

## And they established their genealogy according to their families, according to their father's household. (1:18)

The census was performed according to tribe. Thus, the people had to establish, either by written proof or valid testimony, that they belonged to a given tribe. **Sforno** explains that this strict requirement of family purity was based upon the need for the merit of their forefathers, which would protect them later on during their sojourn in the wilderness. *Chazal* teach that, when the nations of the world heard that Hashem had given His precious Torah to *Klal Yisrael*, they became envious. Why the Jews – and not them? Why were the Jews more worthy of receiving the Torah than the pagans? Hashem countered, “Can you bring the scroll of your lineage as *Klal Yisrael* has done?”

Apparently, this counter statement refuted the nations. What about our *sefer ha'yuchsin*, scroll of our lineage, gives us an advantage over them? How does being the descendants of the Patriarchs benefit us over the rest of the world? The **Klausenberger Rebbe, zl**, quotes the *Derech Pikudecha (mitzvah Peru U'Revu)* who posits that when a baby has been born *b'derech neis*, miraculously, his father has not fulfilled the *mitzvah of Peru U'Revu*, Be Fruitful and Multiply. Obviously, miraculously means just that: an undisputed miracle that cannot be explained scientifically. If this is the case, how are we Jews able to trace our lineage to the *Avos Hakedoshim*, holy Patriarchs? They were infertile, the Matriarchs barren. The fact that they had progeny was indisputably a miracle. How can we be considered to be their descendants?

The *Rebbe* explains that this question may be addressed with a well-known incident recorded in the *Talmud Taanis 25a* in which Rabbi Chanina *ben Dosa* told his daughter, “He who said oil should burn/light will likewise say that vinegar should burn/light.” The *Tanna* had no oil in his possession to light his *Menorah*. Instead, he used vinegar, intimating that what we consider to be natural is, likewise, a miracle. The mere fact that oil burns is due only to Hashem's decree that it burn. Otherwise, oil would be no different than vinegar or water. Thus, he put his trust in the Almighty that vinegar would similarly burn.

A believing Jew is well aware that the notion of “nature,” “natural law,” is a concept made up by those who refuse to recognize and acknowledge that this world-- everything in it, and everything about it-- is all manipulated and guided by Hashem, concealed under the veil of “nature.” There is no nature! There is only Hashem. Everything in this world is pure miracle! This is what we believe. Therefore, it is no surprise to the believing Jew when vinegar burns as well as oil.

We now understand the response to the nations of the world: “Where is your *megillas yuchsin*?” When the nations wonder why the Jews are brought closer to Him, while they are distanced, the reply is: “They established their genealogy according to their fathers' household.” How is this possible, when, in fact, their fathers and mothers were created infertile and barren? The Jewish People are a nation whose pedigree is *b'derech neis*, by virtue of miracle. How could they be pedigreed? Obviously, it is because they believe that everything is from Hashem and that *neis*

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/miracle and *teva*/nature are one and the same. Thus, we deserve to be treated differently. We are believers!