

More than A Name

Topic

Hebrew – Yom Hashoah
 Song *L'hol Yish Yesh Shem* written by Zelda

Grade Level(s)

6th thru 12th

Big Ideas

Judaism places great importance to a person's name

Relevant Vocabulary

יום הזכרון לשואה ולגבורה (<i>Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah</i>)	Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם (<i>L'hol Yish yesh Shem</i>)	Every Person has a name
בְּרֵאשִׁית (<i>Breishit 2:19-20</i>)	Genesis
שְׁמוֹת (<i>Shemot 2:10</i>)	Exodus
מִדְרָשׁ תַּנְחומָא, וַיִּקְהַל א': א' (<i>Midrash Tanchuma, Vayekel 1:1</i>)	A <i>midrash</i> on the five books of the Torah

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Recognize that a person's name is made of external and internal factors
2. Learn the song *L'hol Yish yesh Shem* and why it is sung at *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* commemorations
3. Learn about Zelda, the author of the poem
4. Discuss the symbols associated with a name in the song

Materials / Technology Needed

Paper Mosaic

Materials: construction paper (different colors), glue sticks, a writing utensil, scissors

Hall of Names – Yad Vashem

Headline Routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Song [L'hol Yish yesh Shem](#) with English Subtitles

Song [L'hol Yish yesh Shem](#) sung in Hebrew Chava Alberstein

Prepare in Advance

Copies of the song *L'hol Yish yesh Shem* (in Hebrew and English) – 1 copy per student

Background for Teachers

Zelda Shneurson-Mishkovsky was born in Ukraine in 1914 to a Chasidic family; she was first cousin of the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, Menachem Mendel Schneerson. She and her family made *aliyah* in 1928. Zelda became a teacher while starting to write poetry. She became a prolific and acclaimed poet known by her first name only. Zelda's literary creation was filled with Jewish sources, and *Chasidic* and mystical wisdom (more in the next topic)

About Names:

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Giving names is a topic of high importance in our tradition as can be seen in the literature. At the time of creation, G-d instructs Adam to name the wild beasts and the birds [Genesis 19-20](#). The creation of a name alludes to either a special event associated with the birth or the upbringing of a person. A good case in point is the name *Yaakov* who emerged holding on to the heel of Esau [Genesis 25:26](#) or *Moshe* who was pulled out of the water [Exodus 2:10](#). At times, it may represent a function of character as when Jacob was renamed Israel after showing great strength wrestling with God's angel [Genesis 32:29](#). Names are so important that the second book of the Torah called Names - *Shemot*, traditionally translated as Exodus, recounts the names of the children of Jacob who came down to Egypt. In the Talmud, Rabbis emphasize the importance of earning a good name. "Every time a man increases the number of good deeds he performs; he adds to his good name. You find that a man is known by three names: the name by which his father and mother call him, the name by which other men call him, and the one he earns for himself; the most important name is the one he earns for himself." [Midrash Tanchuma, Vayakhel 1:1](#)

The Talmudic verse in *Midrash Tanchuma* became the foundation of Zelda's song *L'hol Yish Yesh Shem*, which in turn became a hymn of bereavement par excellence. Zelda's song is sung during *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* official commemorations throughout Israel and the Diaspora.

Description of Activities

1. In a circle, ask learners to share their names and why they were named that way. Learners should also share if they have other names except the one given by their parents (for example: Hebrew name, *Yiddish* name (if different than the Hebrew one), nickname, name given by family members other than parents, name given by friends, neighbors. Challenge learners to think of other categories as well.

Make sure to talk to learners about the rules for sharing:

- a. Listen actively
- b. Interact with each other respectfully
- c. Refrain from using bad language
- d. Model empathy and politeness
- e. Ask clarification questions such as "what makes you say that?" "Why do you think so?"

Teacher: Be prepared to share your name(s) and its different meanings. For example: My name is Ana, my Hebrew name is Hannah, my nick name Anni. Some people in my family call me "Ani *miles*" because I walk very fast, my friends/neighbors call me *Assi-st* because I like to help people. I would like to be called *Vinter* (winter in Yiddish) because I love winter, my enemies call me *Nudnikit*, because I am constantly asking them for something.

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2. Ask learners to keep their eyes closed while the song *L'hol Yish yesh Shem* plays. Learners share the feelings the song elicits.
3. Read the song in translation and discuss the different categories of names described in the song.
4. Discussion points:
 - a. What is the purpose of having a name? Possible answers: identity, dignity, belonging, distinctiveness, potential, heritage, successor, humanity, reputation.
 - b. What are the expectations of the person given the name?
 - c. Does the name define the person? Does one's name impact one's life? If yes, how?
 - d. Why do you think names played such an important role throughout Jewish history?
 - e. Does a person have control over its many names, the ones given, and the ones acquired?
 - f. In the song, try to elucidate the different nouns or symbols and their meanings (see pink highlights on page 6): What does G-d represent? What does mother represent? What does father represent? What does *height* represent? What does *smile* represent? What does *tapestry* symbolize? What do *mountains* represent? What do *walls* represent? What do *star* signs represent? What do *neighbors* represent? What do sins represent? What does *longing* represent? What do enemies represent? What does *love* represent? What do *festivals* represent? What does *work* represent? What does *seasons* represent? What does *blindness* represent? What does *sea* represent? What does *death* represent?
5. In the song, the word "name" is written 9 times highlighted in yellow on page 6 (not included the title). What word would you substitute for the word "name." After choosing the new word, read the song again substituting it with the word you chose. Does it help you understand the song better? Does it change the meaning of the song?
6. Identify contrasts in the song (mother/father, birth/death, enemies/love, festival/work). What do the contrasts suggest?
7. Compare and contrast *Midrash Tanchuma* with the first stanza of Zelda's song? What is the same, and what is different? How do you interpret it? *Midrash Tanchuma* – "A man is known by three names: the name by which his father and mother call him, the name by which other men call him, and the one he earns for himself. Zelda's song: "Every person has a name that God gave him and which his father and mother gave him."

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8. The song was written without punctuation. Why do you think Zelda chose that style?
9. What does the title *L'hol Yish yesh Shem* represent to you? Would you have chosen a different title?
10. Name historical circumstances when people were rendered unnamed (for example the use of numbers instead of names).
11. Why do you think this song is sang during *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* commemorations?
12. Name circumstances where people chose to conceal their real names or change their names (conversos, new immigrants to America or to Israel).
13. Would you agree that according to the song, a person's name(s) or identity is shaped by many aspects, some external (such as parents giving names) and some internal (such as having free will to choose love, work, etc.?)

Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Research the project [Hall of Names](#) at *Yad Vashem*. What can we learn about the importance of names in our tradition?
- Write a [headline](#) that captures the most important aspect of this song.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Make a [paper mosaic](#) of your name(s). Trace the name(s) as the design.
- Choose one of the categories of names described in the song and create a picture (virtual or physical).

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Every Person has a Name	לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
<p>Every person has a name that God gave him and which his father and mother gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים וְנָתַן לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ</p>
<p>Every person has a name which his height and the style of his smile gave him and which his tapestry gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאָפֶן חֵיוֶכּוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרִיג</p>
<p>Every person has a name which the mountains gave him and which his walls gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ הַהָרִים וְנָתַנוּ לוֹ כְּתָלָיו</p>
<p>Every person has a name which the star signs gave him and which his neighbors gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ הַמַּזְלוֹת וְנָתַנוּ לוֹ שְׁכֵנָיו</p>
<p>Every person has a name which his sins gave him and which his longing gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ חַטָּאָיו וְנָתַנָּה לוֹ כְּמִיָּהֶתוֹ</p>
<p>Every person has a name which his enemies gave him and his love gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ שׂוֹנְאָיו וְנָתַנָּה לוֹ אֲהַבָּתוֹ</p>
<p>Every person has a name which his festivals gave him and which his work gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ חַגָּיו וְנָתַנָּה לוֹ מְלַאכְתּוֹ</p>
<p>Every person has a name which the seasons gave him and which his blindness gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ תְּקִיפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה וְנָתַן לוֹ עִוְרוֹנוֹ</p>
<p>Every person has a name which the sea gave him and which his death gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שִׁנְתָן לוֹ הַיָּם וְנָתַן לוֹ מוֹתוֹ</p>

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Every person has a name which his height and the style of his smile gave him and which his tapestry gave him	לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאָפֶן חֵיוֹנוֹ וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ הָאַרְיֵג
Every person has a name which the mountains gave him and which his walls gave him	לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנְתָנוּ לוֹ הַהָרִים וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ כְּתָלָיו
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Zelda in her Youth

From *Hasafranim* – Magazin from the National Library of Israel.



Plaque with an inscription with part of the song *L'hol Yish yesh Shem*. Picture by Dr. Avishai Teicher. From *Hasafranim* – Magazin from the National Library of Israel.