\textsuperscript{428} In Italy, there appears around 1500 a certain R. ‘Avraham Zaret who might have been his son.\textsuperscript{429} In fifteenth-century Cologne we


\textsuperscript{423} There are examples for the practice of males carrying female names as by-names among Christians as well. See Hans Bahlow, “Metronymika. Frauennamen des Mittelalters als Familiennamen”, \textit{Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur} 108, no. 4 (1979): 448-466. Yet concentrating on linguistic and literary aspects, this article cites examples without embedding them in a specific family constellation. Furthermore, the examples at hand illustrate the usage of female names as by-names – there is no evidence that those names were in fact family names. Moreover, it appears that most of the examples precede the Black Death. Cf. Wilson, \textit{The Means of Naming}, 176-177.


\textsuperscript{425} Christoph Tepperberg, “Krems an der Donau”, ibid., 677-685. Here 679. See also Keil, “”Maistrin“ und Geschäftsfrau”, 107.


\textsuperscript{427} Stern, \textit{Nürnberg im Mittelalter}, 77; Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1014-1015.

\textsuperscript{428} Stern, \textit{Nürnberg im Mittelalter}, 79; Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1015-1016; Gudrun Emberger-Wandel, “Ulm”, ibid., 1498-1522, esp. 1505-1506. Mahari Margalit mentions a certain יינט Maharaz Jent, which might suggest that the latter carried the female name ‘Jenta’ as a by-name. See Margalith, \textit{Seder ha-Get}, 78.

\textsuperscript{429} Emberger-Wandel, “Ulm”, 1518, note 1229.
come across a scholar known also by the name ‘Avraham Guetlin, who was the son of Guetline.\footnote{430 Erich Wisplinghoff, et al., “Köln”, in Germania Judaica Band 3: 1350-1519. Teilbd. 1: Ortschaftsartikel Aach – Lychen, ed. Arye Maimon (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 632-650. Here 637. In a sepulchral inscription from Frankfurt dated to 1409, a man was designated as ‘Ele’azar bar Kalonymos b Rivkes. Although the designation appears incomplete, the matronym Rivkes רבקיש stands out, especially at this early stage. See Mordechai ha-Levi Horovitz, ed. Sefer Aynei Zikaron. HaKtav ve-haMichtav miBeit haKvarot deKehila Kedosha Frankfurt am Main (Frankfurt: J. Kaufmann, 1901), no. 80. See also the online database http://www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat?function=Ins&sel=ffb&lang=de&inv=7028.}

Such by-names based on a female first name were sometimes passed down throughout a few generations, thus becoming family names. This pattern can be traced in case of the well-known scholar Ya’aqov Margalit (d. 1492) who adopted his mother’s name as a by-name, which would be carried by at least three generations of scholars in this family.\footnote{431 Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1016; Peter Herde, et al., “Regensburg”, in ibid. 1178-1230.} His sons – both scholars, were called Yitshaq Margalit and Shemu’el Margalit. The latter had a son called Moshe Mordekhay Margalit (d. 1616), a rabbi in Cracow,\footnote{432 Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 39, 46, 49, and in passim.} and another son who came to be known as the convert Antonius Margaritha, who clearly kept his family name even after becoming a Christian. The Latin (name) ‘Margarita’ – just like the Hebrew ‘Margalit’, signifies ‘Pearl’.\footnote{433 The Hebrew word ‘Margalit’ meaning a gem appears in Talmudic sources, for instance in: Avodah Zarah 8b. A link between ‘Margarita’ and ‘Pearl’ in the Latin appears in the popular thirteenth-century collection of hagiographies known as the Legenda aurea (The Golden Legend) compiled by Jacopo da Varagine. In the story of St. Margaret’s life, it says that “Margareta dicitur a quadam pretiosa gemma, quae margarita cocatur”. See Jacobus de Voragine, Jacobi a Voragine Legenda aurea, (Leipzig: Impensis Librariae Arnoldianae, 1801), http://tinyurl.com/3uspadl. cap. xciii ‘De sancta Margareta’. Interestingly, another famous convert – (Joseph) Johannes Pfefferkorn (d. 1523), apparently also kept his family name after converting to Christianity; he was the nephew and student of R. Meir b. Menachem Pfefferkorn. See Ferdinand Seib and Maria Tischler, “Prag”, in Germania Judaica 3: 1350-1519. Teilbd. 2: Ortschaftsartikel Mährisch-Budwitz – Zwolle, eds. Arye Maimon, Mordechay Breuer, and Yacov Guggenheim (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 1116-1151, esp. 1132.} An example of a son-in-law who adopted his mother-in-law’s name, later circulated as a family name, comes from Nuremberg. In 1389 the tax lists record a certain Abraham Sprintz, a citizen of Nuremberg,\footnote{434 “Regensburg”, 1227, note 1483.} and another son who came to be known as the convert Antonius Margaritha, who clearly kept his family name even after becoming a Christian. The Latin (name) ‘Margarita’ – just like the Hebrew ‘Margalit’, signifies ‘Pearl’.\footnote{435 Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1016; Peter Herde, et al., “Regensburg”, in ibid. 1178-1230.}
Abraham adopted her name as a by-name and became known as Abraham Sprincz; not only he himself would be designated in this way from now on, but his sons as well (one of his daughters was also named Sprincz). It is not clear why Abraham adopted his mother-in-law’s name, but an instructive case from sixteenth-century Posen may suggest which social mechanisms could have operated in similar cases.

In his youth, the later great Talmudist R. Shemu’el ’Eli’ezer ha-Levi went to Posen where he married the daughter of Moshe Ashkenazi Heilpronn and his wife Edel. Later, due to his mother-in-law’s generous support for his yeshiva in Posen for twenty years, he adopted her name and became known as R. Shemu’el ’Eli’ezer Edels.435 This is an illustration of how a name could function as a gift and the adoption of it as an expression of gratitude. Therefore, Abraham Sprintz of Nuremberg could have adopted his mother-in-law’s name as a by-name as a token of gratitude for her support – whether due to social contacts or material assistance.

As the examples show, women – especially mothers and mothers-in-law – played an increasing role in marking social affiliations. This is supported, furthermore, by other patterns of name-circulation, identifying males with their maternal relatives. One example is that of the Eppstein family in fifteenth-century Frankfurt. The name ‘Eppstein’ carried by the known scholar R. Natan Eppstein and his brother R. Semel Eppstein was passed down through their mother Eva, daughter of Gutlin von Eppstein, who was a wealthy businesswoman. Apparently Gutlin’s son-in-law Jacob von Eppstein adopted his mother-in-law’s name carried by his sons, too. Furthermore, it seems that Natan Eppstein’s son-in-law Gumprecht Eppstein similarly adopted his by-name through his wife, Natan’s daughter.436

435 Mordechai Margaliot, Encyclopaedia le’toldot gedolei Israel, 4 vols., vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Chachik, 1950), 1320. (in Hebrew)
436 On this family, see Yuval, Scholars, 239; Dietrich Andernacht, Michael Lenarz, and Inge Schlotzhauer, “Frankfurt am Main”, in Germania Judaica Band 3: 1350-1519. Teilbd. 1:
In other cases, we can trace sons taking the family name of the maternal grandfather. For example, in the Rapp family – a wealthy family of financiers in fourteenth-century Nuremberg/Treviso, Henndlin, daughter of Jacob and Jutta Rapp, had a son called *Chaim Rapp Soten*. In addition, in fifteenth-century Nuremberg, we encounter two grandsons of Seligman Sack, sons of his daughters, carrying his family name: *Seligman Sack the younger* and *Salman Sack the younger*. These examples seem to reinforce the interrelation between women’s participation in the circulation of family goods and their role in transmitting names. In such cases, by transmitting family names, mothers played a crucial role in forming family circles, linking their sons to their maternal grandfathers and uncles.

4.4. Name sharing among collateral kin

The circulation of given names within Ashkenazi families has been largely examined on the level of vertical kin relations, highlighting lineal patterned transmission of names that links ancestors with younger generations, through the parents. In this setting, the commemoration of ancestors and the continuity of lineages, usually concentrating on scholars’ families, were often in focus. Yet naming patterns observed in the late medieval period call for a reconsideration of how relationships between collateral kin might have contributed to changes in naming practices. In that period, living siblings emerge as potential name-donors and name sharing among collateral kin – between uncles/aunts and their nephews/nieces and among cousins,

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*Ortschaftsartikel* Aach – Lychen, ed. Arye Maimon (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 346-393, esp. 176. We encounter a similar model in Christian communities in the earlier period. In the Christian case, when the estate went to an heiress, her father’s by-name could be passed to her husband or sons. See Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, 176.

437 See the reconstruction of the family tree in Angela Möschter, *Juden im venezianischen Treviso (1389-1509)*, Forschungen zur Geschichte der Juden. Abteilung A, Abhandlungen 19 (Hannover: Hahn, 2008), 351.

becomes more visible. An account of name giving from the fifteenth century illustrates that children could actually be named after siblings.

Discussing the relations between Hebrew sacred names and vernacular everyday names, in his comments (hagahot) on his father’s Seder ha-Get, Yitshaq Margalit recounts: Once I saw a compromise between a man and his wife. She had a brother, whose name in the vernacular was Salman, and he had a brother whose everyday name was Suesskint and his sacred name was Yequt’iel. And her brother was also called by the sacred name Yequt’iel, and their son was named Yequt’iel after both.439 Again, the choice of name emerges as an act needed to be negotiated between the spouses – each wanting to attach the child to his or her family – linking, in this case, the newborn to the families of origin through siblings, specifically brothers. Another case, which is mentioned in Seder ha-Get by Ya’aqov Margalit himself, involves a woman whose birth name was Hadassa – later renamed, due to illness, after her aunt Edel.440

Naming practices observed among Ashkenazi families in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries testify to high circulation of names among collateral kin, especially between uncles and nephews. This can be illustrated in case of the family of Jäklin/Jekel von Ulm (d. 1402/03) – one of the greatest Jewish financiers in Southern Germany in the second half of the fourteenth century.441 Jekel’s sons were business partners, playing an important role, together with their father and their brothers-in-law, in expanding the family venture.442 Occasionally, we find some of

439 Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 67.
440 Ibid., 69.
them also living with or next to one another. One of Jekel’s sons Fiflin had his son named like one of his own brothers Leve/Löw. His name being Juda (Yehuda) Leve, it probably alluded to Jekel’s father Juda Löw Nonetheless. Name sharing between uncles and nephews is also evident among Smoe’s descendants in Augsburg. It seems that there were at least three males named Falk in this family: one of Merlin’s sons Falklin, his fraternal nephew, and the latter’s nephew Falk, once again son of a brother. A similar case among females in this family involves Miryam, Roslin’s sister, and her niece (Roslin’s daughter) Mirlin – ‘Little Miryam’.

The practice of name sharing between uncles and nephews and among cousins is a marked pattern within the kin group of Mayr of Ingolstadt in Nuremberg. Such practices are detectable already in the first documented generation of this kin group; Mayr of Ingolstadt had both a son and a (living) brother sharing the name Symon. As mentioned earlier, one of Pesslein’s (Mayr’s granddaughter) sons from second marriage was called Salman, like his maternal uncle. From this moment onward, the name ‘Salman’ would make a remarkable career in this kin group. As her family tree discloses (fig. 10 below), Pesslein’s son Salman also had a nephew by that name: R. Salman Sack, the son of his brother (through his mother), Seligman Sack. The two brothers were living in Nuremberg; both are recorded (together with their maternal

443 Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 30-33.
445 See section 4.2.2. above, particularly p. 130.
446 On this branched kin group, see Minz, She’elot u-Teshuvot, 74a-b. See also Seitz, “Augsburg”, 46 [43], 48-49 [16, 26]; Emberger-Wandel, “Ulm”, 1504 [1503].
447 See section 4.2.3 above.
448 Both uncle and nephew are mentioned on the tax lists from Nuremberg. See Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 28, 40, 44.
449 It seems that the vernacular name ‘Salman’ was generally widespread among Ashkenazi men in the later medieval period. See also Margalith, Seder ha-Get, 66, 69.
cousin Mayr Johel) as co-owners of two houses in the city.\textsuperscript{450} It is plausible to assume that Salman and Seligman cooperated in business too. In 1497, we come across a joint loan by Salman and his niece Fridlein, Seligman’s daughter.\textsuperscript{451}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 10: The family of Pesslein}
\end{center}

Salman’s nephew, R. Salman Sack, would be later designated as \textit{the elder}, probably in order to distinguish him from his own nephew (his sister’s son), \textit{Salman Sack the younger}. Both uncle and nephew were scholars and rabbis and both moved to Frankfurt after the expulsion of the Jews from Nuremberg in 1499.\textsuperscript{452} A few months after Seligman Sack’s death in the summer of 1497, his son Salman Sack the elder paid out his own nephew \textit{Salman Deuerlein} his share in the inheritance –

\textsuperscript{450} In 1492 the three declared on the two houses they own; one in which Seligman was living and one in which Mayr Johel and Salman were living; Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. G, fol. 118. According to the document, Mayr Johel owned 1/3 of each house, Seligman owned 5/12, and Salman 1/4.

\textsuperscript{451} Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. K, fol. 156.

\textsuperscript{452} Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1019.
perhaps the same nephew. Another Salman in this family who can be identified in
the records from Nuremberg around that time was the son of Seligman Sack the
younger and hence either a nephew or a cousin of Seligman Sack the elder.
Furthermore, we find several cases of name sharing among both female and male
cousins, implying their common descent. One example is the name Guta, going back
to Seligman’s maternal grandmother, shared by two of his granddaughters. Another
eexample is the name Jacob circulated among Seligman’s maternal relatives – traced
among two of his grandsons.

Another example of name sharing between a living nephew and his maternal
uncle is that of Isaack of Giengen and his nephew Isaack in the late fifteenth century.
Isaac’s paternal grandmother, the known businesswoman Rycke of Frankfurt, wrote a
testament in which she bequeathed her entire goods to her (orphan) grandson,
instructing the guardians to report yearly on the financial balance to Isaac of Giengen
and appointing him as her own heir, in case her grandson (Isaac’s nephew) shall die
before her.

Another case is that of the Rapp family in Nuremberg who migrated to
Treviso at the end of the fourteenth century. Jacob Rapp, the head of this
prominent family of financiers, had three sons from first marriage: Michael, Moyses,
and Lazarus; and a daughter called Henndlin from second marriage – to Jutta Rapp.
The relationship between the children of the Rapp family were marked by

453 Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. K, fol. 166.
454 He appears in 1497: Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, LibCons. J, fol. 224.
455 Rycke’s last will was published in Kracauer, “Ein jüdisches Testament”. Cf. Andernacht, Lenarz,
and Schlotzhauer, “Frankfurt am Main”, 364. On Isaac of Giengen, see Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1020
[1049].
456 For a detailed reconstruction of the history of the Rapp family, including a family tree, see
Möschter, Juden im venezianischen Treviso, 72f., 320, 328, 331, 351. See also Toch, “Nürnberg”,
1016-1017.
geographical proximity and intensive economic cooperation among siblings, while all of them migrated together with their (step)mother Jutta, to Treviso.

These patterns seem to have shaped naming practices; we come across several cases of name sharing between collateral kin in this family. Especially the name Michael enjoyed high circulation. The first Michael encountered in this family is Jacob Rapp’s brother. This name would be later bestowed upon one of Jacob’s sons – Michael. The latter had a homonymous nephew, the son of his brother Moyses. In the next generation, this name appears among the grandchildren of both Michael and Lazarus, Jacob Rapp’s sons, thus circulated among second cousins as well. Another example of name sharing between uncles and nephews is that of Lazarus and his nephew, the son of Moyses.

At this stage, the considerable evidence of name sharing among living collateral kin does not make it possible to reconstruct how social players actually used names to shape daily interactions. Nevertheless, it suggests that collateral relationships played an important role in the web of family and kinship, which is supported by other evidence as well. Furthermore, it shows that the circulation of given names gained a growing role in perceiving such relationships, while associating men and women with their families of origin, particularly with their siblings.

By analysing two case studies from the fifteenth century, in the following, I wish to cast light on how such naming practices were embedded in family constellations. Starting with the family of the financier and rabbi of Ulm Seligman of Coburg (d. 1455), I shall then turn to discuss the family of the well-known Ashkenazi scholar Ya’aqov Moelin ha-Levi (d. 1427), known as Maharil, focusing on the relation between Maharil’s role as a scholar and as a family man.


4.4.1. The family of Seligman of Coburg: Case study I

R. Isaac Seligman of Coburg (c.1400–1455) belonged to the Jewish economic élite in the region of today’s Southern Germany.\(^\text{457}\) He was a successful financier whose business extended over Northern Italy and Southern Germany, with Treviso, Constance and Ulm as the centres of his economic activity.\(^\text{458}\) Seligman was the son of Mina and Abraham of Coburg – a wealthy man who made his fortune in the moneylending business.\(^\text{459}\) His elder brother was Jacob, known as Jekel of Schweinfurt (c.1394-1464) – himself a rich moneylender and merchant and a powerful man.\(^\text{460}\) In 1428, Seligman married a successful businesswoman called Jentlin who also belonged to a wealthy family; she was the daughter of Lazarus of Con stance – a rich banker and one the community leaders in Con stance in 1418, who moved to Treviso around 1421 (where he died in 1430). She was also the sister of Mathis of Con stance – a banker and moneylender active in Treviso and Con stance.\(^\text{461}\)

In December 1425, Seligman of Coburg made his first appearance in documents from Treviso – where he was known as *Bonaventura (de Coburch)*. He carried out his business in Vicenza, Verona, and Treviso, where he was a co-owner of a bank with a few other Jews, among them also his future brother-in-law, Mathis of Con stance.\(^\text{462}\) Mathis presided a large household in Treviso, co-residing also with his sister Jentlin, who is listed (as *Gent*) with other members of his household in 1425.

\(^{457}\) Both in the German and the Hebrew sources, he is mostly known as ‘Seligman’ – not Isaac.

\(^{458}\) On Seligman’s business activity, see Scholl, *Die Judengemeinde der Reichsstadt Ulm*, 229ff.


\(^{460}\) Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1017.


\(^{462}\) *Juden im venezianischen Treviso*, 304-305.
The two had another brother named Isaac who was living in Constance where he engaged in moneylending (his recorded loans were made between 1424 and 1428) and acted as the community cantor.\textsuperscript{464}

Already in 1423, Jentlin appears as an active moneylender in Constance who loaned alone. Her business record, as it is reflected in the \textit{Ammann-Gerichtsbuch} from Constance, indicates vital economic activity from 1423 to 1434; her loans as (possibly) unmarried woman amount to hundreds of Guldens, showing considerable financial capacity.\textsuperscript{465} In 1425 she also received a royal privilege from King Sigismund.\textsuperscript{466} Jentlin owned, furthermore, a house on the \textit{Judengasse} in Constance, designated in the town records from 1424 and again in 1448 as \textit{Yentlin hus}.\textsuperscript{467} In 1428 she and her husband Seligman settled down in the city.

Unlike many scholars of his time, Seligman married only in his late twenties, after finishing his studies in Germany (where he studied with Maharil), Austria and Italy, where he also had influential contacts – most notably, with the Doge of Venice himself.\textsuperscript{468} Seligman and his wife expanded the family venture in Constance, playing a leading role in the community economy.\textsuperscript{469} The couple carried out loans jointly as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{463} Ibid., 326-327, 383. In 1424 Mathis acted as Jentlin’s \textit{Vogt}, i.e. guardian. Yet this appears to be an \textit{ad hoc} wardship, since by that time Jentlin was already a moneylender operating alone and a house owner. Therefore, she could not have been a minor at that time. It is, furthermore, unclear whether Jentlin was in fact an “unmarried” woman, as is implied in the literature, or was she a widow, though there is no indication that she was one. On Mathis as guardian, see ibid., 119; Emberger-Wandel, “\textit{Ulm}”, 1520, note 1247.
\item \textsuperscript{465} Amman, “Die Judengeschäfte”, 55-57, 61f; Chone, “Zur Geschichte der Juden in Konstanz”, 3-5.
\item \textsuperscript{466} Hundsmurscher, “\textit{Konstanz}”, 668.
\item \textsuperscript{467} Chone, “Zur Geschichte der Juden in Konstanz”, 11.
\item \textsuperscript{468} Emberger-Wandel, “\textit{Ulm}”, 1506-1507. Another exception for the rule of early marriage among Ashkenazi scholars is the case of R. Salman Katz in Nuremberg, mentioned earlier, who married at the age of 30.
\item \textsuperscript{469} Between 1426 and 1429 the capital involved in business transactions of both Jentlin and Seligman amounted to 6,000 guldens, a remarkable amount which placed them at the head of the milieu of Jewish moneylenders in Constance, as number two lagged far behind with 2400 guldens. On the financial
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
well as separately. Following the imprisonment of the Jews in Constance, among them also Seligman and his brother-in-law Isaac,\textsuperscript{470} Seligman and his family migrated to Ulm in 1431, where he would hold a rabbinic position and preside a successful yeshiva.\textsuperscript{471} A year later we encounter one of his brothers-in-law, Lazarus (Lazan) of Coburg, who was admitted as citizen in Ulm – apparently he was the husband of a sister of Seligman.\textsuperscript{472} The two brothers-in-law purchased together a house in the city, cooperated in business, and Lazarus was an active supporter of Seligman in a bitter quarrel with R. Simlin.\textsuperscript{473}

Jentlin and Seligman had at least one daughter who was married to a certain Mayer/Mann (who is mentioned in the city records along with Seligman)\textsuperscript{474} and four sons: Abraham who was named after his paternal grandfather (possibly as the latter was still alive); Jacob Matthias whose name could refer to both his living paternal uncle, Jacob of Schweinfurt, and his (deceased?) maternal uncle Mathis of Constance (d. 1438); Moshe; and Lazarus who was probably named after his deceased maternal grandfather, but who also shared his name with his “uncle”, his father’s brother-in-law, Lazarus of Coburg (fig. 11). Abraham and Moshe were scholars; Abraham was a scribe – he copied a Book of Customs that later would be translated into Yiddish in Northern Italy.\textsuperscript{475} After leaving Ulm in the early 1450s, the two brothers moved to Treviso where their mother’s family had been living for many years and their father had contacts. Similarly, their brother Lazarus is traced in Northern Italy, in Belluno,
in 1457. Among Seligman’s sons, it would be Jacob who would take up his father’s role as a financier and carry on the family business in Ulm. 

Seligman’s brother, Jekel of Schweinfurt, after whom Seligman’s son was apparently named, engaged in large-scale moneylending and trade in goods. Among Jekel’s debtors we find the Bishop of Würzburg and the City of Bamberg. In 1447, Jekel and Seligman made a notable loan of 2,250 florins to the Duke Wilhelm of Saxony. Jekel spent several years in Schweinfurt (1434-39) where he stood at the

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476 Scholl, Die Judengemeinde der Reichsstadt Ulm. See also Dicker, Die Geschichte der Juden in Ulm, 66-67; Emberger-Wandel, “Ulm”, 1512 (note 1114), 1519 (note 1243).
477 Scholl, Die Judengemeinde der Reichsstadt Ulm, 240ff.
479 Toch, “Nürnberg”, 1017.
head of the Jewish community. 481 Between 1442 and 1447 he lived in Würzburg and afterwards he settled in Nuremberg where his wife, children, and two of his sons-in-law can be traced. 482

The couple had at least six children; two daughters whose names are not mentioned, and four sons: Abraham (d. 1460) who was named after Jekel’s father and shared his name with his paternal cousin, Meyr, David, and Seligman – who was apparently named after his paternal uncle. 483 After Jekel’s death (in 1464), we encounter his son Meyr acting together with his cousin Jacob Seligman as custodian of Meyr’s minor siblings. 484 After Seligman’s death, his son Jacob became known as Jacob Seligman, which highlights his role as his father’s heir. 485 The family dynamics in this case demonstrate the important role played by collateral kin, especially by siblings, brothers-in-law, and cousins. Siblings often lived in the same locality, sometimes even in the same household; they acted as business associates, occasionally naming their children after one another.

4.4.2. Maharil and his family: Case study II

Maharil’s biography, probably more than that of any other contemporaneous Ashkenazi scholar, captures vividly the structured tension between scholarly way of life and family life. 486 Ya’aqov ben Moshe ha-Levi Moelin (1375-1427), known as

482 Michael Toch, “Nürnberg”, ibid., 1001-1044. Here 1017; Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 77, 80-81, 83-84.
483 It is possible that Jekel’s son Seligman was born in proximity to his uncle’s death in 1455, but it is unclear whether he was born before or after Seligman of Coburg died.
484 Jacob Seligman terminated his guardianship in 1466 after the city of Ulm claimed that he was not entitled to act as his cousins’ guardian; Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, BB 32, fol. 31.
485 At the same time, we need to be aware of the role, which scribal practices probably played in such cases. See for example Ernst Schwarz, “Die Personennamengebung in Regensburg von 1100-1350”, Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte 17 (1953/54): 13-39. Here 24-25.
486 For a discussion on scholars’ families and households in late medieval German territories, see the various works by Algazi, especially Algazi, “Habitus, familia und forma vitae”, which also mentions
Maharil, has been often depicted as the most important German rabbinic authority in his generation, an outstanding scholar whose students were numerous and a teacher who cared dearly for his disciples. Maharil came from a distinguished family of scholars and probably owed his disposition for learning to his father’s side of the family. Yet neither of his sons became his successor; in fact, none of them became a significant scholar. Maharil married twice – he divorced his first wife and lived separately from his second wife, choosing to spend most of his time, so it seems, under the same roof with his students. The tension between his role as a family man and as a scholar and teacher is evident throughout Maharil’s life.

His father, R. Moshe Moelin ha-Levi, was one of the most important scholars in Mainz after the Black Death and a prosperous moneylender. Maharil’s mother Minne, the daughter of Minne and Smoe, belonged to a leading family in Augsburg. The couple spent a few years in Augsburg, leaving in 1369 to Mainz where Moelin was appointed as a community rabbi – an office he kept until his death in 1387. Augsburg would, nevertheless, repeatedly serve as an essential node in the family social networks.

Moshe Moelin and Minne had four sons: Salman Yeqiti’el, Ya’aqov Moelin, Shime’on Segal, Gumprecht Mordekhay, and two daughters – Simḥa and Bonlin. Their elder son, Salman Yeqiti’el, was named after his paternal grandfather, Yeqiti’el ha-Levi. Salman was a scholar and a rabbi and was addressed by Maharil,

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Maharil’s case; “Scholars in Households: Refiguring the Learned Habitus, 1480-1550”, *Science in Context* 16, no. 1/2 (2003): 9-42; “‘For This Boy I Prayed’”.
487 Yekutiel Yehuda Greenwald, *Maharil and his Time* (New York: Shulsinger Bros., 1944). Here 13, 18. (in Hebrew); Schütz, “Mainz”, 709. After several prominent rabbis from Austria faced death between 1408 and 1420 and the Austrian Jewry was destructed in 1420/21, the community of Mainz led by Maharil was, for half a decade, the uncontested centre for Jewish scholarship within Central Europe; ibid., 796.
489 After the Black Death, the community rabbis in Mainz were counted among the community leaders. On this point, see “Mainz”, 789.
while still a student, as his teacher. Maharil’s most important teacher in Mainz, however, was his own father, Moshe Moelin. Ya’aqov Moelin was named like his living paternal uncle, R. Ya’aqov Levi Gelnhausen who is mentioned in Sefer Maharil (‘Book of Maharil’). His by-name ‘Moelin’ which was the vernacular form of ‘Moshe’, his father’s name, became a by-name circulating in this family through the patriline, though apparently not transmitted to all sons.

After studying in his hometown Mainz, Maharil, like many scholars in the late medieval period, spent his early career as peripatetic student, wandering from one source of knowledge to the other. It seems that his first teacher outside Mainz was R. Moshe Katz Neumark in Verona, a friend of his father. It was around the age of fifteen (ca. 1390) that Ya’aqov Moelin arrived in Verona to be engaged to Neumark’s daughter whose name is unknown. Maharil spent some time with his father-in-law and teacher, before leaving with his wife to Austria to pursue his scholarly ambitions. This presumed course of events coincides with the predominant Ashkenazi model of young married students who resided with their parents-in-law and were supported by them during the first years of marriage life.

Maharil’s years of study were characterised by high mobility and it was probably against this background that his first marriage experienced a crisis which would end in divorce. We know that in Vienna he left his wife pregnant to travel for his studies, apparently to Cologne. It seems that his wife resisted this move and

490 Moelin, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §1.
491 Spitzer, Sefer Maharil, 102-103.
492 See for example Güdemann, Geschichte des Erziehungswesens der Juden in Deutschland, 58ff.
493 Ibid., 18; Schütz, “Mainz”, 799.
494 Spitzer, Sefer Maharil, 604: §617; Schütz, “Mainz”, 799.
495 Greenwald, Maharil and his Time, 14; Spitzer, Sefer Maharil, 604: §617; Schütz, “Mainz”, 821, note 381. This sketch of the course of events suggested by the Germania Judaica 3 contradicts another remark there about a visit that Moshe Neumark paid Maharil in Wiener Neustadt, allegedly due to the absence of his son-in-law from his home while his wife carried their child. See ibid., 822, note 390. Yet Wiener Neustadt was not far from Vienna and it seems unreasonable to assume this was the case. It would be more plausible to assume that Maharil left his wife in Vienna, leaving for a distant place like
may have asked for divorce against this background. \textsuperscript{496} From one of his \textit{responsa}, we learn how vigorously Maharil defended scholars’ right to pursue their love of study and to wander from one place to another in search of teachers – even against the will of their wives. \textsuperscript{497} Furthermore, from a story told by Maharil himself and cited by his student Salman of St. Goar, the compiler of \textit{Sefer Maharil}, we learn that after he had left his wife pregnant in Vienna, upon his return after nine months he found out that the baby was born dead. \textsuperscript{498} It would not be far fetched to assume that Maharil’s wife felt bitterness about his long absence and may have even seen him responsible for this loss.

Maharil settled down in Mainz around 1395 after accepting the office of the community rabbi – a position formerly held by his father. He remarried, once again, to a daughter of a scholar who was associated with his father. His second wife Gimchen was the widowed daughter of R. Abraham of Erfurt, who was a rabbi in Mainz and a wealthy moneylender. \textsuperscript{499} A few decades later, other scholarly circles in German regions would consider marriage with a wealthy widow the ideal choice for scholars for two main reasons: efficient housekeeping and safe income. \textsuperscript{500} Yet Maharil chose to refrain from the latter and it is unknown how his housekeeping functioned, but he did live separately from his wife and children. In the \textit{Book of Maharil}, Salman of St. Goar recounts, not without pride, how his great master \textit{had lived alone with his yeshiva students in a house next to his wife’s house where she lived with her children. And he did not benefit from her assets during her lifetime and}

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Cologne. Otherwise, this would suggest that even under conditions of geographic closeness, Maharil saw no need to visit his pregnant wife. If this is true, it only reinforces the impression of a scholar who showed low interest in family life.

\textsuperscript{496} “Mainz”, 821, note 381.
\textsuperscript{497} Moelin, \textit{Shut ha-Hadashot}, §187; Algazi, “Habitus, familia und forma vitae”, 212.
\textsuperscript{498} Spitzer, \textit{Sefer Maharil}, 604.
\textsuperscript{499} Schütz, “Mainz”, 797.
\textsuperscript{500} Algazi, “Scholars in Households”, 20ff; “For This Boy I Prayed”, 30-32.
did not eat with her. Only the magnates of the land provided for the needs of his students, whereas he provided most of his own needs through his fees as a matchmaker.\textsuperscript{501}

This account stresses a rule, at least in scholarly households, for male scholars to engage themselves with holy studies, while their wives were supposed to support them economically. The general picture appears to be more ambivalent nonetheless. In reality, Ashkenazi scholars often engaged in moneylending (or other activities) to support themselves and their families, but there were, as also implied by the account of Maharil’s student, scholarly circles that nurtured a different model. In any case, the general impression is that Maharil’s \textit{forma vitae} was an exception to the rule, but on the other hand it demonstrates the inherent tension between Ashkenazi family structures and the scholarly way of life.

Maharil had two sons and two daughters: Moshe Moelin, Shime'on Segal, Bonlin, and another daughter of an unknown name. Moshe Moelin was the elder son of Maharil and his first wife. While his sacred name ‘Moshe’ could refer to both his paternal and his maternal grandfather, his by-name ‘Moelin’ – transmitted through the patriline, marked him as his father’s son. If his name was supposed to signify future social hopes, it certainly failed to gain its purpose, for Moshe Moelin the younger never became a significant scholar nor did he take up his father’s role. In the mid 1430s we find him in Ulm acting as a scribe and slaughterer. He was actually a rather mediocre slaughterer who was about to be deposed by the community rabbi in Ulm. It was one of his relatives and his father’s most famous student, R. Ya‘aqov Weil, who interfered on Moshe Moelin’s behalf.\textsuperscript{502}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[501] Spitzer, \textit{Sefer Maharil}, 402.
\item[502] Weil, \textit{She’elot u-Teshuvot}, §97.
\end{footnotes}
Maharil’s son from second marriage, Shime’on Segal, was named after his living paternal uncle who was a learned man, though not a rabbi. Apparently, Shime’on studied with his father in Mainz and at some point he also studied in Regensburg.\footnote{Yuval, Scholars, 216, 217, 224ff.} Although spending many years close to his father in his hometown (at least until 1425), Shime’on never became Maharil’s successor. Moreover, we encounter bitterness on his part in his quarrel with Maharil’s closest student and scribe, Salman of St. Goar, over his father’s legacy.\footnote{Ibid., 224-226.}

The practice of naming children after siblings is also evident in case of Maharil’s daughter Bonlin, who shared her name with her paternal aunt. This pattern is observed among Maharil’s siblings as well. One of his sisters (it is unclear which
one) named her son ‘Salman’, like her elder brother, R. Salman Yequtiel.\textsuperscript{505} The latter had a son called R. Ya’aqov Gelnhausen ha-Levi who shared his name with his living paternal uncle, R. Ya’aqov Moelin, and with his (probably deceased) paternal granduncle, R. Ya’aqov Levi Gelnhausen.

After Maharil, his nephew was the most important scholar in the family in the early fifteenth century. At some point, apparently after completing his studies, Ya’aqov Gelnhausen lived next to his uncle in Mainz, which suggests close contacts between the two.\textsuperscript{506} Later, like many of his kin, he would settle down in Augsburg where he acted as the community rabbi and stood at the head of the local yeshiva from 1412 until his death in 1428. As the hochmeister of Augsburg, R. Ya’aqov Gelnhausen’s authority exceeded religious matters while acting as a community leader and having close contacts to the Christian authorities.\textsuperscript{507}

Maharil corresponded with his nephew, as he did with his brothers, too.\textsuperscript{508} His responsa addressed to his nephew show that Maharil appreciated and respected him very much. One time he addresses him as “The chiefest of the herdmen, perfect in knowledge, a pleasant man; my excellent, dear brother’s son”.\textsuperscript{509} On another occasion, Maharil called him “my beloved one, my friend, my brother’s son”.\textsuperscript{510} Socially and intellectually, there was a greater continuity between Maharil and his nephew than with his own sons. In fact, it is not at all clear whether Maharil even wished to train his sons as potential intellectual heirs; his closest student was neither of them, and it is not clear if and how long they studied with their father. It is plausible to assume that his son Shime’on studied in his school. Otherwise, how could

\textsuperscript{505} Moelin, Shut ha-Hadashot, §109.
\textsuperscript{506} See She’elot u-Teshuvot, §94. Maharil calls his nephew ‘Mahari’ (‘Our Teacher Rabbi Ya’aqov’), thus suggesting that Ya’aqov Gelnhausen was already a teacher himself.
\textsuperscript{507} Yuval, Scholars, 209-212.
\textsuperscript{508} See for example Moelin, She’elot u-Teshuvot, §1, 17, 37, 48, 57.
\textsuperscript{509} Ibid., §37.
\textsuperscript{510} Ibid., § 52.
he have quarrelled with Salman of St. Goar over the correct interpretation of Maharil’s customs? We also hear that in Regensburg, he cited a prayer on Shabbat evening taught to him by his father.¹⁵¹ But how can we determine what was passed down from father to son and what from master to student? In any case, the competitive relationship between Shime’on and Salman testifies to the bitterness of a son who was obviously not appreciated enough by his father. It was Salman of St. Goar whom Maharil trusted with the compilation of his responses – a project that was never completed due to Maharil’s death. After he died, Maharil’s sons divided his writings among them and apparently impeded Salman’s efforts to collect all his writings for the benefit of a compilation of Maharil’s halakhic views and customs.¹⁵² Perhaps the silence of the sources on Maharil’s son being his student suggests that Shime’on was not an outstanding scholar, a worthy heir.

Generally, it seems that Maharil’s attachment to his family of origin was quite strong, as his correspondence with his brothers and the close contacts among his siblings also demonstrate.¹⁵³ In his book, Maharil mentions more than once how his sisters practised certain customs and cites his brother and (paternal) uncle on different halakhic matters.¹⁵⁴ Sometimes we even recognise geographic proximity between siblings or between uncle and nephew, as in case of Maharil and Ya‘aqov Gelnhausen. Similarly, Bonlin and her brother Gumprecht Mordekhay lived with their families in Bad Kreuznach, close to each other.¹⁵⁵ Finally, the pattern of bestowing a name of a brother or sister among Maharil’s siblings may well indicate the importance of horizontal, collateral kin in the structure of social networks.

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¹⁵¹ Greenwald, Maharil and his Time, 16.
¹⁵² Yuval, Scholars, 224-225.
¹⁵³ See Moelin, She’elot u-Teshuvot, § 57, 58 where customs practiced by Maharil's sisters are mentioned. See also the mentioning of a Berit ceremony performed by Maharil and his brother Gumprecht, who was a circumciser: Spitzer, Sefer Maharil, Hilchot Milah, § 20.
¹⁵⁴ Sefer Maharil, 402-403.
¹⁵⁵ Heyen, “Kreuznach, Bad”, 688 [683].
Re-defining kin relationships in medieval Ashkenaz

Shifts in naming practices usually reflect social changes. In late medieval Ashkenazi families, this can be observed on two levels. First, there seems to be a correlation between women’s participation in the transmission of names and their economic significance, on the one hand and between their participation in the devolution of family goods, on the other. Second, the practice of name sharing between living collateral kin, becoming rather common in the later period, indicates a growing emphasis on collateral patterned relationships. The evidence shows that siblings often lived in close proximity to one another or even shared the same household, and furthermore, that intensive economic cooperation was common among collateral kin – which can be explained to a great extent by inheritance patterns. Generally, shifts in naming practices in Ashkenazi communities imply an extension of the limits of practised kin relationships, while investing new actors with a vital role in shaping family interactions and representations.
5. Designating Jews in medieval sources

The examination of practices for designating persons in the tax lists from Nuremberg, in the previous chapter, has shown how useful it might be to consider not just names but other onomastic elements as well, which would enrich historical discussions in terms of social relationships and kinship patterns. From another perspective, inquiring a whole range of onomastic components is also crucial for reconstructing how certain social groups in late medieval towns were categorised by community and civic authorities;\textsuperscript{516} in other words, for tracing changes in personal-designation models. Since names are but one option to identify persons, the focus on given names would limit our perspective of social identity produced through diverse signifying practices. Unlike isolated names, compound designations – often offering a broader social context – enable us, in many cases, to locate persons within social networks such as kin groups. Distinct types of sources apply, of course, different models for personal designations.\textsuperscript{517} Hence necrologies, for example, would usually incline to follow certain social norms such as using patronymics, whereas tax lists would generally tend to reflect social reality, designating individuals through actual social relationships.

Through the examination of models for designating Jews in various sources, both Jewish and Christian, I wish to delineate changes in practices of identification

\textsuperscript{516} Cf. Melechen, “Calling Names: The Identification of Jews in Christian Documents From Medieval Toledo”, 32-34. Melechen has shown for medieval Toledan society that from the twelfth century onward designation or identification practices were used to construct symbolic differentiation between Jews and Christians.

\textsuperscript{517} Recent studies dealing with designation models outline mostly the formal and technical aspects of analysing such onomastic systems. See for example Falkner, “Zum Namengebrauch in administrativen Quellen Kärntens und Friauls”; Ingo H. Kropac, “Personenbezeichnungen in städtischen Quellen des Spätmittelalters”, ibid., 271-308; Heidrun Zettelbauer, “Der Namengebrauch in den Nekrologien und Urkunden Kärntens und Friauls”, ibid., 409-421. Earlier considerations of Ashkenazi onomastic models are available for medieval Cologne in a study by Cuno, “Namen Kölner Juden”. Although the extent of his article is limited and the analysis is far from comprehensive, Cuno’s insightful essay covers a broad spectrum of onomastic models, while considering the differences between the various source materials with which he was working.
used by community and town administrative (or other) structures to document information on Jewish citizens and residents, mainly throughout the period between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Also, I shall explore how distinct designation models applied in various constellations were, both in terms of religious groups and in terms of gender. For instance, can one observe distinctive patterns of identifying Jews in Jewish sources, on the one hand and in Christian sources, on the other? Also, looking at the materials through a gender lens, are there any noteworthy differences between Jewish and Christian practices? The chapter opens with the introduction of the traditional Jewish model for designating persons. This shall serve as a point of reference, while examining later designation models used by Jews. I shall, then, move to analyse designation models in specific sources; for that purpose, I will examine Jewish sources, focusing on the name lists from the Memorbuch and the Judenschreinbuch from Cologne. I will also survey practices for designating Jews in Christian sources from late medieval Nuremberg, which offer a comparative look into how Jews and Christian were identified in urban administrative sources.

5.1. The traditional Jewish model

Biblical and Talmudic traditions set filiation – specifically the relation of children to their father – at the heart of family and social identities. In Jewish context therefore it is conventional to designate males and females alike through a given name and patronymic. To deal with ambivalent cases, as when two persons living in the same

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518 A great difficulty with some older studies on Jewish names is the lack of a systematic comparison between Hebrew and non-Hebrew sources and therefore it is unclear whether some of the names documented in the Latin sources were in fact used by Jews as given names or were rather a construction of Christian scribes. An example for this approach is the study by Seror, Le Noms de Juifs de France au Moyen Âge. For instance, ‘Narbona’ appears as a female name, which according to Seror was derived from the place name ‘Narbonne’. Yet it is highly probable that this was not a name, but a designation. See ibid., 200.

locality share the same name, the *halakha* (Jewish law) instructs to add specific components such as the place of origin, the name of the paternal grandfather and so forth, in legal documents, particularly in divorce papers, until an ultimate identification can be reached.\(^{520}\) Medieval sources confirm that such norms were widely practised in Jewish communities. The conventional Jewish model was used in other contexts than strictly legal circumstances; it is apparent in memorial lists as well as in sepulchral inscriptions. In the latter case, one observes modifying practices of designation in Ashkenazi communities in course of the sixteenth century.

In late medieval Frankfurt, Jewish tombstones belonging to females, for instance, usually mentioned the name of the deceased and the name of her father.\(^{521}\) One example is the gravestone commemorating *Mistress Bona, daughter of R. Joseph*.\(^{522}\) By comparison, during the sixteenth century, Ashkenazi tombstones increasingly mentioned vernacular appellations, family names, and house names.\(^{523}\) By the end of that century, Hebrew designations on tombstones belonging to Jewish women from Frankfurt were often based on German models – e.g. *Gudrud zum schwarzen Schild* (A. 1598); this sort of designations appear on the stone head, whereas in the main inscription the woman was designated according to the traditional Jewish model: *Mistress Gudrud, daughter of R. Shelomo Shalit*.\(^{524}\) Similar observations can be made in case of males too. This change, though, will not take place until about the mid-sixteenth century, whereas personal designations on medieval Jewish tombstones kept mostly in line with older conventions.


\(^{521}\) Sepulchral inscriptions included often descriptive clauses or praise, but these are not in focus here.

\(^{522}\) Horovitz, *Sefer Avnei Zikaron*, no. 33. (in Hebrew). Note that ‘R.’ (in the Hebrew ר) does not signify a Rabbi but simply means Mr (‘Herr’) as the Hebrew ז. On Hebrew abbreviations and signifiers used in Jewish memorial culture in the medieval context, see Salfeld, *Das Martyrologium*, xxiv-xxv.

\(^{523}\) For materials corroborating with these observations, see Horovitz, *Sefer Avnei Zikaron*.

\(^{524}\) Ibid., no. 356.
5.2. The Nuremberg Memorbuch

One of the unique products of medieval German Jewish culture, a precious source for historians of the Middle Ages, is known as the Nürnberg Memorbuch – an instructive testimony of Ashkenazi memorial practices, which were apparently shaped by the traumatic events for Jews during the First Crusade. 525 To recall, the Memorbuch comprises two necrologies from Nuremberg covering the period between the late thirteenth and the late fourteenth centuries and a martyrology. The martyrology, which is the main part of the compilation, contains name lists from various Jewish German communities, starting in 1096 and ending in 1349. With the reconstruction of the synagogue in Nuremberg in 1296, Yitshaq of Meinigen, the compiler of the Memorbuch, placed it in the new prayer house. After his violent death during the Rintfleisch persecutions in 1298, another scribe continued Yitshaq’s work. The earliest surviving manuscript is from the fifteenth century; a photostat copy of it is available at the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in The Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. 526

Starting in the early twelfth century, a set of liturgical practices crystallised around the persecutions of 1096 in German and in Northern French communities. Those innovations emphasised the central role assumed by the commemoration of those who died as martyrs throughout the medieval period in shaping Ashkenazi identities. 527 The book or parts of it were read aloud in the synagogue, including the

526 The National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, F 73457, PH 2828.
names of the dead, in the Shabbat before Shavu‘ot (Wochenfest) and in that prior to Tishe’a be-’Av (on which Jews commemorate the destruction of the Temples).\(^{528}\)

Research on the Memorbuch of Nuremberg has not yet established how this compilation emerged, how the information encoded within the Memorbuch – especially in regard to individual persons and families, was produced and processed. Israel Yuval has suggested that the name lists appearing in the martyrology were created on the basis of tax lists kept by Jewish communities, which could also account for their structure, as the lists are divided according to family units (Yuval, on the other hand, uses the term batey ’av, ‘households’).\(^{529}\) Yuval’s hypothesis is significant for evaluating practices for designating persons in Jewish sources, as I will explain in what follows.

The analysis of the lists (in chapter III) has shown a significant increase in vernacular names from the thirteenth century onward. Specifically in case of males, the rather slow increase in such names is of special interest, for it indicates a choice or selection when signifying a person; in many of those cases, the use of vernacular names to designate males meant the exclusion of their Hebrew names. In other words, in the lists from the later period, more males than before were commemorated with their vernacular names.\(^{530}\) Furthermore, from the late thirteenth century we encounter the usage of German by-names or nicknames whithin the memorial lists. On the 1298 list from Nuremberg appears a man called Barukh alias Pfefferkorn. On the same list, we encounter a woman designated as Hanlin of Dorfen; and another one

\(^{528}\) Spitzer, Sefer Maharil, Hilchot Shavuot, §1; Hilchot Shiv'a Asar b'Tamuz ve-Tish'a b'Av, §3, 9. (in Hebrew)

\(^{529}\) Yuval, Two Nations in Your Womb, 136-138.

\(^{530}\) The double-name model was widespread among Ashkenazi Jews by the thirteenth century. This model was already in use during the twelfth century, as the materials from the Judenschreinbuch of Cologne indicate, in contrast to what some scholars maintained. Klaus Cuno, for instance, argued that Jews usually carried only one personal name. See Cuno, “Namen Kölner Juden”, 279.
listed as *Gutlin called Wackelbain* וַאֲקֶלִיָּן הַמַּכְנֵה.

If, like Yuval suggests, the memorial lists relied on Jewish documentation (together with oral transmission of information), it would reinforce the impression that we are dealing with real changes in Jewish models for designating persons. This fits well the increasing use of vernacular names in Jewish daily context, discussed in previous chapters. Late medieval *responsa* literature supports this thesis too, as men were often referred to by their vernacular names and by-names, like toponyms, in this context. Still, wouldn’t we expect males to be commemorated according to Jewish tradition with their sacred names?

A comparative look into the necrologies from Nuremberg dated to the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries reveals different patterns from those traced in the *Memorbuch*. In the necrologies, unlike in the later memorial lists, all men appear with their sacred names and usually with patronymics, too. By-names are very rare, usually appearing when the father’s name is missing. Female designations, similarly, include a given name and mostly either a patronymic or the name of the husband, and at times both. A clear distinction between male and female designations is that, while biblical male names appear in their Hebrew form, biblical female names were often written in the vernacular form. Thus, names like *Rehlin, Sarlin, Mikhlin, Porlin*, and *Ḥann(d)lin* occur several times. At this stage, it is difficult to account for the difference between designation practices traced in the necrologies and those evident from the *Memorbuch*. This cannot be explained, for instance, by variable local practices, for the findings apply first and foremost to Nuremberg itself, whose community produced a martyrology and necrologies.

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531 Gutlin appears as *Wakelbain* on the list of new Jewish citizens admitted in Nuremberg at the beginning of the fourteenth century. See Stern, *Nürnberg im Mittelalter*, 17 [123].

532 Ibid., 95-171, 190-204.
5.3. The Judenschreinbuch from Cologne: The role of kin relations in personal designations

The Jewish community of Cologne provides the earliest, rich documentation of Ashkenazi communities in the medieval period. Among the diverse sources on Jews living in the realm of the diocese, the Judenschreinbuch of St. Lauercence parish provides an especially useful source material for studying practices for designating persons. The codex contains various sorts of Latin records, dealing with Jewish property such as real-estate transactions and distribution of estate, dated between ca. 1235 and 1347. Starting from the 1360s, Hebrew notes recording relevant Jewish court decisions were added to the Latin entries. Particularly in matters of inheritance and marital property, Jewish law differed from legal Christian norms and therefore it is in such cases that Jewish court acts were usually attached next to the related Latin entry in the book. This structure of the codex enables thus to compare Jewish and Christian designation practices, containing double references to the same persons – once in Latin and once in Hebrew.

Let us take for example a double designation from the 1270s. A Jewish woman named Gutheil, who bought a house from a Jewish couple in the city, was mentioned in both the Latin and the Hebrew sources. While in the Latin she was designated as *Guīt heil Iudee relicte Ysaac de porta Iudei de Thine*, in the Hebrew she appears as *Mistress Gutheil, daughter of the learned R. David, widow of the learned R. Yitsḥaq bar 'Ef ra yim may God save him for eternity* (חַבְתַּ גֻּטוֹהֵיִל מַרְת 'ר 'דוֹד אָלָמָנָה)

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534 The analysis is based on the nineteenth-century edition: Hoeniger, *Das Judenschreinsbuch*. 

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Evidently, the Christian scribe designated Gutheil as a wife, with reference only to her late husband; the Hebrew counterpart, on the other hand, marked her first as a daughter and only then as a wife. Such a difference could be explained by Jewish legal norms, mentioned earlier, to signify persons in relation to the father. Another possible explanation lies within the different social context in which the records emerged. Patronymic could function as more than a component in a conventional model, it could encode inner-Jewish relations such as family origins and social ties, which would certainly be important for the involved parties and the community members. This sort of information might have been, though, irrelevant for Christian scribes. Furthermore, if the Christian notes were based on oral interactions (unlike the Hebrew notes, which were written and signed officially), the designations would tend to be less complicated and more pragmatic. In order to determine, whether this distinction is merely contingent or a recurring pattern, it is necessary to examine more cases.

The following analysis is based on 189 double designations, out of which 68 refer to women and 121 to men. Both the individual components appearing (names, family ties, etc.) and their combination – the code of personal identification (i.e. the designation), are examined. The various onomastic elements regarded are encoded as follows: Name (N), family ties (F), Iudeus/a (I), special religious status like Cohen or Levi (T), additional signifiers such as ‘the younger’, ‘the elder’, etc. (A), and by-names or other second names (B). Therefore NF, for instance, represents a designation through a given name and family ties – e.g. Mistress Hanna daughter of R. Tsadoq ha-Levi. Similarly, the combination ‘NBI’ means that a person was designated through a given name, a by-name, and the signifier Iudeus/us as in case of

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535 Ibid., §131-133.
Simon Judeo de Vrankenfort. The charts appearing below depict designations from both the Latin and the Hebrew sources, while male and female designations are discussed separately.

5.3.1. Designating men

![Charts showing designations of men in the Judenschreinbuch](image)

**Figure 13: Designations of men in the Judenschreinbuch**

In all 121 double designations of males analysed, men appear with a given name, both in the Latin and the Hebrew entries. One of the most notable practices, distinguishing between the Hebrew and the Latin sources, involves the usage and function of family ties in designating men. In 85% of the Hebrew designations (103) family ties are mentioned compared to only 50% (52) of the Latin ones. In most cases, men were designated in relation to the father: 88 cases in Hebrew notes and 25 in the Latin records. Other kin such as mothers, brothers, and children appear as well. As the sources often deal with family property, mainly with inheritance, it is not surprising that first-grade (blood) relatives mostly come to view. By comparison, on the tax lists
from Nuremberg (14th-15th c.), those were rather parents-in-law who played a significant role in marking persons (see the next section).

Another interesting observation, even if statistically negligible, is the designation of men through their wives. There are 3 such cases in the Hebrew sources and 6 in the Latin. Yet, while in the Latin sources men were identified only in relation to the wife, in the Hebrew, men were designated through the wife and the father.

Finally, the use of family ties decreases in the Latin parts, especially in the later documents where many men were designated with by-names or family names. This could mean that kin relations mentioned in the Latin records functioned as second names, which were much more prevalent among Christians. However, this is not to say that family ties should be necessarily treated as formal units substituting second names. The context in which the different sources emerged is crucial for understanding how designations were produced and used (this is clearly evident in case of tax lists, which I will later discuss).

5.3.2. Designating women

The 68 double-designations of women at hand show unequivocally the significance of kin relations in signifying Jewish women in the Judenschreinbuch. Out of 67 Latin designations referring to family ties, in 79% of the cases the husband was mentioned compared to only 7% that refer to the father. The Hebrew sources, on the other hand, link women to the husband in 69% of the cases and in 36% to the father (12% of the designations include a double reference to both the husband and the father). This is quite a different picture from the patterns traced in the Latin sources. Although women’s role as wives is still prevalent, the Hebrew sources represent their role as daughters to a significant extent. We can all too easily take both options – wife and
daughter – as complementary within a patriarchal system. Yet in terms of kinship structures, they actually represent two competing options: linking women to their marital families or to their families of origin – often through the fathers.

Figure 14: Designation of women in the Judenschreinbuch

It seems that this significant difference in practices for designating (Jewish) women within the two communities faded, though, in the later stages documented by the Judenschreinbuch. In order to examine whether such a change can also be observed within the corpus of Hebrew sources itself, I expanded the sample to include 106 female designations in Hebrew. The analysis reveals that in 101 cases (95%), women were designated with family ties: 74 were linked to the husband and 36 to the father. Half those women were mentioned before the year 1300, which makes it convenient to compare patterns according to time periods. Here, the findings vary significantly from the general observations. Prior to 1300, 69% of the designations appearing refer to the father and 43% to the husband (there are cases of a double

\[536\] Cf. Morsel, “Personal Naming and Representations”.

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reference). After 1300, one observes a growing convergence between Hebrew and Latin designation-models, with considerably more women identified as wives rather than as daughters. In 75% of the designations women were designated in relation to the husband and in 21% in relation to the father (including a few double references).

In general, women are more visible in the Latin sources; there are cases in which a Latin source mentions a woman, whereas the Hebrew counterpart does not.537 One Latin note, for instance, tells of a woman named Ḥanna and her sons who sold part of their house to Suzekindo et uxor eius Iutte. The Hebrew note, referring to these events, mentions R. Yequiti’el son of R. Moshe alias R. Susskind of Neuss but not his wife.538 In a similar case, the Latin source refers to a woman named Rebecca who sold her house to Manno Iudeo et Pure uxori sue; once again, the Hebrew record mentions only the husband: R. Menahem son of R. Mordekhay.539 And there are more cases following the same pattern. It is difficult to conclude which factors played a significant role in this context. Does the distinction between Jewish and Christian practices for signifying women result from distinct religious practices and legal norms? Or should we perhaps attempt to understand the findings, not necessarily in terms of religion but rather in terms of language and communication repertoires?

The examples above indicate that not only women’s names “disappeared” in the transition from one context to the other; while male Hebrew names appear in the Jewish records, they often disappear in the Christian notes, the latter recording Jewish men with their vernacular names. Furthermore, the father’s name appearing in the Hebrew leaves no trace in the Latin. It is likely that the Latin reflects practices closer

537 On the issue of the visibility of Ashkenazi women in late medieval sources, see Keil, “ Unsichtbare Frauen ”.
538 Hoeniger, Das Judenschreinsbuch, §163.
539 Ibid., §165-166.
to everyday communication, to the vernacular language, whereas the Hebrew – practised mainly in ritual and in legal context – was more formal.

Hebrew practices, especially in case of males (see fig. 13 above), employed a more complex technique for signifying persons, in the sense that designations encoded more information on social position and family descent. This, however, should not be simply dismissed as “formalities”, for such information was certainly relevant to the legal process in which the sources emerged – that is, disputes on family property and inheritance. On the other hand, to register property or to document property rights and transactions, Jews were probably not asked for the same kind of personal details. Christian officials recording Jewish property probably sought to identify the involved parties and that identification appears to be pragmatic rather than “stylised”. Nevertheless, in understanding the difference in Jewish and Christian designation-models in terms of communication, I do not wish to suggest that there was no more to style and scribal practices. Perhaps the Latin sources reflect more than everyday communication; they might represent married women’s real legal status more faithfully than their Hebrew counterpart. 540

5.4. The Bürgerbücher from Nuremberg

The two oldest lists of new citizens from Nuremberg – unlike later lists – record Christians and Jews side by side, rather than in separate lists. The first list (1302-1315) and the second one (1314-1331) exist in the original and were edited with other lists of admission (Bürgeraufnahme) from the city. 541 The lists thus offer a comparative look into semiotic systems applied by Christian scribes to signify and identify persons from both groups in the same context. This setting is optimal for

540 Cf. Keil, “Jüdinnen als Kategorie?”.
541 See Nürnberg, Die Nürnberger Bürgerbücher, 28*ff.
examining if and how administrative practices produced distinct identifications for persons from various religious milieus.

Two additional lists that will be used here did not survive in the original; we have a nineteenth-century edition by Moritz Stern, which relied on a transcription of the lost original made by Andreas Würfel in the mid-eighteenth century.542 One list covers the years 1321-1359 (this list does not overlap with the others), while the second one documents a large group of Jews admitted in Nuremberg on September 10th 1338. Both lists include only Jewish citizens, although the first list (1321-1359) is apparently an excerpt from a larger list, which originally recorded Jewish and Christian citizens together.543

Although persons (those were mostly men) from the two groups were documented together on the earlier lists, it is nevertheless possible to distinguish Jews from Christians, at least in most cases. Occasionally, the signifier Iudeus facilitates the distinction, but mostly these are the unique names typical to Jews, which enable us to identify them rather easily. On the first list beginning in 1302, a man called Joseph de Constancia sororius Selkmanni appears twenty years later.544 Joseph was listed as a new citizen, his witnesses being a certain Albreht Snoenhour and a man called Selkman – evidently, his brother-in-law. Neither Joseph nor Selkman were marked on the list as Jews, yet their distinctive names reveal their religious affiliation. Neither the biblical name Joseph nor the German given name Seligman, common among Ashkenazi Jews, was usual among their Christian neighbours.545 Further, the name of the other witness, Albreht Snoenhour, suggests that the man was most likely

542 Andreas Würfel, Historische Nachrichten von der Juden-Gemeinde welche ehehin in der Reichsstadt Nürnberg angericht gewesen aber 1499 ausgeschaffet worden (Nürnberg: Monath, 1755), 40-47. The lists were edited in the nineteenth century and published in Stern, Nürnberg im Mittelalter, 1-19.
543 Nürnberg, Die Nürnberger Bürgerbücher, 41*.
544 Ibid., 40.
545 Christians occasionally carried the name Selkman as a second name. See for instance ibid., 18.
a Christian, for the given name Albrecht rarely appears among Jews. Further evidence though would be needed to establish the man’s Christian identity with certainty, since Jews occasionally carried names typical for Christians.

5.4.1. Signifying Jewish and Christian Citizens

In the following, designation models used for Jews and for Christians will be compared based on 202 designations of Jews (except 3, all refer to men) appearing in the admission lists, which survived in the original, and on a sample of 199 designations of Christians (2 of them are women). The latter sample is chronologically overlapping with the documentation of Jewish citizens in Nuremberg. Witnesses are also included, which means that some persons appear more than once on the lists. The onomastic components used in designating Jews and Christians are represented in the diagram below (fig. 15).

Two findings stand out immediately: the rate of family ties mentioned, which is considerably higher in case of Jews, and the extensive use of second names among Christians. As in case of the Judenschreinbuch from Cologne, there seems to be a strong correlation between the lower rate of by-names and the significantly higher rate of kin relations in designating Jews, which implies that family ties filled an equivalent function within such systems of personal identification. After all, both family names (but not necessarily by-names) and kin relations located persons in a specific family context, crucial for the city authorities. Such assumptions, though, must be examined against the findings on designation practices – the patterns of personal designations. It is through the relations between the individual components – what appears with what – that the function of each of them in the identification system is produced.
Most of the designations analysed here are compound (fig. 16). Yet 28% of the listed Jews compared to 13% of the Christians were designated only through a name. The two most common models for signifying Jews are a composition of name + second name; name + family ties. Christians, on the other hand, were usually signified through name + second name. Such findings support my hypothesis that in the identification of Jews, kin relations can be seen as functionally equivalent to second names. This still does not explain the noticeable practice to designate Jews by name only, which is more than twice as common as in case of Christians.

546 These lists contain many interesting by-names of Jews worth paying attention to. On the list 54 second names appear, out of which at least 30 can be identified as occupation/office: lehrmeister, medicus Iudaorum, magister/meister, iudex/deyhen, hebamme, mohel, der weinschenk, carnifex/fleischmann, pekke, i.e. baecker, schönfärwer, der pader, i.e. bader, stainhauer, faber, and finally, die patmayt (Bademagd, a female occupation which rarely appears in the records, possibly a woman serving in the Jewish ritual bad miqve, which we know to have operated in Nuremberg from the late thirteenth century). We also come across by-names referring to physical traits, like beauty and size: parvus/klein, der lange, pulcher/schön, or to some sort of deformations such as Tilbain, Wakelbain (a woman) and Streckbain. An unusual name appearing is Wazzer, which may refer to a wassertraeger.
It is clear by now that the frequent use of kin relations, when singnifying Jews in the admission lists, distinguishes designation practices applied to each group. But what of the specific family ties that come to view in each case? Which specific kin relations played a role in this setting? Looking at designations that refer to Jewish men, the spectrum of familial relations is quite broad: father 16 times, mother 14 (these occurrences relate to no more than three families), father-in-law 16, brother 6, wife 1, grandfather 1, son 1. Obviously, parents and fathers-in-law played a visible role in social relationships relevant for men admitted as citizens. The designations of Christians reveal a much more limited scope of relatives, including 6 references to fathers, 4 to brothers, 3 to fathers-in-law, and 1 to a late husband, in case of the only woman included in the sample. One striking difference between Jewish and Christian male designations is the visibility of female relatives; this phenomenon is apparent among Jews, while completely absent among the Christians listed in the sample.547

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547 Cf. Rolker, “Namensführung und weibliche Identität”.
The findings based on another admission list from Nuremberg support this observation.

As opposed to earlier admission lists, the one from 1321-1359 records Jews only. This list comprises 328 designations of new citizens and of some witnesses, out of which 291 refer to men and 37 to women. In all cases but four, persons were listed with their given names. The exceptions are women designated through their husbands’ names: Seklin die hebamm, relicta Tagar, relicta Josel, and relicta magistri Lesir. In 113 cases (34%) family ties appear, in 85 (26%) a toponym and in 55 (17%), other second names were used. Curiously, the identifier Jude/in does not appear on this list at all although, as mentioned earlier, these entries appear to have been originally part of a larger list that documented the admission of both Jewish and Christian citizens.

As in the early lists, a considerable share of the total designations (26%) is simple, containing only a name. It is likely that the relatively small size of the Jewish community affected this procedure. Perhaps the usage of names alone to designate Jews was due to the unique names of some of them, but this would hardly be an explanation. The most common designation models, though, were name + by name and name + family ties. One-third of the male designations (97) mention relatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>NF</th>
<th>NB</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>FB</th>
<th>NFB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Designations of Jewish citizens 1321-1359

The designations display, once again, a variety of family ties, including 45 references to fathers, 24 to fathers-in-law, 14 to mothers, 8 to brothers, 4 to mothers-in-law, 2 to brothers-in-law, and 1 to a grandmother. Despite the marked tendency to
mention male kin, the considerable presence of female relatives clearly distinguished designations of Jews from those of Christians. It is notable that all female kin, appearing in the lists, signify vertical relations; sisters, sisters-in-law or even aunts do not appear at all. In fact, uncles and cousins are also absent.

The evidence regarding women is of a much smaller scale, but the usage of kin relations to signify persons is common in this case as well. Out of 37 women appearing on the list, 15 were designated through family ties, mostly in relation to male kin: husband 6 times, father 3, brother 3, brother-in-law 1, son 1, father-in-law 1, and mother 1. Generally, we see that matrilineal relations are much more visible in male designations than in their female counterparts.

5.5. Designating persons through kin relations in the Judenzinsbücher

Other valuable sources, produced by the relatively well-documented administration of the city of Nuremberg in the late Middle Ages, are the Judenzinsbücher (henceforth ZB), which record dues paid by Jews to the city – especially annual tax and admission fees. The first book covers the years 1381-1433 and the second continues from 1434 until 1498. This sort of documentation is particularly suitable for exploring how practices for designating persons relate to the position of persons within families and households. Since the ZB often records the same persons over a long period of time, it enables to observe social dynamics (migration, marriage, widowhood, etc.), as it is reflected in practices for identifying persons. In the following, I will first survey trends in designating men and women, looking also at the specific kin relations mentioned in each case. In the last section, I shall explore how social dynamics are

548 For recent survey of this source type, which does not, however, refer to the ZB from Nuremberg, see Peter Thomas, “Judenbücher als Quellengattung und die Znaimer Judenbücher: Typologie und Forschungsstand”, in Räume und Wege. Jüdische Geschichte im Alten Reich 1300-1800, ed. Peter Rauscher Rolf Kießling, Stefan Rohrbacher, Barbara Staudiger, Colloquia Augustana, vol. 25 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), 307-334.
reflected in changing designations of household (and family) members over time, focusing on specific case studies.

5.5.1. Gender-based patterns

The findings in previous sections have shown that there is a strong correlation on the “macro level” (Jewish-Christian) between lower rates of second names and higher share of family ties used in designating persons. The evaluation of the ZB uncovers similar patterns on the “micro level” (Jewish milieu) when comparing models for designating Jewish men and women. The following analyses are based on 530 designations from the first ZB and 180 from the second book.

![Figure 17: Onomastic components ZB I (in %)](image)

N= 360 men; 169 women

The share of female designations that include family ties is exceptionally high: 81% of the women were designated through their relatives (fig. 17). In addition, we see, for instance in the first ZB, that only 65% of the women were mentioned by name compared to 99% of the men. Such patterns are closely related to the introduction of a
German practice for designating women through their husbands’ given name feminised (marked through the ending –in), as in Salmanin – i.e. the wife of Salman. This form is particularly dense and rich in terms of personal information. The simple (non-compound) designation Salmanin marks the gender (through the female ending –in), the religious affiliation (the name Salman does not appear among Christians except among clergymen), and the family association (wife or more usually, widow of Salman) of the persona denotata.

The spectrum of kin relations defining women is divided as follows: out of 169 female designations, 77 mention the husband, 27 the father, 15 the mother, 6 a brother, 5 a son-in-law, 4 a son, 2 a brother-in-law, 1 a father-in-law, and 1 mentions a grandmother. Compared to the other sources examined, matrilineal relations display here higher relevance to female designation. Some women (3 appearing all together 5 times) signified through work relations, were associated with their employer or the head of the household, as in case of Bel Jacobs von Bamberg Kelnerin or in case of an unnamed woman, who was ein amme, die sein (Symon Johels aydem) enyklein seugt.550

A similar picture emerges from male designations, which were likewise varied and highlighted female kin. Out of 369 male designations, 55 mention the father, 40 the mother, 37 the father-in-law, 11 the mother-in-law, 7 a brother, 4 a brother-in-law, 3 a son-in-law, 2 a son, 2 the stepfather, 2 the wife, 1 a grandmother, 1 a daughter, and 1 man was designated as a woman’s freunde (a cousin). Also, one man was signified through his employer, designated as a servant (diener).

In the second ZB (1434-1498), all 138 men appear with a given name compared to 88% of the women (37 out of 42). Family ties are extensively used in

550 Ibid., 65.
this case as well: in 90% of the female designations (38 cases) and in 45% cases related to men (63 designations), family ties were used for identifying persons. Focusing on the usage of second names, we see that the proportion changes: 61% of the men were recorded with additional name compared to 24% of the women. The use of toponyms, in particular, can be observed in 43% of the male designations compared to 14% of the female designations.

**Figure 18: Onomastic components ZB II (in %)**

N= 138 men; 42 women

Which social and kin relations played a role in designating Jews in the second ZB? Women were mostly identified through their husbands: in 32 out of 42 (76%) designations, this was the case. In fewer cases, women were marked in relation to other kin: son 2 cases, son-in-law 1, father 1, mother 1, and grandfather 1. Family relations appearing in male designations are more varied: 33 mention the father, 17 the father-in-law, 2 mention both, 3 a grandfather, 3 the mother, 2 the wife, 1 the mother-in-law, and 1 mentions both the mother-in-law and the father. In one case, a
Jew was admitted as citizen in Nuremberg in 1457, identified by the scribe as David Jud, der den Mertein Loffelholcz seiner vancknuss half entledigen. The scribe also remarked that this man was to pay no tax as long as the city council wished it.551

We see that when women appeared in tax books, they were usually identified through their husband, which in many cases relates to the fact that they were widows who became the head of the household after the husband’s death, at least in the economic sense of heading a tax unit. The designations of Jewish men suggest the great significance of female kin, which coincides with what was just said; while some women stood at the head of their households, they often shared it with their sons or with their daughters and sons-in-law. Christian sources are particularly relevant here to women’s growing visibility in late medieval sources, as it relates to their economic role and social status – usually in case of widows or wives coming from distinguished families. Female kin, especially mothers and mothers-in-law, became an important reference point socially, economically and, as we have seen, also administratively. In the world of everyday social life, unlike in legal constructions, female kin became a significant anchor of male identifications.

5.5.2. Who belongs to whom? Designating kin groups

The tax lists record the same persons in family/household context sequentially through several years, thus offering the opportunity to examine multi-designations of the same persons within the same corpus of evidence. Yet here, it is not the personal designation per se which stands in focus, but the relations between designation models and different stages in a person’s life course. In this context, individuals are designated with reference to changing relational positions within families and/or households, suggesting who belongs to whom. In terms of reconstructing designation

551 Ibid., 80.
practices, such ‘fleeting’ designations are enormously valuable, as they acquire a broader view of signifying practices, in which proper names are but one option. At the same time, their reference to positions within family and reliance on kinship offers important insights into the relations between household and kinship structures, on the one hand and dynamic designation patterns, on the other. The preference given in the research to stable, proper names is certainly related to their future dominance in modern times, but also to methodological difficulties. Since such designations are extreme context-dependent, only where sources are denser can we identify a single person designated variably in different contexts. A specific case from the first ZB can illustrate this.

In 1383, a man called *Veyfs von Meintz* was mentioned paying 65 gulden. This sum was supposed to secure also the future admission of his father *Sekel* to the city of Nuremberg.\(^552\) In 1385, the mentioned *Sekel von Meintz*, who later loaned the city 1,900 gulden, is mentioned in the town records. Three years later, *Sekel von Meintz* was listed paying tax of 33 gulden. He is mentioned again in 1391 as *der Sekel Jud*; in 1396 it was remarked on the margin of the page (next to an older designation) that he passed away.\(^553\) Later this year, *Veifs des Sekels sun* reappears along with *Koppelman sein bruder und die alt Segklin ir mutter*.\(^554\) After Sekel’s death, his wife and sons appeared as taxpayers, his widow designated as ‘Seklin’. In later references to members of this family, it is mainly through her that they were designated in these records. Thus in 1398, we come across *Reich der Seklynn enenklein* and in that year *Segklin* appears with *Koppelman ir sun*. In 1400, *Secklin* appears together with *Koppelman ir sun* and *Perman ir sun*.\(^555\) In 1402, *Koppelman filius Seklin* is

\(^{552}\) Ibid., 31-32.  
\(^{553}\) Ibid., 36-37.  
\(^{554}\) Ibid., 37.  
\(^{555}\) Ibid., 37, 42. See also 45, 49, 51, 54.
mentioned in the city council’s books. This designation clearly identified Koppelman as his mother’s son – a pragmatic choice, since she was the head of the household and the one responsible for the relevant tax unit, but at the same time it marked him as his father’s son, too. Moreover, it is plausible that a Jewish girl who wished to be baptised (possibly around 1406) was another granddaughter of Seklin; according to the Latin records, *Juttelina sive Jutta neptis Judee que dicitur Secklin in Nuremberg* turned to the Bishop of Bamberg for help with that matter.  

Finally, in 1410 *Jacob der Secklin enenklein* was admitted as citizen in Nuremberg. In fact, in this setting, the designation *Seklin* operated as a family marker in the sense that it created continuity between earlier and later references to legal or financial activities, which were of concern to the city authorities.

Dealing with households and kin groups, the tax lists offer richer and more elaborated materials than name lists, since occasionally they provide biographic information such as marriage, death, migration, and so forth, which makes these sources, combined with prosopographic analysis, fruitful for studying techniques for designating persons. Yet the tax lists do not suffice for this assignment, which is why further town records from Nuremberg shall be used. This source material, edited by Moritz Stern, includes fifteenth-century *Ratsbücher*, *Jahresregister*, and registers of *Judenschulden*.

The next case from Nuremberg may demonstrate what I mean. In 1382, a man named *Abraham* was admitted as citizen in Nuremberg for three years: *3 jar der burger Jud sein*. In 1388, we come across *Abraham Sprintz* who paid 25 gulden a year – from now on he would be designated mostly through this name. About two years

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556 Ibid., 285-286.
557 Ibid., 55.
558 Moritz Stern identifies him with certainty with the above-mentioned Abraham. See ibid., 30, 35, 39.
later he was mentioned again, this time as *der Abraham der Sprinczin eydem.*\(^{559}\)

Apparently, Abraham married the daughter of the mentioned Sprintz in Nuremberg and took the name of his mother-in-law as a by-name. This name would later become a family name passed down through the male line. In 1398, after both his daughter and son got married, *Merlein dez Abrahams tochter* and *Hanna dez Abraham snur* (daughter-in-law) appear as new citizens in the city. In the same year, it also says in the ZB that *Kenel dez Abrahams Kellnerin ist nit burgerin, gibt 2 guldein, daz man sie hie siczen lat, wenn ir die Juden bedurffen zu irer arbeit.*\(^{560}\) Being a housemaid, Kenel was designated through her employer, the head of the household in which she worked and to which she belonged. In 1403 appears also *Samuel dez Abrahams sun* paying tax of 16 gulden.\(^{561}\)

*Abraham Sprintz* died in August 1407 and his wife, designated through the sole word *uxor,* gave up her citizenship in Nuremberg. In 1408, *Smohel dez Abrahams sun* was listed in the ZB and a year later in July, appears *Sprincz des Abraham Sprinczen tohter,* who was penalised for residing in Nuremberg without permit. She was mentioned again about a month later in the *Ratsbuch* designated as *Sprincz des Smoels swester* – her brother Smoel was now the head of the family.\(^{562}\) In 1410, *Mendelein dez Smuln Sprinzen sun* is mentioned. We come across *Smoel Sprintz* and other family members several times, among them appears also an *Abraham des Mendel Sprinzen sun,* Smoel’s grandson who was named after his great-grandfather, Abraham Sprintz.\(^{563}\) In 1430, *der alt Smohel Sprintz* was listed, while a later addition gives away his death without a date. In the same year, *Abraham des Smoel Sprinzen*

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\(^{559}\) Ibid., 39.

\(^{560}\) Ibid., 42. In 1402 she reappears, this time as a citizen, designated as *Kanel Abrahams Kellnerin* (47).

\(^{561}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{562}\) Ibid., 67, 288.

\(^{563}\) Ibid., 55, 57, 58, 61.
sun und Rechel seinem weib were permitted to live one year with Abraham’s parents. A year later, Besel des obgenanten Smohel Sprintzen wirt was mentioned in the ZB, which indicates that Smoel was still alive. However, in 1443 she was designated as Pessl Judyn des obgenanten Mendel Sprinczen muter and once as Besel die Smohel Sprinczin, which clearly indicates that Smoel Sprintz had died prior to these references. Besel herself died in 1448.

Later, other family members were admitted as citizens in Nuremberg, linked to Mendel, Smoel’s son. In 1445, Lesslein des Mendel Sprintzen sun was mentioned and in 1454 Edelein Mendel Sprinczen witib was admitted as citizen. Mendel died earlier that year. An especially interesting designation is that of Mendel’s son-in-law who was admitted in the city in 1443 and who was designated as Judlein meister Salmans sun von Bunn, des Mendel Sprinczen eydem. This multi-layered identification marked him through his name Judlein (the diminutive form of Judah/Yehuda), which also revealed his religious affiliation; it also marked his gender through the indicator sun, while revealing his family affiliation, his father’s status of scholar and possibly his or his father’s place of origin – Bonn. Finally, and perhaps most importantly in a local context, the designation located him within a specific social network in Nuremberg itself – he was the son-in-law of a local known Jewish citizen.

564 Ibid., 65.
565 Ibid., 70.
566 Ibid., 76, 78.
567 Ibid., 75.
Changing naming patterns: the construction of social identities and relationships in late medieval Ashkenazi communities

From the thirteenth century onward, the Ashkenazi name-repertoire expanded considerably, displaying a marked tendency toward the adoption of German names rather than Hebrew ones and the proliferation of more ‘secular’ names – that is, names neither alluding to figures of Jewish religious history nor having any recognisable religious content. This trend was especially evident among Jewish females.

I have explored above the roles which naming practices played in the shaping of social identities and relationships within medieval Ashkenazi communities. Focusing on Jewish-Christian relations, on the one hand and on gender relations within Ashkenazi families, on the other, I have shown that changing naming patterns played a two-fold role: new naming practices such as the institutionalisation of the ‘sacred name’ given to males at the circumcision sharpened the boundaries between Jewish men and Christian men; yet at the same time such practices also served to strengthen gendered identities within Ashkenazi communities, redefining the relationships between Jewish men and women.

The setting of clearer boundaries between social groups, however, was only one side of the process of reshaping Jewish identities. With its expansion, the Ashkenazi name-repertoire became also considerbaly varied, encompassing many new names. A large stock of new names was generated in this period through a procedure borrowed from German practice – taking common German words and putting two linguistic units together to create an individual name with a complex meaning. Hence, constructing boundaries involved massive borrowing – of mechanisms for generating names rather than the names themselves.
It was precisely names coined with borrowed tools that often distinguished Jews from their Christian surroundings. They served to mark Jews, but often in a language – in the wide sense of the term – which Christians could understand. This is an example of crossing boundaries and affirming them at the very same time. Jewish naming practices in the later medieval period are a significant and often unnoticed indicator of acculturation, suggesting that integration and distinction, identity-construction and assimilation are often different aspects of the same process. As Amos Funkenstein suggested long ago: the simplistic and heavily ideological opposition between assimilation and affirming difference proves insufficient for understanding contacts and processes of change.

Scholars have often argued that in the mid- and late medieval period, German Jewish communities moved to shut themselves off from surrounding non-Jewish culture, and that among Ashkenazi Jewry the focus of innovation was religious jurisprudence (halakha) rather than culture at large. However, the development of Jewish onomastics in the late Middle Ages suggests a significant degree of cultural assimilation – not as a passive process of submergence in a dominant culture, but as an active process of appropriation, of innovatively borrowing tools and procedures to reshape identifications.

Earlier historians disregarded such modes of acculturation; it seemed natural to identify ‘acculturation’ with ‘assimilation’, with the adoption of outward markers of identity and see in Jewish courtiers in medieval Iberia a prime example of acculturation in medieval inter-religious context. The study of names, however, yields new insights into processes of acculturation that is not in a polemic context.

Borrowing was not necessarily a tool for distinguishing oneself intentionally by rejecting the symbols of the other, as some recent studies on medieval Ashkenaz suggest.

Shifting analysis from the observation of similarities between names to reconstructing underlying models and practices challenges a view of Jews and Christians as closed collectivities confronting each other, but also revises the older search for commonalities. The similarity in naming patterns observed in the nineteenth century is misleading. Distinguishing between cultural products (names) and models for creating names, and applying qualitative and quantitative analysis, important differences between Jewish and Christian naming-patterns have been brought to light. In the Christian case, one observes a massive trend for the concentration of the naming repertoire around a limited number of supra-regional saints’ names. Few leading names hence covered large portions of most samples. In Jewish communities we encounter, in contrast, a proliferation of names and great variety, with leading names usually covering at most about 10% of the samples analysed. This is a structural difference that has nothing to do with conscious efforts at differentiation or notions of confrontation. Many of the new names, which emerged among Ashkenazi Jews, were created through cultural borrowing taking place in a world of relatively small and dispersed Jewish communities. These communities, however, came to share supra-regional rabbinic authorities, and maintained a very high level of inter-regional exchange (migration, settlement, and supra-local marriage patterns). Yet their close ties and intensive exchange did not exclude variety or result in a convergence of naming practices. On the other hand, variety was a prominent mark of the Ashkenazi world, with its multiplicity of relatively autonomous local communities cultivating local customs.
As the evidence has shown, the demarcation of cultural and religious boundaries between Jews and Christians meant also reshaping of gendered identities within Ashkenazi communities. In general, the vernacularisation trend affected the stock of female names more profoundly; women’s names became markedly more ‘German’ and less attached to the codified stock of Hebrew names. Female names were perhaps the more mobile element, but the trend also intensified the association of men with Hebrew and sacred texts, and women – with the world of the vernacular and the mundane. However, since female names were often vernacular ones, and did not invoke religious meanings to a comparable extent, they were usually entirely omitted from scholarly discussion, as if lacking any meaning whatsoever. Some generalisations about late medieval Jewish culture hence do well without considering women.

The reconstruction of changing patterns of code and message encoded through names suggests that the shift in women’s position within kinship system gave rise to attempts to redefine women’s place in the religious sphere and to strengthen gendered identities. Women’s new names, vernacular and “feminine”, were not mere reflections of social reality; they were a response to the challenges it posed, as women’s share in family economics increased and their legal status improved.

Nevertheless, the analysis of name-giving practices needs to go beyond this, to reconstruct how names were used to channel resources and shape relationships. The shifts in practices for naming females were also at evidence in patterns of circulation of names in late medieval Ashkenazi families. In the late Middle Ages, Ashkenazi women played a growing role in shaping family affiliations. In case of significant female economic actors, women’s names were increasingly regarded as symbolic goods used both in interactions with Christians and within the Jewish milieu itself.
Although in legal contexts patronyms continued to play the leading role as a family marker in various social contexts, men could be associated with their mother or with her family. In fact, the emergence of competing naming models like matronymics enabled to express a broader variety of social ties, paying tribute to women’s role and power in their families.

Modern historiography has tended to focus on patronyms as affiliation markers and to stress the transmission of male names from deceased ancestors to newborns. It tended to reduce kin relationships to vertical, especially patrilineal relations, while the possibility that women took part in securing family continuity has not been considered; at most, they were considered mediators between their male relatives. Furthermore, the uncritical reception of esoteric medieval texts on the magical properties of names led scholars to assume that naming children after living kin was atypical in Ashkenazi culture. The evidence suggests, however, an intensified circulation of names, including between living kin, within late medieval families. More significantly, it shows that women played a visible role in transmitting names. There is an intensified circulation of female names and of names from the maternal stock of names among kin. Perhaps the most surprising phenomenon is the emergence of matronyms based on the first name of a female kin.

On a different level of kin relationships, changing naming-practices imply that during the late medieval period – especially in the fifteenth century, the web of kin relationships was restructured. The pattern of naming children after their living uncles or aunts, emerging in this period, stresses the new role, which collateral kin played in kin relationships. The name analysis in chapter IV has shown that there was a growing emphasis on collateral patterned relationships, while name sharing became an important way for reshaping and marking the relationships between brothers and
sisters, brothers-in-law, between uncles/aunts and their nephews/nieces, and among cousins. The family dynamics reconstructed in specific cases has also demonstrated the important role played by collateral kin, as siblings or uncles and nephews often lived in the same locality, sometimes even in the same household, and acted as business associates. Furthermore, it is plausible to assume that shifts in inheritance practices which took place in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries played an essential role in the restructuring of kinship. With women entering the inheritance system, not only the relationships between brothers and sisters were intensified, but also those between brothers-in-law and between uncles and nephews. Further research into the web of relationships among collateral kin still needs to be done for late medieval Ashkenazi communities.

The consideration of not only names, but of modes of designation more generally has enabled to uncover much more complex social relationships and actual change in kinship structures. Even if given names can mark potential affiliations, practices for designating persons, especially in economic contexts, mark actual paths, relating individual persons to their kindred and locating them within larger kin groups. While personal names marked Jewish women in a way that excluded them gradually from the religious sphere, the practices for designating them in Christian urban records uncovered their essential role in family economies and in securing the continuity of their families of origin. Moreover, the consideration of male by-names appearing in Jewish sources has also surprisingly shown that mothers and mothers-in-law became vital economic players whose name was taken and given as a symbolic good, circulated within families.

As married daughters, women played an increasing role in the transmission of names, linking their children to their maternal relatives, and sometimes even
transmitting female names. On the other hand, some women, especially those who were vital economic actors, became more visible in their roles as mothers and mothers-in-law, while the semantics of their names tended to efface these roles. This apparent contradiction can well be explained in the context of shifting kinship structures and economic roles. Names were not only indicators of these processes, but a vital component of *strategies of representation* – sometimes compensating for women’s enhanced status through the invocation of images of femininity, sometimes documenting women’s and maternal kin’s growing weight through the transmission of particular names.
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