



Names



Aims:

- 1) To learn about why Yaakov's name is changed to Yisrael and the significance of this change.
- 2) To think about the importance of a name both in Judaism and in the wider world.
- 3) To think about our own names and about what it means to have 'a good name'.
- 4) To be aware of the names that we call each other.



Dear Madrichim

Welcome to a new week and a new Choveret!

This week the Choveret is about names, starting with the name of our nation which was born in this week's Parasha when Yaakov was renamed Yisrael, and leading on to thinking about our own names and the importance of names in general. This is a great opportunity for us and our Chanichim to think about who we are and how we want to be perceived by others.

I hope you are enjoying the 5771 Choveret. Please continue to take advantage of pages 6 and 7, designed to help you ensure that your Chanichim are learning as well as having fun. Thank you for your feedback which is much appreciated. If you have further comments, complaints or constructive criticisms of the Choveret then please do not hesitate to contact me at chinuch@bauk.org ☺

Have a wonderful Shabbat, enjoy Sviva, and make sure your Chanichim enjoy it too!

All the best

Alan ☺

Parashat Vayishlach opens with the dramatic meeting between Yaakov and Esav after twenty years apart. After such a long break from each other and with the threat of Esav's revenge looming over him, Yaakov approaches the meeting with fear and trepidation. We see that he takes three precautions in preparation: sending gifts ahead of him to placate Esav; making military preparations by splitting his camp; and invoking Hashem's help by praying to be saved from the hand of his brother.

וַיִּתֵּר יַעֲקֹב, לְבִדּוֹ; וַיֵּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ, עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר.

“And Yaakov was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of dawn.” (Bereishit 32:25)

As the drama unfolds, the Torah then tells us that:

Yaakov wrestles with this ‘man’, identified by Rashi as the guardian angel of Esav. As the mysterious episode comes to an end it becomes more intriguing:



“And he [the man] said: 'Let me go, for dawn is breaking.'

And he [Yaakov] said: 'I will not let you go, except if you bless me.'

And he said unto him: 'What is your name?'

And he said: 'Yaakov.'

And he said: 'Your name shall be called no more Yaakov, but **Yisrael**; for you have striven (*sarita*) with Hashem (*Elohim*) and with men, and have prevailed.'

And Yaakov asked him, and said: 'Tell me, please, your name.'

And he said: 'Why is it that you ask after my name?'

And he blessed him there.”

(Bereishit 32:27-30)

- Why does the ‘man’ change Yaakov’s name? How is this a blessing?
- Why does he not answer when Yaakov asks him for his name?

We see throughout Tanach that names are particularly significant and we learn that each name says something fundamental about that individual. In naming their children, many people in Tanach had certain intentions in mind regarding the lives and future achievements of their offspring.



Lemech when giving birth to his son says:

“And he called his name **Noach** saying, ‘this one will bring us rest [*yenachamenu*] from our work and from the toil of our hands from the ground which Hashem has cursed.”

(Bereishit 5:29)

Leah when giving birth to her third son says:

“‘This time my husband will become attached [*yelave*] to me for I have given birth to three sons,’ therefore she called his name **Levi**.”

(Bereishit 29:34)

- Why does Leah think that after her third child Yaakov will become attached to her?
- When we are crossing the road with 3 children what do we need?

Naming at the Beginning

One of the first tasks assigned to man is to name the animals, as it says:

וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת, לְכָל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּלְכָל, חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה.

“And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and all the birds of the sky and to every beast of the field.” (Bereishit 2:20)

- Why was it important for Adam to name the animals?
- Was this connected to his instruction to ‘fill the earth and conquer it’?

Names as a form of Oppression

In 1935 the Nazis decreed that all Jews must adopt an official Jewish name: Israel (Jacob) or Sarah. This was to be included on their passport along with the large ‘J’ stamp. In contrast, the Midrash teaches that one of the reasons that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt was that they did not take on Egyptian names (Mechilta D’Rabbi Yishmael, Parshat Bo).



- Why are the Jews praised for not changing their names?
- Why did the Nazis insist on a Jewish name? Was it to identify?

The Name of the State of Israel

Only the day before the declaration of independence did the Zionist movement actually decide on the name of the fledgling state. Possible alternatives were Zion, The Land of Israel, Yehuda, and Ever (from Ivri). Would it have been very different if we jetted off to Yehuda for our holidays?



"We, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and the Zionist Movement... do hereby proclaim the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel, to be known as the State of Israel."

Names are the key to our identity. One of the first acts of assimilation is a change of name. The generations who came from Eastern Europe to Britain feared the stigma attached to their Jewish sounding names and as a result they anglicised their names on the way in. Simansky turned into Simons and Shmulevitz turned into Samuels. When we look at the hatches, matches and dispatches section of the JC today, we notice a resurgence of Jewish names.

Our names are important as they are part of our first impression to others. In addition, they often remind us of what we have to live up to, especially if we are named after a family member or a character in Tanach who gives us a good guide as to how to live our lives.

Our name tells other people who we are. The more good things we do, the more credit we give to our own personal name, the name of our family, and ultimately to the name given to Yaakov in this week's Parasha: Yisrael.

Names also play an important role in Jewish law. We use names in all life cycle events, from naming a baby to calling up a Barmitzva boy, and from what's written on the Ketuba at a wedding to the prayers said for the sick.

We also learn that we must not call others offensive nicknames or slur their reputation. Our aim in life is always to have a good name...

A good name is preferred to a lot of wealth... (Mishlei 22:1)

A good name is better than good oil... (Kohelet 7:1)

Rabbi Shimon said "There are 3 crowns: Torah, Priesthood and Kingship. But the Crown of a good name goes above them all. (Pirkei Avot 4:17)

You find that a person is called by three names: one that his father and mother name him, one that people call him, and one that he acquires for himself. The best is the one he acquires himself. (Midrash Tanchuma Vayakhel 1)

Peulah Planning

While it is essential to make sure that Sviva is full of fun and games, it is also very important to make sure that your Chanichim learn something.

This does not just mean that you should give a quick half-a-minute explanation of why certain games were played and then tenuously link them to the theme of the Choveret. Rather it means that you should set aside a significant amount of time each week for engaging your Chanichim in a discussion about the key issues that come out of the weekly theme.

This is not as scary as it may sound, and it can also be done in fun and exciting ways. Therefore I have included in this section of the Choveret both GAMES and DISCUSSION POINTS, to help you ensure that your Chanichim are getting the most out of Sviva, both in terms of enjoyment and in terms of knowledge.

GAMES

- Name games: Great chance to pull out all those old favourites!
 - Step in, step out, come and introduce yourself
 - Hi, my name is X, his name is Y, his name is chiqa chiqa...
 - Bang Bang using the name of the person to your right.
- Name pairs: Match up Hebrew names to their translations (for younger groups) or to their actual meanings (for older groups).
- What's your Name: Ask Chanichim why they are called what they are called – a good way to get everyone to speak and share funny stories.
- Double meanings: Start with an object with more than one name and then each Chanich in turn must give it a different name. When they come to a word with dual meaning they can switch the meaning.




(Remember that your Sviva has two excellent games booklets with tons more suggestions and also that not every game has to be linked to the weekly theme.)

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Ask the Chanichim where their names came from and whether they prefer their Hebrew or English name and lead into a discussion about the importance of names with respect to our identity.
- Show them different quotes about how a name is really a reputation and get them to discuss them and to think about if there are any names which they don't like because they associate them with something negative which was done by someone with that name.
- Give different groups a different suggested name for the State of Israel and get them to argue why it could have been called those other names and then discuss how significant it is that Israel has the name which it does.

Parasha in Pictures!

Vayishlach

'Yaakov was  alone and a  wrestled with him until the break of .'

Ch. 32: Yaakov prepares to meet Esav and struggles with an angel all night.

Ch. 33: Yaakov and Esav meet again and then go their own separate ways.

Ch. 34: Dina is abducted and Shimon and Levi destroy the city of Shechem.

Ch. 35: Binyamin is born, Rachel dies, Reuven sins, and Yitzchak dies aged 180.

Ch. 36: The descendants of Esav and the Edomite kings are recorded.



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For more information or to arrange a Chavruta email Alan at chinuch@bauk.org

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22 - 29 December 2010

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