

## **Let the work weigh heavier on the men, and let them engage in it and let them not engage in words of falsity. (5:9)**

*Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah* 5:18) teach that the Jews had Torah scrolls (scrolls that contained words of Torah) in which they would delight from *Shabbos* to *Shabbos*. Those scrolls imbued them with deep faith that Hashem would soon liberate them. They were able to learn from those scrolls because *Shabbos* was their official day off. (Moshe *Rabbeinu* convinced Pharaoh that he would receive maximum benefit from his slave if he allows him a day to rest and rejuvenate. Pharaoh agreed, and Moshe suggested *Shabbos* be that day of rest.) When Pharaoh saw the people enjoying *Shabbos* by learning Torah, he quickly had them revert to the original seven-day work schedule.

Horav Eliezer M. Shach, zl, notes the *chiddush*, novel lesson, which *Chazal* presented. One would think that Pharaoh increased the work load because a person who is busy has no time to think about liberation. When people have time to gather their thoughts, their dreams and aspirations, it is difficult to control them. Pharaoh knew that part of a successful slave master's function is to control the slave's mind by not availing him the opportunity to think for himself. This is the simple understanding of Pharaoh's contemptuous goals. *Chazal*, however, focus on another part of the Jews' free time: they studied Torah! They had *megilos*, scrolls, that related their challenges, and how they triumphed over them, their deep conviction which resonated in every activity they performed. These lessons revived the souls of the slaves, giving them hope for a better future, empowering them to think, to hope, to dream of liberation from the bondage and the moral turpitude of Egyptian culture.

*Ha'yotzei mi'dvareinu*, in conclusion, the Jews in Egypt received their inspiration from the Torah. Indeed, it is the only source of true inspiration. Horav Tzvi Meir Bergman, *Shlita*, derives from *Chazal* that, without the *koach*, power, of Torah, the Jews would not have survived the Egyptian exile. They understood that, in order to survive physically, emotionally and spiritually, one must have something concrete to hold on to for encouragement, direction and peace of mind. For us, it is the Torah.

Pharaoh was no fool. He was acutely aware that *Klal Yisrael*'s strength lay in their adherence to, and constant study, of Torah. If he could not break them physically through "conventional" slavery, he would deprive them of their life source – the Torah they studied on *Shabbos*. He took away their day of rest, so that they could not rejuvenate through the Torah. It was this diabolical plan that embittered their lives, for, without Torah, their lives had no meaning. While one achieves Torah knowledge in a *yeshivah* under the guidance of *Roshei Yeshivah* and *Rebbeim* who are not only erudite, but experienced in transmitting Torah to their *talmidim*, the foundation upon which greatness in Torah and a desire to achieve this greatness are planted is in the home, especially through the mother.

When the mother of the *Nadvorna Rebbe*, zl, was *nifteres*, passed away, the *Rebbe* explained the following: Shlomo *Hamelech* says, *Shema beni mussar avicha v'al titosh Toras imecha*, “Listen, my son, heed the lessons of your father and the teachings of your mother” (*Mishlei* 1:8). He is emphasizing the importance of maintaining the lessons imparted to us by our parents – both oral and by example. The text, however, begs elucidation. What is the meaning of the term *Toras imecha*? What Torah lessons apply to the mother, when, in fact, a woman is not obligated in the *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*? What aspect of Torah is she to be teaching her child? The *Rebbe* explained that the father can instruct his son to study Torah, he can even study with him all aspects of Torah. If the son resists, however, he has within his purview the right to discipline him in order to learn, but he is unable to create a proper climate for learning in his house. This is a mother’s function. She is the one who imbues her son with *cheishek*, desire, love and passion for learning. The father may work on the intellect, but intellect without emotion remains superficial and will eventually dissipate, since nothing binds it to the person. This drive is the mother’s domain. She is the one that trains her children in *shemiras ha'mitzvos*, Torah observance and study. She sees to it that their Torah learning is imbued with love. This is *Toras Imecha*.

*Horav Eliyahu Lopian*, zl, lost his father at a very young age. His mother was left bereft of her husband with a large family of orphans to sustain. She worked tirelessly to maintain a semblance of normalcy and stability in her family. This was in addition to providing for their basic sustenance. One day, one of her neighbors asked her (in all innocence), “You have boys that are old enough and strong enough to find jobs, which would provide income for the family and make life easier for you. Why do you not send them to work? A *yeshivah* education is fine for someone who can afford it, but, in your case, you are placing your very health at risk with the heavy emotional and physical load that you are carrying.” *Rav Elya*’s mother replied, “As long as I am alive, I do not need my sons’ help. I am able to provide for their needs. When I leave this world, however, the level that I achieve in the world to come will be contingent upon their Torah learning. Thus, I am happy to have the good fortune to send them to *yeshivah* where they will grow in Torah. One day, I will need them, and, at that time, their assistance will be vital and incalculable.”

*Rav Elya Lopian* related the following story which underscores the epitome of a mother’s devotion toward seeing her son become a *ben Torah*. It was during the time of the accursed Czar Nikolai, when Jewish boys were grabbed from homes and off the street and conscripted into the army for twenty-five years, during which time they were subjected to physical, mental and spiritual harassment. It was rare that anyone who survived the ordeal remained an observant Jew. When parents saw their children grabbed from them, they did everything humanly possible to get them back. The boys were put on a train, which, of course, the parents tried to stop in order to pull their sons off. The soldiers were well aware of this, so they would change trains along the way. As the second train pulled up, they threw the boy from one train to another, while the trains were moving. This was dangerous, and it was not uncommon for a boy to lose his life in the “exchange.”

A widow who waited fifteen years to have her only son was a victim of such a tragedy. Her child was yanked off the street, unbeknownst to her. During the exchange, he fell between the trains

and was crushed. The members of the community were hard-pressed to find anyone who could break the tragic news to the mother. The *Rav* of the community agreed that it was his function to be the bearer of bad news.

The *Rav* went to her home and began the conversation saying that he had bad news to share with her. When he told her that her son had been kidnapped by the soldiers, she broke down crying. "I waited fifteen years for my precious child, and now he will become a *goy*! Better he should die as a Jew than live as a *goy*!" At this point, the *Rav* shared with her the rest of the story: her only son was dead. When she heard this she exclaimed, "My son died as a Jew! *Baruch Hashem!*" The next day, the mother arose at the funeral and declared, "Hashem, I am returning this *pikadon*, deposit, that you gave me in pristine spiritual condition. He lived and died as a *frum Yid!*" *Mi K'Amcha Yisrael!* Who is like Your People *Yisrael!*