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How to Understand Your Mission

By Rabbi Dr. Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)

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# The Prophecy of your name.

A Jewish name is profoundly spiritual. In Hebrew, a name is not merely a convenient conglomeration of letters. Rather the name reveals its essential characteristic. Names represent our identity not simply because they are a convenient way to allow us to be distinguished one from another. It is because they define us. The names we are given at birth aren’t accidental. They are to some extent prophetic. They capture our essence. They are the keys to our soul.

The Hebrew word for soul is neshamah. Central to that word, the middle two letters, shin and mem, make the word shem, Hebrew for ‘name.’ Your name is the key to your soul.

Names are a book. They tell a story. The story of our spiritual potential as well as our life’s mission. That explains the fascinating midrash that tells us when we complete our years on this earth and face heavenly judgment, one of the most powerful questions we will be asked at the outset is, What is your name – and did you live up to it?

The Bible remarkably tells us “As his name, so is he” - 1 Shmuel (Samuel) 25:25. Talmudic sages offer countless examples of the connection between the names of biblical characters and their actions.

Our name is a message from HaShem entrusted to our name-givers in order to help us define our mission on earth. The Talmud tells us that parents receive one-sixtieth of prophecy when picking a name. An angel comes to the parents and whispers the Jewish name that the new baby will embody.

Mystics teach a remarkable tradition: At death every person is asked his or her name. Why? Because your name is your mission. What we are really being asked is whether we lived up to the ideals and potentials given to us at birth.

Does that mean then that we are predestined to lives circumscribed by something beyond our control? Are we doomed to play out roles handed to us by our parents while we were infants? Is our free will limited by our names?

Of course that is impossible. Judaism emphasizes the principle of freedom of choice. Yet our names can perfectly describe us because they are predictions of our futures. What makes parents decide on one particular name above all others? At a certain moment it suddenly becomes clear that this is who their child is and no other name will do. The decision, according to our tradition, is guided by a divine spirit— one of the very last remaining powers of prophecy to persist even in our generation.

It is not our name that forces us to be what we are. It is what we are that transmits itself in a profoundly prophetic manner to those entrusted with the holy task of choosing our names.

Indeed, every parent is a prophet at the time of naming a child. It is a remarkable gift from God. But it is also an awesome responsibility.

According to the Ari, even the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in one's name can be indicative of an individual's character.

# Living with the Times

A favorite aphorism of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Chabad, was that "one needs to live with the times." This means that we are to live in tune with the week's Torah portion, and we should attempt to gain insight and understanding into the week's events by looking into the weekly Torah portion. The week's Torah reading, known as the Parshah, has special relevance to anything that happens during that week.

It would seem clear, then, that the Torah portion which was studied during the week, and read on the Shabbat, of a person's birth, would be extremely meaningful in providing some direction to his/her life.

If you don't know the Parshah, go to a Jewish Calendar, browse over to your year and date of birth, and see which Parshah was read on the Shabbat following your birth (or, if you were born on Shabbat, on the day you were born).

If the Shabbat after your birth coincided with a Jewish holiday, then the weekly Parshah is not read that day, so your Parshah is the one read the following Shabbat (or, in the rare instance when a holiday extends over two Shabbats, it would be the Shabbat after that).

# The Process

How do I find my mission in life?  The Torah is divided into 54 portions.  We recite one portion a week throughout the year.  Each Shabbat reading is divided into 7 sections called Aliyot (which means a going up or ascending yes it is the same when we make aliyah to Israel, we ascend to Israel). This means that each week in history has been designated with a portion of the Torah and the seven Aliyot are commensurate with the seven days of the week.  If each of you goes to the day you were born you can figure out exactly what the Aliyah was that represented that day. Read the text in the Torah for that Aliyah, it tells you about you.  The information will miraculously give you information that alludes to your mission is in this world.  I reiterate that it is not always easy, especially in English, to get the full essence of the message being conveyed, but give it a try you may be surprised.

# Marcia Lee Killian – Batsheva bat Sarah

Marcia means “of Mars” or “Warlike”.

Batsheva (בת שבע) means “daughter of seven”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Gematria of בת שבע is 774.

Lee means “healer”.

Killian in means “little church” or “little and warlike”. In Hebrew it means “pining”.

Shebat 20, 5715, Shabbat (Saturday, February 12, 1955)

Parashat Yitro - Exodus 18:1 - 20:23 Maftir: Exodus 20:19-23  Haftarah for Sephardim: Isaiah 6:1 - 6:13

Seventh Aliyah (Exodus 20:15-23) - The Israelites were left traumatized by the overwhelming revelation, the awesome "light and sound" show. They turned to Moses and asked that from then on he should serve as an intermediary between them and G-d: Moses should hear G-d’s word and transmit it to the people. Moses agreed. The reading concludes with a prohibition against creating idolatrous graven images considering that no image was seen when G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai and the commandment to erect a sacrificial altar. The altar stones should not be hewn with iron implements, nor should there be steps leading to the top of the altar.

COMMENTS: Shlomo wrote the “Eshet Chayil” (Mishlei 31) about the ideal woman of Israel, as a poem in admiration of his mother, Batsheva! Notice that in Divrei HaYamim (1 Chronicles 3:5), Batsheva called Bat-Shua (בַּת-שׁוּעַ), like Yehuda’s wife (Breshit 38:12), so it must have been a common name, short for Bat-Y’shua, the daughter of redemption/deliverance.

# Gregory John Killian – Hillel ben David

Gregory means "watchful, alert".

Hillel (הלל) means “he greatly praised”. Gematria of הלל is 65.[[2]](#footnote-2)

John (יוֹחָנָן‬) means “HaShem is gracious”. Gematria of יוֹחָנָן is 124.

Killian in means “little church” or “little and warlike”. In Hebrew it means “pining”.

9th of Av, 5712 (Thurday, 31 July 1952)

Parashat Vaetchanan - Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

Fifth Aliyah (Deuteronomy 5:19 - 6:3) - Moses describes the fright which gripped the nation following the revelation on Sinai. The leaders of the tribes approached Moses and pleaded that he be the intermediary to transmit G-d’s words to them, and G-d agreed.

# Rachel Elizabeth Steinle

Rachel (רָחֵל‎) means “ewe, female sheep”.

Elizabeth means either “My God is bountiful; God of plenty”.

Steinle means “stone cutter”.

Kislev 4, 5735 (Monday, November 18, 1974)

Parashat Vayetzei - Genesis 28:10 - 32:3

Second Aliyah - Genesis 29:1-17 - Jacob continued on his journey, and arrived at a well located on the outskirts of Charan. Upon seeing Rachel, Laban's younger daughter, arriving with her father's sheep, Jacob single-handedly rolled off the heavy rock that sat atop the well, and gave water to the flock. Rachel told her father about the new arrival, and Laban rushed out to greet Jacob. Jacob went to Laban's home, and after spending a month, Laban offered Jacob the job of tending to his herds, and asked Jacob what he wished in terms of wages.

# Nicole Marie Baker

Nicole means “Victory of the People”.

Marie means “bitter”.

Baker means “To Dry by Heat”.

Shevat 23, 5736 (Sunday, January 25, 1976)

Parashat Mishpatim - Exodus 21:1 - 24:18

First Aliyah - Exodus 21:1-19 - This section discusses laws pertaining to the Israelite servant, his mandatory release after six years of service, and the procedure followed when a servant expresses his desire to remain in his master's service. The Torah continues with the laws of the Israelite maidservant, and her terms of release. Other laws contained in this section: a husband's obligations towards his wife; punishments for murder, manslaughter, kidnapping and abusing parents; and the penalties accrued by a person who injures another.

# Sarah Lee Hugle

Sarah (שָׂרָה) means “princess”.

Lee means “healer”.

Hugle means “hill in a ravine”

Av 11, 5740 (Thursday, July 24, 1980)

Parashat Vaetchanan - Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

Fifth Aliyah - Deuteronomy 5:19-6:3 - Moses describes the fright which gripped the nation following the revelation on Sinai. The leaders of the tribes approached Moses and pleaded that he be the intermediary to transmit G-d’s words to them, and G-d agreed.

# Micah Jonah Killian

Micah (מִיכָה) means “Who is Like HaShem?”

Jonah (יונה) means “Dove”.

Killian in means “little church” or “little and warlike”. In Hebrew it means “pining”.

Tevet 2, 5746 (Shabbat Chanukah, December 14, 1985) – We light eight candles!

Parashat Miketz - Genesis 41:1 - 44:17 Maftir: Numbers 7:54-8:4 Haftarah: 1 Kings 7:40-50

Seventh Aliyah - Genesis 43:30 - 44:17 - Upon seeing his brother Benjamin, Joseph was overcome with emotion, which he concealed. The brothers sat down and enjoyed a feast, and Joseph presented them all with gifts Benjamin's gift greater than all the others'. In the morning the brothers departed, but not before Joseph had his royal goblet planted in Benjamin's sack of food. Joseph then dispatched a posse to confront the brothers and "uncover" the planted goblet. The brothers were all brought back to Joseph, who demanded that the "thief," Benjamin alone, remain behind as his slave.

Yoseph hatches his final plot against his brothers. His famed chalice is planted in the Binyamin’s saddlebag forcing the brothers to return to Mitzrayim and a confrontation with Yoseph. The year is 2238.

COMMENT: Joseph’s most common phrase is “HaShem sent me”, as opposed to “you sold me”. This is the quiet understanding that wherever we find ourselves, HaShem sent us there for His purposes.

# Takae Killian

Takae means "filial[[3]](#footnote-3) piety, obedience".

Killian in means “little church” or “little and warlike”. In Hebrew it means “pining”.

November 19, 1989 (night) (Sunday, Cheshvan 22, 5750)

Parashat Chayei Sara - Genesis 23:1 - 25:18

First Aliyah - Genesis 23:1-16: Sarah died at the age of 127, and her grieving husband Abraham identified a plot in the city of Hebron that he wished to procure for use as a family burial ground. This plot, a cave situated in the Machpela field, belonged to Ephron the Hittite, so Abraham approached the Hittite tribe and asked for permission to purchase the parcel of land. Originally Ephron wished to give the plot to Abraham as a gift, but after Abraham insisted on paying full price the acquisition was concluded with Abraham paying 400 premium silver coins.

# Lydia Eve McKay

Lydia means “beautiful one" or "noble one”.

Eve means “Life”.

McKay means “Fire”

Nisan 28, 5747 (Monday, April 27, 1987)

Parashat Tazria-Metzora - Leviticus 12:1 - 15:33

Second Aliyah: Leviticus 13:24-39 - We learn the laws of tzara'at which appears following a burn to the skin. We discover that tzara'at can also affect the areas on the body covered by hair. The symptoms and laws of such a tzara'at are quite different than standard tzara'at. This section concludes with the laws of a person afflicted by multiple dull white areas on his skin.

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1. Which means you were born on Shabbat, which you were! [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The word *mezuzah* has the numerical value of 65, the value of another Name of G‑d, *Ado‑nai* (Master, L‑rd). This Name is associated with the Divine Attribute of *Malkhuth* (Kingship). Perhaps this comes to teach us that by looking at the mezuzah we remind ourselves of the great Master of the Universe, the King of Kings to Whose Supreme Will we must subjugate our will, submitting to the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom. This moves us to repentance. The gematria of mezuzah (65) equals the gematria of the word *hekhal*, chamber, as in *Hekhal HaKodesh*, the Holy Chamber, or *Hekhal*, the main Hall of the Temple. This supports the notion that the mezuzah can turn a house into a place of holiness, a miniature temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Filial means “of or due from a son or daughter”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)