

# WHAT'S POSSIBLE- IN A NAME!

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt; Yaakov and his household, Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudaa, Yisachar, Zevulun, Binyamin, Dan, Noftali, Gad, and Asher...(Shemos 1:1-4)*

The name of the week's portion and the name of the entire book- "Shemos" means- "Names" and not "Exodus". Why are the people listed as names? What's in a name?

We find that whatever name Adam gave to the various creatures of the world "that was its name". (Breishis 2:19) It sounds like whatever name he gave it stuck, like a little kid that names his doggy woofy. Rashi points out that when Adam called his wife Isha (woman) because she was taken from and Ish (man), based on the play of words that we see from here that the world was created with the Holy Language of Hebrew. (Breishis 2:23) What does that mean?

The three sons of Noah from whom the world was reestablished each had a name indicative of their character that played out dramatically in their lives.1) Cham- means-Heat and with the heat and passion of the moment he abused his own father. 2) Yafes - is Beauty and so for appearance sake he joined forces to cover his father's indignity but still his concern was more for manners than morals. 3) Shem's name means name. He did what was essential. He covered his father in the most appropriate way. How is that implied in the name "Name"?

When we buy a new car or computer or whatever of moderate sophistication then there is usually a user's guide that accompanies it. The thicker the booklet the more complex the machinery is. In that manual you find optimal usages for each of the buttons and levers in the gadget. Rarely would you find a vestigial organ- a part that does not serve some function. The designer gives each piece a name that tells us something about its function. The implication of a name is that it points to the designer's intent.

In any other language, names are arbitrary. CAT tells us how to pronounce the word and does little else than remind us of the creature that has whiskers and loves to chase mice. Nothing in the letters is intrinsically connected to the idea it spells. The eastern languages are pictographic. We see in a word a picture of a flower or a friend, and only the pronunciation is absent from the image. In the Holy Language we have both. A Lamed looks like the silhouette of a person sitting. Its name implies learning. Its grammatical use connotes "to" "direction". It is composed of a "cof" + "vuv" (=26)-with learning we grasp higher connections.

The letters of the Holy Language function conceptually like elements in the periodic table. In Sefer Yetzirah, reputed to have been written by Avraham, it is written, "Twenty two Foundation letters: He engraved them, he carved them, He permuted them, He weighed them, and with them He depicted all that was formed and all that would be formed."

Why is the 2nd book not called Exodus? If the real subject was exodus then it should have ended by the splitting of the sea. Yet it continues past the giving of the Torah and on to the construction of the Tabernacle. The Ramban answers The Book of Breishis tells of the formation of the seed, the possibility of what would later be the Nation of Israel. The Book of Shemos focuses on the plantation and development of that potential into a nation worthy of constant Divine Presence, just like the individual Patriarchs and Matriarchs. When is a seed considered to have fulfilled its mission? When it produces an entire tree filled with seed bearing fruits. Who was it that came down to enter the soil of Egypt? It was the essence, the purpose, and the potential of what's possible- In a name! Text Copyright &copy 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).