

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them. (11:19)

Rashi comments that *Chazal* have inferred from this *pasuk* that when a child begins to talk, his father should converse with him in *lashon hakodesh*, Hebrew, and should begin to teach him *Torah*. If he does not teach him *Torah*, it is viewed as if he had _____ buried him. This is implied by the juxtaposition to the next *pasuk*, in which the *Torah* states, "In order to prolong your days and the days of your children." The *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah* takes on a new perspective when it applies to a father's obligation to educate his children. A father who is lax in fulfilling his responsibility of *chinuch ha'banim* incurs grave consequences. Not only does he rob his child of his heritage, he impairs his development as a Jew.

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, says that when a person passes on from this world he comes before the Heavenly Throne and must give an accounting of his life. He is asked to justify his behavior and the level of his observance of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. He then receives his reward and is able to repose in his eternal rest. He may still, however, be called upon to answer for the shortcomings of his children. If their sins can be traced back to a lack of proper education, then the parent is held liable. The onus of guilt is placed where it belongs - on the parent. The *Alter M'Kelm*, interprets the prayer of *iyah rxvu* "uhbrijtnu ubhbpkn" *and remove spiritual impediment from before us and behind us.* We implore Hashem not to prosecute us for the sins that are "lifaneinu," before us. This refers to our sins. We also beg Him not to profer charges against us for those sins that are "m'achareinu" behind us. This is a reference to the sins perpetrated by our children, after us.

The *baalei mussar* cite a compelling analogy which will hopefully impart a strong impression regarding a parent's responsibility towards his children's education. There was once a man who was very wealthy. He was blessed with one son who k"r lost his ability to speak due to the effects of a serious illness. The grief-stricken father took his child to a multitude of doctors and specialists, alas, to no avail. The boy grew up healthy and bright, but he could not speak. The father would go into his room at night and weep bitter tears for the agony suffered by his only child. What could he do? He was willing to undergo any ordeal just so that his child could speak. If only he could put words in his son's mouth.

This tragic story is regrettably one that is relevant to us. When a person leaves this world, he enters the eternal world where everything is spiritual. What does the *neshamah* do *ba'Shomayim*? We are taught that *Torah* is studied at all times; each person shares in the *Torah* according to his specific level of erudition. If he was a great scholar in this world, he will have much to speak about in *Olam Habah*. If, unfortunately, his mastery of *Torah* was limited, he will be relegated to sitting alone "speechless" because he will not have a word to say! In the World To Come, there will be no interest in secular or mundane matters. Everything will be *Torah* - nothing else!

Are we that different than the father whose son could not speak? Are we availing our children the

opportunity to "speak" in *Olam Habah*, or are we preparing them to sit there mute, impaired eternally, because of our lack of vision and selfish concerns?

The *mitzvah* of teaching *Torah* to one's children, writes the **Shelah Ha'Kadosh**, is the underlying purpose of the *mitzvah* of "*Pru U'rvu*," "*Be Fruitful and Multiply*." We are enjoined to have children that will study *Torah* and transmit this commitment to learning through the generations. The commentators emphasize the great significance for parents to pray to Hashem that they be blessed with children who are devoted and committed to *Torah* study.

The mother of the **Chofetz Chaim** was a *tzadeikes* - a modest, virtuous woman who spent the major portion of her day in prayer to the Almighty. She prayed that her beloved son grow to be a G-d-fearing Jew. A number of years after her death they found an old, worn *Tehillim* in her house. This precious book was brought to the *Chofetz Chaim* who took hold of it with both hands, kissing it fervently as tears welled up in his eyes. During this tearful "reunion" with his mother's *Tehillim* the *Chofetz Chaim* turned to the people and said, "Do you have any idea how many prayers my mother said every morning? She would tearfully embrace her *Tehillim* and pray to Hashem, 'Please *Ribono Shel Olam*, grant me that my son grow into a good and true Jew.'" Is it any wonder that her son became the righteous and learned *Chofetz Chaim*?

We have no idea of the effect that prayers emanating from the heart have upon the spiritual development of a child. A bright child, the finest schools, the most exciting and experienced teachers are all wonderful - but *Tehillim* and tears are essential pre-requisites for raising a *ben Torah*. Parents must realize that *Torah*, unlike any other form of knowledge, is a gift from Hashem. We must pray that we, together with our child, be worthy of that gift.

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Shlita, tells of the time the **Chazon Ish** asked him to study with the first *baal teshuvah* who had come to the *Ponovez Yeshivah*. *Horav Galinsky* asked the *Chazon Ish*, "What merit did this young man's father have that he who desecrated *Shabbos* and ate *treifah* food should have a son that would study *Torah*?" The *Chazon Ish* responded, "When this young man's father went 'off the *derech*' and alienated himself from *Torah* Judaism, his father cried bitter tears. His tears regrettably did not help his son, but they served as a merit that his grandson would return to *Torah*."

Horav Efraim Cohen, zl, writes that once a man came to him crying bitterly that on *Shabbos* night when he recites *Kiddush*, his son stands nearby smoking a cigarette to provoke his anger. What should he do? The *rav* asked the man, "To which school did you send him as a child?" He responded by telling him the name of a secular school which was totally devoid of *Torah* study. "Now you come to me crying," the *rav* said angrily. "You are responsible for destroying your son's *neshomah*! You sent him to a school that would "progressively" lead him away from the *Torah*."

Horav Cohen continued with a story. In Russia the government seized any cash or jewelry that belonged to people, claiming it was for tax purposes. The people who were clever hid their money

in a coffin, claiming they were taking a body outside of the city to be buried in the cemetery. One time the guards suspected the ruse and demanded that the coffin be opened so that they could view the corpse. The "mourners" suddenly began to cry that this was not proper honor for the dead. It was a desecration and sacrilege to open the coffin. They cried and wailed to no avail. The guard, who was not fooled, said, "You are crying too late. You should have cried earlier when you were carrying the coffin. Then I would have believed your display of grief. Now, your mourning is out of place."

"My dear friend, " *Horav* Cohen said to the man, "You are also too late. You should have cried years ago when your vested interests motivated you to send your son to a secular school. Your indifference to the future of your child is haunting you now. You woke up too late."