

Say my name...say my name

I hope you enjoy me working through my Beit Din questions, because guess what? I've got a few more to deal with. My next conversion meeting is next Tuesday so get your Jewish Learning life vests on, we've got some swimming to do. Today's question isn't so bad, at least not when it's compared to the last question I gave you.

If you could pick a Hebrew name today, what would it be and why?

I should confess that the moment that I decided to convert I began searching for a name for myself. I've gone back and forth several times on a few different names. It's hard giving a name to anything, especially yourself. A couple of weeks ago, though, I landed on what I'm pretty sure will be my Hebrew name. I'm almost scared to tell anyone what it is for fear that I'll change it with my next breath.

I love my given name. My name is Jeremy Ashley. My mother named me after her favorite character in *Gone With the Wind*. While I enjoy that I'm named after a handsome character in one of my favorite books, I'm not super excited to be named after a wimp. AND? When you're in first grade and you're discovering the world and how things work? When you share with your first grade class that your middle name is Ashley? And you're male? AND you live in The South? AND the person (read GIRL) seated next to you is named ASHLEY? Things get complicated.

See how early we learn the power and magic of a name? I learned early (First Grade!) that my name wasn't right. Ashley isn't a boy's name. I was given a girl's name. How could my mother have gotten it all wrong? How could this have happened? Learning to love my name is maybe the great metaphor of my life. I learned to love my girly middle name

and myself, but I will never forget the power of giving or carrying a name.

The Hebrew name that I've chosen is Noah Lior.

Why Noah? First off? It's one of my favorite names. Period. Since I'm not planning on having children? I figured...I could give the name to myself. Maybe I'll live to regret this? Maybe not. I guess we'll have to wait and see. I also love the story of Noah and the flood. He built a giant boat because Gd told him to and filled it with animals. That's crazy! The story is also a crazy display of faith. Gd said build a boat, y'all, so pass me some nails. I love that. The story also brought us the rainbow. I think it's beautiful that Gd sends the rainbow as a sign that everything is going to be alright. Every time I see a rainbow I think of Noah's story and how Gd is still saying "it's gonna be alright, y'all."

The more I think about the story of Noah, the more I feel that in some way it is my own story. Noah built a giant boat and traveled from one world to the next. He didn't understand why. He just did it. He was compelled to do what he was told. I feel that imagery in my own life. I'm building a boat. I'm getting in it and in a few months when I get out of the Mikvah? I'll be in a new land.

Why Lior? There are a few reasons. I want to honor my biological mother in some way through my name. I can't name myself Laura, so I picked a name that starts with L to honor her memory. When I found the name Lior, it actually reminded me of the name Laura because the feminine form of Lior is Liora. Very similar. The name Lior means I have light, which is a pretty great image, especially when you combine the idea of Noah landing in a new world. So there you have it. We'll see if I change it before I formally take it on.