

PARSHAT SHEMOT  
23 TEVET 5781/07 JANUARY 2021



*Shem*  
Painting by Shinta Zenker

LET US ACQUIRE A NAME FOR OURSELVES

1. “Let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens and make for ourselves a name lest we be scattered over the face of the earth.” (Genesis 11:4)
2. These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob... (Exodus 1:1)
3. A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. (Exodus 1:8)
4. A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. (Exodus 2:1)
5. The woman conceived and bore a son...she saw how beautiful he was...she hid him for three months...she put the child into [a wicker basket]... (Exodus 2:2-3)
6. His sister stationed herself at a distance... (Exodus 2:4)
7. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile... (Exodus 2:5)
8. She named him Moses... (Exodus 2:10)
9. Moses said to God, “Who am I...?” (Exodus 3:11)

10. Every person is called by three names: One, which they are called by their father and mother; one, which they are called by other people; and one, which they acquire for themselves. The earned name is worth much more than all of the others. (Midrash Tanhuma)
11. Each person is born with a deficiency. A person's whole purpose in life, their mission, is to clarify that deficiency. (Based on teachings of Rabbi Mordechai Yosef, founder of Ishbitzer Hasidism)

The very purpose of Creation was that all would be compelled to ask, "Who created all these?" – that all would know clearly that a supreme force, in its goodness, is sovereign of the world, and none would make a claim to autonomous power. To that end, God planted in each entity some lack, a fissure in its being, making them all incomplete. But Creation soon got used to that too – it ceased to notice its own deficiency; it didn't know that it needed God. (Rabbi Ya'akov of Izbica-Radzyn)

In the city, no one thinks about the wilderness; but when one is there in the wilderness, one's whole being is there. (Rabbi Ya'akov)

The name "we acquire for ourselves" is the name we get by healing the deficiency within us. (Rabbi Mordechai Yosef)