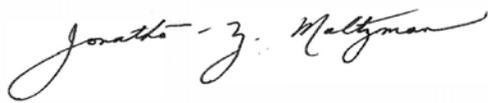


Kol HaRav

Jewish tradition places great importance on names. From our perspective a name defines one's very essence. There is a story told of a husband and wife who had their first child and could not agree on the name, so they went to their rabbi and he asked, "What's the problem?" The mother said, "As the mother, I should have the first right to choose ... I want the baby named after my father Reuven." The husband said, "No, I am the man of the house ... I want the baby named after my father, whose name was Reuven." The rabbi immediately perks up and says, "So then, what's the problem?" The mother cries out, "His father was a horse thief." He cries out, "Her father was a bank robber." The rabbi, in his great wisdom, proclaimed: "I have the solution: you are to name the baby Reuven. If he grows to be a horse thief, then he is named after the husband's father and if he grows to be a bank robber, he is named after the wife's father."

It's been several years since the D.C. City Council passed a resolution calling for a change in the name of Washington's football team. The controversy continues. As a Philadelphia Eagles fan it is hard for me to look at the situation objectively. However, I recognize both sides of the argument for and against the change. On the one hand, if the name "Redskins" is so offensive what about other derogatory names like "Braves", "Chiefs", or "Indians". So what's wrong with Redskins? On the other hand, and this is my opinion, the name does represent a derogatory term and Mr. Snyder, owner of the team and himself a Jew, should be reminded that Jewish tradition has a long history of name changes going back to the Bible. In each case, it was an honorable thing to do.

As Jews we know a lot about the name "Redskins". Jacob's brother, Esau, has his name changed to Edom, which means Redskin! Abraham, Jacob, Sarah and others all had their names changed to show great developments in their lives, generally uplifting ones. In other words, names do make a difference.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan Z. Maltzman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman