

## And the souls they made in Charan. (12:5)

*Rashi* explains that the word “souls” refers to those whom they converted to faith in Hashem. Noticeably, the Hebrew word, *nefesh*, which is singular, is used to describe the souls, rather than *nefashos*, which is plural. In his commentary to *Bereishis* 46:27, where the Torah details the sixty-six souls that accompanied Yaakov *Avinu* as he descended to Egypt, *Rashi* quotes *Vayikra Rabbah* 4:6 where *Chazal* distinguish between plural *nefashos* used to describe Eisav’s family (ibid. 36:6) and Yaakov who ultimately entered Egypt with seventy *nefesh*. They explain that Eisav’s sons are considered separate souls because they worshipped many gods. Yaakov’s family was united in belief in one G-d. Thus, the singular, *nefesh*. We must say that, since all of Avraham *Avinu*’s converts were on the same page in faith, and all believed in Hashem, they are all listed under the singular *nefesh*.

Perhaps we might add a homiletic rendering of *nefesh* and explain why, with regard to the products of Avraham’s outreach efforts, the Torah lists them as *nefesh*. I begin with the following inspirational story. *Horav Chizkiyahu Mishkovsky, Shlita (Mashgiach, Yeshivas Orchos Torah)*, relates that, when a school opened under the auspices of *Lev L’Achim*, the *Mamlachti* school was furious. They did not want to lose potential students from their secular school to the *chareidi* outreach school.

Under the guidance of *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl*, the *Lev L’Achim* members made an effort to reach out to the families of students who were enrolled in the secular school in an attempt to save them from being educated in a spiritually-flawed environment. The chances of such children remaining observant Jews were slim. With the help of the Almighty, and with great self-sacrifice, these tireless individuals were able to convince and save every child in the class – except for one girl. They were beyond excited as, together with *Horav Uri Zohar, zl*, who stood at the helm of this project, they went to share the wonderful news with *Rav Shteinman*. How shocked they were when they saw him break down in copious weeping at the news. They thought that he surely would have been beyond excited. After he calmed down, he explained that he was weeping for that one girl whom they could not reach: “How could you give up on her? You must return, double your efforts and save that child!” He could not relax until they assured him that they would do everything humanly possible to ensure her inclusion in the *frum* school. They were successful.

I think this is why, concerning Avraham’s converts, it says *nefesh* in the singular. Our Patriarch taught us the importance of never leaving anyone behind. We must focus on the individual *nefesh* - - not the larger group. We often pat ourselves on the back, celebrating the numbers that we have reached. Our Patriarchs intimated that our focus should be on those whom we have not reached. Everyone is a *nefesh*.