

# The Jewish Weekly

## Naming a Mother and Daughter

By Rabbi Moshe-Dovid Gutnick

The first story I am about to relate took place in 1987. I had just moved to Bondi, Australia, to become the rabbi of the Mizrachi Synagogue, when one of the congregants came to speak with me about choosing a Hebrew name for herself. For whatever reason her parents hadn't given her a Hebrew name at the time of her birth. Instead, they named her Leonie, after her grandfather who was called Leo and whose Hebrew name was Aryeh Leib.

She really wanted to take the name Ariella, which made sense to her since Aryeh, her grandfather's name, is Hebrew for lion, and Leo or Leonie is Latin for lion, and Ariella is feminine derivative of Aryeh. But she had a very conservative mindset and, to her, the name Ariella was too modern and seemed not traditional enough. She felt she should choose Rachel or Leah or something like that.

I told her, "Judaism teaches that, when our parents give us names, they are blessed with Ruach Hakodesh, Divine Inspiration. Now I don't have Ruach Hakodesh, so I can't advise you. But the Rebbe does. If you'd like, I will write to him and ask his opinion on this issue."

She agreed. Not only that - she wrote the letter to the Rebbe herself. In this letter she explained how she was named by her parents and why. What she didn't say was that her personal preference was to be named Ariella.

When I read the letter, I asked her, "Why didn't you write that you are drawn to the name Ariella? The Rebbe will be interested to know that this is the name you would really want for yourself."

But she said she couldn't bring herself to write that. She reasoned that this name was too modern, and the Rebbe wouldn't be pleased with such a choice. Now it's true that in those days Ariella might have been viewed as an unusual name for a religious woman, though it's not so anymore.

I faxed her letter to New York and, within twenty-four hours, we had the Rebbe's response through his secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner: "The name Ariella is quite common now."

In other words, the Rebbe picked the name that she preferred and allayed her concerns at the same time.

Of course she was thrilled and amazed to no end (as was I) that the Rebbe chose the name that she, in her heart of hearts, really wanted - and so very grateful that he had the foresight to address her concerns at the same time.

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The second story that I would like to relate also concerns choosing a name for a woman, this time a new mother. This happened a couple of years later - in 1989. A friend of mine, Rabbi Pinchas Woolstone, who was at that time Director of the Jewish House in Sydney, came to

me with a problem concerning a family that I did not know. The mother of this family had given birth to a son and, in order to name the baby at the circumcision, she needed a Hebrew name. That is, the baby's name is announced at the bris as X, the son of Y, and both X and Y need to be Hebrew names. For reasons of Jewish law, the father's name could not be used in this case.

Now, a Hebrew name for a girl or woman is given at the time of a Torah reading. The next one which was to take place was on Thursday, with the bris scheduled for the following day. The day that Pinchas came to me with this issue was Sunday.

I responded to him in the same way I did to Leonie - that is, let's write to the Rebbe.

This we did and, as before, we sent the letter by fax on that Sunday. Monday came and went, but there was no answer. Tuesday came and went, but again there was no answer. Wednesday the same thing. Thursday was the day the woman's father was going to have an aliyah during the Torah reading, at which time he was to give a Hebrew name to his daughter. So, they had no choice - they had to pick the name themselves.

The woman's name was Jennifer and everyone thought that an appropriate Hebrew equivalent would be Judith - that is Yehudis (or Yehudit). However, she decided that she wanted the name Bracha. The name Bracha had nothing in common with the name Jennifer, but she was determined that this should be her name despite everyone's objections. And that is the name she was given.

On that Thursday morning, I came from my synagogue to the Jewish House. It was about fifteen minutes after the end of prayers and a fax had arrived while services were in progress. Pinchas was standing there holding the fax, repeating over and over: "I don't believe it ... I don't believe it ... I don't believe it."

"Pinchas, what don't you believe?" I asked. He didn't answer, so I walked over to him and took the fax out of his hands. When I read it, I started repeating, "I don't believe it ... I don't believe it." The secretary who was sitting there was puzzled, "What's going on rabbis? What don't you believe?" The fax was from the Rebbe's office and it said:

"In relation to Jennifer, I suggest the name Bracha. And I want to add that each individual is entitled to choose a name for himself or herself."

So the Rebbe suggested the name Bracha for her, which is the name that she herself had chosen, and by implication also reproved those who objected to her choice.

Two times this happened - the Rebbe had picked a name that the person had also wanted, and he gave an explanation on each occasion that pointedly addressed the situation at hand.

I clearly recall that at the time I was holding that fax I felt as if I was literally holding Ruach Hakodesh in my hands. It is a moment I will never forget.

*Reprinted from my encounter with the Rebbe, www.myencounterblog.com.*

## It Once Happened...

### Becoming Rebbe in Shpoleh

By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon

There are various versions as to how the Zeide finally became publicly known as a Tzaddik and miracle worker.

HaRav Yosef Yitzchok of Lubavitch, known as the Friediker Rebbe, related the following incident:

Once, on his way to visit the Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Yehudah Leib noticed a Jew struggling to pull his wagon out of some deep mud. When the Jew noticed him coming down the road, he called out to him and requested that he help him.

"I am unable to pull out the wagon," he replied, "especially as it is carrying such a heavy load."

Replying in Ukrainian, the Jew said, "Mozhesh danye chotshesh — you can, but you don't want to."

Hearing these words, he felt that perhaps the individual was correct and he should at least attempt to help him. To his shock, as soon as he gave one pull, the wagon came right out onto the road.

Reb Yehudah Leib realized that it wasn't his strength that had pulled it out but the Hand of Hashem.

As he continued on his way to the Maggid, he remembered the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov that a Jew should realize that everything he hears or sees, and surely an event he participated in, is b'Hashgachah Pratit (Divine Providence) and contains a message for him. So, he began contemplating as to what was the message that Hashem was surely sending him. He came to the conclusion that he was being informed that he was now being granted the special ability to help others, and it was time for him to finally accept the responsibility of leading a community and no longer remain a hidden tzaddik.

When he arrived in Mezritch, he didn't tell anyone about what had happened. However, as soon as the Maggid noticed him, he said, "The Baal Shem Tov told me that just as you were able to pull out a wagon with its heavy load, you are also able to uplift a community." He then bestowed upon him the necessary talents and blessed him with success, and the Zeide then settled in Shpoleh.

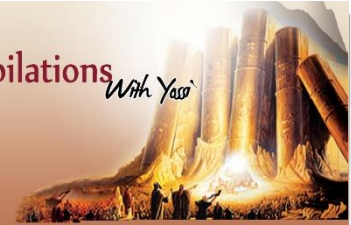
*Reprinted from an email of "Weekly Story".*



**Y-GRAPHICS**

Shabbat Times - Parshat Va'eira

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:19	5:35	6:13
Tel Aviv	4:33	5:36	6:09
Haifa	4:23	5:34	6:09
Be'er Sheva	4:38	5:38	6:14



## The Difficult Segula for the Childless Chasid

By Rabbi Shmuel Butman

There was once a Chasid who travelled to his Rebbe every month to take in the atmosphere of holiness which filled the very air of Kozhnitz. He was happy with his lot in life; if only he had a child, he would be completely content.

Several times his wife had insisted that he ask the Rebbe for a blessing to cure their childlessness, but to no avail. His wife wouldn't desist from her pleas. "This time," she insisted, "you must not leave the holy Rebbe until he answers our request, for my life is worthless to me without children."

The man was forced to agree, and when he came to Kozhnitz and was admitted into the Rebbe's chambers, he told the Rebbe of their longing for a child. The Rebbe listened and offered him the solution his spiritual vision afforded him: "If you are willing to become a pauper you will be granted the blessing you seek." The man agreed to discuss the condition with his wife and return with her answer.

The woman didn't think for a moment. "Of course, it's worth everything to me. What good is wealth without children?" The man returned to Kozhnitz and accepted the harsh prescription. But poverty was not the end of the Rebbe's advice; the man was sent on a long arduous journey to visit the famous Tzaddik, the Chozeh (Seer) of Lublin.

The Chozeh was known for his power to discern the state and provenance of a person's soul, and when he met the Chasid he studied his visitor long and hard before he spoke.

"I will tell you the source of your childlessness and then what you must do to correct the problem. Once, when you were very young, you promised to wed a certain maiden.

When you matured, she didn't interest you any longer and you broke your promise and left the place. Since she was your true intended, you have not been able to have children since. You must find her and beg her forgiveness. Go to the city of Balta which is very distant from here - there you'll find the woman."

The Chasid wasted no time in embarking on the journey. But when he arrived there, no one knew anything about the woman. He rented a room and waited to see the words of the Tzaddik materialize.

One day, he was walking down the street when he was caught in a sudden downpour. He ran to a

nearby shop to escape from the rain and found himself standing near two women who were also seeking shelter. Suddenly, he was shocked to hear one say to the other, "Do you see that man? He was once betrothed to me in my youth and deserted me!" He turned to see a woman dressed in the richest fabrics and wearing beautiful and valuable jewels.

He approached her and she said, "Don't you remember me? I am the one you were engaged to so many years ago. Have you any children?"

He immediately poured out the entire story, telling her that he had come only to find her and beseech her to forgive him. He begged her to ask of him anything to atone for the terrible pain he had caused her.

"I lack nothing, for G-d has provided me with all I need, but I have a brother who is in desperate need. Go to him and give him 200 gold coins with which he can marry off his daughter, and I will forgive you. In the merit of marrying off a poor bride you will be blessed with children, as the Tzaddik told you."

"Please, you give your brother this money. I have travelled many months and I'm very anxious to return home."

"No," the woman adamantly refused. "I am not able to travel now, and it is not feasible to send such a sum of money. No, you must go yourself." With that, she turned and proceeded down the street, but as he was following her with his eyes, she seemed to disappear.

The Chasid ventured on yet another journey to a distant city where he was able to locate the woman's brother.

The man was in a terrible state of agitation which he readily explained: "My daughter is betrothed to a wealthy young man, but I have suddenly become penniless and unless I can find the dowry money, the marriage is off."

The Chasid listened to the heartrending tale and then said: "I will give you two hundred gold coins which will be more than enough for all your expenses." The man couldn't believe his ears. "What, you don't even know me - why would you do such a thing for a total stranger?"

"I have been sent by your sister whom I met a few weeks ago in Balta. Many years ago, I was once betrothed to her and I abandoned her, and the help I'm offering to you is my promise to her."

"What are you saying?" the man turned pale. "What kind of crazy tale are you spinning and why? My sister has been dead for fifteen years. I should know - I buried her myself!"

Now it was time for the Chasid to be shocked. It was beginning to dawn on him that the Maggid of Kozhnitz and the Chozeh of Lublin had orchestrated this entire wondrous episode for his good and the good of this man. He handed him the golden coins and the man blessed him to be granted the blessing of many sons and daughters and a long and happy life of joy from them.

*Reprinted from an email of L'Chaim weekly.*

In Parshat Va'era the Torah provides us with the genealogy of the tribe of Levi. We arrive in this list at the household of Amram and Yocheved and there we are introduced to their two sons, Moshe and Aharon. And then the Torah says "הוא אהרן ומשה" - "This was the Aharon and Moshe, the people who stood before Pharaoh and delivered us from Egypt," and then that statement concludes, "הוא משה ואהרן" - "That, of course was Moshe and Aharon."

So here we have in one and the same statement, first Aharon and Moshe, and then Moshe and Aharon. The order is reversed.

Now, we know from other instances in the Torah that whenever this happens the message is one of equality. For example, in the Ten Commandments we are told "כבד את אביך ואת אמך" - "Honor your father and your mother," and then in Parshat Kedoshim we are told, "איש ואמו ואביו תיראו" - "everybody should revere their mother and their father."

The order is reversed in order to let us know that in our home, fathers and mothers are of equal standing.

So therefore the Torah here wants us to know that Aharon and Moshe were equals.

But then we must ask, does the Torah itself not say, "ולא יהיה כמשה וכהאיש משה ענו מאד מכל" - "Moshe was the greatest prophet of them all," and also, "האיש משה ענו מאד מכל" - "Moshe was more humble than any person."

It is clear throughout the Torah that Moshe was the more famous and his impact on the nation and on generations to come was far more significant than Aharon, so therefore why are we told that they are equals?

Rav Moshe Feinstein gives a wonderful answer. He says that Moshe was great because Moshe achieved his ultimate maximum personal potential, and Aharon did the same. He achieved his personal maximum potential, and that's why they were equally great.

From here the message is that when it comes to achievement we shouldn't, in a state of weakness, compare ourselves to others. We shouldn't think about who is better than whom. Rather, the way Hashem views it is in terms of us ourselves: to what degree are we maximizing our opportunities, using our talent, using our ability in order to guarantee that the potential that Hashem has given us will not be squandered.

So who was greater, Moshe or Aharon? They were equally great. And what's wonderful to know is that each and every one of us can also be just as great as them. One of the ways is by joining together to pray with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

## The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 121  
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1748  
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6701

HAFTORA:  
Yechezkel 28:25 - 29:21

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