

## Jewish Physicians in Southern France in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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This paper analyzes the names of 117 Jewish physicians, who practiced in towns in southern France between 1273 and 1421, and who are listed in an article by Isaac Alteras, “Jewish Physicians from Southern France During the 13th and 14th Centuries”<sup>1</sup> The article includes an additional seven physicians, but these were on the faculty of the well-known medical school in Montpellier, rather than local practitioners. While all of the towns are in France, many of the names and naming practices follow Catalanian (or Occitan?) naming practices, rather than the French or Spanish.

### **Given Names**

The basic form of Jewish names is:

Given Name [child of] Father’s Given Name [child/of] Grandfather’s Given Name [modifier(s)]

### **Men’s Given Names**

The Hebrew word “bat” or the Arabic “ibn” is used for “son of.” In the Alteras article, however, most of the names follow the model described in “Jews in Catalonia: 1250-1400” by Juliana de Luna (Julia Smith).<sup>2</sup> The father’s name follows the son’s without any connecting “ben” or “ibn” in between. Only 13 individuals include “ben” including Solomon ben Joseph ibn Ayyub, the only name where “ibn” also occurs.

Few of the names are Biblical:

Aaron 0/1/0	Ayyub (Job) 0/0/1	Jacob 4/2/1	Moses 8/0/0
Abraham 13/1/0	David 5/3/1	Jedaiah 1/0/0	Nathan 0/1/0
Asser 0/1/0	Isaac 7/3/1	Joseph 6/4/0	Phineas 1/0/0
Avigdor 0/1/0	Israel 1/0/1	Mordochee 2/0/0	Samuel 7/1/0

The format used above and throughout this paper is:

Given Name # of individuals with name/# of fathers with name/# of grandfathers with name

Thus, there were 13 physicians named Abraham, and one physician whose father’s name was Abraham. No physician on the list had a grandfather named Abraham. These numbers includes variants. Thus, the three instances of Abram are counted under Abraham, and Isaac includes Ysaac.

A number of other names are of Hebrew origin: Abba Mari, Baro and Baruch (two forms of the same name), Juthiel, Maymo, Mayr, Nasci, and Sullam. Kalonymos and Todros are Greek, but were adopted early on as Jewish names.

Some names are combinations of Hebrew and Romance language elements. In “Names of Jews in Medieval Navarre (13th–14th centuries)”, Lidia Becker suggests that the similarity between “ben” (son of) and bono

(good) led to such combinations as Bondavit (good/son of David), Bonjudas (good/son of Judas, the Greek form of Judah), and Bonziac (good/son of Isaac).<sup>3</sup> Since these appear as both the first and the second name element in the list of names in the Alteras article, it is not clear if these combinations were used as patronymics or as given names or as both. Or as both elements as in Bonjudas Bondavin of Marseille.

A second combination of Hebrew and Romance elements, Bellshom, was found. The name lexemes translate as “pretty name”, the equivalent of the Greek name Kalonymos.

Two sets of names are translations of Hebrew names. Baruch means “a blessing.” The name was translated as Benedich “a prayer”, which was sometimes shortened to Bendit. Similarly, while the Hebrew name Chaim “life” does not appear on Alteras’ list, the various translations: Vidal, Vides, Vital, Vitalis, and Vives can all be found.

The remaining given names are of Romance language origin, and four of them, I think, are of note:

- *Astruc* is a Romance language name that was used by the Jews of France and Spain. The name means “lucky” or “born under a lucky star.” Becker suggests that the name may be a translation of the Hebrew name Mazel Tov, which means “good star” or Gad “lucky.”<sup>4</sup>
- *Cresques* appears in the Alteras article as a given name, but it also occurred as a family name common among the Jews of southern France and Catalonia. It apparently to derive from the Latin verb *crecere* “to grow, increase”. It may be a a French form of Joseph “may G-d increase” (from Genesis 30:24).<sup>5</sup>
- *Rocell*, *Rossed*, and *Rossel* are the first elements in the names of three physicians living in 14<sup>th</sup> century Tarascon. The names all are variants on the Catalan *russus* “red.”
- *Salves* derives from the Latin *salves* “saves.” It is related to the Spanish name Salvatore.

A frequency count of the male given names on this list is found in Appendix 1 to this paper. The actual names can be found in Appendix 2.

### Female Given Names

Only one of the physicians is female, Sarah of St. Giles, who lived in Marseille. The Alteras article lists three other women, all of them the wives of daughters of physicians:

- Bella, the wife of Leo Jusse
- Franqua, the wife of Compart Asser
- Regina, the daughter of Leo Jusse, and, later, the wife of Vitalis Struch de Beslau

### Bynames

#### Family Names

There are a number of names appear to be family names: Alphaquim, Cabrit, Caslari, Maleti, and Veger. Cabrit is a descriptive byname meaning “a young goat.”

#### Priestly Bynames

The names Cohen refers to the descendents of Aaron, Moses’ brother, who became the first high priest of ancient Israel, and from who all subsequent high priests were descended. When the Talmud, the Book of Jewish Law, gives the basic form of the Jewish name, it specifically mentions Cohen and Levi as bynames.<sup>6</sup>

Jewish law treats Cohens as a special class with certain privileges, duties, and restrictions. The name Levi refers to the descendents of the Biblical tribe of Levi, who served as lesser priests in the First and Second Temple. Four individuals in the Alteras article have the byname Cohen. There is also a Levi and a ha-Levi.

### Toponymic Bynames

The great majority of physicians have a byname based on a geographic location. Most of these are derived from specific towns. All but one of these use the Romance language form *de* or the English form *of*. That one uses the Arabic form al-Bargadi. One physician is from northern France, which was known to medieval Jews as Zarfat, giving the toponymic Zarfati. Another was called ha-Sefardi, from the Iberian Peninsula. Astruc Bonidomini was known as a “habitor Bitteris” (resident of Beziers). Several others had the word Jew as part of the byname; e.g., Jew of Elne. Bedit Jusse was referred to as magister of Arles, and Mosse Vides (or Vives) was known as both physician of Carcassonne and magister of Elne.

One other name, Gerondin, appears to be a toponymic. The Jewish Encyclopedia lists seven Jews named Gerondi, who lived Gerona, Catalonia during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>7</sup>

### Other Bynames

The name Ferrier refers to a blacksmith. Nasci is, I think, a variant on Nasi, “prince.” The title was used by a Jew who served as the King’s representative to the Jewish community. Alteras doesn’t say that Vinellas Nasci was the leader of the Jewish community of Avignon.<sup>8</sup> However, it may mean that he was related to such a person.

Alteras says that a number of medical titles were used, but it is not clear whether these were applied in the course of the documents he referred to or were used as bynames.

The titles were:

- Magister -- 52 times
- Maestro – 3
- Fisticus – 24
- Physician – 4
- Medicus – 2
- Surgeon – 5
- Sirgurgicus – 1
- Surgicus – 4

Twenty physicians were referred to as both magister and fisticus. There was one pairing of magister and surgicus and one of medicu and surgicus.

*Appendix 1*  
Male Given Name Frequency Count

Given Name [# of Individuals with Name]/[# of Fathers with Name]/[# of Grandfathers with Name]

Aaron	0/1/0	David		Mosse	7/0/0
Abba Mari	0/1/0	David	2/2/1	Nathan	0/1/0
Abigdor	0/1/0	Davi	0/1/0	Phineas	1/0/0
Abin	0/1/0	Davinus	3/0/0	Rocel	
Abraham		Dayhot	0/1/0	Rocel	1/0/0
Abraham	10/1/0	Bondavin	0/2/0	Rossed	1/0/0
Abram	3/0/0	Bondavit	1/0/0	Rossel	1/0/0
Anatoli	0/0/1	Daynand	0/1/0	Salamis	
Asday	0/0/1	Dienlosal	1/0/0	Salamis	0/1/0
Asser	0/1/0	Durand		Salamnis	0/1/0
Astruc		Duran	1/0/0	Sullam	1/0/0
Astruc	5/2/0	Durand	1/0/0	Salomon	
Astruch	0/1/0	Helies		Salomon	3/2/0
Astruge	0/1/0	Helie		Solomon	1/2/0
Astrugil	0/1/0	(Helyas)	0/1/0	Salves	2/1/0
Struch	0/2/1	Helies	1/0/0	Samiel	
Ayyub	0/0/1	Immanuel		Samiel	7/0/0
Baruch		Immanuel	1/0/0	Samuel	1/0/0
Baro	2/2/1	Manuel	0/1/0	Sarah	0/0/0
Baruch	1/0/0	Isaac		Senhor	0/1/0
Bendich	2/0/0	Isaac	4/1/0	Thoros	
Bendit	2/1/0	Ysaach	2/2/0	Thoros	
Bellant	1/0/0	Bonziac	1/0/0	(Tourossius)	1/0/0
Bellshom	1/1/0	Israel	1/0/0	Touroci	0/0/0
Blasom	0/1/0	Jacob	4/2/0	Todros	0/2/0
Bonfil		Jedaiah	1/0/0	Vidal	
Bofill	1/1/0	Joseph		Vidal	1/1/0
Bonafis	1/0/0	Joseph	0/2/0	Vides	
Bonfils	0/0/1	Juse		(Vives)	0/1/0
Bonet	4/4/0	(Josseph)	2/2/0	Vital	2/1/0
Bonetus	1/0/0	Bonjues	1/0/0	Vitalis	2/2/0
Bonias	1/1/0	Bonjusas	0/1/0	Vinellas	1/0/0
Bonidomini	0/1/0	Bonjuses	3/1/0		
Bonjudas	1/0/0	Juthiel	1/0/0		
Bonsenyor		Kalonymos	1/1/0		
Bonusdominus	1/0/0	Leo			
Compart	1/1/0	Leo	1/2/0		
Cresques		Leonis	0/1/0		
Crescas	1/0/0	Macip	0/1/0		
Crescent	1/0/0	Mager	1/0/0		
Cresques	1/1/0	Mancipius	1/0/0		
		Maymo	0/2/0		
		Mayr	2/1/0		
		Mordochee	2/0/0		
		Moses			
		Moses	1/0/0		

*Appendix 2*  
Actual Names  
(Sorted by Town)

**Perpignan**

Aaron el-Bargadi	Jacob de Aquanis
Abram Mayr de Pulcrovicino	Juse Baro
Abram Ysaach Veger	Jusseph
Abram Veger	Leo Jusse
Astruc Bonidomini habitator Bitteris (Beziers)	Mager Massip
Astruc Leonis	Mancipius de Lunello
Baro Astruc	Mayr Bonet
Baro Dayhot Cohen	Mayr Cresques
Bellshom Bonet	Mosse Astruch
Bendit Jusse	Mosse Baro
Bendit Struch	Mosse Leo
Bofill Struch	Mosse Macip
Bonafis Bofill Struch	Mosse Vides (Vives)
Bonet Bellshom	Mosse Alphaquim
Bonet Maymo	Salomon Astruc
Bonetus	Samiel Bendit
Bonjuses Davi Baro	Samiel Jacob Cohen
Bonjuses Helie (Helyas)	Samiel Vitalis Levi
Bonjuses Yssach de Villamayna	Samiel Alphaquim
Bonsenyor (Bonusdominus) Salamnis	Samiel Asday
Cresques Maleti	Samiel Cabrit
Davinus de Castlario	Samiel Salves
Davinus de Besalduno	Sullam Maymo
Davinus de Caslar of Besalu	Vitalis of Besalu
Duran Leo de Cereto	Yssach Bonet
Helies	Yssach Cabrit
Jacob Bonjuses	

**Marseille**

Abraham Bondavin	Durand Salves
Abraham de Lunel	Mordochee Astruge
Abraham de Meyrarques	Mosse Bonjusas Cohen
Bonet	Salomon Gerondin
Bonjudas Bondavin	Salves of Courthéson
Bonziac of Beaucaire	Sarah of St. Giles
Dienlosal	Vitalis Abraham

**Avignon**

Abraham Manuel  
 Abraham Salves  
 Abraham Vitalis de Millano  
 Astruc Bonet  
 Bonias de Beaucaire  
 Bonjues Nathan  
 Crescent de Saint Paul  
 David Daynand

David Vital  
 Isaac ben Todros  
 Isaac de Portis  
 Israel ben Joseph Caslari ha-Levi  
 Jacob ben Solomon Zarfati  
 Moses ben Samuel de Roquemaure  
 Vinellas Nasci  
 Vital

**Arles**

Abraham Abigdor  
 Baruch Abin  
 Bendich ben Senhor  
 Bendich de Bourrian

Crescas Salamis  
 Kalonymos ben Kalonymos  
 Salves Vidal de Bourrin

**Carpentras**

Abraham Salomon David  
 Bondavit Bonias of Marsaille  
 Bonet Astrugil (Astruc)

Isaac Touroci  
 Thoros (Tourossius)

**Carcassonne**

Abraham of Carcassonne  
 Astruc ben Isaac of Carcassonne  
 Astruc  
 Isaac

Mordochee Salomon  
 Salomon de Carcassonne  
 Vital

**Tarascon**

Bellant  
 Beziers  
 Compart Asser  
 Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils

Rocel Vivas  
 Rossed Ferrier  
 Rossel Compart

**Narbonne**

Abraham ben David Caslari  
 Jacob ben Abba Mari ben Abatoli  
 Juthiel ben Solomon  
 Phineas of Narbonne  
 Vidal Blasom

**Beziers**

Jedaiiah ben David Caslari  
 Jusse (Josseph)  
 Solomon ben Josphe ibn Ayyub

*Appendix 3*  
*Toponymic Bynames*

de Aquanis	of Beaucaire	al-Bargadi
de Beaucaire	of Besalu	
de Besalduno	of Carcassonne	ha-Sephardi
de Bourrian	of Courthéson'	(Iberian peninsula)
de Bourrin	of Marseille	Zarfati (northern France)
de Carcassonne	of Narbonne	
de Caslar of Besalu	of Petralata	habitor Bitteris
de Castlario	of Puycerda	(resident of Beziers)
de Cereto	of St. Giles	
de Lunel	of Villefranche	Jew of Beaiers
de Lunello		Jew of Elne
de Meyrarques		Jew of Perpignan
de Millano		
de Portis		Magister of Arles
de Pulcrovicino		Physician of Carcassonne and
de Roquemaure		magister of Elne
de Saint Paul		
de Villamayna		

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Alteras, Isaac, "Jewish Physicians from Southern France during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 68, No. 4 (April 1978), pp. 209-223.
- <sup>2</sup> "Jews in Catalonia: 1250 to 1400" by Juliana de Luna (Julia Smith) This article was available online on 04/27/12 through the Medieval Names Archive at [www.s-gabriel.org/names/juliana/catalan-jews/](http://www.s-gabriel.org/names/juliana/catalan-jews/).
- <sup>3</sup> "Names of Jews in Medieval Navarre (13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> Centuries)" by Lidia Becker. This article was available online on 04/29/12 at [pi.library.yorku.ca/dspace/bitstream/handle/10315/3618/icos23\\_140.pdf?sequence=1](http://pi.library.yorku.ca/dspace/bitstream/handle/10315/3618/icos23_140.pdf?sequence=1).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> "Crescas." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd edition. Vol. 5. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 284. Gale Virtual Reference Library. The material was found online on 04/26/12 at [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587504708&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587504708&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w).
- <sup>6</sup> "If there were two [men] in the same town [and the] name of the one [was] Joseph son of Simeon and the name of [the] other [was] Joseph son of Simeon, neither may produce a bond of indebtedness against the other, nor may another [person] produce a bond of indebtedness against them. [if] a man found among his deeds [a quittance showing that] the bond of Joseph son of Simeon [was] discharged, the bonds of both [are considered to be] discharged. How should they proceed? They should indicate the third [generation]. And if [their names] are [alike] to the third [generation], they add [some personal] description; and if their [personal] descriptions are alike they write, 'priest'." Soncino Translation of the Talmud, *Tractate Baba Bathra*, Folio 172a. This material was found to be online on 04/30/12 at [www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra\\_172.html](http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_172.html). According to the comments, "description" referred to physical characteristic such as Joseph the tall, the short, black, brown, etc., and "priest" referred to a Cohen or Levi."
- <sup>7</sup> The seven men were:
- Gerondi, Jacob ben Sheshet (mid-13<sup>th</sup> century), kabbalist. Gottlieb, Efraim. "Gerondi, Jacob ben Sheshet." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507205&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507205&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
  - Gerondi (Gerundi), Isaac ben Judah (13<sup>th</sup> century), Spanish Hebrew poet. Schirmann, Jefim. "Gerondi (Gerundi), Isaac ben Judah." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507204&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507204&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
  - Gerondi, Moses Ben Solomon D'escola (second half of 13<sup>th</sup> century), paytan(writer of prayers) . Heller, Joseph Elijah. "Gerondi, Moses ben Solomon D'escola." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507206&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507206&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
  - Gerondi, Solomon ben Isaac (13<sup>th</sup> century), Spanish liturgical poet. "Gerondi, Solomon ben Isaac." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507208&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507208&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
  - Gerondi, Samuel ben Meshullam (c. 1300), scholar. Ta-Shma, Israel Moses. "Gerondi, Samuel ben Meshullam." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507207&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507207&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
  - Gerondi, Zerariah ben Isaac ha-Levi (12<sup>th</sup> century), rabbinical scholar and poet. His father, ISAAC HAYIZHARI ben ZERAHIAH ha-LEVI GERONDI, was a Hebrew poet and talmudic scholar. Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel, David Derovan, and Joseph Elijah Heller. "Gerondi, Zerariah ben Isaac Ha-Levi." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. This material was available online on 04/26/12 at: [go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507209&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587507209&v=2.1&u=pl2881&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w)
- <sup>8</sup> Alteras, "Jewish Physicians."