

And they established their genealogy, according to their families, according to their fathers' household. (1:18)

The census was executed according to tribe, thereby requiring each individual to establish his genealogical descent from a given tribe. This was done either by document, witnesses, or by the word of the individual. *Chazal* relate that when Hashem gave the Torah to *Klal Yisrael*, the nations of the world suddenly disputed His decision. Why were the Jews receiving the Torah and not they? Hashem replied, "Bring Me your *Sefer Yuchsin*, book of family pedigree, to determine from which nations you descend, so that it can be determined if you are worthy of receiving the Torah. The Jewish People have presented their pedigree, and it is impeccable." *Chazal's* words have allowed for the various commentators to each present his individual exegesis of the concept of pedigree.

Horav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, zl, offers a practical explanation. *Kabbolas HaTorah*, the receiving of the Torah, was not a one time commitment. It was an acceptance for each and every ensuing generation until the end of time. Otherwise, it is not a *kabbalah*, acceptance. The question is: How do we guarantee such commitment? How do we ensure the dedication to the Torah of each and every generation of Jews following *Klal Yisrael's* acceptance at *Har Sinai*? This is done through compliance with the instruction received from Moshe *Rabbeinu* in his farewell address to *Klal Yisrael*: "And make them known to your children and your children's children – the day that you stood before Hashem, your G-d, at *Chorev*" (*Devarim* 4:9,10). Imparting the Revelation and its significance to the next generation is the primary method for keeping *Kabbolas HaTorah* alive and well in the hearts and minds of each generation of Jewish children. In turn, they will transmit their knowledge and emotions to their children. As *Ramban* writes, "This process affirms the veracity of the Torah, for a father will neither testify falsely to his children, nor will he bequeath them something foolish in which he does not believe."

There is one catch, however: This process works only as long as children respect and value their parents. A child who does not extol and hold his parents in high esteem will not accept his parents' affirmation of support for the Torah. Thus, he will not transmit the lessons he has heard from his parents to his children. In order to believe in an event which has taken place in the distant past, one must have faith in his mentor. Faith is the product of esteem. Without respect, one cannot have faith. It is as simple as that.

Chazal convey this idea via a simple aphorism: "If the *Rishonim*, previous generations, are [viewed by you] as angels, then we are like human beings. If, however, the previous generations are not more than human beings, then we are like donkeys." There is a degradation of generations. In order to maintain a status quo, we must glorify our predecessors. If **we** will not sing their praises, who will? Certainly our children will not take up the cause of faith in the past. On the contrary, they will say, "It was appropriate in the past, but we do not live this way today. We live in a modern, progressive society. It is time that we remove the shackles of the past and move on." Every

generation produces its intellectuals who think that they are wiser than the previous generation. If there is no respect, there can be no Torah transmission.

This is *Klal Yisrael's* uniqueness. We have a *Sefer Yuchsin*, book of genealogical descent. We are proud of our ancestors; consequently, we extol them by singing their praises to our children. Only the Jewish People can say this. We establish our genealogy *l'bais avosam*, according to their "father's" household. This is a reference to the Patriarchs. Indeed, we are acutely aware that with each ensuing generation, we are distancing ourselves further from this source of inspiration and pride. We savor everything that we hear or study about them. The greater they appear in our eyes, the greater we become.