

Giving a Child Two Names



1. Although it's unclear when the practice of giving a child two names began, as we don't find anybody in Tanach, Shas, or even Rishonim with two names, it certainly has become commonplace to do so. The only exception to the rule in Rishonim is Rabbeinu Yaakov Yisrael, quoted in Tosafot, Chullin 112a s.v. hani mili.^[1]
2. Adding or modifying a name avoids issues of naming after living relatives or people who one should not name after, such as a Rasha or someone who died young/tragically, according to those who are concerned.^[2]
3. However, according to the Chazon Ish, a double name is one composite name and not two partial ones, so it does not bear any connection to the two parts it represents. Therefore, one would not be in fulfillment of honoring anybody by using two names.^[3] Many authorities disagree, though,^[4] but some say that using two names for two people would nevertheless not be as potent as purely naming after one person.^[5]

Sources

1. Noda BeYehuda (Orach Chaim II 123), Chatam Sofer (Even HaEzer II 18). It is common to use two places in the following cases: Naming a baby after two people, after a living person with an added name, after a Rasha with an added name, after someone who died young with an added name, with the same name as his late parent or sibling with an added name.
2. See above sources about naming after the living concerns and Shu"t Torat Chesed (Even HaEzer 39)
3. Chazon Ish as reported in Pe'er HaDor vol. 4 page 200, Teshuvot veHanhagot (vol. 1 606, 608), Orchot Rabbeinu (vol. 4 Keriat Shem 5 in the new edition, and vol. 3 Brit Milah 3 in the old edition)
4. Ben Ish Chai (Shanah II, Shofetim 27), Yam Shel Shlomo (Gittin 4:31)
5. Shalmei Simcha page 452. Mishpat HaKetubah vol. 2 pages 86, 139 writes that this may be parallel to a similar discussion in Hilchot Gittin regarding the same issue of whether one name is two names or one composite one. However, some think it's an independent issue. See Shulchan Aruch (Even HaEzer 129) and commentary, as well as Sdei Chemed (vol. 6 Maarechet Get Siman 35-36), and Avnei Nezer (Even HaEzer 175) at great length.