

THE NAME A PERSON GIVES HIMSELF IS HIS MOST IMPORTANT NAME

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1068 "This (Aron Kodesh/Ner Tamid/Window) Is Donated By"...A Good Idea. Good Shabbos!

There is an interesting Medrash on the *pasuk* in Parshas Vayakhel "And Moshe said to the Children of Israel, 'See Hashem has called by name, Bezalel son of Uri son of Chur of the Tribe of Yehudah.'" [Shemos 35:30] The Medrash says that every person has three names: The name that his parents call him; the name that his friends and peers give him; and one that he creates for himself. The best of these names is the one he acquires for himself.

What does it mean that every person has three names? I saw a fundamental idea in the *sefer Milchamos Yehudah* that we have mentioned in the past. The *pasuk* mentions in Sefer Bereishis "...And all that Adam called them, every living soul; that became its name." [Bereishis 2:19] Adam gave names to all the animals. Chazal say that this demonstrated tremendous wisdom, to be able to name appropriately each creature. We have said in the past that when Chazal say that Adam named all the animals, they do not mean that Adam merely looked at an ox and said "Well, I will call this a *shor*; this is a donkey I will call it *chamor*; this is a dog I will call it *kelev*." Rather, Adam was capable of coming up with names that defined the essence of the animal.

The English word 'ox' has nothing to do with the essence of an ox. It is a linguistic convention. Similarly, the English word 'cow' does not define a cow. However, in the Holy Tongue, when Adam gave names to the animals, he was able to perceive their essence and define them. That is what the Hebrew word '*shem*' means. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch relates the word '*shem*' to '*shom*' [there]. '*Shom*' means I know where it is, I know its place. It is 'There.'

This is what *Chazal* mean. After a person is born, his parents raise him. His parents form the character traits and *middos* that he possesses for a part of his life. This is the 'name' that his parents designate for him. That does not mean that the name Reuven or Shimon or Avraham or Yitzchak that baby boys are given defines their essence. The Medrash is trying to say that the '*Shem*' which represents the qualities of the soul implanted in a child during his formative years by his parents is

the first 'Name' a child is given. A child's parents, values and aspirations profoundly shape the first 10-15 years, or whatever amount of time, of his life.

Any of us who have raised teenagers know that there comes a time where parents' influence on their children begins to wane and the child is more influenced by his peer group. Therefore, the Medrash says "what his friends call him" is a '*shem*' that determines a part of his essence. Again, this does not mean that if the fellow's name is Yisroel and his friends call him 'Sruly' that the name 'Sruly' defines him. What it means is that the influence the friends have on the essence of the person's personality, values, and way of thinking is critical. They too, at a certain stage in his life, largely define who he is.

But then the Medrash says that all of this only goes so far. Ultimately, a person defines who he is for himself. A person ultimately defines his own essence – the '*shem*' he gives himself, which represents what becomes and how he develops. It is the definition of what he does with the gifts and talents and building blocks that he has acquired during the early part of his existence. The Medrash says that the most important '*shem*' a person has is the '*shem*' he gives himself, representing who he becomes.

Ultimately, a person must take responsibility for himself. His parents have a role and society has a role and a person can say that he received certain personality characteristics from his parents or his friends – for bad or for good – but ultimately you are responsible for who you become.

This helps us understand a Rashi in this week's parsha. On the aforementioned *pasuk* [Shemos 35:30], Rashi comments "Chur was Miriam's son." The question is that the Torah already introduced Bezalel back in Parshas Ki Sisa [Shemos 31:2]. There too, it mentions that Bezalel was the son of Uri who was the son of Chur. Why did Rashi not tell us back there that Chur was the son of Miriam? Why does Rashi wait until Parshas VaYakhel to give us this information?

The answer is perhaps that in Parshas Ki Sisa when we the Torah first introduces Bezalel, he has not accomplished yet. He was given the mandate and he was given the talents but at that point in time, the *Mishkan* was still on the drawing boards. It was a *davar shelo bah l'olam* [a matter which has not yet come into existence]. It was still a dream.

In Parshas VaYakhel, Bezalel has already built the *Mishkan*. Bezalel has now taken the mantle and the glory that he received from his father and his grandfather and from his great grandmother. Now Bezalel can wear that mantle of respect that he is the great grandson of Miriam. As long as a person has not accomplished yet, he can have the greatest *yichus* – he can be the *Einekel* [grandson] of the holiest Rebbe or Rosh Yeshiva – that is all fine and good. However, unless you do something with it, unless you demonstrate that you are worthy to be the grandson of such a distinguished personage, it does not mean anything.

If you want to wear the heritage of your lineage proudly, you need to do something with it. In Parshas Ki Sisa, Bezalel is still undefined so Rashi does not tell us who he really was. Now that we

see what Bezalel has done, now is the appropriate time to say Bezalel can indeed proudly claim his *yichus* and say "I am an *oor-Einekel* [great grandson] of Miriam the prophetess."

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Vayakeil/Pikudei is provided below:

- # 047 Pikuach Nefesh: To Save a Life
- # 090 The Melacha of Carrying
- # 138 The Melacha of Tying Knots on Shabbos
- # 185 The Melacha of Writing
- # 231 Making a Siyum
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- # 321 Leap Year and the Second Adar
- # 365 The Melacha of Tearing
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- # 453 Wearing A Watch on Shabbos
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- #1111 Paying the Baal Koreh/Chazan/Babysitter for Shabbos
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- #1197 Hachana Issues: Loading Dishwasher on Shabbos; Defrosting For Yom.Tov Sheni
- #1241 The Case of the Mishloach Manos That Was Delivered to the Wrong Person
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