

“The boy is gone! And I – where can I go?” (37:30)

Reuven returned to the pit only to find that Yosef was no longer present. He expressed his sorrow at his father’s grief, lamenting, “Where can I flee from father’s grief?” When he would come across this *pasuk*, *Horav Eliyahu Lopian, z.l.*, would sigh heavily and cry out, “*Ha’yeled einenu*,” the boy is gone – my youth has gone by – how will I face my Father in Heaven?” He was bemoaning the fact that he had let his youth slip by “unaccomplished,” and now in his advanced years when the time to meet his Maker was drawing near, he sensed that he was unprepared. If a great saint and *tzaddik* such as *Rav Elya Lopian* feels that he could have accomplished much more during his formative years, what should we say?

The experiences of one’s youth will invariably leave a lasting impression on one’s inner personality. *Rebbetzin Shoshana Zilberstein, a”h*, daughter of *Horav Y.S. Eliashov, Shlita*, related how she and her siblings were “taught” about the insignificance of this temporal world. She was one of twelve children. Understandably, living in a small apartment with a large family necessitated much sacrifice. On the other hand, the children were being taught that *Olam Hazeh*, This World, with its material values does not necessarily coincide with the *Torah’s* barometer of importance. There were regrettably not enough beds for every one of the children. This reality mandated that some of the girls were subject to sharing a bed. She related that every day at three o’clock in the morning, when her father arose, he would take one of the girls and carry her into his bed. He would then proceed to the table and begin to study *Torah*.

It was this scene that remained engraved on the minds of his children. The sweet song of *Torah* that emanated from that room; the image of their father bent over his *seforim*, books, in the middle of the night was eternally etched in their psyche. While they might not have enjoyed the physical comfort of a large mattress, how many of us can say we fell asleep listening to the pleasant sounds of the *Torah* study of a *gadol ha’dor*, leader of the generation?