

## And He saw our affliction, our travail, and our oppression. (26:7)

In the *Haggadah*, *Chazal* expound, “*V’es amaleinu*, our affliction – *eilu ha’banim*, this refers to our children.” *Ibn Ezra* and *Ritva* support this idea. One wonders why *Chazal* would expound a *pasuk* in a manner totally inconsistent with the vernacular of the *pasuk*. The Torah addresses the cruel and brutal labor to which the Jews were subjected in Egypt. How do children enter into the equation? *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl* (quoted in *V’Zos HaTorah* by *Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger*), observes that the word *amal* is always used in connection to the toil that a person expends for something that he desires, so that he sees its ultimate fruit. In other words: purposeful toil. *Chazal* teach, *Ashrei me she’amalo baTorah*, “Fortunate/happy is he whose toil is in Torah.” Thus, *amaleinu* of our *parshah* cannot be alluding to the toil that they expended in Egypt in the course of their labor. This was not something about which they cared. They saw no purpose in their labor, other than the Egyptians demeaning them as slaves and breaking them as human beings. Why, then, would the Torah use the word *amal*, a word which is applied inconsistently in terms of its meaning? It must refer to children for whom parents labor incessantly, so that they derive *nachas*, spiritual pleasure, from them.

*Rav Schlesinger* supplements this idea, noting that the word *amaleinu* is written between *anyeinu*, affliction, and *lachatzeinu*, oppression. He asks, when a person is financially challenged, involved constantly in seeking any avenue of relief, any opportunity to earn money to support his family, how does he find time to attend to his children’s education? Furthermore, when he is beset with *lachat*, oppressed by enemies who are out to destroy him, and the many debts that he owes to his few friends who have stuck by him through thick and thin, he does not have a minute of *menuchas ha’nefesh*, to rest his soul, to put his mind in gear so that he can address the *chinuch*, education, of his children.

The Torah makes a point of positioning *amal* between *ani* and *lachat* to teach, “Yes, you are beset with a multitude of overwhelming problems. Nonetheless, never give up on your children’s *chinuch*. Poverty will not destroy them; neglect will!” Indeed, *Chazal* inform us to be careful with the *bnei aniyim*, children of the poor, for from them will sprout forth Torah. Poverty may wreak havoc on the emotions, but it should not detract you from educating your children. Nothing takes precedence over their *chinuch*, for if they are not educated, then anything that you have amassed has no meaning or value because it has no future. Without a future, today has little to no meaning. This is one form of *amal*, travail, that is good for us, because it preserves our future.