

You are all standing today. (29:9)

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, posits that *nitzavim*, standing, has a deeper meaning, beyond describing *Klal Yisrael's* vertical position as Moshe *Rabbeinu* delivered his last homily to the nation he had shepherded for the last forty years. *Nitzavim* has a much more powerful connotation than **standing**. It is derived from – or closely related to – the word *matzeivah*, a pillar, a monument. In his last oration to the people, Moshe tells them, “**You** are the *matzeivah*, the foundation, the pillar, the force – the very future – and eternal carriers of the flame of Torah. You perpetuate the banner of Hashem. I will pass on and move into the annals of history. Likewise, you will have great leaders throughout every generation, leaders who will be the backbone of the Jewish People, and, they, too, will move on and meet the same end that is destined for all mortals.

Moshe was intimating that, while strong leadership is the guiding force of the Jewish people, the rise and fall of our nation rests on the shoulders of those present and their children. In order that the nation continue thriving, it is necessary for the *hamone am*, ordinary Jew, to continue as a torch bearer. It is in him that the people of Hashem finds its greatest strength.

One has only to peruse history to note the veracity of this statement. At the early part of the twentieth-century, the east coast of America was dotted with small towns and cities which were host to distinguished Torah scholars who led their communities. They were real *rabbanim* of European origin who had emigrated to America, the land of opportunity. They spoke every *Shabbos*, gave *shiurim*, lectures and classes, officiated at family milestones both joyous and sad, and maintained a warm relationship with their congregants. They did not, however, build schools. Thus, in the next generation, the children had no opportunity to expand their Jewish horizons. Therefore, their *Yiddishkeit* died. The *rabbanim* passed on to their eternal reward, followed by their devoted congregants. The children were left holding the bag, but the bag was empty. The *Yiddishkeit* which they sorely needed in order to go on had not been inculcated in them. Their *matzeivah* had crumbled. If we do not educate the next generation, the only monument we will have will, regrettably, be at the cemetery.