

"And Hashem said to Moshe speak unto the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and say unto them, none shall make himself unclean through contact with the dead." (21:1)

The *Kohanim* were admonished not to come in contact with the dead, since this would render them unfit to perform the *avodah*. This rule was relaxed only in a situation which involved close relatives. *Chazal* explain the redundancy of the word ,rntu rnt by stating that it was a special directive to the *Kohanim* that the adults must instruct the young. It seems enigmatic that the *Torah* places emphasis upon teaching the young, while specifically discussing contact with the dead.

We suggest that there is a special message to be gleaned from this *pasuk*. During moments of personal grief one tends to become absorbed with the loss he has sustained. This proclivity is recognized by the *Torah*. Human weaknesses and personal sentiments often take over our entire perspective on life during moments in which we confront human mortality. We may be inclined, however, to forget about the living during such times of emotional stress. We may become less focused upon the children and deprive them of adult supervision, while we attend to our own immediate needs.

We have a propensity to be so involved in burying the dead that we neglect to maintain control over the living. We tend to say "*Kaddish*" for the deceased and neglect to say "*Kiddush*" for the living. We spend money for monuments, rather than on education of the young children. This is the *Torah's* message: even in your deepest grief, do not neglect the young. We must never fall victim to the clutches of depressive reactivity. Our devotion to *Torah* should highlight our commitment to provide for the future.

This idea is especially relevant during these days of *Sefiras Ha'omer*. *Rabbi Akiva*'s twenty four thousand students perished during this period. The terrible disaster would have destroyed a lesser man than *Rabbi Akiva*. His life's work, his academies of *Torah* learning, the ultimate future of *Klal Yisrael*, were all destroyed! The *Torah* was virtually in danger of being forgotten! Who would be the *Torah* teachers? The world would be in a tragic state.

Moreshes Moshe explains *Rabbi Akiva* did not allow himself to become a victim of despondency. He did not accept that it was all over. He moved to the south to establish new schools and to develop new students, who would bring the beacon of *Torah* to the world. The greatest fear of our people has been that *Torah* might be forgotten. Ignorance has always been an even greater fear than oppression. If ignorance and illiteracy prevail, we will have a beautiful world with no character and no structure, a beautiful home with neither moral values nor ethical standings. We will become a people who neither pray nor study, who have no sense of direction or self-control.

Rabbi Akiva did not surrender to his grief. He went forward to build for the future. This was

the same force which drove those who came to these shores to build *Torah* schools from the ashes of the European Holocaust. These heroes, whose indomitable spirits helped them to transcend their grief and reestablish *Torah* study, brought with them new light into the overwhelming darkness of Jewish life. The commitment of parents to *Torah* education during those critical times can well serve as an inspiration for their children and grandchildren today. When pleasures were rare and comforts scarce, they managed to gather whatever monies were required to pay for their children's *Torah* education. We, too, must endeavor to ensure that the *Torah* will reign eternal throughout the vicissitudes of life, so that our future, the young children, will be guaranteed a strong and vigorous Jewish community.