

Shelach

Look at me, I'm humble!

And Moshe called Hoshea Bin Nun Yehoshua

Bamidbar 13:16

Moshe gave Hoshea this name change to Yehoshua, says the Targum Yonason,⁶⁴⁶ when he saw his humility. The name Yehoshua, our Sages tell us,⁶⁴⁷ was a reflection of the prayer that Moshe offered on behalf of Yehoshua: “May Hashem save you from the attitude of the *meraglim*.” Why did Moshe feel the need to make this change in Yehoshua’s name only after recognizing the latter’s great humility?

Great humility has the potential to be dangerous, explains the Chasam Sofer.⁶⁴⁸ When a person reminds himself of his insignificance in the grand scheme of things, he can come to believe that nothing he does is really that valuable. He can begin to neglect accomplishing things, for on some level, he may not really believe that what he is doing is worth all that much. Not only that, he may also not have the guts to stand up to others in his community because he is so humble. When Moshe saw the great humility that Hoshea had, he made him “Yehoshua,” putting a letter *yod* at the head of his name so that his name would begin with a “*yod, heh*.” This name of Hashem, *yod, heh*, says the Chasam Sofer, is a name that represents greatness and even a kind of arrogance.⁶⁴⁹ It is a sort of arrogance that comes from doing what is right. With too much humility, one will not find the strength to fight for what is right and good. In fact, the word for arrogance, *gaavah*, has the *gematria* (fifteen) as does the name *yod, heh*.⁶⁵⁰ Yehoshua was going to be dealing with a very strong influence, and his humility was going to be a disadvantage in facing that. So Moshe prayed for him to be strong and not hurt by what would be going on around him, and that is why his name had to be enhanced.

The need to be an individual is a deep one for humans. Every one of us was created quite unique, both physically and emotionally.⁶⁵¹ The ability to be different comes from strength of personality, and even a bit of arrogance. Yehoshua was not fundamentally an original sort of person. The Midrash⁶⁵² tells us that Yehoshua was not initially respected by the Jewish people; they called him a fool, for he was not all that learned – in the words of the Midrash, not a *ben Torah*. But he would honor Moshe, lay out the blanket the on the chair that Moshe would sit on and sit at the feet of Moshe, as the Torah calls him

⁶⁴⁶ To Bamidbar 13:16

⁶⁴⁷ Sotah 34b

⁶⁴⁸ To Shelach. The same insight is expressed by Shem Mishmuel in the name of his father (Avnei Nezer) to Shelach 673.

⁶⁴⁹ See Tehillim 68:5, as explained by Megillah 31a. The same is asserted by *Megaleh Amukos* (Tinyana, Korach, *drush* 7, vol. 2, p 197, in Prishash Shalom ed.).

⁶⁵⁰ Arizal in *Shaar Maamarei Raʿal* to Sotah. He also explains there that one who is improperly arrogant causes “damage” to the same *yod heh*. See also R. Avraham Schorr’s comments on this in his *Halekach Vihalibuv* 5762 to Shelach.

⁶⁵¹ Brachos 58a, Tanchuma Pinchas 10

⁶⁵² Yalkut Shimoni 958

“assistant to Moshe.”⁶⁵³ Because of that, he merited to grow great. He completely let go of his personal self in a way, and became the assistant to Moshe. Even later in his life, when he was compared to the moon, reflecting the light of Moshe, who was like the sun, the people were embarrassed by this.⁶⁵⁴ But the humility was tempered by the *yod* that Moshe added to it. Yehoshua learned how to turn the fact that he was the “assistant to Moshe,” and the one who lived for others, into something that was original as well – something that was a feat that only he accomplished, when all others were also striving for greatness. He fought against the majority with a strength that only one with a measure of proper arrogance can.⁶⁵⁵

Sarah had a letter *yod* in her name when she was called Sarai. But Hashem changed her name to “Sarah,” replacing the *yod* with a *heh*. The Midrash⁶⁵⁶ teaches us that that very *yod* that was removed from her name was given to Yehoshua. Sarah means “noblewoman.” Sarai means “my noblewoman.” Sarah was taken from her position as a great woman to that of a great woman who would lead and serve mankind, and thus, her name went from the more personal, individual “my princess” to the more general, all-encompassing “princess,” explains the Midrash. R. Moshe Tendler explains that Yehoshua was then entering into a monumental challenge. His job was to maintain his unique, personal inner strength, in the face of an influential group who outnumbered him. There are times where we can not hide away and behave humbly. There are times when we are forced to stand up for what is right. Yehoshua needed that *yod* to give him the strength to fight the danger of the *meraglim*’s scheme.⁶⁵⁷

We all need that extra *yod*. We learn from this Parsha that the amazing strength that our children will need as they head out into the world is only something that can come from very healthy self-esteem. All people must know that they can and should fight the tide when that tide is pulling them toward their death. Each person must know that he is unique, important and powerful – and all the while, remain humble. The great Rebbe R. Bunim would say that each person needs to walk around with two pieces of paper. In one pocket, he should have a paper that says, “I am dust and ashes.”⁶⁵⁸ But in the other, he

653 Bamidbar 11:18

654 Bava Basra 75a

655 See also *Likkutei Torah* of R. Shneur Zalman to Bamidbar, s.v. *inyan shenitnah*, that the Torah was given on Sinai, the smallest mountain, rather than in a valley, for one does need a measure of arrogance.

656 Bereishis Rabbah 47a

657 The Talmud (Sotah 35a) tells us that when Yehoshua spoke up, he was mocked by the other spies and called *Resh Kitiya*, meaning “headless one.” Rashi explains that he had no children yet, and thus, was called this epithet. Aruch (s.v. *resh*) explains that Yehoshua’s extra *yod* was something foreign to his name, and thus, he was mocked as the one whose *head* is not connected to him. This fits nicely with what we have explained – that the extra letter was to allow Yehoshua to have the strength to stand against the *meraglim*, and their failure to see the merit in his words was essentially their failure to value the extra letter that had been appended to his name. For another fantastic interpretation of the name *Resh Kitiya*, see the account of Yehoshua’s birth, life inside of a fish and accidental beheading of his own father, quoted by R. Avraham ben Hagra in *Rav Paalim*, p. 23. See also *Torah Shleima* to Shelach 13:31 (p. 34), *Ishim Utekufof* of R. Mordechai Hakohen, p. 33, and the *Yeshurun Journal*, vol 21, p. 765, for some perspective on this bizarre-sounding – and most likely inauthentic – legend.

658 Bereishis 18:27

must have one that says, "This entire world was created just for me." 659