

Origins of Jewish Last Names in Turov

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The history of the origins of Jewish last names provides a wealth of enlightening information. The Diaspora and all that was linked to it is reflected in the diverse linguistic origins of Jewish last names. These names are primarily of German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, Russian, and Byelorussian origin. Last names convey the professions and occupations of Jews, show the geography of Jewish migration, illustrate their relationships to the regions they resided in, and their interaction with neighbors and the surrounding world.

This article demonstrates this process using the Jewish community of Turov, a city which occupies a particular page of Byelorussian history, as an example. The Turov-Pinsk principality served as a prototype for the national Byelorussian state system. The Jewish community sprang up here in the 16th century and was part of the Pinsk *povet* of the Rzecz Pospolita Polska Brest province (Polish Republic). In 1765, 316 Jews lived in Turov; by 1847 that number had grown to 1447.¹ Turov was considered a *shtetl* of the Mozyr *uezd* in the Minsk *guberniya* and was within the boundary of the “Jewish settlement line”.² The main sources of revenue for the residents were trade and handicrafts. By 1897, Jews totaled 2252 people, composing 52.3% of Turov’s population.³ In 1911, the newspaper *Minskaya Starina* stated, “the people of Turov are religious, moral, robbery occurs rarely - it is not customary to lock up barns and cattle, and the number of illegitimate births is insignificant in comparison to other localities.”⁴

Turov Jews received their permanent last names in a manner similar to the Jews in the Russian empire approximately 150-200 years ago. From the end of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century, the majority of the Jewish population was in Russia (800,000 people), Austro-Hungary (470,000), and German states (180,000). The total population of Ashkenazic Jews living in other countries was merely about 20,000 people. Inherited last names, in the ordinary sense of the word, did not exist. Every individual had only their own first name, to which the father’s name may have been added in official documents. In addition, last names confirmed the birthplace of a person and the name of their mother or spouse. The surname existed for only one generation and was not passed on to the next. In the next generation, the name of the parents (or wife), the place of birth, and occupational sphere changed. This change was reflected in the person’s last name or surname. For example, when Yitzhak Ben Yaacov had a son Moshe, the son was identified as Moshe Ben Yitzhak (Moshe, son of Yitzhak) in official documents, while Yitzhak’s grandson (Moshe’s son) became Leizer Ben Moshe. The household use of that same name may have been different: Moshe Brohes (Moshe, Broha’s husband) or Leib Nehamkes (Leib, Nehama’s son). The history of surname creation contains evidence of wars

and territorial disputes between Poland and Russia. These brutal conflicts occurred on the territory of Belarus in the 17th-18th centuries and substantially influenced the migration of Jewish inhabitants and determined the process of community formation.⁵

In the mid 19th century Russian authorities launched an effort to assign heritable last names to Jews. This was an extension of a practice started by Austro-Hungary in 1797 and the German government in 1807-1834. The practice was prolonged over many years, yet still, in the 20th century, one could encounter Jews without last names. Last names were used in business transactions, registration of legal documents, non-Jewish legal proceedings, commercial receipts, etc. The most important use of last names, however, was for financial affairs. Jewish entrepreneurs and petty bourgeois suffered from excessive taxes, many of which were of an arbitrary nature. Having been forced to adapt to this, Jews often took advantage of the absence of permanent last names, passed on from generation to

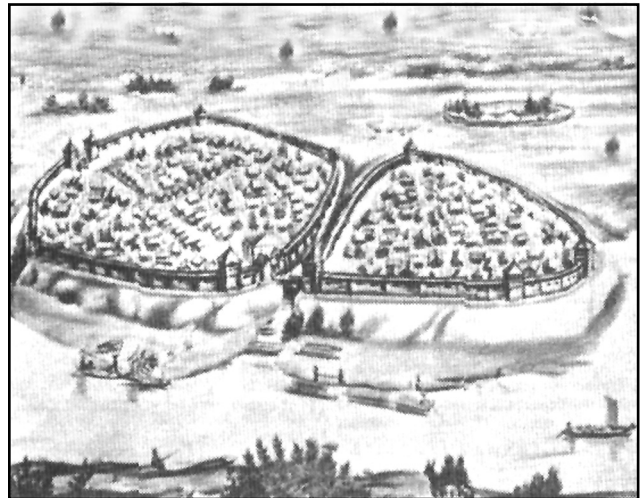


Fig. 1 - Turov in the 12th century

generation, and in this manner evaded inordinate tax burdens.

Russian officials, who were assigned the task of “naming” Jews, had to solve a complex problem. The last names had to reflect an ethnic association and hold meaning (denote something). To resolve this, the authorities approached the issue in their own way. First they employed simple German words, often close to or coinciding with Yiddish, as the foundation and used them to construct last names. These words referred to color or parts of the surrounding environment. This practice resulted in the following word elements: fled (field), wald (forest), gras

(grass), baum (tree), berg (mountain), tsvaig (branch), blatt (leaf), stein (rock), rot (red), grun (green), gelb (yellow), blau (bleu), rosen (pink), gimmel (sky), braun (brown), vais (white), kirshen (cherry), tseder (cedar), tmin (caraway), etc. In this way, the majority of Jewish last names originated from a German background. In Turov, these included Brombergs, Ginsburgs, Vaynblats, Rosenberg, Etingers, and others.

Jews did not wish to completely abide by rules of the German language and strove to preserve Yiddish. As a result, German last names soon started to sound the way the Jewish native language demanded. In Turov that meant Mendelbaum, not Mandelbaum as it sounds in German; Perkin, not Berkin; Kirzner, not Kirzhner; Lamdin, not Lamden; Laihtman, not Leihtman; Maklin, not Makler; Frenkel, not Frank; Shneiderman, not Shnaiderman; Shtelman, not Shtein; Etinger, not Ottinger, etc. On the other hand, the development of Jewish last names was influenced by Byelorussian borrowings, i.e. suffixes, and rules of word formation. That is how from the name Cohen we get Kogan, Kagan, Kaganovsky, Kaganovich, etc. Because of the haste with which officials strove to resolve the problem, a semantic incongruity arose. Only Jews had last names such as Beyntsenbaum, which in its translation from the German means “wheat tree”; Zauershtrom, “sour stream”; Levenfish, “fish-lion”; Siegenbaum, “goat tree”; Kvechman, “to speak out reluctantly”; Shuhman, “chock”, “shoe”, or “horse-shoe.”⁶

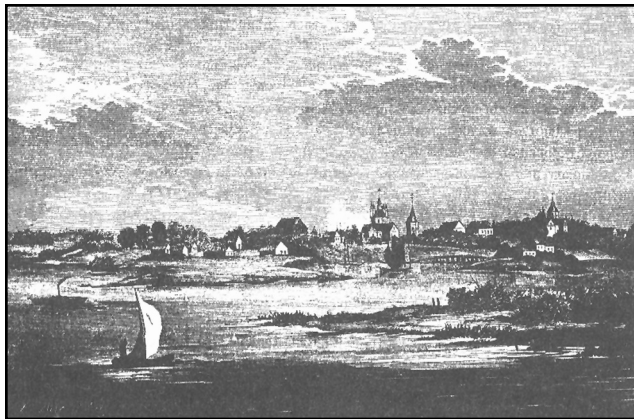


Fig. 2 - Turov in the 18th century

Often Russian officials in Belarus followed the German example of using the ending “er”, which is typical of German or Yiddish.⁷ In this way, Gliners, Pinskens, Gummens, Kagners, Kelers, Kirznens, Reyders, Farbers, and Etingers appeared in Turov. With the passing of time, some of these last names were Russified, their ending (“er”) was changed to “ski,” a sound more comfortable to the Byelorussian and Russian ear. With that, Pinsker became Pinski, Minsker - Minski, Gliner - Gliniski, and Vigorski, Gorodetski, Gorivodski, Drozdinski, Kabinetiski, Chrapunski, and Chernitski appeared.

Old principles of forming Jewish family names also became a source of many last names, now permanent and passed on by inheritance. The Hebrew names “Ben” or “Bar” became “son” (“zon”) (der Sohn - son in German). From here appeared Katz - Katznelson, Shmuel - Shmulenson, Abram - Abramson, Israelson, Davidson, and Gurshenzon. A different group of last names, belonging to this type, was closer to Yiddish than German. At the end of this type of last name is the word “man” (der Mann - person in German), but the first element of these last names was expressed in Yiddish.⁸ In Turov, these last names were Ayzenman, Gizunterman, Gitelman, Glozman, Gozman, Goberman, Zingman, Kayterman, Klugerman, Koymfan, Krugman, Lieberman, Raichman, Fleightman, Shleyzman, etc. The ending “man” went well with many other prefixes, borrowed from simple meanings, such as gold (*gold*); silver, (*zilber*); copper (*Kupfer* - German; *kuper*, Yiddish); and money (*Gelt*).⁹

The tradition (typical of a reserved feudal society) of classifying a person by his profession was not forgotten. However, now this tradition was passed on to descendants, regardless of their actual occupation and even when the ending “man” was not applied: Kushner, (furrier, furdresser); Papernik, (manufacturer of regular paper); Gefter, (manufacturer of notebooks); Treyger, (carrier); Shenker, (tractor driver); Botvinnik (“*botsvina*”- vegetable greenery,

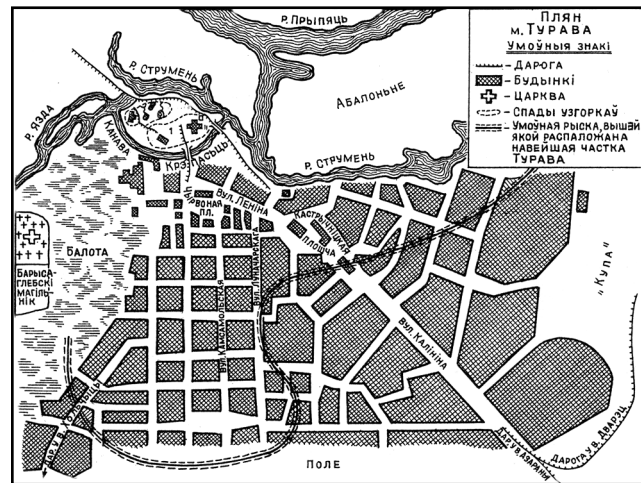


Fig. 3 - Turov in 1926

Polish); Kramnik - bench maker; Mashtaler - horseman; Shpitalnik - sanitarian; Tsukornik - pastry vendor. In Turov, the following were associated with these last names: Glozman (person who works with glass), Shifman (boatman), Shpeizman (cook, chef), Shusterman (shoemaker), Kirzner (furrier), Meklin (middle-man, broker), Offengendin (merchant of household birds), Farber (painter), Furman (carrier), Funtsman (one that weighs), Shlyapintoch (hat), etc.

The practice of allotting people last names according to their professional activities was widely prevalent in the

Jewish Diaspora. Widespread Jewish trades, such as the shoemaking business resulted in the emergence of the following last names: Sandler (Hebrew), Shuster or Shister (Yiddish), Chebotaru (Romanian), Varga (Hungarian), and finally, Sapoznik or Sapoznikov (in Russian - meaning shoe or boot maker). Another, no less prevalent, occupation in the *shtetl* gave rise to the following last names: Portnoy, Portnov (Russian- tailor), Kravetz (Russian), Kravchuk (Byelorussian), Kravzov (Ukrainian), Hait (Yiddish), and Haiyat (Hebrew). Accordingly, the following last names appeared from the same root: Shnayder (Yiddish)- tailor, Shnayderman - person associated with tailoring, Shayderovski, etc. In Turov, the tailoring trade was passed on by inheritance for a long time in the Shneyderman, Shvets and Tkach families.



Fig. 4 - House of Culture in Turov

Yiddish) - wealthy, respectable; and Laykhtman (*laykht*, Yiddish, light-noun) - light [adj]. Soshkin - derived from the female name Sora (Sarah) and Soshnik - emigrant from Soshnik village Pinsk *uezd* of the Minsk *guberniya*; Shtilman (*shtil*, Yiddish) - quiet, calm and Shtelman (*steyn* - rock, Yiddish) - one who works with stones. Some last names were so expressive that they speak for themselves: Bondar, Bondarev, Kuznetz, Kuznetsov, Pilshchik - carpenter, Muchnik - (*muka*, Russian, flour) - flour merchant, Molochnik (*moloko*, Russian, milk) - milk merchant, Krasilshchikov (*kraska*, Russian, paint) - painter, Grenader - soldier, Garbar (Byelorussian) - tanner. On the other hand, other last names require an explanation: Jewish men by the last name Zheleznyak (*zhelezo*, Russian, iron) received their last names because they were associated with



Fig. 5 - Turov city administration office

Certain last names reflected a more narrow specialization: Peltser (one who sews leathers), Futerman (sews coats), Tandetnik, Altauzen (one who turns articles of clothing). Later came last names derived from instruments and devices used by tailors: Sher (scissors), and its derivatives - Sherman, Shermanzon; Nodl (needle) - Nodelman, Nudel, Nudelman (Ukrainian variation), Igolnik, Igolnikov (Russian); Press (iron) - Presman, Presser; Fodim (thread) - Fodimman; Knop (button) - Knopman, Knepel. A particularly large number of last names were associated with carpentry, painting, boat making, and carrier professions.¹⁰

Last names aid in drawing the picture of Jewish occupations in Turov: Aybinder (bookbinder), Ayzinman (*auzn* - metal, Yiddish) - metal worker, Vareg (*vag* - scale Yiddish) - someone associated with weighing, Portman (*Port*, German) - a person from a pier or boatman, Rapoport (*reife* - physician, *mi port*, Hebrew) - doctor from a port city, Fishman (*fish*, Yiddish) - fisherman or fish dealer, Hinchik (method of measuring land use, Byelorussian) - land-surveyor, Furman (*fura*, *waggon*, Yiddish) - carrier. There were also last names in Turov that sounded alike, but held different meaning: Leytman (*leytn*, Yiddish, to solder) and Lihtman (*Licht*, German) - light; or Lauthman (*laut*,

the sale of metal (hardware), but were not blacksmiths, as it may seem at first glance.

A particular category of last names was one in which the prefix was given to occupations, ascribed only to Jews: Melamed (teacher in an *heder*), Soifer (one who reproduces sacred texts, Torah), Rabin, Rabinovich (rabbi), etc. These served as a basis for an entire line of last names associated with the observance of Jewish tradition, which set a rhythm to *shtetl* life and explained various difficult questions which arose in everyday endeavors and interactions. Before 1917, every Jew in Turov, without exception, attended synagogues and *minions*, underwent a circumcision, was married under a *hupa*, observed *kashrut* and *Shabbat*, and buried their relatives at the Jewish cemetery. As a result of this, there existed an exceptional respect for people who were responsible for spiritual life that found its reflection in last names. In Turov lived the Kantors, Kantarovichs, Kogans, Hazans, Hazanovichs - those who sang cantors in a synagogue; Lamdins and Lamdmans - those who studied the Torah (*lamden* - to study, Yiddish), Rabinovichs - descendants or members of the rabbi's family (*rabbin* - rabbi, Yiddish), Rashap - an abbreviation for a well-known expert of Judaism Rabbi Shlomo Pinsker (Rabbi Solomon from Pinsk), Shulmans (*shul* - Yiddish), habitué of the

synagogue and active believer, Yudanovichs (*Yuda, Yehuda, Jew, Yiddish*) - a self-given name for Jews. The last names Shamis, Shames, (*shamash, Hebrew*) indicated that their ancestors were attendants at a synagogue. Reznik, Reznikov, Shoyhet, Sheyhatovich - were specialists in the ritual of butchering cattle and poultry; Menakers inherited their last name from being specialists in clearing fat, bruising of tendons, and other forbidden material in meat; Bodek - inspected the quality of meat, whereas the last name Shub symbolized the abbreviation, which combined 2 professions, named above, associated with the observation of the *kashrut* traditions: “*shoyhet*” and “*u-bodek*”.

A large number of last names was derived from feminine and masculine given names. According to the accounts of linguist and historian Abraham Pribluda (Avrom-Shlema Mendelevich), a total number of 1758 Ashkenazi Jews had such last names, 1065 were masculine names and 693 were feminine. At the same time, 1622 last names originated from professions, trades, and other



Fig. 6 - Jewish cemetery in Turov

occupations.¹¹ The person with the greatest influence in the family had the advantage. If the family depended on the husband as the primary source of income, or if the husband possessed some kind of obviously exceptional attribute, then the children received a last name derived from the male name - Haimovich, Abramovich, Yankelevich, etc. Boruchovs (Boruch), Morduchovs (Morduch), Levins (Levi), Slavkins (Slava), and others were the famous last names in Turov.

Last names derived from female names had their own explanations. Men often left the home to earn money and during the time of their prolonged absences children were named after the mothers. This is how last names such as Haykin, Ryvkin, Sorkin, Estherkin, Leykin, Shifrin, Raykin, Malkin, etc. occur. In Turov this group of last names included the Gitelmans (Gita), Dvorkins (Dvoyra), Itkins (Ita), Kunda, Rashkins (Rohl, Rahel), Rivlins and Rishkins (Rivka), Soshkins (Sora, Sarah), and several others.

A common method for creating last names was geographical location. From the 16th to the 19th century, orthodox Jews of Central and Eastern Europe divided the entire region into a line of countries that differed in their cultural, every day life, and language distinctiveness. All of modern Belarus, a large part of Lithuania, the western part of Latvia (Latgalia), the Pskov, Smolensk, and Briansk regions of the Russian *oblast*, which bordered Belarus, were part of the “*Lita Erets*” (Lithuania). Jews were separated from the rest of the population by their distinct Yiddish dialect and traditional way of life. “*Lita*” was the spiritual center for Ashkenazic Jews, home to major *Yeshivas* and renowned experts of Judaism. Hostility to Hasidism became a trait of the area, although this discipline was spread in certain regions (Chabad - in the far northwest, Hasid “courtyards” in Polesie).

“Geographical” last names affirm the widespread migration of Jews. During the 19th century, migratory patterns went from north to south, from Jewish “Lithuania” to Podolia, to Ukraine and the provinces of Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Tavrida, to the left bank of Ukraine and Bessarabia, where formerly Jews did not live. In 1795, Jewish Lithuania was twice as populous as Jewish Ukraine-Podolia-Volyn; by the beginning of the 1940’s this population ratio was drastically changed. Close to 470,000 Jews lived in Lithuania and more than 550,000 Jews lived in Ukrainian provinces (including Prichernomorie and Bessarabia). In 1897, 1,423,000 Jews lived in Lithuania, while 2,153,000 lived in the southern Russian empire.¹²

Last names often indicated the place certain families originated. A number of them kept their old German last names, which verified that their distant ancestors were emigrants from Germany. The Brombergs, Ginsburgs, Landaus and Landins lived in Turov for a long time. Their ancestors apparently came from the Pfaltz (Landau) and Bavaria (Ettinger - Ottingen). The Liphshits and Livshits were from Czech, Poland and Germany, Bohemia, Silesia, and Turing (Liebeschitz, Lobshutz, Liebschutz), while the Blochs came from Italy (*w loch* means Italian in Polish). In addition to these last names, Turov had representatives of Russian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian cities and *shtetls*. These included the Lutski, Kocherovski, and Hochinski families from the villages of Luka, Kocherovo and Hochin in the Zhitomir *guberniya*; the Brailovskis from the city of Brailov, Vinnitsa *uezd*; and the Shleizmans from Shliozhi village of the Telshai *uezd* in Lithuania. Turov, however, was comprised mostly of Jews named from Belarussian localities, among whom the following names were prevalent.

Minsk guberniya

Gliners - from the Glinnoe village of the Glin’ Mozyr *uezd*; Gorevodskis - city of Rechitsa; Drozdinskis - Drozdy village of the Minsk *uezd*; Lelchuks - Lelchitsy *shtetl* of the Mozyr *uezd*; Pinchuks - city of Pinsk; Puhovitskis - Puhovichi *shtetl*, Igumen *uezd*; Sosnik and Soshnik - Shoshnik village of Pinsk *uezd*; Starobinskis - Starobin

shtetl, Slutsk *uezd*; Strelts - Streltsy village, Slutsk *uezd*; Hrapunskis and Chernitskis - from Hrapin and Chernichi village, Mozyr *uezd*; Chirins - Tsinin *shtetl*, Novogrudok *uezd*.

Vitebsk guberniya

Golins - from Golin village, Nevel *uezd*; Gorodetskis - Gorodok *shtetl*; Dorozhkos- Dorozhki village of the Disna and Senno *uezds*; Chudners - Chudnaya village, Senno *uezd*.

Grodno guberniya

Borodetskis and Borodoskis - from Borodichy village, Volkovysk *uezd*; Koniks - Konna and Konik village, Volkovysk and Slonim *uezd*; Korobochkos - Koroby village, Disna *uezd*; Muravchiks and Chechiks - from Murava and Chechki villages of the Pruzhany *uezd*; Olshanskis - Olshanitsa village of the Slomin *uezd*.

Mogilev guberniya

Goloveys - from Golovchin village, Mogilev *uezd*; Osovskis - Osov village, Cherikov *uezd*; Shliavers and Zaretskis - town of Shklov and Zarech'e village.



Fig. 7 - World War II memorial in Turov

This same method was used to classify emigrants from Turov and served as a basis for the emergence of last names with the root “Turov”- Turov, Turover, Turovski, etc. It is therefore clear that in Turov, there could not have been any Jewish families with such last names. From 1905-1914, more than 400 people, most of them from Belarus, immigrated to the United States of America through the entry point on Ellis Island in New York. These immigrants were marked with the last name that sounded similarly to the word “Turov”.¹³ Turov natives included progenitors of the following people: journalist Yitzhak Tyrov (1855-1929), born in Slutsk; pedagogue, scholar and doctor of philosophy, Nisan Turov (1887-1953), from Nesvizh; automotive engineer and doctor of technical sciences, Ilya Turovski (born in 1912), from Vorontsov village of Cherson *guberniya*; commander Simon Turovski (1895-1937), from Harkov; dramaturge, script writer, and doctor of art history,

May Turovski (1924-); and corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Evgeni Turov from Moscow, et al.¹⁴

These last names demonstrate that Jews, despite living in exile, have preserved their ancestral. That is why many Jewish last names have Hebrew roots. The Twelve Tribes, which comprised the ancient Jewish people, had sacred symbol of a wild animal, which later, in its altered state, became a last name. The patron of the Yehuda tribe was a lion, from which comes the names Leibzon, Leibovich, (lion, Yiddish). Benjamin’s tribe had a symbol of a wolf - Wolf, Wolfenzon (*Wolf*, Yiddish). The totem of Yitzhak’s tribe was a bear - from this symbol the prefixes Dov (bear, Hebrew) and Ber (bear, Yiddish), resulting in all of their many derivatives. Vovsi was a name of a scout, sent by Moses to the unexplored land of Chanaan. Lapidus was the name of Deborah’s, while Efron was the name of a landowner who owned a piece of land, which was bought by Abraham for the burial of Sarah. In Turov, the following last names had Hebrew roots: Kagners and Kaplans, derived from the pontiff of the Jerusalem temple (koyhen), Ozers (eoyzey, aid), Levim (leywij) - became Levins and Levinskis. The following last names were based on Hebrew abbreviations: Shatz - “*shaliah tsibur*” (community envoy), Katz - “*kohen u-tsedek*” (pontiff, righteous man), Segal, Shagal - “*sgan levia*” (member, deputy of the Levy clan), Bashmet - “*baal’ shem-tov*” (possessor of kind name).

An entire group of last names names can be divided into the following common categories:

Personal Traits

Gizunterman - healthy (*gizunt*, Yiddish), Gummer - clever-minded, humorous (*humor*, Yiddish), Gutman - kind (*gut*, Yiddish), Shtilman - quiet, still (*shtill*, Yiddish), Kalyuzhniy - dirty, foul (Ukrainian), Klugerman - smart (*klug*, Yiddish), Latkhman - light (*leicht*, Yiddish), Lieberman - expensive (*liber*, Yiddish), Gorelik - one who lost all of his possessions in a fire (victim of a fire), Freyleymand - happy (*freylekh*, Yiddish), Shvartsman - black (*shvarts*, Yiddish), Shtilman - quiet (*shtill*, Yiddish).

Economic Status

Laichtman - wealthy (*laut*, Yiddish), Goldin - gold (*goldin* - gold), Zilber, Zilberman- silver (*zilber*, Yiddish), Margolin - pearl (*margolis*, Hebrew), Raikhman - wealthy (*rakh*, Yiddish), Roshan - deprived, poor man (*royash*, Hebrew), Baidanchik - idler, one who is lazy, without money (Ukrainian).

Animal and Plant Kingdom

Gozman - rabbit (*goz*, Yiddish), Goberman- oat, (*hober*, Yiddish), Komar, Lis, Mendelbaum- almond tree (*Mandel*, German), Perkin - bear (*ber*, Yiddish).

Intangible Objects

Glin - clay, Kabinetski - cabin (*Kabine*, German), Korobochko - box, Krugman - pitcher (*krug*, Yiddish),

Keller - cellar, basement (*cellar*, Yiddish), Lehchin, Lehchinov - tinder (*likhttsinder*, Yiddish), Wager - scale (*vag*, Yiddish), Feldman - field (*feld*, Yiddish), Shtelman - rock (*steyn*, Yiddish).

Musicians and Musical Instruments

Cimbel - musician-cymbalist (*tsimbl*, Yiddish), Fleitman - musician, one who plays the flute (Yiddish and *fleyta*, Russian), Zingman - singer and musicians (*singman*, Yiddish).

Another unique characteristic of Jewish names is the existence of dual first names. This is an ancient custom of giving a newborn one name in memory of a deceased relative on the mother's side and another name in memory of a deceased relative on the father's side. On this subject, the Sacred Writing states, "and a firstborn, will have a name of a brother who died, so that his name will not be effaced in Israel".¹⁵ Traces of this tradition were encountered in the earliest examples of rabbinical writings, such as Mishne, Talmud, and later annotations. A possible explanation is the condition of life in Diaspora, when Jews were forced to accept unfamiliar names, uncharacteristic of Jewish tradition. Some people rearranged the meaning of their biblical names to the language of the people among whom they lived. Biblical names and similar combinations with their translation were encountered often and were read together as one name: Tsvi-Girsh, Arie-Lev, Shlomo-Zalman. The emergence of double names promoted the position of the Talmud, which states that with the renewal of names a person's Judgment, prepared for him by God, was rescinded. That is why a person who fell fatally ill was given a new name, which was nothing like his former name, after completing a prayer at the synagogue for his recovery. When the person recuperated, the name was left along with the former one, as a good omen for the future. The following double names were encountered in Turov: Margolin, Avremele Ishie-Mashes, Moshe-Dovid and Ione-Arie-Leib; Korobochko, Avraam-Moshe; Zingman, Esther-Malka; Glozman, Shene-Lea, Mordechai-Iosele and Ele-Leib; Shifman, Yitzhak Chaim Boruh and Rochl-Etl; Wager, Freydl-Rochel and Chaim-Godl; Shlyapintoch, Rezel-Lea; Molochnik, Sheyne-Lea, and others.

The civil authorities viewed this custom with caution, and worked to ensure it did not allow for the misuse of names. In 1868, a general-governor of Vilno, A.L. Potapov, asked the instructors of the rabbinical school in Vilno to resolve this potential problem. Several signed on to the task: Chaim Katzenelenbogen, inspector of the rabbinical school; Joshua Steinberg, a lexicographer and author of Russian-Hebrew dictionaries; writer Mark Plungyanski; and Sheftel Klyachko, rabbi of the Vilno community. These scholars explained the need for double names among Jews, but their arguments did not convince the authorities. The latter felt Jewish registration under several names in the *revizskie skazki* (revision lists or poll tax lists) would cause immense inconveniences. This custom did, in fact, hinder

discovering people who were not registered in the *skazki*. The most important thing, however, that concerned the authorities was the misuse of names when issuing passports. According to authorities, "criminals" would be able to hide behind a name belonging to someone else and escape from being prosecuted by the law. For this reason, rabbis were advised to register newborns under only one name after the circumcision.

The story of Jewish last names would not be complete without discussing including their subsets, such as surnames and nicknames. For a long time these existed parallel to last names and sometime even preceded them, serving as the basis for the assignment of permanent last names to families.

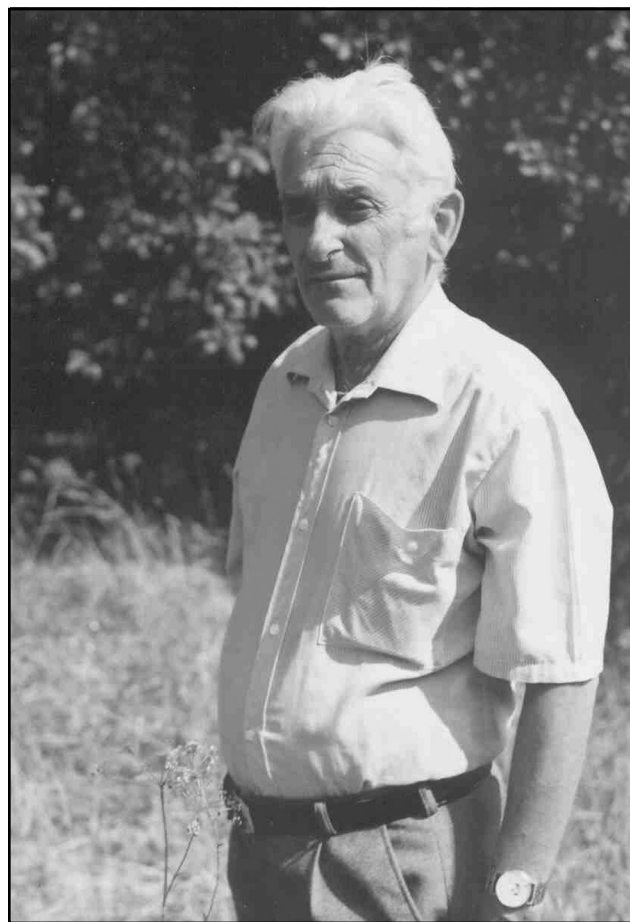


Fig. 8 - Aharon Fleitman, one of only three Jews now living in Turov

Surnames and nicknames helped describe people with the same name, often had a steady nature, and were passed on from a father to his children. Sometimes they were even better suited for people than their official last names. For example, we can declare with confidence that the last name Tyuriahin is derived from a surname for a Jew who had a low self-esteem, was unable to make his own decisions, and always relied on other people.

Other surnames and nicknames originated from a person's individual features: hair or beard color, behavioral

characteristics, physical deficiencies, distinct skills, and professions. Well known people in Turov with such names were Abraham Wainblat - "Avremele der matematik" (Abraham the mathematician), Osher Zaretski - "Osher der glezer" (Osher that works with glass), Shmuel Gummer - "Shmuel der geler" (Shmuel the redhead), Zalman "der blinder" (blind Zalman), "Boruch der zaeke" (Boruch the bunny), "Chaim der oks" (Chaim the bull), "Meyer-faier" (Meyer the fire), and others.

Over time, the majority of Jewish last names became rooted in people's minds without a clear understanding of their semantic meaning. The main function of last names was now a way to classify families or their offshoots. During the Soviet period in Byelorussian history, last names served only to identify Jews as Jews, since ethnic traditions and historical roots were lost. To name a son Israel, Abraham, Samuel, Yitzhak or to name a daughter Sarah, Rachel, or Chava, meant to subject them to persecution, starting from childhood and running the course of their lives. That is why many Slavic names were adopted for Jewish boys and girls. Tayba became Tanya, Beynish and Boruch - Boris, Chaim - Efim, Moshe - Misha, Golda - Galya, Aaron - Arkady, Rachmiel - Mila, Solomon - Siemyon, Hersh - Grigory, Entl - Elena, Osher - Eyosif, Rivl (Rivka) - Riva, etc.

This process was one of the last steps taken towards complete assimilation of the Jews during the Communist regime. Prominent writer Anatoly Aleksin graphically described this in his novel, *The Pevzner Saga* (Tel-Aviv, 1995). The Soviet Hero, Boris Isaacovich Pevzner, and his wife Yudif, are choosing names for their newborn triplets. In memory of a grandmother, Dvoira, they name their daughter Dasha; one of the sons was named Igor, after grandpa Isaac; and the other son was named Serezha (Serzh) - in memory of grandfather Samuel. To this day, these inherited last names, derived from personal names, save the post-Soviet "Russian" Jews from the complete loss their Jewish naming tradition.

Today, there are only 3 Jews left in Turov, Aharon Fleitman, his sister Rimma Peshevich (Fleitman), and Michael Lelchuk. Never will this community, once consisting of more than 3000 Jews, fully cease to exist. People with ancestral ties to Turov, now living in former Soviet republics and around the world, will continue to hold it in their memory, and the evidence of their past will be forever fastened on them in their inherited surnames.

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Fig. 9 - Tur, the first prince of Turov