

"And they made the Bnei Yisrael work with rigor." (1:13)

The *Talmud* states that the word *lrpc* should be read as "lr vpc" with a gentle mouth (*Sotah 11b*). This implies that the Egyptians did not compel the Jews to serve at first, but rather induced them to work using diverse methods of seduction. They paid wages to the builders of Pisom and Ramses. The king himself hung a golden brick upon a worker's chest to show the esteem in which he held his work. Noting this, the masses quickly transferred their residences from the sheltered Goshen to the Egyptian metropolis. The members of the tribe of *Levi*, however, did not forsake Goshen, but maintained their heritage by continuing to study *Torah*.

When Pharaoh realized that his imperial decree to enslave all of the Jews in Egypt had no jurisdiction over the *Leviim* in Goshen, he issued a new edict stating that food would be provided only for the workers and their families. Even Pharaoh understood that the continuity of *Klal Yisrael* was contingent upon the study of *Torah*. As long as one segment of the Jewish people participated in this holy endeavor, the Jewish people would endure. In response to the problem of how the *Leviim* were sustained, *Chazal* say that each family of workers set aside a portion from their meager rations and carried it to Goshen to the tribe of *Levi*. This process continued the entire time that the Jews were exiles in Egypt.

We should take note of the spiritual strength of the Jews at that time. Not only did they refuse to castigate the *Leviim* for not leaving Goshen and sharing equally in the arduous labor, but they respectfully shared their meager staples with them. No one protested, "Why should I work and suffer and then bring them food, while they sit back and study *Torah*? Why do they not work as we do?" They reinforced the sanctity of the tribe of *Levi*. The Jews, despite their apparent spiritual shortcomings, understood the necessity for a considerable segment of the Jewish community to maintain the study of *Torah* as their sole occupation. Consequently, they devoted their lives to making certain that this group together with their families did not lack sustenance. It is no wonder that this generation was worthy of receiving the *Torah*. Only when one appreciates the value of *Torah*, does one merit to be its recipient.