# Assembly Notes

## PARSHAS SHEMOS 5785

### Assembly Theme: What's In A Name

the lubavitch multi-academy trust
lubavitch girls' school

The second Sefer (of the five Books of the Torah) describes the most momentous events ever.

The agony and the ecstasy. The pain of the bitter exile in Egypt. And the miraculous Redemption. The unparalleled Revelation at Sinai where G-d spoke to us directly and gave us His Torah. The building of the holy Temple in the wilderness. Yet, the title of this book is merely Shemos, Names! A name seems like something that's external, almost random. How can that word define what happened in Shemos?! Moreover the first Sedra in Shemos, describing the systematic murdering of Jewish children and oppressive slavery is also called merely Shemos!

The answer: There are two dimensions to a person's name. On the one hand, it is an external factor. A person does not need a name for oneself. The name is there so that others can identify them. People with very diverse personalities can share the same name.

Yet at the same time, when someone's name is called they turn with attention. When someone faints, saying their name can help draw them back into consciousness. The Talmud says that one of the ways to reverse a Heavenly decree is to change (or add to) their name. The Tanya explains that a name represents the inner life force. It is the conduit that allows this inner life force to be expressed.

What kept our people together in Exile? Their names , the shared identity. Exile and redemption are similar to the two dimensions of a name. When the external dimension of our identity is in place, subjugation is possible. But the essence is always there, and when it is expressed, there is Redemption. There are those who are merely "Jews by name". Some part of all of us is like that.

We have witnessed in the past fifteen months countless people who have not been intimidated by the actions of our enemies and of some of our "friends" who should know better. On the contrary, they are coming closer, because of the connection with their essence. When that part of us is redeemed and connected to who we really are, this contributes to personal redemption, and the accumulated effect will help bring the Redemption of all the world.

STORY OF THE REBBE

In 1981 a young student in New Jersey learned the first possuk in Chumash: Beraishis: In the beginning Hashem created the Heavens and the earth. He came home and asked his parents "but who created G-d?". His mother said that the question is great, but she didn't know what the answer was. "Why not ask your teacher?"

He did, but the teacher told him off for asking such questions. His mother told the boy to ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He wrote a letter and asked the Rebbe "Who created G-d?"

A little while later he received a letter addressed to Chaim Elchonon HaKohen. Dated 22nd of Sivan 5741, the letter read as follows:

גוט שבת!

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Greeting and Blessing ,

I received your (undated) letter, in which you write that you want to know more about HaShem etc.

The desire for such knowledge is, of course, commendable, and so King David instructed his son Shlomo, "Know the G-d of your father and serve Him wholeheartedly and eagerly." (Chron, 28:9).

However, there is a time for everything, and at this time the most important thing for you is to concentrate on the fulfilment of the Mitzvoth and your Torah studies, and in due course, you will speak to your Hebrew teacher or Rabbi in your community in connection with the questions you may have.

There is surely no need to point out to you that in matters of Torah and Mitzvoth, Naaseh (we will do) comes before v'Nishma (we will understand), and it is through Naaseh that a Jew attains v'Nishma in the fullest possible measure.

So, the Rebbe is making three points:

1) Asking and wanting to understand is not only permissible, it is commendable

2) Even the most complex questions have answers, but we cannot always understand everything at once. We have to keep working on understanding what we can.

3) The best way to reach a full understanding is to focus on doing Hashem's will.

(Thanks to Rabbu Shneor Ashkenazi for the story)

Good shabbos!

גוט שבת!