Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

NAALEH נעלה מי יעלה בהר ה'

תורת אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 17 Number 44

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Names of Nobility: Parshat Shemot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The book of Shemot begins with a list of names of the members of Yaakov's family who descended to Egypt. This list seems to repeat the list in the book of Bereishit. The list in our parsha ends with the words, "And Joseph was in Egypt." Why was it necessary to repeat this?

The Ohr Gedalyahu explains that understanding the name of a person or a thing helps us focus on its purpose. The Gemara interprets the verse in Tehillim, "Asher sam shamot ba'aretz," to mean that if a person does not live up to his name and his potential, he will bring destruction to the land.

Names have two interconnected components, writes the Dorash Dovid: the definition of the name, and the mental, psychological, and emotional intention of the parents when they gave the child this name. Just as a child inherits physical attributes from his parents, so he inherits these other attributes from his parents. A person is influenced by the two meanings in developing the attributes of his name. One's name includes both a legacy and a mindset. Our Matriarchs articulated the reasons they gave their children their names. The names included the essence of each person.

When the Torah lists the names of these souls as they descended to Egypt, it teaches us that they invested themselves with the ability to retain their innate holy essence, even as they physically moved to the immoral society of Egypt, explains Rabbi Gifter. We all have this ability to actualize our holy potential, no matter where we are and no matter the challenges we face. When the Torah then records that Yosef was in Egypt, adds Rabbi Weinberger, it teaches us that Yosef retained the holy essence of his name the whole time he lived in Egypt.

The verse in Kohelet says, "A good name is better than oil, and the day of death than the day of birth." Oil alludes to wisdom. Unlike emotions, which are volatile, wisdom is unchangeable and constant. This is true of a person's name too. Klal Yisroel retained their names because they let their chochma control their emotions. A person who can maintain clarity of purpose by using wisdom can maintain the integrity of his name.

The Shla"h Hakadosh introduced a custom for a person to recite a verse representative of his name at the end of the silent Amidah. He intended this custom to help keep a person 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. Yosef never changed his name and never forgot his mission, even though Paro gave him an Egyptian name. He made sure his head ruled his heart and his passions.

The Lev Shalom notes that Bnei Yisroel are compared to stars that Hashem brings out and returns individually by name. When Bnei Yisroel descended into exile, as related in Parshat Vayigash, the Torah recorded their names. One would think that the names would be recorded again at the actual exodus from Egypt rather than here, at the beginning of the enslavement. In fact, the suffering was so severe that the predicted 400 years of enslavement was shortened to 210 years.

When our personal troubles seem overwhelming, perhaps Hashem is speeding up our redemption and salvation. In fact, the galut, the exile, is part of revelation, of hitgalut. Our names reveal to us our potential and challenge us to work to fulfill that potential so we will be ready for redemption.

When Bnei Yisroel retained their names, they not only held on to their past, they also kept the vision of the future, writes the Ohr Gedaliah. They kept the revealed essence of their names and the hidden essence contained in their names, which connected them to Hashem. In this way they were able to focus on bringing their potential to fruition and speed the redemption. Through creating a manifestation of his name on earth, man has the potential of bringing the glory of Heaven to earth. By living up to his name, he can merit salvation.

The Women of Egypt and the Desert #10

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottleib

The Gemara and the Midrashim call Paro's daughter, Batya, meaning the daughter of Hashem. The yud and the heh at the end of her name spell the name of Hashem. With this name, He reveals Himself as above all reality but still within this world.

What inspired her to extend her hand when the basket holding baby Moshe was clearly beyond her reach? She couldn't bear to see his suffering. She is an example of someone who exerted superhuman efforts and was helped from above. We learn from this episode that if we try our best, we often receive far more than anticipated.

Miriam was the leader of the Jewish women. Rashi says she taught the women Torah just as Moshe taught the men. Women have a different way of understanding and grasping Torah, hence they needed a woman to teach them. In the Zohar it says that parallel to the heavenly Torah academy for men, women will learn Torah from Miriam and Batya.

Miriam had enormous spiritual depth and vision. She waged battle against evil, which is what her name connotes. When she left Egypt there was so little time, yet she made sure to pack her instruments. Her faith was so strong that she was sure they would need them.

Tzipora was Moshe's wife. Tzipora means a bird. Her nature was to soar above the mundane. She was the perfect wife for Moshe. They were both people of great spiritual transcendence, similar to each other and dissimilar to other people. Moshe elevated himself to the point that he was in a state of continued readiness to receive prophecy. He had to separate from his wife.

Miriam couldn't understand this because her level of prophecy was different than his. The conclusion Miriam reached wasn't that Moshe's prophecy was unique, but that there was something inherently lacking in his relationship. Consequently, she was stricken with tzaraat, a skin illness. Skin, the largest organ of the body, creates a separation between one person and another. When a person sees another in a diminished way, he becomes, in a certain sense, lifeless or unimportant.

Continued on Page 2

Help support Naaleh by searching the web! For more information visit www.iGive/Naaleh.com & www.iSearchiGive/Naaleh.com

The Women of Egypt and the Desert #10

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottleib

Continued from Page 1

Although Miriam clearly meant what she said for Moshe's benefit, she was punished severely. Tzaddikim are penalized for infractions as fine as a single hair. Tzaddikim desire closeness and an intense relationship with Hashem that isn't blocked by any faults. Suffering purifies their flaws.

In the desert narrative, we read about Korach's wife. Korach had enormous potential. He could have been the Levi Gadol. The Levites had to go through a unique ritual which involved shaving off all their body hair in order to give them a feeling of being one unit. Korach's wife told her husband, "You're a nobody, you're just a number, there's no difference between you and the next Levi. Look how Moshe turned you into nothing. He did it to keep his own position. Why are you putting up with this?" She egged him on, which ultimately led to their doom.

In marriage, a husband provides and the wife must take what he gives and turn it into something greater. When the wife sees her husband trying to provide, she feels beloved. When he sees his will actualized in the highest sense, he feels respected. This is how a marriage grows. Korach's wife corrupted her husband's desire to be something. She is the epitome of an evil wife.

In contrast, On ben Pelet's wife didn't argue with her husband. She didn't disparage his dreams and desires. Instead she said, "Either way, whether Moshe or Korach leads, you won't come out on top anyway." It was clear to him that his wife was acting with his best interests in mind. He went inside the tent and she sat in the doorway blocking the entrance. That is how she saved him.

Man is compared to dough. The soul is water and the body is flour. The body is the wife of the soul. Our yearning self, which is called ruach, is meant to rule the nefesh, the part of us that's connected to this world. A good body takes what the soul offers, builds with it, and turns it into something. The soul says, "I want connection." The body actualizes it by performing mitzvot. The body is meant to uplift the soul, to give it credence and credibility, not to disparage it.

We've looked at three paradigms of great women: the woman who is known for what her husband becomes, the woman who is known for what her children become, and the woman who is known for what she herself becomes.

The influence of careerism is touching the observant community. In today's society, self-actualization is idealized. It's wrong to say, "Who I am to my family has nothing to do with my true self." From the Torah's perspective, these three women are in fact one. Your imprint, who you are, shines through in how you succeed in affecting others.

Preparing Oneself for G-d

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

In Siman daled, the Kitzur writes that one who holds back from going to the bathroom violates the prohibition in Vayikra, "Al tishaktzu et nafshoteichem." On a literal level, this refers to the prohibition of eating various insects, bugs, and rodents. However, the Talmud explains that it also includes the prohibition of engaging in disgusting behavior. This includes holding back from relieving oneself when one has to. The Mishna Berura writes that if one just has a small urge and can hold it in, it would be permitted. The Talmud mentions that drinking from a dirty cup or from a vessel that was used for bloodletting is also a violation of this prohibition. The Rambam writes that it also includes eating food that people find disgusting, such as spoiled food, even if it personally doesn't bother you. Although these prohibitions are associated with the Torah verse of Al tishaktzu, the Rambam categorizes them as a rabbinic prohibition. He understands the verse as an asmachta, an association, reflecting the will of Hashem that one not act in a repulsive manner.

If it was a Torah prohibition, we would have to err on the side of caution. However, since the Rambam categorizes it as a rabbinic prohibition, if a person is not sure if one has to relieve himself, he can be lenient. Additionally, when human dignity is in question, one can be lenient. Therefore, the Mishna Berura writes that if a person is in a place where there is no bathroom, he could wait until he finds one.

In Seif daled, the Kitzur writes that one may not contemplate matters of Torah in the bathroom, or in any other area which is not clean. Instead, one can read a newspaper or think about one's business or accounts. Judaism believes that Torah is not merely an academic subject, but is the word of Hashem, either directly in the written Torah or indirectly in the case of the Oral Law. As such, we must respect the Torah and not contemplate it in an unclean environment.

In Seif vav, the Kitzur notes that every time a person goes to the bathroom he is required to wash his hands and recite the blessing of asher yatzar. Although there are some who are particular to wash six times, washing once without a vessel is also acceptable. May one wash in the bathroom? Some opinions hold that since the bathroom is considered a place that is filled with ruach ra (evil spirits), it is considered spiritually and ritually contaminated. Therefore, even if the bathroom is clean, one should wash outside the bathroom. Other opinions maintain that the modern bathrooms we have today are much cleaner than the bathrooms of old and one is allowed to wash there. Preferably one should wash outside, but if there is no water anywhere else, one could wash in the bathroom relying on the lenient opinions.

Asher yatzar is a very significant and beautiful bracha. There are very few blessings that the Shulchan Aruch takes the time to explain line by line as it does with asher yatzar. Human nature is to pay very little attention to things that are constant and ongoing. The point of this bracha is to recognize our blessings and not to take them for granted. We are obligated to thank Hashem even while we are healthy for our wondrous functioning body and the blessing of good health.

In the morning blessings we say, "Hagomel chasadim tovim," who bestows good kindness upon the Jewish people. What does good kindness imply? Is there bad kindness? If a person lost his job and then after a few months got another job, or if a person was unwell and then got better, one would call that chasadim (kindness). But chasadim tovim (good kindness) is when a person doesn't lose his job or continues to be healthy. We need to sensitize ourselves to appreciate what we have while we still have it. The blessing that most reflects this is asher yatzar.

Help support Naaleh by searching the web! For more information visit www.iGive/Naaleh.com & www.iSearchiGive/Naaleh.com