

These are the generations of Noach, Noach was a righteous man. (6:9)

The *Torah* begins by stating that it will list the “generations” of Noach. Instead, it proceeds to relate that Noach was a righteous man. Are we discussing his offspring or his good deeds? *Rashi* cites the *Midrash* that infers from this *pasuk* that the primary generation, the principle legacy of a righteous person, is his good deeds. This is what he bequeaths to the next generation. **Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl**, remarks that offspring and good deeds should be analogous. No good deed should be viewed as inconsequential. The same love that one manifests toward his offspring should, likewise, be demonstrated toward *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds. As a father loves all of his children -- regardless of individual personality, character, or acumen -- so, too, should one love his good deeds, never regretting that he did not devote himself to deeds of greater significance. This same love should manifest itself in his attitude towards performing good deeds. He should not feel compelled to perform. Rather, he should look forward to their performance, as a parent is excited to help his child.

A father scrutinizes his children, looking for ways to enable them to grow spiritually, morally and intellectually, ferreting out their apparent flaws and correcting them. So, too, should an individual examine his good deeds, seeking out imperfections and correcting them.

The **Yehudi Ha'kadosh m'Peshischa** was wont to say, “People are used to saying that they work hard only for their children. They slave and toil, so that their children will grow up to be devout *Torah*-observant Jews. When these children grow into adulthood, rather than strive for self-perfection, they focus once again on their children. They also claim to do everything for their children.” The *Rebbe* continued, “*Ribbono Shel Olam*, I would like to see that one child for whom all of the generations are toiling!”

These words have great meaning. Everyone focuses upon his children, all the while completely ignoring his own self-development. While this form of selflessness is noble, there is a limit. A father who expends all of his time for his children, who does not find time for his own advancement, will ultimately not appreciate his children's spiritual development. One must be himself knowledgeable in order to acknowledge and appreciate another's learning. “*These are the generations of Noach.*” Noach was not a person who neglected his own spiritual growth. The generations of the righteous are their good deeds. They understand the significance of their own deeds. They accord them the same respect they would give to their offspring. While they continue to strive to transmit a legacy to their children, they realize that if they do not study and perform *mitzvos*, they will not have much of a legacy to transmit to their descendants.