



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**  
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
שיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד  
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## Parashat Pinchas

### The Importance of a Name

Our *parasha* states (25:14-15), "The name of the Jewish man who was smitten [שם איש ישראל המכה] together with the Midyanite woman, was named Zimri ben Salu ... And the name of the Midyanite woman who was smitten [המכה] was Kozbi bat Tzur..."

#### Question

The holy *Ohr Hachaim* asks why the double expression of אשר המכה is used when referring to Zimri, but when referring to the Midyanite woman, the *pasuk* only states המכה.

#### The Influence of Man's Name

Before we mention the *Ohr Hachaim's* answer, we will begin by stating that man's name is the name of his soul. This is as the *pasuk* states, "And Hashem placed desolation [*shamut*] in the land," upon which our Sages expounded (*Berachot* 7b) that we should not read *shamut*, which means "desolation"; rather, we should read *sheimot*, which means "names." In other words, names are intentionally given by Hashem and they are not coincidental. As proof to this, our Sages ask what the significance of the name of David's righteous great-grandmother Rut [רות] was. They answer that the name Rut hints to the fact that from her descended David, "who 'saturated' [רייה] Hashem with songs and praises." *Maran* the *Ben Ish Chai* asks why the Gemara felt the need to ask about the significance of Rut's name? Why did it not ask about the names of Rivkah, Rachel, or Leah etc.? He answers that the Sages realized that the name Rut was a very special one for it contains the letters תו"ר which have the numerical value of 606, the alluding to the number of additional mitzvot that a Jew has from a gentile [a gentile only has 7]. How did she merit such a name when still a gentile, the daughter of gentile idolaters, prior to having converted? The Sages therefore answer that she merited that a great light would shine forth from her – David Hamelech – who would offer Hashem an abundance of songs and praise. Therefore, Heaven ordained that she be given this name from the time of her birth, and it was placed inside the mouths of her father and mother.

#### The Importance of Man's Name

The Maharsha (*Brachot* ibid.) writes that man's name has an effect on the way that Hashem interacts with him. We find an example of this in the Torah (32:29) when the ministering angel of Esav changed Yaakov's name from Yaakov to Yisrael. He said that it alluded to the fact, "that you fought [שרית] with angels and were victorious." From here we see just how much a name effects the individual. This is why Yaakov's name was changed to Yisrael, which connotes "dominance," from Yaakov, which denotes Yaakov's holding onto Esav's heel; this represents a lower level than that symbolized by the name Yisrael.



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### A Name that Containing Hashem's Name

This is also stressed in the *Zohar Chadash*, which states that Yehudah merited the kingship because the name Yehudah [יהודה] contains Hashem's Four-Letter Name.

### A Name Can Also Have a Negative Influence

On the other hand, our Sages also teach us that a name can have a negative influence. This is as our Sages teach in *Masechet Yoma* 38b, expounding on the *pasuk*, "And the names of the wicked should rot." Quoting Rabbi Eliezer, the Gemara explains that this means that the wicked should not be referred to by their names. Similarly, our Sages mention in *Sotah* 34b as well as in the *Tanchumah (Haazinu siman 7)* that the names of the spies who sinned by speaking negatively about the land, all contained negative connotations.

### Naming a Child

The Gemara (*Yoma* 38a) states that Ben Azai said, "By your name you will be called, and in your place you will be sat..." The *Ben Yehoyada (Yoma ibid.)* explains these words by writing that Hashem plants the idea for a name in the hearts of the parents, and that name is inscribed in Heaven. He explains in the name of the Arizal (*Shaar Hagilgulim* 23) that when a child is born, the name that the parents call him is not coincidental, nor by chance. Rather Hashem places a name in their mouths that is appropriate for this particular soul. This name is inscribed on the Throne of Glory. This is why our Sages have taught us that a name exerts an influence on the person. The *Ben Yehoyada* adds that a name points to the individual's future achievements in Torah, as well as to his entire future and character traits. Or Ben Azai's words can be explained according to the Ramban, who teaches that there is not an individual whose name is not mentioned in the Torah. Depending on the particular place in the Torah where he is mentioned, will his nature be able to be discerned. This is as we find that the Ramban once had a student whose name was Avner, and through praying, he was able to discover where his name was mentioned in the Torah. This then, is what Ben Azai meant - "You will be named according to the name that fits your character traits, and you will receive your place in the Torah; from there it will be known who you truly are." The *Ben Yehoyada* continues to teach that the name one is given in this world will be his name when he is resurrected in the future, and his place in *Gan Eden* will also allotted according to his name. He therefore explains what Ben Azai was saying in the following manner, "This is what you will be called after the resurrection on the dead, and it will correspond to your place in Gan Eden." For each individual's name is given to him before he descends to this world.

### Man's Name is Damaged by Sin

Now we can well understand the answer of the *Ohr Hachaim* on the question we mentioned above. Since man's name is very influential to his soul, when man sins and sullies his soul, his name gets damaged as well. This is as Shlomo Hamelech said in *Mishlei* (10:8), "The names of the wicked should



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rot." The deeper intent behind these words is that when man sins, his soul gets damaged and "rots." Therefore, his name, which corresponds to his soul also rots. Zimri, who was the prince of the tribe of Shimon, and an important Jew, sinned in a very severe manner. Therefore his soul was stricken, as was his name. This is why the Torah uses a double expression of "striking" when speaking about his demise. For the first expression [שם איש ישראל המכה אשר הכה], refers to the fact that his name [שם] and his soul which corresponds to it were stricken, while the second time it refers to the fact that Zimri himself was stricken and killed by Pinchas.

### **Hagbah**

Accordingly, the Arizal write that when the *sefer Torah* is lifted up during *hagbah*, it is important to try and see the letter in the *sefer Torah*, which is the first letter of his name, for this is a time of great spiritual bounty that exerts an influence on the individual. For anything that an individual sees has an effect on his soul.

### **One Should Add a Name but Not Change it Completely**

In *Yabia Omer (chelek 5- Yoreh Deah 21:3)* it states that if a person is sick *chas ve'shalom* his name should be added; however, the name of the ill person should not be changed entirely. He writes that this is the prevalent custom and correct. This is what is written in the *Shailot veTeshuvot Dvar Moshe Teoumim (siman 58)* citing from the works of *tzaddikim*, that the name of an individual should not be changed completely. This is as the Arizal teaches that an individual draws his life-force from the letters of his name. If this name is uprooted completely, then Heaven forbid, his life-force will be severed. Therefore a name should not be changed; rather an additional name should be added, and this is what is done when a *chatan* has the same name as his father in law or a *kallah* has the same name as her mother in law.

### **Words of Mussar**

According to everything that we have discussed, we can see just how important it is that when parents choose a name for their child it should be done with great consideration, seriousness, and deliberation, for it will affect the child's future. They should not do this like others do, by opening a book of names authored by individuals who lack any Torah knowledge, who merely create strange names that lack any meaning. By them, the main thing is to simply originate new names, but they do not understand that by doing so, they are destroying the soul. Even worse, there are those who give boys' girls' names and girls' boys'. About them, our Sages state, "Woe is to he whose sons are daughters" – for while these are actually boys, they are given the names of girls. The wise man will take these words to heart and take great care in this matter, as well as warning others to do so. By doing so, he will merit offspring who are blessed and successful. *Amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rav Mordechai Malka



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