


לזכות
כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו
לרגל יום הבהיר י"א ניסן

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הרה"ת הרב שלום דוב בער
וזוגתו מרת חיה מושקא
ובנותיהם ברכה ליפשא,
עליזה ושיינדל שיחיו
שוחאט





**WHAT'S
IN A
NAME?**

*Its significance,
power,
and potency*

The use of a name is seemingly merely technical; the most practical way to get someone's attention or to describe whom you are referring to. A name seems to tell nothing about a person's character and personality. Two people who are as different as can be might carry the same name. It seems like a superficiality.

But an interesting incident at the beginning of history hints at the deeper significance of a name.

Before creating Adam, mankind, Hashem consulted the *malachim*. "What value will this man bring?" they asked. Hashem responded: "He will be wiser than you."

As proof, Hashem asked the *malachim* to name various animals. When they could not come up with any names, Hashem asked the newly created Adam if he would be able to name the animals, and he did. He correctly asserted: "This is a *shor*, this is a *chamor*..." and so on.

The obvious question is: What proof is there of such great wisdom by merely naming animals? It seems like just a show of creativity to come up with a different name for each species. Why couldn't the *malachim* do it themselves?

The Mezritcher Maggid famously answers this question: Adam was not just offering an arbitrary name for each animal. He actually looked to the G-dly source of each creature and named it in accordance with its spiritual energy. This in fact does require great wisdom.

The Rebbe explains an even deeper point:

The way an ox or a donkey is in this physical world resembles so little of what they are in their G-dly source. The fact that Adam Harishon was able to look into an ox and see its G-dly source deep within it, is testament to the great wisdom only he had.

As the world progressed, the Torah relates many more incidents where names carry great significance. Chava called her son Kayin because "קניתי איש את ה'"—I acquired a man with Hashem. Meaning: She became partners with Hashem, jointly creating Kayin.

Later we read that Ever named his son Pelleg with *ruach hakodesh*, because he foresaw the revolt at *Migdal Bavel* and the dispersion ("haflaga") that would happen in its wake, all during the lifetime of his son.

The significance of a name only increases once we learn about Avraham Avinu, how Hashem added one letter to his name in order to enable him to have children, making him a father to all nations.

Avraham's first son Yishmael had his name chosen by Hashem Himself, called so because Hashem "listened" to Hagar's plight.

Even though Avraham didn't actually hear the *malach* tell Hagar what name to use, he knew with *ruach hakodesh* to give the name Yishmael.

But what about us? Our names, the names our parents gave us at birth, the ones we give our children; what significance could they have?

The truth is that ordinary people, too, are granted *ruach hakodesh* before giving a name. Although a

parent may not consciously know any great things when choosing and giving a name, the reality is that every name is given with *ruach hakodesh*.¹

THE NAME TELLS A STORY

The Gemara relates:

Rebbi Meir, Rebbi Yehuda, and Rebbi Yosi were walking on the road together. Rebbi Meir would analyze names and discern people's nature from them, while Rebbi Yehuda and Rebbi Yosi were not apt to analyze names. When they came to a certain place, they looked for lodging and were given it. They said to the innkeeper: What is your name? He said to them: My name is Kidor. Rebbi Meir said to himself: Perhaps one can learn from this that he is a wicked person, as it is stated: "כי דור תהפוכות הוה"—For they are a generation [*ki dor*] of upheavals." Since it was Friday afternoon, Rebbi Yehuda and Rebbi Yosi entrusted their purses to him. Rebbi Meir did not entrust his purse to him but went and placed it at the grave of the innkeeper's father.

The innkeeper's father appeared to the innkeeper in a dream and said to him: Go take the purse placed at the head of that man, i.e., himself. The following day, he said to the sages: This is what appeared to me in my dream. They said to him: Dreams during twilight on Shabbos evening have no substance and should not be trusted. Even so, Rebbi Meir went and guarded his money all that day and then took it.

The next day, the rabbis said to the innkeeper: Give us our purses. He said to them: These matters never occurred; you never gave me any purses. Rabbi Meir said to them: Why didn't you analyze his name to learn that he is a wicked man? They said to him: Why didn't the Master tell us? He said to them: I said one should be suspicious, but have I said a person should be established as wicked? Could I say to you with certainty that he is wicked based on his name alone?

What did they do? They dragged the innkeeper and brought him to a store and gave him wine to drink. After he drank the wine, they saw lentils on his mustache, showing that he had eaten lentils that day. They went and gave this sign to his wife. They said that the innkeeper had ordered that their money be returned to them upon the sign that he ate lentils at his last meal. And they took their purses and went. He went and killed his wife out of anger that she did this.²

The Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, was prolific in deriving insights and hints from people's names, most notably his own. In a *reshima* he wrote about his arrest and imprisonment, Harav Levi Yitzchok explains how his name tells the story of his life, the details of his imprisonment and exile, the number of days it lasted and the number of locations he was transferred to.³

The Rebbe often did the same, deriving insight and lessons in *avodas Hashem* from people's names.

In a lengthy *reshima* about Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe connects each aspect of the Yom Tov with the Alter

Rebbe's two names: Schneur and Zalman.⁴

Similarly, in a *reshima* written as notes for remarks the Rebbe delivered at the bar mitzvah of Shmuel Pesach Eber, the Rebbe elaborates on various lessons in *avodas Hashem* based on the bar mitzvah boy's two names.⁵

Chassidim relate: The night before the Rebbe was due to leave Paris, in Sivan 5707* (after having come to greet his mother, Rebbetzin Chana and spending several months there), a special "*tzeisheim l'shalom*" farewell gathering was held in his honor. At around 10:00 p.m., after the *baalei-batim* were mostly gone, the Rebbe announced that now the "real *farbrengen*" would begin. One of the memorable events at that *farbrengen* was when the Rebbe asked each individual for their name and connected it with their life's mission.

A few gems from that *farbrengen*:

To one person named Aharon Mordechai Zilberstrom, the Rebbe said that the source for the name Mordechai in the Torah is from Targum Onkleus on the words *מר דרוור = מירא דכיא*⁶ (one of the incenses used for the *ketores*). The fact that his name was sourced in a translation, said the Rebbe, should serve as a lesson for him to devote himself to translate words of Chassidus into French.

To a fellow named Daniel Saks, the Rebbe taught a lesson based on the story of Daniel in the lion's den.

Efraim Zalman Sudakevitch was present too, and the Rebbe told him to look at the Rashi on the *possuk* *ישימך אלקים כאפרים וכמנשה*.

As this was occurring, Reb Zalman Butman turned to the Rebbe and said that he remembers his father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, also expertly connecting individuals' names with Torah themes and deriving lessons for their lives. He mentioned that Harav Levi Yitzchok once said that *דער זון מאכט בעסער*—"my son is better at this than me," to which the Rebbe responded, "That's just what a father is supposed to say about his son..."⁷

As early as 5703*, the Rebbe wrote a letter to Reb Avraham Eliyahu Akselrod, delving deeply into the meaning of his name and showing how it contains his entire *avoda* in this world.⁸

One year later, in the summer of 5704*, the Rebbe penned a famous response to criticism that certain people leveled at the Frierdiker Rebbe's *sicha* on the name *עקביא* בן מהללא. The Rebbe cited many sources proving that every name has meaning, even if the one who gave the name did not have anything particular in mind.

Throughout the years, the Rebbe would explain the meaning of the names of our Rabbeim and the lessons we can derive from them. For example:

In *sichos* on Chof Cheshvan (the Rebbe Rashab's birthday)⁹ and Hoshana Rabba (the day of the Rebbe Rashab's *ushpiza*)¹⁰, the Rebbe would explain how the Rebbe Rashab's name—Sholom Dov Ber,

* 5707-1947, 5703- 1943, 5704-1944,

DOVBER SHLITA

After the birth of their second son, Rabbi and Mrs. Levi Garelik wrote to the Rebbe that they were considering naming him after the Rebbe's brother, Reb Berel (their first son was named Yisroel Aryeh Leib, after the Rebbe's other brother), but they were unsure if this was appropriate. The Rebbe responded in his holy handwriting:

דובער שליט"א. אזכיר עה"צ.



To read the fascinating story of Reb Meir Shlomo Junik, who was named after the Rebbe's grandfather, Harav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky, see Beis HaRav—The Rebbe's Illustrious Lineage, *Derher Elul 5776*.

connotes a “bear” which the Gemara says is “*mesurbal b’bassar*,” full and fatty—applies to our *avodas Hashem*.

In the various sichos of Chof-Daled Teves, the Rebbe would expound on the Alter Rebbe's name, Schneur Zalman.¹¹

Likewise, there are many *sichos* where the Rebbe explains the two names of the Friediker Rebbe: Yosef Yitzchok.¹²

The Rebbe also derived lessons in *avodas Hashem* from the name of his brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib, at farbrengens on or around his yahrtzeit, 13 Iyar.¹³

Interestingly, when Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht passed away on Erev Shabbos Va'era 5752*, the Rebbe explained that both of his names are connected with the Friediker Rebbe: Yitzchok being one of the Friediker Rebbe's names, and Moshe alludes to the *ispashtusa d'Moshe*, the spark of Moshe Rabbeinu found in each generation in the *nossi hador*.

Then the Rebbe added a lesson to be learned even from his last name: Hecht is the name of a predatory fish which is nonetheless kosher. The Rebbe explained that this symbolizes the *avoda* of preying on the *klipos* and elevating them to *kedusha*.¹⁴

CHOOSING A NAME

The Rebbe points out that although one cannot be 100 percent certain who a person is based on their name, and certainly regular people like us cannot discern that, what we do know for certain is that

a name influences a person, for better or for worse.

This is why we must exercise the power we have to give a child a good name. In this regard, the Rebbe cites the Gemara¹⁵:

The Gemara asks: What does Rus mean? Rebbi Yochanan said: That she had the privilege that Dovid, who inundated Hashem with songs and praises, would descend from her. [The name Rus is etymologically similar in Hebrew to the word *riva*, which means “inundate.”]

From where do we know that it was her name that caused this?

Rebbi Eliezer said, the *possuk*¹⁶ states: “Go, see the works of Hashem, who has made desolations [*shamos*] upon the earth”. Do not read it as *shamos*, rather as *shemos*, names. [Meaning, the names given to people are indeed “the works of Hashem upon the earth.”]

In other words, Rus's name brought about the fact that she merited to have Dovid Hamelech descend from her!

Based on this, Chassidim choose to name their children after their Rabbeim.

In at least two instances,¹⁷ the Rebbe announced at a farbrengen that those who need a *bracha* for children who will grow up to be Chassidim, should name them after the Friediker Rebbe. If they can't give that name, they should give the name Menachem Mendel, like the Tzemach Tzedek.

In addition to this, the Rebbe had tremendous *nachas* when people gave a name to their children after members of the Rebbe's family.

In a letter from 5708*, the Rebbe thanked Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht for “accepting my suggestion” and naming his daughter Rochel after Rebbetzin Rochel, the Rebbe's maternal grandmother.

Characteristically, the Rebbe continues in that letter by explaining the name Rochel and how it is connected to light and revelation—the mission of a Yid in this world.¹⁸

In a letter dated 12 Sivan 5712, the Rebbe bestows great *brachos* upon Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Brok after he named his son Levi Yitzchok after the Rebbe's father:

"When I am at the *tziyun* of the Rebbe, my father-in-law, I will mention you, your wife and the new baby for good health and physical and spiritual good. And just as you have caused me great pleasure (קורת רוח), so may Hashem cause you great pleasure, and may you have *nachas* from your family both physically and spiritually, and may you always report good news."¹⁹

After the *histalkus* of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the Rebbe said that by naming children after her and educating them in her ways, this is the fulfillment of *מה זרעה בחיים, אף היא בחיים*—just as her children are alive, so too she is alive.²⁰

GUIDANCE FROM THE REBBE ON NAMES AND NAME-GIVING

1. When asked what to name a child, the Rebbe almost always answered that he does not tell the parents what name to give, because it is up to the parents to make this decision based on the *ruach hakodesh* they are given.²¹
2. If someone does not know or remember their Jewish name, proper research should first be done by checking with parents or relatives, or a birth certificate. If nothing comes up, they can be given a new name at any point in life.²²
3. If a child was named without the parents' consent, the parents should *add* the name they want, but not *chas*
4. *v'shalom* "dispose" of a name already given.²³
4. There should be no remorse once the name is given. No matter what anyone else says, the right name was certainly given.²⁴
5. The father should choose the first child's name, but both parents must agree.²⁵
6. If for whatever reason the parents cannot agree on a name, they should consult a rav.
7. A girl should be named at the earliest possible opportunity (at the Torah reading closest to the birth).
8. If a child is being given a Hebrew and Yiddish name, the Hebrew name should come first, then the Yiddish.
9. An Ashkenazi Jew should not give a child the same name as their living grandparent. If this was done accidentally, the child should be primarily called by a different name.
10. One should not combine any name together with a name of the Rabbeim.
11. If one cannot give both names of a Rebbe (for example, if the father's name is Yosef), it is still worthwhile to give half of the Rebbe's name.
12. It is appropriate and a *zechus* for the child to be named after a person who died *al kidush Hashem* at a young age. There is no need to be worried.



THE REBBE TELLS AN INDIVIDUAL NAMED JORDAN TO TAKE THE NAME YARDEN

ADULTS TAKING A JEWISH NAME

It was quite a common occurrence for people who were not given a Jewish name at birth to ask the Rebbe for a name. Unlike at childbirth where the Rebbe tended not to get involved, here the Rebbe would usually offer a suggestion.²⁶

Presented here is a list of names that the Rebbe suggested based on their secular counterparts²⁷:

It seems בדרך אפשר that the Rebbe followed a few principles:

1. The Hebrew name should be based on the pronunciation of the previous name.
2. A name should only be added when absolutely necessary. In a case where a

person's original name could be somewhat considered Jewish, the Rebbe opted that they keep their original name. The Rebbe explained that any name, even a non-Jewish name, is an essential connector between the *neshama* and the *guf*.²⁸

3. The new name should be based on the secular name's meaning in Lashon Hakodesh.
4. When possible, choose the Hebrew equivalent of the secular name.

Inge רבקה
[She was named Inge after her father Yitzchok.]

Karmela [It can be a Jewish name, no need for another.]

Unknown שמחה חנה
[Because it's important to serve Hashem with simcha.]

Alis עליה

Michelle מיכל

Clair קריינא
[Both names mean "crown."]

Nancy פנינה
[They both have two "N's"]

Claudia מלכה

Marian מרים

Lida לאה

Debra דבורה

Pardus עדנה
[Pardus in Persian means Gan Eden.]

Yanina יצחקה

Lily לאה

Irene אילנה

Flora שושנה
[Both names mean "flower."]

Iris אוריה (woman)

Rima רינה

Janet יונה

Machnas מחנה or מחלה

Irene Cecile צילה

Valerie בלוריה

Lydia Matilde לאה מרטא

Linda לאה

Monique (French female) מלכה

Josiane (French female) שושנה

Paula פוריה

Wendy בינה תרצה

Suzanne (French female) שושנה

THE REBBE'S NAME

On a few occasions the Rebbe pointed out that his name מענדל should be spelled with an "ע" not מנדל. "Because I am named after the Tzemach Tzedek," and that's how the Tzemach Tzedek spelled his name—צדק is the *gematriya* of מענדל.

In a fascinating letter, the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, writes to the Rebbe that the merit of the one you are named after should be upon you and your wife.

But the title that Harav Levi Yitzchok gives the Tzemach Tzedek in this instance is "איש חי", this alludes to the fact that the Rebbe was born two-times *chai* = 36 years after the *histalkus* of the Tzemach Tzedek (minus two days).

(*Yemei Melech vol. 1, p. 102*)

On 15 Kislev 5741*, in a letter-coded letter (due to wartime), the Frierdiker Rebbe writes to Reb Sender Reinin about getting a sum of money to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin for their visas to the USA: "Moshe - Hershel's brother - has an acquaintance who is named after the Tzemach Tzedek and his wife is named after the Tzemach Tzedek's wife..."

(*Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz, vol. 13, p. 312*)

Olga - Does not need another name, because its the same as עלקא which is a Jewish name²⁹

Brigitte	בריינא
Sandra	אלכסנדרה
Josette	יוספה
Joanna	יונה טייבל
Felicia	מזל טוב
Carol	עטרה קריינדל
Leonie	אריאלה
Lizet	לאה
Luise	לאה
Arlet	אריאלה
Jully	יהודית
Nadine	דינה
Murielle (French female)	מוריאל
Shantala	שיינדל
Katrina	כתר רינה
Parvin	פוריה
Martine (French woman's name)	מרתא או שרה
[The Gemara records a woman named בייתוס]	
Yevgeny	אברהם or Yitzchok
Robert	ראובן
Donald	דוד או דן
Brian	ברוך
Frank	אפרים
Frederic	פרץ
Pascal	פסח
Ken	קנין
Jack	יעקב
Ricard	שמרי'
Todd	טובי'

To a *ger tzedek* named Ernie, the Rebbe suggested the name Yisroel,

in connection with taking on Toras Yisroel and the *mitzvos* of *am Yisroel*. **T**

1. Based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 35; vol. 15, p. 13.
2. Yoma 83b.
3. Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, Hearos L'Sefer Hatanya p. 4.
4. Choveres 22.
5. Choveres 130.
6. Chullin 139b.
7. *Bikkur Paris 5707*, Lubecki.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 1, p. 44.
9. Hisvaaduyos 5742, vol. 1, p. 413
10. Ibid. 5745 vol. 1, p. 342.
11. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 6, p. 35; vol. 21, p. 273.
12. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 3, p. 835; vol. 25, p. 480; et. al.
13. Shabbos Parshas Acharei-Kedoshim 5745, Pesach Sheini 5747, et. al.
14. Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol 2, p. 130.
15. Brachos 7b.
16. Tehillim 46:9.
17. Toras Menachem vol. 11, p. 70; vol. 13, p. 101
18. Igros Kodesh vol. 2, p. 317.
19. Ibid. vol. 6, p. 109.
20. Sefer Hasichos 5749, p. 236.
21. Otzar Minhagim V'horaos p. 184.
22. Igros Kodesh vol 6, #1670.
23. Igros Kodesh vol. 8, p. 191.
24. Igros Kodesh vol. 17, p. 201.
25. This and the following points can be found in Otzar Minhagim V'horaos pp. 186-192.
26. Perhaps this was because the Rebbe took the place of the parents and named with *ruach hakodesh*, or because the Rebbe held that the English name given by the parents has significance. -Ed.
27. Based on various compilations, including one by Rabbi Shmuel Lubecki.
28. Igros Kodesh vol. 8, p. 318.
29. Igros Kodesh vol. 8, p. 318.

USING YOUR JEWISH NAME

The significance and impact of a Jewish name cannot be underestimated. Not just having it but actually **using it**.

Even if a child has a biblical name like Abraham, although it technically refers to Avraham Avinu, still the child will not make that connection. It is therefore important that he is called by his Hebrew name Avraham, this way he is constantly reminded that he is named after the Avraham from Chumash he learned about, and this will surely impact him to follow in Avraham's ways.

(Sichos Kodesh Parshas Shelach 5740, p. 395)