

RABBI ZIEGLER - PARASHAT SHEMOT, 2021 - 5781

This Shabbos is Shabbos Mervorchim Chodesh Shevat which falls out this year on Thursday Jan 14, 2021.

The Moled will be on Wednesday Jan. 13, 5:35 PM and 3 Chalokim

“THANKING OUR PARENTS FOR THE NAME THEY CHOSE FOR US”

“**And these** are the names”...(Shemot 1:1) Names given to us by our parents are important, they indicate individuality and uniqueness and are a form of Divine prophecy. Gemara Megilla (28a) relates that the students of R’Zera asked him “Rebbe, what Mitzvot, (over and above requirements) did you do to deserve such longevity?” R’ Zera responded, “All my life I never called any person by a nickname (even a complimentary one), but only by their real given name”.

The Torah relates that at time of Creation, (Bereishit 2:19), “Gd had formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call each one; and whatever he called each living creature, that remained its name.” The Torah is thereby teaching us that a name is not simply a convenient convention, but it reflects the nature of each creature and its role in the total scheme of the universe. Adam HaRishon had the power to recognize the essence of every animal and name it accordingly.

We read in Tehillim 147, “Gd counts the number of the stars, and to all them He assigns names”. The stars number in the billions, but Gd is aware of each one and gives it a name that defines its purpose in the universe. The Nazis, (yemach shemam-may their names be obliterated) understood this very well. They therefore stripped all the concentration camp inmates of their names and instead branded their arms with numbers. That is what they were called from then on, and that is what they had to respond to at the daily roll calls. Sadly, I heard that some eventually forgot their real names but remembered only their numbers. By doing so, they stripped us not only of our names but our personality, our individuality and our dignity.

Rav Soloveitchik, in a Boston shiur in 1980, was very displeased when he heard some Jewish families giving names of people to their pet dogs or cats. He felt that giving an animal a human name is in fact wrong because the individuality denoted by a name belongs exclusively to humans. Every human death is a loss which cannot be replaced. The Torah introduces the laws of *aveilut*, mourning, because even if someone of lowly character dies, his death is still a loss, for every individual has been endowed with the divine image. The preservation of life is a supreme value, even if it necessitates the breaking of the Shabbat. Thus, a dog may exhibit great friendship for his master, but a different dog can be substituted which could display an

identical friendship. A dog fundamentally has no name; it is merely a part of a species. As devoted as a dog may be, there can be no *aveilut* for it.

So we must honor and treasure the names bestowed upon us. We had no say nor input into choosing our names but once it is ours it is up to us, during our lifetime, to develop this name into a name of goodness and kindness, honesty and integrity, for "**TOV SHEM MI'SHEMEN TOV**"-"A good name is worth more than precious oil" (Kohelet 7:1)

SHABBAT SHALOM, Rabbi Aharon Ziegler-

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT SHEMOT

1- 2:1 states, "A man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi". We know it refers to Amram and Yocheved. So why doesn't the Torah mention their names?

2-According to Gemara Megilla [13a] Moshe had 10 other names. How many can you find?

3-Aharon was rewarded for having great love for his brother Moshe. What did Aharon do to deserve a reward?

4-In pasuk 2:10 , -"And the lad grew up. And the next pasuk states, "And Moshe grew up". Why does Torah state twice the fact that he grew up?

5-Who in our parasha should be honored as a "Righteous Gentile?"

CHEERFUL QUESTION—WHY DO PEANUTS FLOAT IN A REGULAR COKE AND SINK IN A DIET COKE???

(Answers can be sent to : aharonlibby@aol.com)

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