

Giving Children Hebrew Names in Druze Society in Israel

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Abstract

The article examines the trend of giving Hebrew names to children in Israeli Druze society. It further examines the scale and reasons behind it, and finds that they are related to fashion, sociolinguistic and political-sociolinguistic issues. Language contact, especially between Arabic and Hebrew, and the status of Hebrew in the eyes of Arabs and Druze in Israel are also discussed.

Keywords: Hebrew, Druze, names, culture, Arabs, contact

1. Introduction

A name is a word or set of words by which people, animals, places or things are referred to in order to distinguish them from each other. A name is a symbol that seems external, but actually creates bonds that tie individuals to preceding generations of their people. Over the course of a lifetime, people's names are recorded on thousands of documents and entered into hundreds of computer files. Their names accompany them from childhood and remain after death, more faithful than a shadow. Our name labels us and files us in the category of a nation, community, society, family and era, while leaving a deep imprint on our lives (Stahl, 2005: 17).¹ Generally speaking, a first name is a much more than just a means of identification. It encapsulates social, cultural, traditional and value codes, together with parents' expectations, wishes and hopes. Tracking the names of an ethnic group can provide fascinating information about its history and worldview. A fairly small percentage of people change their first or last names during their lifetimes, and most of those who do have serious personal or social reasons for doing so. But even when people change their name, they cannot divest themselves of it permanently, because their original, and real, name stays in the background, leaving a residue in the mind, and can sometimes turn up out of the blue (Stahl, 2005:17). An intimate connection exists between us and our name, which explains the seriousness

¹ Stahl (2005: 17) cites Marshall McLuhan, a philosopher of communication theory, who argued that a person's name is a crushing blow from which they never recover.

with which parents choose their baby's name, and the great interest taken in the study of first and last names.

Often, people want to know the meaning and origin of their name, and want to trace the evolution of the names in their family. However, we cannot actually be sure where a name comes from or what it means, unless we have evidence such as original documents like personal records recorded at the time the name was given/changed or official documents stored in an archive or handed down in the family. Thousands of articles and books have been dedicated to the study of families and names, but even that large body of research does not shed light on the source and origin of every name or last name (ibid.: 19-20).²

There are those who have no right to assert a name for themselves, since under specific political-historical circumstances, powerful others appropriate that right. This was the case for slaves, who got their names from their enslavers, or more commonly today, migrants, whose names are casually distorted by official administrators unable or unwilling to spell them properly. Likewise, illegal immigrants or excluded social actors are at times deprived of the right to be registered under their names in official records. And then there are those who have the power to insist on self-naming, despite social expectations that they would be named by others such as married women who refuse to take their husband's names (Rom & Benjamin, 2011: 1).

A common view in the Midrashic rabbinic literature on the subject of first names is that names encapsulate the character of their bearer and are a testimony to their nature and character. The Midrashic literature holds that a name is not given haphazardly, but follows a prophetic-like apprehension of the nature of the name's bearer. The name that someone or something is given is a consequence of a knowledge about the nature of the owner of the name, and the name stems from that recognition of their nature. Thus, a name is not only an identification tag, but first and foremost is a symbolic stamp and an evaluation of essence. There is a relationship between a name and the person or place it belongs to, and many names are often interpreted on this basis. The belief that a person is their name goes back to ancient times and appears in

² For example, the sole remains of the once 4,000-strong Rhodes Jewish community, with its rich social and religious life, following their liquidation by the Nazis in 1943, is their beautiful, ancient-sounding, names that conjure the bygone days of Jewish history of the Spanish Mediterranean. This bitter fact makes it difficult to research the first and last names of this community (Calahorra, 2012: 3).

ancient Egyptian culture. The Egyptians believed that when people's names are written or spoken, they receive life and the strength to survive (Nehari, 1997: 31-32; Stahl, 2005: 24; Goldberg, 1997: 54).

There haven't always been precise rules for selecting a person's first name. For example, in the Jewish community of Yemen, there were no clear rules for naming babies. It was common in the villages to approach the local rabbi, who would pick a name based on astrological calculations. Sometimes, the name would be tied to the season in which the baby was born. An example of this is the name *Qadriyya(h)* *قادرية*, which would be given to a baby born on *ليلة القدر* *the night of al-qadar*, which according to Jewish Yemenite tradition is the night of *Hoshana Rabbah*. Sometimes, the baby would be named after the mother, grandmother or other relative (Gaimani 1997: 54-55).³ From the frequency with which the first names of Izmir Jews are recorded, for example, we can see that there was not always much originality in boys' and girls' names. We can tell from religious divorce documents and the inscriptions on Jewish graves that most people were named after their grandfathers, grandmothers and other family members. However, some names were chosen simply because they were popular in Jewish society in those days (Bornstein-Makovetsky, 2001: 26).

A person's name is very important in all cultures. We find many customs, beliefs and meanings associated with names. In many societies, a person and their name are considered a single identity. Hence, we find the idea that the fate of a person can be influenced by their name. This idea appears in the Bible: for example *Avram's* name is changed to *Avraham*, *Sarai* becomes *Sarah*, *Jacob* receives the name *Israel*, and *Hoshea's* name is changed to *Joshua*. Thus, a name is not an arbitrary sequence of letters, but in the opinion of mystics, expresses a person's inner essence and is retained even after death.⁴ Jewish custom maintains that changing the name of a person suffering from serious illness can aid full recovery. References to this practice appear in the Talmud and the Midrash. There are numerous customs concerned with

³ Yahya Mansura, from the Yemenite Jewish community of Amran, stated that his grandmother *حمامة* *Hamama(h)* 'Dove' gave his mother the same name, *Hamama(h)*, and likewise his mother also called her daughter, namely his sister, *Hamama(h)* (Gaimani, 1997: 55).

⁴ Believing that a name had such a powerful influence on a person's life, they warned parents not to give children the name of someone whose life was hard. This belief was also recognized in Europe and in the East (Stahl, 2005: 27).

renaming. Some say the sick person should receive an additional name, others that an entirely new name is required.⁵ Some say the name should express longevity and good health, such as *Hayim* 'Life,' others require theophoric names. Some require a random name. There are other circumstances for changing names besides illness. For example, in the Yemenite Jewish community, the name of the bride was changed to bring her good luck. The rabbi who conducted the marriage and wedding celebrations would propose a name for the bride based on her mother's name and geometric calculations. Every care was taken to ensure that the astrological readings of the bride and groom were compatible. It was also customary to perform geometric calculations even before a match was made, and the boy and girl met (Gaimani, 1997: 55-57).

In Arab society in Israel, religion plays a key role in the naming of newborns.⁶ Christian Arabs, too, see their child's name as having a function in preserving their religious identity. As we know, the clan and the family are central to Arab culture, and the mechanism of naming also serves to strengthen these units. Parents often choose names indicating family attributions and descent. Arab children are named after living relatives (grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt), and at one time were also named after deceased relatives, though this practice has dwindled in Israel's Arab sector.

New parents usually ascribe great importance to preserving the memory of their parents and grandparents by passing on their names to their children. They regard this as an act of continuity and a way of strengthening the family tree. When a boy is named after his grandfather, he becomes a living, breathing reminder of previous generations and a new link in the family chain. For many years, people were cautious not to choose names that broke societal conventions. This resulted from the conservative nature of Arab society and may have reflected a desire not to cause embarrassment to a child or unnecessary problems once he could express an opinion.

⁵ In the Jewish community of Izmir, only 3% of the men and less than 1% of the women had two names. In one very exceptional case, a man had three names, two of which he received at birth, and a third, which was added mainly due to illness (Bornstein-Makovetsky, 2001: 23). On the subject of women with two family names, see Kaplan, 2009: 36. On the subject of double names as a socio-onomastic phenomenon, see Demsky, 1997: 26-34.

⁶ Since I was unable to find any academic research relating to first names in Israeli Arab society, I have based myself mainly on material from the Internet.

However, recent decades have witnessed a change in attitudes towards naming, which reflect the times: modernization and the effect of exposure to external influences on the one hand, and intensified religious observance on the other hand. Because of these influences, nowadays, many families in the Arab sector no longer name their children after a deceased relative. The more devout draw their names from the religious sources, and the more modern parents name their children after flowers, objects, feelings and the like. This relatively new practice is found most commonly among young couples who are open to innovation.

Most Arab first names have a meaning and belong to one of several semantic fields. Arab parents tend to give their children names that mean something. For example, parents who perceive their infant daughter as a graceful flower and hope she will flourish as she matures may call her *warda(h)* 'Rose' or *Zahra(h)* 'Rose,' '*abīr* 'perfume of flowers,' *rūz* 'perfume of flowers'.⁷ Arabic names belong to several semantic fields: 1) names that express qualities: *ḡamīl* 'beautiful,' '*asīl* 'thin and soft,' 2) names expressing optimism: '*amāl* 'Hope,' *yazīd* 'abundance,' 3) names that express courage or victory: *naṣīr* 'victory,' *farīs* 'warrior,' 4) names related to time: *saḥar* 'early morning,' *rabī* 'spring'. 5) names linked to God:⁸ '*abdi r-rahmān* 'Servant of the Merciful,' '*abdi r-rahīm* 'Servant of the Merciful'.

Young Druze couples are often exposed to a wide variety of influences and ideas, including television channels from Arab countries and popular figures from the Arab world in general and neighboring countries (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt) in particular. Often the prospective parents' affection or admiration for a star becomes a major consideration when choosing a name for their child. Such names include: *nansī* 'Lebanese singer, female,' *wāil* 'Lebanese singer, male,' '*ihāb* 'very popular Egyptian singer,' *larisa* 'female star of telenovelas and television series in Lebanon.' The fashion of giving new modern names is more common for girls and points to a change in patterns and a break with naming traditions thousands of years old.

⁷ *Rose* is among the most popular names for girls, reflecting a strong Western influence.

⁸ In Muslim families, boys can be named to indicate service to God. The Qur'ān mentions 99 names of God, and when a believing Muslim names his son, he adds the prefix '*abid* meaning 'servant of' before one of God's names. In recent years, some parents have decided not to conform to this requirement, giving their son the name of God without the prefix '*abid*.

In Druze society, there are two dimensions for choosing names: the level of the core family, the parental home and the clan: a vertical dimension which includes the names of long dead ancestors and is meant to show honor and respect and to keep the memories of the ancestors alive; and a horizontal dimension which includes the names of living relatives and recently deceased relatives (from the previous generation). Both dimensions are very important when picking children's names. As one would expect, the more conservative and traditional parents tend to pick vertical dimension names, whereas the more modern and open parents tend to choose horizontal dimension names (Hasan, 2011: 52).

The objective of this study was to examine the trend whereby some Druze parents in Israel choose Hebrew names for their children. It describes the scale of this trend and examines the underlying reasons. The article also makes a preliminary attempt to formulate conclusions regarding this trend, based on the research findings (although the small number of participants prevents any extrapolation from the present findings to the Druze community in Israel as a whole).

The main hypothesis was that Druze parents have very definite reasons for choosing a Hebrew name for their child. It was also hypothesized that a link exists between the decision to give a child a Hebrew name and the desire of members of Druze society to become integrated into Israeli society and be an integral part of it. It is also hypothesized that Hebrew names are chosen for purely aesthetic reasons, that choosing Hebrew names may be part of an assimilation process which began with the enlistment of Druze into the IDF, and finally that parents give their children a Hebrew name because they feel it will improve their prospects of gaining employment in Israel in the future.

A Druze elementary school in the north of Israel with 354 students participated in the study. From a list of all the children's names in the school, the researcher identified the Hebrew names and interviewed a sample of their parents to determine their reasons for giving their child a Hebrew name. Following instructions from the Advisor to the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Education, the name of the school and its students may be published.

The names of children aged 6-11 who attended school in 2011-2012 were obtained. In this study, a Hebrew name is considered a name that is not found in the Arab sources, including the Qur'ān, only in Jewish sources. For example, the name Adam is not counted as a Jewish name as it appears in the Qur'ān.

2. The Druze community in Israel – Background

Israeli Druze society is rural, conservative and religious. The Druze way of life centers on religion and is guided by its religious leaders and elders. Druze society is officially divided into two groups, the '*uqqāl* 'Knowers,' referring to those permitted to study the mysteries of the religion, and the '*Juhhāl* 'the Ignorant,' who are not permitted to read the scriptures (Falaḥ, 2000: 109).

We do not know the exact date when Israel's Druze settlement began. It probably began at the same time the religion was founded and disseminated, and it exists to this day. In 2007, there were 100,000 Druze living in Israel, in eighteen villages in the Galilee.⁹ Some villages are entirely Druze, and others have mixed populations. Apart from the village of Kfar Rama, the Druze are the majority in all the villages (Wiener-Levy, 2007: 172; Ali, 1997: 6).

With the rise of national Zionism, the Druze were faced with a dilemma regarding their relationship with the Jews. According to Dana (1998: 19), there were two reasons why the Druze tended to support the Jews (though the muxtars of the two Druze villages in the Carmel and the Tarif clan, decided to cooperate with the Arabs). The first reason was that the Druze saw that the Jewish community had had no small measure of success in its struggle with the Arabs, and secondly, because many of the Druze themselves had suffered both materially and religiously, and had lost their lives at the hands of the Arabs. We can add to this a third reason, namely that its Druze policy to be loyal to their host country.

The Druze in Israel were only recognized as a distinct ethnic group in 1957 after the establishment of the state. Druze religious courts were set up in 1963 and received similar powers to those of the rabbinical courts (Layish, 2000: 144).

⁹ It does not include the four Druze villages in the Golan Heights.

The Druze community has made a major and unique contribution to the State of Israel. Unlike the other non-Jewish ethnic groups, Israeli Druze serve in the IDF following their leaders' recommendations, and participate fully in maintaining the security of the state. Military service for young Druze became mandatory in 1957. In the same year, the Minister of Religious Affairs officially acknowledged the separate status of the Druze as an independent religious community. Before 1961, the identity card which Israel issued to Druze stated their religion as "Druze," and their nationality as "Arab." In 1961, the government changed this to "Druze" (Weiner-Levy, 2007: 173).

In 1991, following orders from the then Minister of Defense, Moshe Arens, and in light of his policy of encouraging the recruitment and integration of minorities into the army, all IDF units were opened up to Druze. Since January 1956, the Druze community as a whole is subject to compulsory military service (Orgad, 2007: 393-394).

The Israeli Druze population, which is one of Israel's national minorities, regards itself as an integral part of Israeli society. Druze society is undergoing the process of integrating into Israeli society. Therefore, giving Hebrew first names in Druze society represents a form of assimilation into Israeli society, a process which began when the Druze population started to serve in the Israeli army. Perhaps the reason for giving Druze children Hebrew names is to force the cultural mechanisms of the majority to grant the Druze legitimacy, status and relevance, and to eliminate any injustice, discrimination, unequal opportunities and unequal distribution of resources suffered by this ethnic group. The better integrated the Druze are into Jewish society, the better their employment prospects will be. More extensive research is needed to draw substantive conclusions regarding the Druze community in Israel in general.

3. Contact between languages

There are many different kinds of cultural contact between people and language. It is the basic vehicle for contact between nations and individuals; it is the vehicle which facilitates the transfer of cultural objects. Though there are different types of contact, the vehicle, that is language, is always the mediator between cultures. Amara (2005:

26) points out that language is an important factor in children's socialization. It is not just a tool for communication, but essential for human socialization. Language not only transfers content, but is content itself. When two nations meet because they are neighbors or through commerce or occupation, there will be linguistic influences. In our case, Hebrew and Arabic are two language systems whose encounters in history have led to a certain degree of linguistic intermingling. This means that language categories in one language influence the other. Whenever two languages or dialects meet, the languages will certainly to influence one another, since no language can withstand the effect of long-term contact with another language without some effect (Basal, 2004: 32).

According to Weinreich (1968: 14), the merger of languages that are in contact with one another includes vocabulary, phonetics and syntax. The merger usually happens when a person / bilingual speaker uses words from the lending language in the host language, or else identifies a phoneme of the secondary system with a phoneme in the primary system, namely the mother tongue. In creating the phoneme, the person / bilingual speaker adapts the phoneme to the phonetic laws of the mother tongue.

Higa (1979: 278) treats word borrowing as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, which reflects an aspect of cultural behavior. The process of borrowing words and its results reflect the main aspects and characteristics of the cultures: both the recipient culture and the lending culture.

Whenever a minority lives alongside a majority, it will be influenced in numerous spheres such as culture, customs, language and the like. We find many examples of this historically, such as Spain, for example, which was under Muslim Arab rule for centuries. Spanish society was strongly influenced by Arabic, and hundreds of Arabic words entered the Spanish language. A similar thing happened in Arab countries under Ottoman rule, when hundreds of Turkish words entered Arabic (Dana, 1998: 13). Similarly, Israeli Arabs who are a minority inside a Hebrew-speaking Jewish majority are influenced in many areas due to their close proximity to it, but especially in the area of language, because the Arab minority speaks Hebrew.

4. Arabic-Hebrew contact in Israel

Contact between Hebrew-speaking Arabs and Jews occurs in many different contexts, for example government offices, work and recreational settings, such as restaurants. As a result, Arabic has borrowed many Hebrew words and even entire sentences. Israeli Arabs routinely use words like *beseder* 'okay,' *'aruṣ* 'TV channel,' *mivṣa* 'special offer,' *kanyon* 'shopping mall,' *maṣṣil* 'lifeguard' and many others.¹⁰ Despite this, not all Israeli Arabs speak Hebrew fluently, and fluency is not evenly distributed, depending rather on such factors as gender, age, locality and frequency of contact with Jewish Israelis.¹¹ Arab males speak Hebrew better than Arab females since they are in touch with Jewish society more than Arab females, especially through work and in contact with government bureaucracies, and younger Arabs also speak better Hebrew than their elders (Amara, 2002: 87). Young Arabs today are more exposed to Hebrew, because they use leisure and entertainment facilities in Jewish cities and read Hebrew publications, especially the press. This contact greatly improves their Hebrew fluency and increases adoption of Hebrew words and phrases in Arabic (ibid.). As for locality, the closer Arabs live to Jewish centers, the more strongly they will be influenced by Hebrew. For example, Arabs living in the Negev and the "Triangle" speak more Hebrew than Galilee Arabs. Also, in mixed cities and neighborhoods, Arabs and Jews share the same public services, which leads to routine contact between Arab and Jewish citizens, something which has improved Israeli Arabs' regard for Hebrew and elevated Hebrew's status. Another key factor responsible for the use of Hebrew among Israeli Arabs is that many work for Jewish businesses and most are employed by Hebrew-speaking Jews, encouraging them to study Hebrew. Hebrew is thus a significant factor in their lives, a lack of which makes it extremely difficult for them to achieve anything in Israeli society, and they would be unable to learn many of the things that demand fluent Hebrew. In the workplace, management

¹⁰ Amara & Mar'i (2003: 81-83) and Dana (1983: 47-49) discuss the linguistic merger *d-damḡi l-laḡawī* in spoken Arabic. This refers to the adoption of Hebrew words and sometimes full sentences in spoken Arabic – a known phenomenon among Israeli Arabs. An example is: شفت Ṭavlat Liga 'football league'.

¹¹ Amara (1986: 3) notes that Arabic has also borrowed from English. The fact that science and technology developed in English explains why Arabic, like so many languages, borrows much of its science and technology terminology from English. Israel's close relationship with the USA has also led to Israelis borrowing from English, which is subsequently absorbed into the Arabic spoken by Israeli Arabs.

and staff all speak Hebrew, customers speak Hebrew, tools and equipment have Hebrew names, and instructions for use are all in Hebrew. So, Arab employees have to know Hebrew to integrate at work and succeed (Amara & Kabhā, 1996: 60-62; Mar'ī, 2002-2003: 133-136; Cohen, 1968: 670). Hebrew is also relatively easy for them, because Arabic and Hebrew belong to the same linguistic family. Furthermore, the fact that Hebrew and Arabic have many lexical elements in common helps Israeli Arabs learn Hebrew quickly, sometimes simply from being spoken to (Dana, 2000: 165-170).

Although Hebrew is the second most important language for Israeli Arabs, allowing communication with Israeli Jews in all areas of life, and although it acts as an agent of modernization, various sociolinguistic obstacles limit its convergence with Hebrew. Ben Rafael (1994: 176) points out that:

... the dual identity (Palestinian and Israeli) is reflected in the linguistic repertoire of Palestinians in Israel. The tension between the two identities, the Israeli and the Palestinian, has restricted their approach to Hebrew, the language of the dominant Jewish culture. In other words, the Arabs employ a strategy of linguistic integration. On the one hand, they try to connect with the wider social network which is shaped by the majority culture by learning to speak Hebrew well. On the other hand they maintain their identity by retaining their mother tongue.

5. The Degree of Influence of Hebrew on the Arabs

The level of free control in speaking is the result of the extent and efficacy of the connection with Jewish society. For example, the Arabs in the cities (such as Haifa, Jaffa, Ramla and Lydda) and also the Druze Arabs and the Bedouins who serve in the army have a better command of Hebrew than other Arabs (Amara & Mar'i, 2002: 58).

The language of instruction in Druze schools is Arabic, and Hebrew is taught as a second language. The Druze in Israel is a minority that identifies with the majority group in their culture, language and politics. Although the Druze speak Arabic as their first language, and Arab culture is their culture, they do not emotionally sympathize with Arabic language and culture, but they sympathize, however, with the Israeli

identity. The Druze have strong positive attitudes towards learning Hebrew and Israeli society (Abu Rabi'a, 1996: 415-416).

The Druze in Israel constitute a minority within a minority and, apart from the tiny Circassian community, they are the only minority that emphasizes its desire to integrate into Israeli society more than its desire to be united with rest of the macro Arab community in the Middle East (ibid.: 416).

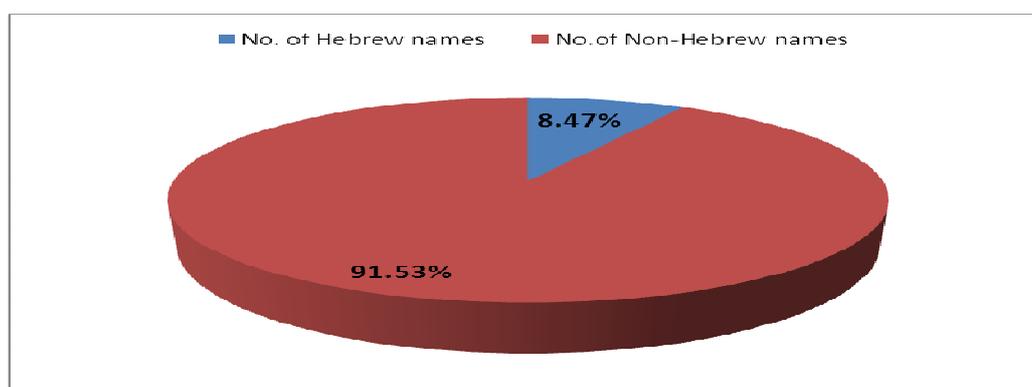
According to Abu Rabi'a (ibid.: 423), the Druze students expressed their desire to live in mixed neighborhoods with Jews and to identify and be like them linguistically and culturally. They also expressed instrumental attitudes, namely that learning the Hebrew language was a utilitarian measure. They seem to believe in linguistic and cultural assimilation into Israeli Jewish society. The social attitudes of the Druze students towards the Hebrew language were positive, as may be expected from a minority that fully identifies with the culturally dominant group.

6. Scale of Phenomenon and Reasons for Giving Hebrew Names

It was found that 30 out of the 354 students at the Druze school had Hebrew names. The percentage of Hebrew names was 8.47%, so it can be said that this is a relatively limited trend.

| Student population | Hebrew names | Non-Hebrew names |
|--------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 354 | 30 | 324 |
| 100% | 8.47% | 91.53% |

Figure 1: Percentage of Hebrew names in the school population



7. Parents' reasons for picking a Hebrew name

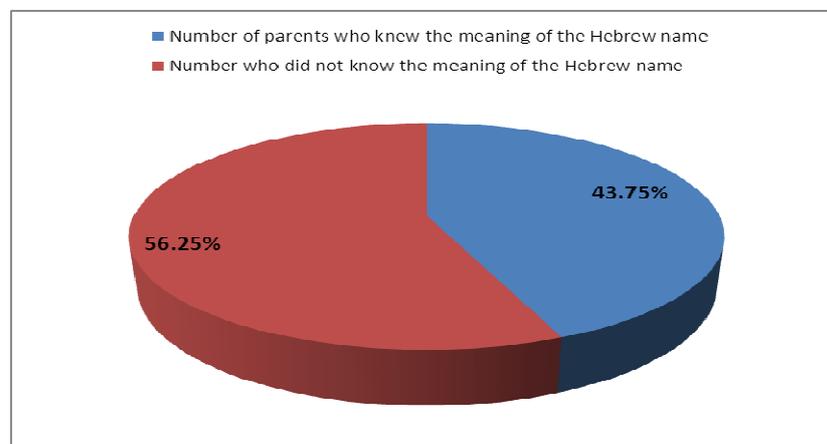
From the interviews with parents it appears that the Hebrew name was not picked out of any personal significance for the child or the country to which it relates or any mystical link to the nature of the bearer. They chose the name, instead, because it was fashionable and for sociological and socio-political reasons.

7.1 Fashion

The findings showed that 43.75% of the parents interviewed had no idea what the Hebrew name meant, and their choice was mainly a matter of fashion.

| Parents who picked a Hebrew name for their child | Parents who knew the meaning of the Hebrew name | Parents who did not know the meaning of the Hebrew name |
|--|---|---|
| 16 | 7 | 9 |
| 100% | 43.75% | 56.25% |

Figure 2: Percentage of parents who knew the meaning of the Hebrew name

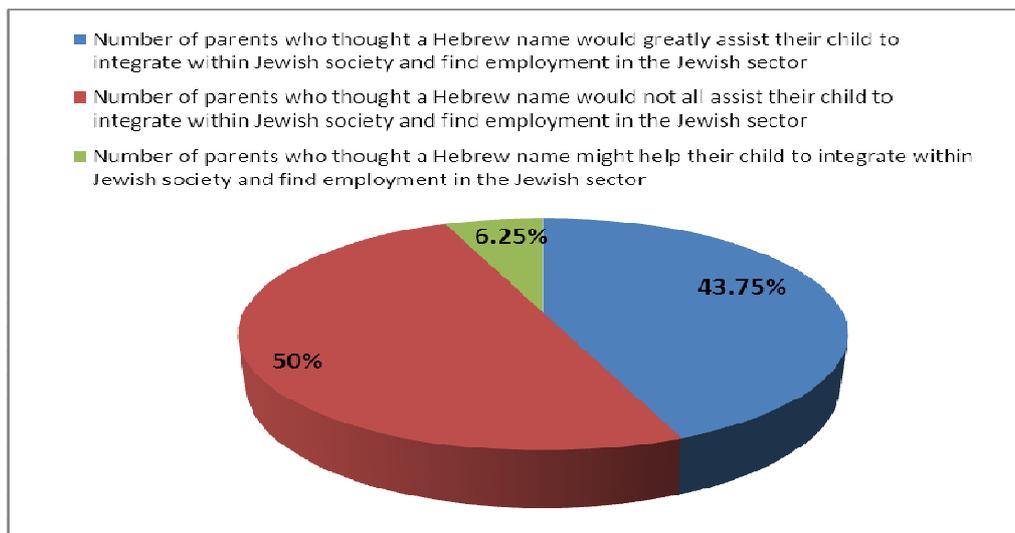


7.2 Political sociolinguistic reasons

The findings showed that 43.75% of the parents interviewed believed that the choice of a Hebrew name would greatly assist their child to integrate within Jewish society and find employment in the Jewish sector. 6.25% felt that the name might help their child integrate etc., while 50% felt the name would not help them at all.

| Table 3: Percentage of parents who saw a link between having a Hebrew name and integration into Jewish society and finding employment in the Jewish sector | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Parents who picked a Hebrew name | Parents who thought a Hebrew name would greatly assist their child integrate into Jewish society and find employment in the Jewish sector | Parents who thought a Hebrew name would not assist their child to integrate into Jewish society and find employment in the Jewish sector | Parents who thought a Hebrew name might help their child to integrate into Jewish society and find employment in the Jewish sector |
| 16 | 7 | 8 | 1 |
| 100% | 43.75% | 50% | 6.25% |

Figure 3: Percentage of parents who saw a link between having a Hebrew name and integration into Jewish society and finding employment in the Jewish sector

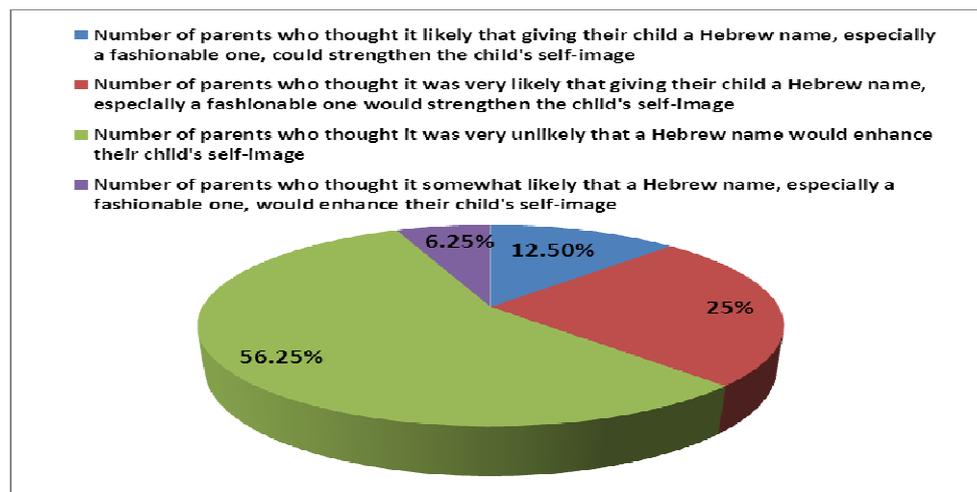


7.3 Sociolinguistic Reasons

The findings showed that 25% of the parents interviewed thought that the choice of a Hebrew name, especially a fashionable one, would significantly strengthen their child's self-image; 12.5% believed it likely that a Hebrew name would be useful; 6.25% believed a Hebrew name might be somewhat useful, and 56.25% believed that a Hebrew name would not be useful at all.

| Parents who picked a Hebrew name for their son/daughter | Parents who thought it likely that giving their child a Hebrew name, especially a fashionable one, could strengthen the child's self-image | Parents who thought it was very likely that giving their child a Hebrew name, especially a fashionable one, would strengthen the child's self-image | Parents who thought it was very unlikely that a Hebrew name would enhance their child's self-image | Parents who thought it somewhat likely that a Hebrew name, especially a fashionable one, would enhance their child's self-image |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| 16 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| 100% | 12.5% | 25% | 56.25% | 6.25% |

Figure 4: Percentage of parents who saw some connection between having a Hebrew name and strengthening their child's self-confidence



8. Summary

Since the analysis of the findings is based on a very small pool of subjects, the conclusions are presented with reservations and should be regarded as tentative. The author does not propose that the conclusions can be applied in general to Israel's Druze community. For any general conclusions to be drawn, far more extensive research is needed based on a larger number of participants. Thus, the conclusions apply exclusively to the subjects of the Druze elementary school that participated in the study.

The trend of giving a Druze child a Hebrew name in Israel is a relatively limited one. Giving a Hebrew name is always a conscious act on the parents' part. In other words, they are aware that the name they have picked is Hebrew (though they are mostly unaware of its meaning or the semantic field to which it belongs). Thus, parents give their child a Hebrew name because of a perceived link between the name and the society it stems from and not because of the name's link to the child's essence or nature. In other words, Druze parents give Hebrew names mostly for cosmetic reasons.

43.75% of the parents who gave their child a Hebrew name felt it would boost their child's self-esteem, especially when the Hebrew name was fashionable. This was one of the sociolinguistic explanations for the parents' choice of a Hebrew name. However, the finding only applies to the study sample and cannot be extrapolated to the entire Druze community in Israel, which would require a more comprehensive study involving a larger number of Druze schools.

Another finding was that 56.25% of parents who gave their children a Hebrew name did not know its meaning. This no doubt shows that parents attach no great significance to what the name means; in other words, the meaning was not an important consideration when choosing the name.

Of the parents who picked a Hebrew name, 50% thought it would help their child integrate into Jewish society and one day find employment in the Jewish sector. Of this group, 43.75% felt the choice would help to a great extent, which may be interpreted as a desire to integrate into Israeli society and be an integral part of it. The choice of Hebrew name may thus point to an attempt to assimilate within Israeli society, a process that began when the Druze started serving in the Israeli armed forces.

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