



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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What's in a name? This week's *parsha*, Shemot, begins with a focus on names, in a review of all of the names of the descendants of Yaakov who went down to Egypt. Indeed, names are a powerful thing. After all, our rabbis tell us that when parents name a child, there is 1/60th of prophecy in that decision. They will be called the name the parents give for the rest of his or her life, thousands and maybe millions of times. Knowing this, many parents take their time to think of the name, with the goal of deciding on a name that maximizes meaning and significance. Generally speaking, Ashkenazi Jews give names for those deceased who were important to them, and if that isn't relevant, they pick other meaningful names. Sephardic Jews, on the other hand, will also name based on the living. Either way, Jews seek the names with the most impact, the most connection, the greatest meaning.

As someone who has been part of that process nine times for my own children, *Baruch Hashem*, I can tell you that naming a child is an intense, yet happy, occasion. It calls for a celebration. Whether by the *Brit Milah* or at the reading of the Torah, it is a moment of happiness and excitement (with whispers of guesses before the name is called out). The father or mother, or both, often get up and explain to the crowd of friends and family why they decided on that name. It's a joyous event.

However, the war we are in has put us in a unique situation. A tragic one. Names have taken on a darker tone. Unfortunately, we

have seen too often these past few months parents burying their children. Obviously, this is not the natural course of events. In the natural order of the world, parents are meant to be long gone before their children pass, but because of the war that was forced upon us we're in a situation where so many parents, who gave their children their names just 20 or 30 years ago, are standing at their children's funerals. They often explain yet again to family and friends why they chose their child's name, but now they do so with sobs of sadness instead of tears of joy. Many times, they describe how the name they gave truly represents their child and who they turned out to be. Their names relate to their personality, their bravery, their passion, and all the other positive attributes they grew to represent.

One of the reasons the *parsha* focuses on names is that while lists of names begin the story of how the Jews went down to Egypt, it also represents one of the reasons we were redeemed. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 32:5) states, "Rav Huna stated in the name of Bar Kappara: Israel was redeemed from Egypt on account of four things - because they did not change their names... They

In loving memory of my mother

**Karin Fürst a"h**

Hamburg - Oslo - Göteborg - Tel Aviv

קארין אסתר בת אברהם יוסף הלוי ע"ה

כ"ה בטבת תשס"ח

*Ari Shalit and family*

went down as Reuven and Shimon, and they came up as Reuven and Shimon. They did not call Reuven ‘Rufus’, nor Yehudah ‘Leon,’ nor Yosef ‘Lestes’, nor Binyamin ‘Alexander’.” It is because they held onto their Jewish names that they deserved to remain the Jewish people and be redeemed from Egypt.

Imagine being in Egypt, enslaved by the ancient Pharaoh. Why would it be so important what you name your child? But the Jews then knew, as we must recognize now, that these names keep us unique as a people. It’s what connects us to the generations before us, and it’s what will continue to connect us to the generations after us. This is what leads to redemption.

There was a recent publication of the most popular names in Israel from 2023, and I noticed how Jewish, yet uniquely Israeli, many of the top names are. For girls, the most popular names include Avigayil, Tamar, Ayala, Maya, Noya, Sara and Yael. For boys, the most popular name was Ariel, presumably a renewed prayer for the *Beit HaMikdash bimheira beyameinu*. Other popular boys names include David (also presumably representing a wish for *Mashiach*), Raphael, Yosef, Lavi, Ari, Noam, Ori, Moshe and Yehudah. This list was published this week because we are ending 2023 and starting 2024, but how divinely providential it is that it coincides with the *parsha* of names, where we are asked to consider the names of our children.

שמות בנות			שמות בנים		
אחוזים	מספרים מוחלטים	שם פרטי	אחוזים	מספרים מוחלטים	שם פרטי
2.05	1,284	אביגיל	2.62	1,710	דוד
1.83	1,147	תמר	2.15	1,404	אריאל
1.81	1,135	איילה	2.04	1,332	לביא
1.76	1,100	מאיה	1.96	1,282	רפאל
1.66	1,041	נועה	1.91	1,248	יוסף
1.66	1,037	שרה	1.90	1,242	ארי
1.52	952	יעל	1.83	1,194	נועם
1.44	902	אסתר	1.73	1,132	אורי
1.31	823	אדל	1.69	1,106	משה
1.30	815	ליבי	1.60	1,044	יהודה

I’ll never forget a story I heard from Daliah Emanuelof, who tragically lost her son Dvir in 2009. Dvir’s family used to be my neighbors in Givat Ze’ev. Dahlia told me some years after Dvir’s death that she was feeling very down. She looked up to the heavens and said, “*Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, please just give me a sign that Dvir is still with me.” That

very day, a few hours later, she was at an event where there was a child behind her making a lot of noise and shaking her chair. She gets up to turn around when she hears the child’s parents calling for him, “Dvir! Dvir!” She asked the parents, “Out of curiosity, why did you name your son

Dvir?” The parents responded, “There was this soldier who passed away. His name was Dvir Emanuelof. He was such a *gibor* and such a *ben Torah*, the ultimate soldier, that

May the Torah learning from this issue be in loving memory of

**MICHAEL MOSHE LEIB  
BEN YOSEF BAER Z”L**  
beloved twin brother  
on his 15th yartzheit

**MEIR ZALMAN BEN  
GÖDEL PESACH Z”L**  
(Matthew S. Silverberg)  
beloved cousin on his 10th yartzheit

**REUVEN BEN CHAIM Z”L**  
(Richard Tilis)  
beloved cousin on his 1st yartzheit

*Avraham & Malka Shrybman*

we decided to name our son Dvir after him, after a real hero.” Dahlia immediately burst out, “That’s my son!” This was the sign she was waiting for.

I’m sure we’re going to find that many names given this year will be influenced by this war. The fact that we are giving names that connect our children to the previous generations, whether because they passed away, or to honor their importance during their lifetime, such as Sephardim naming after living grandparents, this is really a beautiful thing. It shows the link between generations.

Each year at the Pesach Seder we recite “*Bechol dor vador, omdim aleinu lechaloteinu*, in every generation, our enemies try to destroy us.” Yet, I am reminded more and more how names have kept us going. They have connected us. The same way as those who perished in the Holocaust are remembered by their names, in their families and on the monuments of Yad Vashem, this generation is remembering our soldiers who are not forgotten. Their names and values live on in the Jewish people.

*Yehi ratzon* that just as the Jews in Egypt were redeemed through their keeping of their names from generation to generation, with G-d’s help we will see the *geulah* again in part because of *Klal Yisrael* staying strong and passing our names to the next generation. In this merit, may we see a speedy and full redemption in our days.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Show your hakarat hatov to Torah Tidbits by donating



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