

# What to take into account when choosing a name

One little word has to epitomise all the wishes and hopes of the parents and express their ideals and traditions.

*Harrap Book of Boys' and Girls' Names*

In naming a child, or anything else, we can either reflect a quality we perceive as already present, or we can choose to imbue the one to be named with the blessing of a quality or attribute.

Sometimes one of the children of the family intuitively knows the name of the baby-to-be. One child pointed to his mother's large tummy, announcing **Daniel** – and Daniel he was named.

Usually, though, it may be ill-considered to choose a name for a baby before birth. If I had been a boy, I was to have been called **Charles** (but my parents had the feminine form ready in waiting for a girl).<sup>15</sup>

How much more appropriate to choose a name for the baby once you know the sex and have had a chance to observe and sense his/her qualities. A newborn baby is not a blank page. Babies are born with distinct physical, emotional and psychological characteristics.

One woman wrote to say: 'We chose the name **Joel** from several Hebrew names that came to mind at the time he was born. I feel it was a strong past life in need of expression, and we liked the sound of the name (he can be a bit of a prophet at times!)

A child named **Elinor** (after one of her father's favourite characters, from the *Morte d'Arthur*) declared at the age of one: 'I Ella', and from that day on that has been her name.

A mother during pregnancy is often able to communicate directly with the foetus and through this, and her dreams, can already have a clear idea of the child's characteristics by the time of birth. When the mother of Prince Siddhartha Gautama conceived her son, she dreamed of a white elephant, which foretold his future destiny

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as Sakyamuni Buddha. In our own times, in 1984, on the night that Maria Torres conceived little Ösel, who was to become Lama Ösel (having been recognised, according to Tibetan tradition, as the rebirth of Maria's former spiritual teacher, Lama Thubten Yeshe), she dreamed that Lama Yeshe placed his hand upon her head.<sup>16</sup>

My friend, the late Sun Bear (Gheezis Mokwa in his own Ojibwa tongue) was so named because of his early visions which predicted his future role as leader, medicine man and teacher.<sup>17</sup> There are many such accounts in recent days, as well as in the traditions of ancient peoples. These characteristics can soon be observed by a sensitive and open observer and can be confirmed and expanded upon by other means, such as the natal astrological chart.<sup>18</sup>

One couple combined the father's requirements for 'something short, strong and clear' with the mother's wish to choose a name with particular meanings and associations. They knew their son would be a Taurean, so chose the name *Peter* with its associations of earth and rock. Also, while carrying him, his mother kept hearing the name Peter everywhere, and liked the sound of it. This same mother called her daughter *Tara* because of her fondness for the Tibetan goddess of that name.

You might also consider taking the place of birth into account.

One man, whose son was conceived in William Wordsworth's house in Cockermouth called the child *Adam Charles Derwent*. From the windows of the room where he was conceived, across the lawns, you could see the river Derwent.

Or perhaps the time of day might even be significant.

In a remote house in Maine, amongst woods and mountains, a woman was having a home delivery. The doctor was called and came, but the labour went on intermittently all night. Everyone there stayed up partying, and finally at first light the child was born – and was given the name *Dawn*.

## WHAT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN CHOOSING A NAME

A name is usually for life of course, and not just for childhood, so it is worth taking time and care in its choosing.

Here are some questions which may be helpful:

- WHO is this child?
- WHAT are this child's CHARACTERISTICS?
- What is this child's PURPOSE?
- With what do I/we want to ENDOW this child?
- What GIFT OF SPIRIT do I want to offer him or her?

One man I spoke to remarked that 'every baby kicks in a different way', implying that this could perhaps give clues about the right name to choose! The same man told me that he and his wife had named one of their daughters **Bronwen** (white breast or wave) as she was conceived in a Welsh clifftop field overlooking the sea.

As well as a convenient means of describing, identifying and attracting someone's attention, a name is also a blessing (or a curse!), a dedication, and an invocation (lit. an in-calling of power).

Keep in mind that a name is more than a verbal badge of identification. It is a token of parental affection; and will become part of the owner as a perfume becomes part of a flower.<sup>19</sup>

One father told me how he had chosen the names **Matthew** and **Meredith** for his children because he liked the sound resonances between the two names, and also because of his love of the sea, echoed in MERedith.

So the circumstances of the birth, the time of day, the season of the year and the phase of the moon may all have a bearing on the naming of a child. The natal astrological chart, which can be drawn up immediately after birth, reflects a wealth of information about the child's character and temperament: strengths, weaknesses,

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potential and likely destiny. I would strongly recommend that you do have the child's chart drawn up (this can save a lot of time-wasting and red-herring-chasing later in life), even if astrology is unfamiliar to you. As well as getting a clearer picture of the new being's characteristics, it can also provide you with information about the quality of your growing relationship to the child – both the easy facets and the more challenging.<sup>20</sup>

Calling children after famous or inspiring people is a route chosen by many parents.

A woman wrote to tell me that she decided to call her daughter **Jessie** after an older woman who struck her as strong, honest, 'knowing' about why people act as they do. Jessie senior came from a hard, working class country background, but had the gift of mixing with anyone.

*Giving a name, indeed, is a poetic art; all poetry...is but a giving of names*

Carlyle in his journal. 18 May 1832

## Brainstorming for the right name

- You may want to make a list of your favourite names, cultures, most respected people of the past and present etc.
- Do you want your chosen name to be ancient or modern; from another tradition, language, culture, religion?
- You could, for example, scour the sacred books of the world for inspiration.
- Or perhaps you would like a name from one of the great mythologies of the past? <sup>21</sup>
- As well as taking the child's astrological chart into account, you might also find out what animal and element govern the child's birth in the Chinese astrological system.
- You could also consult an astrologer.
- Some people like to choose diminutives. I have included very few of them in this book, but other books list them at length.
- How will others react to the name?
- How does it sound?
- All letters have numerological value which carries significance.<sup>22</sup>