

## Parshat Shemot: Names of Nobility

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

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The second book of the *Torah* is commonly referred to as "*Shemot*/Names," as it begins with listing all the names of *Bnei Yisroel* that descended to Egypt, repeating the list from *Sefer Bereishit*, and ending with, "And Yoseph was in Egypt." Why was it necessary to repeat the names and why does the *Torah* tell us that Yoseph was in Egypt, which we already know?

The Mesillot Bilvovom notes that there must be some connection between the names they went down with and the redemption, explaining on one level that one of the main reasons we were redeemed from Egypt was because we did not change our names which maintained our Jewish identity. Similarly, these names must also somehow be harbingers of redemption.

The Ohr Gedalyahu reminds us that the name reflects the essence of a being, its potential, and the purpose of his existence. The *Gemara* interprets the verse in *Tehillim*, "... *Ki sam shamot ba'aretz* - He put destruction in the land," and says *shamot*/destruction, with different vocalization, can easily be read as *sheimot*/names. If you do not live up to your name and your potential, you will bring destruction to the land. What was it that Hashem loved so much in Avram that He named him Avraham? He found Avraham faithful to his name. One must be loyal to the attributes inherent in the name one is given.

Names, thus, have two interconnected components writes the Dorash Dovid. The first is the definition of the name, while the second is the mental, psychological and emotional intention of the parents when they gave the child this name for, just as a child inherits physical attributes from his parents, so too does he inherit these other attributes from his parents.

One's name includes both a legacy and a mindset. Our Matriarchs articulated the reasons they gave their children their particular names. These names were a sacred legacy in the land of Israel, and included the essence of each individual. By renaming these souls when they descended to Egypt, they invested themselves with the ability to retain their innate holy essence even as they had to adapt to the immoral society of Egypt, says Rabbi Gifter. This ability to adapt and actualize our innate holy potential wherever we find ourselves exists in each one of us whatever challenges we face and wherever we are. When the *Torah* then records that Yoseph was in Egypt, adds Rabbi Weinberger, it is telling us that Yoseph retained the holy essence of his name the whole time he was in Egypt, just as his brothers would do when they descended to Egypt.

Rabbi Y. Eisenberger notes that names not only include the essence but also imply permanence. Therefore, the angel Yaakov fought could not give his name because his mission changed daily. On the other hand, when Moshe asked Hashem what Name he should tell *Bnei Yisroel*, Hashem readily told him a permanent name: I will be that which I will be- that which I am now supporting you through the challenge of Egypt, so will I be with you through every challenge and diaspora in your future history. Hashem's message to *Bnei Yisroel* through Moshe was that the relationship between Hashem and *Bnei Yisroel* was permanent; Hashem would never abandon His people.

In Kohelet it says, "A good name is better than oil, and the day of death than the day of birth." Oil always alludes to wisdom which is unchangeable and constant. Just as wisdom is constant and continuous, so too is a person's name. What allowed *Klal Yisroel* to retain their names was that they let their *chochma* control

their emotions. He who can maintain clarity of focus and purpose through exercising wisdom has maintained the integrity of his name from birth to death. The wish of the parents, wisdom represented by the father and understanding represented by the mother, is that the child they are now naming should accomplish his mission.

The Shla"h Hakodosh introduced a custom to recite a verse representative of one's name towards the end of the *Amidah*. This verse should serve as a mantra to keep one focused on his mission in life. At death, you will be asked your name, you will be asked if you lived up to the essence your name signified. Yoseph never changed his name and never forgot his mission, even though Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name in keeping with his status. He made sure his head ruled his heart and his passions.

Our names reveal to us our potential, challenge us to work to fulfill that potential so that we will be ready for redemption. When *Bnei Yisroel* retained their names, they not only held on to their past but also kept the vision of the future before them, writes the Ohr Gedaliah. They kept the revealed essence of their names and the hidden essence that connected each of them to Hashem, just as each person is represented by a letter in the *Sefer Torah*, a letter that is connected to a specific attribute of Hashem. By keeping their names, they kept that connection alive and were able to focus on bringing their potential to fruition, the fruition that would speed the redemption.

The book is called *Shemot*, Names, precisely because the names provided the hope for and were the harbingers of salvation, precisely because it provided them with the focus they would need to survive the enslavement and to hasten that salvation.



## The First Prayer: Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Yosef was the most talented and intelligent of his brothers and his father discerned it and treated him differently. The brothers became jealous. Hashem gave Yosef prophetic dreams and although he knew the brothers disliked him, he told over how they would bow down to him. He knew where that would take him, yet he still went ahead and did it. He ended up being thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave in Egypt. If the story had ended there it would have been anti-climactic. But it goes on and leads us to the transformation of Yosef into the great person he became. His best years were those he spent in Egypt facing test after test and climbing ever higher spiritually as he overcame his challenges.

When the Jews asked Moshe to send spies to the land of Israel, Moshe acquiesced, rationalizing that if he would deny their

request it would make them more suspicious of the land. The spies came back with negative reports that the land seemed unconquerable. They implied that Hashem didn't seem to have full control. This was a terrible mistake and the Jews were punished for this. They had to wander in the desert for 40 years and were sentenced to die. In truth, Hashem didn't want Moshe to enter the land because if he would have built the Temple it could not have been destroyed which would have been disastrous for the Jews. If Moshe would have been able to see that, he would have been able to make peace with that part of his destiny.

Whatever happens to an individual is leading him somewhere in terms of his individual potential. Whatever is happening to us as a people is leading us somewhere in terms of our potential as a nation. Hashem takes everything that was accrued over the genera-

tions all the way back to the *Avot* and lets it build on itself until the conclusion of the story which is redemption.

We end the blessing of *Avot* with, *Melech*- you're the ruler, *Ozer*- you help us, you give us the space to act for when you help someone you have room for them, you save us, and you shield us. Sometimes we don't even know what mistakes we could have made and what tragedies could've happened.

"Blessed are you Hashem the shield of Avraham." Why are we going back to Avraham? Why don't we say, "The shield of our forefathers?" Avraham was the one who started it all, who pushed the dominoes down, so that they could now all go. All prayer is attributed to Avraham, who had one question, "Who made it all?" And this is how we conclude the first bracha in *Shemone Esrei*.

## Shir Shel Yom- Yom Sheini: Part IV

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The verse, "*B'rogez rachamim tizkor*," depicts how Hashem deals with this world in a way that we define as anger, while at the same time He remembers to have mercy. Opposites are not contradictory by Hashem. Likewise, the greater a person becomes, the more spiritual he becomes, and the less he is bothered by differences and can live in unity and harmony despite the different ways of seeing reality.

Rav Tzadok Hakohen teaches that every Jew has spirituality in him and even those who violate *Torah* are still a part of the Jewish people. On *Yom Kippur*, we give permission for all to come and pray, even sinners. Although there is a contradiction between who they are and what they do, we have to look beyond their actions and see their inner spark. Every Jew has a divine soul within him which indicates that he can overcome contradictions, and create peace between opposite opinions, natures, and genders. It depends on how much we bring Hashem into the picture and on how much our ego is

invested. "*Ke'asher shamenu kein ra'inu*- As we heard that is what we saw." If we look at reality as *Beit Elokeinu*, the domain of Hashem, and we want to bring Him into the picture then we can merit the era of *Mashiach* when there will be peace between everyone. It all depends on how much we concentrate on bringing Hashem into our lives.

This chapter of *Tehilim* was written by the sons of Korach. In the beginning they took part in the dispute against Moshe but at the end they came to the conclusion that, "*Moshe emet v'Torahato emet*- Moshe and the *Torah* are true." Korach and his followers were decimated. But his sons remained alive and they teach us a message. The fact that you have a different opinion and see things differently does not mean that other peoples' views are wrong. When *Mashiach* will come we will see perfect reality. The ability to accept "*Moshe emet v'Torahato emet*," even when there is an argument is a challenge. How will it all end? Rashi says there will be the ultimate war of Gog U'magog between the nations and the Jewish people. Hashem will fight the battle

for us and evil will be destroyed. This will open up the possibility of peace between people.

Chazal say that after Hashem took the one body of water that existed at the time of creation and divided it into two, upper and lower, spiritual and physical, the lower waters complained that they wanted to be closer to Hashem. Hashem comforted them that salt would be extracted from them and used with every sacrifice. A sacrifice is a means to connect to Hashem. On a superficial level it seems that the waters above are in a better place. But in reality, the light that emanates from the darkness is brighter and more meaningful. When the physical waters become part of the sacrifices, a means to connect to Hashem, it fulfilled the ultimate purpose of creation. We were placed in a world of darkness where it is difficult to discern the truth. But if we struggle and choose what is right and what Hashem wants, we can achieve greater heights than what the most elevated spiritual entities can ever attain. That is the message of the second day.