

MEGILLAT RUTH
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***Shiur* #30: Perpetuating the Name: The Levirate Marriage**

Land Purchase and Marriage

And Boaz said, “On the day that you purchase the field from the hands of Naomi and from Ruth the Moavite, you hereby purchase the deceased’s wife to establish the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.”
(*Ruth* 4:5)

This verse is syntactically awkward. While my translation smoothed out some of the bumpiness of this passage, the direct object of the second appearance of the verb “*kanita*,” “you hereby purchase,”^[1] is not at all clear. Is it the deceased wife who has been purchased or the field?^[2] And from whom is the field purchased? Is it from Naomi or from Naomi *and* Ruth the Moavite? Are they joint owners?^[3] It certainly complicates matters to suggest that Ruth the Moavite is a partial legal owner of the field!^[4]

The translation that I have adopted requires there to be a comma after the words, “Ruth the Moavite,” and does indeed suggest that Ruth is considered a partial legal owner of the field.^[5] However, according to the cantillation marks (used also as punctuation), the major break in the sentence (the *etnachta*) is placed after the word, “Naomi,” thereby dividing between Naomi and Ruth. No matter how you understand this, this makes the sentence read awkwardly. The word “from” (*me’et*) is also particularly difficult. If this word were not present, Boaz’s speech would simply state that on the day that the *go’el* buys the field from the hand of Naomi, he has also purchased the responsibility to marry Ruth, the wife of the deceased.

Whichever way we read this convoluted sentence, Boaz’s intent seems clear. The *go’el* cannot agree to purchase the land without assuming the responsibility to marry Ruth the Moavite. This reading is borne out by the events that ensue in this chapter: the *go’el*’s panicked refusal, the transfer of the *go’el*’s rights to Boaz, and Boaz’s purchase of the field alongside his marriage to Ruth. But what are the legal grounds for linking these two separate issues? Perhaps the clumsy syntax reflects the flimsy basis for interweaving these separate matters and the awkwardness of connecting them.

Are there, in fact, any grounds for fusing together the familial obligation to purchase the ancestral inheritance (*geula*) along with the responsibility to care for (and marry) the widow of the dead brother (quasi-*yibbum*)?^[6]

One possibility is that Boaz links these matters artificially in order to deter the *go'el* from marrying Ruth. This would imply that Boaz himself wishes to marry Ruth, an idea I have consistently avoided. I have instead maintained that Boaz agrees to marry Ruth for purely selfless reasons, having nothing personal to gain. Nevertheless, it is possible that, having encountered Ruth's exemplary character, Boaz changes course and aspires to marry Ruth himself.

This may be indicated by two factors. One is that Boaz also refers to Ruth as a Moavite here. Perhaps Boaz intends to remind the *go'el* of the complications of marrying Ruth so that the *go'el* will be dissuaded from marrying her. Second, there is an interesting *keri u-ketiv* in Boaz's proclamation. While he uses the second person to inform the *go'el* that it is his duty to purchase Ruth (*kanita*), the consonants of the word are written to reflect the first person pronoun (*kaniti*). Traditional exegesis tends to regard the *keri* as the simple meaning of the text and the *ketiv* as a device that allows for a deeper meaning.^[7] Perhaps buried at the core of Boaz's offer is a personal ambition to marry Ruth himself.

Even if there are no compelling legal grounds for linking these two obligations, Boaz's stipulation that the *go'el* must also agree to marry Ruth is accepted without resistance by the elders and those present (including the *go'el* himself). While this may be due partly to Boaz's authoritative status, it seems likely that the fusion of these duties made sense to the people of Bethlehem. What is the idea that underlies the connection of these separate familial responsibilities?

Part of the answer to this question is related to the manner in which this marriage to Ruth is associated with levirate marriage (*yibbum*). We will explore this topic more fully in our next *shiur*. For the present, I will note that the most obvious connection between the events of chapter four and the *mitzva* of *yibbum* is the stated goal of marrying Ruth: "To uphold the name of the deceased upon his inheritance." This phrase, which occurs twice during the course of the legal proceedings in *Ruth* 4 (verses 5 and 10), echoes the goal of the levirate marriage:

When brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no child, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside to a stranger. Her husband's brother (*yevamah*) should come to her and take her as a wife and do *yibbum* with her (*ve-yibema*). And the eldest son who shall be born^[8] will be established in the name of the deceased brother and his name shall not be erased from Israel. If the man does not desire to take his sister-in-law (*yevimto*), his sister-in-law shall go up to the elders in the gate and say, "My brother-in-law (*yevami*) refuses to establish for his brother a name in Israel; he does not want to perform *yibbum* with me. (*Devarim* 25:5-7)

The goal of the levirate marriage is to preserve the name of the deceased man. Because the deceased did not produce an heir, his name is threatened with extinction.^[9] In what way does *yibbum* maintain the name of the dead brother?^[10] It may

be assumed that the child who is the product of the levirate marriage is simply named for the deceased. Nevertheless, rabbinic exegesis of this passage suggests otherwise.^[11] *Chazal* assume that the goal of the marriage is to provide an heir for the land of the deceased.^[12]

The idea that the preservation of a person's name is linked to the maintenance of his inheritance is evident in the story of the daughters of Tzelafchad.^[13] In petitioning for inheritance of their father's land in spite of the fact that they are women, they proffer the following argument: "Why should the *name* of our father be lost from his clan because he has no son? Give us a portion in the midst of our father's kinsmen!" (*Bamidbar* 27:4).

Halakha maintains that the brother who performs *yibbum* then becomes the heir of the estate of the deceased.^[14] Nevertheless, this approach is difficult textually and logically. Textually, the simple meaning of *Devarim* 25:6 is that the one who will establish the name of the deceased is the *child* born to the union between the brother and the widow of the deceased. Logically, the idea that the living brother can maintain the name of his deceased brother by receiving his land is problematic. After all, the brother would receive this portion whether he performs *yibbum* or not. More to the point, it does not seem that provisions are made for the brother to demarcate his brother's land separately or to maintain any remnant of his brother's distinct portion.^[15] If the brother simply absorbs his brother's land into his own, how would this preserve the name of the deceased brother?

Logically, it seems that the best way to preserve the name of the deceased upon his land is by giving the land of the deceased brother to the eldest *child* born to the levirate marriage.^[16] This child can maintain the distinct and separate defined portion of land (rather than allowing it to be swallowed into the ancestral portion of the brother).^[17] Textual evidence as well as common sense point to the child born of the *yibbum* relationship as the significant party who is designated to maintain the name of the deceased. Although this is not the halakhic ruling with regard to *yibbum*, it is certainly possible that this is the practice with regard to the *yibbum*-like custom of *geula* which is implemented in *Megillat Ruth*.

Boaz's goal is to ensure that the name of the deceased does not vanish. It is therefore not sufficient for a relative simply to marry Ruth, nor is it enough merely to redeem Elimelekh's property. Rather, in the spirit of the above reading, an heir must be produced who will be given the rights to Elimelekh's land, thereby assuring that it is not integrated and conflated into another person's ancestral portion.^[18] By maintaining the land's distinctive identity, the name of Elimelekh remains for eternity. It may be for this reason that Boaz links together two separate ideas: purchasing the land and marrying Ruth.^[19] Only if these two actions are performed by the same person will either of these actions be capable of accomplishing their ultimate aim.

This may deepen our understanding of why the *go'el* categorically refuses to marry Ruth after he has so eagerly agreed to redeem the land. As noted, redemption of the land was an economically sound venture. However, by linking it to the attempt to

produce an heir to whom that land will be given, it loses all economic advantage for the *go'el* and his descendants. Instead, this land will never be subsumed within the *go'el*'s ancestral portion. The child who is born will assume complete ownership of the estate of the deceased. The *go'el* will have extra mouths to feed and will not have gained anything for his investment.^[20] Indeed, the *go'el*'s negative reply is not long in coming.

Marriage to Ruth is not a simple prospect. Her Moavite background, compounded by the presumed economic drawbacks in performing this *yibbum*-like marriage with no discernable monetary advantage, renders it unlikely that anyone would agree to marry Ruth. Boaz's stalwart willingness to marry Ruth is extraordinary and another indication of his admirable character.

What's in a Name?

The ultimate goal of the *Megilla* is to restore the name to those whose name is threatened with erasure. We have noted quite often the significance of names in this story. *Midrashim* abound which direct us to seek the meaning underlying the names in this story.^[21] More significantly, I have frequently illustrated that the potential loss of the name is a major theme in the *Megilla*. The narrative opens with the deaths of Machlon and Khilyon, whose names signify their inevitable erasure and destruction. This is followed by Naomi's bitter declaration of the loss of her own name (*Ruth* 1:20),^[22] Ruth's initial anonymity in Bethlehem (e.g. *Ruth* 2:5-6),^[23] and the *go'el*'s purposeful namelessness, in which the text refers to him as "*Peloni Almoni*," or "no-name."^[24]

Boaz, the champion of the story, restores names in the narrative. This is due in part to the fact that Boaz himself has an inheritance (*Ruth* 2:3) and, consequently, a name (*Ruth* 2:1). Perhaps for this reason, it is the mere mention of Boaz's *name* which initially restores Naomi's hope in her future (*Ruth* 2:19): "And [Ruth] said, 'The *name* of the man with whom I worked today is *Boaz*.'"^[25] Boaz provides Ruth with the means to pronounce her own name (*Ruth* 3:9).^[26] Moreover, Boaz's initiative to restore the names of the dead (*Ruth* 4:5, 10) should not surprise us in the least. In the final analysis, Boaz facilitates the rehabilitation of Ruth's name as well as the names of Naomi and the deceased members of her family. Significantly, Boaz's official proclamation of purchase of the land explicitly mentions the names of each member of Elimelekh's family, including the sons, who have not been mentioned since their deaths in *Ruth* 1:5:

And Boaz said to the elders and the entire nation, "You are witnesses today that I hereby purchase all that belongs to **Elimelekh** and all that belongs to **Khilyon** and **Machlon** from the hands of **Naomi**. And also Ruth the Moavite, the wife of Machlon, I hereby purchase as a wife to establish the *name* of the deceased upon his inheritance and the *name* of the deceased will not be cut off from his brethren and from the gates of his place. You are witnesses today." (*Ruth* 4:9-10)

The word “name” (*shem*) is, in fact, one of the key words of chapter four, appearing a pivotal seven times. The blessing of the union of Boaz and Ruth contains the cryptic wish, “And call a name in Bethlehem” (*Ruth*4:11). The phrase is obscure: *Who* is meant to call a name in Bethlehem? Is it Boaz? The house built by Boaz and Ruth? Is it the product of their union? It is also unclear what, precisely, is meant by calling a name in Bethlehem. Does it mean to achieve fame? Perhaps the idea is that they should build their reputations in Bethlehem.^[27] I believe the phrase should be read in a literal manner: this union should succeed in restoring names. After all, the vital concept of name-giving has been at stake throughout the narrative. This phrase suggests that the solution for the loss of names so prevalent in this narrative will begin with the union of Boaz and Ruth.

The women’s public blessing of Naomi after the birth of Ruth’s child also refers to name-giving. They confer the elliptical blessing upon Naomi, “And his name shall be called in Israel” (*Ruth* 4:14). This phrase is unusual, as it would seem to require a direct object and thereby precede the naming of the child.^[28] In a parallel phrase with regard to the brother who refuses to perform *yibbum*, the phrase is followed by a new appellation: “And his name shall be called in Israel, ‘The House of the One who Removed his Shoe’” (*Devarim* 25:10). Nevertheless, in the *Megilla*, this phrase is independent and not followed by the name of the child. In fact, the naming of the child does not occur until verse 17! How can we understand this fragmentary phrase?

Some scholars have suggested that the intent is that the child’s name will be famous,^[29] while others similarly suggest that it means that the child’s name will be celebrated.^[30] Nevertheless, once again it seems to me that the implication is that the very act of naming the child is itself the goal. It matters not what the name is; the purpose of the narrative is to ensure that the child will have a name, an identity, and a destiny. Thus, the women excitedly bless Naomi: “The child will be given a *name* in Israel!”

The final appearance of the key word “*shem*” is the actual naming of the child (*Ruth* 4:17). This child, born to restore the name of the family whose name is threatened with extinction, is given a name by the neighbors, by general society. In this way, *Megillat Ruth* ends with society’s acknowledgement of the importance of each individual acquiring a name. The act of naming the child is followed by a genealogical list, extending back ten generations all the way to Yehuda’s son Peretz. This impressive list of names suggests that the birth of this child has restored the link between the generations, rejuvenating a chain that consists of individuals with names, identities, and a shared destiny.

Finally, in keeping with the broader context of *Megillat Ruth*, we must recall that the book of *Shofetim* concludes with an abundance of unnamed individuals. I have frequently suggested that the prevailing anonymity which characterizes this period depicts a society where individuals have lost their name along with their destiny.^[31] In this vein, the act of establishing a name in *Megillat Ruth* is especially significant. Boaz’s ability to facilitate the reacquisition of one’s name paves the way towards restoration of

names in society at large, thereby repairing society and enabling the nation to reacquire its destiny.^[32] When people have no name, they forget their fundamental objectives, personal and national.^[33] The restoration of names and identity for the Israelite nation can enable them to realize their true national destiny: promulgating God's name.

Boaz does not merely make it possible to reacquire names during his era. He also produces David from Bethlehem,^[34] a man with a name (e.g. *I Shemuel* 18:30; *II Shemuel* 8:13), and the Davidic dynasty, which is also designated to establish names for generations to come.^[35] In the chapter which delineates the ideal state of this dynasty (*II Shemuel* 7), the word "shem" modifies three different parties: the king (David), God, and the nation. First, God promises David a great name (*II Shemuel* 7:9). The primary aim of the Davidic dynasty is also noted: to build a house for the purpose of disseminating God's name (*II Samuel* 7:13).^[36] To round out the picture, this same chapter depicts God bestowing a name upon the nation (*II Shemuel* 7:23).^[37] This in turn will lead to the acknowledgement of the greatness of God's name (*II Shemuel* 7:26). The intertwining of the parties which receive a name in this chapter suggests that they are interdependent. If individuals have names, identity and destiny, then the nation (and their king) will have a name, identity, and destiny. If the king has a name, then it is likely that he will be successful in conferring a name upon his people. Only when the nation has a name, an identity, and an awareness of its unique destiny, will God's name be promulgated in the world. The establishment of the name in *Megillat Ruth* offers hope for an idyllic national situation which looms hopefully ahead with the birth of the Davidic dynasty.

This series of shiurim is dedicated to the memory of my mother Naomi Ruth z"l bat Aharon Simcha, a woman defined by Naomi's unwavering commitment to family and continuity, and Ruth's selflessness and kindness.

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^[1] Like the word *makhera* (which appears in *Ruth* 4:3; see *shiur* #29), the word *kanita* should probably be understood not as a past tense verb ("you purchased"), but as a formal (perhaps legal) instantaneous perfect ("you hereby purchase").

^[2] If the referent is the field, the verse would require a comma dividing the sentence after the words "Ruth the Moavite, the wife of the deceased." It would then read, "On the day that you purchase the field from the hands of Naomi and from Ruth the Moavite, the wife of the deceased, you have purchased it." In this reading, the word *kanita* ("you have purchased it") stands alone, with the meaning that the *go'el* has bought the land. This reading seems unlikely because then there is no clear connection between buying the land and marrying Ruth. Moreover, the verse becomes almost tautological: "On the day that you purchase the field... you

have purchased it.” Finally, if this is simply referring to the buying of the field, what causes the *go’el* to panic and hastily renege on his previous agreement?

[3] The use of different prepositions with regard to the purchase of the field from the hand (*mi-yad*) of Naomi and from (*me’et*) Ruth suggests that they are not equal custodians over the field. On the basis of this textual anomaly, some scholars suggest that Naomi is the actual owner of the field while Ruth has a “legal interest” in the transaction. See Murray D. Gow, “Ruth Quoque – A Coquette? (Ruth IV 5),” *The Bible Translator* (1990), p. 309. Interestingly, the Targum translates the verse using the identical prepositional phrase (“*min yada*, from the hand”) with regard to both women.

[4] This is precisely what the Malbim (*Ruth* 4:5) claims with regard to this verse. He maintains that both Naomi and Ruth received one portion of Elimelech’s field as part of their *ketuva*. While Naomi’s portion is available for conventional purchase, Ruth’s portion is only acquired through a *yibbum*-like act of marriage. It is this which proves difficult for the *go’el*, as Ruth’s portion was designated to perpetuate the name of the deceased and would not be associated with the *go’el*’s name. The Malbim does not fully elaborate on what he means by this last idea.

[5] The Greek translation seems to read the word “*kanita*” as containing the hidden third person direct object, as in, “you hereby purchase **her**.” While this is not indicated in the *keri* of the word, it yields a meaning similar to that of my translation.

[6] As noted in *shiur* #25, Rashi (*Ruth* 3:9) suggested that Ruth had already linked these two issues in chapter three: “‘For you are a redeemer’ – To redeem the inheritance of my husband, as it says (*Vayikra* 25:25): ‘The nearest redeemer shall come and redeem...’ And I and my mother-in-law need to sell our inheritance. And now it is upon you to buy; buy also me along with [the inheritance] so that the name of the deceased will be recalled upon his inheritance, for when I come to the fields, [people] will say, ‘This is the wife of Machlon!’” See also Rashi, *Ruth* 4:10.

[7] We have previously discussed this phenomenon, in which Massoretic tradition has indicated that a word is read differently than the manner in which it is written (see *shiur* #21). This phenomenon is often treated by medieval exegetes as an exegetical device that maintains both a surface meaning (*keri*) and a deeper meaning (*ketiv*). See, for example, the Abravanel’s introduction to the book of *Yirmiyahu*, which contains a lengthy excursus on this phenomenon. Academic scholarship assumes that there is only one original reading and therefore concentrates its efforts on ascertaining the “correct” reading. For a thorough scholarly treatment of the *keri* and *ketiv* in our verse, which also contains a survey of different academic approaches, see Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (1996), pp. 216-229.

[8] I have chosen to translate the verse according to its plain meaning (*peshuto shel mikra*). Although *Chazal* offer a different reading of this verse, which contains significantly different halakhic implications, they are the first to admit that their reading of the verse deviates from its plain meaning (see *Yevamot* 24a).

[9] See *II Shemuel* 18:18; *Yeshayahu* 56:5.

[10] Rashi offers an interesting suggestion in his comment on *Ruth* 3:9 (see footnote #6 above).

[11] See the discussion of this assumption in *Yevamot* 24a. Rashbam and Ibn Caspi (*Devarim* 25:6) maintain that this is the simple meaning of the verse. Ramban (*Bereishit* 38:8; *Devarim* 25:6) disagrees. As proof, he cites the fact that the name of the son born to Ruth and Boaz is Oved, and not Machlon. To support his contention, Ibn Caspi claims that Ruth actually named her son Machlon, but the neighbors called him Oved!

[12] The centrality of the inheritance for the maintenance of the name is not evident in the passage in *Devarim*. It is, however, quite clearly linked in *Megillat Ruth*, in which Boaz twice states that the goal is “to uphold the name of the deceased **upon his inheritance**” (*Ruth* 4:5, 10). Rashi on *Devarim* 25:6 offers the following explanation: “‘He shall be established in the name of the [deceased] brother’ – The one who performs *yibbum* with his wife shall take the inheritance of the deceased along with the estate of his father.” See also Targum Yonatan

on *Devarim* 25:5-6. In this vein, *Yevamot* 17b maintains that only brothers who share in their father's ancestral inheritance are considered brothers for the purpose of levirate marriage.

^[13] *Yevamot* 24a does not reference the story of the daughters of Tzelaḥchad, but instead adduces *Bereishit* 48:6 as a proof text for this connection.

^[14] *Mishna Yevamot* 4:7; *Yevamot* 24a; Rambam, *Hilkhot Nachalot* 3:7.

^[15] Interestingly, in *Bava Batra* 12b, there is an argument regarding whether the *yavam* is meant to receive both pieces of land contiguously (like the *bekhor*). The conclusion is that it is not in his rights to demand this. In other words, the *yavamin* inherits two distinct pieces of land, in contrast to a *bekhor* who receives a double portion. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the brother is charged with maintaining the distinctive land of the deceased. I am grateful to Rabbi Dr. Judah Goldberg for this source and for discussing this issue with me. I thank also Rabbi Danny Wolf for discussing the complexities of this topic with me.

^[16] R. Yaakov Medan, *Hope from the Depths: A Study in Megillat Ruth* (Heb.) (2007), p. 83, indeed suggests that the *peshat* of the verse is that if there is a son born from the *yibbum* union, that child receives the entire inheritance of the deceased (after the death of the grandfather). Although this is not the conclusion of the Halakha, Rav Medan explained to me that his intention is to expound the plain meaning of the verse, whose internal logic is compelling.

^[17] While this is not the halakha in regard to the *mitzva* of *yibbum*, the *peshat* of *Devarim* 25:6 suggests that his idea may underlie the original concept of *yibbum*. Given that our scenario is at best an echo of the *mitzva* of *yibbum*, it is certainly conceivable that the inheritance of Machlon will be given to the son of Ruth's forthcoming marriage, in keeping with the *peshat* of *Devarim* 25:6. See R. Yaakov Medan, *Hope from the Depths: A Study in Megillat Ruth* [Heb.] (2007), pp. 84-85, 91.

^[18] Because the marriage to Ruth is not actual *yibbum*, as we will prove in the next *shiur*, the land of Machlon would not automatically go to a child who is born to Ruth. Therefore, the land must be purchased by the man she marries and given to the child in acknowledgement of the aim of maintaining the name of the deceased upon his inheritance.

^[19] These passages (*Ruth* 4:5, 10) are the only places in the *Tanakh* where the verb "*kana*," "to purchase," is used to refer to the taking of a wife. This seems designed to create a further link between the purchase of the land and the marriage to Ruth. Later in the chapter, when Boaz actually marries Ruth, the more common word, "*lakach*," is used (*Ruth* 4:13).

^[20] R. Yaakov Medan, *Hope from the Depths: A Study in Megillat Ruth* (Heb.) (2007), pp. 83-84, takes this one step further. He suggests that the reason that the Torah frowns upon *chalitza* (the alternative to *yibbum*) is because underlying it is the untoward desire to possess his brother's land by inheriting it himself, instead of producing an heir for his brother.

^[21] *Shiur* # 7 developed this topic at length.

^[22] Naomi's declaration that she has lost her name seems to derive from two correlative losses: that of her land and that of her children. From the economic perspective, Naomi's sale of her inheritance means that she has lost her identity alongside her ability to support herself. Moreover, the death of Naomi's children and the termination of her continuity also mean the loss of her name. This explains the goals of chapter four, which involve the restoration of Naomi's land and progeny, thereby restoring her name and that of her family.

^[23] See *shiurim* # 13, 18.

^[24] This is ostensibly as punishment for refusing to uphold the name of the deceased. See *shiur* # 28.

^[25] In response to Ruth's mention of Boaz's name, Naomi declares for the first time her acknowledgement that someone may redeem her: "The man is close to us; he is of our redeemers" (*Ruth* 2:20). See *shiur* #19.

^[26] See *shiurim* # 18, 24.

^[27] Rashi says that it means that Boaz's name will be great.

^[28] Indeed, in many congregations, the naming of a child is preceded precisely by this phrase, “*va-yikarei shemo be-Yisrael.*”

^[29] See e.g. Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (1988), p. 271.

^[30] See Edward F. Campbell Jr., *Ruth* (Anchor Bible, 1975), p. 163. The phrase which generally connotes celebration of a name is usually preceded by the preposition “*be*” and generally used with respect to God (as in to call in God’s name, “*kara be-shem Hashem*”). See e.g. *Bereishit* 12:8; *Shemot* 34:5. Nevertheless, sometimes the phrase appears without a preposition, with the meaning to celebrate (e.g. *Devarim* 32:3; *Tehillim* 99:6). Campbell suggests the possibility that God is the subject of the phrase, although he concludes that it is more likely that the phrase refers to the child’s name. See also Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (1996), p. 256.

^[31] See *shiurim* # 2, 3, 13, 24.

^[32] In *shiur* #19, I suggested that Naomi’s ability to regard Ruth as a subject who has both a name and an identity is triggered by Boaz, who models this behavior. The people of Bethlehem will likewise take Boaz’s cue and regard Ruth as an individual with a name. In this way, Boaz guides the nation to regard each other as people and reinstates their identity and name.

^[33] The intertwining of the themes of people’s names and God’s name is especially prominent in the Exodus narrative. There too the text indicates that without one’s own name, one cannot truly know God’s name. It transpires that one cannot fulfill one’s duty to promulgate God’s name if one does not know one’s own name.

^[34] Perhaps this is the reason that the witnesses bless the union of Boaz and Ruth with the words, “And call a name in Bethlehem” (*Ruth* 4:11).

^[35] The *Tanakh* highlights the greatness of the name of David’s son, Shelomo (*I Melakhim* 1:47; 5:11). Significantly, Shelomo’s name is said to be great in order to make God’s name great (*I Melakhim* 10:1).

^[36] See also e.g. *I Melakhim* 5:19; 8:16-20. David is aware of the obligation to promote God’s name from the very beginning. This is his primary aim during his battle with Golyat (*I Shemuel* 17:45). We also see this in David’s concern with the ark, which is said to bear God’s name (*II Shemuel* 6:2). See also *II Shemuel* 6:18; 22:50.

^[37] While the simple meaning of this rather convoluted verse may be that God establishes the nation to establish for Himself a name (e.g. Radak ad loc.), another reading of the verse yields the possibility that God has conferred a name upon His nation.