

"For it is no (vain) (empty) thing for you; because it is your life." (32:47)

As Moshe bids farewell, he implores *Bnei Yisrael* to charge their children with *Torah* observance and *mitzvah* performance, "*for it is no vain thing for you, it is your life.*" The Hebrew word *er*, which is usually translated as "vain," literally means "empty." *Horav M. Swift, z.l.*, suggests that viewed in this perspective, this phrase lends itself to an alternative meaning. A container is considered empty when its contents have been removed. On the other hand, this container is still viewed as a container, retaining its potential use for a similar purpose.

A gentile without *Torah* is a human being who has the potential to achieve his intended purpose in life. The gentile only remains "empty" of *Torah*. It is not part of his life. Without it, he is still a person. The converse is true by a Jew. A Jew who is "empty" of *Torah* is not merely "empty"; he no longer functions in the same potential capacity as he had previously. He no longer has the same meaning or value as a Jew, for the *Torah* is our only way of life. Indeed, it is our very source of living! If one denies the Jew his *Torah*, devoids his life of his *mitzvos*, his *tallis*, *tefillin*, *Shabbos*, and *kashrus*, then there is no longer anything uniquely Jewish about him. He is emptied of his real significance. To be a *er* hkw an "emptied vessel," is the antithesis of *Torah* Judaism.

As we stand before Hashem during these days of sublime judgement, let us not come before the Almighty "empty" handed. Let *Torah* penetrate into our inner being, so that the "*pintele Yid*," the essential Jew within each of us, emerges. The goal is that our entire essence will be suffused with Jewish living.