

## פרשת ויצא

None of us are oblivious to our names. We may like them and we may love them, or perhaps our reaction is not so positive, but they are there.

When we are asked, 'Who are you?', we respond, 'I am *ploni*.'

'I am ploni' is not just a combination of words that I fill out on a form to receive some license or other document.

'I am ploni' is a statement of who I am. It becomes far more than how I identify myself to others; it is my identification of myself to me!

The names that we find in the Torah are often told to us in the context of a particular meaning that they wish to convey.

And, 'naming' is not just limited to people either.

We read in Parshas B'reishes (Perek 2/Posuk 20):

וַיִּקְרָא הָאֱדָם שִׁמוֹת לְכָל הַבְּהֵמָה וְלַעֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְלָאָדָם לֹא מָצָא עֶזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ:

The Odom gave names to all of the animals and all of the birds of the heavens and to all of the wild animals of the field; Odom did not find a helper for himself.

Midrash Tanchuma (Parshas Chukkas 12) teaches us a remarkable lesson. We read:

בשעה שביקש הקדוש ברוך הוא לבראות אדם הראשון, נמלך במלאכי השרת, אמר להן נעשה אדם בצלמנו (בראשית א/כו<sup>1</sup>), אמרו לו מה אנוש כי תזכרנו וגו' (תהלים ח/ה<sup>2</sup>), אמר להם אדם שאני רוצה לבראות בעולמי תהא חכמתו מרובה משלכם, מיד

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<sup>1</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים...לִיקִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיִּרְדּוּ בְדִגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ:

G-d said, 'Let us make man in our image and in our form and they will rule over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the heavens and the animals and all of the land and all of the creeping creatures that creep on the land.

<sup>2</sup> The entire verse reads:

מָה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וְכֵן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ:

העביר לפניהם כל בהמה חיה ועוף, אמר להן מה שמותן של אלו, ולא ידעו, כיון שברא אדם הראשון העבירן לפניו, אמר לו מה שמותן של אלו, אמר לזה נאה לקרותו שור, לזה ארי, לזה סוס, וכן לכולם, שנאמר ויקרא אדם שמות לכל הבהמה וגו', אמר לו אתה מה שמך, אמר לו אדם, שנבראתי מן האדמה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אני מה שמי, אמר לו ה', שאתה אדון על כל הבריות, היינו דכתיב אני ה' הוא שמי (ישעיה מב/ח<sup>3</sup>), שקרא לי אדם הראשון...

When Hashem wished to create Odom HoRishon, He consulted with the angels. Hashem said to them, 'Shall we make man in our image?' They said to him, 'What is man that You should remember him?' Hashem said to them, 'The Man that I wish to create in My world will have wisdom greater than yours.' Hashem immediately passed all animals and wild animals and birds before them and He said, 'What are the names of all of these?' They did not know.

When Hashem created Odom HoRishon he passed all of the animals, wild animals and fowl before him and He said, 'What is the names of these?' Odom said 'To this one it is best to call an ox and to this one a lion and to this one a horse, and so to all of them. This is as it is written, 'He gave names to all the animals etc.

Hashem said to Odom, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Odom because I was created from the ground.'

Hashem said to him, ‘and I, what is My Name?’ Odom answered, “‘Hashem’ because You are the Master<sup>4</sup> of all creatures.” ‘

What is man that we should remember him? What is man that we should count him?

<sup>3</sup> The entire verse reads:

אֲנִי ה' הוּא שְׁמִי וְכְבוֹדִי לֹא אֶחָר לֹא אֶתֶן וְתַהֲלִיתִי לַפְּסִילִים:

I am Hashem; that is My Name; My Glory to another I will not give and I will not give My Praise to idols.

<sup>4</sup> At first, I was taken aback from this rationale and justification that Odom HoRishon gave for the Name of Hashem, *Yud, Heh, Vov*, and *Heh*.

It is true that we pronounce the Name of Hashem as if it were *Adon...oy*, but that is not the reading of the letters.

That is what is written, I am Hashem; that is My Name that Odom Horishon gave me.'

I will not attempt to interpret this final section of the Midrash. I do not understand how finite Man can give a Name to Hashem Who is eternal<sup>5</sup>.

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The reading of the letters is a combination of the words 'was', 'is', and 'will be'. So I would have expected that Odom would have explained that since G-d is eternal, this name, Hashem in its written form, is His proper Name.

The reason why we do not read the Name of Hashem, *Yud, Heh, Vov*, and *Heh* as it is written is because of a verse that we read in regard to the Burning Bush.

Hashem replies to one of the refusals that Moshe Rabbenu Olom HaShalom offered to go on the mission that Hashem sends him (Sh'mos Perek 3/Posuk 15):

וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֶלֶּלֶּיִם אֶל מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֵלֵינוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ אֲבֹתֵינוּ  
אֵלֵינוּ יִצְחָק וְאֵלֵינוּ יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דֹּר:

G-d said further to Moshe, 'So should you say to B'nei Yisroel, "Hashem, the G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Yaakov send me to you; This is My Name forever and this is My Memory of Me for each and every generation.

Rashi writes:

זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם - חֹסֶר וִי"ו, לֹמַר הָעֲלִימָהּ, שֶׁלֹּא יִקְרָא כִּכְתּוּבוֹ:

*This is My Name forever* – the word לעולם is written missing the letter *vov*, like this לעלם to teach you 'hide it'. G-d's Name is read as it is written.

And we read in Shulchan Aruch Siman 5:

יְכוּיִן בְּבִרְכּוֹת פִּירוּשׁ הַמִּלּוֹת כְּשִׁיזְכִּיר הַשֵּׁם, יְכוּיִן פִּירוּשׁ קְרִיאָתוֹ בְּאֲדֻנּוֹת שֶׁהוּא אֲדוֹן הַכֹּל, וְיְכוּיִן בְּכַתִּיבָתוֹ בִּי"ד ה"א שֶׁהִיא וְהוּא וְיֵהִי, וּבִהְזָכִירוֹ אֱלֹהִים, יְכוּיִן: שֶׁהוּא תִקְיָף בַּעַל הַיְכוּלָתוֹ וּבַעַל הַכֹּחוֹת כֻּלָּם.

When one says Brachos he should have intent regarding the meaning of the words. When he pronounces G-d's Name, his intent should be of its meaning of how it is read – *Adnus*-mastery because He is the Master of All and also have intention for the meaning as the way it is written.

When one mentions the Name *E...lokim* his intention should be that He is Mighty, All-Powerful, has all of the ability and all of the strengths, all of them.

Thus, perhaps, Odom HoRishon was referring to how we say the Name of G-d.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps one would think to raise the possibility that before Creation Hashem did not need a Name.

Names are meaningful. Often the Torah tells us clearly what they mean. The first name explicitly given in the Torah<sup>6</sup> comes with its own explanation. We read (B'reishis Perek 3/Posuk 20):

וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הִוא הִיְתָה אִם כָּל חַיִּי:

Odom called the name of his wife *Chava* because she was the mother of all living beings.

And sometimes we are told and then the next piece of information is withheld as we read when learning of the birth of the first two children of Odom and Chava. We read there (Perek 4/P'sukim 1-2):

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת ה': וַתִּסֹּף לֵלֶדֶת  
אֶת אָחִיו אֶת הָבֶל וַיְהִי הָבֶל רֹעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה:

The Odom knew Chava his wife and she became pregnant and she gave birth to Kayin because she said, 'I acquired a man with Hashem'. She continued to give birth to his brother to Hevel and Hevel was a shepherd and Kayin was a worker of the ground.

And this is the pattern that we have throughout the Torah where we are presented with many names; sometimes we are told their meaning and at other times we rely upon our *meforshim* to share their interpretations with us.

And this brings us to our Parshas Vayetze when we learn of the birth of all of the Shevatim with the exception of Binyamin; we will learn about his birth, under its tragic circumstances, in next week's Parshas Vayishlach.

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If such a hypothesis would be raised, I would counter that unlike the Name E...lokim which isn't G-d's 'Personal Name, because *Elohim* can refer to judges or false gods, the Name *Yud, Heh, Vov*, and *Heh* is G-d's exclusive Name – as the Midrash writes. Thus, I would think that this Name of *Yud, Heh, Vov*, and *Heh* is one and the same as Him Yisborach.

<sup>6</sup> Earlier, Odom named the feminine gender as we read (B'reishis Perek 2/Posuk 22):  
וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֶאת הַפֶּעַם עָצָם מִעֲצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לָזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִשׁ לִקְחָהּ זֹאת:  
Odom said, 'This time a bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh; this one will be called *I'shah* because this one was taken from *Ish*.

The names that were given to the Shevatim are not without explanation. We may wish to plumb the depths of their meanings further – but even without additional investigation we are privy to the thoughts of our ancestors as well as to the importance that they placed on the naming process.

And that leads us to an inconsistency, with two parts to it, which I think is one of a kind.

Leah I'meinu has given birth to her first four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda. Each of the sons is given a name to reflect and give expression to the specific situation<sup>7</sup> in which Leah finds herself.

Thus we read four consecutive verses (B'reishis Perek 29/P'sukim 32-35):

וַתֵּהָרָא לֵאָה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמְרָה ה' בְּעֵינַי כִּי עָתָה יֶאֱהָבֵנִי  
אִישִׁי: וַתֵּהָרָא עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי שָׁמַע ה' כִּי שָׁנוּאָה אֲנִי וַיִּתֵּן לִי גַם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא  
שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן: וַתֵּהָרָא עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר עָתָה הִפַּעַם יִלְוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי יִלְדֹתִי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה  
בָּנִים עַל כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי: וַתֵּהָרָא עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הִפַּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת ה' עַל כֵּן קָרָאָה  
שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלִּדְתָּ:

Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son and she called his name Reuven and she said, 'because Hashem saw my affliction because now my husband will love me.' She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son and she said, 'because G-d heard that I am hated and He gave me this [son] also' and she called his name Shimon. She became pregnant again and she gave birth to a son and she said, 'Now my husband will join himself to me because I bore him three sons'; therefore he called his name Levi. She became pregnant again and she gave birth to a son and she said, 'this time I will give thanks to G-d'; therefore she called his name Yehuda and she stopped from bearing children.

Still childless, Rachel I'meinu gives Bilhah, her maid-servant to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears two sons as we read (ibid. Perek 30/P'sukim 5-8):

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<sup>7</sup> Seforno writes in our Parsha (Perek 29/Posuk 35):

...ונראה שהיו כל אלה שמות של קדמונים...קודם לשמואל הנביא והיו בוחרים מהשמות הקודמים את הנופלים על לשון המאורע:

It appears that all of the names of early personages, prior to Sh'muel HaNovi, were choosing names that reflect an expression of the particular event.

וַתֵּהָרַב בִּלְהָה וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֵּן: וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל דָּנָי אֵל...לִיקִים וְגַם שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי וַיֵּתֶן לִי בֶן  
עַל כֵּן קָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ דָּן: וַתֵּהָרַב עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בִּלְהָה שְׁפָחַת רָחֵל בֵּן שְׁנֵי לְיַעֲקֹב: וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל  
נַפְתָּלִי אֵל...לִיקִים נִפְתַּלְתִּי עִם אָחִי גַם יָכַלְתִּי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ נַפְתָּלִי:

Bilhah became pregnant and she gave birth to a son for Yaakov. Rachel said, 'G-d judged me and He also heard my voice and he gave me a son;' therefore she called his name *Dan*. She became pregnant again and Bilhah the maidservant of Rachel gave birth to a second son for Yaakov. Rachel said, 'Hashem has judged<sup>8</sup> me together with my sister and I am also able' and she called his name Naftali.

It is true that we sometimes find more than one interpretation of a name. Perhaps the most prominent example of such a phenomenon is in regard to Reuven.

As we saw above, the Chumash gives a reason for the ראו – seeing. Rashi presents another reason from the Midrash:

וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן - רְבוּתִינוּ פִּירְשׁוּ, אָמְרָה רְאוּ מָה בֵּין בְּנֵי לֵבָן חָמִי שֶׁמָּכַר הַבְּכוֹרָה  
לְיַעֲקֹב, וְזֶה לֹא מִכְרָה לְיוֹסֵף וְלֹא עָרַעַר עָלָיו, וְלֹא עוֹד שֶׁלֹּא עָרַעַר עָלָיו אֲלֵא שֶׁבִּיקֵשׁ  
לְהוֹצִיאוֹ מִן הַבּוֹר:

*She called his name Reuven* – Our Rabbis explained, She said, 'See the difference between my son and the son of my father-in-law, Eisav, who sold the birth-right to Yaakov [and then wanted to kill Yaakov] and my son [Reuven] – not only did he not sell the birth-right to Yosef [because Yosef just 'took' it] and did not challenge Yosef about it, but also wanted to [save Yosef and] take him out of the pit.

These two explanations are not the same but they are not contradictory – both could be true without causing a tension between them that would require an explanation.

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<sup>8</sup> There are many interpretations of the name *Naftoli*. Rashi brings some and other explanations are found throughout the commentaries.

And then we come to the children born to Zilpoh, the handmaiden of Leah I'meinu and here we confront for the first time, and perhaps for the only time at least in regard to the founders of our nation, that which appears to be truly inconsistent<sup>9</sup>.

We read (Perek 30/P'sukim 9-13):

וַיֵּרָא לְיָאָה כִּי עָמְדָה מִלֵּדֶת וַתִּקַּח אֶת זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתָהּ וַתֵּתֶן אֹתָהּ לְיַעֲקֹב לְאִשָּׁה: וַתֵּלֶד זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לְיָאָה לְיַעֲקֹב בֶּן: וַתֹּאמֶר לְיָאָה בְּגֵד וַתִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ גָּד: וַתֵּלֶד זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לְיָאָה בֶּן שְׁנֵי לְיַעֲקֹב: וַתֹּאמֶר לְיָאָה בְּאִשְׁרֵי כִי אֲשֵׁרוּנִי בָנוֹת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ אֲשֵׁר:

Leah saw that she had stopped from giving birth and she took Zilpoh her handmaiden and gave her to Yaakov for a wife. Zilpoh the handmaiden of Leah bore a son for Yaakov. Leah said, *Bogad*<sup>10</sup> and she called his name Gad.

Zilpoh the handmaiden of Leah bore a second son for Yaakov. Leah said, 'With my happiness because the women are happy for me;' she called his name Asher.

There is no question that the name given for the second son of Zilpoh is celebratory. Not only is Leah happy with the birth of Asher, all of her friends are happy for her as well.

But what do we say about the first of those two sons, Gad? Was she pleased or not? Did she rejoice at the birth of this son or not?

To answer that question, we have to learn Rashi and he gives us multiple explanations.

We first read:

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<sup>9</sup> There are some explanations regarding the name *Shimon* that also may appear to be contradictory. See note 100 in *Torah Shleima* to Perek 29 of Sefer B'reishis.

<sup>10</sup> We will explain more about this word shortly. Here we shall note that its translation should have been *Bogod*. However, if that would have been its transliteration, then we would have been forced to write the son's name as *God* and that would lead to confusion. Thus, since we wrote the name as *Gad* we were 'forced' to transliterate the word as *Bogad*.

בא גד - בא מזל טוב, כמו (שבת סז ב) גד גדי וסנוק לא, ודומה לו (ישעיה סה/יא<sup>11</sup>)  
העורכים לגד שלחן.

*Bo Gad*<sup>12</sup> - Good fortune has come. [The word *Gad*] here has the same meaning as we read in Masseches Shabbos. One who says an incantation: 'My fortune has been good fortune, do not be tired, [day and night<sup>13</sup>]. It is also similar to the verse in Yeshaya bemoaning those who 'set a table for *Gad*'.

[As Rashi there explains:

העורכים לגד - שם עכו"ם העשויים על שם המזל

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<sup>11</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְאַתֶּם עֲזַבְתֶּם ה' הַשִּׁכַּחְתֶּם אֶת הַר קֹדְשִׁי הָעֹרְכִים לְגַד שְׁלָחַן וְהִמְמַלְאִים לִמְנֵי מִמְסָךְ:  
You who forsake Hashem, who forget My holy mountain, who set a table for *Gad* and fill glasses of wine libation for the number of the priests.

<sup>12</sup> If we looked at the verse in the original, and not just its translation, we saw that the word there is written בגד. That is its *k'siv*, how it is written. Its *k'ri*, how it is read, is as two words. The first being בא and the second being גד. We expect the *Ba'al Kri'a* to read it as two words but we see it in the Sefer Torah as one.

The *Dibbur HaMaschil* that Rashi writes, or at least as we find it in our chumashim, is according to the *k'ri* – that is, as two words.

<sup>13</sup> The translation is according to Rashi. The bracketed words are part of the incantation in the Gemara there, and in the original: אשכי ובושכי.

The Gemara continues regarding one who recites this incantation:

יש בו משום דרכי האמורי

He has a prohibition of following Emorite practice.

The prohibition against Emorite practice is learned from the verse in Parshas Kedoshim (Vayikro Perek 20/Posuk 23):

וְלֹא תֵלְכוּ בְחֻקֹּת הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִשְׁלַח מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי אֶת כָּל אֵלֶּה עָשׂוּ וְאָקֶז בָּם:  
Do not go according to the statutes of the nation that I Hashem send away from before you; they did all of those practices and I was disgusted by them.

For a more extensive treatment of דרכי האמורי see the entry with that name in the *Encyclopedia Talmudit*.



*They set the table for Gad* – it is a name of an idolatrous belief that is based on *Mazal*-good fortune.

Before we ask why Leah I'meinu would term the birth of Gad as 'good fortune', we will note how well this verse, interpreted as above, leads into the following verse regarding *Asher*. Leah notes her good fortune and then gives expression to her happiness at the birth of these two sons by naming the second, *Asher*.

And why would Leah term the birth of Gad as good fortune? The answer seems to be that her expectation to have *additional* children through this type of surrogacy was unprecedented.

Leah was certainly not the first to suggest a substitute wife for her husband. Sarah I'meinu was the first as we read (B'reishis Perek 16/P'sukim 1-2):

וְשָׂרַי אִשְׁתֹּת אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ וְלֵהָ שִׁפְחָהּ מִצְרִית וְשָׁמָּה הָגָר: וְתֹאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל אַבְרָם  
הִנֵּה נָא עֲצָרְנִי ה' מִלְדֹּת בָּא נָא אֶל שִׁפְחָתִי אוֹלִי אֲבֹנָה מִמֶּנָּה וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי:

Sorai, the wife of Avram did not give birth and she had an Egyptian maidservant and her name was Hagar. Sarai said to Avram, 'Behold, please, G-d has prevented me from giving birth, please live with my maidservant; perhaps I will be built from her; Avram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Of course, this tactic of Sarah I'meinu succeeded and she bore Yitzchak Ovinu.

Rachel I'meinu, too, adopted this tactic in our Parsha. We read (Perek 30/Posuk 3):

וְתֹאמֶר הִנֵּה אֲמַתִּי בִלְהָה בָּא אֵלֶיהָ וְתֵלֵד עַל בִּרְכִּי וְאַבְנָה גַם אֲנֹכִי מִמֶּנָּה:

Rachel said to Yaakov, 'Behold my maidservant Bilhoh, live with her and she will give birth on my knee<sup>14</sup> and I too will be built from her.'

The comparison of this statement of Rachel I'meinu to the one of Sarah I'meinu is obvious.

Leah I'meinu, on the other hand, was quite different. She had children. She had already given birth to four sons. Would Hashem 'reward' her with the birth of children through a process of surrogacy?

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<sup>14</sup> Rashi quotes the Targum explaining this phrase to mean 'I will raise the children'.

The answer was 'yes', of course, and Leah I'meinu attributed this first birth as good fortune.

When Zilpoh had her second child, *Asher*, Leah understood that more than 'good fortune' was at play and that this was an evident gift from G-d that no one could deny and therefore all the women would be happy for her, as the verse writes.

All is fine until we read another<sup>15</sup> p'shat in Rashi:

דבר אחר למה נקראת תיבה אחת בגד, כמו בגדת בי כשבאת אל שפחתי, כאיש  
שבגד באשת נעורים:

Another explanation – Why is the word *bo god* read as one word – *bogod* which means 'traitor'. It is like Leah said to Yaakov, 'You acted traitorously towards me when you lived with my maidservant' – like the husband who is unfaithful to the wife of his youth.'

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, Rashi offers three explanations of *bogod*. The second is based on the translation of the word גד to mean 'cut'. He writes:

ומדרש אגדה שנולד מהול, כמו (דניאל ד/כ) גדו אילנא, ולא ידעתי על מה נכתבה תיבה אחת.

The Midrash writes that *Gad* was born circumcised [i.e. the *orlah* was cut away]. This is in consonance with the verse 'cut the tree'.

I do not know why the word *bogod* was written as one word [since the translation would be בא גד – 'he came cut/circumcised' or, according to Rashi's first explanation בא גד means 'good fortune came'].

Other explanations of the name *Gad* also relate to its meaning as 'cutting'. Midrash Aggadah, cited by *Torah Shleima* to the verse of the naming of Gad (note 33) says that it refers to Eliyahu HaNovi, according to the opinions that Eliyahu came from Shevet Gad.

This explanation refers to Eliyahu as the one who 'cut down' the false prophets as we read in Sefer Melachim I Perek 18.

Another Midrash (*Torah Shleima* ibid.) also connects the name *Gad* to Eliyahu HaNovi – but for a different reason.

*Gad*, that Midrash says, is like the word מגיד, to tell. Thus, the meaning of our verse is that Leah called her son Gad with the prophetic intention referring to Eliyahu HaNovi who would tell G-d's Word to Israel.

One does not have to be a scholar to be taken aback by this explanation. It is certainly true that out of context, one who sees the word בגד would identify it as meaning some form of the word 'traitor'.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, in the context of the event that occurred, how would it enter our mind that Leah would criticize, or even attack Yaakov Ovinu for fulfilling Leah's request?

Furthermore, the dissonance between the names of these two sons who are born to Zilpoh at the 'request' of Leah is glaring.

Whereas in the first explanation we are able to find a trajectory in the progression from *Gad*- good fortune to *Asher* – happiness, it would seem to be most challenging to do the same regarding a progression from *Gad*-traitor to *Asher*-happiness?

How is this to be explained?

Perhaps we can understand this commentary of Rashi by viewing an additional Midrash.

*Torah Shleima* (ibid. 34) brings a Midrash of unknown origin that is brought in *Sefer Chasidim Hechodosh*<sup>17</sup>. We read:

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<sup>16</sup> Many readers may argue and say that when they see the letters בגד, they interpret it as *begeh*-clothing. One who studies the commentary of Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch will learn that *begeh*-clothing is deliberately related to 'traitor' because clothes seek to present a person other than he or she is.

This will be discussed shortly.

<sup>17</sup> *Sefer Chasidim* was written by Rabi Yehuda HeChosid, one of the Baalei Tosfos and has appeared in numerous editions over the centuries. It has teachings about Minhagim and Halachos and *Segulos* as well as descriptions of some individual events. One of the newest, or the newest, editions was edited and annotated by Rav Reuven Margolies and published by Mosad HaRav Kook in 1957.

The writing and compilation of *Torah Shleima* was begun before World War II and continued for decades. I do not know the specific edition that is referenced here.

I have the Rav Margolies edition and one other and I did not find this Midrash in either.

בגד- בגד שהלבישה לאה בגד שלה לזלפה ובגדה ביעקב שסבור היה שהיא לאה ונתעברה כי לא רצה יעקב בה ובגדה בו בבגד שלה וצותה לכסות לה הבטן שלא תרגיש רחל עד שילדה ויבא אליה יעקב ולא נכתב בה הריון.

*Bogod* – This refers to the clothes in which Leah dressed Zilpoh in her, Leah's, clothes and she, Leah, acted traitorously with Yaakov. Yaakov thought that it was Leah [because of the clothing] and Zilpoh became pregnant. [Leah had to do this act of treachery] because Yaakov did not want to be with Zilpoh.

Leah act traitorously – בגדה with her clothes – בגד. [Additionally] Leah ordered that Zilpoh's stomach should be covered with a *begeg* so that Rachel would not know that Yaakov had lived with Zilpoh. That is why, unlike all of the other births to the other women, it is not written regarding Zilpoh<sup>18</sup> ותהר, she became pregnant.

What might have been seen first as a grave accusation against Yaakov Ovinu, and an accusation that seems totally unjustified, now has taken on a very different appearance based on this Midrash.

In fact, by bestowing the name *Gad* on this infant, Leah seems to be pointing an accusatory finger at herself!

And that accusatory finger takes us back a number of years to Leah's marriage, as Rashi writes here:

...וכדי לרמות ליעקב נתנה לבן ללאה שלא יבין שמכניסין לו את לאה, שכך מנהג ליתן שפחה גדולה לגדולה וקטנה לקטנה:

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<sup>18</sup> Rashi notes the absence of the word ותהר in regard to Zilpoh and he explains: ותלד זלפה - בכולן נאמר הריון חוץ מזלפה לפי שהיתה בחורה מכולן ותינוקת בשנים ואין הריון ניכר בה.

*Zilpoh gave birth* – By all of the other women it says 'they were pregnant' – except for Zilpoh. The reason is that Zilpoh was younger than the rest of the women and her pregnancy was not outwardly visible.

It is worthwhile to note at the birth of her second child as well, Zilpoh's pregnancy is not mentioned. According to Rashi it could be explained that because she was still young, her pregnancy did not show.

However, the absence of the pregnancy for the second birth is not understood at all according to this Midrash.

Lovon, in order to trick Yaakov, gave Zilpoh, the youngest of the maidservants, to Leah so that Yaakov would not understand that they were bringing Leah to him instead of Rachel. The custom was to give the youngest maidservant to the youngest daughter [so Yaakov was led to believe when he saw Zilpoh that he was being given Leah].

It would seem inconceivable that Leah l'meinu would employ the very tactics that brought her such misery over the years. Did she not give names to her sons that indicated that sorrow and suffering?

We read (Perek 29/P'sukim 32-34):

וַתֵּהָרָא לֵאָה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמְרָה ה' בְּעֵינַי כִּי עָתָה יֵאָהֱבֵנִי  
אִישִׁי: וַתֵּהָרָא עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי שָׁמַע ה' כִּי שָׁנוּאָה אָנֹכִי וַיֵּתֶן לִי גַם אֶת זֶה וַתִּקְרָא  
שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן: וַתֵּהָרָא עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר עָתָה הַפַּעַם יִלְּוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי יִלְדֹתִי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה  
בָּנִים עַל כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי:

Leah became pregnant and she gave birth to a son and she called his name Reuven because she said, 'Hashem has seen my affliction and now my husband will love me.' She became pregnant again and gave birth to a son and she said, 'Because Hashem heard that I am hated, he gave me also this son' and she called his name Shimon. She became pregnant again and she gave birth to a son and she said, 'Now, this time my husband will accompany me because I bore him three sons'; therefore he called his name Levi.

All of these names indicate Leah's sorrow and distress over her situation. Would she deliberately seek to incur more sorrow and suffering?

Perhaps we can approach this dilemma in the following matter.

Later in our Parsha, when Yaakov becomes wealthy with the extraordinary growth of his flocks by some unique means, Yaakov becomes aware of the burning jealousy and hatred that has been unleashed from Lovon and his sons. He thus decides to consult with his wives, not the maidservants, regarding his next step.

We read (Perek 31/Posuk 4):

וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב וַיִּקְרָא לְרָחֵל וּלְלֵאָה הַשָּׂדֶה אֶל צֹאנוֹ:

Yaakov sent and called for Rachel and for Leah to [come] to the field to his sheep.

Rashi writes:

ויקרא לרחל וללאה - לרחל תחלה ואחר כך ללאה שהיא היתה עיקר הבית, שבשבילה נזדווג יעקב עם לבן, ואף בניה של לאה מודים בדבר, שהרי בועז ובית דינו משבט יהודה אומרים (רות ד/יא<sup>19</sup>) כרחל וכלאה אשר בנו שתיהם וגו', הקדימו רחל ללאה:

*He called to Rachel and to Leah – He called Rachel first and afterwards he called for Leah because Rachel was the basis of his home. It was because of her that he married into the family of Lovon.*

Even the descendants of Leah agreed to that because Boaz and his Court from the Tribe of Yehuda [the descendants of Leah] and they say, 'Like Rachel and like Leah that they both built'. They place Rachel before Leah.

Already here we have the seeds<sup>20</sup> of this recognition of the place of Rachel, before that of herself. However, that recognition does not deter Leah from her desire to be the builder of the House of Israel.

The fact that is relegated to a relatively secondary position to Rachel I'meinu does not deter Leah I'meinu from her role and goal as this builder of Israel.

Such is apparent later on when Leah I'meinu gives birth to Yissochor.

The Torah writes exceptionally (P'sukim 16-18):

וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב מִן הַשָּׂדֶה בְּעָרֵב וַתֵּצֵא לָאָה לִקְרָאתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלַי תָּבוֹא כִּי שָׂכַר שְׂכָרְתִּיךָ בְּדוֹדָי בְּנֵי וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה בְּלֵילָהּ הוּא: וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵל...לִקְיָם אֶל לָאָה וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֶּן

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<sup>19</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בַּשַּׁעַר וְהַזְקֵנִים עֲדִים יְתֵן ה' אֶת הָאִשָּׁה הַבָּאָה אֶל בֵּיתְךָ כְּרָחֵל וְכָלָאָה אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵי שְׂתֵיהֶם אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וַעֲשֵׂה חַיִּל בְּאַפְרָתָה וְקָרָא שֵׁם בְּבֵית לָחֶם:

All the people who were at the gate and the elders said, 'We are witnesses. May Hashem give to this woman who is entering your house to be like Rachel and Leah who both built the House of Israel; do valiantly in Efros and give a name in Bethlehem.'

<sup>20</sup> I think that it would be incorrect to use a term other than 'seeds', i.e. the beginning. Whether or not it is more than seeds is dependent in no small way on our interpretation of the dynamics of the *dudaim*-flowers about which the Torah teaches a few verses later.

חַמִּישִׁי: וַתֹּאמֶר לְאָה נָתַן אֱלֹהִים שְׂכָרִי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי שְׂפָחָתִי לְאִישִׁי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
יִשְׁשַׁכָּר:

Yaakov came from the field in the evening and Leah went out to meet him and she said to him, 'You will come to me because I have certainly hired you with the *dudaim*-flowers of my son' and Yaakov slept with her that night, *he*. G-d heard Leah and she became pregnant and she bore a fifth son for Yaakov. Leah said, 'G-d gave me my reward that I gave my maidservant to my husband' and she called his name Yissochor.

First, we note Rashi's commentary:

בלילה הוא - הקדוש ברוך הוא סייע שיצא משם יששכר:

*That night, he* – [He<sup>21</sup>] refers to Hashem. Hashem aided and Yissochor emerged from that union.

וישמע א...ל'קים אל לאה - שהיתה מתאוה ומחזרת להרבות שבטים:

*G-d heard Leah* – Leah was desirous and seeking to increase the number of Shevatim.

First we note that Leah's deeds were for the sake of heaven. She was not seeking to have more children in order to enhance her position in the House of Israel. She wanted to enhance the House of Israel itself.

And thus, when we read Leah's words once more we have a new insight. She said:

נָתַן אֱלֹהִים שְׂכָרִי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי שְׂפָחָתִי לְאִישִׁי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁשַׁכָּר:

'G-d gave me my reward that I gave my maidservant to my husband' and she called his name Yissochor.

Leah was not trying to trick Yaakov as an act of revenge by giving him a disguised Zilpoh. Her subterfuge was not meant to turn the table on him once more.

Her action was *לשם שמים*, for the sake of heaven. It is for that reason that the word *הוא*, *He*, referring to Hashem, is appended to that verse. G-d testifies that her 'hiring' of Yaakov was not for any personal reasons whatsoever.

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<sup>21</sup> According to this, the word *הוא* in the verse should have been translated as **He**, with a capital H.

And when Leah names Yissochor and attaches the name, not to the 'hiring' because of the flowers, but because of the 'deceit and treachery' of giving Zilpoh to Yaakov, we now have an entirely new picture.

Leah understood that her actions were proper. When we read of the events, and especially this Midrash that we have just learned, we are legitimately concerned by the appearance of dishonesty.

When we then read that Hashem Himself blesses this union and when Leah teaches us that this uniquely Divine blessing for this union was because she 'gave' her maidservant to Yaakov, our perspective has changed greatly. We know now that the appearance of dishonesty was only because of our misreading the event.

And now, we no longer are puzzled with the progression of names from *Gad*, implying treachery, to *Asher* meaning happiness.

The 'treachery' of Gad was not evil. On the contrary, it joins together with many events that we see in Sefer B'reishis about which we are challenged to understand. The testimony of the Torah itself – the **וַיְבָרֶךְ** of Hashem himself blessing the union and the connection that Leah herself makes between the birth of Yissochor and the birth of Gad, teach us that there are events beyond our understanding.

But they were not beyond the understanding of Leah, just like so many other events were not beyond the understanding of the Ovot – and HaKodosh Boruch Hu.

And because that which occurred was correct and proper, Leah names the next son born to Zilpoh, *Asher*. There is about what to rejoice; there is that about which to be happy.

The House of Israel, the House in which we all reside, is being built for all future generations.

Often, I am exposed to the writings of presumably well-meaning religious individuals in which their goal is to have us understand the Ovot, I'mahos and the great leaders of our people, as being just like us. In the Hebrew parlance of these



days it is called learning Tanach <sup>22</sup> בגובה עיניים – on the basis of equality – we being equal to the founders of our people and the other great people of our nation.

This type of learning often is expressed by implying: ‘I understand my pettiness and therefore I can project it onto Yitzchak Ovinu, as being perpetually intimidated because of the Akeida or Leah I’meinu bearing a perpetual anger against Rachel I’meinu and Yaakov Ovinu, and all of the rest of the founders of our people.’

Sometimes, an intelligent person will extol a writer of Torah ideas as ‘only learning *p’shuto shel Mikro* without looking at any Gemaros or Midrashim’ as if cutting of knowledge of Chazal and other sources was a virtue. It is not a virtue<sup>23</sup>. Deliberately disassociating from Chazal and other classic sources can suggest a rebellion against Torah authority and *Emunas Chachomim*.

Of course there is what to learn from the way the Torah is written and how it expresses itself. However, rather than detracting (*chas v’Shalom*) from the study of true *P’shuto shel Mikro*, the other approaches of true Torah study, *drash*, *remez* and *sod*, provide us with the fullness of the Torah experience, with each approach enhancing the others.

And this is not to detract from recognizing the humanity of the founders of our people. But what are we to learn from their humanity, including their limited faults and failures?

We are to learn what can be achieved and what can be accomplished despite their faults and limitations. We are to be inspired by their achievements and accomplishments and to say, ‘if they could, so can we’.

We are to see the reality in the challenge that Rambam presents to us in Hilchos Teshuvah Perek 5:

רשות לכל אדם נתונה אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה ולהיות צדיק הרשות בידו,  
ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה ולהיות רשע הרשות בידו...

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<sup>22</sup> For a most non-complimentary view of this term see Yeshaya Perek 2/Posuk 11 and Rashi there.

<sup>23</sup> And it is likely not even *p’shuto shel mikro*.

אל יעבור במחשבתך...שהקדוש ברוך הוא גוזר על האדם מתחלת ברייתו להיות צדיק או רשע, אין הדבר כן אלא כל אדם ראוי לו להיות צדיק כמשה רבינו או רשע כירבעם...

Every person has the ability that if he wants to turn himself to a good path and be righteous, he can; if he wishes to turn himself to an evil path and be wicked, he can.

You should not think that Hashem decrees at birth that a person will be righteous or evil; that is not so. Rather, a person has the potential to be righteous like Moshe or evil like Yerovom.

When we realistically look up to the founders of our people with admiration and understanding, we prepare ourselves to seek the goals that Rambam sets before us.

If we seek to weaken the status of the founders of our people by projecting upon them all of the faults and limitations that possess us, then we close the door to our personal growth and aspirations.

Sefer B'reishis is the book of growth and aspirations. If we view it as the *beginning* of our trek to realize our potential – then our serious and dedicated study of it is the first step in of that trek.

Let us not lose our way or let others deter or mislead us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock