

Their count, for the tribe of Menashe; thirty two thousand, two hundred. (1:35)

The count for *shevet Menashe* was about thirty-two thousand men. There is no doubt that every census was determined by Hashem. Consequently, there must have been a reason that the number thirty-two played such a prominent role in Menashes' census. **Horav Chaim Pardes, Shlita**, expounds on the significance of the number thirty-two through the perspective of *Chazal*. The *Talmud Yevamos 62b* states that Rabbi Akiva's twenty four thousand students died during the period between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* because they were not accustomed to showing proper *kavod*, honor/esteem, one for another. The **Maharal M'Prague** makes a profound statement in regard to the time frame of their death. On the thirty-third day of the *Omar, Lag B'omar*, the Heavenly decree that they should die ceased. What is the implication of this brief cessation in their tragic demise? He explains that they died because of laxity in observing proper *kavod*, which in the Hebrew language, *sucf*, is the *gimatriya*, numerical equivalent of thirty-two. Hence, they perished during a thirty-two day period! The *Talmud* states that they died during the entire period between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. However, the decree ended on the thirty second day of the period. After that no one else became ill; only those who were already ill died after the thirty second day.

To explain this idea further, *Horav Pardes* cites *Maharal* in his commentary on *Meseches Avos 4:1*, where the *Mishnah* says: "Who is honorable? – He who honors his fellow man." *Maharal* explains that just because others give honor to an individual, it does not necessarily make him honorable. Plaudits given by others do not imbue one with honor. These are only superficial expressions, which do not become ingrained in the person. It does not change the person in any way. It does not create an honorable person from one who previously was not a man of distinction. On the other hand, when one demonstrates whom he considers honorable, when one gives honor to others, he takes an active role. In other words when one dispenses *kavod* he shows that he is a *mechubad*, honorable person.

One who receives *kavod* is dependent on others. He does not himself necessarily possess *kavod*. Hashem is referred to as *Melech Hakavod*, the King of Honor. Hashem reveres those that fear Him. Since He is *cholek kavod*, dispenses *kavod*, He is a *mechubad*. The same idea can be noted further in *Mishnah 7* where the *Tanna* says, "Whoever honors the Torah will himself be honored by people." *Maharal* explains that *Torah* is *kavod*, it is the essence of *honor* and reverence. One who connects with *Torah* by honoring it, studying it, and observing its commandments, will receive the reciprocal reward that his entire person will be honored by those around him. Interestingly, one is not deemed honorable simply by studying or observing *Torah*. Only by honoring *Torah*, does one become honorable.

What is inferred from *Chazal*, as seen through the interpretation of *Maharal*, is that one who attaches himself to honor, who sees to it that others receive the respect they deserve, will himself

be honored. One who represents the opposite of *kavod*, who profanes *kavod haTorah*, denigrates the honor due the *Torah* and its disseminators, is not and will not be honorable. *Kavod* is determined by one's attachment to *Torah* via the honor he accords to it. Consequently, one who does not exhibit the proper *kavod haTorah* is himself no longer an honorable person. Rabbi Akiva's *talmidim*, students, died during a period of thirty two days equivalent to the Hebrew word *kavod*, for they did not reflect the proper *kavod* one accords a *Torah* scholar. Not giving *kavod* is tantamount to denigrating a *talmid chacham*. This sin, in accordance to their lofty level of spiritual devotion was considered grave enough to warrant such severe punishment.

The unique census of the members of Menashe's tribe, **Horav Pardes** suggests, may be attributed to Menashe's nature. Menashe was the *bechor*, the elder of Yosefs' two sons. He was Yosefs' honor, hope and source of confidence in the dark *Galus* of Egypt. He represented Yosef's *kavod* in Egypt. The number of men in his tribe reflected this unique status.

Applying the initial idea that Menashe symbolized *kavod*, we suggest another reason for his tribes' number. Menashe, although being the elder brother, deferred to Efraim out of respect for his scholarly status. Rather than become upset when his grandfather, Yaakov, gave precedence to Efraim, his younger brother, he wholeheartedly accepted the "demotion" and gave *kavod* to Efraim. His ability to give *kavod* where it was due is recognized by the unique census of his tribe.