

They assembled the entire congregation... and they declared the lineage according to their families, according to their father's households. (1:18)

Rashi explains *va'yisyaldu* as, "They declared their lineage." This means they brought documents proving their lineage (as part of *Am Yisrael*). *Kedushas Levi* presents an alternative explanation in which the word *va'yisyaldu* is translated literally as indicating *leidah*, birth. As is well-known, the nations of the world trace their lineage matrilineally, after their mothers [*Rus Rabbah* 2:13]. Rabbi Meir comforted Avnimus *HaGardi* when his mother died. However, a short time later, when Avnimus' father died, the gentile was not actively mourning his father. Rabbi Meir explained that from the standpoint of lineage, a non-Jewish idolater has no status from his father. The reason for this is that idolaters were often promiscuous, raising a cloud of uncertainty concerning the true father's identity. For this reason, they are referred to as *l'umim*, nations, which may be understood as a contraction *l'-to-eim* – mother – (according to the mother). By contrast, *Klal Yisrael*, upon receiving the Torah and later constructing the *Mishkan* and its *keilim*, vessels, were granted the privilege of now being able to trace their lineage after their fathers.

Perhaps, we can explain this further. When the nation received the Torah, they were spiritually uplifted. The building of the *Mishkan* likewise added to their collective spiritual persona. Prior to this spiritual transformation, they were a nation recently liberated from the moral turpitude that characterized Egyptian culture, but had not yet transitioned to becoming *Klal Yisrael*, the *Am Hashem*. *Mattan Torah*, followed by *hakomas ha'Mishkan*, marked their formal designation as Hashem's chosen people, charged with a unique mission in the world.

One significant outcome of this elevation was their ability to now trace their lineage patrilineally. They had a spiritual identity that was refined through their acceptance of the Torah. Torah study and *mitzvah* observance shape the essence of a Jew's spiritual identity, without which, he still remains a Jew, but lacks a spiritual signature, an identity that defines him. The building of the *Mishkan* supplemented this new spiritual demarcation. Being the dwelling place of the *Shechinah*, the Presence of the *Shechinah* signified that Hashem rested among *Klal Yisrael* in a direct and tangible manner.

We now understand the word *va'yisyaldu* as heralding a novel "birth." Their families could now be identified according to their father's houses. We now return to the beginning of the *parshah*, *pasuk* 2, *Seu es rosh*, "Take the sum of the heads." The word *se'u*, also means to raise up, elevate, uplift. We are being taught that the nation underwent a metamorphosis, which now allowed for their identity to be traced patrilineally. An added caveat of this paternity: A father transmits his worthy, positive character traits to his children. Unlike the nations of the world, we are able to convey our paternal lineage with its attendant virtues to our children. It is like saying each ensuing generation is not brand new, but, a continuation, a newer version, of the preceding generation.

Horav Avraham Yitzchak Bloch, zl, the last *Rosh Yeshivah* of Telshe, Lithuania, ascended to the position of *Rav* and *Rosh Yeshivah* at the young age of thirty-nine. It was remarkable how such a relatively young scholar could assume such a distinguished and demanding position. However, one must know his relationship with his father to appreciate how this seamless transition was realized. He did not merely learn from his father – he absorbed his teachings so completely that he became a living embodiment of them. Every *sugya*, every nuance of *hashkafah*, every subtlety of leadership, was ingrained in him to the point that his father's wisdom flowed naturally through him.

Thus, when the mantle of leadership fell upon his shoulders at a young age, it was not a transition but a seamless continuation. He did not step into his father's role as an outsider attempting to fill great shoes; he was already walking in them. Had he been a new and unfamiliar voice, the shift might have been jarring. He was, however, not merely a successor – he was his father's legacy in its purest form, a refined and renewed expression of the same greatness. In him, the soul of Telshe burned just as brightly, ensuring that its sacred mission remained unshaken.