

"So now, write this song for yourselves and teach it to the Bnei Yisrael, place it in their mouth." (31:19)

In a sermon delivered at the writing of a new *Sefer Torah*, *Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, z.l.*, offered the following parable to explain this *pasuk*. There once were two sisters who met a number of years after they had each been married. One sister, who had married a young man from a wealthy family, dressed in a manner which reflected her material success. The other sister had married a poor fellow who did not have the good fortune to better his lot during his married life.

It was truly surprising that at their meeting both sisters bemoaned their lot in life. Upon looking at her wealthy counterpart, the poor sister remarked, "Why are you crying ? You have it made. You have no financial difficulties. You need not worry where your next dollar is coming from. Life is treating you well. Why are you complaining ?"

The sister, who had presumably "succeeded" in life, broke down and told her sister that life was not so rosy. "True, I dress well and have all the jewelry that I can use, but that does not lead to happiness. I am like a showpiece. I have no say whatsoever in the management of my household. My husband talks down to me as if I do not exist. What benefit do I derive from the gold and silver ?" The other sister said, "Although my financial situation leaves much to be desired, I still have a wonderful husband who treats me like a queen. I am in charge of my home and I play an integral role in the upbringing of my children."

After retelling the parable, *Horav Ferber* looked at those assembled and asked, "So who really was better off, the rich sister or the poor one ?" He continued, "I remember an old *Sefer Torah* in a small town in Lithuania that had no silver or gold to adorn it. In fact there were times when it did not even have a cover to protect the parchment. This *Sefer Torah*, however, had a 'say' which reverberated throughout the entire community. The members of the community adhered to its message regarding the management of communal issues, big and small, with the utmost reverence. Can we say the same for the *Sifrei Torah* in some of the synagogues in our community (London, in the early to mid 20th century) ? They are covered with fancy velvet *mantels* and adorned with silver and gold, but is their message heard beyond the *Aron Ha'Kodesh* -- or is it relegated to be a showpiece ? What benefit is derived from a *Sefer Torah* that has no 'say,' whose Divine message is of no value to us ?"

This is the meaning of the *pasuk*. When you write for yourselves a *Torah*, be sure not to leave it in the *Aron Ha'Kodesh*. Take it out and *ovhpc vnha*, "Put its message into your mouth." The words of the *Sefer Torah* should control and direct every aspect of your daily endeavor. Learn it, study it, become proficient in its laws. Let it be your life's inspiration. Only then will you actualize the *mitzvah* of writing a *Sefer Torah*.