



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
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Make Your Name Great

Avraham is commanded to uproot from his current location and settle in Eretz Yisrael where God promises to “*make him into a great nation, and that he will be blessed, and God will make Avraham’s name great....*” ואגדלה שנתך (Bereshit 12:2).

Avraham served to sanctify Hashem’s name. He did not seek personal recognition. Did Avraham desire that his name be made great? That he become a celebrity? In today’s technological age, people post all facets of their life on social media seeking “likes”, “friends” and personal recognition. If a picture is not shared on facebook, Instagram or some other media, it is as if such event never transpired. Is this the blessing that Hashem was promising to Avraham? That his name would be made “great” in the eyes of others? True, Avraham wanted his message of monotheism to go “viral”, but he did not crave thousands of followers for his self-image. What exactly is the

intention of “*va’agadla shemecha*” – that I will make your name great?

Perhaps we can answer this question, based on an idea presented by the *Igra DeKallah* (written by the Bnei Yissakhar- Rav Tzvi Elimelech Spira of Dinov). He suggests that the intention is not to make Avraham’s name great for others, but rather to make his name great - for himself! Each individual has potential to achieve great things. However, not everyone lives up to their full potential. The blessing to Avraham is that he would be able to fulfill his full potential. In fact, later the Torah describes Avraham as **בא בימים** – (Bereshit 24:1) – which is interpreted to mean that he made each day count. He maximized his potential each and every day. By acting appropriately, as an **oved Hashem**, Avraham will simultaneously be sanctifying God’s name, since his actions will be attributed to the Almighty.

Rav Kook in *Siddur Olat Re’iyah*, explains the passage recited on the *Yamim Noraim*, “**אלוקי עד שלא נוצרתי איני כדאי**” “My God, before I was created, I was unworthy.” There is a reason why one was born in the twenty-first century rather than in another century. Each of us has a unique mission in life: to fulfill a specific purpose in a specific generation. We would have been useless in another generation, but we are

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essential in this generation. Each of us has to look into ourselves to identify our purpose and mission and to do what we can to fulfill that mission. We should seek to maximize our potential and do what we can to make this world a better place. Each of us was granted certain *kohos* (abilities) that we have to utilize properly, not so that we can become famous – but so that we can fulfill our mission on this earth.

After 120 years, when we ascend to Heaven, we are asked our name. Why is that so important? As the Midrash on Koheles tells us טוב שם תשתן טוב – “a good name is more valuable than precious oil” (Koheles 7:1). Man is given three names. One by his parents; one by his friends (nickname) and one name that **he creates for himself** (by his actions).

It is a custom to recite a *pasuk* at the end of the *Amida* that begins and ends with the letters of our name so that we will not forget our name. A name highlights the essence of an individual. Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch suggests that as the word for name – שם – “shem”, can also be read Sham (there) – the name depicts where the person is in life.

May we be *zoche* to build a great name for ourselves – not to gain fame but rather to be able to reach our potential and fulfill our mission on this earth by contributing our part. May we recognize where we can have a positive impact, on our families, friends and community and act in way that can facilitate making this world a better place while being *mekadesh shem shamayim*- sanctifying God’s name. ■

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