

With which you are to instruct your children, to be careful to perform all the words of this Torah. For it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life. (32: 46,47)

We are commanded to instruct our children to observe the Torah and perform its *mitzvos*, because it is our life. Simply, this refers to the Torah which is the source of our life, for without it one does not truly live. He exists in the physical sense, but if the meaning of life eludes him, can he be considered truly alive? Alternatively, “it” refers to our children whom we have instructed in the ways of Hashem and who carry on the legacy of our instruction. In the *Talmud Taanis* 5B, *Chazal* state, *Mah zaru b’chaim, af hu b’chaim*; “Just as his seed/offspring is alive, so, too, will he be considered alive.” If one’s children maintain a commitment to Hashem and his Torah, they preserve the “life” of their parents, since their legacy lives on in them.

We have seen this phenomenon played out in every generation. Parents who transmit the heritage to the next generation and emphasize its value and significance see their legacy activated and preserved as their children grow up and follow in the path forged by their parents. The legacies of our ancestors are continued by their descendants, thus keeping them alive long after their mortal beings have been laid to rest.

I just read a poignant story that underscores this idea. A Jew from Bnei Brak was ill, confined to a hospital bed in one of the outlying hospitals of *Eretz Yisrael*. He was a deeply religious Jew who happened to become ill while visiting that part of the country. He shared a room with another Jew who hailed from a non-observant *kibbutz*. The man was obviously not observant. Being from the immediate area, his roommate had many visitors who, like him, were from the *kibbutz*. Among his steady stream of visitors, however, were a group of young men with their wives, all of whom were clearly observant. They and their wives dressed the part. It was obviously an anomaly that, among the man’s many visitors, there was this group of *chareidi* couples.

These were not simply visitors who came, visited and left. They spent time, spoke to the nurses, and, when they left, kissed the man on his hand. After seeing this repeatedly, the observant roommate conjured up the courage to ask his roommate for an explanation. “They are my children,” he replied. Seeing the look of incredulity on the *chareidi* man’s face, the *kibbutz*nik explained, “I was blessed with these wonderful children in the merit of my wife.” Now, the *chareidi* man was completely astonished. How did such a non-observant Jew merit to have such special children? Because of his wife – what did his wife do that made such an impact?

“Let me explain my previous statement. I arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* at the age of twelve, as a Holocaust survivor. I was immediately taken with a large group of young people to an irreligious *kibbutz* where we were inculcated with secular Zionist doctrine, devoid of G-d, Torah and any form of religion. Whatever I remembered from my parents’ home was quickly forgotten, as I began a new life as a secular Israeli. My future wife, who was eight years old at the time, was also in that

kibbutz. As orphans of the Holocaust, we became attached, and, as we matured, we became increasingly close to one another. When we were of marriageable age, I proposed marriage to her. Her response was, 'I need time.'

"Two months later, she had her answer, but first, she wanted to share a story with me. She told the following story: 'The last time I saw my mother was when we were separated at the *selektzia*: the adults went to the left, which meant certain death; the young and healthy went to the right. They could survive a little longer. My mother knew that this was it. She embraced me and said, This is the last time we will see each other until we are one day reunited in the World of Truth. If you want to maintain a spiritual bond with me, then I ask that you promise to observe two words. If not, then you will have severed your spiritual connection with me. I will no longer be your mother. It is all up to you.

'My mother told me the two words which she implored me to constantly review and never forget. I had no idea what they meant, but I never forgot them. All of the time that I have been here, I have reiterated these words without knowing their meaning or implication. When you proposed marriage, I went to a *chareidi Rav* and asked him the meaning of the two words. He explained the meaning to me. The words were *Taharas HaMishpacha*, family purity. I now know their meaning and overriding implication. And now, so do you!"

The man continued, "When I heard her say this, I thought that she was out of her mind. We lived on a *kibbutz* where *Shabbos* desecration was a way of life. Consuming every type of non-kosher food meant nothing to us. In fact, the Torah with its many *mitzvos*, both positive and prohibitive, did not inhibit us. How could she possibly want and expect to observe the family purity laws? Yet, she was adamant and unyielding – I either agreed, or there was no marriage. She was not about to sever her spiritual connection with her mother.

"I had no choice. I wanted to marry her. We observed *taharas hamishpachah* just as if we were a *chareidi* family. Now you know why I have such children."