

Meanings of Persian-Jewish Surnames

by Ephraim Dardashti

When people select a surname for the first time or change their surname, they often provide a window into their aspirations, professions, preferences and the realities of their lives. We may glean such information from a list of surnames used by the Jews of Iran. Fixed, inherited family names are a relatively recent phenomenon in Iran, having been mandated for the country as a whole only in the early 1920s.

The names listed below provide hints of professions practiced or aspired to by the Jews. They are Hebrew surnames with no Persian, Turkish or Russian suffixes, thus indicating a strong Jewish/Hebrew self-image; and a list of surnames that indicate the different regions people identified as the source of their family roots. The names were taken from four sources:

- Names of individuals who were born in Iran that are Jewish and are personally known to the author
- Names found in Farsi Jewish magazines published in the United States: *Shofar* and *Payam*.
- Names of Jewish donors to Persian synagogues in Los Angeles
- Names from tombstones in Jewish cemeteries in Iran and the United States

These lists are not exhaustive. Readers with knowledge of additional names should contact the author at ephidar-dashti@gmail.com.

Professions

Almasi – Diamond seller
Ashpaz – Cook
Atarian – Son of grocers
Atighechi – Antique dealer
Ayinesazan – Glass maker
Bana – Builder
Bandandaz – Plucker of hair
Chadorchi – Tent seller
Dalazadeh – Son of deal makers
Falgir – Fortune teller
Farshforoosh – Carpet seller
Ghalichi – Carpet seller
Ghassab – Butcher
Ghassabian – Son of butchers
Hakhamzadeh – Son of rabbi
Hakim – Physician
Hakimfar, Hakimi, Hakimian, Hakimianpour – All allude to being related in some way to the field of medicine
Halimi – Halim maker (halim is a porridge)
Hanassab – Scrubber of henna
Javaheri, Javaherian – Jeweler
Jourabchi – Sock seller
Kadkhoda, Kadkhodazadeh – Ruler of a village
Kafash, Kafashian—Shoemaker

Khakshouri, Khakshouyi – purchaser of dirt from jewelry stores who rinses the dirt to retrieve fragments of precious metal
Kamouchekesh – Player of the kamanche (a stringed instrument)
Lahafdooz – Sewer of bedspreads
Massachi – Seller of matzah
Moalem – Teacher
Najar – Carpenter
Neyzan – Player of the flute
Ostad – Teacher, master of a craft
Panirian – Son of cheese sellers
Pezeshk, Pezeshki, Pezeshkifar – Related to medicine
Pinedooz – Cobbler
Ravanshenas – Psychologist
Saraf – Moneychanger
Shaer – Poet
Shofet – Judge
Simozar – Hinting at being jewelers
Shokhet – Ritual slaughterer
Sormeforush – Seller of kohl
Tabibi – Physician
Talasazan - Goldsmith
Tootooni – Tobacconist
Zahabian – Goldsmith
Zargari, Zargarian – Jewelers

Unadulterated Hebrew Names

Abir – אביר Knight
Afar – אפר Dust
Ahdoot – אחדות Unity, comradesly
Ahouvim – אהובים Lovers
Aryeh – אריה Lion
Azhkenazi – אשכנזי Ashkenazi
Baalhaness – בעל הנס Miracle worker
Bakhour – בחור Young man
Baroukh – ברוך Blessed
Beneliyahu – בן אליהו Son of Eliyahou
Benhuri – בן הורי Son of Huri
Benporat – בן פורת Son of Porat
Bensadigh – בן צדיק Son of a tsadik
Bension – בן ציון Son of Zion
Beroukha – ברוכה Blessed
Beroukhim – ברוכים Blessed (plural)
Davidi – דודי of David
Dayanim – דיינים Rabbinical judges
Eldad – אלדד
Eli – אלי
Elisha – אלישע
Emanouel – עמנואל God is with us
Emouna – אמונה Faith
Gabbay – גבאי

Gabriel – גבריאל
 Gad – גד
 Geula – גאולה Redemption
 Ghassab – Butcher
 Ghadishah – קדישה
 Ghadosh – קדוש Holy
 Goyqadosh – גוי קדוש A holy nation (Name chosen by Cohens)
 Hai – חי Living
 Haim – חיים Life
 Halleluya – הללויה
 Halousim – חלוצים Pioneers
 Hassid – חסיד Righteous
 Hassidim – חסידים Righteous ones
 Haverim – חברים Friends, comrades
 Hebron – חברון
 Hebroni – חברוני from Hebron
 Herout – חרות Freedom
 Kabooud – כבוד Respect, honor
 Kasher – כשר Kosher
 Kohanim – כהנים Priests
 Kohengadosh – כהן קדוש Holy priest
 Kohansedgh – כהן צדק Just priest
 Lavi – לביא Lion
 Levi – לוי Levite
 Leviim – לויים Levites
 Limoudim – לימודים Studies
 Maccabee – מכבי
 Mashiah – משיח Messiah
 Mataniyahu – מתניהו
 Meborakh – מבורך Blessed
 Melamed – מלמד Teacher
 Moreh – מורה Teacher
 Moshe – משה
 Moshel – מושל Governor, ruler
 Najar – נגר Carpenter
 Naiim – נעים Pleasant
 Naqi – נקי Pure
 Nasi – נשיא Head of
 Nataneli – נתנאלי
 Navi – נביא Prophet
 Nehama – נחמה Consolation
 Nehorai – נהוראי
 Neman – נאמן Faithful
 Netzer – נצר Descendent
 Oheb – אוהב Lover of
 Ohebshalom – אוהב שלום Lover of peace
 Ohebsion – אוהב ציון Lover of Zion
 Pedouim – פדואים
 Penhasi – פנחסי
 Pertieli – פרתיאלי
 Pessach – פסח Passover
 Pourat – פורת Prolific
 Rason – רצון Grace
 Roubeni – ראובני
 Sapir – ספיר Sapphire

Saraf – צרף Moneychanger
 Sasoun – ששון Joy
 Sefaradi – ספרדי
 Shabtai – שבתאי
 Shalem – שלם Complete
 Shalom – שלום Peace
 Shaoul – שאול
 Shemtoob – שם טוב Good name
 Shimoni – שמעוני
 Shofet – שופט Judge
 Shokhet – שוחט Ritual slaughterer
 Shmouel – שמואל
 Shomroni – שומרוני from Samaria
 Shoushani – שושני from Shoushan
 Siman – סימן Omen
 Simantob – סימן טוב good omen
 Sioni – ציוני Zionist
 Soofer – סופר Scribe
 Soomekh – סומך Trust
 Talmud – תלמוד
 Tefillen – תפילין
 Tighva – תיקוה Hope
 Tishbi – תישבי
 Toub – טוב Good
 Yahid – יחיד Unique
 Yedidsion – ידיד ציון Friend of Zion
 Yeranen – ירנן He will sing
 Yeroushalmi – ירושלמי Jerusalemite
 Yodim – יודעים In the know
 Yomtoub – יום טוב Good day
 Yehasqel – יחזקאל
 Zahir – זהיר Careful
 Zeroubaveli – זרובבלי

Geographical Names

Aghalorian, Aghalorpour, Aghalorpouri – From the village of Aghalor in the Mazanderan region
 Ardebilichi – From the region of Ardebil in the Azerbaijan region of northwest Iran
 Arghavani – From the village of Arghavan in the Kerman region
 Baghdadi – From Baghdad, Iraq
 Damavandi – From the ancient city of Damavand, east of Tehran
 Dardashti, Dardashtian – From the Dardasht section of Isphahan
 Delijani – City south of Qom
 Esfahani – City in central Iran reputedly built by Jews after the destruction of the first temple. Originally named Yahudiyeh, the place of the Jews.
 Esraiili – From Israel
 Falesteeni – From Palestine
 Gharebghi – Village in Western Azerbaijan
 Gilani – Northern luscious section of Iran
 Giliyardi – Jewish village within Damavand, a village that was historically Jewish

Golpayegani – Area of Jewish settlement northeast of Isphahan
 Gorji – Village southeast of Babolsar in the region of Mazanderan
 Goudarzi – Village south of Babolsar in the region of Mazanderan
 Hamedani – City located in the foothills of the Alvand mountains in Midwest Iran, the traditional burial ground of Esther and Mordechai
 Hebroni – From Hebron in Israel
 Kashani, Kashanian, Kashi, Kashinejad – City in the province of Isphahan. The Jewish population has a tradition that they are descendants of the expulsion from Spain in 1492.
 Kermani, Kermanian, Kermanshachi, Kermanshahi – City in southeastern Iran
 Kordestani – From Kurdistan in Western Iran
 Lahijani – From the village of Lahijan in the Caspian region of Iran
 Sabzevari – From the village of Sazevar located in northeastern Iran
 Sanandaji – From Sanandaj, the capital city of Iranian Kurdistan
 Sanani – From the village of Senan in southern Iran
 Shirazi, Shirazipour – From the city of Shiraz in southern Iran
 Shomroni – From Samaria in Israel
 Shoushani – From the city of Shoushan, the site of the Queen Esther Purim story
 Tehrani – From the capital of Iran, Teheran

Torbati – From a village in the Khrasan region of Iran, in northeast Iran
 Touserكاني – From the city of Touserkan in the Hamedan province
 Yazdi – From the city of Yazd, located southeast of Isphahan

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Ephraim Dardashti was born in Iran to a Jewish family that embodied Jewish strands from the communities of Isphahan, Shiraz, Yazd, Teheran and Tsarist Russia. Dardashti studied Middle-Eastern history in college with an emphasis on Persian, Arabic and Hebrew. As a historian, he has published pieces on the use of Arabic in the war against terror and on better understanding the actions of the Islamic Republic within the Persian cultural context. Dardashti lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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