

## And these are the names of Bnei Yisrael who were coming to Egypt. (1:1)

The *parsha* commences by mentioning the names of the tribal ancestors. Although they had previously been recorded during their lifetime, they are once again repeated after they have passed from the scene because of their dearness to Hashem. They are likened to the stars of the sky, which Hashem brings out and brings in by name. He counts and enumerates them at both opportunities. This indicates that the forefathers, like the stars, are precious to Hashem. Actually, Hashem took a census of *Klal Yisrael* three times: when they were liberated and left Egypt; after the Golden Calf debacle during which a number died, to see how many had survived; and when He was about to rest His *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, among them. The commentators (*Rashi* in *Sefer Bamidbar*, prior to the last count) explain the purpose of these censuses: to demonstrate His abiding love for them.

It is not as if Hashem requires a census. He certainly knows how many Jews comprise His nation; rather, He shows His affection by counting them. The *Kli Yakar* (*Parashas Ki Sisa* 30:11) supplements this: *Ki sisa, es rosh Bnei Yisrael*, "When you take a census of *Bnei Yisrael*," whenever the concept of *nesius rosh*, elevating the head (counting), is used with regard to numbers, the purpose is to teach that by numbering/counting the people, they are (being) elevated above the nations of the world. Every number indicates the singular uniqueness of each individual Jew. In this manner, Hashem shows each Jew how important and valuable he is to Him.

Showing love to each student is a central theme in the world of Torah *chinuch*, education. More significant, love demonstrates to the student that he is valued, appreciated and important. This applies in the classroom, in the *bais hamedrash*, and (especially) in the home. A child must feel loved. We sometimes see children whose parents certainly love them, yet they still do not thrive. The children who thrive are the ones who feel accepted and cherished for exactly who they are. A child who does not feel special will, unfortunately, act out in a manner that garners attention for himself. This is a response to rejection, a cry for affection.

When a *talmid*, student, acts out, how his *rebbe* and parents respond can make the difference between the spiritual life and death of the student. The *Chasam Sofer*, *zl*, was *zocheh*, merited, a Heavenly favor for which very

few *poskim*, *halachic* arbiters, qualified. His decisions and *chiddushim*, novellae, have been accepted throughout the spectrum of the Torah world. The *Minchas Elazar*, *zl*, attributes the *Chasam Sofer's* extraordinary merit to one specific incident that took place during his tenure as *Rosh Yeshivah* of the distinguished Pressburg *Yeshivah*.

The *sefer ha'limud*, order of Torah learning, of the *yeshivah*, was to repeat the *Mesechtos*, Tractates, which they studied, every three years. One brilliant student in the *yeshivah*, by the name

of Landsberg, was able to repeat verbatim every word that the *Chasam Sofer* said in *shiur*. Not only could he repeat the Torah thoughts, but he even mimicked the nuances and expressions of their revered *Rebbe*. Prior to a *shiur*, lecture, which he had heard during the previous cycle of learning, he told the class that he would say the *shiur* with all of the accompanying nuances that were common fare for the *Chasam Sofer*.

The student did so prior to a *shiur* that the *Chasam Sofer* was about to teach. Thus, when the *Chasam Sofer* taught the *shiur* with exactly the same pattern that was presaged by Landsberg, it brought quiet chuckles to the faces of the students. When the *Chasam Sofer* noticed that something was amiss, he stopped the *shiur* and asked what was so funny. Obviously, no one was prepared to tattle on Landsberg, until finally a student, Aharon Deutsch, raised his hand and explained what had occurred. The *Chasam Sofer's* reaction was to declare, "Landsberg has stolen my *shiur*!"

The students trembled when they heard their revered *Rebbe* utter these words. Added to this was the announcement shortly thereafter that anyone who had attended yesterday's *shiur* should appear the next day in the *bais hamedrash*. Any student who did not appear at the designated time would be dismissed from the *yeshivah*. Everyone was certain that the *Chasam Sofer* would excoriate Landsberg in the presence of the entire *yeshivah* for slighting the *gadol hador*, the preeminent Torah leader of the generation.

At the appointed time, *the Chasam Sofer* entered the *bais hamedrash*. All of the *yeshivah* students were present, their nerves taut, all of them waiting to hear the *mussar shmuess*, ethical lecture, that would remain etched in their minds forever. Three hundred and ninety students sat on the edge of their seats, ready to hear the *gadol hador's* piercing words. It did not happen. The *Chasam Sofer* said the following: "I do not know what happened yesterday, how I could have publicly offended a student who is so dear to me. He is a student who is steeped in Torah erudition; I should have realized that what he did was out of his extraordinary love of Torah." Then the *Chasam Sofer* broke down in bitter, incessant weeping, "With a broken heart, I publicly ask his *mechilah*, forgiveness, and promise that I will never do it again."

The students sat there stunned. They did not believe what they had just heard. The *Chasam Sofer* had just asked forgiveness from the student who had the day before offended him! It was at this moment that the students came to realize the unparalleled plateau of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, and extreme humility that the saintly *Rebbe* evinced. They had no doubt that the student who had acted impudently the day before should have received a scathing lecture. However, the *Chasam Sofer* sought to teach his students, many of them who were destined to become Torah leaders themselves, an important lesson in Torah *chinuch*. Their education, and, by extension, the education of generations of *bnei Torah* took center stage and outweighed the excoriation of one student. We understand now why the *Minchas Elazar* felt that this action of the *Chasam Sofer* catalyzed the acceptance of his *piskei halachah* throughout *Klal Yisrael*.

Sensitivity to another person's pain, acknowledging his adversity, is imperative for a Torah Jew. The *Tiferes Shlomo* posits that Moshe *Rabbeinu* achieved his position – and succeeded as the quintessential leader and *Rebbe* of *Klal Yisrael* – specifically because of his ability to feel the pain and carry the yoke with his brethren. We might think that this imperative applies only with regard to adults. The following vignette demonstrates that it applies equally to a young five-year-old girl. Furthermore, it is incumbent even on a Torah leader.

*Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl*, was walking home through the streets of Bayit V'gan one afternoon when he chanced upon a young five-year-old girl weeping profusely. He stopped, went over and asked the child what was troubling her. The girl was well aware (according to her elementary level of understanding) that *Rav Abramsky* was a holy man who commanded the respect of the members of her community. Amid her tears, she said that she had worn a new dress to school (she pointed to the dress that she was wearing) and her friend had said that it was not a very pretty dress. The distinguished *Dayan* bent down and said, "You go back and tell your friend that *Rav Abramsky* said that it is a pretty dress!"

*Rav Abramsky's* aide, who was walking with him, suggested, "Surely, the *Dayan* has more important things to do with his time – like writing another novel Torah thought. It certainly takes precedence over a little girl's dress!"

*Rav Abramsky* replied, "When *Moshiach* arrives, he will wipe away all the tears that flow from the eyes of our people. All, means all the tears – even those of this young child. What is wrong if I want to follow in the footsteps of the Almighty and wipe away the tears of a child?" This is a novel approach, but then, he was a unique *gadol*.