

Calev silenced the people toward Moshe. (13:30)

How did Calev get the attention of the people? How was he able to halt the rebellion momentarily, so that he could get a word in edgewise? *Rashi* explains that Calev intimated that he, too, was about to disparage Moshe. How did he indicate this? The *Sifsei Chachamim* quotes the *Mizrachi* that when Calev referred to Moshe *Rabbeinu* as *ben Amram*, the son of Amram, the people thought that he was on their side. After all, he had referred to Moshe by something other than his given name. This constituted disrespect. Obviously, he did not esteem Moshe as a leader. Once he got their attention, however, he was able to attempt to reason with them.

Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl, comments that calling someone by a name denoting his relationship to his father, rather than by his given name, is derogatory. It implies that his legitimacy is connected with his pedigree. He is not worthy in his own right. The *z'chus avos*, merit of his fathers, plays a critical role in his distinctiveness. This concept is reiterated in Scripture and *Talmud*. David *Ha'melech* laments *ad meh levadi lichlimah*, which is interpreted as, "Until when will you be calling me *ben Yishai*, which is shameful for me?" David was implying, "I have my own name. I should not be referred to by my father's name." In *Shmuel I, II*, the *Navi* refers to Shaul *Ha'melech* as *ben Kish*. In *Shmuel I 20:27*, David is referred to as *ben Yishai*, "Why did *ben Yishai* not come to eat bread?"

The *Talmud Shabbos 85*, quotes the despotic prince of the Tribe of Shimon, who, as he was about to commit a hedonistic act with a Moavite woman, humiliated Moshe by calling him *ben Amram*. Likewise, when Moshe struck the rock, the people complained about him, employing the name *ben Amram* to denigrate their leader. Likewise, in his commentary to *Pirkei Avos*, the *Tosfos Yom Tov* explains that *Ben Bog Bog* and *Ben Heih Heih* did not merit to be called by their own names. In the *Talmud Sanhedrin 41*, the revered *Tanna*, Rabbi Yochanan *ben Zakai*, was referred to as *Ben Zakai*, because he was learning Torah for himself. Yet, when he taught Torah to others, his full name was used.

Rav Ilan explains that this might be the reason for the prayer we say at a *Bris*: *V'yikarei shemo b'Yisrael*. The emphasis of *shemo*, his name, is our way of saying that we hope that the baby will not only be called by a name connecting him to his father. We would like him to have his own name – that he make a name for himself in his own right. This idea is underscored by the blessing we confer upon the *rach ha'nimol*, recently circumcised infant: *zeh ha'katan gadol yiheyeh*, "May this small one (child) become a *gadol* adult/great." We pray that this child manifest signs of growth in his own right, rather than rely on his father's merit. *Z'chus avos*, ancestral merit, is a wonderful bonus but, if it is all that one possesses, it is far from complimentary.