

CALLING ONE BY NAME

Parshas Shmos - Vo'eiro

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

1) The English name of the second of the five books of Moses, "Exodus", is a poor simile to the Hebrew name SHEMOS. Though the Exodus from Egypt is central and basic, including the ten plagues suffered by Egypt and the miraculous crossing the sea, the Hebrew name SHEMOS (names) is more appropriate, because it is more people oriented. The mention of each of the twelve tribes is symbolic of Hashem's love for each of them (see Rashi Shemos 1:1). Pharaoh sought to influence the midwives by giving them new names. However they called themselves Yocheved and Miriam by their original names. Moshe has ten names (enumerated on Simchath Torah upon returning the scrolls to the ark). However, he is called Moshe, the name given him by the daughter of Pharaoh who saved him. In Chumosh Shemos alone, Moshe is mentioned over three hundred times. For every divine contact was preceded by calling Moshe by name, as a sign of love (Rashi Vayikro 1:1).

2) A name is given to a child in connection with a sanctifying function. A boy is given the name at his circumcision. A girl is given her name at the time the father is called to the Torah, and recites the blessing, Birchas HaTorah. Both parents of the child agree on the choice of the name, and is announced at their religious function by the father.

Traditionally the name of the first child is chosen by the mother, and the second child by the father. Interestingly, the person honored to make the announcement for a boy at the Bris, even if he already knows the choice of the name, will have the father announce the name, and then repeat that name with cup of wine in his hand.

In Parshas Shemos we read about the two sons born to Moshe, but only the older son's name, Gershom, is given, plus the reason for that name (Shemos 2:22). The second son's name is not revealed in the Parsha. Only when Yethro comes to Moshe with Moshe's wife Tziporah and their

two sons, the name of the second son Eliezer is revealed, plus the reason for that name (Shemos 18:4). "For the G-d of my father came to my aid and He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh." The name giving which is usually announced at the time of the Bris by the father had to be delayed, since Moshe was dangerously ill on that day, and the Bris performed by Tziporah (Shemos 4:25). The name was possibly given later by Moshe when his health improved.

One commentator suggests that Eliezer's name was given by Tziporah, at the time of the Bris. This was her expression of profound deference to her husband, choosing a name which applies to him, being saved from Pharaoh, thus bringing about her marriage to him.

This observation may be corroborated by the fact that when the reason for Gershom's name is given, the Torah reads "because he (Moshe) said I was a stranger..." But when the reason is given for Eliezer's name, the Torah does not say "because he said". This coincides with the above that it was not Moshe but Tziporah who named him Eliezer.

3) The Midrash teaches us that even though the Bnei Yisroel in the tragic exile in Egypt adopted some Egyptian practices, they were redeemed in the merit that they maintained their identity, regarding their names (language and clothing). The maintenance of their unique Jewish names is a major cause for their deliverance and indicated in the very beginning of the second book of Chumosh (Shemos Rabba 1:4). Reuven was so named by his mother as she said, "Hashem in His mercy had **seen** her plight etc. (Breishis 29:32). Now in Shemos, Hashem uses the identical language regarding the Jewish people. "I have **seen** the affliction of my people that is in Egypt..." When Shimon was born, his mother so called him because Hashem has **heard** (my problem). At the time of Redemption Hashem said "I have **heard** their outcry because of their taskmasters.

In this connection it should be deemed appropriate to deprecate observant Jews, especially Rabonim, who call themselves by goyishe names. In this democratic America, a Chinese may call himself "U", and

a Frenchman Hubert, and a Jew may call himself Chaim. The name given at birth, and used when called to the Torah, should be maintained with pride. This country, furthermore, glories in her multicultural population, and seeks to uphold and preserve the culture of all ethnic groups. By hiding one's Jewish name and substituting it with Jerry, Max, Marvin, etc., one does not add to American riches.

4) When Moshe is requested to go to Egypt and first speak to the Israelites to tell them about the divine mission, he asks "what if they will ask 'what is His name?' What should I say?" Apparently, Hashem also possesses a name. Hashem replies, "Eh-ye A-sher Eh-ye", I shall be as I shall be. Rashi expounds, I shall be with them in this sorrow as I shall be with them in other sorrows. To the people it was enough to be told Eh-ye. It was enough for them to concentrate on the deliverance. But Moshe had to know also ASHER Eh-ye, the divine presence also in other (later) sorrows. Moshe had to know the full name because his task was to build the foundation of the final messianic redemption.

5) In Parshas Vo'eiro we learn of a fundamental meaning of the name of Hashem as the One who fulfills His promises (see Rashi Shmos 6:3). And so now that Moshe is sent to Pharaoh with the mission of the Exodus from Egypt, the promise of Redemption will be fulfilled, as indicative in the name of Hashem.

In our prayers we mention the name of Hashem numerous times. It is thus imperative that we know the meaning of the name. Moreover, it is essential to prepare oneself to mention the name of Hashem. "Give ear O heavens and I will speak... When I call out the name of Hashem" (Devorim 32:1,3). Targum Jonoson teaches that Moshe prepared and sanctified his mouth with eighty-five letters (PEH equals 85) before uttering the name of Hashem. With such readiness the divine response is indeed favorable.

