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Thought Tools

How Do You Spell Greatness?

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My brother, David, regularly gets letters and emails intended for me. And I frequently find myself introduced as Rabbi David Lapin. For some reason, the name David sticks in people's minds more than the name Daniel. For a while I got so tired of being called David that I considered going to court to have my name changed to Ferdinand or Montgomery.

The corrections column in newspapers and magazines routinely inform us that articles misspelled someone's name or labeled a picture incorrectly.

That is because magazines, papers and people are fallible. But when Scripture wrongly identifies someone or 'misspells' someone's name, something altogether different is occurring.

After David kills Goliath, King Saul rewards the young hero by marrying him to Saul's daughter, Michal. As those of you who have read the Book of Samuel know, in a way that it is inappropriate for fathers-in-law to behave, Saul tried to kill David. What happened while David was on the run?

*And Saul gave Michal his daughter, David's wife,
to Palti, the son of Layish, who was from Gallim.
(I Samuel 25:44)*

After Saul's death, David reclaims his wife from the man to whom Saul had given her.

*And David sent messengers to Ish Boshet,
Saul's son, saying, 'deliver me my wife, Michal...'
And Ish Boshet sent and took her... from Paltiel the son of Layish.
(II Samuel 3:14-15)*

Notice his name changes from Palti to Paltiel. Ancient Jewish wisdom informs us that this isn't an editing mistake. The two letters that change Palti to Paltiel compose one of God's names. God is inserting Himself into Paltiel's name.

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"Thank you for having such high expectations. I never dreamed I could learn so much so fast."

"I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to take the course from two people that see the spiritual insights as a vitally important part of the language."

People are not born great. Greatness comes as individuals respond to circumstances in their lives. Many people display greatness by exhibiting commitment and integrity in daily situations in their work and family lives. Others find themselves playing on a larger stage.

This was the situation in which Palti found himself. He was singled out by his king and given Michal as a wife. He had every reason to assume that her marriage to David had been annulled and that all the money, prestige and favors that come to members of the royal family would now be his.

Yet, from the day Saul sent her into his house until the day that Ish Boshet took her away, Palti never laid a finger on Michal. Despite King Saul's approval, Palti recognized that neither Michal nor David's wishes were being considered. For acting with such holy integrity and self restraint, he merited a Godly name.

Paltiel was not born into a prestigious family. He did not distinguish himself in battle or by amassing great wealth. Like most of us, he was an ordinary person. But when he faced temptation and challenge, one that took place behind closed doors, he triumphed so magnificently that God singled him out and shared His name with him. The self-control Paltiel showed was evidence that in hundreds of ways through his lifetime, he had strengthened his self-discipline muscle. That type of greatness is available to us all.

Names matter. Biblical names matter even more. Every name in Scripture has a meaning; one that isn't usually evident from the English wording. When a Biblical name changes, a "story behind the story" is being transmitted.

Sometimes, the spelling of a name changes as it is used in different places. The name sounds the same when said aloud, and the change is completely hidden when it is transliterated into another language. It can only be discerned by reading the original Hebrew.

We look at some of those instances and the hidden message being taught in Holy Hebrew!, a program about which I am incredibly passionate. I look forward to sharing the next [Holy Hebrew!](#) journey with you.

Susan's Musings

This week's musing - [With Charity for All? Not Exactly](#)

Economists and politicians can debate whether extending unemployment benefits is a needed crutch in hard times or whether doing so discourages too many people from searching wholeheartedly for work. Society, though, might gain from a different approach...

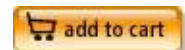
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Rabbi,

Lately, almost whenever I meet salespeople and also socially, people extend their hand to shake. As a woman I do not want to shake strangers' hands.

Recently a car salesman approached my husband and then me. I kept my hands behind my back and smiled at the salesman. He asked, "Do you not want to shake my hand?" I said I was in covenant with my husband and do not shake hands.

However, I do NOT want to hurt people's feelings. Do you have a polite, kind way of avoiding the handshake without going into detail? I would appreciate a 'tool' for this new lunging intrusion.

Thank You,

Catherine

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