

Sephardic and Mizrahi Names

Jewish family names often fall into a few categories. Read the examples, then see where your own names fit.

Place Where a family lived or came from		
Toledano	from Toledo, Spain	Sephardic
Mizrahi	from the east	Mizrahi
Yerushalmi	from Jerusalem	many communities
Yazdi	from Yazd, Iran	Iranian
Ajami	foreigner	Iranian

Trade or role A profession or community role		
Haddad	smith (Arabic)	Arabic speaking lands
Tabib	physician	Yemen
Melamed	teacher (Hebrew)	many communities
Dayan	religious judge	many communities
Cohen	descendant of priests	all communities

Quality How a person looked or behaved		
Elbaz	falcon	North Africa
Hassan	handsome, good	Arabic speaking lands
Sedaca	charity	Sephardic, North Africa

Ancestor Son or daughter of a parent or forebear		
Ben Haim	son of Haim (Hebrew)	Sephardic, Mizrahi
Danialpour	son of Daniel (Persian)	Iranian
Akhamzadeh	child of a sage, or rabbi (Persian)	Iranian
Ben Esther	son of Esther	Sephardic, Mizrahi
Nissim	from the given name Nissim, "miracles"	Sephardic, Mizrahi

Given names from North African and Middle Eastern Jewish communities

Messaouda / Mas'ud: fortunate (Arabic) · **Freha:** joy (Arabic) · **Sultana:** queen · **Mazal:** good fortune (Hebrew) · **Simha:** joy (Hebrew) · **Aziza:** beloved, precious (Arabic) · **Esperanza:** hope (Spanish)

Notice how many names express a hope for the child: happiness, luck, and a good life.

My name research

My full name			
How to pronounce it		Language or culture of origin	
Meaning (etymology)			
Category of my surname	☐ Place ☐ Trade or role ☐ Quality ☐ Ancestor ☐ Other	Hebrew or other name	
The story of my name			
Sources I used			

Examples adapted from JIMENA's Sephardi & Mizrahi Education Toolkit, Jewish Language Project, Lesson 7. Name meanings can be debated; check more than one source.