ALREADY DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

by Rabbi Label Lam

And these are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt; Yaakov, each man and his household came... (Shemos 1:1)

Wouldn't it be sufficient, (DAYEINU), for the Torah to tell us that these are the Children of Israel who came down to Egypt?! Why do we need here to say that these are their names? Why is the mentioning of names at all relevant? Of course they have names! And that becomes the title this whole 2nd Book- "Names!" What's in a name, anyway?!

There are few important things to know about names. Hebrew names are not arbitrary at all. A name signals and describes the essence of a person, his or her mission and reason for being. Parents are gifted at the time of naming their child with a form of prophecy. Just as together with G-d they bring a child into the world, so they are the partners too in the naming of their baby.

When our third son was born about a quarter of a century ago, it was a few days before Rosh HaShana, and the fast of Gedalia was between the time of the birth and the Bris. I had been learning a Sefer by my Rebbe's father, Ohr Gedaliahu, my father in law's father who perished in the 2nd World War was Gedalia, and therefore a rather swift decision was made to name the boy Gedalia. We had never had such an easy time deciding. Other times the naming seeming harder than the actual birthing, to me, at least. Now in a few hours we were set, we thought. The night before the Bris, my wife shared, in advance, with her father the good news, but for some mystical reason he insisted that we not give that name after his father. Another nephew already bore the name and he was adamant. We were stuck and left fishing the night before. I called up one of my Rebbeim and he said two things, 1) Let there be no arguments of bad feelings involved in the choosing process and 2) he assured us that whatever name we choose it will be the exact prophetic choice. We decided on the name of my great grandfather, and also a prominent person from my wife's illustrious family tree, Shmuel.

At the Bris I honored myself to say a few words which, even though I had little time to research and prepare, zeroed in on the essence quality of Shmuel. It went something like this: The Gemora in Chulin tries to figure who was greater according to their humility. Dovid said."I am a worm and not a man..." A worm is still a living thing! Avraham said, "I am dust and ashes." Dust and ashes are still substantial. Moshe and Aaron, however, said, "What are we?! (NACHNU MAH!?)" They declared and understood themselves to be absolutely zero and therefore they are found to be greater.

However, the Talmud also teaches us, based on a verse in Tehillim that we recite during Kabbalas Shabbos, "Moshe and Aaron through their service and Shmuel with the calling of His name", that Shmuel, since he is mentioned seamlessly together with them in the same verse, he is equal to both Moshe and Aaron. How and why is he as great the greatest? Where do see it. Where's the proof? The answer is there in that very verse! "Moshe and Aaron..."

When Chana, Shmuel's mother prayed for a child, she had already dedicated her son before he was ever conceived. That was her irresistible formula of prayer. This child is from You and for You HASHEM! Shmuel means, "Shemo"- his name and his sake "El" is for G-d! Another meaning is that she expresses, M'-from HASHEM- Shoalti. His name, Shmuel means, "I have borrowed him from HASHEM".

Therefore, Shmuel was "nothing" to himself before he was ever anything. He was absolutely dedicated from before birth. While Moshe and Aaron became great by their service to HASHEM, they grew to see themselves in proper proportion by hard work. Shmuel, as it were, was born into a position of this same nullification, by the calling of his name.

Normally we would read it, that by the calling of HASHEM's name he became superior, but here, we understand, by the calling of his own name, he was **already destined for greatness.** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.