

He, therefore, called his name Edom. (25:30)

Certainly the name Edom/Eisav evokes question. Referring to a bowl of red bean soup as “red” is not cause for one to be named “Red,” unless this reference to red soup defines the person. *Rashbam* says that Eisav had a ruddy complexion, and he sold his birthright for a bowl of red soup. That is a pretty contemptuous act. Hence, Edom/Red is a reference, not so much to color, but to contempt, which describes Eisav quite well. *Sforno* views the red color of the soup as a description of Eisav’s values and outlook on life. He was so consumed with hunting and plunder that he viewed food only by its external color – which is the way he looked at everything. He did not consider the intrinsic value of anything – only the externals. Food was judged by its color. So, too, life, people, events – everything was judged by the superficial, the external. Red was an apt description of Eisav.

Eisav cared about the here and now – not about tomorrow. Destiny, future, ramifications, were words that were foreign to him. “Give me the red stuff!” is all that mattered. The fact that the soup was comprised of round beans which was part of the mourner’s meal (for the passing of Avraham *Avinu*) – with round representing the life cycle – meant absolutely nothing to Eisav. He saw external red. That was all he cared about. Thus, his name was a perfect fit.

People give names, but it is Hashem Who inspires the name. The name that a person is ultimately given is much more than a metaphoric title, an arbitrary coincidence; it often reveals a hidden significance in a person’s life. Names carry on the Jewish heritage of a person. Indeed, one of the primary reasons that our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt was that they retained their Hebrew names. A person’s name determines his destiny; thus, we are careful about after whom we name a child.

Interestingly, our first exposure to Avraham *Avinu* and Sarah *Imeinu* occurs after their marriage. We know nothing about their lives prior to this. We do know about Yitzchak and Yaakov and their marriages. *Horav Levi Yitzchak Berditchover, zl*, explains that everything that we are taught about the *Avos* and *Imahos*, Patriarchs and Matriarchs, carries great significance due to the role it plays in the future of *Am Yisrael*. The marriage of Avraham and Sarah plays no such role, since it was doomed to be a childless marriage as a result of the names they bore at the time.

As mentioned, a person’s name is intrinsically connected with his soul. A name defines, empowers or restricts – depending upon the case or situation. Avram means supreme father, which alludes to Hashem in His supreme state. The Divine emanations in this name are too strong and lofty for the material world in which we live. Therefore, as Avram, it was impossible for our Patriarch to have children.

His name was changed to Avraham, which means *av hamon goyim*, father of many nations. This name with regard to Hashem indicates a status of *tzimtzum*, constriction, whereby the Divine Presence allows only a constrained flow of Divine emanation to enter the world. Such a stream can

be tolerated and absorbed by material creations. With this form of emanation, children were possible. A fundamental alteration took place when Avram's name was changed. It was as if he were reborn. Sara *Imeinu* also underwent a change which allowed the previous esoteric properties that made up her psyche to be altered, to the point that she could now entertain the notion of motherhood. It is all in the name. Their personal destinies had changed to include the future *Klal Yisrael*.

Esterke was born during a sad and bitter time for European Jewry. It was 1942, and the evil Hitler, like his Amalekean forbear, Haman, had sworn to destroy the Jewish race. Poland and Lithuania were overrun; now it was time to swallow up Hungary. Esterke's mother knew that only a miracle would save her baby girl. Born on *Purim*, she gave her the name Esther. She felt that her birthday was a Heavenly sign that as darkness turned to light for the Jews of Persia thousands of years earlier, so, too, would her dear Esterke be saved. Her name would be her destiny.

Her roommate in the hospital said, "Mrs. Rosenberg, let me look at your sweet baby." After staring at her lovingly, the gray haired Hungarian woman who owned a farm said, "What a pity that she will not live to see her first birthday. Hitler is coming and the Jews, especially the children, are his obsession. He wants all of you dead. Please, let me take your little girl. She is innocent. I will raise her and give her a good life. I never had children of my own. I will raise her as if she were mine."

Mrs. Rosenberg looked back at her with a shocked expression, "How could I give her up? We are Jewish. You are not. I could never allow a Christian to raise my Esterke."

"You do not understand," said the woman, her compassionate tone suddenly gone, replaced by an icy, condescending tone. "You and all your people will soon be history, and your baby with you. I am her only chance for survival."

Mrs. Rosenberg replied, "Today is *Purim*. My daughter, like her namesake, Queen Esther, will survive. She will be the source of miracle, transforming darkness and gloom into light and hope."

Two years later, Esterke and her parents lived in a Hungarian ghetto. This was a prison where Jews were selected daily to leave the "comfort" of the ghetto – never to be heard from again. This was life in the ghetto. Children barely survived on the poor rations they had. Finally, on Esterke's third *Purim*, her parents made the fateful decision to smuggle her out of the ghetto to one of the poor villages where a farmer would take her away (for money, of course) and raise her as his child. It was her only chance of survival. Any day now, the Nazis would liquidate the ghetto, and the children would be their first victims.

Esterke burst into tears when her parents bid her goodbye. Everyone cried, but Esterke's mother said, "Today is *Purim*; your name is Esther. You will have a miracle. That is why we gave you this name. It is your day!"

Then her mother embraced her and gave her one last gift, “Esterke, you may no longer answer to this name. It is not safe. Your new name is Eva.”

Obviously, Esterke/Eva did not understand. The next morning, a young man smuggled her out of the ghetto, amid heavy sobbing, as father and mother bid farewell to their young child. Esterke cried, “You won’t come with me, *Tatty* won’t come with me, and I can’t even keep my name!”

The young man who looked like a Hungarian peasant, but was really Jewish, told her, “Do not worry. You will have your parents and your beautiful name – in your little heart. Every night when you recite the *Shema* you will remember them.”

Months passed, and the parents heard nothing of their little girl. The war was over, and they went looking for her. They had some idea where she would be. They walked for miles, stopping at various farms looking, asking, begging – but no one knew where their little girl was. They kept on looking. One does not give up hope on their child. Finally, they came to a farm where they saw a little girl playing. Could it be? Yes, it was her! But she did not recognize them. A few months in the life of a three year old child is a lifetime. Her father called to her, “Little girl, come over here.” She came over, stared at them and ran to the house to call her “mother.” “There are strange people outside,” she said. The woman looked at Esterke’s parents with a blank, stony face. Her parents were frightened. To have gone through so much and then lose their child would be too much for them to handle.

Suddenly, her mother cried out, “Esterke! Esther *Hamalkah*, my *malkah*! It is *Tatty* and Mommy! Remember us?”

Esterke stared for a moment, as she processed what she heard and then it all came back to her. She ran to them. Their family was reunited.

Years later, Esterke remarked, “I forgot everything: my mother, my father, my religion. I remembered only one thing from my past: my Jewish name. Why? Because a Jewish name is no small thing. It is one’s destiny.”