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OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

ת"ד

What's in a Name?

"When a person is born and his parents call him by a name that arose in their minds, it is not coincidence or happenstance, rather HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed in their mouths the name that is meant for that Neshama..."¹ So teaches Rav Chaim Vital in the name of his teacher, the Arizal. Every person receives the name meant for him, a name that reveals the essence of his or her character. While the precept "כשמו כן הוא" - *as is his name, so is he* - appears in Sefer Shmuel², nowhere is it more evident than in Sefer Divrei HaYamim.

In Divrei HaYamim, we encounter many familiar figures referred to here by unfamiliar names. These names elaborate upon aspects of their characters or events in their lives only hinted at in earlier books. For example, the

midrash teaches that Miriam, sister of Moshe and Aharon, is alluded to in Divrei HaYamim by no fewer than six different names: "Efrat", from the root *lifrot*, to be fruitful, for her role as midwife to the Jewish women in Egypt;³ "Acharchel", hinting to Miriam's role in teaching the women - the *chel*, multitudes of women, followed after her (*achareha*) with their instruments to sing and dance in her wake as she sang praises of Hashem following the Splitting of the Sea. The remaining four names assigned to Miriam in Divrei HaYamim are related to Miriam's *Tzara'at*. She was called "Azuvah - the abandoned one", because she was sickly, therefore called "*Chelah*" (from *Cholah*, sick) and her face was as white as a sheet, hence "Yeri'ot", meaning sheets. Consequently, no man wanted to marry her and she was as if abandoned. Calev married Miriam despite her illness, and nursed her back to health, caring for her as if she were his child, providing her with food and medicine. Thereafter, Miriam was called "Na'arah", meaning a young girl, for it was as if her youth were restored to her.⁴ In a variant midrash, Miriam was called "Azuvah" because when she was stricken with *Tzara'at* she was considered as if she were dead, and Calev, to whom she was already married, left her. When she was restored to health, he remarried her with great fanfare, and her youth was restored, hence "Na'arah", and she bore him children.⁵ The event of Miriam's *Tzara'at*, though fleeting in terms of time, was clearly a very central one

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in her life and legacy.

The midrash further explains that a person bears not only the name assigned to him at birth by his parents, but the name he is called by others, and the name that reflects the vicissitudes of his or her life.⁶ Thus the two sons of Elimelech of Beit Lehem who fled famine in the Land of Israel along with him, are named in Megillat Rut as Mahlon and Chilyon. In Divrei HaYamim, they are referred to as "Yoash" and "Saraf".⁷ The Talmud explains that "*hitya'ashu - they despaired*" of the Redemption and therefore were condemned to "*sereifah - burning*", capital punishment at the hands of Hashem.⁸

As we study Divrei HaYamim, let us be mindful of how much information is deeply embedded beneath the surface of these deceptively simple lists of names. So too, the names we call one another conceal depths of character not always apparent on the surface. There's always more to another person than what we encounter at face value; let's take the time to value one another, to respect the life experiences that may have contributed to shaping the character of others and of which we may know but little. May the lingering light of the Chanukah candles illuminate both the darkness of exile and the obscurity that clouds our ability to appreciate the light radiated by the Neshamot surrounding us, leading to greater accord in place of discord, and ultimately contributing to the process of Geulah. ■

6. קהלת רבה ז

7. דברי הימים א ד:כב

8. בבא בתרא צא.

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program



Be'er Tziporah a'h - Bottled Water Gemach



Walking down King George St. in Jerusalem
and want a cold bottle of water?

Come help yourself to a bottle at
52 King George.

In loving memory of Yoni's wife
Tziporah a'h, a true Eishes Chayil, always
full of chessed, kindness and laughter, and
brought life and strength to so
many people, that she touched!
She was like Aron, who loved
peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having
the opportunity of having Tziporah in
his life, to learn of her caring, patience and
happiness, to overcome her challenges. May
Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world,
in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama
shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with
tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a
crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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