

It is not good that man be alone. (2:18)

Chazal (*Berachos* 17a) ask: “Through what deeds do women merit eternal life? [Since they do not have the *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*, to study Torah, they are unable to earn the merit that is ancillary to it]. Through going through the trouble of bringing their children to the synagogue to study Torah, and through sending their husbands to the *bais hamedrash* to study Torah, and for waiting for their husbands until they return home from the *bais hamedrash*.” *Chazal* (*Yevamos* 63a) “If the man is worthy, the woman will be an *eizer*, helper; if he is unworthy, she will be *k’negdo*, against him.” *Chazal*’s interpretation of the *pasuk* appears (superficially) to contradict the *pasuk*. Hashem was creating a helper to support the man, who would otherwise be alone (which was not good). How then could this “helper” be *k’negdo*, against him? Is she good or not?

We must say that it all depends on the husband. If he is the sort that loves to learn, understands the meaning and benefit of learning, then he will go to the *bais hamedrash* on his own volition. He will not require his wife’s initiative to “convince” him to go. If, however, he is unworthy, and Torah study is not his primary objective in life; if, in fact, he has no intent to visit the *bais hamedrash* for the purpose of learning Torah, then his wife is *k’negdo*, against him, by compelling him to go. This is how she earns her *Olam Habba* for Torah study.

Family life is the primary unit in Jewish life. The Torah is the blueprint for *Bri’as ha’Olam*, the creation of the world, as it is stated in the *Zohar*: *Istakeil b’Oraysa u’bara alma*, “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” The Torah presented the *tochnis*, agenda, for the world to come into being. *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz*, *zl*, explains that one who suggests that the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud av v’eim* was given to us as just one of the 613 *mitzvos* of the Torah is mistaken. Hashem created the world in such a manner that everyone is the product of a father and mother. Everything in life revolves around the Torah. Thus, the family unit is inherently a Torah concept. We must endeavor to understand why this is so – why is it crucial that human beings be born from parents and that the family play a critical part of their lives?

Horav Eliyah Svei, *zl*, observes that the concept of “family” plays a role only concerning human beings. No other specie or creature adheres to such a concept. Furthermore, why is it that all other creations are functional almost at birth? They become stronger and more able as they grow older, but they do not go through the various stages of life as do humans. A human, in fact, is basically helpless and cannot function without an adult watching his/her every step. Why should a human being, the chosen one of all creations, begin life on a lower level than an animal?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* surmises from this that the foundation of *Yahadus*, Judaism, is the principle of the *mesorah*, tradition, that 600,000 men over the age of twenty-years old heard the first two *Dibros*, Commandments, from the Almighty, as they were privy to the greatest Revelation of all time. These experiences, coupled with their forty-year sojourn through the wilderness, were transmitted throughout the generations from father to son in a manner that inculcates trust from son to father, so that a Jewish boy/girl grows up with trust and dependence on their parents. It is only

through such a medium of trust and commitment that children will accept and adhere to the *mesorah* handed down to them from their parents.

It is for this purpose that Hashem created the world in a manner such that the members of each ensuing generation depend on their parents to be their anchors throughout life. As long as children view their parents as their mainstays in life, they will accept the *mesorah* from them. This does not apply only to members of *Klal Yisrael*, who are charged with transmitting the Torah and its 613 *mitzvos*, but even to gentiles/*Bnei Noach*, who must give over the seven *mitzvos* commanded to *Bnei Noach*. Whenever a generation is lost either through persecution or cultural/social upheaval, a link is broken in the chain of transmission and the next generation is deficient, since it is no longer connected to the base. Family is everything. The breakdown of the family unit signals the dissociation of its surrounding society.

In a "Touch of Chizuk," Rabbi Yechiel Spero relates a story which I feel conveys a powerful lesson about *mesorah* – one that goes to the crux of our *mesorah* and why, in my opinion, some families enjoy greater success in their transmission of the *mesorah*.

Moshe was a *chassidishe* American *yeshivah bachur* who was studying in the *Gerrer Yeshivah*, *Sfas Emes*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* at the time was the *Pnei Menachem*, who would eventually ascend to the helm of *Gerrer Chassidus* as its *Rebbe*. Moshe was an excellent student, diligent and G-d-fearing, who was also deeply committed to *Chassidus* – its teachings and way of life. When his father, *Reb Shaya*, came to visit from America, he was heartened by the glowing reports concerning his son's learning. He met his son's friends and was impressed by the esteem in which they held Moshe. Last, he met with the *Rosh Yeshivah* to receive the crowning report about his son. How surprised he was to hear a lukewarm report about his Moshe. After all that he had learned that day, he was taken aback. Perhaps the *Rosh Yeshivah* was unaware that he was Moshe's father? He reiterated his relationship with Moshe. The report did not change.

Reb Shaya was in a quandary. He was under the impression that his son was doing quite well. Now, he was no longer sure of anything. Unable to overcome the doubts that were creeping up concerning his Moshe, *Reb Shaya* opened up and asked the *Rosh Yeshivah* if anything was wrong with his son's learning.

The *Pnei Menachem* replied with a story that had occurred concerning his own father, the saintly *Imrei Emes*. Prior to World War II, a decree was issued regarding drafting *yeshivah* boys into the Polish army. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence understands what happens to a *frum*, observant, boy in the Polish army. "My brother was old enough for the draft. My mother went to the *Imrei Emes* and asked him to give his word that her son would not be drafted. To her shock, he did not respond. She took this as a sign that her son would be drafted. She reacted the way any Jewish mother would react: with bitter, copious weeping. As far as she was concerned, the *Rebbe's* somber reaction was an ominous sign. When her mother saw her crying, she approached her son-in-law, the *Imrei Emes*, and informed him that her daughter, his wife, was terribly distraught

from the news she inferred from his reaction to her request. The *Rebbe* assured his mother-in-law that she had no reason for concern – all would work out: *A momma darf veinen*, ‘A mother needs to cry. Had I told her that all would be well, she would not have cried for his overall well-being. The tears of a *Yiddishe momma* are precious and cherished by Hashem. Although he may not presently need the support of those tears, one day in the future he will certainly need them. Now he will have them put in reserve for him.’”

The *Pnei Menachem* explained to *Reb Shaya*, “Had I told you immediately how well your son was doing, you would have become complacent. When one does not feel the need for *davening* for his child, he will not shed those precious tears that are so valuable. As wonderful as your child is, do not ever stop crying on his behalf!”

I think this is an added caveat to our *mesorah*.