

"And you should teach them diligently to your children." (6:7)

We are enjoined to transmit *Torah* to the next generation. *Rashi* adds that "*your children*" also refers to one's students. Indeed, teaching *Torah* to one's students is a form of spiritual creation. Various interpretations cite the importance of either personally teaching or caring for the *Torah* education of one's children.

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z.l. cites the *Talmud* in *Brachos 14* which states that one who recites *krias shema* but does not wear *tefillin*, is viewed as a false witness. In the *parsha* of *krias shema*, one mentions the imperative to wear *tefillin*. To accept the *mitzvah* of *krias shema*, while apparently ignoring the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* is blatant hypocrisy. In this *parsha*, the *Torah* enjoins us in the *mitzvah* of *chinuch ha'banim*, educating our children. *Horav Sonnenfeld* asserts that to recite *shema*, thereby affirming one's relationship with Hashem, while neglecting to provide for the *Torah* education of one's children, is duplicity.

The *Sefer Chareidim* writes that just as one should pray for his own spiritual welfare, so, too, should he entreat Hashem that his children will grow up as *Bnei Torah*, replete with *yiraas shamayim*, fear of Heaven. The *Chazon Ish* strongly demanded that Jewish education must be first and foremost on the agenda of lay leadership. He viewed this as the most prime focus of *yidishkeit*.

In regard to this idea, the *Chazon Ish* related that a Jew once came to the *Chofetz Chaim* seeking his blessing for success in educating his children. The *Chofetz Chaim* responded, "A blessing you seek for educating your children? Sell the pillow that you sleep on (if necessary) and hire the best G-d fearing rabbeim and then you will have success and *nachas!*"

Horav Sholom Shwadron, Shlita, relates a poignant story concerning the *Ridvaz*, *Horav Yaakov David Wilowsky, z.l.* which teaches a profound lesson about this topic. On the day of his father's *yahrzeit*, the *Ridvaz* came to *shul* somewhat earlier than usual to *daven mincha*. He proceeded to his place and placed his elbows on his *shtender*, lectern, and became lost in thought. Suddenly he burst forth in tears and continued crying softly to himself.

Seeing this spectacle, the congregants assumed that the *Rav* was overly emotional today, since it was his father's *yahrzeit*. After a while, however, a close friend came over to him and questioned his unusual display of grief. After all, he asked the *Ridvaz*, your father was over eighty years old when he passed away and that occurred almost fifty years ago! The *Ridvaz* responded with the following story.

When he was a young boy, his father had arranged for him to have an exceptional tutor. This tutor charged one ruble per month which, at that time, was a large sum of money. Although his parents eked out a very meager living, they undertook with great effort to pay this sum, so that their son be provided the best *Torah* education.

His father's source of livelihood came from building furnaces for people. One winter, business was very bad due to a shortage of cement and lime with which to build furnaces. As a result, three months went by and the tutor had not yet been paid. In those days if people didn't earn a living, they had no food. The tutor patiently waited as long as he could. One day, he sent home a note stating that, if the money which was in arrears was not paid, he would be compelled to terminate his studies with the young student.

Upon receipt of this note, his parents were devastated. Their son's *Torah* study meant everything to them. Nothing should stand in the way of his becoming a *Talmid Chacham*. When his father went to *shul* to *daven*, he heard of a wealthy man who was looking to purchase a furnace. It seemed that he had built a new house for his son and daughter-in-law. Due to the cement shortage, however, he could not get a furnace. He was willing to offer six rubles for a furnace.

His father hurried home from *shul*. After discussing the wealthy man's offer with his wife, he decided to dismantle their own furnace brick by brick and to rebuild it at the home of the young couple. He did all of this just to obtain money to support their son's *Torah* study! Upon receipt of the money, he cheerfully paid the tutor for the past three months and for the next three months. That winter it was bitter cold, and the whole family suffered greatly, but it was well worth it so that their son would continue his studies.

The *Ridvaz* finished relating this story and looked at his friend and said, "Today, because it was chilly outside, I was considering staying home and making a private *minyán* to say *kaddish* for my father. Then I decided that my father "merited" that I go out in the cold and say *kaddish* in *shul* in his honor. When I came to *shul* I began reflecting upon the *mesiras nefesh*, self sacrifice, of my father and, indeed, my whole family during that bitter cold winter. All of this hardship was for one purpose, so that I could study *Torah* uninterrupted with the best teacher. When I remembered my parents immeasurable dedication to my *Torah* learning, a devotion which only a parent can have, I became very emotional.

This simple, but moving, story carries with it an important message. Do we ever stop to think of the sacrifice our parents have made for our education? Do we even wonder what they had to give up to pay for tuition, the effort involved in driving carpool, sometimes going out late at night to take us to a *mishmar* or to a private *rebbe*? Indeed, every aspect of our education be it curricular or extra-curricular, is dependent upon our parents' devotion to our future. In applying ourselves to *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance, it would serve us well to remember this lesson.