

A man who is a leader of his father's household. (1:4)

The census was taken with the participation of the leader of each tribe, an individual who was acutely aware of the lineage of each of the members of his tribe. In a homiletic rendering of this *pasuk*, the commentators say that the *ish*, man, who became the tribe's *rosh*, leader, should have achieved this position on his own personal accomplishments. It should not be the result of his *avosav*, ancestors. One must be deserving by virtue of his own merit. Pedigree is a wonderful quality; illustrious lineage is meritorious, but only if it augments an already distinguished individual who has achieved his distinction on his own volition. If all he has to his name is his "name," ancestral lineage, then he is unworthy of a leadership role.

The son of a distinguished Torah leader was quick to remind people of his impressive lineage. The *rav* of his community was a distinguished *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who had achieved his distinction through his unusual acumen and his brilliant mind – despite being the scion of a simple pedigree. His father was a fine – but simple – Jew, a tailor by profession, who saw to it that his son be availed every opportunity to achieve Torah scholarship. One day, this layman, whose only claim to fame was his *yichus*, pedigree, had a run-in with the *rav*. In the ensuing conversation, which was heating up, the layman said to the *rav*, "Do you have any idea concerning my *yichus*? What is your *yichus*?"

The *rav* countered, "Your lineage may be impressive, but, sadly, it ends with you. Mine, begins with me."

It is related that a fire consumed the home of the parents of the *Mezritcher Maggid*. The *Maggid* was yet a young child, and he did not realize the severity of the loss. When he noticed his father weeping bitterly and uncontrollably, he went over to calm him. His father, however, was inconsolable. He cried, "I do not care about the house and our meager possessions. I am weeping over the loss of my *megillas yuchsin*, scroll upon which was written my family's pedigree." The *Maggid* turned to his father and assuaged his fears, "Do not worry. I will rewrite your scroll – beginning with me."

In conjunction with the above, **Horav Meir Premishlaner, zl**, comments on the *pasuk*, *Naso es rosh bnei Gershom gam heim l'bais avosam l'mishpechosam*, "Take a census of the *bnei Gershom*, according to their fathers' household, according to their families" (ibid 4:22). He said, *Naso es rosh*, "When one seeks a *rosh*/leader, if he is only *bnei*, the "son of someone," but lacks personal distinction, is himself not of distinguished character and scholarship, Gershom; drive him away, for he is unfit to lead. If *gam heim l'bais avosam*; if, in addition to his illustrious lineage, however he, too, is a scholar, virtuous and G-d-fearing, then *naso es rosh*, he is worthy of becoming your head/leader.

Horav Shlomo Levenstein, Shlita, quotes commentators who likewise apply this idea to the *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim*, 126:6, *Haloch yeleich u'bachoh, nosei meshech ha'zara, bo yavo b'rinah nosei*

alumosav. “He who bears the measure of seeds walks along weeping, but will return in exaltation, is a bearer of his sheaves.” If a person carries only the *meshech ha’zara*, the work of others who have planted the seeds (in other words, his personal worth is comprised of what others before him have sown), then he walks along weeping (because he has nothing of his own to show for himself). When will he be worthy of returning in exaltation? When he bears his own sheaves, his own achievements. Standing on the shoulders of others may engender a great sense of pride, but it can be quite shaky if one is not firmly ensconced on his own solid surface.