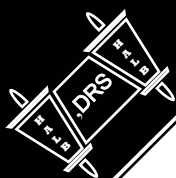


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Volume 5 - Issue 7

The DRS Weekly Torah Publication



OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GENTILE WORLD

BY: RABBI MOSHE ERLBAUM, 10TH GRADE REBBE, DRS-YHSB

Yaakov, in his message to Esav, states, "*Im Lavan garti, va'eichar ad ata*, With Lavan I have lived and have lingered until now" (*Bereishit* 32:5). Rashi, who questions the strange expression of "*garti*", offers two explanations. First, the expression suggests that Yaakov did not become a dignitary or an important person but rather remained a stranger; a person without a permanent residence. Therefore, Esav should not be upset over the blessings that Yitzchak had given to Yaakov since the blessings remain unfulfilled. Rashi, in his second explanation, views the expression "*garti*," (spelled *gimel, reish, tav, yud*) as a hint to the *taryag mitzvot*, because *garti* and *taryag* share the same numerical value (613). In other words, he is hinting to Esav, "*Im Lavan garti, vetaryag mitzvos shamarti*, With Lavan I have lived yet I kept the 613 *mitzvot*." The simple and accepted way to understand Rashi is that Yaakov was giving Esav a double message. On the one hand, he is telling Esav that he has no reason to be upset or to desire to kill him. Yet, if Esav remain angry, it would be inadvisable to attempt such an act on someone like Yaakov, who is such a *tzaddik*. After all, Hashem would surely save him.

This interpretation seems difficult. The whole episode describes Yaakov as consistently submitting himself to Esav, trying his best to avoid confrontation. This being the case, why would he allude to his righteousness and moral strength as if to "dare" Esav to attack him?

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This week's issue of
D'varim Hayotzim
is dedicated by Rabbi Eli Brazil in
honor of Zach Klein and Scott Topiel
on their successful efforts in the Toy
Drive and Coat Drive, respectively.

PARSHAT VA'YISHLACH
18 KISLEV, 5764
DECEMBER 13TH, 2003

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Candle lighting: 4:10 pm
Shabbat ends: 5:22 pm

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ENJOYING GOD'S REWARDS IN BOTH WORLDS

BY: TZVI SHAPIRO, 11TH GRADE

"I (Yaakov) have been diminished by all the kindness and all the truth that You have done Your servant... Rescue me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esav, for I fear him lest he come and strike me down, mother and children." (*Bereishit* 32:11-12)

Rashi comments on these *passukim* that Yaakov humbly feared that Hashem's promise of great wealth and a large family, had diminished his *zechuyot* (merits). He, therefore, feared that Esav would be able to overpower him. We see from here that whenever a person, even a great *tzaddik* like Yaakov, receives special treatment from Hashem, it diminishes his "spiritual chips" in *Olam Ha'Bah*.

Similarly, the *Gemarah* (*Shabbat* 53b) records a story about a widower who could not afford a wet nurse to nurse his newborn son. He was miraculously given the ability to nurse his son himself. Abaye remarked on this incident, "How lowly is this man for whom the order of creation was changed." R. Yaakov Orenstein explains that "lowly" literally means

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HALACHA Corner

CHANGING A PERSONS NAME

BY: RABBI ARYEH LEBOWITZ

I. Introduction. In this week's *parshah*, the Torah records the story of Yaakov's battle with the angel of Eisav. At the conclusion of the battle, Yaakov demands a blessing from the angel. After being told that the name of his nemesis is Yaakov, the angel blesses him by saying that he will now be called Yisrael, a more appropriate name for one who has defeated an angel. This incident provides an appropriate backdrop to the larger issue of people changing their names. This week we will discuss the significance of names in general, situations where it may be appropriate to change a name and guidelines to be followed when changing a name.

II. The significance of names. The importance of a person's name is well documented in Rabbinic literature. The *gemarah* (*Berachot* 7b) states that one's name can determine his lot in life. The Maharsha adds that God's actions are sometimes influenced by people's names. The *gemarah* comments that Rut merited having Dovid as a descendent as a result of her name. The name of Rut is alluded to in the phrase *shiroi v'tishbachot*, a reference to the songs and praises that were written by Dovid. In a similar vein, the *Midrash* (*Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Ha'azinu* 7) warns us to be careful in choosing a name for a child, as his name may predispose him to certain tendencies. The Midrash proceeds to show how each of the spies who slandered *Eretz Yisrael* had a name that would indicate a predisposition to this sin.

III. Changing the name of a sick person. The *gemarah* (*Rosh Hashana* 16b) lists four methods of changing a heavenly decree that has been issued against a person. The methods listed include giving charity, crying out to God, changing one's deeds, and changing his name. Based on this *gemarah*, the *Rema* (*Yoreh Deah* 338:10) records the custom to change the name of a dangerously ill person in an attempt to change the decree against him and save his life. The *Sefer Chasidim* (245) records that some have the practice to sell the patient to a different family rather than change his name. The logic for this custom is that we are concerned that there has been a decree that the son of a particular person should die, and by changing the family that the patient belongs to, he is no longer the son of that person. The *Ha'Gahot Mekor Chesed* on the *Sefer Chasidim* suggests that this is where the name Meshulam comes from. The name Meshulam was given to the child to indicate that he had been sold and paid for. Similarly, *Kuntros Ziv Ha'Sheimot* (page 100 note 12) suggests that the names Tachlifa and Chalafta that are com-

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RABBI ERLBAUM (Continued from page 1)

I think we can better understand the Rashi based on a famous essay authored by the Beit Halevi. In Yaakov's *tefilla* to Hashem, he entreats Hashem to save him, "*miyad achi miyad Esav*, From the hand of my brother from the hand of Esav" (*Bereishit* 32:12). The Beit Ha'Levi asks, why does Yaakov use this superfluous expression? After all, Yaakov's only brother is Esav! He explains that Yaakov was not just afraid of Esav *harasha* attacking him physically. He was also fearful of Esav befriending him and acting towards him like a loving brother. Esav's friendship and kinship would also be a great danger to Yaakov's family. Esav, as a loving brother, can potentially be a major spiritual threat to Yaakov's children. They may learn and be influenced by the evil practices of their "loving" uncle. Indeed, Esav attempts both forms of attack. After he is successfully appeased by Yaakov's presents, Esav suggests "*nesah veneilcha ve'elcha l'negdecha*, Let us travel and go and I will proceed alongside you." (*Bereishit* 32:12) Here too, Yaakov successfully manages to avoid this ill advised alliance.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the implicit message that Yaakov expressed to Esav. Esav has no need to be angry since the *berachot* were not fulfilled. However, Yaakov also wished to tell him that he is not interested in any lasting relationship. I lived with Lavan for twenty years and was not influenced by him. We physically dwelled together but actually lived apart. I managed to hold on to the traditions of my forefathers and not allow Lavan's evil ways to impact my family or me. Yes, I wish to remain cordial with you but we must live separate lives. "*Ma'aseh avot siman labanim*." This attitude of Yaakov has defined our relationship with

TZVI SHAPIRO (Continued from page 1)

"diminished." Abayei was saying that since the laws of nature were altered for this man by God, the man's *zechuyot* in *Olam Ha'Bah* would be decreased.

Based on this idea, we can understand the fact that when a person thanks God for His kindness in the *berachah* of *Ha'Gomel*, the congregation answers "Amen. May He who has bestowed every goodness upon you continue to bestow every goodness upon you." Wouldn't it be enough to just say "Amen," agreeing to the fact that Hashem is good? Apparently, saying Amen is not enough. Rather, we pray that Hashem should continue to bestow kindness even though Hashem has already been good to this person. Moreover, we pray that His goodness should extend both to *Olam Ha'Zeh* and *Olam Ha'Bah* and should not diminish the person's *zechuyot*.

Similarly, after we list all of Hashem's numerous kindnesses, we conclude in the 4th *berachah* of *Bircat Ha'Mazon*, "...and of all goodness forever may he not deprive us." This means that even though God gives us an abundance of good things, we pray that he should never deprive us of our *s'char* in *Olam Ha'Bah* because of his benevolence. Just like Yaakov, may we be able to retain our *zechuyot* both for *Olam Ha'Zeh* and *Olam Ha'Bah*.

HALACHA (Continued from page 2)

monly found in the *gemarah* also originate with such arrangements where an ill child was sold. Obviously, our custom is not to sell sick children, but to change the name of the patient in the hope of a *refuah*.

A. Changing or adding? *Sefer Ta'amei Ha'Minhagim* cites the *Sefer Rachamei Ha'Av* who states that not just anybody may change the name of a sick person. Only one whose actions are based in *ruach ha'kodesh* may give a person a different name than the one he was given at birth. The logic for this ruling is that a name has tremendous significance in determining the life of a person. Indeed, taking away his old name may cut off his very lifeline. For this reason, the common custom is not to take away the name that a person was given at birth, but to add a different name to the name he already has. Perhaps this is why Avraham, who was renamed by God (from the original Avram), had his new name replace his old name entirely, whereas Yaakov, who was renamed by an angel, is called Yisrael in addition to Yaakov.

B. Which names should be added? *Sefer Chasidim* records a custom that when choosing a new name for a sick person one should open a *chumash* to a random page and choose the first name that appears on the right hand side of the page. The logic for this custom is probably based on the above-mentioned idea that we are incapable of really choosing a name that is appropriate for this person. Instead, we leave it in God's hands based on which page we open to. The Rambam (*Kovetz Teshuvot Ha'Rambam V'igerotav* 1:52) writes that in general people should not use a *chumash* to determine the proper approach to take. Instead, our custom is to add a name with a positive connotation (i.e. Rafael, Baruch, Chaim, Shalom, Azriel etc.) that would suggest a forthcoming change of *mazal*. The *Chida* (*Sefer D'vash Lefi*) writes that when adding a name for a woman, one should not add the names Rachel, Batsheva, Tamar, or Leah, but should instead choose Chanah, Sarah, or Yocheved.

C. The permanence of the new name. Responsa *Minchat Elazar* (4:27) rules that when a person had a name added due to illness, the new name should be his first name, while his old name should be his middle name. If, however, the person dies from the illness, his son should be called to the torah with the new name as his middle name and his old name remaining his first name.

IV. Changing names for other reasons. Although the only place that the *Shulchan Aruch* mentions a custom to change a name is in reference to a sick person, the idea behind that ruling may apply to other areas as well. Rav Moshe Shternbuch (*Teshuvot V'hanhagot* 1:790) was asked for various ideas and *segulot* for a couple that had been married for ten years without having been blessed with children. Amongst his many suggestions, Rav Shternbuch mentions that the names of the parents may not be compatible and that may be the cause for the lack of children. He therefore suggests changing the name of either the husband or wife with the hope that the new name will be more compatible in the eyes of God. Of course, once the new name becomes well known, the *ketubah* should be fixed to reflect the change.

Additionally, the Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:4) writes that one of the methods of repentance is for the sinner to change his name, thereby suggesting that he is not the same person who committed the sin. Needless to say, the generally accepted custom does not seem to be to change one's name when he repents.

V. Conclusion. We have discussed the pertinent issues regarding the appropriate occasions to change a person's name. It is important to point out that any change in a name must not be done flippantly, regardless of the circumstances, as the name of a person reflects his very essence. Before changing anybody's name a competent authority should be consulted to provide guidance.

CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE THAT HELPED IN DONATING ITEMS FOR BOTH THE CHANNUKAH TOY DRIVE AND DRS COAT DRIVE. THE CHANNUKAH TOY DRIVE COLLECTED OVER 100 TOYS AND OVER \$800. THE DRS CLOTHING DRIVE COLLECTED 5,000 ARTICLES OF CLOTHING .

STORIES OF GREATNESS:
WEEKLY ACCOUNTS OF INSPIRATION

BY: NAFI SCHWARZENBERGER

A wealthy traveler came to the small village of Radin, Poland, just to meet the famous Chofetz Chaim, whose piety and brilliance were admired all over the world. Entering the sage's tiny home, the wayfarer was shocked at the simplicity of the abode. In the center of the room stood an old table and rickety bench. The kitchen was tiny and primitive, and the small on the side was hardly befitting this leader of European Jewry. "Rebbe", the man asked, "Where are all your possessions? How can you live with barely a thing?"

The Chofetz Chaim gently asked the man, "And how did you arrive here?"

"By coach", said the man.

The Chofetz Chaim walked outside and peered into the very fine carriage. He then turned to the wealthy traveler and asked, "I see no dining room here, nor a kitchen, and not even a bed?"

"But Rebbe," the man protested, "I am but traveling. I don't need those amenities. I don't know where I'll be tomorrow, and they are only useful in a fixed place".

The Chofetz Chaim smiled!! "I, too, am traveling in this world. I know not where I will be tomorrow. I only need temporary amenities.

**THE CANTOR WHO
LOST HIS VOICE**

The cantor of Berdichev wasn't looking at his position happily.

In almost any other house of prayer, the distressed cantor thought, he would have understood his role during services. The beauty of his voice would inspire the whole congregation to lift their voices and hearts to Hashem. The fervor of his singing would be the perfect complement to an ordinary rabbi's more subdued prayers.

But Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was no ordinary rabbi. He shouted, he cried, he sang out his heart's pleas to Hashem. One moment, he would wave his hands madly. The next, he would sink quietly into himself, only to burst out again into a sing-song story. Then he would suddenly stride back and forth on the *bimah*, leaving no safe place for the cantor to even

stand.

What could a cantor do? Sing quietly and steadily, in hopes of providing some contrast to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's drama? Or sing ever more loudly and heart-renderingly, hoping not to be over-shadowed?

One day, just before services, the cantor of Berdichev approached Rabbi Levi Yitzchak. "Rabbi, I cannot sing today. My voice is hoarse from last week."

"Hoarse?" Rabbi Levi Yitzchak looked closely at the man. "What have you been doing, to become hoarse?"

The cantor lowered his eyes piously. "I have been singing before the Ark. The Ark that holds the holy Torah!"

"I understand," said Rabbi Levi Yitzchak.

"Thank you, Rabbi," said the cantor. "I knew you would understand."

"What I understand," said Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, "is that singing before the Ark could make you hoarse. But singing before the living Hashem, that could never make you hoarse!"

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Weekly Torah Publication of the DRS Yeshiva High School

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