

More than A Name

Topic

Hebrew, *Yom Hashoah*, Challenge and Response
The Song *L'hol Ish Yesh Shem*

Grade Level(s)

6th – 12th

Big Ideas

People have names both that they are given and that they make for themselves.

A person's name can live on long after the person passes away.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Recognize that a person obtains many names, which come from external and internal factors
2. Learn the song *L'hol Ish Yesh Shem* and why it is sung at *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* commemorations
3. Analyze the symbols associated with a name in the song
4. Create remembrances of those who perished during the Shoah or other more recent events

Relevant Vocabulary

יום הזכרון לשואה ולגבורה (<i>Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve- laG'vurah</i>)	Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day
לכל איש יש שם (<i>L'hol Ish Yesh Shem</i>)	Every person has a name
חז"ל (הַחֲכָמִים וְזִכְרוֹנָם לְבָרָכָה) (<i>Hazal / Hachameinu Zichronam Livrachah</i>)	Our Sages May Their Memory Be for a Blessing
בְּרֵאשִׁית (<i>Beresheet</i>)	The Book of Genesis
שְׁמוֹת (<i>Shemot</i>)	The Book of Exodus (literally: Names)
מִדְרָשׁ תַּנְחוּמָא (<i>Midrash Tanhuma</i>)	A collection Midrash on the five books of the Torah
מִשְׁנֵה תוֹרָה (<i>Mishneh Torah</i>)	A comprehensive code of Jewish law compiled by Maimonides (literally: A Second Torah)

Materials / Technology Needed

- [Paper Mosaic](#) Materials:
 - Construction paper (different colors)
 - Glue sticks
 - Writing utensils
 - Scissors
- [Hall of Names](#) – *Yad Vashem*
- [Headline Routine from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)
- Song [L'hol Ish Yesh Shem](#) with English Subtitles
- Song [L'hol Ish Yesh Shem](#) sung in Hebrew Chava Alberstein
- Song Sheets (pages 6 and 7)

Prepare in Advance

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

More than A Name

Background for Teachers

About Names:

Giving names is a topic of high importance in Jewish tradition. According to *Hazal*, “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*, [Vayakheil 1:1](#))

This idea can be found as far back as the Torah. For example, the original patriarch of the Jewish people is named Avram, called *Ivri* by others, and earns the name Avraham from God. *Yaakov* is named after a special trait, as he was born holding on to Esau’s heel ([Beresheet 25:26](#)). Later on *Yaakov* earned the name Israel after showing great strength wrestling with God’s angel ([Beresheet 32:29](#)). The Rabbis were also concerned about what people would call each other and prohibited nicknames that could embarrass others ([Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 3:14](#), and [Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 228:5](#)).

The Talmudic verse in *Midrash Tanchuma* became the foundation of *Zelda’s* song *L’hol Ish 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. The idea behind the song corresponds with the notion that we must bring forward and remember each person. The massive scale of the loss inflicted to the Jewish people during the Holocaust might be hard to grasp, and this song reminds listeners to remember the uniqueness of each person who perished. People’s names are important not only in life but also in death, and each person who perishes has an identity and is an entire world ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5](#)).

Zelda

Zelda Schneurson-Mishkovsky was born in Ukraine in 1914 to a *Chasidic* family; she was first cousin of the seventh 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* used Jewish sources, and *Chasidic* and mystical wisdom in her literary creations. Her poetry won her multiple awards in Israel and drew followers both religious and secular.

Description of Activities

1. Ask learners to spend a few minutes researching what their Hebrew names mean or who their biblical reference is.
2. Learners share what their Hebrew names say about who they are. After that, learners could share other things that people call them (nickname, name given by family members other than parents, name given by friends, neighbors) and explain how those names reflect who they are. Challenge learners to think of other categories as well.

More than A Name

Teacher: Be prepared to share your name(s) and its different meanings. For example: My name is Ana, my Hebrew name is Hannah, my nickname 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.

3. Ask learners to keep their eyes closed while the song *L'hol Ish Yesh Shem* plays. Learners share the feelings the song elicits in them.
4. Read the song in translation and discuss the different categories of names described in the song.
5. Discussion points:
 - a. What is the purpose of having a name? Possible answers: identity, dignity, belonging, distinctiveness, potential, heritage, humanity, reputation.
 - b. What are the expectations of the person given the name?
 - c. Do you think one's name defines the person? Do you think one's name impacts one's life? If yes, how? If not, why not?
 - d. Why do you think names played such an important role throughout Jewish history? Why did people focus so much on names? Why are there so many discussions about how people should be called? Why does Jewish tradition place such importance on names of those who came before us?
 - e. Do people have control over their many names, the ones given and the ones acquired?
 - f. Try to elucidate the different nouns or symbols and their meanings in the song (see pink highlights on page 6): “What do each of the following represent?”

• God	• Walls	• Festivals
• Mother	• Star signs	• Work
• Father	• Neighbors	• Seasons
• Height	• Sins	• Blindness
• Smile	• Longing	• Sea
• Tapestry	• Enemies	• Death
• Mountains	• Love	
6. In the song, the word “name” is written 9 times (highlighted in yellow on page 6) not including the title. The word “name” represents a personal characteristic. If you were to substitute this word for another personal characteristic, what word would you use instead? After choosing the new word, for example, “a stamp or a mark,” 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?
7. Identify pairs in the song (mother/father, birth/death, enemies/love, festival/work). What do the pairings suggest?

More than A Name

8. 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."
9. The song was written without punctuation. Why do you think Zelda chose that style? Is it simply a poetic decision? How does it recall Biblical and rabbinic texts? Is it because receiving a name is something that can happen at any time?
10. What does the title *L'hol Ish Yesh Shem* represent to you? Would you have chosen a different title?
11. Why do you think this song is sung during *Yom HaZikaron laShoah ve-laG'vurah* commemorations? When else might this song be appropriate for remembering people?
12. 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.)? Do you share that opinion?
13. Learners explore individuals who were killed during the Shoah or during other past or more recent events. Learners each choose an individual to remember and create [paper mosaics](#) of their names. Trace the names as the design. In the mosaic, learners should also represent how their individuals gained a good name (e.g. being a great philanthropist, writing beautiful poetry, bringing joy to others' lives).
 - a. Post mosaics in a designated area to create a memory gallery where others can learn about people being remembered in the mosaics.
 - b. **Tech Option:** Learners create virtual social media pages that show how the people they are remembering gained a good name.

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

- Choose one of the categories of names described in the song and create a picture (virtual or physical).
- Write your many names using calligraphy.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Research the [Hall of Names](#) project 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.

More than A Name

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>Every person has a name which his height and the style of his smile gave him and which his tapestry gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which the mountains gave him and which his walls gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which the star signs gave him and which his neighbors gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which his sins gave him and which his longing gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which his enemies gave him and his love gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which his festivals gave him and which his work gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which the seasons gave him and which his blindness gave him</p> <p>Every person has a name which the sea gave him and which his death gave him</p>	<p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאַפֵּן חִיּוּכּוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרֶץ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ הַהָרִים וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ כְּתָלָיו</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ הַמַּזְלוֹת וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ שְׁכֵנָיו</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ חַטָּאִיו וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ כְּמִיתָתוֹ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ שׂוֹנְאָיו וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ אֲהֲבָתוֹ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ חֲגָיו וְנִתְּנָה לוֹ מְלָאכְתּוֹ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ תְּקוּפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה וְנָתַן לוֹ עֲוֹרוֹנוֹ</p> <p>לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁנָתָנוּ לוֹ הַיָּם וְנָתַן לוֹ מוֹתוֹ</p>

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More than A Name



Zelda in her Youth
From *Hasafranim* – Magazin from the National Library of Israel.



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