

Yosef died, and all his brothers and that entire generation. (1:6)

The *Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:8)* teaches that as long as any member of the original seventy souls that comprised Yaakov *Avinu's* family that descended with him to Egypt was alive, the Egyptians did not enslave them. In other words, *shibud Mitzrayim*, the bondage to which the Jews were subjected, did not begin right away. Why was this? How did the group of seventy protect their descendants? *Horav Aharon Cohen, zl (Rosh Yeshivas Chevron)*, explains that every member of that unique group enjoyed a close, personal relationship with the Patriarch. As a result, he had greatly influenced and inspired each of them. Thus, each and every one of them had the ability to be *mashpia*, influence, the coming generation based upon the spiritual ascendancy they had received from Yaakov. It was as if the Patriarch had lived on through them.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* applies this concept to explain a comment made by *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*: “The *misnagdim* (a religious movement seen as using *yeshivos* and scholarship as the focus of their Jewish learning) err, as do the *chassidim*.” (*Chassidim* focus their learning around a *Rebbe* who focuses on emotional displays of piety and halachic stringencies.) He explained: “The *misnagdim* feel that they do not require (the leadership of) a *Rebbe*, while the *chassidim* think that they have a *Rebbe*.” Obviously, this statement begs elucidation. Indeed, *Rav Yisrael* did not in any way intend to diminish their *Rebbe*. On the contrary, he was intimating that just by acting as *chassidim* of a *Rebbe* – in name alone – but not clinging to him and learning from him, so that his influence is inculcated into their lives, has little value. It is only when a *talmid*, student, grows spiritually and ethically as a result of his *Rebbe's* influence that he can say that he has a *Rebbe*. Simple attendance at festivities does not make one a *chassid/talmid*.