

Parents have a degree of divine inspiration when naming their child, that does not mean that the parents are prophets

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# מילימ בריכה



## It's All in the Name

### Halachic Questions Relating to Names

Rabbi Daniel Neustadt

The custom of naming a baby at his Bris is based on the fact that it was in conjunction with the commandment of Mila that Hashem changed Abram's name to Avraham. The name אברהם was much more than an old name with a new letter added; it symbolized a totally new identity. From that day Avraham achieved perfection of his physical being through the act of Bris Mila his new name and its implications would reflect his broadened mission.

The relationship of Bris and naming a child may be based on the fact that an article can only be named after it has been completed. According to Kabbalah, the removal of the Orlah rids an individual of a certain degree of Tumah, allowing to gain the full sanctity of his soul-הנשמה. The Zohar writes that it is only after the removal of the Orlah that a child can be called אדם. Thus, with his physical and spiritual creation complete he attains the holiness of being part of Am Yisroel. It is fitting, then at that time he be given his Hebrew name.

**My grandfather was not religious but I was very close to him and want to name our son after him. My husband says this is not ideal. Is he correct?**

If your grandfather grew up religious but then rebelled against Yiddishkeit to the degree that he became a Shabbos desecrator then it is not recommended to name a child after him. If, however his lack of religious observance was due to lack of proper education in his youth, then it is proper to name after him but preferably add another name (e.g., a name of a Tzaddik) to your grandfather's name. It makes no difference which name comes first.

**My father didn't have a Hebrew name, but I want to name my newborn after him. How do I choose?**

Choose a Hebrew name that is similar or close in meaning or pronunciation to your father's Secular name. For instance, his name was John, you can call your newborn son Yonasan. If your mother's name was Rose, you may name your daughter Shoshana.

**If parents have Ruach Hakodesh when naming a child, why do some Rabbanim suggest later in life changing a name?**

While there are some Kabbalistic and Chassidic sources that indicate that parents have a degree of divine inspiration when naming their child, that does not mean that the parents are prophets. Sometimes, under extenuating and specific circumstances Rav may guide a person to change his name.

**My parents gave each of us siblings three names and none of us use all of them. I've heard this invalidates the name. how does that work?**

If a person never uses a name that was given at the Bris or Krias Hatorah, then that is no longer considered to be a person's name. Practically speaking the "dropped" name will not be used in the Kesubah (or on a Get). There are some exceptions to this rule, so the issue must be discussed with a qualified Rav in advance of a wedding.

**When we name a child after a deceased relative, is it just for our own memory, or does it elevate the Niftar's Neshamah in Olam Habah as well?**

I am not aware of any sources who say that naming a baby after a deceased relative elevates his Neshamah. The only way to elevate a Neshamah (other than saying Kaddish and lighting a Yuhrzit candle) is by learning additional Torah, giving more Tzedaka and participating in extra Chessed activities, while dedicating the Zechusim to the deceased.

**My uncle had a very odd-sounding Yiddish name, and I'm told it's not right to give a baby such an uncommon name. But shouldn't my uncle's memory be more important?**

No, your child's self-esteem and potential embarrassment (or being targeted by bullying) is more important. If you wish to perpetuate your uncles name, donate some Seforim to a Shul or dedicate a day of learning as an Aliyah for his Neshama.

**My mother-in-law had a name that is more commonly used as a boy's name in most circles. Should we name a daughter or a son after her?**

It all depends on whether your daughter will be embarrassed in the future for having what is commonly used as a boys name. If that could be a concern, then name your son with that name and give your daughter a girl's name.

**We're Ashkenazic, but my daughter married a Sephardic boy and they want to name their newborn daughter after me. Should I allow that?**

When your daughter married this Sephardic boy, she committed herself-presumably with your agreement and blessing- to follow her husbands customs. So, if your son-in-law insists this Minhag be followed, you have no choice but to accept. But if your son-in-law asks you if you wish to receive this honor, then you should decline, since this is not the custom of the Bnei Ashkenaz.

**We were recently redt a great boy for my daughter, but he had the same name as my husband, and our Rav told us we should pass on the Shidduch, why?**

Many people are careful to follow the will of Rav Yehuda Hachassid, who advised against doing a Shidduch if the prospective son-in-law has the exact same first name as the girl's father (the same applies to a prospective daughter-in-law and the boy's mother). Note, however that this is not a binding Halacha that must always be kept and in certain situations a qualified Rav may permit a couple to marry despite this advisory not being followed.

**One should not Paskin Halacha from this article. A qualified local Orthodox Rabbi must be consulted regarding how to be Noheg Lmasseh.**



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## מעשה שהיה כך היה — Three Bris Milas

There is no  
greater Zechus for  
a good judgement

It was one in the afternoon. I had just finished a four-hour learning *Seder at Kollel* and was headed home when my cell phone rang. It was my wife. Her voice was shaking.

"Its Ima," she choked out.

"What about my mother?" I asked with dread.

"She was in a terrible accident. She was hit by a bus. You need to go the hospital now." In a haze, I asked my wife about my mother's condition, and she told me that the doctors said she was in a coma. Her condition was critical, but stable. I immediately called my brother. He already knew, and in a few minutes, he would come pick me up in his car and we'd drive together to Rambam Medical Center in Haifa. After receiving permission to enter, we rushed into the ICU. Our mother was lying in a hospital bed attached to various machines.



I went searching for the ward doctor and asked him about my mother's condition. The doctor looked at me straight in the eye and said, "it's not good. You're a religious man. Pray!". It was a good piece of advice. I pulled out a *Tehillim*, my teary gaze fixed on the words infused with *Emunah*. Now more than ever, I identified with the words I was saying. A Jew's

power is in his speech. That's what my mother always said and taught me.

"We have to do everything we can for Ima," my brother said to me.

The first thing we did was call our cousin Avrumi. Avrumi is a lively *bachur* who gets things done. Avrumi made some calls and within minutes he had organized a *Minyan* to go to Klal Yisroel's Ima- Mama Rochel. To pierce the heaven with *Tefillos* for our mother. My wife gave my mothers name to hundreds of women who joined together to complete the *Sefer* of *Tehillim* numerous times as *Zechus* for her. *BH*, all of their efforts bore fruit and the unbelievable happened: my mother recovered amazingly fast. Although she regained consciousness, she would need a lengthy *rehab*.

It was three days before Rosh Hashana. My mother was extremely weak and needed help even with her basic needs. Who would be there for her during *Yom Tov*? Ima always worried about us and did everything for us, and now she needed us to be there for her.

It was seven in the evening. The children were eating supper. While my wife served them, I asked Ruti, my eldest daughter, to give the little ones their bath. My wife noticed that I was preoccupied and asked me what was wrong. "In three days, it will be Rosh Hoshana. What will be with Ima?"

"You will be with her," my wonderful wife answered emphatically, "I'll go to my parents with the children. All will be fine. Honoring one's parents takes precedence over everything, and there is no greater *Zechus* for a good judgement."

A stone lifted from my heart. I asked her if she was certain. "Absolutely!" she said.

On Erev Rosh Hashana, I arrived at the hospital feeling I had done the right thing. There was a *Minyan* there that I could attend, and a *Tzedakkah* organization would provide delicious meals for the patients and their families. It felt good to be able to be there with Ima. I smiled at her, and felt

gratified when she smiled back. There was nothing like Ima's loving smile.

I davened the Rosh Hashana *Tefillas* with particularly intense concentration, knowing one can't take anything for granted. On Rosh Hashana, it's decided who will live and who will die. Who will find peace, and who will suffer. I implored, with tears filling my eyes and rolling down my face, "אבינו מלכנו שלה רפואה שלימה, לרחלי עמר." I thanked Him for everything He had done for me in the past, and plead with Him to provide in the future. "For Your sake, give us life, a life of *Torah*, of fear of heaven, so that we will merit doing Your will.

At the conclusion of Rosh Hashana, I parted from Ima and went home. My wife greeted me with a huge smile, "the kids had a wonderful *Yom Tov* at my parent's house," she informed me. "It was a little hard and sad without you. Still, they acknowledged that honoring one's parents in more important than anything."

Over the next week, my mother remained very weak. She would need someone to be with her on Yom Kippur. My brother assured me that there was no question. "I'll be with her on Yom Kippur," he said.

She was so happy to see that her sons were so devoted to her, and it was *Mechazek* her. She went through a lengthy and difficult rehabilitation period, and after several months of physical therapy, she made a full recovery *BH!*

A year passed and we had a son. We were elated at our good fortune. The *Bris* was set to take place on Rosh Hashana, but we didn't think this symbolized anything special. Then, after Rosh Hashana, my brother called to inform me of his own *Mazel Tov*, he also had a son! The *Bris* would be on Yom Kippur.

The year before, I had left my family to be at my mothers' side on Rosh Hashana. And now, we merited celebrating a *Bris* one year after; on Rosh Hashana.

My brother had stayed with mother on Yom Kippur, and he had merited making a *Bris* one year later; on Yom Kippur.

This story was related first hand from the *Avreich* who lives in Elad.



The power of *Kivud Av Va'em* in the most difficult circumstances, even when it seems utterly impossible, brings immense merit and blessing.

A few months later, a letter was received by the author of this story from another brother who lives in Kitryat Sefer saying that there is more to the story. "That year, I also merited having a son

on the seventh of *Adar*. The day of Moshe Rabbeinu's birth and death, and the *Bris* took place on Purim; another unusual day to celebrate a *Bris*.

Three brothers. Three *Bris Milah's*. All on days of judgement (or corresponding to a day of judgement, since Purim is connected to Yom Kippur).

"The amazing thing," he continued, "is that our mother's reaction to the *Bris Milah's* that took place on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, was that her third son, *IYH*, would have a *Bris* on Purim.

And so, it was.

## Mila Mysteries

### When Should One Drink From the Cup of Wine?

The custom is that one places a bit of the wine in the baby's mouth when reciting the words, "*b'domayich chayi*." However, when does the person reciting the *B'rachos* drink the wine?

According to some opinions, one should drink the wine immediately after completing the *B'racha* of "*Asher Kideish*" in order to avoid an interruption (a *Hefsek*) between the *B'racha* of "*HaGafen*" and drinking the wine (Tur Yoreh Deah 265). Although the *B'racha* of "*Asher Kideish*" intervenes between *HaGafen* and drinking, this is not considered a *Hefsek* just like reciting the *B'rachos* of *Kiddush* or *Havdala* between "*HaGafen*" and drinking the wine are not.

However, naming the baby constitutes an interruption since it is not a *B'racha*. Others contend that naming the baby is not considered an interruption between the *B'racha* and the drinking of the wine since it is part of the procedure (Itur). To avoid this *Shaylah*, the most common practice in *Chutz LaAretz* is to honor one person with reciting the *B'rachos* and someone else with naming the baby. This way the honoree who recited the *B'rachos* can lick the wine off his fingers in a discreet way, thus avoiding the *Hefsek*. In Eretz Yisrael, the prevalent custom is to honor one person with both *Kibudim*; some follow the Tur's approach that he drinks from the cup before he names the baby whereas others follow the Itur's approach that he does not drink the wine until the baby is named.