

“The name of one was Gershom, for he had said, ‘I was a sojourner in a strange land.’” (18:3)

Horav Shlomo Margolis, Shlita, notes that Yosef *Ha'tzadik* named his first son Menasheh because “G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household” (*Bereishis* 41:51). Upon naming their sons, Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Yosef recognized the significance of remembering the past. There are people who attempt to erase the past, to eradicate the memories of the previous generation, its culture and way of life. Some are even ashamed of the past, considering it to be obsolete and antiquated. Not so the *Torah*-oriented Jew. He remembers the past; he venerates the past; he lives the present and builds toward the future based upon the foundation of the past. This is the reason that when they name their children, who symbolize the future of our people, they use names that recall the past. Even Yosef, the viceroy of Egypt, eternalized the past when he named Menasheh. He was not embarrassed; he was proud.

Only by connecting to the past, are we assured of a promising future. Why? Why is the past so important? What crucial role should it play in our lives? One who does not acquaint himself with the past cannot pretend to grasp the present. Anti-Semitism, for instance, cannot be fully understood without an examination of its roots in history; its development over time and the myths about Jews and Judaism that it has catalyzed. The concept of *geulah*, redemption, is better understood when one has a more profound understanding of *galus*, exile. Through the prism of history, *galus* takes on a new perspective. One strengthens his Jewish identity and heightens his Jewish pride when he becomes acutely aware of the many significant achievements of his ancestors throughout history. One who becomes acquainted with his Jewish past will identify and take pride in it, as he integrates this knowledge into his own life. Lastly, he will see how many of today's issues, problems and challenges have been confronted in the past. One who ignores his past is destined to relive it.