

The Significance of the Hebrew Samech and Its Occurrence Rate in Names of Foes of the Jewish Nation

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The letter *Samech* is the fifteenth in the Hebrew alphabet with a numerical value of 60. This letter corresponds to the English “S”, like in Serpent. As with other Hebrew letters, *Samech* has a special significance in Jewish tradition and its “loud” absence from most biblical Hebraic names is not coincidental. To explain the meaning of *Samech*, I will mostly pursue Rav Shmuel Yaniv’s *Parashat Hashavua* (Torah weekly portion) [1]. For the reader’s convenience, the article by Rav Yaniv (in Hebrew) may be downloaded via the link below.

Generally speaking, *Samech* signifies in the Hebrew alphabet that which is evil, contrary to holiness, to life, to morality and to happiness. Accordingly, *Samech* is absent from biblical text or names dealing or associated with holiness and purity. Conversely, it appears abundantly in biblical text and names that are in essence opposed to these virtues or describing adversity in our earthly world.

Thus, in all twenty names of the first ten generations, from Adam to Noah, the letter *Samech* is “shoutingly” missing. Similarly, in all next ten generations of Hebraic genealogy, including *Noah*’s son, Shem, and his 26 offspring, *Samech* is loudly absent. By comparison, Ham, also Noah’s son, has seven offspring with

Samech in their names. Abraham's descendants also do not carry this letter, neither do Isaac's offspring or those of Esau (the latter totaling 40! relate to Genesis 36). Joseph, Jacob's son, is the first to carry *Samech* in his name. This is so extraordinary and unique that Rav Yaniv has considered it requiring special explanation (as indeed is expounded in the afore-cited source).

Conversely, entities affiliated with evil, impurity, corruption and death consistently include *Samech* in their names. Thus, Sodom contains "S", and so does Samael (or Samuel, also Sammael or Samil), considered in post-Talmudic lore a figure who is an accuser, seducer and destroyer, the angel of death and the representative of Satan on Earth who had seduced Eve, appearing to her as a Serpent.

Interestingly, names of the only biblical Hebraic heroes that could have been corrupted (they have not!), due to living for an extended period of time within an unclean nation, Joseph and Esther, both carried an S in their names. Rav Yaniv explains that since both Joseph and Esther had to fight seduction, corruption and impurity in the society they were living in *Samech* is part of their names.

In the same vein, in the biblical list of names of pure (clean) animals and birds (those Kosher for eating), *Samech* does not appear. It does appear, however, in names of impure (unclean) animals, like *Hassida* (stork) or *Peres* (vulture).

Biblical text describing Creation (action of the Divine; Genesis 1:1-31 and 2:1-9) does not include even a single *Samech*; neither do verses in the *Torah* relating to the *Menorah* (all in all 1521 letters, according to Rav Yaniv).

One cannot be surprised to find out that Hebrew words conveying suffering, negative virtues, calamities, undesirable situations, regularly contain the letter *Samech* in their root. Such are *Kaas* (anger), *Sevel* (suffering), *Goses* (dying), *Ason* (disaster), *Sakanah* (danger), *Siuv* (corruption), *Siut* (nightmare), *Heres* (destruction), *Romes* (trampling), *Chamas* and numerous others.

Further discussion may be found in Rav Shmuel Yaniv's article.

Given this role of the letter *Samech* in the Hebrew language, in Hebrew biblical text and in biblical names of Abrahamic Jewish descent, it is an interesting coincidence that to this day the majority of Israel's avid enemies, bent on destroying the Jewish nation or the Jewish State (in the modern era), tend to include *Samech* in their names. Indeed, the occurrence rate of that single Hebrew letter in the list of names of individuals and organizations, actively hostile to the Jewish nation, is mind boggling!

In ancient times, such names are the biblical Sisra (Judges 4:2), Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13) and Sanvallat (Nehemiah 2:10). Non-biblical names are Antiochus and Titus, the latter being responsible to the destruction of the Second Temple, 70 AD.

Here is a list of names of individuals and organizations, from the 20th and 21st centuries, all engaged in hostilities against the Jewish nation either by waging wars or via acts of terrorism. Most names are most likely familiar to the reader and therefore are in no need of detailed introduction:

- [1] Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Palestinian Mufti (serving Hitler during WWII);
- [2] Joseph Stalin;
- [3] Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt (during the Six-day War);
- [4] Anwar Sadat, president of Egypt (during the Yom Kippur War)
- [5] King Hussein of Jordan (engaged in battle against Israel in the Six-day War);
- [6] Saddam Hussein of Iraq (firing missiles at Israel in the first Gulf War);
- [7-8] Assad family (father and son) of Syria (the former engaged in the Six-day War and the Yom Kippur War);
- [9-10] Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas of Palestinian leadership (engaged in terrorism for part of their lives);
- [11] Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah;
- [12-13] Hamas and ISIS, current terrorist organization and self-declared Islamic state, respectively (the latter, though hostile to the Jews, has not yet

launched combat operations against Israel; as of the time of writing this post);

[14] Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's current president (not yet engaged in military activity against the Jewish State; as of the time of writing this post);

[15] Hassan Rouhani, Iran's current president;

[16] Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, ex-president of Iran (fourth president of current regime).

The arch-enemy of the Jewish people in modern time had not carried an S in his name (although a close T). It is interesting, however, to observe how Nostradamus refers to (probably) Hitler in the 24th quatrain of Century II (refer to source [2], which also delivers the original French):

"Beasts ferocious from hunger will swing across rivers;

The greater part of the region will be against the *Hister*,

The great one will cause it to be dragged in an iron cage,

When the German child will observe nothing".

In an attached comment (therein, p. 589), the author notes that "With *Hister* as an anagram for *Hitler*, this quatrain was long held by Nostradamians to forecast the fate of *Hitler*." Referring *negatively* to modern interpretation of *Hister* as the Danube (river), Leoni notes that "it must be admitted that it is difficult to see what the Danube being dragged in an iron cage could refer to."

The crucial point here: Assuming that the above interpretation is correct, it is intriguing to note how Nostradamus felt a need to include an "S" in reference to *Hitler*.

Summary:

Presence of the Hebrew *Samech* (“S”) in numerous names of devout enemies, past and present, of the Jewish nation; and the “roaring” absence of *Samech* in biblical Hebraic names — these may all be just historical coincidences (a lot of them..).

REFERENCES

[1] Rev Shmuel Yaniv: Daf Shvui #794, Parashat Yitro: “Why is Samech absent from Shabbath Mizvoth (commandments)?” (Hebrew)

<http://www.biu.ac.il/jh/Parasha/yitro/yani.html>

[2] Leoni E (1982). *Nostradamus and His Prophecies*. Reprint of a previously published: *Nostradamus: Life and Literature*. Originally published in 1961.

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