Parshas Chayei Sarah – ושמו לבן

What’s in a Name

Chazal teach us that there is much significance to the names of people in Tanach. This applies to people in general too. In the Torah, though, we get insight into events and behind-the-scenes background, from the names of the characters involved. עפרן, for example, wasn’t simply the fellow who happened to own the property of Meoras HaMachpeilah. He was, according to some sources, the עפרן (Afran), the communal gravedigger – ואל עפר תשוב. He was also עפרן, Gematria 400, the asking price for selling the land to Avraham. He was עפרן בן צחר, Gematria הכסף יענה את הכל. True to his name, money was everything. He knew how to score a deal even for a patch of earth that nobody attached any importance to. And it wasn’t dirt cheap.

But why Lavan, of all names? Lavan? For one of the most sinister characters in Tanach? What was white about Lavan? His path in life was as dark and fiendish as can be. Perhaps, it is only a euphemism for his dark side. Like the Mishna in Pesachim – אור לארבעה עשר. The night is graciously referred to as the time of brightness. A friend of mine suggested that it conveys the idea, that the only thing that was white about him, was his name. A Medrash says that actually he was קמואל אבי ארם, more famously known as the evil בלעם. Another Chazal identifies him as the infamous king of ארם נהרים, כושן רשעתים, of Sefer Shoftim. Why, then, was he called Lavan? Says the Medrash, not as a description of his character. Rather, it was his most prominent feature, one that caught the notice of all around him. Lavan was a whiter than white Albino!

Why is the second of the חמשה חומשי תורה called שמות? A title connected to the events of יציאת מצרים would have been more fitting. The Seforno comments that the people mentioned in the course of these events, are all worthy of being singled out by name. Their names all give insight to their personalities. Each of the Shevatim and their offspring, achieved the goals that they were meant to attain. They succeeded in devoting their talents and abilities, to the purpose they were brought into the world for. So much so, that their names aptly described them.

What’s in your name? Maybe someone worked out a catchy Gematria during your Sheva Brochos. The real significance in your name, though, will be the מעשי חסד or the upliftment of Torah and Mitzvos you brought about. Name-messages in the Torah, make for Geshmakeh Divrei Torah and reinforce the total Emes of Torah. It is also meant to urge us to make our own names synonymous with great accomplishments and outstanding deeds.

The דעת זקנים in פ' ויצא explains why Yissochor isn’t called Yissoschor. One reason is because Yissocher felt that his son’s name, יוב, wasn’t suitable. So he gave him one of the “Shins” from his own name. Now he would be appropriately called, ישוב. Rav Yitzchok Zilbershtein, Shlit”a, asks, why did Yissocher have to take a letter from his name for this purpose? He could have just added a letter and kept his own “Shin”. Perhaps, we can understand that in order for parents to pass on their hopes and life-goals to their children, it isn’t enough to teach and lecture them. A parent has to invest his own self, his Neshomoh, personality and outlook into his children’s Chinuch. Every child should be able to take a page from their parent’s book on how to live. You cannot expect a child to develop a proper attitude and appreciation for Tefilah, if you are a card-carrying member of your Shul’s early-bird “Kiddush Club”. Your name has to stand for אחריות and devotion to Davening. Your name has to be synonymous with קביעות עתים לתורה and love and respect for Talmidei Chachomim. When your children think about you, it should conjure the image of a mother carefully reciting Birchas HaMazon, a father who speaks gently and with dignity, or parents and grandparents who move heaven and earth, to offer hope and encouragement to anyone in need, and so on. Make a name for yourself and make it good.

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a Lechtigeh Chodesh, yk

**L’Ravcha D’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Erev Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah – 24 Cheshvan**

**Rav Gedalya Moshe Goldman of Zvhil** (1888-1950), son of Rav Shlomo (Reb Shlomke) of Zhvil. When the Soviets rose to power, he was sent to Siberia. The Rebbe did not bend in his Mitzvah obsrvanve even in the most trying circumstances. He did not yield on Kashrus. He would not desecrate Shabbos, come what may. After eight years of exile efforts succeeded to obtain his release., The commandant of the camp called R’ Gedalia Moshe into his office. "I have here the papers for your release," he said as he waved some papers in the air, "and if you sign them now you will be a free man." "But it is Shabbos," replied Gedalia Moshe. "I cannot and will not sign on Shabbos." The commandant shouted, "If you don't sign the papers now you will remain here another eight years!" "Nevertheless, I will not sign and desecrate the Shabbos."

He turned to an aide and yelled to him, "Bring in the other Jew!" A few moments passed, and R’ Chaim Shaul Bruk was brought in to stand next to R’ Gedalia Moshe. The commandant made him the same offer as he had to R’ Gedalia Moshe: "Sign these papers and you can go free." "Of course I can't sign the papers," replied R’ Chaim Shaul, "It's Shabbos, and I don't violate the Shabbos." "You will remain here another eight years." "I will not write on Shabbos."

Suddenly R’ Gedalia Moshe said, "Give me the papers. I will sign for him." The commandant was dumbfounded. "What? You said you wouldn't write on Shabbos! You're going to be here for another eight years! And now you'll sign for him?" "Of course I wouldn't sign on Shabbos to gain my freedom," R’ Gedalia Moshe replied. "But this is different. R’ Chaim Shaul is weaker, and he cannot stand this place any longer. It would be dangerous for him to remain here another eight years. Give me the papers and let me sign..." Both men were freed from prison within the next few days without having to be Michallel Shabbos.

The rebbe arrived in 1936 to Eretz Yisrael where he worked to conceal his greatness. But the Gedolai Eretz Yisroel recognized him as a Poel Yeshuos. He served as an Admor for only five years. He died when he was only 61. It was a time when Har Hazeisim was no longer accessible and Har HaMenuchos was not yet developed as a cemetery. The Rebbe was buried in a small cemetery on a piece of land right where the Knesset is now located. Until recently, his Kever remained unknown and unnoticed. Through the efforts of R’ Pinchas Kornfeld, a Gerrer Yerushalmi, the kever has become a magnet for Yidden in need. Numerous Yeshuos have been reported by people who davened there over a cycle of any Monday-Thursday-Monday.

**Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Chayei Sarah, Shabbos Mevorchim– 25 Cheshvan**

**Yartzeit of Kedoshei Kahal Bnai Torah, Har Nof**

*One month to Neiros Chanukah*

**Tuesday, Parshas Toldos – 28 Chesvan**

**Rabbeinu Yonah** (ben Avraham) of Gerondi, France (1200 [1180]-1263). The Ramban's mother and Rabbeinu Yonah’s father were siblings. Many years later, the Ramban’s son, Rav Shlomo, married the daughter of Rabbeinu Yonah. Thus, the two great rishonim were mechutanim as well as first cousins. He was a student of Rav Shlomo ben Avraham Min Ha'Har. When King Louis XIV of France, "Saint" Louis,” burnt all the copies of the Talmud in Paris in the Square of the Louvre, Rabbeinu Yonah, one of the Rambam’s main detractors, felt that the events in Paris were a sign that he and the other opponents of the Rambam were seriously wrong. He then composed his work Shaarei Teshuvah, in which he outlined the methods of doing Teshuvah, and he traveled from place to place preaching about the need to back away from matters which cause division among the Jewish People. Among his talmidim are the Rashba and Ra’ah.

**Wednesday, Parshas Toldos-Erev Rosh Chodesh, 29 Cheshvan**

*Yartzeit* of *Harugei Mumbai, Hashem Yinkom Damam*. (2009)

**Yom Kippur Katan** established by the Rama”k, R’ Moshe Cordevero, Mechaber of Tomer Devora and his fellow Mekubalim of Tzfas. The Steipler Rov, zt”l very much encouraged the saying of Yom Kippur Koton as a defense from harsh Gezeiros, r”l.

**Thursday, Parshas Toldos - Rosh Chodesh Kislev**

*Some years have a 30th day of Cheshvan, some do not, impacting on Bar Mitzvah and Yartzeits when there is only one day Rosh Chodesh.*

Rav Yosef Shmuel of Cracow (1703), author of **Mesoras Hashas**.

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