

Did I conceive this entire people, or did I give birth to it, that You say to me, “Carry them in your bosom?”... I alone cannot carry this entire nation, for it is too heavy for me!” (11:12,14)

Parents have an enormous responsibility – regardless of the difficulty – whether it be economical, personal, or a child with an unusual problem with which the parent is unable to cope. By virtue of the fact that one carries the title parent, he becomes obligated to support his/her child under all circumstances. The problems of many adolescents often result from a family dynamic in which the parents are inept or dysfunctional. Parents often shirk their responsibility by laying it at the door of others, such as the school. A proper education, in a stable environment under the tutelage of loving, caring, and knowledgeable mentors, can buffer the damage caused by the home somewhat, but can never replace the role of a solid home in the life of a child.

There is a well-known story which took place when a young *chassan*, recently married man, came before the holy **Sfas Emes** with a complaint. Apparently, his father-in-law had promised him a considerable dowry, which he presently had reneged. What should the young man do? He was counting on the support.

The *Sfas Emes* asked the father-in-law if this was true. The father-in-law was an honest man and replied that, while it was true, he could do nothing about it, since he was broke. He had made certain investments for which, not only had he not realized the profit, he had actually lost his principal. He was very apologetic, but he still had no money.

The *Sfas Emes* listened to the man’s tale of woe and rendered the following decision: Moshe *Rabbeinu* stated that he neither conceived *Klal Yisrael*, nor gave birth to them; therefore, he should not be compelled to “carry” them. Why did Moshe say this? He could have simply said, “Sorry. I have no meat to give you!” What was changed by the fact that he did not give birth to the nation? Obviously, if one is a parent, then insufficient income, lack of funds, no meat, is an unacceptable excuse. A parent must somehow, someway, think of an avenue to sustain his child. This is what parenting is all about. If you are the girl’s father, then you must pay up. Somehow, you must find the money to carry out your promise.”