

שמות – There's a chap-vort which I cannot resist sharing, about the word שמות. The זצ"ל R' Chaim Kanievsky was very מקפיד on שמות. He would always complete it on Friday, ensuring he wouldn't מטריח his family to wait for him, whether at the סעודות on Friday night or Shabbos morning. Despite his immense schedule and many חובות, he still prioritized שמות. He did it in the same order that I do it which is מקרא, תרגום, and then מקרא again. This method allowed him to understand the מקרא better when he read it the second time.

That's just a small introduction to the topic of שמות, which means names. Names hold a very חשובה place in כלל ישראל. We know from the מדרש that there's a small ענין of רוח הקודש involved when parents choose a name for their child, parents have to ask for סיעתא דשמיא in order to choose a name that's appropriate for the child. The גמרא teaches that a name has a profound effect on a person. First, it impacts the individual directly, and second, it reflects who the person will become throughout their life. Because of this, רב מאיר in the גמרא would ask for a person's name before interacting with them. He used the name as a way to determine how to approach the person and how to deal with their שאלות and issues. (The concept of רוח הקודש influencing a parent's choice of a name is from the אריז"ל; it's not ווערטל; it's סתם אזוי אַ ווערטל). R' Chaim Kanievsky advised that parents should give their children normal names to prevent embarrassment. Both the חזון איש and the Steipler were also very shtark on this ענין.

The זוהר, as quoted by R' Chaim, explains that the letters of a person's name combine to influence their life. It also discusses certain name combinations that are not ideal for marriage. These are secrets of רוח הקודש, and we do not truly understand how they work. R' Chaim was adamant that we should not consult people who claim to understand these mysteries. Instead, we should focus on מידות and other practical, meaningful aspects when arranging שידוכים, rather than being preoccupied with names.

I came across an interesting insight from R' Chaim while preparing for this. R' Chaim used to say that naming a child after a deceased relative had no ייחוס or benefit, either for the נפטר or for the child. He explained it was simply a זיכרון of the נפטר. However, he later revised this opinion. Like many גדולים in the גמרא who changed their views, R' Chaim stated that it is indeed a tremendous זכות for the child and provides great נחת to the נשמה of the deceased. He also mentioned that he heard in the name of the חזון איש that naming a child after a deceased relative is both a נחת and a טובה for that נשמה. Furthermore, giving a child a name connected to the פרשה is an added זכות for the child. We named some of our children based on the פרשה, and others after relatives or individuals we felt were חשוב.

In life, it's essential to approach all our activities with the same seriousness and חשיבות as we do when naming a child. Each day, we should ask ourselves, "What am I doing today to increase כבוד שמים? What am I doing to improve my family's רוחניות and גשמיות?" A name reflects our willingness, our תשוקה, our yearning to improve ourselves, to become better people, and to live up to the names that we have chosen for ourselves. Bezras Hashem, we should have הצלחה in achieving this and be a נחת for כלל ישראל and for all those who came before us. Good Shabbos!

