

המכון הבינלאומי לגנאלוגיה יהודית ומרכז פאול יעקבי, ירושלים



**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY
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The Names Sara and Israel from the Holocaust

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Genealogists looking at official documents from Germany, Austria and Bulgaria dated after August 17, 1938 will probably find that Jewish citizens of those countries had an additional personal name - Israel or Sara.

After a century of assimilation most Jews had an official vernacular first name and possibly a surname similar to that of their gentile neighbors, with no indication of his/her racial or religious identity. The Nazi regime knew the power of names. In their pursuit of "racial purity" and the ultimate removal of the Jews from their society, they required Jews by law to take a specific first name and register it with the Department of Interior and the Security Police - "Israel" and "Sara".

There was also a strange collection of so-called Jewish first names that could theoretically be substituted for Israel or Sara, some taken uncritically from the Bible and others derived from Yiddish. For instance, Chamor - "Donkey" was certainly not Israelite (Gen 34:2); Ahasver recalling the Medieval Christian name for the "Wandering Jew"; and, ironically, Isidor, which is pagan in origin.

This paper will explore the range and implications of names considered by the Nazis to be Jewish to register Jewish identity, beginning with Israel and Sara as the primary options.