

He said, “Your name shall no longer be Yaakov, but Yisrael, because you have commanding power with the Divine and with men, and you have prevailed.” (32:29)

The *Kedushas Levi* offers an interesting explanation for Yaakov Avinu’s name change.

We can identify two types of people or, rather, two forms of *avodah*, service/relationship with Hashem. Some (this too is not easy) direct their hearts solely to Hashem when they are engaged in *avodas ha’kodesh*, sacred service, such as, *tefillah*, Torah study and *mitzvah* observance. At these times, they are completely immersed in Hashem’s Presence. Once *davening* is over, or they close their *seforim* and enter the marketplace, however, they bid Hashem “goodbye,” and their focus shifts radically. They have departed from their relationship with the Heavenly sphere. They deal with people in their everyday business – of course, they act ethically and with integrity – it is just that Hashem is no longer in their conscious thoughts.

The second type of Jew/concept lives on a higher plane. His mind and consciousness never leaves Hashem. Even in his daily discourse and dealings with people, his mind is directed Heavenward to Hashem.

The first level is called Yaakov – the Hebrew letters are a composite of *yud* and *ekev*, which means heel. This reflects an inferior level of *avodah* in which Hashem is not always the primary focus. The second level is that of Yisrael, which is a composite of *yashar*, straight, *Keil*, G-d: G-d is upright, or, *li rosh*, mine is the head, indicating its superiority.

The angel intimated to Yaakov, “No longer will you be called Yaakov, but Yisrael, because you have shown to have a commanding power to control your environment. Thus, even when you are engaged in mundane matters, ordinary talk with common folk, you still cleave to Hashem. You have been with G-d and man, and you have prevailed. You successfully focus your thoughts on Hashem at all times.”

Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl, was the *posek ha’dor*, issuing countless *halachic* rulings with remarkable calm and clarity, while being inundated with the pressures of people who were in deep pain and desperate for answers and resolutions. A close *talmid* remarked, “Rebbe’s mind never leaves Hashem. When he listens to a question, he hears the words of the person, but, in his inner world, he is always speaking with Hashem, asking, ‘What is Your *ratzon*, will, concerning this case?’ This is why his rulings carry such clarity. He never lets go of Hashem’s Presence, even while dealing with ordinary people.”

One who achieves such a plateau of closeness with the Almighty is so bound with Him that Hashem completely guides that which emerges from his mouth. *Horav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, zl*, spent ninety years of his life completely immersed in Torah all hours of the day. He was versed in

every area of Torah and *halachah*, and he issued rulings concerning every aspect of Jewish life. He never wasted a minute, never spoke an extra word. What emanated from his mouth was Heavenly-inspired, because he never severed the connection between himself and Hashem. He never spoke on his own, because he was never on “his own.”

A young couple who had an exemplary loving marriage for twelve years without bearing a child decided that, if they were to have children, each of them would have to have a different spouse. They made the sad, tragic decision to divorce. Both husband and wife were devoted *baalei teshuvah*, having decided to become *frum*, observant Jews, after having lived completely secular lives. They were told before the proceedings that, since the husband was a *Kohen*, he could never marry a divorcee or even remarry his wife. With much weeping from both husband and wife, the *get*, divorce, was final.

Three weeks after the divorce, the wife discovered that she was pregnant. They had had no clue prior to the divorce. Now what? She could not remarry her husband, because he was a *Kohen*. They were beside themselves. The greatest *posek*, *halachic* decisor, in *Eretz Yisrael* was *Rav Elyashiv*. Perhaps he could find a dispensation. He welcomed them to his home, listened intently to every bit of information, was moved by their tears, but said that, *halachically*, nothing could be done. The husband was a *Kohen* and, thus, could not remarry his wife. “But what are we to do?” they cried. He replied simply (nothing that issued forth from his mouth could be called “simply”), “Go to the *Kotel* and pray – one never knows from where the *yeshuah*, salvation, can come.”

The young man went to the *Kotel* to pour out his heart. He had no idea how this would change his predicament, but, when *Rav Elyashiv* spoke, one listened. When people saw the intensity of his *tefillah* and the bitter sobbing that accompanied it, they, too began to pray.

Soon, many supplicants who had come for their own needs were praying for this young man to have a *yeshuah*.

Suddenly, an elderly *chassid* who spoke no English went over to the young man and said to him, *Gei zu dein Tatteh! Gei zu dein Tatteh!* “Go to your father.” Someone translated the phrase to the young man. When he looked around, the elderly *chassid* was gone.

Now what? His father was lying terminally ill in Dallas, Texas. Their relationship the last few years had, at best, been strained. He felt that, regardless of the situation, he must do his part. He flew to Dallas that night. His father knew that the end was near, and he figured that, if his son was here, he might as well come to terms and reconcile with him. His father asked why his wife had not come. He explained about the divorce, his voice breaking with every sentence. He explained about the divorce, the *halachah*, the pregnancy and the fact that he was a *Kohen*

precluded him from remarrying his wife.

His father lay there soaking up everything, his eyes moist. After all, he was a father, and he realized that his son was suffering. He loved him, despite his choice to adopt a different lifestyle than the one in which he was raised.

He may have fought him on it, but at the moment, it was about reconciliation, not conflict. He lay there, sunken into his bed, his body frail and trembling with weakness. Yet, with visible effort, he lifted his head slightly, his parched lips began to move as he summoned the strength to speak to his son. "You can dance! You can go back to your wife and together raise your future child. I never told you that your mother and I were unable to have children. Because of my foolish pride, we never let anyone know that we had adopted you and raised you as our own son. You are not a *Kohen!*"

It all became clear. *Rav Elyashiv* had advised him to go to the *Kotel* and *daven* - which he did. It was there that he was answered. *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, zl*, (quoted by Rabbi Paysach Krohn), said (with regard to another situation), "At times, Hashem puts words in a *tzadik*'s mouth and only later does he realize why he said them." We may add that this idea

relates to a *tzadik* whose relationship with Hashem is 24/7: *Shivisi Hashem I'negdi tamid*.