

The Meaning of Using Children's Names by Their Fathers in the Bible in the Book of Genesis in the Jewish Bible According to Jewish Religious Literature

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Received: 7 May 2024 ▪ Revised: 2 July 2024 ▪ Accepted: 6 August 2024

Abstract

In this article, we will provide interpretations regarding fathers naming their sons by name and we will summarize the main points of their statements that have been brought forward so far. The scripture mentions that Adam called his third son by his name, even though it has already been mentioned that Eve called her son by his name. For example, the Ramban claims that the scripture emphasizes that the calling by name is precisely for those who will continue the chain of generations, the Melbim points to the same principle and says that it was appropriate to mention from whom the kingdom of the house of David will come.

Keywords: Judaism, Abraham, Noah, Lot, Malbim, Rambam, Bible, Jewish literature.

1. Adam and Eve

In the bible, God called Adam by name, as it is written: "This is the book of Adam's history on the day God created man in the image of God He made him. Male and female, he blessed them and blessed them and called their names Adam on the day of God" (5:1-2).

Contextual proximity to the word "earth" cannot be ignored, as the connection and connection between man and the earth is described several times: "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground..." (2:7) as well as: "By the sweat of your nose you shall eat bread until you return to the earth because from it you take it ..." (3:19; Sutzkover, 2012).

We have already seen in the midrash above that a person is named after the soil from which he was created. The Radak explains the meaning of this a person is created from a body and a soul, the soul is a part of God from above, while the body is created from the earth. Man is named after the earth, after the physical part of him to remind him that if he chooses to follow the nature of the physical, he will only be like the earth, and will not be recognized as the spiritual part of it. From this, we learn that a person has the choice to direct his life to the satisfaction of physical needs and thus incline to the earthly side of him, or in his ability to follow the spiritual qualities that are unique to him, and thus to resemble his Lord who created him. Both the male and the female are called "Adam", and this reading distinguishes Those of the other animals who were also created from the earth and this is a name-calling for all of humanity. The Maharal links man and the earth not only in the aspect of matter and creation, that man was created from the earth, but

sees a common feature and that is the power inherent in both man and the earth that he brings out of the power into action. The soil has the power to grow plants that are not the soil itself, and similarly, man has hidden powers to create new things (Kimhi, 2005).

Another noun that defines a man is “Adam” (A “Man”). In this, there is a difference between the male and the female who are both called Adam, but the male is called “Ish” and the female is called “Woman”. The man named the woman after she was created from his rib, and hence the name of the man was also derived “for this shall be called a woman because she takes it from a man”. The scripture did not mention before that the human being is called an “Adam”, and it is he who gives her uniqueness as a woman, thus distinguishing between the woman’s purpose and the man’s purpose. As a “person”, different from the animals, the male, and the female are equal in purpose, yet in their essence, they are different from man and woman. The woman is the last creation created, and perhaps hence it is necessary to call her by a name that distinguishes her from the man from whom she was created. As mentioned, reading a name is like reading an essence, and therefore reading her name “Asha” expresses a change in the relationship between the man and the woman. This is repeated after receiving the punishment for the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the person changes the woman’s name once more and from “Woman” she becomes “Eve”. Although she is still called “Woman” because this name is inclusive of all human females, Eve is the first name of Adam’s wife, in meaning her being the “mother of all living” that animates humanity. A person recognizes her animal power, and to strengthen it he changes her name, thus inciting her connection from sin, temptation, and death to her ability to grow and create life (Smet, 2009; Galily & Petkova, 2022).

Sutzkober sees the change of Eve’s name from “Adam” to “Woman” and then to “Eve”, as Adam attempts to control his anger over her. She notices that the name changes are made after an event in which the female occupies a central place: after her uniqueness and creation from man, man calls her woman and emphasizes that she was created by him, and after eating from the tree of knowledge and falling from its roots, man changes her name to Eve, thus defining her role as a mother only. Sutzkober tries to prove that the name Eve came to command the language of experience, and according to this to explain that man shows his superiority over her and what he expects from her. We do not think it is reasonable to accept this explanation, because the word “Hava” is from the word “animal” since it is known that the letters V and V alternate, and what is more, Adam himself says about Eve that she is “the mother of all living”. Therefore, it seems to us that calling a woman’s name comes from admiration and appreciation for her figure and her abilities, which are different from a man’s, and not from laziness about a person (Sutzkober, 2012).

Eve is called by four names: Adam, female, woman, and Eve, with each name pointing to a different quality inherent in her. The multitude of names indicates its importance. Adam is an inclusive name for humanity, this name reveals the uniqueness of man over the animals and his role to control them. Man is also an animal and therefore he is derived from a male and a female, thus expressing their wonderful ability to bring life into the world and to be partners in creation, but they must remember that first they are human before being animals and they are assigned a role in their creation to be above the animal. The woman is taken from the man, and he is the one who calls her by her name. Man discovers that a woman has her personality and has unique qualities. The name Eve is a teacher of the experience. The woman can create an experience from every action she does, thereby elevating her actions spiritually. The woman’s worship of God is more internal than the man’s and therefore she does not need external signs to worship the Creator. The woman is able, while doing her routine work, to ascend and communicate with God.

To understand the meaning of calling by name, we started in this article with the first sources in the Torah in which calling by name appears. The first name was given by God himself in the creation of the day. G-d created the light and calls it “day”. We concluded that the calling by name is a continuation of the creation of the creature, but we realized that G-d did not call names to all His creatures but assigned this significant role to His handiwork – man. We discussed the

role of man vis-à-vis the animal and concluded that in the reading of the name, there is a dimension of recognition that stems from a spiritual force capable of deepening and adapting it to the physical attributes of the creature. In addition to this, we found that there is a connection and assimilation of essence and function in the act of giving the name. From these words, we concluded that beyond the spiritual connection between the giver of the name and the one called by name, there is also an assertion of authority and the establishment of the sovereignty of the one who calls by name over the one called by name.

So far, we have seen that the reading of the name is a significant matter both in terms of the authority and power of the giver of the name and the consequences that the name has on its subject. We deepened our understanding of the name "Adam" given by the Holy One, blessed be He, and we also saw that Adam could adapt his name to himself based on the understanding of his essence and abilities.

Later we found the difference between the name "Adam" and "Ish" by reading the name of the "woman" and tried to stand for the differences, and we increased the veil of distinction even more when Adam gave the woman her name: "Hava".

Cain's birth symbolizes the final act of creation. Eve, the mother of humanity, gives birth to the firstborn and thus ties herself to the act of Genesis, and she perpetuates this by calling her son's name (Samuel, 2003).

2. Parents call by name

About three hundred and thirty names of people are mentioned in the book of Genesis. Only in thirty-eight of them does the scripture indicate the act of reading the name, and only in thirty of them does the scripture reveal who it is that gave the name.

Since the act of reading is not regularly mentioned, and the scripture found it appropriate to specify only in certain cases who gave the name and why he was called by that name, we decided to deepen our investigation on the matter and detail it to other branches. We found that the reading of the names is divided mainly between the parents and in special cases, God participates in the reading of the names.

"Shem" expresses a nickname for a person in the family aspect, and it seems that the name is a means of publishing the result, this means that the newborn son carries the memory of his father in his very being, just as the meaning of the term "recognizing a name" is to recognize his memory and including the existence of the father, like the prophecy of Isaiah: "And I gave Babylon a name and a rest and a grandchild and a grandchild" or the motive "that his name may not be blotted out of Israel," regarding the daughters of Tzel and fear (Segal, 1938).

Considering this, it is understandable why the reading of the names is, for the most part, given by the parents, since the parent determines how his memory will be preserved. The parent preserves his memory by giving birth and seals his memory by naming the child.

Already in biblical times, giving a name was not only to identify the individual, but also express and indicate cultural-religious aspects, and according to Fleishman, calling a name even creates a connection between the person and everything related to his name. Hence, a person's name in the biblical period belonging to a specific culture and society, and we can dare to say that giving the name creates the child's belonging to the society in which he grew up, and even more, giving the name indicates the parents' belonging to this culture (Segal, 1938; Fleischman, 2001).

From another point of view, Sutzkober sees as a rule the granting of a name as an expression of power, which is even more expressed between the parents. There may be some truth in her words in some cases, and this can be seen even nowadays, but forcefulness is a symptom of

a failed system of connection between parents and their children or between the parents themselves. Failed relationship systems have always existed in every culture, and probably will continue to exist, but as a rule, we refrain from generalizing and stating that our ancestors had failed marital relationships, without necessarily saying so, because an important pillar in the study of the Torah is the positive learning from our ancestors, since they were special personalities and had other Spirit they were chosen to be the leaders and fathers of the nation (Sutzkober, 2012).

3. Adam: shet – Enosh

As we have already mentioned, Cain was named by his mother. The fact is interesting that in the second son born to Adam and Eve, it is not stated who called his name and why. It is possible that the Bible chose to omit this fact, knowing that this child has no significance for the rest of history, just as its name indicates its lack of purpose – “vanity”. Some point to the difference in Eve's direction and claim that after her strength was revealed in the birth of Cain, the birth of Abel is secondary to her and involves a lot of trouble. It is difficult for us to accept this opinion, as it greatly lowers the rest of the spirit of the first creatures and brings them closer to animal qualities than to human or moral qualities that are revealed through physical phenomena.

Be that as it may, at the birth of the third son the reading of the name is double. In chapter 4 it appears that Eve is the one who calls Seth by name, but this time she brings God into the act: “God gave me another seed...” while in chapter 5 it appears that man calls Seth by name: “...and he called his name Seth.” Sutzkober, according to her method, sees this as a control struggle between Adam and Eve. In the first son, Eve usurped the ownership of Cain and the procreation, in the birth of Abel, Adam did not want to recognize his son, and both saw his birth as a mere nuisance, and only in the birth of the third son is he the one who finally calls out the name, thereby imposing his guilt on both Eve and the next generation. It seems right to us to believe that there is control and authority in the calling of the name, but it is not reasonable to generalize and turn every calling of the name into a forceful struggle for destructive control, without the meaning of the readings guiding us to say yes (Sutzkober, 2012).

The Ramban interprets that the scripture emphasizes the birth and the calling of Seth’s name by Adam, since the continuation of human history will be through him, therefore, to clarify the essence of choice the scripture adds that Adam called the name of Seth. From this, the assumption is strengthened that all newborns were called by name, and the scripture is this who chose to emphasize chosen people who were assigned a role in a certain period, and this emphasis is expressed by the calling by name. To emphasize the continuation of the dynasty that came from Seth and not from Cain and Abel, the scripture also indicates the calling of Anush’s name by his father, Seth (interpretation of the Ramban, 2005).

4. Lemach: Noah

The tenth generation to the first Adam is Noah and the reading of his name is mentioned by his father Lamech. Noah also marks the closing of an era, and the special role assigned to him to renew humanity after the flood is known. Interesting is the fact that when Lamech explains the name, the explanation is given in the plural and not the singular: “It will comfort us from our pain and irritate our hand...” which might have emphasized the universal role assigned to it.

Rashi mentions in the midrash that Noah invented the plow that relieved his generation of the curse of the first Adam after his sin in the Garden of Eden, and because of the relative rest that the plow has, it is called Noah. This midrash is puzzling because even if Noah

invented the plow, it was over many years, and how did his father name him after an event that hadn't happened yet?

It seems that it is possible to trust the words of the Hazekoni for verse 99 which says that Noah was born immediately after the death of Adam, who was “Cursed is the ground for your sake all the days of your life” and for that reason they saw his birth as a correction to the act of the first Adam, and if so the saying “this will comfort us” was said as a hope. This interpretation also explains the meaning of the saying in the plural, because a whole generation stands and waits for the curse to be lifted from the earth (Hezkoni Commentary, 2005).

On the other hand, the Radak interprets that Noah’s name came to Lamech in prophecy and not out of conjecture and hope. Lamech by the power of his prophecy knew that this son would bring comfort to his generation and therefore called his name Noah. According to his words, Lamech places his son as a witness to the correctness of his prophecy and is not satisfied with the revelation of the prophecy that through his son the benefit from the work of the land will come to the next generation, but leaves its mark on his son and thus also creates a more solid commitment to the fulfillment of the word of the prophecy (Kimhi, 2005).

5. Yehuda: Ar, Peretz and Zarah

In Genesis, the story of Judah and Tamar is told, which by all accounts is complex from a family, constitutional, moral, and national point of view. In the story of this act, the Torah does not cover up the characters and does not cover up their names. Furthermore, precisely in the birth of the children of Yehuda, the text specifies and emphasizes the very act of calling the name (Caspi, 1991).

The Radak does not see a repetition of the calling by name for emphasis but explains that this was the custom in the order in which the names were called: the first son was called by the father, the second by the mother, the third by the father and God forbid. This is how he explains why Yehuda calls his firstborn by name while the second is Named by the mother, and although the third son should have been named by the father, it is the mother who calls the son by his name because Yehuda was not present at the time of birth. Its meaning sheds light on the time of giving the name, which is given near birth, and strengthens the connection between the calling of the name and the beginning of his essence in the world (Kimhi, 2005).

The Malbim writes that it was appropriate to mention the calling of Ar by name, as Judah's firstborn, because from him a kingdom would come, and the same is true regarding the birth of Peretz and Zarah, from Perez the kings of the House of Judah came. The mention of their name serves as a kind of emphasis on the kingship that will come from him (Malbim, 1956).

6. Joseph: Manasseh and Ephraim

Ibn Ezra interprets Manasseh’s name from the language of mercy, that God blessed Joseph with all the good things he showered upon him, according to which it seems that the names of Manasseh and Ephraim symbolize Joseph's recognition of the good that God has done with him (Ibn-Ezra Commentary, 2005).

Rabbi Hirsch follows a different path and gives two interpretations, one in the meaning of forgetfulness, according to which Yosef claims before God that he forgot his family from him, but he rejects this interpretation since the scripture does not want to categorize Yosef as being heartless. Therefore, Rashar gives a second interpretation that “Nashni” is from the word creditor-debtor, and according to this Yosef turns to G-d and thanks him for the reality he is in, after all, he is indebted to his family who brought him without first thinking, to the situation he is

in Now kosher and ruler in Egypt. This interpretation does not mean that Yosef ignores his past, but rather he sees his past as a tractate of events that it was precisely the disasters that befell him that caused his wealth and happiness (Hirsh, 2002).

The interpretation of the Melbim continues the educational line that outlines the names of Yosef’s sons and explains that each of Yosef’s sons is a memory of a different period in his life. The elder Menashe symbolizes the worry he had during his poverty, while Ephraim symbolizes the fruitful and flourishing period of his life. His two sons were born a ruler in Egypt and yet he does not forget that his good days followed his bad days and they depend on them “that poverty caused his greatness” (Malbiim, 1956).

7. Conclusion

In this article, we have provided interpretations regarding fathers calling their sons by name and we will summarize the main points of their statements that have been brought forward so far. The scripture mentions that Adam called his third son by his name, even though it has already been mentioned that Eve called her son by his name. The Ramban claims that the scripture emphasizes that the calling by name is precisely for those who will continue the chain of generations, the Melbim points to the same principle and says that it was appropriate to mention from whom the kingdom of the house of David will come (Melbim, 1956).

The Radak, on the other hand, does not see the marking of name-calling as a special matter that the Torah emphasizes and says that the order of name-calling between the parents was an accepted and clear matter of who the father calls and who the mother calls by name. The names given by ancestors come to express different things. Rashi’s interpretation explains that the names can express hope, and Radek explains that the hope that arises precisely in a certain name stems from a spiritual manifestation that was upon the father and the reading of the name comes to strengthen faith in his prophecy (Kimhi, 2005).

The Hezkoni sees the reading of the name to express a mark of a significant event from which a change stands out. Ebaz through the names of the sons of Yosef shows that reading the names of the sons was a way of expressing gratitude to G-d and in a similar way Rabbi Hirsch interprets that the reading of the names itself is a call and an appeal to G-d (Hezkoni Commentary, 2005).

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

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