



## פרשת שלח

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

### Torah Names

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## Part I. Torah Names

### Big Names

One of the outstanding features in the Torah is the subject of *sheimos*, the giving of names. Today we give names without too much consideration, but in the ancient times it was a bigger endeavor. Of course there is consideration today too – “should we name him after this *zeide* or after that one?” “Which family do we have to accommodate more?” – but it’s not like it used to be.

So even today there are considerations, but in ancient times, especially at the beginning of our history, there was much more to the name – there was much more purpose in giving a name. And that’s why throughout the Tanach we find emphasized again and again the procedure of giving names. It’s not a minor event. Every time a child is born we read the details of who gave the name, what the name was, what it symbolizes.

### The Big Event

Now, one purpose in naming a child which is obvious to us is that the name is a monument; it memorializes something. Sometimes the name signifies an emotion that came along with the birth of that child; it could be an expression of gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. That’s what our first mother did when she called the first child ever born ‘Kayin’. She said *קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת הַשֵּׁם* – *I have acquired a man from Hashem!*

It was a very big event! In the history of Mankind, the first childbirth! The truth is, even if it was the millionth childbirth or the billionth, the quadrillionth, it’s still amazing! How could it happen? A mother eats fish and peas and bread and she drinks milk, and finally a child is produced. That’s all it is. A child doesn’t come from the mother – it comes from materials that the mother eats. She eats potatoes and out comes a baby. Chemically, that’s as true as could be.

So even today it’s a miracle! Every time a child is born it’s an opportunity to laugh in the faces of

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the evolutionists. They say it's an accident. 'It happened by random gene mutations and in the course of time it developed that there was such a thing as reproduction.' We're laughing our sides off at that claim! A big guffaw! Reproduction is such an accident that the biggest most complicated machinery in the world could more easily happen as a result of accident, than reproduction.

### **Kayin to Kreindel**

And so when the first birth in history occurred, the first mother, Chava, was so delirious, so happy, so amazed, that she gave her son a name to commemorate that occasion: **קָנִיתִי אִישׁ** – *I acquired a man*, **אֶת הַשָּׁם** – *from Hashem*. And she called him Kayin as a memorial to her astonishment and happiness that a man was born from her.

By the way, it's a shame when people read that and they think it's just a story in the Torah, a trivial part of our history. That Torah name became a teaching, an attitude that every mother and father is expected to learn. Even if the child's name is not Kayin; it's Kalman or Kreindel, whatever it is, but whenever a mother looks at her sons and daughters, she reminds herself of that monument-name of the first child born in this world and she thanks Hashem: "*Boruch Hashem! Hashem gave me such a gift; a human being!*"

And even when they get married and move out of the house, sometimes she walks on the street and she bumps into her daughter, "Ah! Boruch Hashem, my daughter. **קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת הַשָּׁם**." She sees her son and she reminds herself of that first monument-name, Kayin, and she thinks to herself, "Baruch Hashem, I was gifted with a man from Hashem." That's how we take that Torah and use it as a teaching – that's what Torah means; teaching. And so the name Kayin becomes a memorial for all of our children.

### **Names and Prayers**

However, although this is certainly true that we should understand Torah names in the sense

of monuments, memorials for a certain idea – we must keep in mind another purpose the ancients had in mind when they bestowed names. More than a monument, a name is also a *tefillah*.

When Chava gave her son the name Kayin she was also thinking like this. Kayin is from the word *koneh*, to acquire, and she wanted her son to be a *koneh*, an acquirer. He should be a go-getter. Because this world is for the purpose of acquiring things, for acquiring all the things that prepare a person for the world that matters most.

And so the name Kayin was a *tefillah* to Hashem: "I didn't bring my little boy into this world merely so that I should have a doll to play with. I brought him here to accomplish for You. And so please Hashem, please help him be a *koneh* of all good things, all good qualities; help him to acquire those things that will prepare him for the life in the World to Come."

And so we see now a double function to a name. Every name can be a monument and it can be a prayer too. Azaryah let's say. Azaryah could mean "Hashem helped when he was born." After his mother had hoped and prayed that she should be blessed with a child so she said "Azaryah – Hashem helped. He heard my prayers and He helped." And it's a *tefillah* too. "Hashem should always be a help for my child." The same is Chananyah: It's a monument of gratitude, "Hashem graciously bestowed a child on me" and it's also a prayer, "Hashem, please deal with my little boy with *chein*."

### **Praying for Consolation**

Now in some cases it wasn't merely a prayer for the child – it was a prayer for the Jewish nation. Nechemiah ben Chachalyah, that's the name of Nechemiah Hatirshasa. Now Nechemiah you know, was born in the time of exile, *golus Bavel*, and you see immediately that there were prayers in his name and in his father's name too.

Nechemiah means 'Hashem is going to console.' *Nachamu nachamu ami*. That's

Nechemiah. It's a prayer that the *golus* should come to an end and the nation should be restored to Eretz Yisroel and to its glory. And so Nechemiah's pious parents gave him that name and whenever they said "Nechemiah, come and eat," "Nechemiah get up," "Nechemiah go to sleep," they were *mechaven peirush hamilos* - they spoke that name with intent, with meaning.

Not like we. We just say "Nechemiah". It's a name, that's all. And sometimes we abbreviate it, "Chem'ke", and we forget the origin. But Nechemiah's parents had that *tefillah* in mind. He wasn't named after some uncle or some grandfather. They invented that name! And so they used the *peirush hamilos* of that name. Whenever they said his name they were saying that *tefillah*.

### **Yeshayah and Shay'ke**

And his father too. Chachalyah means *Chakei leKah*, 'Hope to Hashem.' It means: as difficult as things may seem to be in *golus*, always, always look to Hashem for His help.

So here you had a father and a son whose names commemorated a very important ideal of turning towards Hashem; they were in *golus* and they were praying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu with their names. Isn't that a beautiful thing?

Let's say you have a son named Yeshayah; so whenever you call him you're having in mind the *peirush hamilos* - "Hashem should be your salvation!" Isn't that a wonderful exercise for a pious mother?

She doesn't say, "Shay'ke come here." She's thinking, 'Yeshayah. Hashem should help him. He should help him become big. He should be healthy and live long. He should be rich. He should be a big *talmid chacham*. He should get a good *shidduch*, all the good things.'

### **The Beautiful Way to Live**

Not only does she *daven* from the *siddur* or at Shabbos candle lighting, but even when she calls

her son to eat supper - "Yeshayah, come down to eat" - she's thinking, "Hashem should save you from all troubles. You shouldn't choke *chas v'shalom* on the food and your body should absorb all the food in a good way and you should be only healthy and wealthy." Isn't that a beautiful way to call your child to the table?

Here is a *frum* father. He doesn't say "Yiddeleh, come here." Maybe he does but once in a while he calls him Yehudah too. "Yehudah! Please take out the garbage." And He has in mind when he says Yehudah - "He should praise Hashem." In old Hebrew, the *heh* of *hifel* many times was not dropped in future. Yehosef. We say *yosef* - 'he will add,' or *yodeh*, 'he will praise.' But in ancient Hebrew in many cases, the *heh* remained in future tense. So Yehudah means 'He will praise.' And so the good father puts some thought into it: "I'm *davening* to the Almighty that my Yiddeleh should spend his life praising Hashem."

And so we see now that Jewish names are really Jewish prayers. Why do Jews call their children the names of animals, like Dov, a bear, Ze'ev, a wolf, and Aryeh, a lion? The answer is that it's a prayer. It's a *tefillah* that this Jew should have these qualities.

Yes, absolutely. Sometimes a Jew has to be a bear or a lion or a wolf. You know when you see a bear walking down the street at night, you're not going to walk up and shake hands with him. If you see him even five blocks away, you'll stop a taxi and you'll take it in the other direction. If there's no taxi, you'll climb the telegraph pole. That's because a bear means business! A Jew has to be a bear. He has to be a hero - a strong hero willing to go into combat for the honor of Hashem.

### **Lions and Wolves**

Aryeh! A Jew has to be a lion. He has to be strong-willed and fearless like a lion. The Jew is going to pass through so many vicissitudes in life. He's going to duel with so many nations and so many different cultures and in order to survive

and in order to remain loyal, it will be necessary for him to be a lion; not to cower, not to yield, not to budge.

Ze'ev! He's a wolf. A wolf is always hungry and a loyal Jew is hungry for *mitzvos*. He's hungry to serve Hashem. He doesn't serve Hashem like somebody who is forcing himself to do it. No; for *avodas Hashem* he has an appetite like a wolf. When a wolf eats up a sheep he doesn't do it *leshem mitzvah*, like somebody who ate a lot on *erev Shabbos* and now on Friday night he's not able to eat any more but what can he do; he has to sit down at the *seudah* and eat some more. No! He's hungry for *mitzvos*. That's why you call him a wolf.

And therefore all these names, Torah names, Jewish names, represent certain desirable characteristics of service of Hashem that we are praying for. We need Kayins and Yehudahs and Nechemiahs and Dovs and Ze'evs and Aryehs. All types of names and *tefillos* we need.

It's not a bad idea by the way if we would practice this once in a while. Not only a mother and father. Anytime you mention the name of a fellow Jew you can exercise the *tefillah* aspect of the name. It's not easy? It's worth it anyhow. Because that's what a Torah name is all about; that's what our forefathers did when they used the names – as much as possible they used them to remind themselves of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and to *daven* to Him.

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## Part II. Name Change

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### Opposing the Majority

Now we'll try to take this subject a step further. Everyone remembers the story about what Moshe Rabbeinu did before he sent Yehoshua off with the rest of the *meraglim* on a mission to spy out Eretz Canaan. Moshe was afraid that Yehoshua might yield to the urging of the others, and so he made sure to prepare Yehoshua for the difficult test.

These *meraglim* were great men after all and there would be a question of Yehoshua being able to oppose the majority. It's not easy for a minority to maintain its opinion against the majority – especially when the majority is made up of men who are worldly-wise and respected. And so Moshe was afraid that Yehoshua might not be fortified enough to stand up against the attitude of the others.

And so, what did Moshe do? What was his plan to give Yehoshua the strength to maintain his clarity of vision in order to persist against the opposition? He gave him a new name! You hear such a thing? Moshe wanted Yehoshua to feel that he was important; that he should have the self-confidence he would need to stand tall and so **וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְהוֹשִׁיעַ בֶּן נֹן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ** – Moshe called him Yehoshua instead of Hoshea (Shelach 13:16).

Now everybody knows what the Chachomim tell us in the Gemara (Sotah 34b). It was a prayer: Yehoshua means **קִּי-הָ יוֹשִׁיעֶךָ מֵעֲצַת הַמְּרַגְלִים** – 'Hashem should rescue you from the counsel of the other *meraglim*.' You shouldn't be overwhelmed by their opinion. That's what our Sages tell us, that Moshe spent time praying for Yehoshua.

### A Name of Dignity

But that's actually not the whole story because a name is more than just a prayer. When Moshe added that *yud* to Hoshea his intention was to add dignity to Yehoshua. By giving him a new, more dignified name, he was actually telling him, "Now you have the name of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, **י-ה**, in your name and that dignity will strengthen you and help you overcome the obstacles you'll face."

"You should know who you are!" That's what Moshe was telling Yehoshua. Praying, that's very good, but a person needs self-esteem too. "A person who knows that he's a *neshamah*, that Hashem put inside him some of His own greatness," Moshe said, "that's a person who has the dignity and self-confidence not to become *batel*. He doesn't cower before opposition. *Kah yoshiacha!*"

Hashem is with you! And if you recognize that, if you understand who you are, you can accomplish anything.”

And so the most important purpose of his new name – adding in to his name the name of Hashem – was so that Yehoshua should recognize his true value, his true self worth, and have the courage not to yield to the attitudes of those who wished to pressure him in the wrong direction: “You have the name of Hashem in you and that means your potential is unlimited.”

### **Tznius and Self Esteem**

And don't think it was superfluous. If he hadn't done that, if Yehoshua hadn't recognized himself and encouraged himself, who knows what would have happened? It wasn't a simple matter to oppose these great men. And therefore along with the prayer it was necessary also to let Yehoshua himself know who he was, and that way, when the test would come he'd have enough boldness to speak up, to maintain his stand in opposition to the majority.

Now, that's a very important lesson we learn from the procedure of giving a new name to Hoshea. Because that's a big problem for the Jew today – he doesn't realize who he is. The greatness of every person is beyond our ability to measure but when he doesn't know, if he didn't study the subject, then he doesn't have the backbone to stand up to the world because he's lacking in dignity. Without a backbone he bends; he cowers before the attitudes of the gentile street. He cringes before other Jews who think he's a fanatic. Even before his *chaveirim* he doesn't have the self-esteem to do what's right.

Why is it that many *frum* women today aren't dressed with the old-time *tznius* of our nation? Because it takes strength; it takes self-esteem. The poor woman is fighting a battle. She wears a dress down to her knees – at least when she's standing it's down to her knees – and as she walks down the block her face is flaming because all the

women are pointing at her and saying, “Look at that old-fashioned one.” Today one has to be a martyr even for covering her knees!

### **Self and Psychology**

And so the name Yehoshua is teaching us what *we* have to acquire; it means that the *frum* Jew – even the best one – has to build up a store of self-esteem within his own mind; he has to recognize his greatness and acquire the self-confidence that will accompany him wherever he goes in this world.

Now, I must say one important thing before we continue because that word 'self-esteem' is bandied about irresponsibly today. In this place when we use that word we're not talking about the self-esteem of Freud. Freud's self-esteem means that people should live for individualistic self-expression; to express the self without inhibitions which means it's a self esteem that encourages the worst passions, the most base desires, the gratification of the lowest impulses of the self. Freud's self-esteem means you're a dog.

The psychologists and the therapists who are *dreying ah kop* with the self-esteem of Freud are ruining people. I remember a case from years ago. There was a woman who didn't feel well so she went to a psychologist. And so he taught her to give up all inhibitions. She was a *frum* woman by the way. I knew her well. I admired her. What happened? It began like this. When she was bothered by a neighbor who was pushing around her garbage can, she opened up her window and she said dirty curse words from the window. She was obeying her psychologist – no inhibitions. Freudian self-esteem. Things went from bad to worse and finally they became so bad that her husband couldn't keep her anymore. It was understood he had to give her a *get*. Because she was expressing her 'self'!

No, that's not the 'self' the Torah is talking about. The Torah self-esteem means the greatness that everyone has in him, the *tzelem Elokim*, the

*chelek Eloka mimaal*, the unlimited potential for achievement. On the contrary, it's the Torah self-esteem that gives you the strength you need to curb passions and overcome the wickedness that crops up from time to time in the mind. It gives you the strength to overcome all obstacles. And that's what Moshe Rabbeinu was teaching Yehoshua when he changed his name, that *Kah yoshiacha* – “Recognize your greatness and that will fortify you.”

### **Recognize Your Greatness**

Now, when you read this story, don't think it's intended only for Yehoshua – it's intended for you. It doesn't matter if you're a Chaim or Chana, a Boruch or Blima, every Jew has to be a Yehoshua too – every man and woman, boy and girl, has to acquire the self-esteem and confidence that he can struggle against the tests he faces in life and succeed.

Like it says *אַל תהי רשע בפני עצמך* – *don't be a rasha in your own eyes*. There's no such thing as an unimportant person and surely when it comes to Jews there is certainly no such thing as an unimportant Jew. Every Jew is a repository of tremendous qualities and capabilities. And that's paramount in the whole subject of *chinuch* – the *chinuch* of our children and ourselves – to give a person a sense of future potentiality, to let him know what he could be.

What happens when a person doesn't recognize his or her own greatness? Terrible mistakes are made! Didn't all the *meraglim* have beautiful and inspiring names? They did, absolutely. But because they didn't make use of them – they didn't realize their own greatness; they didn't understand that they were '*anshei sheim*' – so they brought misfortune upon themselves and the Klal Yisroel.

### **Spoiled Names**

That's what our Sages tell us. They say that the names of the *meraglim* were turned inside

out. You know the Gemara in Mesichta Sotah says about the *Meraglim* that “we have a tradition from our forefathers that the spies' names were because of their deeds.” Because of the wrong that they did, they were given these names.

What's the example the Sages give us? *סְתוּר בֶּן מִיכָאֵל*. He was one of the *meraglim*. What does his name mean? *שָׁפַתוֹ מֵעֲשׂוֹי שָׁל הַקְרוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא* – *He contradicted and broke down the work of Hashem*. That's *סְתוּר* – ‘to break down.’ Hakodosh Boruch Hu was bringing them now to their happiness in Eretz Yisroel and all of a sudden Sesur ben Michoel got up and he became a barrier, an obstacle. He said, “No, don't do it.” He discouraged them. Sesur means *שָׁפַתוֹ* – he contradicted and broke down, *הוּא מֵעֲשׂוֹי שָׁל הַקְרוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא* – *he broke down the intentions of Hashem*.

And what about Michoel? Sesur spoiled even his father's name. Michoel means ‘He made Hakodosh Boruch Hu low.’ *מִךְ* means low, like in the *possuk* *בֵּי יָמוּךְ אָחִיךָ*, *when your brother will fall low*. Hakodosh Baruch Hu was going to bring them successfully into the land but what did Sesur ben Michoel say? “Don't try it now. Wait! Some other time. It's too dangerous. These are giants; they're powerful and we'll be decimated. They'll massacre us.” So instead of making Hakodosh Baruch Hu great and powerful, Sesur ben Michoel made Him small and weak and he broke down the plan of Hashem.

### **Names of Nobility and Nonsense**

Now many people, when they learn this, they make a mistake. Could it really be that this *ish sheim*, the man of a good name, actually had such a wicked name? Because remember, this name was given by his parents when he was born. Would his mother have given him such a name, Sesur – somebody who contradicts and breaks down Hashem's plans? And Michoel? That he lowers the honor of Hashem? No, no; that's preposterous.

You can be sure that the mother of Sesur when she gave him his name, she was thinking

about the **יֵשׁב בְּסִתְרֵי עֲלִיּוֹן**. 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu is my protector' or 'I'm hiding in Hashem.' And it was that name that he was expected to live up to. His mother hoped he'll be a man who trusts in Hashem. He'll have faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu and he'll say, "If Hashem told us to enter the land, let's go anyway. Don't be afraid!" Like Kaleiv and Yehoshua he'd be strong enough to stand tall. Same thing for Michoel. Michoel means, 'Who is like Hashem! Mi Ka-Keil.' That's a glorious name of *emunah*. Only that he took his name and changed it.

Now that may seem just like a play on words. He changed the name? How could that be?! His mother didn't mean that. The answer is that he chose a different way and now we know retroactively that this is what he made from himself. Instead of rising up to the challenge with dignity and self-confidence like Yehoshua did, he made himself Sesur, one who tried to break down Hashem's plans.

Because that's a big function of living in this world, to live up to the potential of your name, the ideals in your name and all the good Jewish names.

### Part III. *Changed by Torah Names*

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#### **We Share a Name**

Now, you'll ask me about different names. Well, if I would get paid for overtime we could sit together, we could stay here all night and talk about names. Why not? And we'd have a good time at it because every name can be interpreted *l'tovah*; every name is a monument to an important attitude and an ideal that encourages us.

You should try thinking like that, by the way; try thinking in that direction. You're using the names anyhow. If you live among the *frummeh*, you're using Torah names all the time. Betzalel – *We are living in the shade, the protection, of Keil.* Amram – *My nation belongs to the One on high.* Yocheved – *Hashem is my glory.* It adds a flavor to

your day when wherever you go; if you are looking for it you will be encouraged by the inspiring names that our nation has bequeathed to posterity. It adds zest to life!

But there's one name that we have to always be thinking about. There's one Torah name that belongs to all of us. No matter what you're called – even if you're unfortunate enough to still be a Jeffrey or a Susan – there's still one name of pride, of encouragement and authentic self-esteem, that belongs to you. Because whatever your name is, it's also Yisroel. **וּבְשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִכְנָה** – *And you will be called Yisroel* (Yeshayah 44:5). Ahh! The most beautiful of all names, Yisroel!

#### **Knights and Angels**

Now in the ancient times our nation studied their name; they lived with the attitude of their name. You know what Yisroel means? It's a name that signifies the highest aristocracy! Yisroel means you are the one who is the prince in the world; from the word *sar*. **כִּי שָׂרִיטָה** – *You have been knighted.* 'Knighted' means that you're capable of anything.

You remember when we got that name? Yaakov was struggling with the *malach* and he wouldn't give in. Now, it's true that Yaakov had big muscles. Remember when he rolled the stone off the well by himself, a stone that needed a lot of shepherds? He must have had big biceps to do that. And so Yaakov wasn't a *nebachel*; he was very strong. But those biceps didn't count for anything against the *malach*. Yaakov succeeded because he had more than muscles. He had the courage that comes from what we call conviction! He knew that Hashem had given His promise, *I'm going to be with you.* He knew who he was and that's why he wouldn't give in.

And that's when he got that name. Hashem told him, **כִּי שָׂרִיטָה עִם מַלְאָכִים וְעִם אַנְשִׁים** – *"You're a prince when you're dealing with angels and men."* By means of pride in that name you'll always be a prince. Even when you're dealing with the biggest

obstacles – even a *malach!* – you’re not supposed to say, “Well, it’s a *malach*. What’s the use of opposing him?” Oh no! A Yisroel knows who he is; he is fortified with the confidence that he is important and that he can succeed. “You will gain power and overpower,” your name tells you.

### **Noble Forever**

Don’t disdain that! That’s why the Jew is urged always to remember Yisroel, who you are and never to forget your nobility. You shouldn’t sink beneath the level that this name requires of you. That name should always be on your mind because all of our courage, all of our self-confidence and strength, comes from that name. That’s why the Jew was given this name, so that we should always remember that name and be fortified in our encounters with all opponents.

Yisroel is in the future tense – it means that forever, in all your relationships with the world, you have to realize you’re a prince. No matter what you’ll face in this world, no matter who you’ll face, you have all the dignity you need to win out against all of the ordeals. All the self-esteem that you need, all of the self-confidence that people are searching for, is found in that name because you have gained power, *Yisra*, by means of the name of Hashem, *Keil*, that supports you.

### **Compassionate Crusaders**

And that’s why Yaakov’s children, the Bnei Yisroel, never gave in. The whole world was against them but that meant nothing to the Jew who was fortified with the vitamins of the self-esteem of the name Yisroel. Even to the death they refused. As they were standing on the scaffold in Spain and the priest approached them with a cross and he offered them, “If you’ll kiss the cross, we’ll do you the favor of not burning you alive.” That was considered a very big favor from the compassionate Christians. They would slay you on the spot instead of roasting you slowly. But the Yisroel wouldn’t yield!

Even if their lives would be saved, even then they wouldn’t yield. The Yisroel had the self-esteem to gladly accept the rack. He gladly allowed their skin and their flesh to be combed off his bones while he was alive *because he knew who he was*. The entire nation knew they were Yisroel.

And therefore nobody thought of imitating the gentiles or assimilating. If it happened once in a rare while, it was a low character and it was a good riddance that the Jewish people were able to spit him out, to vomit him out. But the masses of the people were all heroes because their name told them who they were.

That’s all you need to make it in this world! To know you’re a Yisroel!

### **Standing Up Against Evolution**

People always ask me what to do for self esteem. All the time I’m getting phone calls about that. If you are a Jew, that should be the first basis for self confidence, “I am from the Am Hashem!” If somebody never learned to respect himself as a Jew, he’ll be fainthearted; he’ll try to hide his identity among the *umos ha’olam*, when he comes among gentiles or among irreligious Jews. But when somebody appreciates what’s important, when he learns what it means to be chosen, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לְשׁוֹן - He elevated us among all the nations; once a person understands that, so every Jew has a reason to be proud. It’s only those who don’t understand that, who don’t have the true criteria, those are the ones who are lacking in self confidence.

And therefore when we face anybody, we face them with the backbone of a Yisroel. Let’s say you face an evolutionist. Suppose it happens that the dean of a college by accident meets you and he says, “What?! You still don’t believe in evolution in this day and age?!”

So you can be a Yisroel and tell him off. I’m not saying you should spit in his face. A dignified person, a confident person, doesn’t have to do that. So you tell him like this: “If you believe in

evolution then tell me, how does it happen that all fruits when they are ripe they're easier to peel than when they are raw?"

Ask him that question. That's an accident of evolution? An accident by every fruit? A banana when it's ripe it's easier to peel. When it's not ripe it's hard to peel. Try to peel an orange when it's hard and green. You can't peel it at all.

### **The Foolish Theory**

While he's thinking about that you'll ask him like this: Why is it that all seeds come loose when they are ripe? All seeds come loose. If you eat an apple when it's not ripened yet – of course you wouldn't want to eat it but if you would try, the seeds wouldn't fall out; the seeds are stuck in tightly. But when it ripens the seeds drop out while you're eating it. Why is it that all seeds get loose as soon as the thing is ripe? Another accident? And this accident happens to all fruits and all vegetables?

"Certainly it's an accident," he says. "Over millions of years there were gene mutations that coincided and finally one case developed where there was an apple whose seeds did come loose and that apple happened to survive. The other species couldn't survive because they didn't have this advantage that the seeds should fall loose and plant other apple trees."

Now, a Yisroel that is not fortified with his name's meaning so he cowers; he shrinks into nothing before big ideas like that. Gene mutations and millions of years. But a real Yisroel laughs at that. "Just tell me," he tells the professor, "how did it happen that all the other trees during the millions of years, how did they happen to keep on going if they didn't have this advantage yet? If this advantage didn't develop until millions of years?" It's so foolish, so empty, such *sheker*. You have to be a Yisroel when you face any ideology that's outrageous; and that's how the Bnei Yisroel lived always.

### **Becoming a Zhid**

You know when it changed? When we lost that self-awareness of our pride, our superiority. There came a time when it changed, and that was after Moshe Mendelssohn. After Moses Mendelssohn there began a time when people started forgetting what it means to be a Yisroel. There was a reason for that. In Germany at that time, and also in France and in England, the material circumstances of the *umos haolam* improved greatly. They began to make advances in technology and in sciences and they began living more opulently. Also the power of the church was somewhat weakened. There arose a sect of intelligentsia who were somewhat free thinkers, and therefore among them there was a certain spirit that looked like tolerance.

At the same time the Jews in Germany began to relax in the study of Torah. Once Germany had been a center of Torah; big *yeshivos* with many *gedolim*. But now the *gedolim* were all in the east and Germany now was beginning to become dim as a place of Torah. It didn't have any big places of Torah anymore

Now these two combinations, because Germany was now much weaker in Torah learning than before, and also the *goyim* in Germany began to become wealthier so the Jew now began to look down at himself. He wasn't a Yisroel anymore; now he was a *zhid*.

### **Returning to Greatness**

Once you look down at yourself, once you don't know what a Yisroel is, so it's a different story, and you begin to forget. When you're only in Torah so you're always reminded what Yisroel means because the whole Gemara and the whole *medrash* and our entire literature are busy emphasizing and reiterating this theme, what it means to be a Yisroel. And therefore as long as they were immersed in Torah learning they had the confidence. But after the Torah spirit weakened and the *goy* became more wealthy and

civilized, then they began to lose that authentic self-pride that a Torah Jew has always. and that's why assimilation began.

And so, the answer is to go back to our name. The Am Yisroel should return to all the great attitudes that are included in the name Yisroel. That was the original plan, that they should never forget their name, that the Am Yisrael should know who they are. And that's the secret of the name Yisroel; to elicit from you the greatness that's inherent in you, the greatness which every Jew is born with natively.

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL Confidence From Our Name

Torah names are meaningful and there is much potential for growth when we add intent as we call out names of our family members and others. In our *parshah* we learn how much significance Moshe Rabbeinu attached to names, changing the name of Hoshea in a bid to make his mission a success. The name of our nation "Yisroel" empowers us to stand strong against all the blandishments of the Yetzer Hora. This week I will *bli neder* pause every day for a moment when I reach the *bracha* of Ga'al Yisroel and recognize my greatness as part of the Chosen Nation of Hashem.



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Is there any meaning in a person's first name?



There's everything in the first name. Because it's like saying to Hakadosh Baruch Hu "לך אני - I am Yours!" Your name shows you belong to Hashem. If you call yourself Bertram instead of Boruch, you belong to Bertram. "If you want to stay with the nation of Bertram," Hashem says, "so stay with them."

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא - if you're a Yisroel, I promise you Olam Haba. But you have to identify. If you identify with Bertram, then go to the Bertrams.

Rabbi Norman? That's not identifying with Hashem. What's wrong with Nachman or with Nosson? If you're Norman, you belong to the Normans, like Norman Mailer and all the other *reshaim, yimach shemom v'zichrom*. There are a lot of Normans that are in Gehenom today and many are on the way to Gehenom. "So if you want to be with the Normans, go ahead," Hashem said.

And therefore, the first name is your choice. Who cares what your parents called you? Give yourself a new name and use that name with pride.

It's a pity when parents lose an opportunity. Here's a man who has a daughter and he calls her Rishonah. "First daughter." A *meshugener*. Rishonah, my first daughter. Is that a name of one of our great mothers? He takes a name that means nothing at all. The fact that it's in Hebrew and he's calling her number one? Is that a name for a daughter?

Or he calls his daughter Ilana. Ilana is a Russian name. He says, "No, it means a tree. Ilana is a female tree." No; Ilan is a tree. But Ilana is a Russian name. That's not a name to give the Jewish girl.

And therefore, everything is in the first name. It shows who you belong to.