

So shall you say to Bais Yaakov. (19:3)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* was commanded to give precedence to the women when he delivered Hashem's mandate to the nation. *Rabbeinu Bachya* explains that a "good" woman has the power to inspire her son to study Torah with zest and vigor. She creates the excitement, the passion, the inherent joy. This is why I used the word "good" to describe what every Jewish mother should be. It is only if she personally feels a strong affinity for Torah that she can imbue her son (and daughter) with such emotion. The love of Torah should resonate with her son, thus encouraging a long, committed relationship with it.

Horav Aizik Sher, zl, was a strong proponent of a woman's/mother's obligation to be a strong *akeres ha'bayis*, foundation of her home. A mother who is truly devoted to her children makes the difference in their ultimate success as *bnei Torah*. The *Rosh Yeshivah's* deep appreciation of a mother's function was manifest during an incident that took place late one morning. *Rav Aizik* had a heart condition that required him to take a daily walk, which he did, accompanied by one of his students.

As they were walking one day, a young woman pushing a baby carriage, in an obvious rush, almost bowled them over. Spectators were shocked at this. The young man accompanying *Rav Aizik* muttered, "What right does she have to walk like that? Does she think she is the only one on the street?"

The *Rosh Yeshivah* remained silent until his student had released all of his anger. He then said, "I am speaking now to myself. If you want to listen in, however, you may. I wonder how much I achieved today for myself and how much I accomplished for others! Rather than deteriorate in bed all day, I arose in the morning, and got dressed. After all, it was cold. I went to *shul* to *daven*, because I require a blessing for good health and livelihood. I ate to nourish myself. I studied Torah for myself. In other words, it is now 11:00 a.m., and I have done absolutely nothing for anyone but myself!

"This young woman, however, probably slept very little during the night, having gotten up numerous times to take care of her infant. By the time she fell back asleep, she had to get up, so that she could wake her husband for *davening*. She then prepared sandwiches for her children to take to school. She woke and dressed them, prepared breakfast, bid them goodbye, and then returned to her infant. As soon as things quieted down, she received a call from the school principal asking if she could come in to substitute for a teacher who was absent. She needed the money to help support her family. So she said, 'Yes,' and ran to school. Now, should I, who have done nothing for anyone other than myself, criticize this woman who has already done so much for others? Can you imagine?"

Rav Aizik then continued, citing the *Rambam* in *Hilchos Shechitah* 13, who explains that, concerning the *mitzvah* of *Shiluach ha'kein*, the reason we first send away the mother bird and only

then take the chicks for ourselves is that we should not take advantage of the mother bird's natural maternal instincts to protect her offspring. Upon seeing a human being, every bird flies away – except for the mother bird, who never abandons her offspring. Therefore, we may not capture the mother. We send her away.

The *Ohr Sameach* adds that we accord extraordinary respect towards the mother bird, because she is occupied with raising the next generation. Her function precludes her from being captured. *Rav Aizik* concluded, "Surely, a Jewish mother who provides and cares for the future of our nation deserves a little latitude."