

Yair ben Menashe, went and conquered their villages and called them Chavos Yair. Novach went and conquered Kenas and its suburbs, and called it Novach after his own name. (32:41,42)

Yair had no children to carry on his name. Therefore, after conquering the villages, he named them after himself as a memorial. Everyone wants to be remembered. Indeed, after having lived a mortal life replete with many achievements, all that is left are memories – memories of the individual. He is gone, but his memory lives on. It is up to each and every one of us to decide, by the way we act, how we want to be remembered. Sadly, for some, when we wake up to this realization, it is too late.

Novach also conquered villages. He, too, named them after himself. Only, in this situation, we observe a disparity in the naming process. *Rashi* indicates that, in the word “*lah*,” the letter “*hay*” is not marked with a *dagesh*, dot. (This is referred to as *mapik hay*, whereby such a *hay* is *mapik*, brought forth, underscored, and pronounced as a full consonant with the same sound as the English letter H, even though it is at the end of a word, which usually does not have a sound. When the suffix *hay* is used for “her” or “it,” it usually takes a *dagesh*.) The fact that the *dagesh* is missing indicates a weakening of the possessive message implied by the “*hay*.” *Rashi* quotes Rabbi Moshe *HaDarshan* who explains that, since the name Novach did not endure for long, the word *lah* was weakened, so that it sounds more like *la* (with an *aleph*), which means “not.”

Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, notes that every dot in the Torah is present for a reason; every dot teaches us a lesson. What important lesson is imparted by the missing dot? Why is it important for us to be aware that the city of Novach did not retain its name for an extended time?

In contrast, the Chavos Yair, thirty cities conquered by Yair ben Menashe and named for him still carry the name he gave them – Chavos Yair. Wherein lay the difference between the “namings”?

The *Rav* explains that a property is often called by its owner’s name to indicate possession. He wants people to know that he conquered it, he built it. It is his. Thus, Yair named the cities Chavos Yair to inform everyone that he had built these cities. Novach also wanted to indicate possession, but he had another agenda. His message was, “Yes, it is my city, but, actually, it is more than my city. It is Novach – Novach city. I and my city are one and the same.” Novach identified completely with his property. This is inappropriate. One may identify with possessions, but not to the point that he and his material abundance are one and the same. Thus, the city did not retain the name Novach. As all physical entities are temporal, so, too, was the name Novach; here today – gone tomorrow.

While Novach was censured for identifying himself so closely with his material abundance, a person who identifies with *ruchniyos*, spirituality, becomes elevated. One who identifies with his

spiritual demeanor takes on a new image. He may have a physical body, but his essence is *ruchniyos*. The greatest blessing is to become one with Hashem, His Torah and *mitzvos*. Thus, he epitomizes virtue and holiness. Success in life is determined by one's identity – the identity that he has established for himself. For example, a sports figure who devotes his life to success on the field or on the court, will live and die as a sports figure. The “ball” will be his epitaph, his symbol of achievement. When one identifies with *ruchniyos*, the Torah and *mitzvos* are his memorial. We have no reason to elaborate on this contrast in values.