

PINCHAS 5733

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In listing the family names of the Shevatim (Bamidbar 26:5) we find that each family had a letter “hey” added at beginning of name and a “yud” added at end of name. Thus, the name Chanoch became HaChanochi, and Chetzron became HaChetzroni, and so with all.

Rashi offers a beautiful explanation for these additions. He writes that the nations of the world chided Bnei Yisrael saying “Do you people really believe your genealogy is pure and holy? If the Egyptian taskmasters ruled over your men don’t you think they had control over your women and they fathered many of these children that are about to enter Eretz Yisrael? So HaShem sealed each family with a “Yud” and “Hey” the letters representing G-d’s name and thereby giving testimony on the purity of each family that the children were fathered by their true biological parents. This is supported by Dovid HaMelech when he states in Tehilim (122:4) “For there the tribes went up, [Shivtei Ka, Eidut L’Yisrael] the tribes of G-d, Who is a testimony to Israel”.

One wonders, did this addition of “yud –hey” in the Torah really convince that nations of the world about our genealogy, about our purity in family life, and did this deflect their arguments? Indeed not! Rather, what it did accomplish was to assure Bnei Yisrael who their father was and who the grandfather was. It was intended to satisfy their insecurities.

In order for a person to determine his identity he must know his own origin. In order to develop his full potential one has to feel secure about his parents, grandparents and ancestors.

The people of Israel had just suffered a devastating tragedy; a plague that took twenty-four thousand lives. The cause was that the men (primarily of Shevet Shimon) had violated the Torah by having sexual relations with Midianite women. It seemed plausible therefore, that some Midianite men may have had relations with Jewish women and even fathered their children. Consequently, the children are now doubtful as to who their real father’s were, and confused about their own identity.

A child who knows his origins can then determine if he can match accomplishments of his parents or perhaps, even surpass them. Amram was the Gadol HaDor but his son Moshe Rabbeinu surpassed him. Moshe’s sons gazed at their father and realized they would never match or come close to their illustrious father.

I met a twenty-two year old professional and successful woman who was planning to leave her job and country because she had just found out that she was an adopted child from a Russian family. Although she was raised from infancy in a loving environmental

home in the United States she was determined to research and find her true and biological mother, no matter what the cost or time involved. After two years in Russia- she did find her mother.

Here was a woman who was happy, financially secure, well educated and yet, ready to drop everything in her life and travel to a country where she had no one she knew and no knowledge of the language. What driving force compelled her to embark on this journey? The answer is- identity. She was searching for her own identity and origin in order to know herself.

We now understand the great kindness of HaShem by adding the “Yud” and “Hey” on each family name...