

# THE ZIVIS OF MUELLHEIM

—JUSTIN J. MUELLER

Where did the first known Zivi ancestor, Aaron Moshe Zivi, come from? We do not really know; nor do we know the name of his wife. Supposedly, he was born in Sulzburg, which had an old Jewish community, born about 1660, and moved to Muellheim before the turn of the century. It has been accepted that his son, Rafael Paul bar Aaron Moshe Zivi, was born at Muellheim in 1690 and died there in 1762. The various historical accounts differ.

However, where did these early ancestors of ours come from to settle in Muellheim? Various places are named in the general Upper Rhine region: Stuehlingen (now part of Waldshut am Rhein), Switzerland, or Alsace. We do know Jews have been living in the general area who may have come with the Romans, who were in the region into the 5th century of the Common Era (CE). We do know that in the 16th century a Jew was hanged in Muellheim for stealing a chicken. To this day, the spot on a small rise on the road to Sulzburg, is known as 'Judengalgen' (Jew's gallows). We also know about the burning of the Jews of Basel, Neuenburg, and Strassburg during the time of the great Black Plague panic in the 14th Century.

Family saga, as told to the author as a child, held that Jews (i.e. the Zivi family), had lived in Muellheim 'for ages' – after all, Rafael Paul Zivi was born in Muellheim in 1690! Thus, it is possible that they lived there and were simply tolerated. It is also known that the status of 'Schutzjuden' (protected Jews) was not automatic and was generally a matter of financial status.

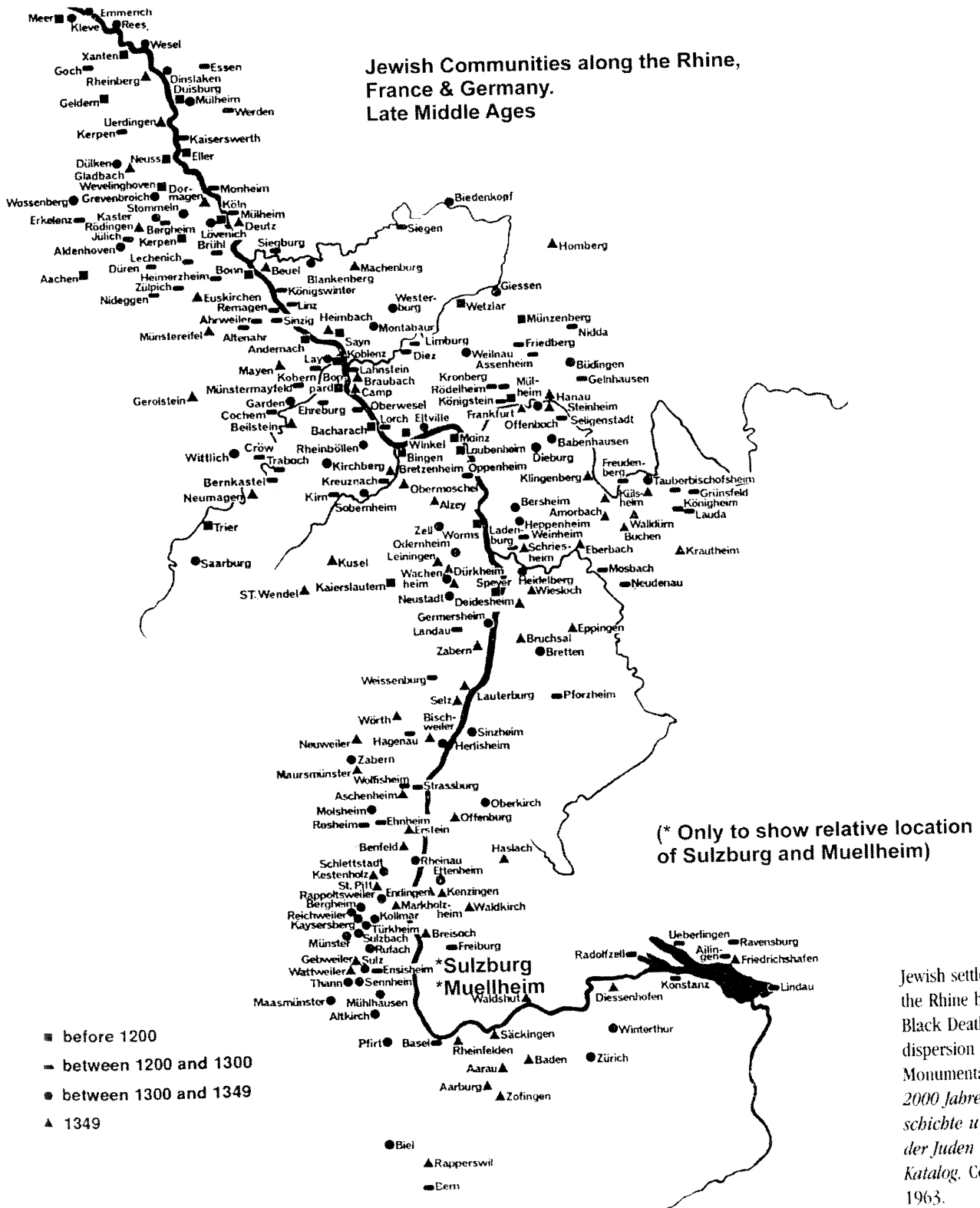
Breisach am Kaiserstuhl, im Breisgau (west of Freiburg) is an old Roman fortress and, as such, has changed hands many times in the past. It also had an old Jewish community, one of whose members was Josef Guenzburger. He appears to have been an astute businessman and a wealthy horse trader. He was employed by the then ruling Margrave, Karl Wilhelm of Baden, to attend to some of his fiscal affairs, which included collection of the 'Schutzgeld' (protection money) from the Jews. Colloquially, he was called the 'Judenvogt' (Jews bailiff). As a result, he had considerable influence at Court and was able to get permission for Jews to settle in several nearby communities, including Muellheim, in the early 18th century.

The earliest of our ancestors of whom we have documentation (as researched by Guenter Boll) was Rafael Paul Zivi. He seemed to have been a man of affairs, well to do, and devout. Around the year 1722 (the dates given by historians vary), he bought the house that is now

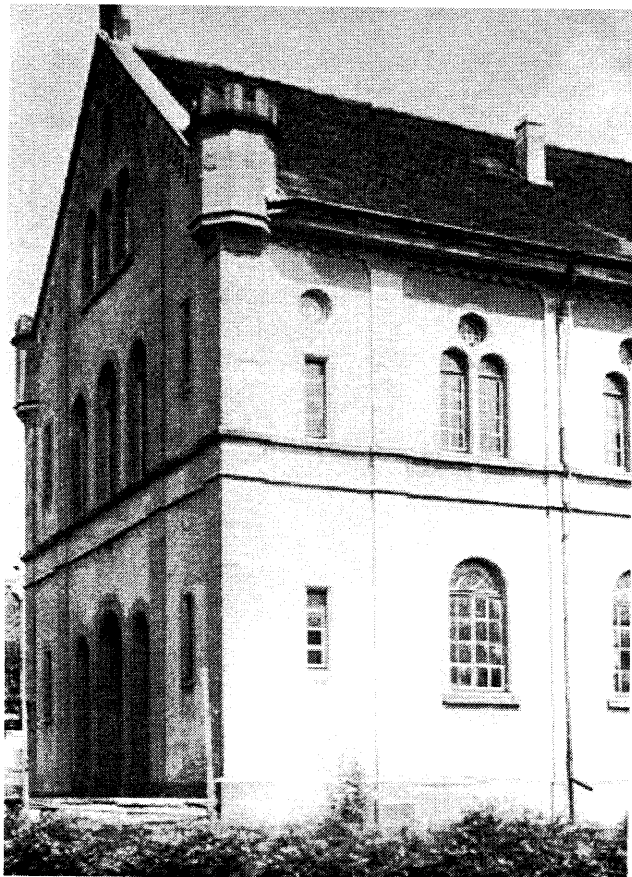
## Author's Notes and Acknowledgements

This article would have been impossible to write without recourse to the work of others. Memory only goes so far. In particular, I wish to mention Guenter Boll for his work, entitled: 'Von den bitteren Erfahrungen der Muellheimer Juden, 1750-1850', Muellheim, 1987 ['Of the Bitter Experiences of the Jews of Muellheim, 1750-1850'] and Rolf Schubbauer for his work, entitled: 'Nehmt dieses kleine Heimatstueck', Muellheim, 1988 and 2001 ['Take This Bit of Home: Traces and Stations of the Road of sorrows of the Jews of Muellheim and Badenweiler between 1933 and 1945']; and last, but certainly not least, my cousin Sam Zivi who was very helpful with providing ancestors' names and dates. Any errors contained herein are those of the author.

## Jewish Communities along the Rhine, France & Germany. Late Middle Ages



Jewish settlements on the Rhine before the Black Death and the dispersion of 1349. *Monumenta Judaica, 2000 Jahre Geschichte und Kultur der Juden am Rhein. Katalog, Cologne, 1963.*



*The Muellheim Synagogue ca. 1937*

known as Hauptstrasse 115. This house remained in the Zivi family until 1921 when it was sold to settle the estate of Jakob Zivi (1828-1921), the author's great-grandfather.

Observant Jews needed a place to pray as a congregation and Rafael Paul Zivi provided an upstairs room in his house for this purpose until 1753 when a proper synagogue was built right across the street. In 1851-1852 a new and larger synagogue was built on the same site and was used until the demise of the congregation in 1940; it was demolished in 1968.

From their beginnings in Muellheim the Zivi family spread out far and wide. Since the sons had to provide for their families, they moved away and established new family lines, notably Rexingen in Wurttemberg and Haigerloch in Hohenzollern, now both in Baden-Wurttemberg, and

Durmenach and Biesheim in Alsace. Of course, their descendants spread out again so that at the recent first Zivi Meeting in Muellheim (May 5, 2005) attendees came from France, Switzerland, the United States, and Mexico. The author of this article and his two cousins, Lou W. Zivi and Ralph J. Zivi, were the only 'Muellheimer' present. The fourth still living 'Muellheimer,' Gerda Zivi Frank, was unable to attend. This meeting took place at the Stadthaus Hotel am Marktplatz under a painting of the old Zivi house at #115; unfortunately, we know nothing of the painting's provenance.

The Jewish congregation of Muellheim thrived for many years and, at its peak in the middle of the 19th Century, represented approximately one fifth of the city's population. Presumably the large synagogue was full.

Over the years, the congregation dwindled, largely due to greater opportunities in the cities and abroad. Accordingly, I shall try to tell about the Zivi's I have knowledge of or that I knew.

My great-grandfather, Jakob Zivi (1828-1921), whom I never knew, was born in the house at Hauptstrasse 115 and lived there until his death in 1921. His wife, Amalie Weil from Sulzburg, predeceased him in 1916. She was the sister of Sophie Weil who married Meyer Bloch of Ihringen am Kaiserstuhl, who also became one of my great-grandmothers. (They were the parents of Caroline Bloch who became my grandfather's wife.) Jakob was a 'Viehhaendler' (cattle trader), like so many of his contemporaries. Jakob and Amalie had eight children: five daughters (Mina, Berta, Elise, Helene, and Anna) and three sons (Max, Heinrich and Gustav). The five sisters all immigrated to the United States, primarily the Chicago area, as did one son, Max.

## The Zivi Name

So what does all this have to do with our family name? A 1936 German-Hebrew dictionary: Hirsch (deer) = Zvi. Other variations include: Zevi, Zvi, Tzvi, Bedi, Sebi, Sabi. These are all variations of the surname of Sabbetai (or Shabtai) Zevi, a mystic and scholar born of Sephardic parents on the 9th of Av, 1626 in Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey). He was quite precocious and unstable. He began traveling while pronouncing himself the Messiah. In 1665 he went to Gaza and there met Rabbi Nathan Benjamin Levi Ghazati Ashkenazi, a famous Lurianic kabalist and visionary who became his prophet and spread the word widely. References do not indicate that Shabbetai traveled beyond the immediate near east; however, Nathan is known to have traveled as far as Venice. The word spread by means of letters and messengers and was widely accepted by European Jewry, including some leading rabbis.

It was a period when the long-suffering Jews of Europe, especially in the east, sought solace and relief. The 30-Years War, which tore Europe apart, had just ended and in 1648 the Chmielnicki massacres occurred in Poland. The hopes of imminent salvation took hold of Jewry everywhere and soon lead to excesses. Soon enough disillusion set in and Turkish authorities imprisoned Shabtai for presuming to be king. In order to escape execution, Shabtai converted to Islam. The cult lived on well into the 19th Century – known as the Donmeh. Nowhere is there any evidence that he may have traveled to Germany, much less had a son named Zivi.

The youngest son, Heinrich (1880-1918), married Carry Heimann (1885-1942) of Muellheim and they had a daughter Gerda (Zivi Frank; b. Giessen 1916) and lived in northern Germany. Tradition has it that he was too short to serve in the regular draft army; however, when they needed warm bodies, the army drafted him and he died at Arras in France on March 18, 1918, the last of seven Jewish casualties of World War I from Muellheim.

The oldest son, Gustav (1867-1943) stayed in Muellheim in partnership with his father Jakob and married his cousin Caroline Bloch (1867-1948) from Ihringen in 1896. They rented twice (next door at 111 and 113) before buying the house at Hauptstrasse 107 'am Berge' (on the little hill) in 1912 where the author grew up. Gustav and Caroline had three children: Hugo, Laura, and a third child who died in infancy and was too young to have a name and grave.

Hugo (1897-1974) went to local schools in Muellheim and at 14 was apprenticed to Katzauer Brothers in Bruchsal, Baden, a manufacturer of paints. There he also attended Handelschule (business college) presided over by Bernhard Zivi (1866-?) who was the son of Josef Isaia Zivi, Heinrich Sohn (1826-1927) and Fanny Diedesheimer (1834-1918). Unfortunately, nothing further is known of him, and in Bruchsal, Baden there is no record of him having been deported to Camp de Gurs in southern France.

In 1927, Hugo Zivi married his employer's niece, Hilde Maier (1899-1986) from Nussloch (near Heidelberg) and they had two sons: Wolfgang Louis (Lou W.) in 1929 and Rolf Julius (Ralph J.) in 1932. More on their adventures later.

Laura Zivi (1899-1983), married William (Willi) Mueller (1893-2000) of Lechenich in Prussia (near Cologne) in 1922. Their only child, Justin J. Mueller (1923- ), is the author of this article. In early 1926 the marriage broke up and my mother returned to Muellheim with me where we lived with my grandparents at Hauptstrasse 107. Since she now had to support us, her brother Hugo set her up in a paint and household goods store at Hauptstrasse 132. Eventually she purchased the store from her brother and kept it until our immigration to the United States in May 1936.

We did not have far to go to the synagogue or the 'Kahal House' (community house) at Hauptstrasse 113 as it was just across the street. When Grandfather Gustav purchased the house at Hauptstrasse 107 in 1912 he had water, electricity, and telephone installed and converted the 'succoh' in the attic with a permanent roof.

My Uncle Hugo and Aunt Hilde and their two sons Wolfgang (Lou) and Rolf (Ralph) lived on the corner of Parkstrasse and Werderstrasse in a leased villa that had various outbuildings suitable for Uncle Hugo's wholesale paint business.

I often went to visit my uncle and aunt and along the way passed several Zivi households: in the Kirchgasse the widow of Jesaias Zivi (1849-1922), Josefina (1885-1937) lived with her unmarried daughter Mathilde (1884-1942, Auschwitz), who did fancy laundry (i.e. heavily starched shirts, collars, etc.). Her four sons Josef (?-d. Israel?), Eugen (1882-1942, Auschwitz), Max (1886-France?) and Emil Friedrich (1889-d. Montevideo) all went to higher schools and became teachers and professors. They sometimes visited on holidays and that is when I met some of them. Mathilde never married and stayed home so the brothers could study.

A few steps further around the corner of Lindenstrasse and Werderstrasse to this day stands an odd-shaped house with a tall outside staircase. It was there that Frau Talmine Zivi (Guggenheimer), widow of Moses Zivi (1843-1927) lived. When I had to pick up or take something to her, she was always pleasant. I believe she was Swiss and so was able to flee to Switzerland.

Going along the Werderstrasse where it joined Hauptstrasse 61 lived Helene (1878-1943) and Josef Zivi (1868-1943) -- sister and brother. Josef never married and his sister stayed

home to care for him.

Going up the Hauptstrasse, just east of the old former hospital, lived Mathilde Zivi, the widow of Adolf Zivi (1863-1922). Her son, Herbert (1883-1942), lived out of town but came visiting occasionally, especially on holidays. I do not have any data on these people; however, he reputedly had all sorts of Zivi family documents, which are, of course, lost to us. The last I heard of him, many years ago, was that he fled only to perish at Majdanek in 1942.

Opposite the old hospital, Hauptstrasse #91 lived Carry Zivi (1885-1942), widow of the fallen Heinrich (1880-1918, Arras), with her daughter Gerda (1916-). They lived with Carry's parents, Salomon and Rifka Heimann. Two houses away lived Walter Frank (1911), whom Gerda later married and with whom she immigrated to the United States.

Many years ago, I met an Israeli woman, Ceruti bas Yotam, who at the time was living in Queens, New York with her family. She claimed to be a descendant of Hermann Zivi originally be from Elberfeld, presumably a granddaughter of Hermann Zivi, but had no further information and was unhappy living in the United States. I had no further contact with her

On a Sunday morning in late 1935, a police constable came to our home at Hauptstrasse 107 to 'invite' my mother Laura (1899-1983) for an interview with the Gestapo. The Gestapo questioned Mom about her friends and acquaintances and she came home frightened and fully determined to leave as soon as possible. By June 1936, we arrived in Brooklyn, New York and stayed with my Grandmother Zivi's sister Babette Bloch. After a short time, my mother found work and became independent. During the remainder of 1936 I was in three different foster homes and schools until January 1937 when I went

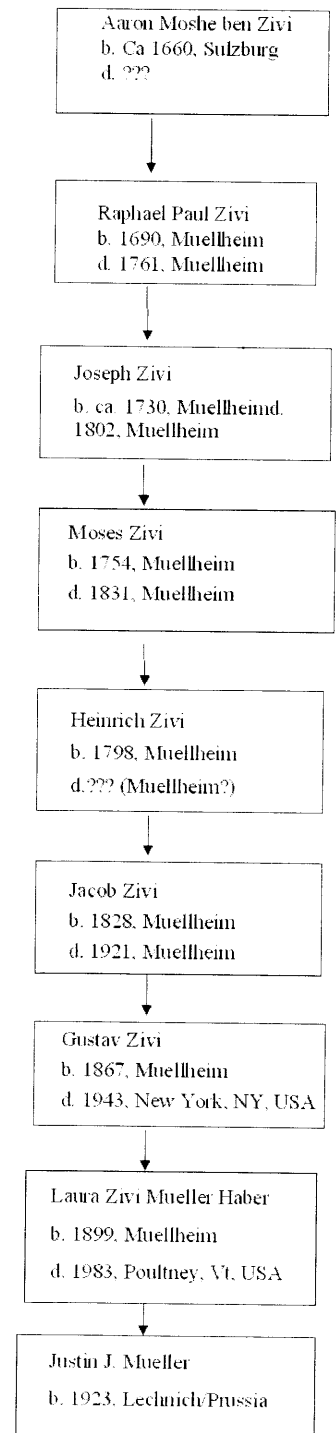


*The Zivi Family ca. 1934/1935*

*From left to right:*

*Caroline Zivi, Justin Mueller, Laura Zivi-Mueller, Hilde Zivi with son Rolf Zivi, Hugo Zivi, Wolfgang L. Zivi, Gustav Zivi*

### *Decadency Chart of Justin J. Mueller*



to live with Rose and Ben Goldman, where I remained for a year and a half. Since my mother's pay was minimal (this was during the Depression), the \$30 per month for my board was largely borne by my Grandfather Gustav's siblings in Chicago.

In the summer of 1938, my mother and I moved to a small apartment in the East Bronx, then an area heavily populated by eastern Jews; we were neither welcome nor comfortable.

The Kristallnacht occurred November 9-10, 1938 and it became imperative to get our immediate family (Grandparents Gustav and Caroline Zivi; Uncle Hugo and his wife Hilde and their two sons Lou and Ralph) out of harm's way. In a matter of months, we managed to arrange for the two boys, Lou and Ralph, to go into France. The borders were already closed, so the family was told to go to Breisach where my Grandmother Caroline's nephew, Samson Schick (son of Hermine Bloch), awaited them on the bridge.

There were many more adventures and shenanigans, including deportation to Camp de Gurs in southern France, U.S. quota numbers, and fraudulent visas to Cuba. Anti-Semites in the U.S. Dept. of State's Visa Division were not helpful either. However, by God's grace the entire family arrived in New York City in April 1942 on a Portuguese ship via North Africa. All of this occurred because the Gestapo questioned my mother!

At the beginning of the 20th Century more and more of our ancestors took advantage of the opportunities available and achieved various degrees of success. I know of only a few as family tree charts do not give too much information and personal memory goes only so far. Interestingly enough there was relatively little familiar/social connection between the various Zivis. One knew there were cousins; however, some of their personal data and formal addresses were not known.

When a Swiss Professor Picard made an ascent into the 'stratosphere' in the 1930s grandfather casually mentioned that he was a cousin.

Hermann Zivi (1867-1943, Tel Aviv) became a cantor and composer of Jewish ritual music. He was first employed in Düsseldorf and later as Chief Cantor at Elberfeld. As mentioned above, his cousin Bernhard was head of the Handelschule in Bruchsal.

One of our cousins unwittingly attained a certain prominence in history, namely Alfred Dreyfus, the innocent victim of the so-called 'Affaire Dreyfus' that tore apart France and unleashed anti-Semitism. He was falsely accused and eventually exonerated. He was the great-great-great grandson of our common ancestor Rafael Paul Zivi ben Aaron Moshe.

There is an interesting corollary to the 'Affaire Dreyfus': The Viennese journalist Theodore Herzl who reported on the trial, concluded that the situation of the Jews needed a political solution; hence, Zionism as a political party.

Another Zivi descendant comes to mind: Rabbi David Max Eichhorn (1906-1986) son of Anna Zivi-Eichhorn (1874-1945) and Josef Eichhorn of Columbia, Pennsylvania. During World War II he served as a military chaplain in the U.S. Army and was among the troops that liberated Dachau. He held many prominent positions with various Jewish groups and was a widely published author.

The Zivi family is one of the few Jewish families to have a surname before the early 19th Century when surnames generally became required. We have no knowledge of when or where the name 'Zivi' originated. Through the years, there have been some odd spellings of the name due to local language usages; today the spelling Zivi (or Zivy in France) is generally accepted.