

"And Hashem removed them from their land... And He threw them out to a different land like this day." (29:27)

According to the Masoretic tradition, the letter "*lamed*" of the word *ofkahu* (and He threw them out) appears enlarged. The commentators offer various reasons for this custom. *Horav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita*, offers an insightful homiletic interpretation. The name of the letter "*lamed*" implies the concept of teaching. He suggests that the purpose of Hashem's exile of the Jews was not merely to punish them, but rather to teach them the ramifications of straying from the *Torah*. This is consistent with the principles of effective punishment by which one receives instruction in the consequences of his sins. When one realizes the results of his mistakes, he will be more zealous in his devotion to the *Torah*, observing its mitzvos with alacrity and enthusiasm.

Perhaps we may advance this idea further. Because the letter "*lamed*" denotes teaching, we suggest that *ofkahu* specifically refers to sins which address principles connected with teaching. By enlarging the letter, the *Torah* seems simultaneously to convey a message regarding the meaning of this particular letter and to alert the reader to its misuse. To educate is not only an intrinsically goal; it also provides an integral link in our people's chain of survival. All too often, however, we hear of teachers who perceive themselves to be "above" the average student. They refuse to impart knowledge to those who do not meet their arbitrary standards. On the other hand are students who feel they are superior to their teachers. They invariably look with disdain upon those who, in their egotistical assessment, are inferior to them. This attitude represents an arrogance unbecoming a *Ben Torah*. One must be willing to transmit knowledge to individuals of diverse academic abilities. Conversely, one must be inclined to study and glean wisdom from all available sources. As Dovid Hamelech said "*From all my teachers, I have learned.*"