


HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

When *davening* for him, how does one mention the name of an invalid who is a convert? Should one use the gentile mother's name? Should the mother's name be omitted?

The issues:

- A) *Davening* for the sick
- B) *Shem kodesh*, the Hebrew name
- C) Using the invalid's mother's name; a convert

A) *Davening for the sick* [excerpted from Halochoscope VIII:25]

In the Torah, Avraham Avinu prayed for Avimelech. Hagar cried out for Yishmael. Moshe Rabeinu *davened* for Miriam. The Talmud says the main purposes of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick, are to make oneself aware of their needs and to be aroused to *tefilah* for their recovery. The manner in which one is meant to attend the sick, sitting low in submission, praying and repenting, is to arouse the invalid to *tefilah*. If he saw his visitors neglecting *tefilah*, he might give up hope and neglect to *daven* himself. Hashem wants the *tefilos* of the invalid. [Talmudic and Midrashic sources state that Hashem orchestrates a situation in order to hear the *tefilos* of Israel, based on a verse in Shir Hashirim: “let Me hear your voice”.] In the Wilderness, the Israelites were struck with a plague of wild serpents. They were saved when they raised their eyes heavenward in *tefilah*.

King David was informed that his son would die. The prospect at that time was that once he took ill, nothing could save him. Nonetheless, David fasted and prayed. The objectives of *teshuva* and *tefilah* stand alone, regardless of the presence or absence of direct results perceived by mankind. King Chizkiyahu was terminally ill. He maintained a long-standing tradition that one may never give up on *tefilah*. Even after the decree has begun to take effect, *tefilah* can save one from grave and hopeless sickness. He was cured through his *tefilah*. He also concealed a book of remedies so that people would not come to rely on medicine to the exclusion of *tefilah*. He taught the world that one must always have faith in *tefilah* and *teshuva*. When the desired results of one's *tefilah* do not appear, one must realize that in the long term each *tefilah* helps. Some say that one does not fulfill *bikur cholim* unless he *davens* for the invalid. The visit should bring about the *tefilos* of both patient and visitor. Saying “*refuah shelaimah*” with sincerity is considered *tefilah*.

The scriptural source for *tefilah* (*Mishpatim* 23:25-27) lists five things for which to *daven*: prosperity, specifically abundance and quality of bread and water; removal of sickness; absence of miscarriages; long life; and protection from enemies. Thus, health is one of the main purposes of *tefilah*. The Talmud and commentaries maintain that for the truly righteous, medicine will not cure – only *tefilah*. While Hashem creates the laws of nature to determine natural events, the righteous rise above these laws with *tefilah*.

Moreover, gentiles are governed by *mazal*, destiny. Israel is not governed by it. Any decree can be overturned by *teshuva* and *tefilah*. The poskim debate whether this applies to the people as a whole or also to individuals. There are indications that though length of life seems predetermined, this too can be changed. The main thing that can change *mazal* is *zechus*, merits earned from certain deeds. According to some, these, too, require *tefilah* to make them work. Some even maintain that *tefilah* alone can provide *zechus*.

“A prisoner cannot release himself from jail.” He needs outside help. The Talmud relates that one may pray that another is aided in repenting, to save himself. Some consider this an obligation. This seems to interfere with freewill. The commentaries explain: Hashem never forces one to repent. Rather, in response to the *tefilah* of the person praying, Hashem draws closer to him, and in his merit, to the entire universe. This nearness helps the invalid for whom he *davened* to do *teshuva*.

In summary, the object of *tefilah* is to bring about a change for the good. It works hand in hand with repentance, acting as a *zechus*, even after a heavenly decree has begun to materialize. Regardless of medical prognosis, the obligation to *daven* remains. It is an obligation to *daven* for one's own health and for others, and even for another's repentance. [See e.g. Brochos 5b Shabbos 12b 156a-b Psachim 56a Rosh Hashanah 17b Taanis 25a Moed Katan 28a Nedarim 39b-40a Kidushin 82a Baba Basra 16b etc., Poskim. Tur Sh Ar YD 335, esp. 4, commentaries.]

B) *The shem kodesh* [abridged from Halochoscope XVII:11a.]

Hashem, means 'the name'. We may not utter Hashem's holy names unnecessarily, so we use the word for name, with a definite article. Everything has a name. The ultimate name is that of the First Cause of everything. Each of His names has a different meaning, to connect to His specific 'attributes' in that context. The first mention of names in the Torah is in reference to rivers. The next mention is in reference to the naming of the animals by Adam, as instructed by Hashem. This then became the 'name'.

In any language, the term 'name' means a number of different things. It identifies the person, so that he or she is no longer an unknown entity, that almost does not exist. It also identifies the person specifically, since the whole purpose of the name is to distinguish between this person and that person. This could be done with a number, but the use of a name has more personal meaning. A name also means famous or well-known, even on a small scale. It also refers to a reputation, as in a good or bad name. In most contexts, it also represents the essence of something. That is, the name might be some linguistic form of another word or words, perhaps contracted or changed. These might mean a specific quality or they might be connected to events, people, phenomena or the like. The purpose is to impart a sense of the item, place or person.

Hashem created each animal using its name in the Holy Tongue. Adam called them all by a name as well. Hashem had a reason to change the names to what Adam thought of, or He wanted to show the level of intelligence that Adam had in understanding the nature of every animal, or He showed that Adam's intelligence led him to name the animals exactly as Hashem had named them. This shows how deeply the name used by a human is connected to the original nature of the being that Hashem had in mind from its creation. The names of rivers could also have been created before humans called them by

those names. The names were then handed to Adam. Or, the Torah acknowledges the names given by the humans with the same type of divinely inspired intelligence. Thus, when a name is given, it clearly has a measure of divinely inspired intelligence.

This inspiration is given to those who name a child. As he or she develops, the name will become synonymous with the identity and spiritual calling of that child. The Jewish name is called the *shaim kodesh*, holy name. This is the term used in *halachic* contexts for Hashem's names used in the Scriptures as opposed to mundane uses of a similar word. When the Israelites were counted, it was by their names. The name is also used when we wish to pray for the person. Indeed, this is the first time the name is used. At the time of the *bris milah*, a name is given to the boy in the middle of a *tefilah*, and for a girl, a *tefilah* is made in *shul* over a *sefer Torah*. The name allows a person to be mentioned in the heavens. The names of the tribes of Yisroel were engraved on the vestments of the *kohain gadol* when he served in the temple. We have a tradition that every Jew's name is to be found somewhere in the Torah. Thus there is a holiness to the name, and the person naming him or her is actually tapping in to the source of that holiness.

The Midrash says that one has three names: one that is given by his parents, one that he is called by others and one that is 'written in the book of his creation'! Some maintain that one has seven names, all connected to his soul: Ploni the son of his father's name; P. the son of his mother's name; P. the son of his father and his mother's names together; P. son of his father, son of **his** father (the grandfather); named with the great-grandfather; named with the tribe/family; named for his occupation; name as he is commonly known.

Generally, the parents name the child. There are exceptions, such as Moshe being named, apparently, by the daughter of Paroh, and Oved, son of Ruth, named by her neighbors. Sometimes, Hashem names a person, but He tells the parent to formally do it, as we see in the cases of Yitzchok and Yishmael. While it is divinely inspired, the parents choose the name and are responsible for it. The *Midrash* says that in earlier times, names were based on events, because there was no need to record lineage. Nowadays we need to preserve lineage. Therefore, we name after ancestors. A convert assumes a new *shem kodesh*, usually of his own choosing and divinely inspired. [See Parshas Beraishis 2:19-20 Shemos 3:13-15 Bemidbar 1:2 Tehilim 147:4, commentaries. Brochos 7b Yuma 83b. Koheless Rabasi 7:3, 41. Tanchuma Haazinu 7. Sefer Yetzira Perek 2-4 etc. Tur BY Sh Ar EH 129, commentaries. Kisevei Arizal Shaar Hagilgulim. Yosef Ometz, end. Refs in Sefer Habris, Mekor Ubiur Halacha 10. Bais Aharon II, end. Igros Moshe EHIII:35.]

C) The mother's name

One's *mazal* is associated with his given name, so much so that one way to effect a change in *mazal* is by changing the name. In general, a Jew is identified by his name, son of his father's name. This is how he is called to the Torah, honored, and documented. When praying for Miriam, Moshe did not mention her name. Accordingly, the Talmud says that one need not mention the name of the person for whom one is *davening*. Some say this means that one may not mention it. Others say this refers to praying in his presence. Especially if he is very ill, this can demoralize him. In addition, sometimes the name can arouse more judgment. The common practice is to follow the view that when the invalid is not present, his name is mentioned.

Various references to *tefilah* mention the name of the person with his mother's name, rather than that of his father. This is especially so when referring to health. The explanations for this vary. Some say that it is an unexplained mystery relevant only to such *tefilos*. Some say, based on the Zohar, that the mother's name is totally undoubted. Some say that the mother has less demerits, and accordingly, more *zechus*. Some cite the Talmudic dictum that the mother contributes the physical aspects, that are the source of sickness. In some Scriptural references, the mother of the invalid *davened* especially hard.

If the name of the mother is not known, some say one should mention the father's name anyhow. Others maintain that neither parent's name should be mentioned. There is also a practice to use the name Sarah, mother of the Jewish people. Some mention Chava, who is named as the mother of all living humans. The varying views reflect the opinions on why the mother's name is used. If it is a mystery or to be absolutely certain, it would be preferable not to mention any parent. If it is to mention as many *zechuyos* as possible, or one of the other reasons, the father is better than nothing.

A convert is considered born again spiritually. The question is whether to mention the name of his birth mother in this context. *Tefilah* is recited in a holy context. One should not utter the gentile name in this context. When a *gair* is mentioned in Jewish documents, the poskim debate how he is to be identified. The prevailing practice is that his father is given as Avraham Avinu. He is considered the father of converts. From the same source, Sarah is the mother of converts. Thus, there is indeed a practice to use the name of Sarah as his mother when *davening* for his health. Others suggest using the name Avraham Avinu. He surely had enough *zechuyos*. If the hope is that the mother will help intercede in heaven, Sarah or Chavah would both be appropriate. [See refs to A and B. Zohar Lech Lecha 173. Brochos 34a 55b Bikurim 1:4 (Yerushalmi) Shabbos 66b Psachim 112a Chagigah 9b (Tos.) Gitin 34b (Tos. Yam Shel Shlomo) Baba Metzia 59a Baba Basra 81a, commentaries. Sefer Chasidim 237 242, Mekor Hachessed. ShT Rashba 413. Maharil Smachos. Sh Ar OC 53:19 116 119 MA1 EH 129:5 20, commentaries. ShT Chasam Sofer EH 41. Torah Lishmah 399. Yabia Omer II:11. Btzail Hachochmah III:91. Mitzvah Bikur Cholim, Biurim 43:11.]

In conclusion, any of these suggestions could be correct. As long as one is consistent, he will always have an opinion to rely on. Therefore, one should follow one view consistently. A *shul* should have a consistent *minhag* as well.

On the parsha ... Perhaps another reason Yisro had a letter added to his name was due to his conversion. His gentile name should no longer be used in holy contexts.

Sponsored by Noah Bass and Debbie Rotenstein in memory of Debbie's mother, Rochel bas

Chaim a"h, whose *yahrzeit* is the 17th of Shevat. ☞

Sponsored in honor of Malka Fayga's birthday on Tu biShevat, and on behalf of the Pittsburgh

Jewish Community to welcome the Bostoner Rebbe Har Nof this week.

Correction to last issue: in memory of Amy's father, Zev Avraham ben Yosef z"l. ☞

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