

# The JEWISH Spin on Current Events

## JUDGING POLITICIANS BY THEIR NAMES

*What role does a name play in ones character?*

### c OVERVIEW d

1. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HEBREW NAMES?
2. HOW DOES ONE KNOW WHAT NAME TO GIVE THEIR CHILD?
3. WHAT OTHER BENEFITS DOES A NAME HAVE TO A PERSON?
4. CAN A 'NAME CHANGE' ADJUST ONE'S SOUL OR CHARACTER?
5. HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ENGLISH NAMES?

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March 5, 2008

*(Next class will be held on March 19)*



A Project of the

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**c SOURCES d****1. What is the significance of Hebrew names?****c 1A d**

GENESIS 2:20

And the man assigned names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to every beast of the field...

**c 1B d**

MEDRASH TANCHUMA, PARSHAS HA'AZINU

A person should research names in choosing one to call his son so that he may be worthy of being a tzadik, for at times, the name causes the person to be good or bad, etc.

**c 1C d**

ZOHAR, VAYAKHEL, 223B

Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Yitzchok once were walking together when Rabbi Yossi remarked: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, indeed chose Betzalel from all Israel for the work of the Tabernacle. Why so?' Rabbi Yitzchok replied: 'There is something in a name. It has been laid down that G-d has appointed certain names here on earth to be a crown to men and to enable them to achieve certain things.'

Rabbi Yossi thereupon said: '...the Holy One, blessed be He, took delight in him and chose him above all the rest for this work, and gave him wisdom and understanding and knowledge, inasmuch as he already was possessed of all wisdom of heart, as it is written: "and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom" (Exodus 31:6). For the Holy One, blessed be He, does not grant wisdom only to him that already has wisdom.'

Rabbi Shimon said: 'The name Bezalel was symbolic, and he was called so in virtue of his wisdom; esoterically the name is composed of b'zel-El (in the Shadow of G-d).'

**c 1D d**

TANYA, SHAAR HAYICHUD, CHAPTER 1

It is written: "Forever, O G-d, Your word stands firm in the heavens." The Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, has explained that "Your word" which you uttered, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...", these very words and letters stand firmly forever within the firmament of heaven and are forever clothed within all the heavens to give them life, as it is written, "The word of our G-d shall stand firm forever" and "His words live and stand firm forever..." For if the letters were to depart [even] for an instant, G-d forbid, and return to their source, all the heavens would become naught and absolute nothingness, and it would be as though they had never existed at all, exactly as

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before the utterance, “Let there be a firmament.” And so it is with all created things, in all the upper and lower worlds, and even this physical earth, which is the “Kingdom of the silent” (inanimate)...

This same thought was expressed by the Ari, of blessed memory, when he said that even in completely inanimate matter, such as stones or earth or water, there is a soul and spiritual life-force...

Now, although the name *even* (stone) is not mentioned in the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah, nevertheless, life-force flows to the stone through combinations and substitutions of the letters which are transposed in the “Two hundred and thirty-one gates,” either in direct or reverse order, as is explained in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, until the combination of the name *even* descends from the Ten Utterances, and is derived from them, and this is the life-force of the stone. And so it is with all created things in the world-their names in the Holy Tongue are the very “letters of speech” which descend, degree by degree, from the Ten Utterances recorded in the Torah, by means of substitutions and transpositions of letters through the “two hundred and thirty-one gates,” until they reach and become invested in that particular created thing to give it life.

**2. How does one know what name to give their child?**

**c 2A d**

OTZAR HABRIS, PAGE 327

The names parents give to their children are the very names that G-d calls it in the Upper World. And Hashem gives the insight into man [i.e., the parents] to call his children with that very same names just as G-d called the soul.

**3. What other benefits does a name have to a person?**

**c 3A d**

TOLDOS YAAKOV YOSEF, PARSHAS SHEMOS, PAGE 139

I have heard from my teacher (The Ba'al Shem Tov) that just as one grasps one body by physically holding on to it, so too, one grasps the soul by calling his name. Even when one sleeps, he can be awakened by calling his name.

**4. Can a 'name change' adjust one's soul or character?****c 4A d**

GENESIS 17:4

As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be a father of a multitude of nation; your name shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

**c 4B d**

GENESIS 17:15

And G-d said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife – do not call her name Sarai, for Sarah is her name.

**c 4C d**

GENESIS 32:29

He said, "No longer will it be said that your name is Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with the Divine and with man and have overcome."

**c 4D d**

NUMBERS 13:16

These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the Land. Moses called Hoshea son of Nun "Joshua."

**5. How does this apply to English names?**