

LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE

70 EAST ELM STREET

PHONE: 312-337-6811

RABBI DR. DAVID BAUMAN

CHICAGO ILLINOIS 60611

EMAIL: lds70@yahoo.com

EMAIL: rabbilsds@gmail.com

Shomrei Israel

שומרי ישראל

WEBSITE: lds70.org

PHONE: 847-454-7993

THE NAMES OF THE SPIES

As you may have inferred from my May-June Bulletin on Haman's sons, the Rabbis have a penchant for interpreting names by connecting them with Hebrew words that sound almost like the name and using the meanings of those words as a basis for their "interpretation." So when I read the section of Numbers 13 describing the twelve tribal representatives sent to scout out the Promised Land (by God's command/viz. Numbers 13:1-2 or by Moses's decision/viz: Deuteronomy 1:22-23, I'll let you decide!) I wondered whether there was a rabbinical interpretation of those names as well.

The precedent for such interpretations is Midrash Rabba Bamidbar 16:10 which says, "There are people whose names are nice and whose actions are ugly, people whose names are ugly and whose actions are nice, people whose names and actions are nice, people whose name and actions are ugly, whose names are nice and whose actions are ugly." It goes on to give Ishmael and Esau as examples of ones had nice names but ugly actions, and as the names of the spies as examples of ones whose names and actions are ugly, the names of the spies, and gives as an example Sethur, "who closed himself off from the world שסתרו מן העולם."

Even though they were described as "chiefs" of their tribes, they were not the true chiefs; those were listed in Numbers 1:5-15. So why were these spies listed by name? In Sotah 34b Rabbi Isaac (69-74 CE) said, "It is a tradition in our possession from our forefathers that the spies were named after their actions, but only with one has it survived with us." He then proceeded to give us the etymology of Sethur ben Michael. Rabbi Yochanan, responded with the etymology of Nahbi ben Vophti. Recognizing that this may not be the last word on the subject, I looked at Ginzberg's The Legends of the Jews (Volume 3, pages 264-5) and, not at all surprised, found a list with interpretations of all the names.

The list of interpretations of the names of the ten who recommended against going into the Promised Land was taken from a Midrashic text, Tanhuma, attributed to Rabbi Tanhuma bar Abba (350-375 CE), edited in the 5th century CE, and published by the 8th century CE. (Oddly, though, the passage I will cite, from Tanhuma Haazinu 7, ends with "and this is found in the book of Rabbi Moshe Hadarshan," an 11th century rabbi, so who knows when this actually was written.)

Here they are, including both the Hebrew from Tanhuma and the English translation from Ginzberg (G), along with my interpolation of the key Hebrew words which link the interpretation of the name with the name itself, and some comments on the differences in the various texts. (If you want to skip the details, jump ahead to the punch line.)

Reuben: Shammua ben Zaccur שמוע בן זכור
על שלא שמע בדברי המקום וכאלו שאל בזכורו

G: He did not obey שמע שלא God which was counted against him just as if he had pursued sorcery

Simeon: Shaphat ben Hori שפט בן חורי
על שלא שפט את יצרו ונעשה חורי מן הארץ

G: He did not conquer שפט שלא his evil inclination and hence went out empty handed without receiving a possession in the land of Israel

Issachar: Igal ben Joseph יגאל בן יוסף
על שהוציא דבה על הארץ לכך נאסף בלא עתו

G: He soiled the reputation of the Holy Land, and therefore died נאסף before his time.

Benjamin: Palti ben Raphu פלטי בן רפוא
פלט עמו ממעשים טובים ורפו ידיו שהרי מת

G: He spat out פלט the good qualities that had previously been his and therefore wasted away

Zebulun: Gadiel ben Sodi גדיאל בן סודי

דבר דברים קשין כגידין

G: He spoke infamous things דברים קשין כגידין against God in executing the secret plan of the spies

Manasseh: Gadi ben Susi גדי בן סוסי

הטיח דברים כלפי מעלה והעלה סיסיא הוא שאמר ארץ אוכלת יושביה

G: He blasphemed God and aroused his wrath, for it was he who said of the land, it eateth up its inhabitants

Dan: Ammiel ben Gemalli עמיאל בן גמלי

העמה כחו על שאמר כי חזק הוא ממנו וגמל לעצמו שלא נכנס לארץ ישראל

G: He cast a shadow upon God's strength

Asher: Sethur ben Michael סתור בן מיכאל

על שהיה בלבו לסתור מה שכתוב מי הוא כאל ה', ואומר אין כאל ישורון

G: He had resolved to act against לסתור God and instead of saying "Who is like unto God?" he said, "Who is God?"

(AM: this is an imperfect translation. The Hebrew אין כאל ישורון is taken from Deuteronomy 33:26, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun." In Sotah 34b Rabbi Isaac interpreted both the names Sethur and Michael. He said that Sethur was so named because he undermined שסתר the works God; and that Michael was so named because he suggested that God אל was weak מך. The Midrash Rabba Bamidbar 47:10 says that Sethur was so named העולם אל מן העולם "because he suppressed God from the world." This indicates that whatever Rabbi Isaac remembered got amplified by the time it got copied into the Tanhuma.)

Naphtali: Nahbi ben Vophsi. נחבי בן ופסי

החביא האמת ופסה האמונה מפיו כמו פסו אמונים מבני אדם

G: He suppressed החביא the truth and faith found no room in his mouth, for he brought forth lies against God

(AM. In Sotah 34b Rabbi Yochanan interpreted both the names Nahbi and Vophsi. He said that Nahbi was so named because he hid שהחביא the words of God, and Vophsi was so named because he stepped over שפיסע the attributes of God. Again what was recorded in the Talmud got amplified by the time it got copied into the Tanhuma.)

Gad: Geuel ben Machi גאואל בן מכי

על שגאה לומר דברים אשר לא בן על הקבה, לפיכך על בן נעשה מן

G: He was humbled because he urged untruths against God.

Ginzberg also gives an interpretation of the names of the two who recommended going into the Promised Land

Ephraim: Hoshea ben Nun הושע בן נון

G: Full of understanding and not caught like a fish by the spies

(AM: Sorry, but I don't know where Ginzberg got this; Tanhuma instead says that Moses gave his name an added letter so that his name would begin with the name of God and therefore prevent him from listening to the spies)

Judah: Caleb ben Jephunneh קלב בן יפנה

שבדברים שהיו על לבבו השיב למשה, ולא כדברים אשר היו על לב מרגלים

G: He spoke what he felt in his heart and turned aside from the advice of the rest of the spies

You may think that this is merely a rabbinic game, in which one stretches a bit to force the name to match a Hebrew term that corresponds with a characteristic of the person, especially when that characteristic is only determined ex post facto. But there is a precedent in the early part of the Torah, beginning with Adam and on through the sons of Moses, in which the derivation of each name is explicitly given. We see an example of this in 1 Samuel 25:25, when speaking of Nabal, the text says, "for as his name is, so is he; Nabal נבל is his name and folly נבלה is with him." The rabbis interpret this phrase, כשמו בן הוא, "for as his name is, so is he," as indicating that each name has an interpretation, and that it is the task of the exegete to discover that interpretation. So as you browse through the Talmud and Midrash, don't be surprised to find rabbinic interpretations of other names in the Tanach.

LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE FAMILY NEWS

SINCEREST WISHES FOR COMPLETE RECOVERY to:

All who have succumbed to COVID-19.
MARLA FERENCZ who underwent surgery.
SAM SCHUSTER who underwent surgery.
KATHLEEN SOLOVY who was hospitalized.
JERRY ZOLDAN who underwent surgery

רפואה שלמה!

SINCEREST CONDOLENCES to:

ELLEN and ALBERT ZICKMANN on the death of their mother, Nadia Zickmann.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem

KIDDUSHIMCANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19

HONORABLE MENSHEN

Please forgive me for any errors and omissions. AM

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue wishes to thank the following for their contributions. In memory of Nadia Zickmann: **Liliane Dayan and her children, the Gerber family, Harriet Gershman, Sherrie and Craig Glicker, Alice and Frank Kleinman, Ron Marmer, Roberta and Josh Miller, Sonia and Sheldon Nahmod, Ede and Aaron Snyder, Candice Goldstein and Abraham Steinberg, Aimee and Lee Strauss, Henry Winograd.** In memory of Elaine Izaks: **Vita Land and Harold Zarkowsky.** In memory of Gloria Jarvis: **Diana and Sam Schuster.** In memory of Dinah Heffez: **Diana and Sam Schuster.** **Rose Dessau:** for the *yahrzeit* of her mother. **David Green:** in memory of Joseph Linker. **Dayna and Shaun Kleinman:** in memory of Vicki Siegel. **Carol and Mark Markovich:** for family *yahrzeits*. **Eli Michaels:** in memory of Margaret Michaels. **Vita Land and Harold Zarkowsky:** in memory of Janet Land. For Sam Schuster's recovery: **Irwin Brown, Rose Dessau, Harriet Gershman, Alice and Frank Kleinman, Roberta and Josh Miller, Henry Winograd.** For Kathleen Solovy's recovery: **Alice and Frank Kleinman, Henry Winograd.** In honor of the birth of Lori and Raphael Lavin's granddaughter: **Beverly Alpern, Gail and Jim Jarvis, Diana and Sam Schuster.** In honor of Shane Zickmann's bar mitzvah: **Morene Dunn and Barry Axler. Ronld Marmer, Liana, Henry, Edward, Mark and Jonathan Palacci.** In honor of Beverly Alpern's grandson's bar mitzvah: **Lynn and Alfred Altschul. Sonia and Sheldon Nahmod:** in honor of the birthdays of May March, Sue Mednick, and Vita Land. In honor of Toby Mann's birthday: **Rose Dessau, Sonia and Sheldon Nahmod. Henry Winograd:** in honor of Shom Klaff's retirement and thanks for her years of service to the synagogue.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Lake Shore Drive Synagogue is pleased to announce the continuation of a series of Zoom classes on the High Holiday led by Rabbi Bauman. The sessions will begin at 7:30 PM on Wednesday evenings. The meeting ID is 5147488968 and the password is 810153

We now have Zoom morning minyanim every morning, from Sunday through Friday, at 8:30 AM. The meeting ID is 83278107218 and the password is 810153.

The next meeting of the Book Group will be on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 10:00 AM, where Hananel Mack's The Aggadic Midrash Literature will be discussed. It will be held via Zoom with meeting ID 6984061038 and password is LSDSBooks.

Since there are no Friday night services scheduled, we do not include the Schedule of Services in this bulletin. We have inserted our usual calendar of candle lighting times and Shabbat/holiday ending times in this Bulletin and have indicated the times that the Friday night services would begin, if ever we schedule them.