

A Taste of Torah

What's in a Name

by Rabbi Nesanel Kipper

The second book of the Torah, often called the Book of Exodus, describes a most transformative time for the Jewish People. They go into exile in Egypt, are led to their redemption, follow Hashem through the desert, and ultimately receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai. And yet this book's official name is the "Book of Shemos," the Book of Names. Indeed, the beginning of this week's parsha begins by listing all the names of the Tribes. What is the significance of names that we choose that word as the title of the parsha and, indeed, the entire second book of the Torah? The Medrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 16:3) says that during Creation, Hashem gathered all the animals and brought them before the angels. He asked them, "What are their names?" and they did not know. When Adam was created, Hashem asked him the same question, and Adam provided a Hebrew name for each animal. The Medrash shares this incident to demonstrate the wisdom of Adam. What was so special about Adam giving names to the animals? Doesn't every language provide made-up names for everything? And how are we to understand the notion that the angels did not know what to name them?

Rabbi Gedalia Schorr (1910-1979) explains that Adam didn't merely decide on a random name for each creature. Rather, Adam was able to grasp the essence and nature of each species, enabling him to understand what each one's role is in revealing *kevod shamayim* (G-d's glory) in this

world. A Hebrew name reflects the essence of an item, and the name Adam gave each animal reflected its very essence.

With this idea, a Medrash Tanchuma at the beginning of this week's parsha can be understood. The Medrash says regarding the names of the Tribes, "Their names were beautiful and their actions were beautiful." The names of each Tribe represents the incredible capabilities that each one possessed and each one's unique ability to bring about tremendous *kevod shamayim* in the world. The actions mentioned by the Medrash refer to how each of the Tribes tapped into his potential and turned it into reality throughout his life in this world. "Their names were beautiful and their actions were beautiful" means that through their actions, they brought out their essence from a mere description of potential into the realm of reality.

When Bnai Yisrael entered Egypt, they found themselves in surroundings of great spiritual impurity. In this lowly environment, it was vital that the fledgling nation not lose their names. They could not forget their essence and identity, the awareness of their special mission, which was to bring about *kavod shamayim*.

The Talmud (Pesachim 87b) refers to exile as a planting. Just as a seed ultimately sprouts and creates a large plant, the exile, too, is part of larger process in which the purpose is to ultimately be redeemed, which brings forth a greater blossoming than could have occurred before. While a seed does break down somewhat before

continued on back



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Stories for the Soul

Don't Ruin It for the Next Guy

In Lakewood, NJ, it is not unusual for people who need a ride for a short distance to attempt to get a hitch from people driving down the street. One fine day, a Lakewood resident offered a ride to a fundraiser from Jerusalem. As they set off, the driver made small talk with his passenger. The passenger informed the driver that he was in Lakewood to raise funds for a particular cause, and the ride he was receiving was to his next fundraising destination.

A short time later, as the driver pulled over to drop off his passenger, he took out his wallet to make a contribution. However, the man refused to take any money from the driver.

The driver was incredulous, and asked why his donation was being refused.

"If you give me a donation now," explained the Jerusalemite, "then you may feel that you were compelled to give me a donation since you gave me a ride. The next time a fundraiser asks you for a ride, you will hesitate, recalling that providing such a ride entails providing a donation you may not have planned on giving. I don't want to ruin it for the next person!" And with that, the man thanked his benefactor and went on his way.

Our Sages teach us that although Moshe was a prince in Pharaoh's palace, he joined his fellow Jews in their work, unable to see the suffering of his brethren while he lived in peace. The ability to look beyond one's own needs and focus on the plight of others is a hallmark of greatness.

Kollel Happenings

HACHNASAS SEFER TORAH THIS SUNDAY AT AISH

Don't miss a special event of honor for the Torah this Sunday! The Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor is inaugurating a new Sefer Torah. A Hachnasas Sefer Torah will take place at Aish of the Rockies on this Sun., Jan. 19. For dedication opportunities or more info, visit www.denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

THE LEGAL & HALACHIC STATUS OF CRYPTOCURRENCY AT FEB. 5 T4T

Join Micah Schwalb, Esq., Founding Partner at Roenbaugh Schwalb, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they examine this cryptic conundrum. Feb. 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) A thorny problem | 4) Give them the password |
| 2) Long arm | 5) Near-fatal lodging |
| 3) A mountain of merit | 6) This time only |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk - Part VIII

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilber (the famed Russian Jew who practiced and taught Judaism for decades in Soviet Russia before emigrating to Eretz Yisrael, where he was very active in bringing Judaism to Russian Jews), writes that a neighbor of his in Eretz Yisrael, a

man by the name of David Kil, was an eyewitness to the above incident and corroborated the story. Mr. Kil added several other details, among them that the Latvian government officials officially asked Reb Meir Simcha to pray on the city's behalf.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

growing, it cannot rot entirely. The same idea is true with Bnai Yisrael in exile. If we lose our essence and completely forget our mission as a Jew - the loss of "name" - then the Nation as a whole would, G-d forbid, become lost in exile.

We can now understand the significance of names as they relate to the Book of Exodus. As the Bnai Yisrael began their exile, the Tribes bequeathed their abilities to their descendants. These unique abilities empowered the Jewish People not to forget their names - their ultimate mission in bringing about *kavod shamayim*.

Each one of us has unique capabilities and strengths that define our role in bringing *kavod shamayim* into this world. Furthermore, just like the Jewish People as a whole goes through periods of exile and redemption, so,

too, each individual goes through his own personal times of exile. A person's *neshama* (soul) wants to accomplish all that it can in this world. But the Evil Inclination, expressed through physical desires, ego and the like, often stands in the way. As King David says in Tehillim (142:8), "Free me from the prison of my soul, so that I may praise Your Name." The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) explains that the prison of the *neshama* is the body, which does not allow one's true abilities to shine through.

May Hashem indeed help the infinite strengths of our *neshamos* shine through our physical confinements, so that we may spread Hashem's greatness throughout the world. As King David concludes in the aforementioned verse, "In order that I may praise Your Name."

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) A thorny problem 1:12 s.v. <i>vayakutz</i> | 4) Give them the password 3:18 s.v. <i>visham'u</i> |
| 2) Long arm 2:5 s.v. <i>es amasa</i> | 5) Near-fatal lodging 4:24 s.v. <i>vayvakesh</i> |
| 3) A mountain of merit 3:12 s.v. <i>al habar</i> | 6) This time only 5:1 s.v. <i>ata sir'eh</i> |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers