

Equidistant Letter Sequences in Tolstoy's "War and Peace": Witztum's "refutation" refuted.

Abstract

In 1994, Witztum, Rips and Rosenberg (WRR) published their now-famous paper "Equidistant Letter Sequences in the Book of Genesis", which claimed to show that messages concerning the lives of various famous rabbis were encoded in the Hebrew text of Genesis by equidistant letter sequences (ELs).

In September 1997, Dror Bar-Natan and Brendan McKay refuted WRR's work by showing that the flexibility WRR allowed themselves in the definition of the data, and the inaccuracy with which they applied the definition, were sufficient to allow a similar result to be manufactured for the Hebrew translation of War and Peace.

Bar-Natan and McKay's draft paper was attacked in a long document "A Refutation Refuted" published by Witztum in December 1997.

This paper is a reply to Witztum's document. It was written, with the cooperation and encouragement of Bar-Natan and McKay, by a person who chooses to remain anonymous. The name of this person has never been publicly mentioned in relation to codes. At the same time, Bar-Natan and McKay produced a final edition of their paper. Both the considerations involved in Bar-Natan and McKay's paper, and the analysis of Witztum's work that appears in this paper, are accredited to "we" for stylistic reasons only.

Preface	3
Critical Analysis Of The Appellations Choice in WRR's Lists.....	8
Assertion 1	19
Assertion 2	21
Assertion 3	23
Assertion 4	25
Assertion 5 part 1.....	27
Assertion 5 part 2.....	29
Assertion 6	31
Assertion 7	32
Assertion 8	34
Assertion 9	36
Assertion 10	38
Assertion 11	40
Assertion 12	42
Assertion 13	44
Assertion 14	47
Assertion 15	49
Assertion 16	51
Assertion 17	52
Assertion 18	54
Assertion 19	61
Assertion 20	63
Assertion 21	67
Assertion 22	71
Assertion 23	74
Assertion 24	76
The changes in the list of the sages.....	78
Bibliography.....	79

Preface

Witztum's main claims regarding the famous rabbis experiment on Genesis and our demonstration on WNP (=War and Peace) can be summed up as:

1. The WRR (=Witztum, Rips and Rosenberg) list was fully prepared in advance (a priori) by an independent expert and was not changed in any way by Witztum.
2. There are several cases in which reversing the decision made in the WRR list (like omitting a name that was included or including a name that was omitted) improves the result. That proves that the list was prepared a priori.
3. The WRR list was compiled according to pre-established rules.
4. We didn't find any case where these rules were violated by WRR.
5. Our list for WNP succeeded only by breaking these rules and therefore proves nothing.

We'll answer each claim:

1. *The WRR list was fully prepared in advance (a priori) by an independent expert and was not changed in any way by Witztum.*

First we note that if this claim could be proved, Witztum's case (regarding the results of the famous rabbis' experiments) would have been proved without any need for his other points. However this is only Witztum's (and Havlin's?) version of the history of the experiment and there isn't any proof that this is indeed the way it happened. In fact in another place we bring some circumstantial evidence that cast doubt on this version. But even if no such evidence was available it should be clear that such unusual results cannot be based only on personal trust in a story testified to by only one or two people.

Witztum says about his findings: "People often ask why, over the last 12 years, I have spent so much time in the field of hidden codes in the Torah, instead of my original field of interest-modern physics and general relativity. The discovery we have made concerning hidden patterns in the Torah is ultimately much more far-reaching and significant. The repercussions of our discovery touch on the very nature of human existence." (See [Witz]). Would anyone be ready to accept such a grandiose claim just on the basis of personal trust in Witztum and maybe one of his friends?

It seems that Witztum himself understands this and that's why he adds his other points. Let's consider the next one.

2. *There are several cases in which reversing the decision made in WRR list (like omitting a name that was included or including a name that was omitted) improves the result. That proves that the list was prepared a priori.*

First we have to comment that it is not always easy to determine whether any specific **single** change would have improved WRR's original result or not. This is because WRR had several measures of success at that time and it's not clear what measure was

the dominant one then. Another slight problem is that Witztum was not able to give us exactly the same programs with which the original results were obtained. Be that as it may, even if we agree that in some cases reversing the theoretical decision of WRR improves their result, we certainly do not agree with the conclusion Witztum draws from it. The fact that there are some cases in which reversing the theoretical decision made by WRR improves the result does not prove that the list as a whole wasn't optimized to give a strong result, it just proves that the optimization was not a perfect one.

As we will show in detail below, the “wobble room” which the design of WRR's experiment leaves is huge. It's so huge that one can get a very strong result in any text even by working in a non-systematic manner and doing only a partial optimization.

We ourselves have experienced something similar. In the first drafts of our WNP demonstration we didn't include some legitimate and successful appellations since we either were not aware of their existence at that time or didn't try all the variations systematically. It's possible that even our new list is missing some appellations which could further improve our result, and which we are not using because our limited research didn't find them (or didn't find sources for them). In fact, we could obtain a substantially stronger result merely by relaxing our standards a little, while still arguably remaining within the bounds of accuracy and consistency established by WRR. However, we have chosen to aim for a result only slightly stronger than WRR's while maintaining high standards.

The examples that Witztum gives for his list are of 2 kinds:

- (1) Successful appellations that were not included.
- (2) Cases in which breaking WRR rules could improve his result.

For (1), the explanation for these omissions can simply be that we are dealing here with human beings who can forget and overlook names, forget to try certain variations, or just be unaware of them altogether at that time. (As we were in the first draft of our list). This proves nothing.

For (2), it should be clear that the fact that WRR didn't always break their rules to improve their result doesn't prove that they never did that! In fact, in our response we'll give several examples of cases in which WRR clearly broke their rules and it was to their benefit.

In general, once you succeed in optimizing the list to get a strong result it is better not to make the list too “bibliographically” suspect by over-optimizing. While the current WRR list shows enough signs of inconsistency and bias, it's obvious that further optimizing it (for example by omitting more unsuccessful appellations) would make it look even more suspect.

To sum up, the meaning of the claim that WRR list was not chosen a priori is not that **all** of the choices which were available to WRR were made in a way which “paid off” for them. It rather means that **enough** of the choices that were available to WRR were made in a way which “paid off” for them.

Therefore, if Witztum wants to prove that he didn't bias the list it's not enough for him to show sporadic examples of choices that didn't pay off. Rather, what he has to do is to prove that he didn't make any favorable choices (or at least not enough to obtain such a result).

One way to do that, perhaps the preferred one, is simply to replicate the experiment on Genesis independently. Witztum has to first find an expert **on whose professionalism and objectivity** all agree and **who has never seen the second WRR list of appellations and dates (or ours) nor Havlin's guidelines**. This condition is vital to ensuring that the experiment is indeed independent of WRR's experiment; without it, even if the expert is instructed not to take Havlin's considerations into account for the choices made by WRR in the second sample, they may still influence him. After such an expert is found, he should be given WRR's **first** pre-print and the list of rabbis who participated in the second experiment and **nothing else**. Then he should be instructed to build a list of appellations and dates for the second list according to the rules detailed in the pre-print and what he considers to be their implications.

In fact, as described in another place, we have done precisely this kind of experiment with an independent expert, and the best results we got, after trying several variations, were still tens of thousands times weaker than those of WRR.

In any case, even without that recent independent experiment on Genesis, we have demonstrated in our WNP "experiment" that enough wiggle-room exists in the design of the WRR experiment to produce a similar strong result in any text. Therefore the burden of proof that this wiggle-room was not actually used in his experiment falls entirely on Witztum, especially if he wants to go on making grandiose statements like the one we quoted above.

Witztum understands this, and that is why he is so adamant about claiming that our experiment and analysis of the data in fact didn't prove that enough wiggle-room exists in the design of WRR experiment to produce such a strong result in any text.

Let's check his next point.

3. *The WRR list was compiled according to pre-established rules.*

Here we should remind the reader again - if the claim that WRR's list was prepared a priori by an independent expert, could have been proven, then it would have been enough to validate the experiment. But since there is no real "historical" evidence for this claim (and some circumstantial evidence against it), it is clear (even to Witztum) that such unusual results cannot be regarded as scientific just on the basis of belief in Witztum's account of the events. That's why he tries, as an alternative, to claim that the WRR lists were compiled according to pre-established rules, something which can (theoretically) be verified without relying on his word.

This last claim is analyzed and refuted in great detail bellow. Basically we check 3 questions:

I. Can these rules really be called "rules"?

The most serious problem with the rules is that they do not specify the source from which the appellations are to be taken. Nobody can say that a given group of appellations for a specific rabbi is exhaustive and that there are no other appellations for this rabbi hiding somewhere in the vastness of Judaic literature. Therefore one **must** define in advance the precise source (or set of sources) from which the

appellations are going to be taken. It also has to be a relatively compact source so it would be possible to check that it was used in a consistent and exhaustive manner (a set of encyclopedia entries is an ideal choice). This consideration is highlighted by the fact that at least one of the appellations used by WRR is extremely rare (See Assertion 21). However WRR don't have any such well-defined source at all.

The Responsa database is no such source. First, it is much too big (and still growing) and, as Havlin himself said about it in his letter of 30/10/96, "the existing program does not enable a researcher to ask what are the names and appellations of a given sage. Consequently the researcher must determine in advance the appellations for which he wishes to search". Second, and most important, Havlin himself admits in the same letter that it wasn't the only source used and that for some rabbis it wasn't used at all!

Another problem with the rules is that there are many kinds of appellations for which the rules don't supply any guidelines (or only ambiguous ones) for inclusion or rejection. That is to say, the rules leave a great deal of leeway for subjective discretion. Prof. Havlin specifically admits in his letter, several times, that a great deal of discretion was used in preparing the list.

In short, anyone who read the rules but did not see the WRR list could not build, based only on the rules, the exact same list. Even Prof. Havlin has admitted that, were he required to prepare the list again, it might be slightly different. (This is especially true about the rules in the pre-prints, but to a lesser extent also for the rules in his letter, which appeared 10 years after the experiment.)

II. Can these "rules" really be called "pre-established"?

Another serious problem with these "rules" is that most of them were not published in advance, and therefore Witztum's claim that they are "pre-established rules" remains a matter of belief.

Here we have to distinguish between the first list and the second one, and between the rules that were published in the first pre-print and those published in Havlin's letter of 30/10/96, about 10 years after the experiments were conducted.

No rules were published in advance for the first experiment.

The rules published in the first pre-print were published in advance only for the second experiment. (Unless we suspect that the second list, or part of it, was already in existence before the publication of the first list. Technically it's possible, but there's really no need to go that far in our suspicions, and we are perfectly willing to believe WRR's story on this point).

The rules in Havlin's 1996 letter were NOT published in advance even for the second experiment.

More than that, some of the rules seem to be of quite an arbitrary nature, and this gives some impression that these rules in particular may be of an ad-hoc nature.

III. Were these "rules" obeyed consistently?

The third problem with these rules is that they were not obeyed consistently. Many examples of that appear in the rest of this document.

In particular, those examples totally refute Witztum's next claim:

4. *We didn't find any case where these rules were violated by WRR.*

So we can go straight to the last claim:

5. *Our list for WNP succeeded only by breaking these rules and therefore proves nothing.*

In the next parts of this document all of Witztum's 24 claims against our list are responded to in detail. We show that, in fact, all of our deviations from the rules (to the extent they can be called rules) are matched by equal deviations from the rule by WRR. Only three of the appellations that we added could really be described as erroneous (and even then not extremely so) and we can easily afford to remove them, as the reader can see in the final version of our list for WNP.

We also note here that since, in some cases, Witztum uses the rules to omit/include appellations and yet in other places he ignores the same rules, we allow ourselves to do exactly the same thing. In some places we fix the WRR list where it doesn't obey the rules, and in other places we change the WRR list by breaking the same rule.

Therefore our WNP "experiment" proves exactly what we always claimed it proves: there is enough wiggle-room in the design and implementation of the WRR experiment to produce a similar strong result in any text.

Comment: As explained in point 2 above, we don't claim (and we don't need to claim) that in all the possible choices that WRR were faced with (in theory or in practice), their decision was taken in a favorable direction. In particular we want to make it clear, for the interest of fairness, that some of the (many) examples of inconsistency in WRR's lists that we show bellow are not necessarily biased in WRR's favor. But of course, as we explained in detail in point 2, this doesn't prove, in any way, the validity of WRR's results.

WRR used only the spellings איסרלש, טירקש, איזלש, ליוא, מענדל, מעשיל. Are there any Yiddish spelling rules which dictate these particular choices?

It may also be asked how one definitively determines which names are to be considered Yiddish names which must be written with Yiddish orthography and which words are only of German or Slavic origins and therefore must be written according to Hebrew orthography. This is especially problematic since it is well-known that the origin of Yiddish is Old German and that many words were introduced from the Slavic languages. We find that Witztum claims that the names קרוכמאל and אופנהיים are German names which must be transliterated into Hebrew (he includes them as קרוכמל and אופנהיים). On the other hand, he claims the names הלר and חלם are original Yiddish names and not of Germanic and Polish origin, respectively, as can be seen from the fact that they appear on his list as העלר and חעלמא. (See more on this in Assertion 18.)

Another inconsistency in this example is that Witztum writes both חעלמא (with an ע) and חחלמא (without an ע), but he doesn't write העשיל both with an ע and without.

Naturalness:

We may ask why WRR use only the original form of Yiddish names and not also their Hebrew transliteration (when the transliterated forms are at least as common as the original Yiddish forms, e.g. השל, העל, מענדל). Why do WRR reject the Hebrew transliteration of Yiddish names while they do not reject the Hebrew transliteration of other foreign names? Just because Yiddish is written using Hebrew characters?

III. Rule of Aleph as a Vowel Letter (Mater-lectionis)

According to this rule, when transliterating foreign names that sometimes have an aleph used as a vowel letter, the form with an aleph and the form without it will both be included (such as לוצאטן-לוצטן).

Naturalness:

The rule itself looks reasonable. There is still the question why WRR decided to use all the existing variants in this case, while for variants of other sorts (see point (F) below) it was decided that only the most common one would be used (at Prof. Havlin's discretion).

Consistency:

We found many examples where WRR broke this rule:

- For the Rif, Rabbi I-23, WRR used only אלפס and אלפסי, but not אלפאס and אלפאסי. (In the Responsa database we see that the Rif himself writes the name with an aleph and signed that way!)
- For the Sma, Rabbi I-15, WRR used only פלק-כך and ולק-כך, but not פאלק-כך or ואלק-כך. (The forms with the aleph also appear in the Responsa database).
- For the Noda-Beyehuda, Rabbi I-20, WRR used only אנדל, but not אנדל. (The form with the aleph appears several times in the Responsa, including in one of the appearances of this rabbi's signature!)
- For R' Yaacov Hagiz, WRR used only חגיז, but not חגיז. (See more details in Assertion 13).

- For R' Menachem Mendel Krochmal, WRR used only קרוכמל, but not קרוכמאל. (See more details in Assertion 18.)
 - For R' Yom-Tov Lipman Heller, Rabbi I-17, WRR used only ליפמן, but not ליפמאן.
 - For R' Chaim Capusi WRR used only כפוט, but not כאפוט. (See more details in Assertion 8.)
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We will now examine the rules that appear in Prof. Havlin's statement of opinion [Hav96] (the paragraphs in red italics are direct quotes from that document). Before we start we want to remind the reader yet again that **the following "rules" were first published 10 years after the experiment was run:**

(A) As is well known, Torah literature is rich in abbreviations and acronyms, which relate both to the Halakhic concepts under discussion and to the various sages. A distinction must be made between a simple abbreviation or acronym used only at one place or in a particular text, and an abbreviation or acronym that constitutes an appellation. The yardstick for determining this point is quite simple: if the abbreviation or acronym has become an appellation, it has a specific pronunciation. Accordingly, a distinction should be made between abbreviations and acronyms which are pronounced as words, such as: ם"כ"ב (Rambam), ןהרש"ל (Maharshal), ןהר"ל (Maharal), and those which are not pronounced as words and are merely an abbreviated written form, such as ןהר"ר (Morenu HaRav Rabbi), ןהר"ר ןהר"ר (Morenu Verabenu HaRav Rabbi), ן"ב (Beit Yosef), ןהר"ר (TOsefot Yom Tov), and ןהר"ר (NOda BeYehuda).

When I was asked to prepare the list of the names and appellations of the great Torah sages (the first list), I did not include abbreviations or acronyms that are not pronounced as a word, since these are not appellations.

The list includes acronyms that are pronounced as a word, such as Rambam (Rabenu Moshe Ben Maimon), Maharshal (Morenu HaRav Rabbi Shlomo Lurie), and Maharal (Morenu HaRav Rabbi Liva). The list does not include acronyms not pronounced as a word, such as: ן"ב, ןהר"ר, etc. Naturally I acted in the same manner when preparing the second list.

Strictness and Explicitness:

Contrary to Prof. Havlin's statement, his yardstick is not so simple after all.

Let's take the acronym א"ז ה"ב as example. According to Witztum's claim it isn't pronounced. We don't know if he is correct, but let's assume he is. What does it mean "not pronounced"? It certainly doesn't mean that it's never pronounced by anyone; when we are talking about it among ourselves we pronounce it as "Harav Za." What it means is that, while a few people may have some "private" specific vocalization for it, for some reason it is not widely used.

When we are dealing with widely used acronyms it's easy to determine which acronyms may have some "private" pronunciation but are not widely pronounced (like ןהר"ר). But in the case of rarely used acronyms it's not clear how much this

distinction between “private” and “public” pronunciation is even meaningful, and it’s very difficult to check it.

Naturalness:

One could ask why this particular yardstick of pronunciation is used (especially in view of the problems involved in its application)? If the real distinction sought here is, as Havlin says, “between a simple abbreviation or acronym used only at one place or in a particular text and an abbreviation or acronym that constitutes an appellation” then we could simply use the “frequency of usage” yardstick. We could, for example, count appearances in the Responsa as Havlin claims to have done in some of the other rules. Then widely used acronyms like נב”י, נב”ג, and התו”ט, which clearly identify their owners, would also have been used.

Consistency:

There are several examples of inconsistency in applying this rule.

All the following appellations are pronounced (Prof. Havlin implicitly admits it in his letter): מהר”ש שרעבי, מהר”א אשכנזי, מהר”א יצחקי, מהרד”א, מהר”ח שבתי. Yet they were rejected with the claim that Havlin saw them as being shorthand names. On the other hand, the appellation אופנהיים מהר”ד was included though it appears to be just as much a shorthand name.

Particularly interesting is the next quote from Havlin’s letter [Hav96]:

24. A number of variants have developed from the basic form of יעב”ץ (Yaabez): ריעב”ץ (Riyaabez), הריעב”ץ (HaRiyaabez), מהריעב”ץ (Mahariyaabez). I chose הריעב”ץ (HaRiyaabez) but rejected ריעב”ץ (Riyaabez), because I saw it as a simple abbreviation; this latter form occurs almost exclusively in Iggerot Mosheh. מהריעב”ץ (Mahariyaabez) - appears as often as הריעב”ץ (HaRiyaabez), but rejected according to section f(2) above.

Havlin says that he saw ריעב”ץ as mere abbreviation and therefore didn’t include it. But it is definitely pronounced, as can be seen by the fact that the translator of his letter transliterated it to English as “Riyaabez,” and also by Havlin’s own inclusion of the same form with the definite article - הריעב”ץ.

Similarly, appellations like ר”י עמדין, ר”י בירב were rejected though they are widely pronounced (as Ri Beirav, Ri Emdin etc.). (See Assertions 11, 13 and 16.)

Perhaps the most interesting example is א”ח הע”ר, which was included though in all probability it is not pronounced, and that it is definitely a case of an “acronym used only at one place.” (See Assertion 21)

(B) A researcher concerned with the biography of a single person will also mention the appellations relating to the subject of his work. However, a researcher preparing a list of names and appellations of individuals and Torah sages must take account of the fact that some appellations were used over the generations to refer to several different individuals. A well-known example of this is the appellation "Maharsha" ("מהרש"א) referring to Rabbi Shemuel Eliezer Edels. This appellation is also found on occasions with reference to other sages, such as: Rabbi Shemuel Aboab, Rabbi Shlomoh Amarilio, Rabbi Shemuel Eliezer Alfandari and others. In an historical list of the appellations of Torah sages, Rabbi Shemuel Eliezer Edels will receive the appellation Maharsha, since he is the most famous of the sages referred

to by this appellation, since his work is the most famous among all Talmud students in all the Diaspora communities, and since he is known by this appellation by them.

Another example is when one of the people bearing an appellation is from the Rishonim (early sages), while the other is from the Acharonim (later sages). Since in the world of Torah literature the Rishonim enjoy a special status vis-a-vis the Acharonim, the appellation will be identified with the Rishon rather than with the Acharon. Thus in the first list I did not mention the appellation ש"ב"ט"ט (Harivash) as referring to Rabbi Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov (the Besht), since this appellation is identified with Rabbi Yitzhak Bar-Sheshet, one of the Rishonim sages.

Sometimes several sages of equal status are referred to by the same appellation. Accordingly, those mentioning these sages must clarify to whom they are referring, by mentioning their books or their full name. In such cases I am unsure whether or not to take the position that this appellation is not unequivocally related to a certain sage, and that it constitutes a simple abbreviation not to be included in the list. In practice, I acted as follows: If, in the above-mentioned encyclopedia, the appellation is included in the entry for that sage, I also included it in the list; if not, I did not include it.

Strictness and Explicitness:

Prof. Havlin admits that there are cases when it is difficult (even for him) to determine whether an appellation deserves to be included or omitted using this rule. In these cases he decides based upon his own discretion.

Naturalness:

This rule looks quite arbitrary. If “N” is an appellation widely associated with rabbi “A”, why should we not use it for him, even if it is more associated with rabbi “B”?

The issue becomes even more questionable when we recall that WRR decided to use personal names even if they are common to several rabbis and even when some of these rabbis are much more famous than others. True, it is possible to say that in a certain sense there is a stronger tie between a person and his personal name than there is between him and other names given him. But is this necessarily relevant to the research at hand? (See more about this in Assertion 23).

Consistency:

There are two striking examples of this rule being broken by WRR:

- The appellation ט"ב"ט"ט by itself is undoubtedly known primarily as the appellation of the third RABaD (Ba'al Hahasagot). Despite that, WRR included this name for the second RABaD as well. (See more details in “HaRaavad story” in Assertion 5 part 2.)
- The appellation **Ba'al HaNes** is primarily known as the appellation of R' Meir Ba'al HaNes, buried near Tiberias. Despite that, WRR included it as an appellation for R' Chaim Capusi. (See more details in Assertion 9.)

Sometimes the common appellation of a number of sages is not an abbreviation, but a word or expression. For example, a number of sages were known as "Ashkenazi" (European). On its own, this appellation does not identify the sage. This appellation was used in the case of

Ashkenazi sages who lived in Sephardi (Oriental) communities where the appellation was customarily added to their name. For example, Hakham Zvi (in the first list) was known as Zvi Ashkenazi, but the appellation "Ashkenazi" did not become his family name and his son was not called by this name. At most, the term "Ashkenazi" may be included as part of the full name. The same principle applies to the appellation "Mizrachi" as used for a Sephardi sage who lives in an Ashkenazi community. It is true that, over the years, these appellations became accepted family names (which is why we find Sephardi families with the family name Ashkenazi).

In fact WRR's treatment of **Ashkenazi** and **Mizrachi** is one of the most striking examples of inconsistency in their lists. See a detailed explanation of this in the "racial discrimination story" in Assertion 22.

(C) *Many sages are named after the titles of their books. Here, too, the researcher who encounters such references must discern whether the reference is to the sage or to his book. For example, one may encounter the expression הרב כסף משנה כתב ("The Rabbi Kesef Mishneh wrote..") This could refer to Rabbi Yosef Caro, in which case the appellation would be understood as הרב בעל כסף משנה = הר"ב כסף משנה (HaRav Kesef Mishneh, i.e. HaRav Ba'al Kesef Mishneh--"the Rabbi who wrote "Kesef Mishneh"). It could, however, refer to a quotation from Rabbi Caro's book Kesef Mishneh, in which case the reference would be understood as כתב בכסף משנה ("he wrote in Kesef Mishneh"). In general, it may be said that the sages were known by their main and most famous book. For example, Rabbi Azariah Figo (in the second list) wrote a well-known book entitled Giddulei Terumah, and another book which also became quite well known (though less important) entitled Bina Le-Ittim. Let us now see how he is referred to by the author of Sha'arei Teshuvah (a collection of excerpts from responsa works on the Orach Haim section of Shulhan Arukh), Section 223: "And Ba'al Giddulei Terumah...wrote in his work Bina Le-Ittim..." A similar example is found regarding Rabbi Haim Benbenest (in the second list). While his most important work is Keneset ha-Gedolah, he also wrote other works. He is mentioned in the responsa work Yehaveh Da'at (Part 5, ref. 54) as follows: "... Ba'al Keneset ha-Gedolah in his responsa Ba'ei Hayei..." and, op. cit. (Part 6, ref. 49): "... Ba'al Keneset ha-Gedola in his work Dina de-Hayei..."*

Some sages composed a number of works but for various reasons are not known by these titles. This may be because they became known by another name or appellation, or because their compositions were not particularly famous or widely disseminated.

Strictness and Explicitness:

Prof. Havlin admits that there are cases when it is difficult to determine if a reference to a sage by the name of his book is a reference to his book or an indication that it is an appellation for the rabbi, and that in such cases his discretion was required.

Consistency:

Here, too, one can point to quite clear examples of inconsistency:

- The appellation **Ba'al HaHalachot** (for the Rif) was included by WRR, while the appellation **Ba'al HaMapah** and **Ba'al HaHaga'ah** (for the Rema) were omitted. (These appellations appear often in the Responsa, and in at least 2 places we see that the appellation Ba'al HaMapah is used for him even where the discussion is not concerning this book - שו"ת דרכי נועם and שו"ת רב פעלים חלק ב-י"ד סימן מא- (חלק חושן משפט סימן כז).
- WRR used for Rabbi I-13 the appellation **Ba'al HaTumim**, based on the name of his book "Urim V'Tumim" (on Shulchan Aruch - Choshen Mishpat). But they didn't use the appellations **Kreti U'Pleti**, **Ba'al HaPleti**, and **HaPleti** based on his book "Kreti U'Pleti" (on Tur Yoreh Deah), though it seems that these appellations are no less known than the first. See, for example, in the Responsa database, in particular, the responsa of the Chatam Sofer Part 2 (Yoreh De'ah) Article 9: "and the Gaon HaPleti, in his book called 'Tiferet Yisrael'..." See also the title of his entry in [Halp].
- Particularly interesting is the case of **Yosher Levav**, used by WRR as an appellation of rabbi II-30 though it's very doubtful that it really does serve as his appellation. See more details in Assertion 20.

(D) When a sage has two Hebrew first names, such as Moshe Haim (Luzzato, in the first list), we have the appellation "Rabbi Moshe Haim." When the second name is influenced by a foreign language, such as Yehoshua Hoeschel (in the first list), the customary form in writing is Yehoshua Hamekhuneh Hoeschel ("Yehoshua who is known as Hoeschel"), in other words "Hoeschel" is perceived as an appellation. Accordingly, I distinguished between these names. I consider his name to be Rabbi Yehoshua, while his appellation is Rabbi Hoeschel. (provided this appellation was well-known and unambiguous, as discussed above in section b).

There is a simple question here, though it is relevant mostly for the first list (for the second it was already fixed and couldn't be changed). Why weren't first names used on their own (without the title "Rabbi")?

This question is even more striking if we consider that:

- (1) WRR did use the first name without the title "Rabbi" when they used them within the "full name" category; they cannot say that first names were not used alone out of respect for the rabbis.
- (2) WRR used surnames without the title "Rabbi," though some of them (like Mizrahi) are very common. WRR cannot say that first names were not used alone because alone they are very common and therefore don't identify the rabbis.

(E) Use of the definite article (ה' א' הידיעה). Many appellations in the Torah literature are referred to with the definite article (in fact, the use of the definite article sometimes proves that the expressions constitutes an appellation). Thus, for example, we often find the expressions המהרש"ל (HaMaharshal), המהרש"א (HaMaharsha, both in the first list), and so on. In general, I included the appellation both with the definite article and without. However, there are exceptions. For example, Rashi (in the first list) is not known as הרש"י (with the definite article). The opposite

also applies - some appellations never appear without the definite article, such as א"גרא (HaGra; in the first list). Appellations composed of two or more words do not take the definite article; thus one does not write הַבַּיִת יוֹסֵף (HaBeit Yosef) or הַמַּהַרִּי קָרוֹ (HaMahari Caro), since this does not conform to the rules of Hebrew grammar (though various sources may include examples of irregular expressions of this kind, which do not conform to the rules of Hebrew grammar).

First, a side remark: Prof. Havlin here claims that expressions in which the definite article is used before appellations of two words are irregular. In fact they are very common, as can easily be seen by searching the Responsa for הַבַּיִת יוֹסֵף. They are so widely accepted that Havlin himself used such an “irregular” expression just a few paragraphs above! Look at the original Hebrew version of his letter (available at <http://www.torahcodes.co.il/docum1h.pdf>) and you’ll find that he writes הַחֲכָם צַבִּי in point (b).

More seriously, there are several cases in which WRR’s usage of the definite article looks unclear. For instance, why is it acceptable to turn מוֹזֵל לִי נִירָה (Moshe Zacut Li Nirah) definitive? In this case one could not claim that the purpose of the definite article is to distinguish between different sages known by this appellation, as R’ Moshe Zacuto was the only one who bears this appellation (in fact, it is one of his signatures).

Other examples of seeming inconsistency in applying this rule are that WRR used הַיֵּעֲבֹץ, הַיֵּעֲבֹץ, הַיֵּעֲבֹץ, הַיֵּעֲבֹץ and הַיֵּעֲבֹץ but did not use these same forms without the article - יֵעֲבֹץ, יֵעֲבֹץ, יֵעֲבֹץ, יֵעֲבֹץ and יֵעֲבֹץ. We note that all the forms without the article also appear in the Responsa. In the case of יֵעֲבֹץ, this is actually his signature.

Also, **Shabtai Cohen**, without the definite article, was used for Rabbi I-31 but **Yaacov Levi**, without the definite article, was not used for Rabbi II-23 (despite the fact that it appears in the Responsa several times).

(F) Sometimes appellations appear with minor variations, such as מַהְרֵשׁ"ל (Maharshal) or מוֹהַרְשׁ"ל (Moharshal), מַהְרֵשׁ"א (Maharsha) or מוֹהַרְשׁ"א (Moharsha) (according to the authors' style, period and location). A similar problem occurs for the same reasons with such variant forms as הַרְשׁ"ל (Harashal) and מַהְרֵשׁ"ל (Maharshal), הַרִּי קָרוֹ (HaRi Caro) and הַמַּהַרִּי קָרוֹ (Mahari Caro). I proceeded as follows: (1) If one variant is much more common in the database, I adopted that form. (2) If the variations appear with similar frequency, I exercised my own professional judgment (based on my knowledge of other sources).

Strictness and Explicitness:

Again we see that Prof. Havlin himself admits there are cases in which it is difficult to decide which variant is more common and in which he decides based on his own discretion.

Moreover, in cases of names that appear in the Responsa database one can at least check the frequency of various variants using a computer, but how would one reliably and objectively check the frequency of variant appearances in different, non-computerized sources?

Naturalness:

This rule sounds arbitrary. Why, for example, should a common and accepted appellation like הרש"ל be rejected simply because that sage has a more common appellation like מהרש"ל? (The ratio between them in the Responsa is about 1500:4000).

The question is even more striking if we recall that in the case of variants of names differing from each other by use of aleph as a vowel letter, WRR decided all variants should be used, not just the most common one.

Consistency:

There are several examples of inconsistency here as well:

- In the case of R' Shalom Sharabi (Rabbi II-31) both הרש"ש and מהרש"ש were included, though it's clear that הרש"ש is the original and more common form. We note that the form הרש"ש appears in the title of this rabbi's entry in [Marg] and [Heb], but we have not found any encyclopedia which titles his entry מהרש"ש. In addition we note that in the Responsa the forms הרש"ש appear considerably more often than מהרש"ש (the ratio for this rabbi is about 256:6!). In the [DBS] CD-Rom we also find that הרש"ש appears more often than מהרש"ש.
- In the case of R' Yaacov Emdin (Rabbi II-24) both יעב"ץ and ריעב"ץ were included, though it's clear that יעב"ץ is the original and more common form. To show that we simply refer the reader to Havlin's quote above: "A number of variants have developed from the basic form of יעב"ץ." We also note that יעב"ץ is actually this rabbi's signature and also that יעב"ץ(ה) appears in the Responsa much more often than הריעב"ץ.
- In the case of R' Moshe Zacuto (Rabbi II-27) both הרמ"ז and מהרמ"ז were included, though it's clear that הרמ"ז is the original and more common form. We note that this rabbi signed his name as קול הרמ"ז, and the book in which his letters were collected is called אגרות הרמ"ז. In his entry in [Jud] we find that "he was known throughout his life as ReMeZ." We also note that in the Responsa the name הרמ"ז appears more often than מהרמ"ז, and even more so in the Kabbala, Chasidut & Bibliography sections of [DBS].

Beyond this, a few more remarks about Prof. Havlin's statement of opinion [Hav96]:

1. *ה"ר אב"ד (HaRa Abad) - not pronounced (sounds like ד"ר אב"ד which means "the evil Abad")*

We are not sure if this is true, for we find in this rabbi's entry in [Heb] "known in the books of the Rishonim by the name ה"ר אב"ד," and in [Michal] we find in this rabbi's entry "who is called ה"ר אב"ד"(our translation and emphasis). Besides, if the consideration Havlin mentions here were relevant, then we also shouldn't pronounce the name ה"ר אב"ד, as it might sound like "HaRah Avad" (= "the evil was lost"). There is even a pun based on this about the Third Raavad (see [Aley], p. 175). But, of course, ה"ר אב"ד is pronounced, and so (we think) is ה"ר אב"ד(ה).

10. *אבולעפיא, אבולעפיא (Abulafia) - this form of the family name is imprecise, since the Arabic form of the name is "Father of Health" (Abu-el-Afia), which is how it should appear.*

This is a strange remark. Why should we care what is the precise Arabic origin of the name when we are searching for ELSs in Genesis? More than that, the forms אבולעפיא and אבולעפיא, imprecise as they may be, are very widely used.

In fact, the ratio between the appearances (in the Responsa) of the “imprecise” forms אבולעפיא/ה (or in “ktiv male” אבולעפייא/ה) and the “precise” form used by WRR אבו-אל-עפיא (or in “ktiv male” אבו-אל-עפייא/ה) is 359:24!

Even stranger, we find that Prof. Havlin himself uses the “imprecise” forms אבולעפיא and אבולעפיא extensively in his professional articles! (See in many places in [Hav83], including for this very rabbi.)

22. *חגיז (Hagiz) - rejected because it is clear from his son's introduction to his father's book Halakhot Ketanot, that the correct spelling is with an Aleph*

See comment on that in Assertion 13.

In the last part of this document we will give some additional examples of the freedom of choice which the rules allow and the lack of consistency in the choices which were made:

• **Use of Surnames:**

Strictness and Explicitness: WRR have defined in their table of appellations a specific category for surnames. However, there are no instructions in the preprints (or in Havlin’s letter) about how surnames are defined and identified. Today one can easily define and identify a person’s surname by looking at this field on his ID card, but this invention is relatively new. Many of the sages in the lists lived in countries and eras in which the issue was not clearly and precisely defined.

For example: the appellation **Shabtai** for Rabbi II-13 was included by WRR as this rabbi’s family name, but strictly speaking it isn’t his family name, only the name of his father. It appears that this rabbi’s family didn’t have a constant family name that passes from father to son, but rather each family member was called after his father’s private name. Thus this rabbi’s signature חיים שבתאי, doesn’t mean חיים of the family שבתאי, but rather חיים son of שבתאי, and his own sons were called חשה חיים, חשה שבתאי etc. See [Im] vol. 1 p. 299, and also in the Responsa database at שו”ת עין יצחק חלק ב-אה”ע טימן כז.

Consistency: Several examples of inconsistency appear here as well:

- The surnames **Ulif** for R’ Gershon Ashkenazi and **Ashkenazi** for several rabbis were not included (see more details in Assertion 22).
- The name חיימוני, which appears as Rabbi I-2’s surname in [Marg] and [OtzIs], should perhaps also have been used.
- Witztum decided the name חלמ (or חלמא or חלמא) is not appropriate to use as surname because Rabbi Shlomo Chelma did not use it in his signature but the name עמד”ן is appropriate to use as the surname of the Yaabetz despite his

explicit and strong opposition to the use of this name. (See more details in Assertions 15 and 24).

- **Variants of Surnames:**

Strictness and Explicitness: Many surnames have variants (beyond the issue of orthographic spelling, Yiddish names, and use of aleph as a vowel letter). The rules do not give clear guidelines about the handling of these variants.

Consistency: Looking at the WRR lists we find that here, too, there is no consistency. A list of examples appears in Assertion 19.

- **Use of the form Segal:**

There are no guidelines about how and when to use this kind of appellation. Here, too, we find inconsistency: WRR used **Yaacov Segal** but did not use **David Segal**, **Yechezkel Segal**, or **Yehuda Segal**. (See details in Assertion 10).

- **Use of Poetic Epithets and Signatures:**

Here, too, there is no guideline about how and when to use this kind of appellations, and here, again, we find inconsistency:

We find, for example, that WRR included the appellation המלאך for R' Abraham HaMalach, the doubtful signature אה הער for R' Ricchi, and the appellation שר שלום for the RaShaSh.

But they did not include, for example, the appellation הרב המורה and (ה)ר"ם for the RaMBaM (see details in Assertion 2), הרב פרשנדא for Rashi, הרב המשביר for R. Yosef Caro, nor (ה)חבי"ב and (ה)רב and חבי"ב אד"ם for R. Haim Benebnishty.

They also didn't use the signatures ש"ר יצחק for Maharshal nor הצעיר החי, אהב ור"ע and העשי"ר for R. Ricchi.

Now we are going to address Witztum's claims against our assertions. Our original claims are quoted from the first draft (20/9/97). Witztum's claims are quoted from [Witz97b].

Assertion 1

Our Original claim:

We've added the appellations ראב"ד שני and ראב"ד שני for Rabbi II-1, Rabbi Avraham, Av-Beit-Din of Narbonne. A variant of these appellations which includes the definite article, הראב"ד השני, is the header of Rabbi Avraham's entry in [Az]. It separates Rabbi II-1 from Rabbi I-1, הראב"ד, the Ra'avad of Posquieres.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. The expression הראב"ד השני is not an appellation of R. Avraham. It is used neither in the written literature, nor in oral discussions. In the Responsa database, for example, this expression does not appear at all.

BNMK encountered this construction in the bibliographic work Shem HaGedolim by the Chida (= Chaim Yosef David Azulai). Chida discusses a number of personalities who were all known by the acronym ראב"ד. He organizes them chronologically, and in order to distinguish between them he refers to the earliest one as "the first Raavad," to the next one as "the second Raavad," etc. Obviously these do not thereby become appellations of the personalities involved, any more than the numbers before biographical entries in an encyclopedia become part of their names.

Witztum's claims here are simply false. True, the appellation הראב"ד השני does not appear in the data bases of Responsa. But it does appear in the entry for this rabbi in [Halp] (vol. 8, p. 200 - "known as הראב"ד השני"). It also appears in [StaJew] (in the title line of this rabbi's entry, vol. 1 p. 49) and in [OtzIs] (vol. 1 p. 97 - "known by the name הראב"ד השני"). It appears in [Frid] (entry 143). It even appears now in the biographical section of the Responsa CD-ROM (version 6); in the entry for האשכול we read that "some people call him הראב"ד השני." Even [Marg] itself (the encyclopedia from which Witztum selected the rabbis) states explicitly in his entry - "Azulai called him הראב"ד השני" (translation & emphasis in all cases is ours) and these are not the only places where we have found it.

The analogous appellations הראב"ד הראשון and הראב"ד השלישי are also very common. They can be found in these rabbis' entries in [Heb] and [Marg.]

Witztum is probably right in saying that the source for these three appellations is the book "Shem HaGedolim." However, there is no doubt that, since time the Chida coined them, they have turned into well known appellations and bear no resemblance to the case of "the numbers before biographical entries in an encyclopedia" in Witztum's words. These appellations have, in fact, much the same status as "Henry the Eighth" which Witztum mentions below. In short, the one making a gross bibliographical error here is Witztum himself.

B. BNMK then compounded their bibliographical error with mistakes in grammar. In fact, both of their additions are based on grammatical errors:

*In their first case they seem to have extrapolated that if the expansion השני הראב"ד exists for הראב"ד , the parallel expansion of ראב"ד without the definite article, must be ראב"ד . This is simply a mistake in grammar. Even without the article before the proper name, one must still retain the article before the ordinal number – השני הראב"ד as in הנרי השמיני -Henry the Eighth of England. Unsurprisingly, the expression ראב"ד does not exist anywhere, not even in *Shem HaGedolim*.*

Here Witztum stands on somewhat more solid ground. The form ראב"ד is indeed problematic from a grammatical standpoint and הראב"ד is the more correct form. Even so, the grammatical problem is not extraordinary; an example of a somewhat similar (though not precisely the same) form can be found in Havlin's letter [Hav96], in which the form כוזרי appears.

In retrospect, we agree with Witztum. It is better not to include such a problematic form in our list, and we should have included the more correct forms הראב"ד and השני הראב"ד . We will remove ראב"ד from our list.

In the second case, הראב"ד they invented a form which Hebrew grammar simply does not allow. Needless to say, this "appellation" is not to be found anywhere.

(This response was based on the Sept. 20th '97 draft of BNMK's article. The second "appellation" הראב"ד was subsequently removed from their list. It does not appear, for example, in the October 18th draft. Someone seems to have done them the kindness of pointing out this gross error, thus sparing them further embarrassment)

This was a mistake on our part. But, as Witztum noted, we fixed it ourselves more than a month before he finished writing his response (25/11/97), so why does he mention it?

Assertion 2

Our Original claim:

The word מלאך (the angel) is an adjective and not a last name. It is used in relation to several rabbis and is not specifically an appellation for Rabbi II-3, Rabbi Avraham. It is inconsistent to use this as an appellation for Rabbi Avraham, while at the same time not using חסיד (the Hasid, the pious) for Rabbi I-11, Rabbi Yehuda haHasid. Thus we remove it.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

- A. It is obviously correct that the term Malach is an adjective, not a surname.
B. Concerning their claim that this title was applied to a number of different rabbis:*

One must make a clear distinction between an expression used by one rabbi to describe another in a specific instance, versus an epithet which is identified with a certain personality. For example, as an incidental usage we would expect to find the adjective "angel" applied under two kinds of circumstances:

- (i) When a certain rabbi's given name happens to be the same as one of the angels (Rafael, Gavriel, etc.), thus inspiring the use of this epithet. (ii) Or when an author is referring to his mentor (in keeping with the Talmudic dictum that one should learn from a teacher who resembles an angel).*

A survey of the Responsa database confirms this expectation. There are about 5 uses of type (i), and one usage of type (ii). There are no further uses of this term. By contrast, concerning Rabbi Avraham the Encyclopedia Hebraica refers to him already in the heading of his entry as "R. Avraham who was called Malach." He was consistently referred to in this way, not merely in a passing instance by a specific author. His given name was not the same as one of the angels, nor was it only his disciples who referred to him in this way.

*Margalioth explains in his Encyclopedia (under the heading "R. Abraham HaMalach") how he earned this title as a result of "the great admiration for him on the part of **all** the Tzaddikim of the generation, who bestowed upon him the title "HaMalach").*

- C. The epithet "HaChassid" is too common. Many scholars who were renowned for their piety merited to be known by this title. A survey of the Responsa database reveals approximately 1370 uses (by contrast with 6 for the term "Mal'ach"). That is why it is impossible to use the title "HaChassid" by itself. It can only be used in a context in which the bearer is also identified. On the other hand, in the literature of the Chassidic movement one can easily identify any reference to "HaMal'ach" as an allusion to R. Avraham, the son of the Maggid of Mezeritch.*

We agree with all the facts here. We also agree that the distinction which Witztum draws between the epithets "HaChassid" and "HaMalach" is a reasonable one. However, who said that this distinction is the right distinction to make here?

The main point here is that in the first pre-prints there are no explicit guidelines about the inclusion or exclusion of epithets like “HaChassid” and “HaMalach.” Without such guidelines, equally good reasons can be given both for and against including these appellations. Witztum chose to draw a distinction between common and unique epithets, which gives him a good reason to omit “HaChassid” while keeping “HaMalach.” But since this distinction is not specified in advance in the pre-prints, why should it be more relevant than the distinction we draw between names and nouns or adjectives (by which both “HaChassid” and “HaMalach” should be omitted)?

We also note that when we turned to an independent expert to form a completely a priori list of appellations for the Rabbis in question (see details in [MBBK]), he used the combination רבי אברהם המלאך, but not the adjective המלאך on its own.

From all of the above it should be clear that there is no basis whatsoever for BNMK to erase the term המלאך from the list.

We completely disagree. Even if Witztum’s distinction between common and unique epithets was more relevant than ours, that doesn’t mean there is no basis for erasing המלאך. All we have to do is to check if Witztum always uses unique epithets for the rabbis in his lists. If he doesn’t, then there is no reason why we should.

It should come as no surprise to the reader that Witztum didn’t always use unique epithets, and so we are justified in omitting המלאך. We will give just 2 examples of unique epithets not used by WRR:

1. The epithet הרב המורה (after his book, “Moreh Nevuchim”) is a known appellation of the RaMBaM (Rabbi I-29), one which identifies him especially in Jewish philosophical literature.
2. The epithet (ה)ר"ח במז"ל (“of high luck,” also a word play on the acronym ל"ח–רמב"ם “RaMBaM o.b.m.”) is another appellation of the RaMBaM. It appears in the Responsa database and there is even a book on the RaMBaM with this title [Mai]. Most interesting is to see what Havlin himself writes on this name in [Aley] (p. 175): “This appellation (of the RaMBaM) is used by many of the Rishonim of Spain.”

Assertion 3

Our Original claim:

Rabbi II-6, Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi, is sometime called after his book titled "מעשי ה". The variant יהוה/וה/י is never written or pronounced, so we have removed it from the WRR lists and instead inserted the widely used appellations 'ה מעשי and בעל מעשי ה' .

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

Before we answer Witztum we want to remind the reader that at the time of the second experiment WRR were only bound by the rules that appeared in the first pre-print. In that pre-print there are no guidelines about how G-d's name should be spelled in the experiment. As we will show below, there are 5 plausible ways of writing from which WRR could choose. Still, for the purpose of this answer we assume that the rule of using only pronounced words (that appeared explicitly only years after the experiment was done) should be used. What we show in this response is that this rule can be interpreted in different ways, so that even with this rule there are several different choices available.

A. The designation יהוה/וה/י מעשי is not a variant. This is the original title of R. Ashkenazi's book.

We don't understand what Witztum means by "the original title of the book" or "עיקר שם הספר". If he means by this "the title as it appears in the book itself" then he is definitely wrong. In the first edition [AshE1583] we find the title 'ה מעשי. Amongst all the other editions we did not find even one with the title written as יהוה/וה/י מעשי.

BNMK make a serious error when they assert that the Tetragrammaton is "never written or pronounced." On the contrary, this name appears in the Torah an enormous number of times, and of course it is "pronounced" (that is to say, unlike some of the acronyms discussed elsewhere, it is a proper name which was meant to be pronounced and has a specific vocalization). There are simply Halachic limitations concerning the circumstances under which it may be pronounced.

Here Witztum distorts what we said. As the reader can see above, we didn't claim that the name יהוה/וה/י is not pronounced or written as is. We claimed that the appellation יהוה/וה/י מעשי is never pronounced or written as is. As Witztum knows very well, these are completely different claims.

To make the difference clear to those readers who lack the necessary background, let us first explain a few things. The tetragrammaton יהוה/וה/י is indeed written as is, and pronounced with the special pronunciation "A-d-o-n-a-y" (י/ו/ד/א). However, according to the Jewish Law this can only be done within the framework of blessings, prayers, and quotations of full verses from the Bible. Outside of this context one is not allowed to pronounce or write this name as is; instead it is pronounced as "HaShem" (שם) and written 'ה or 'ד (or, rarely, שם).

We can summarize the way the holy name is written/pronounced in this table:

	“holy” context	“secular” context
written	ה/ו/ה/י	(rarely םשׁה, ׳ד) ׳ה
pronounced	י/ו/ד/א	םשׁה

The expression ה/ו/ה/י as the appellation of R' Eliezer Ashkenazi or the name of his book does not meet the halachic criteria we cited. When it is used as a name of a book or a rabbi it is not being used in the context of a prayer or the quotation of a full verse from the Bible. Therefore, no observant Jew will ever pronounce it with the special pronunciation “Maasey A-d-o-n-a-y” or **write it** ה/ו/ה/י. This is the reason why WRR included the form םשׁה and not the form י/ו/ד/א. This is also the reason why in none of the editions of the book we saw was the title ה/ו/ה/י.

We see that rejecting the form ה/ו/ה/י was justified. However, as a gesture to Witztum, we agree to restore it.

B. It is precisely because of the sanctity of this name that the variant ׳ה (using the abbreviation) was invented. The letter is used here in place of the holy name. It is simply a stand-in which is not pronounced. Therefore Prof. Havlin was conforming to the rule of not including unpronounced designations when he omitted the forms ׳ה and בעל ׳ה, and once again it is BNMK who have deviated from the rules by their substitution.

We think that it is possible to claim the opposite, that the letter ׳ה as stand-in for the holy name is pronounced. It is pronounced “Hashem” or “A-d-o-n-a-y” (depending on the context), just as ה/ו/ה/י is pronounced “Hashem” or “A-d-o-n-a-y” (depending on the context).

In other words, ה/ו/ה/י is pronounced in special ways that are not at all as it is written (whether it is pronounced “Hashem” or “A-d-o-n-a-y”), and yet Witztum included it. Therefore we are justified in including ׳ה despite the fact that it’s pronounced in special ways that are not as it is written.

This may not be Witztum’s interpretation for what is and what is not a “pronounced” word, but since this whole issue is not at all defined in the pre-prints we think that our interpretation is just as good as Witztum’s.

We also want to inform the reader that in all the editions of the book that we saw the title appears as ׳ה (and once ׳ד) but never as םשׁה or ה/ו/ה/י.

Assertion 4

Our Original claim:

According to [WRR2], they use grammatical orthography (כתיב דיקדוקי) for the spelling of Hebrew words. This does not apply to the last name of Rabbi I-7, Rabbi David Oppenheim, whose origin is in the Yiddish or German language and not in Hebrew. Yiddish words are spelled in Hebrew letters, and, WRR say, "there is no need to transliterate" them. Hence we replace their אָפּנהיים with the commonly used form, אופנהיים, which is used in their source encyclopedia [Marg]. In Responsa, אָפּנהיים appears once, while אופנהיים appears over 50 times, including a number of times as Rabbi David Oppenheim's own signature! See also [Az].

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. There is a subtle misrepresentation of the position stated in our paper. The original quote reads, "For words in Hebrew, we always chose what is called the grammatical orthography" Note that we specifically say "words in Hebrew," not "Hebrew words" - that is, any word which has been rendered into Hebrew, even if derived from a foreign language, is to be written in grammatical orthography. The only expressions which do not fall under this rubric are words deriving from languages which themselves use Hebrew characters, such as Yiddish and Ladino, because these languages do not need to be rendered into Hebrew. This rule was followed consistently in the construction of both published lists regarding all foreign names (for example, in the first list the name פֿאַרשטאַט appears rather than פֿאַרשטאָט).

The accusation of “subtle misrepresentation” is ridiculous. As any English speaker can attest, the meaning of the English phrase “words in Hebrew” which Witztum uses here and anywhere else is “words in the Hebrew language” exactly as we had interpreted it, and not “words rendered into Hebrew letters” as he interprets it here.

In the presentation of the spelling rules in the Hebrew preprint [WRR3] Witztum uses the Hebrew phrase בַּעֲבוּרֵי שְׁמוֹת, which also normally means “words in the Hebrew language,” just as the expression שְׁמוֹת בְּאַיִדִּישׁ which he uses there for the Yiddish spelling rule mean “names in the Yiddish language.”

It's true, though, that the פֿאַרשטאַט example supports Witztum's interpretation.

B. The name "Oppenheim" is of German derivation, not Yiddish, therefore it was transliterated according to grammatical orthography exactly as the rules stipulate. In this form, and only in this form, does it appear in the index to the Encyclopedia Hebraica, and in the heading of the relevant entry. The Encyclopedia Hebraica is consistent in its use of grammatical orthography for its entries, whereas anyone examining Margalioth's Encyclopedia will immediately notice that he is not particular about adhering to grammatical orthography.

C. Concerning the forms which appear in the Responsa database, it is well known that the responsa literature commonly uses k'tiv malei (an orthographical style in which extra letters are added for clarity in

pronunciation), and even malei d'malei. There are even responsa that use Yiddish, Ladino, and other languages. For this reason it comes as no surprise that the k'tiv malei form אַװפֿנהײַם appears much more frequently than the grammatical orthography form אַװפֿנהײַם, and it is pointless trying to establish the correct spelling according to grammatical orthography based on this source.

So why does Witztum use this source to determine the spelling of Horowitz? (See Assertion 17).

At any rate, accepting Witztum's point that the Responsa cannot be an authority on issues of grammatical orthography, we have asked the Academy of Hebrew Language for the correct spelling of Oppenheim according to the pointillated spelling. Their answer was that in the case of names the first and most important fact is how the name's owner spells it. Since in our case there is no doubt that אַװפֿנהײַם is the spelling used by R. Oppenheim himself in his signature (see [Op]), by this criterion it should be used.

Beyond that they told us that, from a purely grammatical point of view, when the name is written without nikud it must have a double "yud" (i.e. אַװפֿנהײַם). When written with nikud (pointillated spelling) it is usually written with a single "yud". But in a text that uses also the name without nikud, it is still preferable to use a double "yud" even for the name with nikud, because in the case of names it is important to have a consistent spelling both with and without nikud. This shows that there is a possibility for replacing אַװפֿנהײַם with אַװפֿנהײַם even under grammatical orthography.

From all of the above it should be clear that Prof. Havlin acted consistently in using the form אַװפֿנהײַם and not אַװפֿנהײַם.

And we acted just as correctly in using אַװפֿנהײַם instead of אַװפֿנהײַם.

Despite all this we are willing to placate Witztum by replacing אַװפֿנהײַם with his אַװפֿנהײַם to demonstrate that the wiggle-room is so large we can afford that.

Assertion 5 part 1

Our Original claim:

Widely used acronyms sometimes acquire the status of a word, and are used as if they were a word. A good example is the acronym/word AIDS. When reading it, we do not expand it to "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome." Following common practice, WRR use such "pronounced" acronyms as appellations. Rabbi I-29, the Rambam, is best known as הרמב"ם, and not by his full name, and it is rightly included as an appellation in their first sample. But they are inconsistent about the use of acronyms that did not attain the status of a word. They have used הרב"א, הריעב"ץ, בעל הלקט, הרב"י and a few other such acronyms, but they have left out acronyms such as הרב"ז, מוהר"א, etc. We have done the same, removing one of their acronyms and adding two new ones: we have removed הריעב"ץ (Rabbi II-24, the Yaabez), and added המוהר"א and מוהר"א (Rabbi II-10, Rabbi Haim Abulafia). The last acronym appears very often in the Bar-Ilan Responsa Database [Re], it is used in [Az], and its omission in [WRR2] is especially questionable.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A comment on the issue of "pronounced" names: As we have already said, there are no explicit guidelines in the pre-prints about using only appellations that are pronounced.

Despite that, we accepted this limitation in general. Thus, all the appellations we added (with one or two exceptions) are pronounced (see in particular Assertions 11, 13 and 16). The one or two exceptions are justified by WRR's inclusion of equally unpronounced or unwritten names in the very same place (see Assertions 3 and 21).

In particular, the whole issue of pronounced names becomes irrelevant in this assertion (Assertion 5), since Witztum admits that מוהר"א is pronounced. We will just make a few short comments about Witztum's comments here.

A. We are happy to learn that BNMK finally admit that there is a difference between an acronym which is pronounced and an ordinary abbreviation or set of initials which is not pronounced. Yet they continue to confuse the issue of being pronounced with the issue of being common. When we say that an expression is "pronounced" we mean that the letters have a specific vocalization, regardless of how common the expression is. The acronyms הרמב"ם and הרב"י have exactly the same status: they are both pronounced. The only difference between them lies in their prevalence – הרמב"ם is much more prevalent.

We agree that there is a difference between being pronounced and being prevalent, but this distinction is meaningful only for widely used appellations.

Let's take, for example, the acronym הרב"ז, which Witztum claims isn't pronounced. We don't know if he is correct, but let's assume he is. What does "not pronounced" mean? It certainly doesn't mean that it's never pronounced by anyone, since, for example, when we are talking about it among ourselves, we pronounce it as

“Harav Za”. What it means is that while a few people may have some “private” specific vocalization for it, for some reasons it is not widely used.

When we are dealing with widely used acronyms it’s easy to determine which acronyms may have some “private” pronunciation but are not widely pronounced (e.g. נוב״י). But in the case of rarely used acronyms it’s not clear if this distinction between “private” and “public” pronunciation is even meaningful.

B. Therefore there is no justification for their claim that א״ח הע״ד, הר״ב״י, הר״א, בעל הלק״ט were included in violation of the rules. All of these acronyms are pronounced.

בעל הלק״ט: We don't know if it's pronounced, but famous rabbis we asked don't think it is pronounced.

הר״ב״י: It sounds like a tongue-twister, so we doubt it is pronounced. If it is, then so must ר״ע״ב be, yet it wasn't included in the WRR list. (See the “Critical Analysis” above).

הר״ב״י is probably pronounced. We have found it transliterated as “Rabi.” However, there is an interesting story which demonstrates the difficulty of determining whether an acronym is pronounced or not. Two years ago one of our friends discussed this issue with several important rabbis and he discovered that even they didn't recognize this name by sound.

א״ח הע״ד, as we show in Assertion 21, it is most likely not pronounced.

C. There is also no justification for their claim that the expressions ״הר״ב״י, ״הר״ב״ז״א were omitted in violation of the rules:

(i) הר״ב״ז״א - This acronym is not pronounced (and anyone familiar with the usage of the abbreviation ״ז״א in the Kabbalistic literature will understand immediately why this acronym cannot be pronounced). In any event, a survey of the Responsa database reveals that most references to הר״ב״ז״א refer not to the author of ״זרע אברהם״, R. Avraham Yizhaki, but to the author of ״זרע אמת״, who is not one of the personalities on the list.

ז״א is an acronym of “Zeir-Anpin,” a Kabbalistic term usually referring to the system of the lower 6 or 7 “Sefirot.” We are not aware of any reason why this fact should prevent it from being pronounced as “Za.” Witztum is very obscure here, and to explain, we’ll note that (1) the name of this rabbi is, after all, written as הר״ב ז״א, (2) the Hebrew word ז״א (=moved) is pronounced “Za,” and (3) the expression “BeZeir-Anpin” itself is used in Hebrew also in the meaning “in miniature.” Therefore, we don’t understand Witztum’s mysterious hint here.

(ii) ״הר״ב״י״— This is acronym is indeed pronounced, but it does not refer to any personality on the list. For example, in the Responsa database this acronym is used to refer to the author of Sfatai Hayam, the Maharim of Brisk, etc.

Outside of the Responsa database it appears as an appellation of Rabbi II-23 (Maharil). See, for example, the table of acronyms in [Din] p. 429.

Assertion 5 part 2

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

(iii) א"ח"ח- This is also pronounced. But Prof. Havlin has already explained (see his report, in the chapter "Professional Judgment," sec. B) why he decided not to use this acronym. It is used to refer to many different personalities, and not specifically to R. Chaim Abulafia.

Here Witztum relies on Havlin's claim that, as a rule, when an appellation is used for several different rabbis he decided it should be used only for the most important of them, or for the one most well known by this appellation. We'll call it the "shared appellation" rule.

This rule does not appear in the pre-prints, and therefore we should not be bound by it. More than that, this rule looks like an ad-hoc rule, for it really is illogical. Particularly for this rabbi – if he were called א"ח"ח and known by this name, why should we omit it just because other rabbis are also known (to the same extent) by this name? (See more about the illogical nature of this rule in Assertion 23).

This not all. Let us tell you the **"The Raavad story"**:

The appellation ר"אב"ד (by itself) is used to describe three medieval rabbis ("Rishonim"). Two of them appear in WRR lists: Rabbi I-1 and Rabbi II-1. Of these three rabbis, the one who is most important and most well known by the appellation is Rabbi I-1 (ר"אב"ד השלישי). This can be confirmed by anyone who has any knowledge of rabbinical literature. It is absolutely certain that were you to ask anyone, from the lowliest yeshiva student to the greatest rabbi, "Who was ר"אב"ד?" the first rabbi who would come to mind would be the ר"אב"ד בעל ההשגות (Rabbi I-1) and not ר"אב"י (Rabbi II-2). It is doubtful whether the average yeshiva student would have even heard of ר"אב"י. Even those readers who have no knowledge of rabbinical literature can understand this fact by observing that ר"אב"ד בעל ההשגות was included in WRR first list because the length of his entry in [Marg] is over 12 columns, whereas ר"אב"י appears in the second list because the length of his entry is only about 2 columns. If that is not convincing enough we will simply quote the definition of ר"אב"ד in the supplement on acronyms in the Even-Shoshan dictionary [Even]: "The name of a number of rabbis in the 12th century; especially famous is ר"אב"ד בעל (השלישי) בעל ההשגות."

It's obvious that, had WRR really built the lists according to the "shared appellation" rule, we could expect them to include ר"אב"ד as an appellation only for Rabbi I-1. However, by looking at their lists we see that they included it for both rabbis!

The violation of the "shared appellation" rule by the inclusion of ר"אב"ד for Rabbi II-1 is so obvious that it can hardly be attributed to an oversight. After all, not only does every Torah student know that this appellation is more widely associated with Rabbi I-1, but WRR could not possibly have forgotten that they already used it for that rabbi in the first list!

Whether on purpose or not, WRR clearly broke the rule in a blatant way with ר"אב"ד. Therefore, we are more than justified in breaking it here with א"ח"ח.

We also note that in the case of א"מחוקר the appellation is indeed common to a number of rabbis. But, unlike the case of ד"רר for Rabbi II-1, it is not more widely associated with any other rabbi. Therefore our deviation from this rule is not only fully justified, but also much more modest than that of WRR.

N.B. The example of ד"ר is not the only time they broke this rule. See another clear example in Assertion 9.

For similar considerations Prof. Havlin omitted the acronym ש"ה for the Baal Shem Tov from the first list. Had he included it it would have dramatically improved the results:

You will recall that in the original experiment which was carried out for the first list the statistics P1 and P2 served as the measure of probability. This is how the results were reported in both the "White Preprint" and the "Blue Preprint."

The best result was originally $P1 = 0.000000001334$. If we were to add ש"ה we would receive $P1 = 0.00000000412$. In other words, the results would have been better by a factor of 3.24!

As the case of ד"ר above shows, the “shared appellation” rule was very clearly broken when the second list was prepared, so even if WRR omitted ש"ה because of this rule it doesn't matter. As we explained in the preface we don't need to show that WRR broke their rules every time they could, we just have to show that they broke it at least as much as we did.

But in fact, Witztum's explanation (that ש"ה was omitted because it is “shared appellation”), is just one possible explanation of the omission. Another possible explanation is simply that WRR didn't think of it at that time. We are, after all, dealing with humans, and even Prof. Havlin admitted in [Hav96] that he had overlooked and forgotten to include several appellations. So we see that the example of ש"ה proves nothing.

D. On the basis of their faulty assertions, BNMK claim to be doing "the same" as we did, when in fact they are doing something different altogether: They erased a legitimate acronym (ק"ע) with no explanation at all, while adding in its place two expressions which do not deserve to be included.

As we have seen, the inclusion of א"מחוקר is fully justified.

The omission of ק"ע could be justified in several ways. We don't have to prove that it's not pronounced, we just have to show many equally pronounced acronyms that were omitted by WRR. There are many such examples (see the “Critical Analysis” above, point A), but we will not list them here since we don't mind putting ק"ע back onto our list.

Assertion 6

Our Original claim:

In [Hav], Prof. Havlin described the methodology he employed in producing the list of appellations. In his report he acknowledged a few omissions he made in the original list. One of those omissions is the appellation הרב חבי"ב for Rabbi II-11, Rabbi Haim Benbenest(i). Thus we have added הרב חבי"ב to our list, with and without the definite article ה. We have also added the widely used הרב החבי"ב.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. This case merely serves to demonstrate that Prof. Havlin indeed constructed the lists in an a priori manner. Had he desired to improve the results he would have been sure to include these appellations in the list: Taking P1 and P2 as the measure of probability (see Response 5), the best result without these expressions was $P2 = 0.0000000201$. If we add in these expressions we receive $P'2 = 00000000719$. In other words, the results improve by a factor a 2.8!

Witztum admits that their omission of these appellations was mistaken and that their inclusion in our list is justified. As for the fact that it also improves the results in Genesis – that alone proves nothing. See comment about this issue in the preface.

B. Concerning the form רב חבי"ב, it is doubtful whether this is a valid form: It appears a single time in the Responsa database in the Responsa Yosef Ometz, 104, after he had been mentioned a number of times as הרב חבי"ב. The omission of the definite article in this one instance may simply have been a slip of the pen.

Actually, he is mentioned in that response (no. 104) three times as הרב החבי"ב and (once) in the form ורב חבי"ב (=and רב חבי"ב), so the possibility of a pen slip seems less likely than Witztum implies.

It can also be argued that the inclusion of רב חבי"ב is dictated by rule (E) in [Hav96]. Incidentally, the similar form רב אב"ד seems to have been approved by Havlin in [Hav96] as an appellation for Rabbi II-1. His words about this are not very clear, but it seems that he doesn't explicitly reject it, despite the fact that this form doesn't appear even once in the Responsa as an appellation of Rabbi II-1.

(It appears several times, but not as an appellation. The form with the article, הרב רב אב"ד, does appear several times as an appellation of Rabbi II-1.)

Moreover, Witztum himself included in his list the unusual form בטל נט, without the article, as the appellation of Rabbi II-12 despite the fact that he managed to find it only in one source (that is not even in the Responsa, and not even in Hebrew). See Assertion 9.

We think all these considerations provide enough justification for leaving רב חבי"ב on our list.

Assertion 7

Our Original claim:

The appellations בנבנשת and בנבנשתי are both used for Rabbi II-11, Rabbi Haim Benvenist(e). WRR chose בנבנשת, we choose בנבנשתי. (Incidentally, בנבנשתי appears in Responsa more than בנבנשת, in roughly a 3:1 ratio).

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. The original form of the family name of R. Haim Benbenest is unquestionably בנבנשת. See the Encyclopedia Hebraica at his entry, and at the entry for the family Benbenest.

On the other hand, the variant בנבנשתי appears in the heading of this rabbi's entries in [Vin], [Hal], [Halp], [Ster] and [OtzIs], among others. It also appears more often in the Responsa, and it even appears in Prof. Havlin's professional articles (see below).

This is how both he and his brother R. Yehoshua and others in the family signed their names.

We agree that this is how both he and his brother R. Yehoshua signed their names, but this is not a justification for omitting the other form. See point C below.

B. It is true that the variant בנבנשתי exists, and that Prof. Havlin omitted it on the basis of his judgment. But this case only serves to illustrate that Prof. Havlin acted in good faith, and that his considerations were purely professional, because the appellation בנבנשתי does not appear as an ELS in Genesis at all, and would not have affected the outcome. Had Prof. Havlin actually operated as they have suggested - intentionally selecting the most successful names - then he should have used both forms in this case and spared himself unnecessary criticism.

The alert reader will have noticed that Witztum never gave any justification for rejecting the variant בנבנשתי. He just pontificates in the name of Havlin's professional judgment. But if it were true that Havlin's professional judgment was that בנבנשתי is only an unimportant variant which doesn't deserve to serve as an appellation of this rabbi, why did he use this variant (in the "full" spelling בנבנישתי several times in his professional articles for this very rabbi? (See [Aley] p. 159, and [Hav83] p. 24, 64, 294, 627.)

At least we can say, that those unjustified omissions and inclusions of WRR that do not affect the result (like the example here) serve to show that the WRR list wasn't prepared with as much professional care as Witztum would like us to believe.

See more about variants of surnames in Assertion 19.

C. Therefore, their assertion that they are proceeding in the same manner as Prof. Havlin is ridiculous. They omit the original name and include only the variant, and they admit to doing so not on the basis of professional considerations but only to manipulate the results.

We remind the reader that there is no hint in the pre-print (or even [Hav96]) that only the forms preferred by the name-bearer himself should be used. Moreover, Witztum himself sometimes used names and spellings that were not used by, or were even explicitly rejected by, the name-bearer. See Assertion 15 and our response to Assertion 13.

Sometimes WRR even used only the variant that was not used by the name-bearer (as we did here). See our response to Assertion 13.

D. Incidentally, the "information" which they supply the reader parenthetically is mistaken: בנבנשתי does not appear 3 times more frequently in the database. The real ratio is 1:1.

The reason for the incompatibility between Witztum's count and ours is probably due to the fact that Witztum counted all appearances of בנבנשת and בנבנשתי while we counted only their appearances as the surname of R' Haim.

It's also possible that we used a different version of the CD-ROM. The original search was done with version 4, which is no longer available to us, but we repeated the search with latest version (version 6) and here are the full results:

(Note that the name can be written both in plene spelling ["ktiv male"] בנבנישתי and defective ["ktiv chaser"] בנבנשתי. In our list we only used בנבנשתי because it seems more consistent with the "ktiv dikduki" rule. If we also include בנבנישתי it won't affect the result as it doesn't have an ELS).

All appearances:

"Benbenesht":	בנבנשת--45	בנבנישת--0	total--45
"Benbenishty":	בנבנשתי--50	בנבנישתי--9	total--59

Appearances only as surname of Rabbi Haim:

"Benbenesht":	בנבנשת--6	בנבנישת--0	total--6
"Benbenishty":	בנבנשתי--12	בנבנישתי--3	total--15

We see two things: First, even when we consider all the appearances, the form "Benbenishty" is (slightly) more common than "Benbenesht." Second, when we consider only the appearances as surname of Rabbi Haim (which seems to be more correct) the ratio between the two is much closer to 3:1 than to 1:1.

Assertion 8

Our Original claim:

The last name of Rabbi II-12, Rabbi Haim Capusi, can be spelled either כַּפּוּסִי or כַּאֲפּוּסִי (in Responsa, they appear in an 8:3 ratio, which indicates quite clearly that both spellings are valid). WRR state explicitly in [WRR2] that in such cases they use both spellings. But in their list they took only the first form. For our list, we make the opposite mistake and take only the second form.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. In our paper we state that "the letter א is often used as a mater lectionis," and that in such cases we take both forms. In other words, where it is grammatically appropriate to use the mater lectionis we take both forms. In the word כַּפּוּסִי the accent is on the פ, not on the כ, therefore it is grammatically incorrect to use the mater lectionis.

Witztum claims here that it is grammatically appropriate to use א as a mater-lectionis only in an accented syllable, but this is simply not true. To show that we simply quote Even-Shoshan's definition of mater-lectionis:

אמות הקריאה: האותיות א' ה' ו' י' הנכתבות לציון תנועות שונות, כגון: מלאכה, עומדים.
Our translation: "mater-lectionis: the letters א' ה' ו' י' written to mark different vowels, e.g.: מלאכה, עומדים."

There is nothing in the definition about accents. Moreover, in the first example that it brings – מלאכה – the accent is on the last syllable (כה), and yet we see that there is an א serving as mater-lectionis in the second **non-accented** syllable (אל)!

כַּפּוּסִי is the correct form, and it was with this form that R. Capusi, in fact, signed his name, as is attested to, for example, by Chida in Shem HaGedolim (a source which BNMK are fond of citing).

Witztum is probably correct in saying that Rabbi Capusi signed his name כַּפּוּסִי. However, this fact is irrelevant, since the rule of aleph as a vowel letter doesn't say that we should use only the spelling preferred by the name-bearer himself. We can see that in other cases it didn't matter to Witztum how the rabbis themselves signed. See many examples in Assertion 13.

The fact that in the Responsa database the form כַּאֲפּוּסִי also appears says nothing. The responsa literature is not always particular about the subtleties of grammar.

We will note that the spelling כַּאֲפּוּסִי also appears (together with כַּפּוּסִי) in the title line of this rabbi's entry in the encyclopedia [OtzIs] (vol. 5, p. 187).

It is interesting to note that in Assertion 13 BNMK themselves paraphrase our statement more accurately, "where א is used as a "mater lectionis..." It is strange that here they paraphrase us in a way which is misleading.

This accusation is totally ridiculous. Witztum here interprets his rule in an uncommon way and then accuses us for using the most reasonable and natural understanding!

To show that, we will quote the rule precisely as it appears (in the first preprint): “In transcribing names into Hebrew the letter ‘א’ is often used as a mater lectionis; e.g. Luzzato may be written לוצטו or לוּצאטו. In such cases we have taken both forms.”

We found in the Responsa and [OtzIs] that Capusi may be written כּאפּוּסִי and כּפּוּסִי, and therefore we deduced, according to this rule, that both forms should be used. If Witztum had meant that the form with the aleph should be used only when the aleph appears in an accented syllable, he should have said so explicitly in this rule. Given the published wording of the rule, we think that our interpretation is the most natural one (see the example from Even-Shoshan above). More than that, we can prove that the only other person who used this rule (besides Witztum and us) also understood it as we did and not as Witztum presents it here.

In the Inbal-Gans cities’ experiment [Gans], Witztum’s friend Zvi Inbal explicitly relies on this very rule in spelling the names of the cities. Let’s look at the city name Granada. The accent in this name is on the syllable “na.” According to Witztum’s interpretation it should be spelt as אַדְנַגְגַּ and אַדְנַגְגַּ, but the spelling אַדְנַגְגַּ is grammatically incorrect. But it turns out that Inbal has included the spellings אַדְנַגְגַּ and אַדְנַגְגַּ, exactly as our interpretation would have it!

B. Therefore BNMK's statement that they allow themselves to "make the opposite mistake" is itself predicated upon an error: No mistake at all was involved in the omission of כּאפּוּסִי, whereas they "err" purposefully in deleting כּפּוּסִי from the list.

On the contrary, we see that כּאפּוּסִי was omitted against (the most reasonable understanding of) the mater-lectionis rule, and therefore we are completely justified in omitting כּפּוּסִי.

Assertion 9

Our Original claim:

The two forms בעל הנט and בעל נט are most often associated with Rabbi Meir, whose grave is near Tiberias, rather than with Rabbi II-12, Rabbi Haim Capusi. The vast majority of references to בעל הנט in Responsa refer to Rabbi Meir and not to Rabbi Haim Capusi and we found no references to Rabbi Haim Capusi as “בעל נט.” (Responsa does refer to this rabbi often; see the previous point.) On several occasions Havlin ruled out an appellation for one personality because it was more closely associated with another personality (see [Hav]). Hence we remove the appellations בעל הנט and בעל נט.

Witztum’s Response and our rejoinder:

A. As Prof. Havlin mentions in his report, the responsa literature is not the most appropriate source to look for appellations of R. Haim Capusi, since his main Torah output was not in the realm of Halacha. Contrary to the assertion of BNMK, his name does not appear frequently in the Responsa database (there are only 22 references, which is not a lot. For comparison, his contemporary and academic adversary, the Radbaz is referred to by this one appellation more than 8500 times!).

We won’t argue about the definition of “frequently.” It doesn’t matter here anyway; our main point is that “Baal HaNes” is more widely known as the appellation of another rabbi, as we’ll show below, without having to count appearances in the Responsa.

B. It is true that the combination "R. Meir Baal HaNes" is more common than "R. Haim Capusi Baal Hanes," but R. Haim Capusi is also known by the appellation "Baal HaNes" alone, whereas R. Meir is generally not. See the Encyclopedia Judaica at his entry, where it mentions that R. Haim Capusi's synagogue is referred to as "the Synagogue of Baal Hanes." In this same source you can find the appellation בעל נט, as well.

“Baal-HaNes” story:

Witztum’s claim that “R. Haim Capusi is also known by the appellation ‘Baal HaNes’ alone, whereas R. Meir is generally not” is simply false. בעל הנט appears by itself as an appellation for R’ Meir Ba’al HaNes even in the Responsa database. See the responsa of the Chatam Sofer, Part 6—Likutim article 27—where it is written, “No man contributed to the poor of the Land of Israel unless to the soul of בעל הנט or memorial candles for בעל הנט...”. From this line we can clearly see that the appellations בעל הנט and מאיר בעל הנט both served for this same man. By reading the full response one can learn further that when someone contributed charity using the formula “for the soul of בעל הנט” it was clear to all that the intent was מאיר בעל הנט.

In fact, Witztum’s reply here is quite strange. Even if he missed this response of the Chatam Sofer it should have been clear to him that, should you ask anyone which rabbi was called בעל הנט or בעל נט the first reply would be Rabbi Meir. Only the very

few people who had even heard of Rabbi Capusi might consider him as a second possibility.

Readers who have no knowledge of this matter can still appreciate this by looking at the Encyclopedia Hebraica. In the entry for Rabbi Meir (Vol. 22, p. 69) we find that “his tomb became very famous in the Jewish world from the 18th century...” (in this source you can also find the appellation **בַּעַל הַנֶּט**). Rabbi Haim Capusi, by contrast, is so relatively unknown that he doesn't even have an entry in the Encyclopedia Hebraica!

And guess whose name Even-Shoshan brings as an example in his definition of the expression **בַּעַל הַנֶּט**.

We conclude that the rejection of the appellations in our list was indeed mandated by rule B in Havlin's letter, while its inclusion in the WRR list is erroneous (according to this rule).

Assertion 10

Our Original claim:

Rabbi II-15 is Rabbi Yehuda Hasid Segal. WRR omitted the appellation ל"ה סג"ל, his first name + his last name. We do use this appellation. (See e.g. [Marg]).

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. ל"ה is not this rabbi's last name. BNMK brought no source to indicate otherwise. In Margalioth's Encyclopedia one finds the combination ר"ב יהודה סג"ל, but not יהודה סג"ל.

That's easy. Yehuda Segal appears in a number of sources. For example, in the article "The Chevra Kedosha of Rabbi Yehuda Chasid and its Aliyah to the Land of Israel" [Ben] Meir Benayahu quotes at least 3 different sources from the era of R' Yehuda Chasid in which he is called simply יהודה סג"ל (pages 141, 143, 144).

That is also what the researcher himself calls the rabbi at the start of part B of the article-יהודה סג"ל חסיד.

Note that we do not claim that Segal is the family name of Rabbi Yehuda Hasid, as Witztum doesn't claim that Segal is the family name of the Maharil (whose family name is מוּלֵין or מוּלֵן). We just claim that the combination Yehuda Segal exists and therefore should have been included by Witztum, just as he included the form Yaacov Segal.

B. If one examines the "Blue Preprint" he will discover that, contrary to the assertion of BNMK, we did not "always take appellations of this form." We took them where there was a justification; for example, in the case of the Maharil (23 on the list). There we use the combinations ר"ב סג"ל and ר"ב סג"ל because they are well documented both in the Responsa and elsewhere.

Witztum is correct; we didn't notice that he doesn't always take appellations of this form. After having examined the "Blue Preprint" as he instructed we indeed discovered at least two other combinations of the form "personal name + Segal" that were omitted. However this hardly serves Witztum's case, for these omissions are even less justifiable than the omission of Yehuda Segal!

This is what we found:

1. יהודה סג"ל (for the TaZ) was omitted although it is documented both in the Responsa and elsewhere. See, for example, in the Bach responsa, that this is what his father-in-law the Bach calls him! (See also the title line of his entry in [Az] and [De] part 1, p. 4.)
2. יחזקאל סג"ל (for Rabbi Yechezkel Landa) was omitted though it is documented in the Responsa. See, for example, in his Responsa ("Noda Beyehuda") that he signs his name יחזקאל סג"ל לנדא (and once simply יחזקאל סג"ל). He is also addressed a few times as יחזקאל סג"ל.

We sincerely thank Witztum for drawing our attention to the fact that his usage of Segal is even more inconsistent than we thought.

C. In any event, the appellation ל"גם הדין' does not appear as an ELS in Genesis, and its omission would not have affected the results.

In fact, none of the forms with Segal mentioned above appears as an ELS in Genesis. However, this does not justify the inconsistency. See the comment about this issue in the preface to our response.

Assertion 11

Our Original claim:

We add the appellation טראני הר"י to Rabbi II-19, The Maharit, along with the variations ר"י טרני, הר"י טרני, and ר"י טראני. This puts the Maharit in a similar status with the Yaabez.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. The abbreviations טרני הר"י and טראני הר"י are not pronounced. That is why they were not included in the list, just as the abbreviations עמדון הר"י and עמדון הר"י for the Ya'abez were not included (and just as קארן הר"י, for example, was excluded from the first list as an appellation for personality 19).

We think that the appellations טרני הר"י and טראני הר"י are pronounced. These appellations are similar in form to ר"י בירב and ר"י מיגש which appear as “Ri Berav” and “Ri Migash” in the list of abbreviations in the index volume of Encyclopedia Judaica (page 77). See also Assertion 16 for another proof that the similar appellation ר"י עמדון is also pronounced as “Ri Emdin.”

B. BNMK make a fundamental error here and in Assertion 16. Out of linguistic and bibliographical ignorance they assume that the appellation טרני הר"י is simply the abbreviation טרני הר"י with the addition of the definite article, when in fact, as is commonly known, טרני הר"י is short for רבי יוסף טרני, whereas טראני הר"י stands for רבי יוסף טרני. (See, for instance, the Even Shushan Dictionary in the section on acronyms, where he explains that ר"י [23 on the first list] stands for רבי יצחק אלפסי, whereas הר"י, with the definite article, stands for רבי יצחק אלפסי).

As for the meaning of the acronyms הרמב"ם, הרמב"ם, and their like—it can indeed be said that the meanings are הרב רבי משה בן מימון, הרב רבי יוסף טראני. This can also be proven by the fact that we hear people saying להרמב"ם (read LeHaRambam) instead of לרבמ"ם (read LaRambam). On the other hand, they can also be seen as הרמב"ם + הר"י טראני or הרמב"ם + הר"י. The proof of this is that we find people who, for example, say ברבמ"ם (read BaRambam, not BeRambam) instead of בהרמב"ם (BeHaRambam). That is, they regard the ה as a definite article, which, according to Hebrew grammar, is omitted after the letters ח and כ and their pronunciation changes from “e” to “a.”

We can also add that Havlin himself in [Hav96] treats such an ה as an article, for he says: “For example, Rashi is not known as הרש"י (with the definite article).”

C. The variants טראני הר"י and טרני הר"י do not appear in the Responsa database. Regarding עמדון הר"י, it does appear in the Responsa database. Below, in response 15, we will explain the use of the form עמדון in addition to עמדון, and that the Ya'abez was also a prolific author outside of the field of Halachic Responsa, so the sources for his appellations are not restricted to the responsa literature

There isn't even a hint in the first pre-prints that only appellations which appear in the Responsa deserve to be included, so there is no reason why we should use only such appellations. Moreover, Witztum himself used many appellations that do not appear in the Responsa, some of them even for rabbis whose main field of creation was Halacha. For example, he used שלמה ןחנעלמא for Rabbi II-32, even though this form doesn't appear in the Responsa. What does appear there is the form we used - שלמה חנעלמא , see Assertion 24. (We have to add, on Witztum's defense, that שלמה ןחנעלמא does appear in other places, e.g. [Marg]).

However, if Prof. Havlin had included these two appellations in the list the results would have improved from $P^2 = 0.00000000201$ to $P^2 = 0.00000000186$.

This is irrelevant. See the comment about this issue in the preface to our response.

D. From all of the above it should be clear that there is no justification for BNMK's additions.

We disagree.

Assertion 12

Our Original claim:

We've added the appellation ח'ימונג'יל for Rabbi II-21, Rabbi Yaakov Beirav. It is his last name by his own testimony, see [Be, 'א 'ט]. See also the article [Gr], where the same source ([Be, 'א 'ט]) was used to determine Rabbi Beirav's last name. [Gr] says the name is ח'יאנג'יל. Given the explicit "ח'ימונג'יל" in [Be, 'א 'ט], the "ח'יאנג'יל" in [Gr] must be a typographical error.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. We present here the relevant passage from the responsum of R. Yaakov Beirav (first printing, Venice 1665, responsum 1): "Says the author, Yaakov who is called Bei Rav, [of] the exiles in the exile of Castile, from the town of Maqueda in the kingdom of Toledo, of (or "to") the family of בני ח'ימונג'יל.

This is the only source in which the term ח'ימונג'יל is mentioned, and its meaning is unclear: Is this a place name, or perhaps the name of the family's patriarch?

Note that the passage was copied somewhat defectively, and that at least one word is missing: "of the exiles, etc." It is not entirely clear what is meant: One could understand that R. Yaakov Bei Rav was among the exiles who were exiled from the town of Maqueda to the family of בני ח'ימונג'יל.

And even if one were to insist that this is some sort of surname, the name should be written בני ח'ימונג'יל, and not just ח'ימונג'יל.

Fine.

B. But the story does not end here. Gruenhut (the correct spelling), on whose article BNMK base themselves, also relies on this sole reference, but his version of the text reads ח'יאונג'יל. Furthermore, see Or HaChaim, by R. Chaim Michal (an authoritative bibliographic text), no. 1069, p. 496, who has the reading מ'רמראן!

Fine.

C. The assumption that this appellation is R. Yaakov's surname is based on pure guesswork, not on proof. On the other hand, evidence does exist that the appellation ב'י ג'ר, with which R. Yaakov consistently signed his name (and which appears dozens of times as his signatures in his responsa as well as on other documents), was his family name -for his descendants were also called by this name (for example, among his descendants was another R. Yaakov Beirav, who is also mentioned in the Encyclopedia Hebraica and by Margalioth).

The assumption that this appellation is R. Yaakov's surname is not ours, but of [Gr] (p.27), so even if it is a bit speculative, this "guess" seems to be more substantiated than Witztum's guess that א'חהער is pronounced (see Assertion 21).

Still, to please Witztum and to improve the quality of our list we will remove this appellation from our list.

D. Let the reader be informed - the name לַיְיָוָה does not appear at all as an ELS in Genesis, and its inclusion would not have affected the results.

This is irrelevant. See the comment about this issue in the preface to our response.

Assertion 13

Our Original claim:

The last name of Rabbi II-22, Rabbi Israel Yaakov Hagiz, can be spelled either חגיז (as in [Heb] and as in the biographical section of [Re]) or חגיאז (as in [Marg]). But WRR use only חגיאז, contrary to their explicit convention that where א is used as a "mater lectionis," they take both forms. Thus they fail to use the appellations חגיז מוהר"י and חגיז ר"י (both appear in Responsa). We allow ourselves to make the opposite mistake, taking the appellations חגיז מוהר"י and חגיז ר"י and omitting חגיאז. We note that even though the WRR computations are restricted to appellations totaling 5-8 letters, we can tell which 'short' appellations (such as חגיז, עמדן, or מולן) they consider as valid either by checking whether they have used longer appellations that contain the shorter ones as substrings or by reading their "blue preprint" [WRR1], in which the short forms are also listed.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

It is correct that if no other information were available, both forms, חגיז and חגיאז, should have been used.

Witztum is trying to sneak in a new condition, one which doesn't appear in the rules. The mater-lectionis rule says that whenever both forms appear, both should be used. Nothing is said in this rule about "other information."

However, as Prof. Havlin explained in his report, from R. Moshe Hagiz's words in his preface to his father's work Halachot Ketanot, it seems clear that they specifically wrote their name חגיאז. (See the end of the same work, where the author, R. Yaakov Chagiz, signs this way, and the son also writes his father's name there with this spelling).

So what? The mater-lectionis rule doesn't say that both forms should only be used when it's not known which the name-bearer used.

In many other cases WRR used both forms despite the fact that the name-bearer used only one of them:

1. WRR used the spelling קרז for R. Yosef Caro (Rabbi I-19), though he used the spelling קראז. See, for example, the picture of his signature which appears in his entry in Encyclopedia Hebraica, vol. 29 p. 27. Incidentally, we note that the spelling קרז (as opposed to חגיז) is quite rare. It probably does not appear in Responsa at all (as a family name), while the equivalent form קראז appears some 2000 times. (That is to say, the קראז-קרז ratio in Responsa is 2000:0; for comparison's sake the חגיאז-חגיז ratio there is about 5:1).
2. WRR used the spelling לוצצט for Ramchal, even though he himself used the spelling לוצצט. See, for example, the picture of his signature at [Lut] p. 47. See also his signature at the end of [Luz].

More strikingly, sometimes WRR only used a spelling that was not used by the name bearer himself:

3. The Rif signed his name ראלפאטי (see his signatures in the Responsa database), yet WRR used only the spelling ראלפטי.
4. R. David Oppenheim signed his name אופנהיים (see [Op]). WRR specifically used only the spelling אופנהיי because it was required (in their opinion) by the rule of pointilated spelling.

It is clear from all this that, while it might be true that R. Chagiz himself used only רגאק, rejecting the רגק form is completely unjustified and a clear violation of the spelling rules.

Recall that Prof. Havlin is himself an expert of the first rank - whenever he felt he had a solid proof, he preferred that to an article by a colleague.

As a side remark we will add that Havlin's words in [Hav96], according to which "his son, in the introduction to 'Halachot Ketanot' determines that the proper spelling is רגאק" are inaccurate. Looking in "Halachot Ketanot" we find that the son indeed constantly uses the spelling רגאק, but he never explicitly says that he thinks this is the only correct form. Perhaps what Havlin had in mind is a specific place in which the son mentions that the gematria of רגאק is equal to that of רגקה (a tractate on which he published a book). It seems pretty far-fetched to determine from this gematria pun that R. Hagiz's son thought the spelling רגק is incorrect. Maybe the son thought רגק is correct as well, but just mentioned that the gematria of the spelling רגאק is the same as רגקה. In any case, as we explained above, even if R. Hagiz himself were standing and shouting that the spelling רגק is incorrect it should not have made a difference, for the spelling רגק is nonetheless widely used. (See also the case of Emdin in Assertion 15.)

Beyond that we can add, in a jocular tone, that in gematria puns of this nature a difference of one is not considered relevant, and therefore one can definitely say that the gematria of רגק also equals that of רגקה!

On a more serious note we want to add that there seems to be an incompatibility between what Witztum says here and what Prof. Havlin says in [Hav97].

We understand from what Witztum says here that Havlin had the freedom to ignore the mater-lectionis rule whenever he found that the name-bearer preferred a specific spelling. From what Havlin says about the name Caro in [Hav97] it follows that this rule was actually applied automatically, and that his findings had nothing to do with its application.

B. The appellation רגק"ג is not pronounced. It is merely an abbreviation (see Response 11). Furthermore, despite BNMK's claim to the contrary it does not appear in the Responsa.

We think it is pronounced (see Assertions 11,16). Furthermore, contrary to Witztum's claim, it does appear twice in the Responsa in the combination רגק"ג (by Ri Hagiz).

C. Prof. Havlin had no knowledge about our measuring method, therefore he prepared the list of appellations without regard for their length. Yet even according to BNMK's allegations, Prof. Havlin would have had no interest in omitting the name רגק. Because it consists of only four letters,

it would not in any event have been included in the experiment, which required expressions of 5-8 letters. The appellation וְגַיִן וְרִמְמוֹן (as well as וְגַיִן וְרִמְמוֹן, if you will) does not appear as an ELS in Genesis at all! On the other hand, regarding R. Yosef of Trani (19 on the list) Prof. Havlin included the form וְגַיִן (without the mater lectionis), despite the fact that this caused the results to be poor by a factor of 1.5! (Obviously he had no way of knowing this). In other words, Prof. Havlin clearly did not have had prior knowledge about the "success" or "failure" of any particular expression - we see that in this single issue of whether or not to use the mater lectionis, on one occasion he included the form which omits the mater lectionis despite the fact that its inclusion had a deleterious affect on the results (in the case of וְגַיִן), and he "inexplicably" did not include this form on an occasion when including it would have spared him unnecessary criticism without affecting the results at all (in the case of וְגַיִן)!

This proves nothing. See the comments about this issue in the preface to our response.

***D.** In light of the above, BNMK's statement that they "allow [themselves] to make the opposite mistake" by consciously erasing a correct name seems rather bizarre. Their addition of the name וְגַיִן וְרִמְמוֹן, as we have seen, also turns out to be without justification.*

Quite the contrary. As we explained above, by omitting וְגַיִן WRR has broken the mater-lectionis rule in a blatant way. Therefore we are completely justified in breaking it the opposite direction. Adding וְגַיִן וְרִמְמוֹן is also justified, as we have shown in B.

Assertion 14

Our Original claim:

For Rabbi I-31, The Shach, WRR use both the appellation כהן שבתי and the appellation הכהן שבתי. We follow suit, and for Rabbi II-23, the Maharil and Rabbi II-25, Rabbi Yitshak Horowitz, we use both לוי and הלוי. Thus for Rabbi II-23 we add the appellations לוי יעקב and לוי מוהר"י on top of the existing הלוי יעקב and הלוי מוהר"י, and for Rabbi II-25 we add לוי יצחק on top of the existing הלוי יצחק.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. BNMK continue here their practice of inventing appellations. R. Shabbetai Cohen, known by his acronym as the Shach, is in fact referred to as both כהן שבתי and הכהן שבתי. He is referred to as הכהן שבתי in the heading of his entry in both Margalioth and the Encyclopedia Hebraica. He is referred to as כהן שבתי in the index to Encyclopedia Hebraica, and in several citations there (see the entry for R. David Halevi, p. 86; see the entry "Vilna," p. 165; and elsewhere). The same is true of Margalioth (see the caption under the Shach's picture, facing p. 1089; see the entry for R. Yehoshua Heshil of Cracow, p. 705; and elsewhere). Also in the Responsa database he is referred to as ר' שבתי כהן.

Nevertheless, it is totally unjustifiable to extrapolate from his case that for every Cohen or Levi both forms should be used. On the first list, for example, R. David HaLevi (the Taz) was always referred to as דוד הלוי, not לוי דוד. Therefore each case must be examined separately to determine which forms should be used.

We originally thought that Havlin's rule of using all forms both with and without the definitive article should apply here as well, but in retrospect perhaps Witztum's approach is more correct here and each case must be examined separately to see if both forms exist.

B. The appellation לוי יצחק is never used to refer to R. Yitzchak Horowitz, and should therefore be omitted.

Perhaps Witztum is correct that לוי יצחק is never used to refer to this rabbi. On the other hand, it's also possible that לוי יצחק appears once in reference to this rabbi in some addendum to a book that survived in only two copies. (See in Assertion 21 that this should be enough by Witztum's criteria to justify its inclusion.) However, since we don't have the resources to check all the books in the world and since our limited check seems to confirm Witztum's claim, we agree to remove לוי יצחק.

C. Regarding the Maharil, we do sometimes find him referred to as יעקב לוי (the ratio of occurrences of יעקב לוי versus הלוי יעקב in the Responsa database is 1:5). In this instance perhaps it should have been included.

Then why wasn't it included in the first place? Interestingly, in this case Witztum forgets his habit of analyzing the effect each of his admitted omissions has on his result. (The reader can easily guess why.)

The acronym 'ל' 'ר"ת, however, is never used for the Maharil, and should therefore be omitted.

We will remove it.

Assertion 15

Our Original claim:

In the case of Rabbi II-24, the Yaabez, we do not use appellations based around the spelling עמנדן for two reasons. They appear less often, and we wish to follow the precedent set by WRR when they did not use the form מולן with Rabbi II-23, the Maharil. (יעקב מולין, etc., appear often in Responsa, more often than forms with עמנדן, and were omitted in [WRR2]. See also [WRR1].)

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. The ratio of appellations which incorporate the spelling עמנדן in the Responsa database, versus those which incorporate the form עמנדין is the same (1:6) as the ratio of appellations incorporating מולן versus those incorporating מולין.

However, the Ya'abez was a prolific author outside of the field of Halachic responsa, as well. Therefore sources for his appellations are not restricted to the responsa literature.

What Witztum claims here, in fact, is that in Jewish literature (outside the Responsa database) עמנדן appears more often relative to עמנדין, than מולן appears relative to מולין. That is why he claims the omission of מולן is justified and the omission of עמנדן is unjustified.

The factual claim about the frequencies outside of the Responsa may be true or may be false. Since neither we nor anyone else can possibly scan all Jewish literature and count all the appearances of עמנדן vs. עמנדין and מולן vs. מולין it's practically impossible to thoroughly check this claim. However, we do have a way to partially check it using another computerized Jewish database that contains books that are not included in the Responsa database. We took the DBS CD-ROM [DBS] and checked the relative frequencies of these variations in books that do not appear in the Responsa. The results were:

עמנדין--13 עמנדן--0
מולין--19 מולן--11

This doesn't seem to confirm Witztum's claim.

Be that as it may, the whole issue of choice between similar variants of names according to frequency is not defined by the rules in the first pre-print, therefore even if Witztum's claim was correct it would be irrelevant.

For more about variants of surnames see Assertion 19, below.

This is how the spelling עמנדן came to be used, for example, in the heading of his entry in the Encyclopedia Hebraica. In Margalioth the heading does indeed use the spelling עמנדין, but the form עמנדן appears elsewhere in this same source.

On the other hand, the Ya'abez himself wrote עמנדין (for the city name; he rejected its usage as his name). Also supporting our case that מולן should be treated like עמנדן is the fact that Maharil's entry in [Vin] is מולין.

B. A man may be referred to by a name he has chosen for himself, or by one which others have conferred upon him, even if it is not to his liking. Therefore this section of their argument (which does not appear in the original draft of BNMK's article) is entirely irrelevant.

The fact that Ya'abez did not consider his surname to be ענדין (and even rejected it, see [Ya]) and yet WRR treat it as his surname is very relevant to the question of how WRR determined what should be considered a person's surname. See Assertion 24.

Also compare what Witztum says here to what he said about בנבנשת, הורוביץ, חגיז and כאפוט (Assertions 7, 17, 13 and 8). There he justified omitting these forms because they were not used by the rabbis themselves, even though in the last two cases this involves breaking his mater-lectionis spelling rule.

Assertion 16

Our Original claim:

WRR are inconsistent about the use of the definite article, ה. For example, they use הר"י עמדין and הר"י עמדין for Rabbi II-24, but omit ר"י עמדין and ר"י עמדין. (The latter two forms appear in Responsa more often than the former two!) We fix this mistake and allow ourselves to make a parallel mistake, and omit the appellation מהרש"ש for Rabbi II-31, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, while keeping the appellation מהרש"ש.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. As we have already discussed at length in our response to Assertion 11, BNMK make two errors. First, they assume that הר"י עמדין is simply the expression ר"י עמדין with the addition of the definite article. This is incorrect (see our response there).

Also see our response there.

They err a second time in assuming that the expression ר"י עמדין (or ר"י עמדין) is pronounced. This is also a mistake; these are nothing more than abbreviations. (See the Response to 11 where we note that Prof. Havlin followed the same rules in making the first list).

This is strange. Witztum claims here in fact that הר"י עמדין is pronounced as HaRi Emdin, but when you drop the ה at the beginning, ר"י עמדין is not pronounced as Ri Emdin. (We should note again that the second form appears in the Responsa more often than the first).

We think that appellation ר"י עמדין is pronounced. See, for example, [Mish] in "Hilchot Brachot" section 229, subsection 2, note 2 in Sha'ar HaTziun, in which it is written "הגאון ר"י עמדין," pointillated in a way which makes it clear that it is pronounced "Ri Emdin." (See also Assertion 11).

B. On the basis of these two errors they "allow themselves" to make a third error: the omission of a correct appellation from the list. Clearly their arguments deserve to be dismissed.

We could justify the omission of מהרש"ש simply by pointing to all the cases where WRR weren't strict about the definite article beyond the example above. See the "Critical Analysis", Point (E). We won't bother to do that, because in our new list we omit מהרש"ש(ה) for another reason. See "Critical Analysis", Point (F).

Assertion 17

Our Original claim:

The last name of Rabbi II-25, Rabbi Yitshak HaLevi Horowitz, is spelled הורוביץ by both [Marg] and [Heb]. We thus replace הורוויץ with הורוביץ.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. Here BNMK simply provide the reader with misinformation, on the basis of which they wrongly alter the list once more.

In the Encyclopedia Hebraica there is a special entry for the famous Horowitz family (v. 13, pp. 939-940). There the encyclopedia sets down the main spellings of the family name as any of the three: הורוויץ, הורוביץ or הורויץ, and it does not indicate a preference among them. All of these options are used by Margalioth, as well. For example, in the index he uses the form הורוויץ for all members of the family, including R. Yitzchak Horowitz.

Lest the reader be misled, there is only one form which appears in the **title line of R' Yitzchak Horowitz's own entry** in both Encyclopedia Hebraica (first supplement volume, p. 874) and in Margalioth (column 918), and this is הורוביץ. This spelling also appears in the title of this rabbi's entry in [Halp] (vol. 7 p. 161)

B. In cases like these the responsa database can be of service:

Compare this to what Witztum says about using the Responsa to determine spelling in Assertion 4.

R. Yitzchak Horowitz is not mentioned in this source even once with the spelling הורוביץ, whereas the form הורוויץ does appear. In all, the Horowitz family name appears there some 200 times as הורוויץ, and only in a few isolated instances as הורוביץ or הורויץ. Thus the preference seems to be clear.

Witztum's remarks "In cases like these the Responsa database can be of service" and "Thus the preference seems to be clear" are misleading. Since the explicit rules in the first pre-print do not provide any guideline for behavior in such an instance, WRR had, in fact, a number of choices besides referring to the Responsa (recall that the Responsa is not even mentioned in the first pre-prints). They could include all three variants (as they did for R' Moshe Zacuto - see Assertion 19). They could use only הורוביץ relying on the fact that it is the form which appears in the Responsa database (although it's not clear why this should prevent the usage of other forms for this rabbi, like הורוביץ). They could use only הורוויץ relying on the fact that this is the form used in the title line of his entry in Margalioth (as they did, for example, in Krochmal's case), or they could use the last two forms, relying on the last two reasons. Since no explicit guidelines were given ahead of time to prefer one criterion of selection over another, each decision could have been defended equally well.

They decided eventually to chose the form הורוויץ; we decided to chose the form הורוביץ.

C. Once again we see that their claims unfounded, and their attempts to change the list are invalid.

We see no such thing.

Assertion 18

Our Original claim:

The Krochmal Story: We suspected that there's something wrong with the name קרוכמל for Rabbi II-26, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Krochmal, author of the responsa book צדק צמח and of the biblical commentary פי צדיק. So we started searching. The word קרוכמל does not appear in the Bar-Ilan Responsa database [Re]. The only variation of קרוכמל that does appear there is קראכמאל, which appears only twice. But in both appearances it is the Yiddish word for starch, and not a Jewish surname. And it is not because [Re] doesn't care about Rabbi Menachem Mendel; the Rabbi appears in [Re] many times, but only under his other common designations. In [Marg], קרוכמל is in the header of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's entry, but no explanation for the origin of the name is given. In [Heb] Menachem Mendel doesn't even have an entry, though the index mentions him twice. Looking inside the text, we got no further clues. His books are signed מנחם מענדל and מנחם מענדיל, and no קרוכמל is mentioned in them in any form. An eulogy for him [Sh] mentions only his first name(s), מנחם מענדיל, and the titles of his books. So where did "קרוכמל" come from? [Az] was of no help. In the 19th century bibliography [B-Y] one of Krochmal's books is listed under קראכמעל. In a 19th century biography [Du] of David Oppenheim, Krochmal is mentioned in passing, and his name is given as קראכמאל. We are almost certain we also saw קרוכמאל and קרוכמעל, but after a long day in the Israeli National Library in Giv'at-Ram, the stairs leading to the photocopy machines seem very steep and the pencil becomes really heavy, so we don't have references for these two forms. The 19th century Rabbi Nahman Krochmal spells his name קרוכמאל. All of that taken together indicates clearly that Krochmal was not spelled "קרוכמל" in the 19th century, but it doesn't help us find how Krochmal was spelled when Rabbi Menachem Mendel lived, in the first part of the 17th century.

At this point we got the advice of two wise man. One suggested that we look at [Hei], a book on the Jewish laws in the state of Moravia, where Rabbi Menachem Mendel was the state's Rabbi. From the other wise man we learned to check the citations in the footnotes. One footnote, on page 111, he checked himself. It lead to an article [Marx], that contain a letter written by the son of a nephew of Rabbi Menachem Mendel in the late 17th century, only a few dozen years after Rabbi Menachem Mendel died in 1661. In that letter Rabbi Menachem Mendel's surname is given as קראכמאל. The following day (and a continent away), we checked the footnote on page 102. It lead us to two articles, [Har] and [Ka], devoted to our Rabbi and his descendants. Both articles use the spelling קראכמאל extensively and not just in passing, and the latter one even explains where the name comes from! It relates the name קראכמאל to a certain earlier Dayan Rabbi Jonah Krochmals in the city of Cracow, where Rabbi Menachem Mendel was born. A transcript of the tombstone of Rabbi Jonah Krochmals is given in [Zo, page 180] and Krochmals is spelled קראכמאל there. Thus there is no doubt that the original

spelling of the name Krochmal is קראכמאל and we remove the appellation קרוכמל from our list, putting קראכמאל instead.

Note that here we corrected new to old, while in the case of Rabbi II-25, Rabbi Yitshak HaLevi Horowitz we corrected old to new. Whatever inconsistencies WRR have we are allowed to have too.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

Surely the reader must be awe-stricken by this dramatic tale of how BNMK succeeded through their linguistic sleuthing in uncovering an irregularity (smelling of conspiracy) in the selection of the name קרוכמל. The reader will be twice as awe-stricken to discover that not only is there no basis to their assertions, but that in the course of their narrative they expose the enormity of their ignorance. To make this clear we will respond point by point. We will entitle our response: "The Ignorance Story"

We do not claim to be top experts in the fields of bibliography or linguistics, and we do make mistakes like every human being. However, we will show below that most of Witztum's "proofs" of our ignorance are either based on distortions of what we actually said, or reveal Witztum's own lack of knowledge.

As for the title "The Ignorance Story", we agree that this is indeed a good title for Witztum's response.☺

A. BNMK never explain why they suspected that something was amiss regarding the name קרוכמל in the first place. As we will see, this is precisely the spelling which appears in the encyclopedias.

Let's say that our intuition made us suspect that קרוכמל was not the spelling of this name at the time R. Krochmal lived.

B. They claim that they were unable to find the name קרוכמל mentioned in the Responsa database. It is a pity they were unaware of the trivial fact that major Rabbinical authorities are rarely referred to by their family names in the responsa literature. For example, the Maharasha (34 on the first list) is mentioned about 4000 times by this acronym, but only seven times by his family name. The Bach (16 on the first list) is also mentioned thousands of times, but only 15 times by his family name. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the name "Krochmal" does not appear, despite the fact that his major work, Tzemach Tzedek, is mentioned hundreds of times.

And where did we express surprise at that? As any reader can see by reading our original claim above, we just mentioned that the Responsa database didn't help us determine the original spelling of Krochmal.

C. They admit that the name קרוכמל serves as the heading for his entry in Margalioth's Encyclopedia, but they could find no explanation for the source of this name. How is this fact relevant to the investigation at hand?

Was Prof. Havlin supposed to have researched the derivations of the names? The fact is that the name which appears is מנחם.

Actually, in order to apply Witztum's spelling rules (according to Witztum's interpretation) he had to do research into the origins of each foreign name. According to Witztum's interpretation of his rules, German names are written according to the Hebrew ktiv dikduki whereas Yiddish names are written as is. In order to determine how Krochmal should be written, WRR should have done research to determine if it is a German or a Yiddish name.

We also see that in other cases WRR were not satisfied with the title in Margalioth and actually searched for other variations of the family name (see Assertions 17 and 19).

D. But it is not only Margalioth who uses this spelling: They mention that R. Menachem Mendel is cited twice in the index of the Encyclopedia Hebraica, but that an examination of the text at these two citations led to "no further clues." -- Let the reader not be misled: In the index itself, and in the two entries cited in the index the only spelling which appears is מנחם.

This indeed led us to no further clue about the original spelling of the name, exactly as we said!

E-F. In his responsa Tzemach Tzedek R. Menachem Mendel Krochmal signs his given name a handful of times. The vast majority of responsa are without any signature at all. In the eulogy over him he is again mentioned only by his given name and by the name of his works. This was common practice regarding a great many major Rabbinical personalities throughout the ages, for example, R. Heschel of Cracow. It was unnecessary to add any other identifying appellation. This does not indicate the slightest irregularity, as is well known to anyone versed in the literature.

Where did we say that this indicates any irregularity? As any reader can see by reading our original claim above, we just mentioned that these sources didn't help us determine the original spelling of Krochmal.

G-H. BNMK found their way to a Yiddish transliteration of the name Krochmal, and it did not even occur to them that this was, in fact, nothing more than a transliteration.

Witztum is completely wrong here. מנחם is not just a Yiddish transliteration of a name (in what language, by the way?). It is definitely the Yiddish word for "starch," as we said in our original assertion. See, for example, the Yiddish dictionary [Harduf].

This Polish/Yiddish word is the origin of the family name Krochmal (see, for example, the dictionary of family names [Gu]). The first people who were called by this name were called so because they had commerce in starch. (See the quote from [Ka] in point J below)

I. We were especially touched by the part about the two "wise men." The first wise man, you will recall, referred them to the book Jewish Enactments of the Province of Moravia. BNMK forgot to mention the small fact that the spelling קרוכמל occurs in this source exactly 20 times, and no other spelling appears at all! -- Or perhaps the author of this work was also part of the conspiracy, together with the Encyclopedia Hebraica, Margalioth's Encyclopedia, and other sources?

If Witztum had understood that we were looking for sources to determine the original spelling of this name it would have been obvious to him why we didn't mention these appearances. All of these appearances of קרוכמל are in the footnotes, added to the text by the author of this book in the 20th century, and therefore they provide us with no clue as to how the name was written originally!

The second wise man found a footnote which led them to an article by Marx, containing an autobiography of a relative of R. Krochmal. There he found only one mention, which used the spelling קראחמאל.

An Israeli reader will be reminded of a joke which was popular in Israel forty years ago: Why do the police make their rounds in pairs? -- Because one of them knows how to read and the other how to write.

If BNMK already decided to use two wise men -- one who knew about this source and another who knew to look in the footnotes -- they should have hired a third wise man who knew how to evaluate what they have read. The author himself, Marx, notes that the author of the biography was a simple person, whose writing is poor. This is clearly an understatement, as any Hebrew reader would attest to. In the very sentence where the gem קראחמאל appears, it is also mentioned that he was the "author of the responsa of (sic!) [the book] Tzemach Tzaddik (sic!)." (the book is the responsa, and its name should be Tzemach Tzedek).

If these grammatical and spelling mistakes are not enough, a few lines earlier he writes: "He died in Poland before the bad years and the destructions (spelled חורבנות rather than נחורבנות) came, which occurred in Poland (spelled this time פולניא rather than פולין)." Obviously from such a flawed document one can draw no conclusions at all.

Indeed we did not draw any conclusion from it, as can easily be seen from the fact that we used the form קראחמאל and not the form קרוכמאל. However, we should add that the form קראחמאל, which Witztum calls mockingly a "gem," is actually an acceptable, albeit rare, way of writing the name Krochmal. For example, we found that this was the way the 19th century philosopher Rabbi Nachman Krochmal signed his name (see [OtzIs] in his entry, and a picture of this signature in [Rab]), and this form also appears on his tombstone (the picture of it appears in his entry in [Jud]). [Our remark in the original draft that he spelt his name קרוכמאל was mistaken. Interestingly, Witztum "the expert," with all of his efforts to find flaws in our work, didn't notice this mistake].

We definitely agree that the author of this 17th century autobiography was a simple person whose writing is poor. But one point in Witztum's mockery of it reveals Witztum's own lack of knowledge in these matters:

The word פּוֹלֵנִיאַ may indeed look strange to the modern eye. But surely someone as versed in the Rabbinical literature as Witztum should have known that it was an accepted spelling variation of פּוֹלֵנִיאַ in previous centuries! This can be seen easily by searching the Responsa database. We found that the variations פּוֹלֵנִיאַ/ה and פּוֹלֵנִיאַ/ה etc., appear there about the same number of times as פּוֹלֵנִיאַ/ה and פּוֹלֵנִיאַ/ה etc. (the ratio is about 45:50).

J. They then found their way to an article by Shmuel Aba Haradsky (sic). Again they saw the spelling קראכמאל, and they still did not suspect that this was simply the Yiddish transliteration, in which the letter א was substituted for a ו (an "oh" sound), and an װ for a segol (an "eh" sound). The same misunderstanding caused them to transliterate the author's name as "Haradsky," rather than correctly as "Horodezsky" (see for example the Encyclopedia Judaica). This same article was published 10 years later in Warsaw. This time the surname of R. Menachem Mendel is written קרוכמאל, and the author's name appears on the opening page in German: Horodetzky. In any event, they might at least have noticed that in the very sources they examined, including the article by Marx, wherever the name appears in Latin letters it is always spelled "Krochmal" and not "Krachmal!"

We don't understand Witztum's point here.

As the reader can see above, we didn't use the English spelling "Krachmal". We even transliterated the name קראכמאל as "Krochmals".

Beyond that, even if we had thought that קראכמאל is pronounced as Krachmal, what difference would it make? When we search for ELSs we don't use sounds, we use letters, and the Yiddish spelling remains קראכמאל, whether we thought it pronounced Krochmal or Krachmal!

They also cite a second article, that of Kauffman. What they forget to mention is that in Kaufman's opinion the name Krochmal derives from the German.

Let us quote what Kauffman actually says about it:

“שם משפחת קראכמאל אשר עלה לגדולה ע"י נושאו ר' מנחם מנדל בעל צמח צדק כבר היה נודע לפניו בעיר קראקא כי שם נמצא את הדיין מהו"ר יונה קראכמאלש הנפטר ביום ד' יב' שבט תכ"ט [...] . הראשון אשר כנוהו בשם הזה היה נקרא על שם מסחרו כי הוראת המלה קראכמאל בלשון פולין היא starke ולקוחה ממלת לשון אשכנז היא Kraftmehl.”

Our translation: “The family name Krochmal, which has become famous by its bearer R. Menachem Mendel author of ‘Tzemach-Tzedek,’ was already known before in the city of Cracow, for there we find the Dayan R. Yonah Krochmals who died on Wednesday, the 12th of Shevat, 5429[...]. The first to be called by this name was called after his trade, because the meaning of Krochmal in Polish is starch, and it is derived from the German word **Kraftmehl**.”

What Kauffman is actually saying is that Krochmal is the Polish word for starch. As we have seen above, it is also the Yiddish word for starch. The origin for this word in

both languages is the German word “Kraftmehl,” but as can be seen, its pronunciation has changed considerably as it passed into Polish and (through it?) into Yiddish.

On the other hand, they do follow him to the grave of R. Menachem Mendel's early relative to trace the origin of the name.

*Unfortunately, from the date on the tombstone it seems that this "early relative" died 8 years **after** R. Menachem Mendel Krochmal died (by the way, the name is "Zunz," not "Zonz." The name Zunz is well known in the field of Jewish bibliography).*

This is just about the only real mistake Witztum found in our entire story, and as the reader can see, it is fairly insignificant for our case. Actually, now that we know that R. Yonah Krochmal's didn't live long before Rabbi Mendel Krochmal, that they lived at exactly the same time, it seems that the way his name was written can be an even better indication of how Rabbi Mendel (probably) wrote his name.

***K-L.** They claim to have replaced a "new" spelling with an "old" one, when in fact what they have done is to replace the Hebrew spelling with the Yiddish.*

Since Krochmal is a Yiddish word, then the Yiddish spelling is indeed an old one and the Hebrew transliteration of it (קרױכמאל or קרוכמל) is indeed a new one. The fact that we (and Witztum) have not been able to find the spelling קרוכמל (or קרוכמאל) in any source prior to the 19th century shows that clearly.

Therefore there is no justification for this substitution, and of course, they have failed to show any inconsistency in the application of Prof. Havlin's rules. (By the way, in the case of Horowitz, also, they were not substituting a "newer" spelling for an "older" one, as we explained in response 17, and as can be learned from the letter of Prof. Menahem Cohen, who himself writes קרוכמל, when using this name, even in the 20th century).

When we say that the spelling הורױיך is old, we do not mean that today it is no longer existent, only that today it is used much less frequently than הורױיך. For example—in the 1998 Jerusalem phone directory the ratio הורױיך:הורױיך is about 1:6.

To sum up: There was no place for suspicion in the first place. The name "Krochmal" was written in our paper according to the correct Hebrew spelling, whereas BNMK tried (through their ignorance) to replace it with a Yiddish spelling. [In a later version, published about two months after the first version, and after I wrote this response and related it to many people, they added to their assertion that Krochmal is actually a Yiddish name.

It is abundantly clear that this new assertion is ad-hoc and is intended to justify their big mistake retroactively.

As the reader can see in our original claim (taken from the first draft), we said that קראכמאל is a Yiddish word long before Witztum's response was written.

Beyond that, this accusation makes us laugh. Even if the "new" assertion were an ad-hoc one, what of it? It is correct and that is what matters. Since we are declaring loudly and clearly that our list is "cooked," why shouldn't we be allowed to use ad-hoc justifications? If Witztum wants to prove that his list is not "cooked" he cannot do this by "proving" that **we** use ad-hoc assertions (which we admit to anyway); he has to prove that **he** doesn't use any such assertions. That, alas, he cannot do, since he does use such assertions extensively, as we show in many places in this paper.

Please note section 'J' above where the source which they themselves bring indicates that the name Krochmal is of German origin.

So what? Doesn't Witztum know that half the words in Yiddish are of German origin?

Also from the same section above it is clear that they do not distinguish between Hebrew and Yiddish transliterations (they write קראדעצקי as Haradsky)].

See our comment there.

To sum up, when you throw the rhetoric aside, Witztum's substantial argument was that Krochmal is a German name and therefore its Hebrew transliteration - קרוכמל - should have been used.

However, as we have seen above, the name actually comes from the Polish/Yiddish word for starch. The German word Kraftmehl from which the Yiddish word is derived is not pronounced at all like Krochmal, and therefore Witztum's claim that קרוכמל is the Hebrew transliteration of this word is ridiculous.

We think that, since this name comes from Polish/Yiddish, by WRR's Yiddish spelling rule it should not be transliterated to Hebrew but rather remain with the Yiddish spelling קראכמאל. Just as in one of the appellations of Rabbi II-32 that appears in the blue-preprint [WRR1] Witztum spelled the Polish name of the city Chelm with the Yiddish spellings חלמא and חעלמא and not the Hebrew transliteration חלם (see the entry for this city in [Heb]).

Still, as an outstanding gesture to Witztum we are ready to accept his suggestion that the name Krochmal should be transliterated into Hebrew. But here we find another problem with what Witztum did. The name Krochmal can be transliterated to Hebrew both as קרוכמל and as קרוכמאל. The spelling קרוכמאל, for example, appears for this rabbi in [Katz] (p.81) and in the second Horodetzky article that Witztum mentions in point J (assuming he didn't made a mistake copying it. We couldn't check it ourselves because Witztum didn't give any bibliographical details for it). It also appears (for other people) in [Rab] and other places.

Therefore, according to the mater-lectionis spelling rule of WRR, the name should have been used both as קרוכמל and קרוכמאל. As they used only קרוכמל, we will make the opposite mistake and take only קרוכמאל.

Assertion 19

Our Original claim:

The last name of Rabbi II-27, Rabbi Moshe Zacut, is זכות, and not זכותא or זכותו. See his own signatures in his book קול הרמ"ז, see his biography [Ap], and see [Marg], [Heb], and [Az]. Hence we remove the appellations זכותא, משה זכותא, זכותו, and משה זכותו.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

- A. It is intriguing that when BNMK write the name of this personality in Latin letters they write "Zacut," despite that the fact that both the Encyclopedia Hebraica and the Encyclopedia Judaica use the form "Zacuto." In the article by Marx which they cited in Assertion 18 the form "Sacuto" is used.*
- B. Furthermore, following BNMK's advice, we decided to see Aba Applebaum's biography. To our astonishment we discovered that already on the title page the subject is referred to as "Zacuta" in Polish and "Zakuto" in German. In the second chapter (pp. 4-5) we learn that this personality was known as משה זכותא 'ג, and that he was a scion of the illustrious "זכותא (Zacuta)" family. BNMK tell us we can rely on this source.*
- C. The Chida himself uses the form זכותו elsewhere in his writings, for example in Birkei Yosef (Orach Chaim 581). The form זכותא may also appear in this source, but we did not survey the entire text. According to BNMK we can trust the Chida, as well.*
- D. BNMK neglected to mention that the forms זכותא and זכותו are mentioned in the Responsa database.*
- E. There are signatures of the form זכותו in the Letters of R. Moshe Zacuto, and the correspondence to him often addresses him by this name. In the title page of Kol HaRemez - Sefer HaTikunim (with a commentary by the Kabbalist R. Yaakov Kopil) we find the name משה זכותא 'ג. This is also the form used in the approbations to the books. These are just a few examples.*
- F. From all of the above it should be clear that there is no justification for the proposed erasures.*

It appears that our original claim that “the last name of Rabbi II-27, Rabbi Moshe Zacut, is זכות and not זכותא or זכותו” was not completely accurate. The forms זכותו and זכותא can be thought of as variants (apparently, less frequently used) of the surname זכות. But does that mean we must include them?

Many surnames have variants (beyond the issues of grammatical writing, Yiddish names, and the use of aleph as a mater lectionis). The rules in the first pre-print do not provide any guidelines about how to treat these variants. Without such guidelines one may follow different rules: use all the variants that exist, or use just the one most frequently used, or maybe even use just the one used by the name bearer himself. WRR seems to have followed different rules for different rabbis.

For example:

1. The surname of Rabbi II-24 has at least 2 variants: Emdin and Emden (see Assertion 15); WRR used both.
2. The surname of Rabbi II-11 has at least 2 variants: Benbenesht and Benbenishty (see Assertion 7); WRR used only one.
3. The surname of Rabbi II-25 has at least 3 variants: הורוויץ, הורוביץ, and הורויץ (see Assertion 17); WRR used only one.
4. The surname of Rabbi II-23 has at least 2 variants: מולין and מולן (see Assertion 15); WRR used only one.
5. The surname of Rabbi II-28 has at least 2 variants: מרגליות and מרגליות. The second variant can be found, for example, in this rabbi's entries in [Az], [Frid], [Vin], [Ster], [Jud], in the entry for his book in [B-Y] (p. 487), and even in the index of [Marg]. WRR only used the first one.
6. The surname of Rabbi II-7 has at least two variants: אופנהיים and אופנהימר. The second variant can be found, for example, in his biography [Du] and also under his picture and in the title of his entry in [Jud] (the appearances in [Jud] are in Latin letters, like those of "Zacuto" in [Heb] and [Jud]). WRR only used the first variant.
7. The surname of Rabbi II-27 has at least 3 variants: זכות, זכותא, and זכותו. Of these, the last two are less frequently used than the first (this was checked both in the Responsa database and the DBS CD-ROM [DBS]). Also, the first variant was the one usually used by R. Moshe himself (as can be seen in his responsa book קול הרה"מ). The first is also the one which appears in the titles of his entries in the Hebrew encyclopedias: [Marg], [OtzIs], [Halp], [Ster], [Hal]. WRR used all three.

We see in example 7 that, in contrast with what they did in examples 2-6, WRR has decided to include all the variants.

We, on the other hand, decided to follow the example set by WRR in examples 2-6, and use only one variant (the most frequently used).

Clearly, our choice is no less justified than WRR's.

Assertion 20

Our Original claim:

Often great Rabbis are called after their books. Thus we add the appellation הון עשיר for Rabbi II-30, Rabbi Immanuel Hai Ricchi. We comment here that the appellation הון עשיר appears often in [Re], while the appellation ישר לבב does not appear there at all, not even in its correct form, יושר לבב.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. We recommend that the reader examine sec. C of the chapter "Professional Judgment" in Prof. Havlin's report. There the concept that "often great Rabbis are called after their books" is explained thoroughly.

We recommend that the reader also examine our criticism of this section in our "Critical Analysis" above.

In that criticism we show that there are enough examples of inconsistency by WRR in calling rabbis by the titles of their books to justify the inclusion of הון עשיר, even were all of Witztum's claims here correct. However, the story that we are going to tell now shows that he is most probably incorrect. We will call this story "**The story of Hon-Ashir and Yosher-Levav**":

B. In that same report it is explained that the Responsa database cannot give an accurate picture regarding a Kabbalist like R. Immanuel Hai Ricchi, whose main productive output was not in the realm of Halachic responsa (he was in the main a Kabbalist, who wrote deep Kabbalistic works, including Kabbalistic commentaries to the Scriptures). His most important works, by which his reputation was established, were Mishnat Chassidim, and an abridged edition which was widely disseminated: ישר לבב. See Encyclopedia Hebraica, Margalioth's Encyclopedia, and Encyclopedia Judaica. Since these are Kabbalistic works there is no reason to expect them to be mentioned in the responsa literature.

On the other hand, it is perfectly natural that his book הון עשיר, in which he explains the wording of the Mishna, should appear there, and indeed it does. However, contrary to BNMK's assertion, it does not appear "often." It is mentioned only 28 times, of which 16 references are made by the same author.

We won't argue about the definition of "often."

C. The appellation הון עשיר בעל appears exactly twice in the Responsa database. Both references are in the responsa Yehuda Ya'ale, by R. Yehuda Assad. It is very instructive to discover that R. Yehuda Assad in his discussion of R. Ricchi's words, expresses himself thus: "The saintly genius in the book הון עשיר on the Mishna, he is בעל ס' משנת חסידים (the author of Mishnat Chassidim . . ." (Part I, Orach Chaim, 1). Elsewhere, R. Yehuda Assad writes: "בעל משנת חסידים" (the author of Mishnat Chassidim), o.b.m., in his book הון עשיר" (Part I, Yoreh De'ah 193). Only after he has introduced him in this way does R. Yehuda Assad allow

himself to refer to him as the בעל הון עשיר (the author of Hon Ashir) as a short form (Part I, Yoreh Deah, 196).

To cite a similar example: R. Chaim ben Atar (9 on the first list) is generally known by the name of his commentary Or HaChaim. When he is mentioned in connection with one of his other works he is referred to as follows: "The great author of Or HaChaim in his book Pri Toar . . ." (responsa Yeshuot Malko, Yoreh Deah 16). Another author writes: "The holy genius, the author of Or HaChaim, o.b.m., in his book Rishon Letzion . . ." (responsa Tzitz Eliezer, Part 15, 35). See Prof. Havlin's report for other examples, in section (c).

*In these examples one can readily see which book was considered the author's principle work after which he came to be known. When he is referred to by the name of **another** of his works, it is nothing more than a shorthand way of referring to the content of the book itself ("the author of Such-and-Such says . . ." or "HaRav Such-and-Such says . ." rather than saying "it is written in the book Such-and-Such . . ." (In this latter usage the expression הון עשיר appears in the Responsa database 5 times, all of which involve discussions of the content of this book).*

It seems that Witztum missed one appearance of the appellation.

In the responsa "Peulat-Tsadik," part 3 section 184 ג סימן חלק (פ"ק), we find the following:

"...ראיתי להרב הון עשיר בס' אדרת אליהו בפ' נוטל שדקדק מלשון המשנה כו..."

[Our translation: "I saw that the Rav Hon-Ashir, in the book Aderet-Elyahu, has learned..."] (Aderet-Elyahu is one of Rabbi Ricchi's last books.)

We see that this rabbi is referred here by the name "Hon-Ashir" even when another of his books is being discussed. By Havlin's criteria in [Hav96] rule C, cited here by Witztum, this should prove that Hon-Ashir is an appellation for this rabbi. This is the source on which we relied, and it's a pity that Witztum missed it.

See more on this at the end of this response.

D. By contrast, the expression משנת חסידיים בעל appears 9 times in the Responsa database.

But what about "Yosher Levav"? The fact that בעל משנת חסידיים appears often only proves that בעל משנת חסידיים deserves to be an appellation and we definitely agree. However, this does not automatically make ישר לבב an appellation, even if Witztum's claim that ישר לבב is an abridged edition of משנת חסידיים is true. To see that clearly, we can simply look at the case of R. Yosef Caro (Rabbi I-19). This rabbi wrote a huge and very important Halachic work called "Beit-Yosef"; "Beit-Yosef" is definitely one of his common appellations and was correctly included in WRR's first list. In addition, R. Caro also wrote an abridged edition of "Beit-Yosef" which has been even more widely disseminated and is even more widely studied, the famous "Shulchan-Aruch." However, for all its fame, "Shulchan-Aruch" has not become an appellation of R. Caro (at least not to the same extent as "Beit-Yosef"). It wasn't even included in WRR's list for this rabbi!

If Witztum wants to show that ישר לבב is an appellation of R. Ricchi, he has to show us appearances of it (and not of משנת חסידיים) as an appellation. So far he has failed to do so.

*E. Contrary to the claim of BNMK, the appellation **ל"ל ז"ל** does appear in the Responsa database (in the responsa Rav Pe'alim, Part III - Sod Yesharim 13). Nevertheless, this was not Prof. Havlin's source, see paragraph B above.*

This single occurrence doesn't prove anything by Havlin's criteria, since it appears in the context of a discussion about the book Yosher Levav.

Incidentally, the reason we didn't notice this appearance is because it appears as an acronym. It is written: "בהקדמת הרב י"ל ז"ל" ["In the preface of the Rav Y.L. o.b.m." (to this book)].

*F. Regarding their comment that the "correct form" is **ל"ל ז"ל**, R. Ricchi borrowed the name **ל"ל ז"ל** from a verse in Psalm 119, as he himself notes in his Introduction. The "correct form," as it appears in the verse, is **ל"ל ז"ל**, and this is how it appears in our paper.*

As the reader can see above, we didn't say that Witztum should have included the form **ל"ל ז"ל**, we just mentioned that we didn't find this form, either, in the Responsa. Therefore it should be clear that when we said "correct" here, we meant "correct from a bibliographical point of view," not "correct according to Witztum's spelling rules." **ל"ל ז"ל** is the form that appears as the title of this book in all the editions we saw, beginning with the very first edition printed by R' Ricchi himself [Ric1737].

G. From the above it should be obvious that their addition was thoroughly unjustified.

Completely the contrary! We, at least, have been able to show one appearance of **ל"ל ז"ל** which satisfies Havlin's criteria while Witztum has not been able to show any such appearance of **ל"ל ז"ל**.

We have actually done more than that. Accepting Witztum's explanation that the Responsa is not the best place to hunt for appellations of Rabbi Ricchi, we looked other places as well. Of course we cannot scan all of the Kabbalistic literature, but to our aid once again came the DBS CD-ROM [DBS], which contains a collection of books in Kabala and Chasidut.

This is what we found:

ל"ל ז"ל appears 7 times.

ל"ל ז"ל appears once in the form **ל"ל ז"ל** and this is in a discussion of what he wrote in this book.

Here as well we found no support for Witztum's claim that **ל"ל ז"ל** should qualify as an appellation.

But the most interesting findings in [DBS] were:

1. In "Mavo LeChochmat HaKabala" part 1, gate 3, chapter 1 (ספר מבוא לחכמת), we found the following:
(הקבלה חלק א שער ג פרק א ובכח זה רצה הגה"ק בעל משנת חסידים ז"ל להבין סוד הצמצום כפשוטו (ראו ספרו יוסף לבב בהתחלה).)

[Our translation: “With this power the holy genius, author of Mishnat Hasidim o.b.m., wanted to understand the secret of Tsimtsum in a simple manner (see the beginning of his book Yosher Levav).”]

2. In “Shem HaGedolim”, Tosefet Pletat Sfarim, the letter Yud (- ספר שם הגדולים - תוספת פליטת ספרים - מערכת י), we found the following (in a list with short descriptions of books):

(יג) יושר לבב - על סוד הצמצום לבעל משנת חסידיים

[Our translation: “Yosher Levav – on the secret of Tsimtsum, by the author of Mishnat-Hasidim”]

In these examples R. Ricchi is referred to as “author of Mishnat Hasidim” even when the book being discussed is Yosher Levav! These examples are precisely like the examples that Witztum mentions in section C above. From these it should be obvious which book was considered the author's principle work (after which he came to be known) and which was not. In this case we can conclude that משנת חסידיים does deserve to be regarded as an appellation, but יושר לבב in most likelihood does not.

To sum up, we think that the only book name that deserves to be regarded as R. Ricchi's appellation is Mishnat-Hasidim. Our findings, as well as Witztum's, seem to support this claim, as does the fact that this is the only book mentioned in the title of his entry in any of the encyclopedias we saw. However, since Witztum had erred by including Yosher-Levav, we allowed ourselves to make the “mistake” of including Hon-Ashir (which, at least, has some case for inclusion, as we have seen in point C above).

Assertion 21

Our Original claim:

The story of the appellation ר"א ה"ע of Rabbi II-30, Rabbi Immanuel Hai Ricchi, is particularly telling. First, we couldn't find it anywhere, and nobody we asked could tell us what it meant. When we inquired with Doron Witztum, he said Rabbi Ricchi used it as his signature in some of his books, and that it expands to "אני חי, הצעיר עמנואל ריקי" (I'm alive, the young Immanuel Ricchi). We think the inclusion of such an acronym is extremely silly. It is a signature; not an appellation. Nobody should refer to Rabbi Ricchi by this name other than himself, not even the author of the hidden codes in the book of Genesis.

Anyway, it seems that nobody does refer to Rabbi Ricchi by this name, for we could find no such references and we could find no one who even knows what it means! In particular, it is not "pronounced" (ונהגה).

The story doesn't end here. When we tried to find ר"א ה"ע as a signature in Rabbi Ricchi's books, we failed. What we did find was a different permutation of these letters, אהע"ח, which appears with its expansion, אני הצעיר, עמנואל, חי ריקי (me the young, Immanuel Hai Ricchi). We note that in Hebrew the latter expansion makes much more sense than the former, and that the dictionary of acronyms [AY] lists the latter acronym but not the former. Including "אהע"ח" as an appellation is senseless for the same reasons as above, but it still makes more sense than including "ר"א ה"ע". So we deleted "ר"א ה"ע" and inserted "אהע"ח".

Witztum's Response And our rejoinder:

Here again, we respond point by point:

A-B. The appellation ר"א ה"ע as R. Ricchi's signature can be seen, for example, in at least one of his books in the National Library in Jerusalem. This acronym is mentioned in an article by R. Avraham Shisha HaLevi (HaDarom, 5732, p. 246), along with an explanation.

In other words, Witztum says that, as far as he knows the signature ר"א ה"ע appears in one book and is also mentioned in one article [Shi].

More accurately, the book in which it appears is in fact a printed addendum to another book by R. Ricchi. This addendum survived, as far as we know, in only two copies of the book "Maase-Hoshev" (one in Zurich and one in Jerusalem). The article [Shi] in fact discusses this particular addendum, and that's why it mentions this signature.

So, in fact, Witztum admits here that we are dealing with a most rare form, known only to a few scholars. It's so unknown and unused that it does not even appear in the dictionary of Hebrew acronyms [AY], though that book includes many uncommon acronyms.

See in the preface an explanation of why using very rare appellations is very problematic in this kind of experiment.

R. Ricchi, who was a Kabbalist, "attached great significance to signatures of this kind, especially to the fact that the five letters of this expression are precisely those which cannot receive a dagesh (a diacritical mark which doubles the value of the letter) in the Hebrew language. In the form ח"א ה"ע - I am 'Chai,' the young Immanuel Ricchi" -he alludes to both of his given names, "Chai" and "Immanuel."

Lest the reader be misled, the sentence that R. Ricchi “attached great significance to signatures of this kind” doesn’t appear in the article Witztum mentions. The only explanation of this acronym given there is that it means “I am 'Chai,' the young Immanuel Ricchi.”

C. We believe that there is indeed special significance to the name by which a person refers to himself. At the end of Assertion 15 BNMK imply that there is no significance to appellations by which others refer to a person; here they dismiss an appellation by which someone refers to himself. What's left?

This is a stupid rhetorical question that doesn’t really deserve an answer.

As any intelligent reader can understand, there we pointed to the problematic nature of using an appellation that was used only by other persons and was rejected by its own bearer. Here we point to the problematic nature of using an appellation that was used only by its bearer and is virtually unknown to others. Surely even Witztum can understand that there are plenty of other appellations that were both acceptable to their bearers and widely used by others. In fact, almost all the other appellations in his (and our) list fall into this category.

If Witztum claims here that signatures should qualify as appellations, then this creates a new inconsistency in WRR’s list. There are other signatures for this and other rabbis that are much more well-known than this one, and yet they were not included in the WRR lists. We will bring just two examples:

1. ח"א ה"ע – this is another signature of R. Ricchi. It appears in [Ric1742] (part 2 p. 51) and [Ric1858] (at p. 5).
This one is an acronym of “ח"א ה"ע ר"י ק"י”, and (unlike אה"ע"ר) it’s definitely pronounced (as “HaTsair Hachai” – “The living young”).
2. ש"ר יצחק – this is a signature of Maharshal (Rabbi I-33) which commemorates his beloved grandfather. It appears in the Responsa and is mentioned in his entry in [Marg].

D. The next complaint is particularly bizarre: If they do not even know the meaning of ח"א ה"ע, how do they know that it is "not pronounced"? Of course it is pronounced! ח"א is pronounced Ach -- like the Hebrew word for brother, and ה"ע is pronounced Ha'er -- "the one who is awake," so that the entire phrase reads, "the brother who is awake." It is a play on a passage from Song of Songs (5:2): . . . דודי דופק, ע"י, קול דודי דופק, . . . "I am asleep but my heart is awake, the voice of my beloved knocks, 'Open up for me, my sister . . .'" (This verse is written as an allegory; 'my beloved' is referring to G-d, and 'my sister' is referring to the Jewish people. The Hebrew for 'my sister', אַחתי has the same root as 'my brother' - אחי).

Witztum's explanation is highly original, but we don't know where it comes from. It doesn't appear in the sources that he mentioned above. Until he is able to give a source for it, we have no choice but to regard it as pure speculation.

More than that, there is a very good indication that this speculation is wrong.

Ach Haer story – part 2: When we look at the way this form appears in the article which Witztum mentions [Shi], we see that it doesn't appear in the form אַח הַעֵר as Witztum brings it here (and as one would expect if it was supposed to be pronounced as two separate words – “Ach Haer”). Rather it appears as אַחַהֵעֵר רַפָּה.

The form in which it appears (in its only known appearance) gives no indication that אַחַהֵעֵר is supposed to be broken into two words. On the contrary, it's written as one word and the signature has a second word that Witztum ignores completely. See more about this second word below.

E. It is true that R. Ricchi also uses a different signature: אַהֵעֵח״ר. It does not make more sense or less sense.

Contrary to Witztum's claim, the acronym אַהֵעֵח״ר does make more sense than the acronym אַחַהֵעֵר. As any Hebrew speaker will attest, the sentence אֲנִי הַצַּעִיר עֲמֻנוּאֵל sounds natural, whereas the sentence אֲנִי חַי, הַצַּעִיר עֲמֻנוּאֵל רִיקִי sounds unnatural and forced.

It is simply a different acronym, and R. Ricchi used both.

The acronym אַהֵעֵח״ר appears more often than אַחַהֵעֵר, we found it:

1. At the end of the song “אוכל מאכל ראשון” at the end of [Ric1731].
2. At the end of the song “אוכל מאכל ראשון” at [Ric1742] (end of part 2).
3. At the end of “הזהרה הראויה לעולם קטן” at the beginning of [Ric1858].

By the way, all of these appearances are in fact in the form אַהֵעֵח״ר רַפָּה.

In yet another appearance (at [Ric1742] part 2 p. 52) R. Ricchi also give the following explanation:

אַהֵעֵח״ר רַפָּה זהו ר״ת אֲנִי הַצַּעִיר עֲמֻנוּאֵל חַי רִיקִי, והם האותיות רפויות שאינן מקבלות דגש כידוע לבעלי הדקדוק, וזהו רפה, דאף אני לא חזק אני כי אם רפה

Translation: “אַהֵעֵח״ר רַפָּה is an acronym for ‘I am the young Imanuel Chai Ricchi’, and these are the ‘weak’ letters that cannot receive a dagesh, and this is רַפָּה (=weak), as I’m also weak and not strong.”

From this explanation we see that רַפָּה is an integral part of the signature, and therefore even if there was any case for including this signature (or the form אַחַהֵעֵר) it should have been in the full form אַהֵעֵח״ר רַפָּה (or אַחַהֵעֵר רַפָּה).

[A side remark: The facts mentioned above have led an expert we consulted on this issue to raise the possibility that the appearance of אַחַהֵעֵר in the aforementioned addendum may be no more than a typo. We do not feel qualified to make such an assertion and don't need to, as our case is robust enough without it. We bring his opinion without making any assertions on this issue.]

It is unclear whether this form is pronounced or not. A variation of these same 5 letters is used as the mnemonic to remember the letters which

cannot receive a dagesh - ר"עפּהאַ. This latter acronym, which has no connection to R. Ricchi, is pronounced (see the Even Shushan Dictionary, the section on acronyms). Because it is unclear whether the acronym ר"עפּהאַ is supposed to be pronounced, it was not included in Prof. Havlin's list.

F. From the above it follows that there is no basis for erasing the appellation ר"ע ה פ"א from the list.

On the contrary, from the above it clearly follows that there was no basis for ever including this appellation on the WRR list. Because (1) It's very rare and virtually unknown, (2) It's only a part of a signature, and not an appellation by which R. Ricchi is called, and (3) It's not pronounced.

On the other hand, if they could prove that ר"עפּהאַ is to be pronounced, we would include it in the list. Please note, if we were to include this appellation, it would only improve the results - the acronym ר"עפּהאַ is in fact more successful than the one we used: The best result for the second list using ר"ע ה פ"א was: $P^2 = 0.00000000201$. If we replace ר"ע ה פ"א with ר"עפּהאַ we receive: $P^2 = 0.0000000016$. Using both forms we receive: $P^2 = 0.0000000012$.

Most probably ר"עפּהאַ is not pronounced either, and it seems difficult even to invent for it any plausible pronunciation. As we indicated above, there is no basis for using it even if it were pronounced, since it's only a part of a signature and not a name by which R. Ricchi is called. So, in our new list we decided to include neither form.

Assertion 22

Our Original claim:

The appellation מִזְרָחִי for Rabbi II-31 is identified with a rabbi from the Rishonim. We remove it. Notice that מִזְרָחִי is not the last name of Rabbi Sharabi, and is related to him just as the name אֶשְׁכְּנָזִי relates to Rabbi I-6, Rabbi Gershon Ashkenazi and to Rabbi II-6, Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi. In both those cases WRR did not use the appellation אֶשְׁכְּנָזִי.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. The appellation מִזְרָחִי is indeed the family name of R. Shalom Mizrachi.

Perhaps our original wording was inaccurate. We will rephrase it to say that the name אֶשְׁכְּנָזִי deserves to be regarded the last name of rabbis I-30, II-6, and particularly I-6, at least as much as מִזְרָחִי deserves to be regarded the last name of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, and yet WRR didn't include it in their lists.

It is therefore completely justified, and even necessary, to fix this clear inconsistency of WRR by removing מִזְרָחִי.

In the cases of Rabbis I-30 and II-6, R. Zvi Ashkenazi and Eliezer Ashkenazi, we find that Ashkenazi appears as their last names both in [Heb], [Jud] and [OtzIs] (their entries are found under the letter א [or אָ]. We also found that, in the case of Rabbi I-30, his son (the Yaavetz) was also called Ashkenazi (though very rarely - see, for example, the responsa book “Sheilat Yaavetz” part 1, Article 33—“...our teacher and rabbi, R' Yaacov Ashkenazi...,” the entry for “Sheilat Yaavetz” in [Az], and the entry of R' Yaacov Emdin in [Ster]). We also found that this name appears on Rabbi II-6's tombstone and the first prints of his book (see pictures in last pages of [BD]).

It is most interesting to compare the case of Rabbi I-6 (R' Gershon Ashkenazi) with what Witztum says here about Rabbi Shalom Sharabi. We will call it “**The racial discrimination**” story, for Witztum seems to discriminate here in favor of a “Mizrachi” and against an “Ashkenazi” ☺.

Witztum brings several reasons why מִזְרָחִי should be regarded as the family name of Rabbi II-31. He says that, because of all these reasons, “it cannot be compared to the term ‘Ashkenazi’ in reference to certain other personalities.” Specifically, he means that it cannot be compared to the term Ashkenazi for Rabbis I-6 and II-6, the rabbis we mentioned in our original assertion. However, we will now see that **each and every** point he gives to prove that Mizrachi is a family name here, also applies to the case of אֶשְׁכְּנָזִי for Rabbi I-6!

- *He signed his name מִזְרָחִי דִּידֵי שְׂרָעֲבִי. This is also how his name is written on his tombstone.*

In Rabbi Gershon Ashkenazi's responsa book "Avodat HaGershuni" [AshG1699], we find that he, too, consistently signed his responses as אשכנזי גרשון.

There is even a poem he wrote that appears in the preface of this book in which he signed his name, as an acronym formed by the first letters of the words, as אשכנזי גרשון.

We were unable to find what was engraved on his tombstone, but whatever it was it is irrelevant, faced with the fact that he himself signed אשכנזי.

- *See also the Encyclopedia Hebraica. In the Responsa he is also referred to as ג' שלום מזרחי שרעבי. Note that the name "Mizrachi" is positioned before the name "Shar'abi" (by contrast with R. Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi).*

We have looked not only in the Encyclopedia Hebraica but also in others. It is particularly illuminating to compare how they each title the entries for Rabbi Sharabi and Rabbi Ashkenazi:

	Ashkenazi	Sharabi
[Heb]:	אשכנזי (אול"ף), גרשון	שרעבי [מזרחי], שלום (רש"ש)
[Marg]:	ג' גרשון אשכנזי (אול"ף)	ג' שלום שרעבי (הרש"ש)
[Jud]:	ASHKENAZI (Ulif), GERSHON	SHARABI, SHALOM
[OtzIs]:	אשכנזי, גרשון	---

Using this criterion, the case for considering אשכנזי as the last name of Rabbi I-6 is considerably stronger than that for considering מזרחי as the last name of Rabbi II-31!

It is also worth quoting what [OtzIs] says about Rabbi Gershon Ashkenazi in its entry (our translation and emphasis):

"His family name was אול"ף, but he was more well known by the appellation אשכנזי that later **has become his family name.**"

We also see from these sources that WRR should have used the appellations אול"ף and אול"ף for R. Gershon Ashkenazi, just as they have used the appellation שרעבי for R. Sharabi.

- *His descendants were also called "Mizrachi" and this is the name which appears on the tombstones of his wife and son as their family name.*

Looking at Rabbi Gershon Ashkenazi's entry in [OtzIs] and [De] we find that his sons were also called אשכנזי. We also see in the preface to [AshG1710] that his grandson signs his name as אשכנזי בן הרב נחום אשכנזי.

- *Furthermore, he was not a Sefardic Jew dwelling among Ashkenazim (a common rationale for such an appellation in cases where it is not a family name)*

We note that Rabbi Gershon Ashkenazi was born in Poland and lived his whole life in Poland and Germany. He clearly was not an Ashkenazi Jew dwelling among

Sefardim (a common rationale for such an appellation in cases where it is not a family name).

From all of the above it is clear that "Mizrachi" was indeed R. Shalom Shar'abi's family name, and that it cannot be compared to the term "Ashkenazi" in reference to certain other personalities. See Prof. Havlin's report, the end of sec. B.

On the contrary! We see that there is every possible reason to compare it to the term "Ashkenazi" in reference to Rabbi I-6, exactly as we did in our original assertion.

B. Therefore, even if the name ןןןן is shared by another scholar, it was necessary to include it in the list, because a man's given and family names are too intimately associated with him to be omitted.

So why was the name ןןןן omitted for Rabbi I-6?

C. Furthermore, they are in error when they identify R. Eliyahu Mizrahi as one of "the Rishonim." He, in fact, belongs to the period of the "Acharonim" (the later scholars).

Even if Witztum were correct here, it would make no difference to our case, since (as the reader can see above) we no longer rely on this issue. However, we want to note here that it's probably more accurate to say that he lived in the period between the Rishonim and Achronim eras. Rabbi Menachem Kasher has included R. Eliyahu Mizrahi's responsa book in his list of the responsa of the "Rishonim" (see [Kash] vol. 2, p. 351).

Assertion 23

Our Original claim:

The sources [Heb], [Marg], [Az], and [Re] never refer to II-31, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, as שר שלום, and we found at least 7 other rabbis who carry the name שר שלום (and that are referred to by this name extensively). Some of these 7 are much earlier than Rabbi II-31. The appellation שר שלום certainly does not identify שר שלום and therefore we remove it. WRR do the same in similar situations; see [Hav].

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

- A. It is true that there are other rabbis who are referred to by the name Sar Shalom in the Responsa. The most famous of them is R. Sar Shalom Gaon, mentioned in the Responsa database some 150 times. The name "Sar Shalom" is his first name. There are altogether about 40 references to other rabbis with the first name of "Sar Shalom." This is a relatively small number of references, and cannot be called "extensive" (for comparison, the Rambam is mentioned approximately 100,000 times.)*
- B. What is unique about the appellation Sar Shalom in connection with R. Shalom Shar'abi is that it is not his given name, nor is it his family name. It is an epithet (meaning "Prince of Peace") which was conferred upon him by other scholars throughout the generations, particularly students of the Kabbala, which was the field in which R. Shalom was most productive.*

This is interesting. In [Witz97a] Witztum says: “The soundest principle is, in the natural course of the matter, to use the name which was given to the man at birth. It is difficult to argue with its validity. On the other hand, regarding the various appellations, which sometimes came about and developed over the course of hundreds of years and in different locations, their status is less firm, and even variable.”

In other words, he claims that a given name is more strongly related to a person than an epithet (and that's why he can use them even when they are common to several rabbis, while epithets common to several rabbis can only be used for the most important of them).

From this it would seem to follow that if, according to Havlin's rule, we should reject an epithet of an Acharon when it's also an epithet of a Rishon, then a-fortiori we should reject an epithet of an Acharon when it's also a given name of a Rishon.

Here Witztum admits that שר שלום is the given name of one of the Rishonim (Rabbi Sar-Shalom Gaon, who lived in Egypt in the 12th century), whereas for Rabbi Sharabi (who is one of the Achronim) it is an epithet conferred upon him by other scholars throughout the generations. But contrary to the above logic he seems to infer from this that we shouldn't reject it as an appellation of Rabbi Sharabi!

Does this sound logical?

*Thus we find this appellation attached to his name at the beginning of his book *Nehar Shalom* (printed at the end of *Etz Chaim*), and in the approbation of R. Yedidya Abulafia. This is how Maharit (alGazi) refers*

to him: "Our mentor the pious Rabbi Sar Shalom, o.b.m." This is how R. Chaim Palache refers to him in his book Tochachat Chaim, and this is how R. Aharon Ferreira refers to him in the preface to his book Kapei Aharon. R. Chaim Shaul Duwayk HaCohen and R. Eliyahu Le'egimi wrote a book called Sar Shalom about intentions in the prayers, which treats of R. Shalom's opinions. See also the introduction of R. Chaim Shaul Duwayk HaCohen to the book Otzrot Chaim. The famous R. Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (the Ben Ish Chai) composed a special poem for the anniversary of R. Shalom's passing, which resembles the song Bar Yochai, is sung on the anniversary of the death of R. Shimon bar Yochai, except that it revolves around the epithet Sar Shalom in place of Bar Yochai. See also the book Divrei Shalom, by the grandson of R. Shalom, in the section Kuntras HaMinhagim, where he refers to R. Shalom as Sar Shalom.

We didn't claim that this appellation is non-existent for Rabbi Sharabi, just that it also belongs to other rabbis, at least one of them a Rishon. We don't see the point of this paragraph.

C . (As Prof. Havlin wrote in his report, the great Kabbalist Rabbi Shalom Shar'abi is not expected to appear in the responsa database. In any case, in the responsa Rav Pe'alim of R. Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, which is included in the Responsa database, the abbreviation ש"ש גר"ה is mentioned several times, which may stand for "Sar Shalom" rather than "Shalom Shar'abi").

Maybe. So?

D. Therefore, there is no justification for erasing the appellation Sar Shalom.

On the contrary, there are 2 justifications for erasing the appellation "Sar-Shalom." The first is rule B in [Hav96], which we mentioned. Witztum hasn't managed to explain why it should not apply here. The fact that the appellation falls in one category (given name) for one rabbi and in another category (epithet) for the other is no reason for not applying this rule. The rule as it appears in [Hav96] does not state that we should make an exception in such a case.

The second justification is the usual one – Witztum didn't always use well known poetic epithets like שר-שלום. He didn't use פרשן דתא for Rashi, הרב המשביר for R. Yosef Caro, ר"ח במז"ל, and הרב המורה for Rambam, nor who knows how many more appellations of this sort which could be found. Therefore, we are allowed to not use שר שלום.

Assertion 24

Our Original claim:

The last name of Rabbi II-32, Rabbi Shelomo Chelma, can be spelled either as חלמא or as חעלמא. See the header to his entry in WRR's source encyclopedia, [Marg], and see his biography [Br] (one can say that Rabbi Chelma's last name is חעלמא, and that the letter ע is "mater lectionis"). Thus we wish to add the appellations חלמא, חעלמא, חלמא, שלמה חלמא, and שלמה חעלמא. In practice we only add חעלמא and חלמא; the other two appellations do not fit within 5-8 letters.

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

A. Avraham Brik claims (in an article published in Sinai, v. 61, 5723) that R. Shelomo always signed his name חלמא שלמה הק'. He bases this assertion on R. Shelomo's signature in Pinkas Arba Aratzot (by Y. Halperin), p. 360. However, the signature as it appears there actually reads: שלמה הקטן ברהב מהוד"ר משה ז"ל החונה בק"ק חעלמא יע"א בהמ"ט מרכת החדשה ("the young Shelomo son of the Rabbi . . . Moshe, o.b.m., who is encamped in the holy community of Chelm . . . author of Merkevet HaMishna").

In no source does he sign using the formula quoted by Brik.

The author of Pinkas Arba Aratzot refers to him as בעל מרכת החדשה, ר' שלמה בן משה מזמושטש, אב"ד חעלמא ("R. Shelomo b. Moshe . . . head of the court of Chelm . . .").

As the reader can see, we didn't claim that R' Shlomo Chelma signed his name this way, nor did we rely on this claim, so this paragraph is irrelevant (though Witztum is correct; R' Shlomo probably never signed this way).

What we did rely on is the fact that Brik himself (in the only full-length biography of R' Shlomo Chelma of which we know) consistently uses the name Chelma as Rabbi Shlomo's last name. And, as we'll see immediately, he is not the only one who does so. As Witztum said in Assertion 15.B, a person can be called by a name even if he himself didn't use it.

B. In Margalioth's Encyclopedia the term חלמא does not appear as either a family name, or as an appellation for R. Shelomo.

Ah! But the name חלמא appears as the surname of the rabbi in the title line of his entry in Encyclopedia Hebraica (it appears there as חלמא, ר' שלמה), and his entry there appears under the latter ח, not ש. Similarly, the title line of this rabbi's entry in Encyclopedia Judaica is "**Chelm, Salomon**" and it appears under the letter C and not S. The name חעלמא שלמה also appears in the titles and prefaces of the books [Chelm72], [Chelm75] and [Chelm88]. This name also appears a few times in the Responsa database in the forms חעלמא, הגר"ש חעלמא, and חעלמא שלמה (whereas the forms used by WRR - חלמא שלמה and חעלמא שלמה do not appear there even once). חעלמא שלמה even appears in the 19th century bibliographical work [B-Y] (p. 373 entry 2295).

We see that this name is used as this rabbi's last name by many different sources.

C. Therefore, in Prof. Havlin's opinion "Chelma" by either spelling is not R. Shelomo's family name. They are simply two forms of writing the name of the town of "Chelm." It follows then that it should not be added to the list.

It's reasonable to assume that Rabbi Chelma himself didn't use it as his surname. However, the examples above clearly prove that with the passage of time this was accepted as his surname. Beyond that, we remind the reader that for the name ענדדן we have clearly seen (Assertion 15) that the Yaabetz did not see this as his surname and even sharply dissociated himself from it, yet WRR used this form as his surname because it has become widely accepted as such.

Therefore it follows that including the names אולחא and אולחא is fully justified.

The changes in the list of the sages

Witztum's Response and our rejoinder:

To arrive at their artificial success, it did not suffice BNMK to erase correct appellations and to include 'appellations' that broke the rules. They also changed the list of the sages itself. However the changes which they introduce does not fit within any rule whatsoever!

Please remember that in our second list we included only those sages in Margalioth's Encyclopedia of Great Men in Israel whose entries are between one and a half and three columns and contains either their date of birth or death (day and month).

In Document 2, Bar Hillel and Bar Natan report that they did their own check of the length of the entries in the Encyclopedia. According to their check, they claim that we omitted two sages (Rabbi David Ganz, Rabbi Meir Eisenstat), and added three sages (Rabbi Aharon of Karlin, Rabbi Yehuda Ayash, Rabbi Yehosef HaNagid). In this document, we reply that our choice was a priori, however it wasn't done by counting the number of lines, as they did. We report there that we did re-run our experiment, incorporating their changes, and that the results significantly improve.

Regarding Section 2.2 in BNMK's report, they omit some sages and add others, not following our original list, not following their own suggestion (above), and in fact not following any rules whatsoever. BNMK may want to claim "but they broke the rules just as much as we did", but there is one important difference. Our choice was to our detriment, and their choice was to their benefit!

Only two comments are necessary in reply.

First, our list of rabbis is closer to the correct list than WRR's list is. In light of this, it is hard to see that Witztum has the right to complain.

Second, Witztum's claim that his errors were to his detriment is a fine example of the misinformation which characterizes his arguments. Remember that there were two lists of rabbis. *In each case*, WRR made errors of selection that were to their benefit at the time they made them. In the case of the first list, the main error was the selection of Rabbi Ganz despite his having less than three columns. Since R' Ganz performs rather well, this error unjustifiably improved the first list. For the same reason, moving R' Ganz to the second list (where he belongs) improves the second list, and Witztum has discovered that the improvement is even enough to overcome the negative effect of correcting the other errors made in the second list. Thus Witztum is claiming that twice making choices to his advantage is logically the same as once making choices to his disadvantage!

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