

I Will Change Your Name

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The book of Numbers, (Ba'midbar in Hebrew), begins with the Lord commanding Moses to take a census of the people of Israel who had come out of Egypt. The Hebrew word midbar מִדְּבָר comes from the same root as m'daber, מְדַבֵּר which means, to speak. It is in the wilderness times that God can and often does speak to us a word in due season. My hope is that this writing will speak to each and every heart through the Holy Spirit. In Hebrew, names carry significant meaning. For example, Eli-tzur means "My God (Eli) is a rock (Tzur)". Of the proper names listed in this census, several contain the Divine name, El (God). The name Tzur (Rock), is frequently used for God as in Tzur Yisrael (Rock of Israel) or Rock of Ages, as well as Shaddai, which appears three times in the list of names, which is usually translated as Almighty but actually comes from the Hebrew root for a woman's breast. Shaddai is the feminine aspect of God's nature that nourishes comforts and provides.¹

Each male eligible to go to war found his position in his family by his father's house. I began to think about names and their significance, and inwardly I wondered about all the children growing up today without fathers. So many children today (including my own) are growing up in homes where the father is absent. Where would they be listed? Where would be their place in the census? Even today in the synagogue, when a man is called to read from the Torah, he is always called by his father's name: _____ ben (son of) _____. This is why, in the Hebraic culture in which Yeshua (Jesus) lived, they called out to him, "Yeshua, ben David, t'rachem alai!" Yeshua, son of David, have mercy on me!" By acknowledging Yeshua as a son of David, they declared him the Messiah who would sit on the throne of His father David (Isa. 9:6-7). If a Jewish man does not have a father or if the father's identity is not known, he will be called by his name, _____, ben Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov (son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); signifying that he is still a covenant child of God through our forefathers. What about the girls? First of all, girls and women are not usually called up to read from the Torah in an Orthodox synagogue. But on the occasion of a Bat Mitzvah, or in conservative or reform synagogues which encourage female participation, a girl or women is also called by her father's house. She will be called by her given Hebrew name _____ bat (daughter of) her father. Rarely will she be called daughter of her mother. This is just Jewish tradition.

I currently live with a lot of confusion regarding my name, largely due to the chaos and instability which has characterized my life in the past. First of all, like most Jewish children living in exile, my parents gave me an English name (well, ok, a Scottish name); but I was also officially named in the synagogue with a Hebrew name according to Jewish tradition. Perhaps this accounts for some of the later confusion regarding names. When I went to a bi-lingual Hebrew school, I would be called my English name for half the day and my Hebrew name for the other half. But my last name was solid, my father's name, a name with a good reputation. Proverbs 22:1 says that a good name is worth more than riches. I had that name. I also liked it because it started with an A so that meant I was always at the head and not

¹ See article and audio message on El Shaddai on website: www.voiceforisrael.net

the tail end in school lists and line ups. But when I married at the age of 19, my name changed to my husband's and I moved to the back of the line, so to speak☺ That marriage lasted seven years and ended in divorce, so I decided to change back to my maiden name (I always did like the front of the line). Ten years later, living in the world, I became pregnant by a Japanese man who abandoned me and our unborn child, leaving my son without a name; without a father's house. So he took my father's name and we lived by my father's family. This crisis pregnancy led to my salvation; however, shortly after becoming a Believer in Yeshua as my Messiah, I unwisely married a man in the church who turned out to be abusive. A wolf in sheep's clothing. After less than a year, I escaped to a woman's shelter but for a short time, my name had been changed again and I had to again go through the process of changing it back to my maiden name. By the time I re-married (are you getting dizzy yet? I know I am), I decided just to keep the maiden name. It was too much trouble to keep getting used to new names. But my parents, still Orthodox Jews, asked me not to use their name on any of my writing, since they strongly disagreed with my faith that Yeshua is the Messiah. To them it was a source of shame and embarrassment to the extent that I practically became cut off from my father's house. Therefore, for writing purposes, I used my husband's last name. When we moved to Israel, the issues became further confused as children were born. We ended up hyphenating the name of our daughter and due to bureaucratic red tape, our youngest son ended up with just his father's name.

After the Israeli government denied my Polish-born husband a visa, we were forced to return to Canada, feeling defeated and lost. Our dream had been to live in the land of Israel and to raise our children there and we felt we had failed. We didn't know how to live like 'normal people' in exile anymore and our hearts continually longed to go home. My husband one day decided that enough was enough with the name thing – each of us carried a different name – the situation was ridiculous. So he trekked us all down to the registry, chose the Hebrew equivalent of my maiden name and with a few stamps and signatures, we all became 'Nesher' (which means eagle in Hebrew). The children all grew up with this name and we began to feel comfortable with it – until the marriage disintegrated. Another failure, another defeat; another unwise decision. The children and I ended up returning to Israel where they do not recognize the legal name change in Canada, therefore it's back to the maiden name again. Oh boy..... Can you see that I wrestle with the issue of something that should have a simple answer but doesn't, 'What is your name'?

In Hebrew, we don't ask, "What is your name?" We ask, "How are you called?" We named my youngest daughter, Liat, from Isaiah 43:1, "**I have called you by name, you are mine** (Lee-atah)² I keep wondering, if God calls me by name, what is it? In the end, the book of Revelations tells us that God is going to give those who overcome a new name, a secret name written on a white stone, which only those who receive it will know. I can hardly wait to find out what I will be called! As we journey through life's trenches and sometimes sewers, we can receive names for ourselves that are false, negative or destructive. Perhaps as a child, you were called a derogatory name by some cruel children and it stuck. Other people may label us with words that pierce like a sword. In an abusive relationship, a man said he felt sorry for my children that they have me for their mother. So I received the 'Bad Mother' label. My father once told me as a little girl that I had no common sense so on goes another label that reads, 'Dumb or foolish'. What have people said to you or about you? In my mind, I see a person walking around as an adult,

² Lee-at (Liat) is the feminine form of this phrase "You are mine"

fearfully and wonderfully made by God, but with all these labels struck all over their body. These labels carry names like, “Loser, failure, stupid, fat, ugly, bad, dirty, unloved, and unlovable. These negative labels cover over the magnificence of who we were created to be. The word of God says that He created us just a little lower than Elohim (a name for God). Wow! (Psalm 8:5) Obviously the translators couldn’t handle this powerful truth so they wrongly translated it as ‘angels’ instead of Elohim. We were made in the image of the Almighty and have His nature as our true selves. But this beauty has been marred by all the false names we call ourselves.

I see in the Bible many instances of name changes that affect that person’s entire destiny. God begins with Avram and Sarai, whose names mean Exalted Father and My Princess. Together, they carried a divine destiny which they could not fulfill because they were barren. All that God did was to add His own Divinity to their names and they became fruitful. God’s name is often abbreviated as the Hebrew letter hey ה . When God added His own Divine name, ה to both Avram and Sarai, they became Abraham and Sarah. Abraham literally translates as the father of a multitude of goyim (Gentiles). Many little children in church today sing, “Father Abraham has many sons, many sons has father Abraham...”. All those who are of faith now belong to their Father Abraham’s house. The very physical nature of Sarai changed after her name included God’s Divine name. In Hebrew, the letter hey ה also functions to feminize a word. When God added His feminine nature to Sarai, her barren womb came to life and she bore a son, Isaac (which means laughter). Those things which are birthed by God in His timing bring joy!

God did not change Avram’s name in order to make him a King or Monarch but to make him a father. God also changed Jacob’s name to make him a father. The change of name of Isaac’s son, from Yaacov (Jacob), to Yisrael (Israel), after wrestling with God, also brought him into his divine destiny as the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Faithful fathers are so desperately needed in today’s world. Any man who believes that his job, his position, his career, ministry or financial status is what really counts has totally missed the heart of God, which is to Father. I weep so often at the longing in so many children’s lives to be fathered; when their fathers are absent – or too busy and consumed with work to train up their children in the ways of God. Only one of the functions of a father is to physically provide for the material needs of his wife and children. But the role of a father is so much more! Just yesterday I visited the widow of a Japanese man who died while his wife was pregnant with their unborn son. Today that boy is the same age as my son, Avi-ad. Boys (and girls) growing up without fathers. But God promises to be husband to the widow and father to the fatherless. Thank God we can all have a place of belonging in our Heavenly Father’s house! And God promises to heal the curse of fatherlessness on our Land – to turn the hearts of the Fathers back to their children and the children back to their fathers.³ Halleluyah! One of the things that has surprised me about Israeli culture is how involved the fathers are in the lives of their children. There were four fathers (and me) who came on the recent school field trip. It is often a father who writes out the birthday invitations and makes the phone calls to invite the children. It’s the father who picks up the sick child from school. I’m not used to it, but I delight in it and thank God and thank all the faithful fathers! Perhaps some men have also received a label of ‘failure as a father, inadequate, or not good enough, incapable...and so have just given up. For all those who still struggle with unresolved father wounds and issues – there is hope! We have a Father who longs to father us - to be everything that our earthly father was unwilling or incapable of being to us. To all the adult ‘little girls

³ Malachi 4:6

(and boys) still searching for the unconditional love of a Father, still seeking for a place of belonging in their father's house, thus says the Lord, **“Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father's house; So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him.” (Psalm 45:10-11)** God is our Father who desires us, no matter how much we have been rejected by our own people, our own families and friends.

Sometimes the way we have come to see ourselves, after all the battles, all the sins, all the failures and messes and disappointments of our life is not the way God sees us at all! The names we call ourselves are not the names the angels call us. Gideon called himself the least of his father's house but the angel called him a mighty man of valor (mighty soldier man). (Judges 6:12). The word he used to describe himself in Hebrew is not so much 'least' but tza'ir, which means 'youngest'. Gideon thought he was too young to be used by God; sometimes we think we are either too young or too old. But God sees the heart. David was so young (tza'ir) and insignificant in his father's eyes that he didn't even consider David when the prophet Shmuel came to choose and anoint the next King of Israel. David's own father called him insignificant, not worthy, invisible perhaps; but God called him 'anointed, worthy, man of destiny, King of Israel! Perhaps we see ourselves as 'Tza'ir', the youngest, most inexperienced, the least, not even worthy of consideration in other people's eyes – even our own father's! But Yeshua taught us that **‘he who is the greatest among you, let him be as the youngest (tza'ir)...’**⁴ To be 'tza'ir' – the youngest, or least, is not a liability in God's Kingdom. For He deliberately chooses the weak and the foolish to confound the wise. We may take heart in the revelation that the way we see ourselves is often not the way God sees us. The angel of the Lord called Gideon a mighty soldier (chayil). This is the same word used in Proverbs 31 to describe a woman of valor (eshet chayil). I suspect that most of us, men and women, feel desperately far from the label of 'mighty soldier man or woman'. Most likely we feel more like Mephiboshet, who called himself a 'dead dog' (2 Samuel 9:8); but David saw him as belonging to his father, Jonathan's house; therefore a covenant son. The Israelite spies saw themselves as grasshoppers; but Joshua and Calev saw God's unlimited power available to help them overcome. The spies labeled themselves 'not able' but Joshua and Calev refused this label and instead chose the name 'well able, overcomer'.

We must also refuse these negative labels. I believe with all my heart that some of us are still walking around with our sticky labels, carrying the names that others have labeled us with or that we have labeled ourselves; but that God wants to change our name in order for us to fulfill our Divine destiny. I love to sing a song on my harp especially for women in prisons, shelters and everywhere that broken hearted, wounded women gather. It is called 'I will Change Your Name.' I sing these lyrics prophetically over the women and I believe the Holy Spirit would want to sing these words over each one now:

I will change your name;

you shall no longer be called,

“Wounded, Outcast, Lonely and Afraid”

⁴ Luke22:26

I will change your name,

Your new name shall be:

“Confidence, joyfulness, Overcoming One, Faithfulness, Friend of God, One who seeks My face.”

Zion calls herself an outcast; someone for whom no one cares. But God says, **“You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name.”** **“You shall no longer be termed ‘Forsaken (Azuva), nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate (Shmamah), but you shall be called Hephzibah (My delight is in Her) and your land Beulah (married) for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.”** (Isaiah 62:2-4)

Yes, God promises to do this for Israel, but I believe this is a word in due season – that He wants to do this for us as well. God wants to give us a new name. Recently, I went for prayer for inner healing and deliverance. From emotional woundings suffered in my life, I still carried within me a name called ‘Abandoned’. At the end of the prayer session, and without any prior knowledge of the nature of this article, the prayer counselor said, *“Oh, I almost forgot – we must give you a new name! What will your new name be?”* (My new name became ‘Accepted’). This confirmed to me that God truly wants to change our names – our very identities. We need this desperately. I once sang this song at a Shavuot (Pentecost) gathering in the Galilee. A woman later came to me and with great weeping explained that the Lord had directed her to come to this assembly where she had endured two hours of worship songs and dances and preaching until she wondered why she had ever come. But at the very end, when the Lord ministered to her heart through this song, I will change Your Name, she knew this to be the reason why she had come. There are those among us, even perhaps sitting beside us in the churches and congregations, who feel so desperately forsaken and desolate; lonely, abandoned and afraid. In their hearts, they call themselves Azuva (abandoned), Shmamah (desolate); but God wants to remove those labels that we have carried around for so long and give us a new name: Hephtzibah and Beulah – My Delight is in Her and Married. For many of us, like He did with Hosea’s wife, like he did with me, God has had to hedge us in with thorns and wall us in; take all our lovers and idolatrous relationships away from us. He does this not to harm us but in order to allure us, to bring us into a wilderness and speak comfort to us there. (Hosea 2:6-15) And what is it that the Lord speaks to us in this wilderness place? It is that He wants US to change HIS name! **“that you will call Me, Ishi (my husband) and no longer Baali (My Lord and Master).” (Hosea 2:16)** He wants us to come to Him out of love and not fear. God wants to woo us back into an intimate, eternal covenant relationship with Himself, the only One who can truly bring us life. **“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving-kindness and mercy, I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know יִהְיֶה.” (Hosea 2:19-20)** This ‘marriage relationship’ with our Bridegroom extends far and beyond any earthly relationship; past ‘until death shall us part’ for nothing can ever separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua – neither life nor death, nor angels or demons, not past or present or future. We are safe in His hands.

It has been eighteen years now since I've been 'saved'; but I am just now coming to realize that God wants to do so much more than just save us from hell. He sent Yeshua to heal us. Of all the Scriptures He could have chosen to reveal His primary mission as the Messiah, He chose the verses from Isaiah 61⁵:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

No matter how deep the wounds, how desolate the brokenness, God is our healer. I just opened to this devotion this morning, *“God can heal a broken heart but He has to have all the pieces.”*⁶ The Master Craftsman wants to put the pieces back together according to His design rather than have us trying to find all the fragments and crazy glue them into something that works. First of all, it just doesn't. And second of all, how can we ever recover the pieces of our heart that have been entrusted to another and discarded by them into the nearest trash can? Can we trust God to transform our brokenness into something of beauty and value? Can we give him our ashes, our mourning, our heaviness and depression and exchange all of these for the new name that He wants to give us? I want to believe that we can; that He is able, for God is faithful to His word, **“You shall be a Crown of beauty and a Royal diadem in the hand of your God.” (Isa. 62:3) Amen. May it be so.**

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⁵ Many thanks to John Stasi Eldredge for this revelation in their book, Captivating

⁶ God's Little Devotional Book for Women, Honor Books, Inc.