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PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Shelach  Rabbi Pesach Gottesman

Choose Your Own Name

The Gemara Sotah 34b states, “R’ Yitzchok says, we have a tradition from our fathers that the *meraglim* were named according to their deeds, but we haven’t succeeded in understanding [how their names revealed their deeds] except one, Sasur ben Michael who denied Hashem.” The Gemara teaches us that although now we may not understand how, nevertheless all of the names of the *meraglim* hinted at how they acted. The Sefer Yedei Moshe on Bamidbar Rabbah 16,10 asks, if the names of the *meraglim* hinted to their corruptness, why did Moshe Rabeinu send them in the first place? The Gemara in Yuma 83b cites a story in which R’ Meir went to an inn and asked the innkeeper his name. R’ Meir refused to hand over his money to the innkeeper to watch since his name hinted at evil. With this being said, why wasn’t Moshe Rabeinu wary to send these men?

Perhaps we could answer with a different Gemara in Brachos which asks, “What is the significance of the name Rus?” R’ Yochanan explains that she merited to have Dovid HaMelech descend from her who “sated” Hashem with his song and praise [comparing the name Rus to the word Rivuhu- sated]. The Malbim points out that the name Rus was given to her before she became Jewish. It was a Moavi name. How could it be that her name was referring to Dovid Hamelech’s service to Hashem?

We see from here that it’s not the name which makes the person, but the person who makes the name.

A certain Gabbai Tzedakah in Yerushalayim by the name of R’ Yaakov Rosental presented to Harav Elyashiv, Shlita

with the following question: A child was born to a family in Bnei Brak before Purim, and the parents decided to name him Mordechai. A short while later they received a letter from a great uncle in the United States with a generous check in appreciation to them for being the first ones in the family to name a child after his father. The father of the baby was in a dilemma. Does it constitute *Gneivas Daas* to keep the money, misleading his great uncle into thinking that the child was truly named after his father? Harav Elyashiv replied, “What is the problem? From now on, have him named after this relative as well!”

We see from here that a person could be “renamed”. This is what happened to Rus. We don’t know why she was originally named Rus, but she transformed her name to the highest service of Hashem in the course of her life. The *meraglim* did the opposite. They had free choice with what to make of their names. When Moshe Rabeinu chose them, they were completely righteous. They themselves turned their names into something negative through their actions.

A child is born with unlimited potential. Although the parents give him his name, only **he** makes the name. May Hashem give us the *siyatta dishmaya* to be *zoche* to make the most of our names.

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HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

Ripped Tzitzis

Rabbi Avi Weinrib

In this week's parsha we are introduced to the mitzvah of Tzitzis. The purpose of wearing tzitzis is to serve as a reminder of all the mitzvos that are incumbent upon us [see Shulchan Aruch O.H. 8-8]. Furthermore, the tzitzis serves as a symbol and uniform that the wearer is dedicated and committed to keeping all the mitzvos in the Torah. In this week's Halacha Encounters, we will discuss one of the many relevant halachos which pertain to the mitzvah of Tzitzis.

If one or more strings rip

What is the halachic status of tzitzis when one or more of the strings torn off a corner? Would this render the entire garment unfit? When tzitzis are made, four long strings are placed through the hole in the corner of the garment. The strings hang down on two sides whereupon one corner now has eight strings. They are then knotted and wound with the required amount of knots and windings. Therefore, although it looks like eight strings, in actuality there are only four strings in each corner. If one string were to totally rip off, this would actually only be one half of a string ripping off. The Shulchan Aruch [O.H. 12-1] quotes the opinion of the Rosh that if a string were to rip, although initially each string should be 10 ½ inches (beginning from the knot closest to the garment), if at least 1 and ¾ inches remain, the tzitzis would remain valid. This would mean that even if one string of the eight would totally rip there would be no problem since the other half of that string remains totally intact. However, if two strings totally rip without 1 ¾ inches remaining it would now depend on how they were manufactured. Most manufacturers of tzitzis are careful that throughout the knotting and winding process, the four halves of each string remain on one side of the knots and the other halves on the other. If so, if two strings would rip on the same side of the knot there would be no problem as again this is only two halves of two different strings. If however it was on different sides

of the knot, then we have to be concerned that the two ripped strings were from the same string and the entire corner would be invalid. If three or more strings ripped on the same side it seems that it should remain valid. However, the Shulchan Aruch [12-1] quotes the opinion of Rabeinu Tam that one is required to have at least two full strings of 10 ½ inches. Therefore, if three would rip even on one side according to Rabeinu Tam that corner would now be invalid because there are no longer three full strings. The Rema writes that the custom is to follow Rabeinu Tam and invalidate the tzitzis once one no longer has two full strings. In summation, if one string would rip even totally according to all opinions the tzitzis remain valid. If two strings would rip totally it would depend if one can verify that the manufacturer was particular to keep the two halves of each string on two sides of the knot and the two ripped strings are on the same side the tzitzis remain kosher. If they were on different sides of the knot it would be invalid. If from at least one of the strings would remain at least 1 ¾ inches it would be kosher. If three strings would rip and all three would be less than 10 ½ inches it would be invalid.

Discarding the Ripped Tzitzis

What should one do with the ripped pieces of Tzitzis? The Rema (O.H. 21-1) rules that although one is not required to bury the strings they should not be placed in a degrading place such as the garbage. One may wrap the tzitzis in a bag and then discard them. The Mahril writes that it would be better to use them in the performance of a mitzvah such as using them for a bookmark in a sefer or to bind a sefer. One should not merely store them in a sefer for no purpose as this is a disgrace to the sefer [M'or Ukitziyah 21]. Furthermore, the Rema writes that a scrupulous individual should in fact bury them and one who is stringent to do so brings blessing onto himself [Rema ibid.].

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