

7. **v. 17 Thou shalt . . . plant them.** God, Who once “planted a garden eastward in Eden” (Gen. 2:8) and placed a man and woman within it, frequently uses the planting metaphor to speak of His placing of Israel in their land. 2 Samuel 7:10 is particularly close to the present context: “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more”, but other uses of the metaphor are as follows: Psalm 44:2; 80:8,15; Isaiah 5:2,7; 51:16; Jeremiah 2:21; 11:17; 12:2; 18:9; 31:28; 32:41; 42:10; Ezekiel 36:36; Amos 9:15. Jeremiah is evidently particularly fond of the imagery.
8. **v. 17 the mountain of Thine inheritance.** A strange phrase, and one used in the Ugaritic (Canaanite) literature to describe the mountain dwelling of Baal. One could translate ‘inheritance’ as ‘possession’ (‘Your mountain that is Your property’). This is God’s mountain, the one He has coming to Him, the one which belongs to Him and for which He has grand plans. The takeoff of Canaanite/Ancient Near Eastern standard religious phraseology may be deliberate.
9. **v. 17 Sanctuary.** This is the first occurrence of the Hebrew *miqdash*, the term commonly used to refer to the tabernacle, but which may be used of temples or other holy places. It can also carry the more specific, technical sense of the Holy Place.
10. **v. 17 O Lord.** The term here is *adonai*, which means ‘lord’, ‘master’. A great variety of names for God are used in the Song, as earlier footnotes have brought out; Sarna suggests the ten-fold occurrence of YHWH may be deliberate.
11. **v. 20 Miriam the prophetess.** This is the only time she is thus designated, and no account of the content of her prophetic ministry is given (but compare the rebellion of Numbers 12). Six Scriptural women are given the official designation ‘prophetess’ (Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, Isaiah’s wife, Anna and Miriam), but there are other references to women prophesying.
12. **v. 20 the sister of Aaron.** Aaron was the first-born son, hence Miriam is described as his sister rather than as the sister of Moses.
13. **v. 20 timbrel.** The *toph*, a tambourine or drum-like instrument.
14. **v. 21 answered.** Although the regular verb ‘to answer’, the term probably carries a technical sense here, referring to antiphonal singing, or singing with responses. We do a similar thing today with hymns like ‘Lead me, Lord’ and ‘Lift up to God the voice of praise’. One might translate, ‘sang back’.



Encounter

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The Law given through Moses*

28. The significance of names

Islip Collyer

THE MEANING of names, and any significance arising out of the way in which they are used, may seem to be outside our subject. An exposition of the Law would be incomplete, however, if the names received no attention. The Scriptures clearly show that in many instances names were given with a prophetic object. Some names were changed by Divine instruction, and the reason for the change was clearly stated. With others the significance of the name is not a matter of special comment in the

text of the record, and yet the reason for the change is too obvious to be missed by any reader. On the basis of these clear meanings we may see the significance of many other details, although, as with so much in Scripture, the lessons are partly hidden.

The name given to the father of the faithful was definitely prophetic: “thy name shall be

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Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Gen. 17:5). This is the classic example of God speaking of "things which be not" as though they were already established facts (Rom. 4:17). It is also the best example of a name given with a meaning which we are expected to note.

The name Isaac was not so significant, but the meaning is obvious. It was a word for 'laughter', and was given as a name with this thought in mind, the laughter of incredulity being turned into the laughter of joy.

Esau and Jacob were apparently named by their parents without any instruction from God, but the Divine answer to Rebekah's inquiry clearly influenced the choice (Gen. 25:22). Edom is radically the same as Adam, meaning 'Red earth', and Esau expresses the same idea. Jacob means 'A supplanter', in harmony with the angel's assurance that the younger would take the first-born's place. This idea of the old Adam being supplanted by another is thus presented in the patriarchal names. Later Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and in this matter the words of the angel clearly revealed the meaning: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (32:28).

WHEN we come to the names of Jacob's sons, there is not the same direct indication of Divine control. In some instances the names appear to have been chosen by the mother with sole reference to local and temporary matters. In view of the manner in which God made use of names, however, it must be conceded as at least a possibility that the meanings of these humanly bestowed names should be used in the Divine plan. Investigation proves that they have been so employed.

With only one exception, the significance of the names as stated by scholars is confirmed by the text of Scripture. This exception is with the first-born Reuben. His name is said to mean 'Behold a son'. This would be a natural exclamation at the arrival of a first-born and might well be chosen for a name. In the text we read that Leah said, "The Lord hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me" (29:32). This thought might well go with the exclamation, "Behold a son!", but this meaning is not confined in the definite and unmistakable manner we find with other names.

Note the three sons mentioned in the remaining three verses of the chapter (vv. 33-35): "the

LORD hath *heard* . . . and she called his name Simeon", which means 'Hearing'. "My husband [will] be *joined* to me", and she called the child Levi. This name indicates 'Joining', and is sometimes used as a word. For instance, in a prophecy of the final restoration the people will say, "Come, and let us *join* ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant" (Jer. 50:5). The word here used for 'join' is *lavah*, the root from which Levi is derived. Again in the text of Genesis we read that, with the birth of the fourth son, Leah exclaimed, "Now will I *praise* the LORD", and she called the child Judah, which means 'Praise'.

So with other children and other mothers. "God hath judged" for Dan; "great wrestlings" for Naphtali; "A troop cometh" for Gad; "Happy am I" for Asher. There is a more elaborate explanation for Issachar, the curious incident of hiring with the mandrakes gathered by the first-born being given as the explanation of the unusual name, meaning 'A hire'. With her sixth son Leah exclaimed, "now will my husband *dwell* with me, because I have born him six sons". The name Zebulun means 'Dwelling'.

Rachel's two sons were also named with reference to circumstances prevailing at the time of their birth. "The LORD shall *add* to me another son", Rachel said, and called the child Joseph, which means 'Adding'. The second son brought sorrow, for it took her life. She called the boy Ben-oni, but Jacob called him Benjamin. There seems no doubt as to the meaning of these names, both of which are significant. 'The son of my sorrow' expressed the grief of the mother, who, after hard labour, was brought to death. 'The son of the right hand' expressed the feeling of the father, who lost the fair woman of his early choice in giving birth to the last son of his family.

THERE is a point of some interest in this matter not unrelated to the spirit and the deeper meanings of the Law we have been studying. Referring to this tragedy in later days, Jacob said, "Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way" (48:7). There is, of course, an obvious explanation of this expression "died by me", for he was the father. There is, however, another possible meaning arising out of Rachel's fault in taking away the teraphim of her father. She concealed this sin at the time, but Jacob said, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live" (31:32). It seems clear that the patriarchs possessed a certain power of prophetic blessing or cursing, and so unwittingly Jacob

may have pronounced sentence of death on his erring wife.

The two sons born to Joseph in Egypt became tribal heads, so that they were more important than any of the other grandsons of Jacob. Accordingly we are given clear guidance as to the meaning of the names. "God . . . hath made me forget . . . all my father's house", said Joseph, and so called the first-born Manasseh, which means 'Forgetting'. "God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction", he said for the second son, and called him Ephraim, meaning 'Fruitful' (41:51,52).

WHEN the people were established in the land of Canaan, the Levites were separated for priestly service and not reckoned as one of the tribes. The essential number of twelve was made up by Ephraim and Manasseh becoming tribal heads instead of their father Joseph. This arrangement is sustained in the picture of restoration presented in the closing chapters of Ezekiel. A portion is allotted for each tribe extending from the east to the west of the land. Near the centre, between the portions for Judah and Benjamin, there is to be a portion for priests and Levites, with the sanctuary in the middle.

The tribes are continued according to the enumeration established in the days of Joshua, but the positions are quite different and the order of the names is therefore changed. Nearly all the tribes are removed from their original places, some of them to considerable distances. Issachar and Zebulun, for instance, were in the north when the land was first divided, but will be in the south according to the order presented in Ezekiel. Reuben and Gad are brought from the other side of Jordan to be in line with the other tribes and they are both moved southward, Gad to the extreme south of the land. Benjamin is moved from the north to the south of Judah. Simeon, which in the old days was the southernmost tribe, will in the restoration have three other tribes to the south of it (Ezek. 48).

In the book of Revelation the twelve tribes are enumerated again, but with further changes of a most significant character. It seems impossible to resist the conclusion that there is something in the nature of a cipher in the use of these names. If, in contemplating the Kingdom to come, we tried to concentrate a mental picture into twelve of the shortest possible sentences, we could hardly do better than use the names as presented in Revelation 7: 'praise to God'; 'be-

hold a son'; 'a troop cometh (many sons)'; 'happy'; 'wrestling'; 'forgetting'; 'the Lord hearing'; 'joined' to those he 'purchased'; 'dwelling' with them and 'adding' to their number for 'the Son of the right hand'. This is taking the meanings of the names as given in the text of Genesis and with the changed order presented in Revelation. If a reader rejects this idea as fanciful, can he suggest a reason for the change? The list in Ezekiel gives the same combination of Asher, Naphtali and Manasseh, reading 'Happy, wrestling, forgetting', and this is appropriate whether we think of natural or spiritual Israel.

The list in Revelation 7, however, makes some other startling changes that call for explanation. The name Dan, which heads the list in Ezekiel, is omitted altogether from Revelation. Ephraim, which was one of the most important of the tribes in the old days, is also absent from the list. The number is made up by Levi and Joseph being restored to the list. But, while Joseph is there instead of his son Ephraim, Manasseh, the less important son, still figures as a tribal head.

We can think of no explanation of these changes except that which is suggested by the meaning of the names. Dan means 'judgement', and so appropriately heads the list in Ezekiel, for judgement—righteous judgement—will be the very basis of the blessedness. But for spiritual Israel, when the hireling has been 'joined' to God and the Lord 'dwells' with His people, judgement will be in the past. So Dan is omitted from the list. Ephraim means 'fruitfulness' in the natural sense, so, while the tribe was one of the most important in the old days, the name does not appear in the symbolic presentation of the redeemed in Revelation 7.

In Ezekiel 48, when the gates of the city are mentioned, the names are restored to the original twelve. Here Reuben, who was Israel's first-born, heads the list, but the other names are not in the order of birth. There may be meanings in the way the names are grouped, but we should need more knowledge before it would be reasonable to express a definite opinion. It certainly seems rather significant that the west gates, facing as they will to the isles of the Gentiles, should bear the names Gad, Asher and Naphtali—"a troop cometh", 'happy' and 'wrestling'—for Gentiles who come to the light in happy hopefulness will still need to wrestle and to overcome. The new name of the city mentioned immediately afterward enhances the significance of this thought: "He Who will be is there".