



More Than a Name

Moshe was named so by Basya because (Shemos 2:10) *ki min hamayim mishisihu* ("because I drew him from the water"). The problem is that according to the explanation Basya gave, his name should be Nimshe ("he was drawn"). So why did she name him Moshe, and not Nimshe?

The word *shem* ("name") is found within the word *neshama*, since the essence of a person is in his name (Ruach Chaim 1:1). Indeed, Chazal teach us that one's name can influence their personality—(Berachos 7b) *shma garim* ("the name causes"). In a similar vein, it says (Shmuel 1, 25:25) *ki kishmo kein hu* ("he is as his name implies"). For this reason, the words *sham* ("there") and *shem* ("name") are spelled the same—because when one's "name" is there, then it is as if he himself is "there"—as everything he is, is included in his name.

Noach had three sons: Shem, Cham and Yafes. We Jews come from Shem. Indeed, the term Semite comes from the word Shem. Since the entire world is here for us (Bereishis 1:1, Rashi), and we are the purpose of the world, it makes sense that we originate from Shem ("essence"). This also explains why people feel good when they are called by their name, as this is their essence. Based on this, we now see why we refer to God as Hashem ("the name"): since He is the essence of everything, it is only fitting that we refer to Him as "the name."

Let us cite some other examples:

1) Avraham represents fathering the Jewish people. In fact, the letters of Avraham rearranged spell *ha'eivarim* ("the limbs"), since it is from his limbs that the Jewish people were conceived. Because there are 248 limbs in one's body, it comes as no surprise that the name Avraham has a numerical value of 248.

2) Adam was supposed to live for 1,000 years but only lived to the age of 930. The extra 70 years were instead given to Dovid Hamelech who lived to the age of 70. The scion of the Davidic dynasty and his eventual successor will be Moshiach. Consequently, the name Adam forms an acronym for Adam, Dovid, Moshiach (Sefer Likutim, Haazinu).

3) The Pe'er Aharon (Haggada, s.v. *tzei ulmad* and s.v. *arami*) tells us that Lavan stands for Lavan Ben Nachor. His name also hints to the succession of his gilgulim, as it

serves as an acronym for Lavan, Bilaam, Naval (Rema Mipano, Gilgulei Neshamos, 2:34, footnote 177 and Likutei Torah, Balak).

4) Chushim, the son of Don, was deaf (Sota, 13a, Rashi). When the Torah spells his name, it is spelled without a *vav* (Bereishis 46:23), and therefore is comprised of four letters (*ches*, *shin*, *yud*, *mem*). This spelling alludes to the fact that he only possessed four out of the five senses. When one is lacking in one sense, his other senses are stronger. This is hinted to in the name Chushim, as it stems from the word *chush* ("a sense"). Also, the letters of the word Chushim can be rearranged to spell out *mi sach* ("who is speaking?"), since one who is deaf cannot hear and is always asking "who is speaking."

5) The Gemara (Pesachim 4a, Rashi) tells us of a story about a person who said, "if I had a palace to build, I would only build it on the seashore." This person was from the tribe of Zevulun, which was blessed with the words (Bereishis 49:13) *lchof yamim yishkon* ("he shall settle by seashores"). The Gemara there also tells us of a person who would insist on litigating his business dealings in court. He was said to be from the tribe of Don, as it says (Bereishis 49:16) *Don yadin amo* ("Don shall judge his people").

6) If we break up the name Yissachar, it yields the phrase *yesh schar* ("there is reward"). It is well-known that the tribe of Yissachar was especially associated with those who toiled in Torah study. As part of the liturgy for a *siyum*, we customarily thank Hashem for allowing us to be *...miyoshvei beis hamidrash* ("...from those who sit in the beis midrash"). Later in that paragraph, we compare ourselves to those idle people who accomplish nothing in their lives and assert *anu ameilim u'mekabl'im schar* ("we toil and receive reward"). In this passage, we associated "reward" with the study of Torah, just like the name of the tribe that studies Torah—Yissachar—is also associated with the existence of "reward."

7) There are thirty kings and *nesi'im* that descended from Yehuda. What is the gematria of Yehuda? 30! (Midrash Lekach Tov, Vayechi, 49:8)

8) The Maharal tells us that the middle of a set is the chosen element from within that set. For this reason, Eretz Yisrael—the land chosen for its kedusha—is in the

centre of the world. The city of Yerushalayim lies in the center of Eretz Yisrael. And of course, in the centre of Yerushalayim stands the Beis Hamikdash.

Likewise, we see something special in Aharon Hakohen's name: Each of the letters in his name (except for the first letter. The alef, which is the head of all the letters refers to Aharon, the kohen gadol, who is the head of all the kohanim.) allude to the middle gematria value of a set of numbers. In other words, in mathematics, there are sets of ones, tens, and, hundreds. So the letters alef through yud are in the set of ones, letters from yud through tzadi are in the set of tens, and letters from kuf through tuv are in the set of hundreds. If we look at the name Aharon and start from the second letter we will see that it is comprised of the following letters: hey (whose gematria equals 5, putting it exactly in the middle of the ones), reish (whose gematria equals 200, putting it exactly in the middle of the hundreds, because the highest single letter gematria in the hundreds is tuv which equals 400), and nun (whose gematria equals 50, putting it exactly in the middle of the tens) [Tiferes Yisrael, 22].

In light of this, we can truly understand why Moshe's name was Moshe. His name precisely defined who he was throughout his life. The word Moshe is in active present tense, as it means "he who draws" because that capsulises Moshe's entire life. He was not named Nimshe with the passive meaning of "the one who was drawn" but rather he always remained the active "drawer" his entire life!

Let's summarise some of the things that Moshe did throughout his fruitful life (Sforno, Shemos, 2:10):

A) He extricated ("drew") a fellow Jew from a Mitzri beating (Shemos 2:11, 12).

B) He "drew" Yisro's daughters out of an encounter at the well (Shemos 2:17).

C) He is the one who freed ("drew us out") us from Mitzrayim.

D) He is the one who "drew" the Torah down from heaven to This World.

With this last fact in hand, we can understand the words *ki min hamayim mishisihu*, for he drew the Torah, referred to by water (see Taanis 7a) down to This World.

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