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## A POSTHUMOUS CHANGE OF NAME

(BIRKENTHAL NOT BOLECHOWER)

IN No. 1, vol. XII, of this REVIEW Dr. Vishnitzer published some details concerning a diary of a Polish Jew who lived and wrought during the second half of the eighteenth century. Since I have previously edited a great part of another work by the same author, I feel myself obliged to object to a posthumous change of the name of the author.

This is how the matter stands:

In the early part of 1911 I found in the library of the well-known leader of the Haskalah movement in Galicia, Joseph Perl, a manuscript entitled *Dibre Binah*. The work, composing 329 pages small octavo, deals with the history of pseudo-Messiahs in Israel. Excepting the story of the Frankists, which the author knew partly from his own observation, and other interspersed personal experiences, it does not call for publication. The author of the work, as appears from the title-page, from passages in the book itself, and from attached letters, is Reb Dob Ber Brezower properly Birkenthal, who lived in Bolechow in Galicia and died there in 1805 at an advanced age. In order to get exact data concerning the two names I instituted an inquiry in Bolechow and I found out that as late as 1850 a family by the name of Birkenthal was still domiciled there, called commonly "Brezower". Moreover, Reb Dob Ber is entered in the book of the *Hebra Kadisha* under the name Birkenthal. Birkenthal is a Germanization of Brezower (*Birke* = *bereza* in Ukrainian) and goes back to the regulation of Jewish family names under Joseph II. There is therefore no doubt concerning the name: until the middle of the eighties of the eighteenth century exclusively Brezower, later officially Birkenthal.

Unfortunately the family name does not occur in the diary which found its way to London. Dr. Marmorstein, who in 1913 first published a bibliographical notice about it, therefore called the author "Bolechow" after his native place. When Dr. Vishnitzer in 1918 or 1919 undertook the elaboration of this diary and drew the public attention to its

importance, my biography of Birkenthal and part of the *Dibre Binah* had already been printed in *Hashiloah*. Nevertheless he preferred to continue Marmorstein's error and furnish the author with a posthumous name. He did the same in an article in *Der Jude*, although he should have been aware that the author was never known by this name to his contemporaries.

Why should Dr. Vishnitzer state that the diarist was named "Bolechower or Birkenthal" and then call him Bolechower throughout the article? Where is the evidence for the name Bolechower? To be sure, names are unessential, but one must not deal arbitrarily with the name of a deserving man, even if that man has been dead 120 years. Dr. Vishnitzer will cause confusion if he does not edit the diary under the name Birkenthal. For in such case two works by the same author will be known under two different names. Surely the author has a right to have his name on the title-page.

Jerusalem.

A. J. BRAWER.