

"(The) Torah (that) Moshe commanded us (is) the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov." (33:4)

Chazal expound upon the concept of *Torah* as an inheritance. *Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita*, differentiates between an inheritance which belongs to the heirs to transform as they please and a heritage which is to be transmitted to the next generation in its entirety. Reflecting this idea, parents have a demanding responsibility to transmit to their children the whole *Torah* excluding their own commentary and personal opinions.

The *Torah* in its pristine form is the inalienable right of our children. To deny them this right is more than an infringement upon the right of possession. Rather, it is an impingement upon their existence. It undermines the idea of *Torah* as the basis of a Jew's life.

In the *Talmud Pesachim 49b* *Chazal* read the word *varun*, heritage, as *varutn*, betrothed. This is interpreted homiletically as a metaphor for the union between Hashem's *Torah* and *Bnei Yisrael*, as a bride to her bridegroom. The *Maharal* indicates that the end of this *pasuk*, "*kehillas Yaakov*," the congregation of Yaakov, refers to the whole nation of *Am Yisrael*. Rich and poor alike, each Jew has an equal share in our *Torah*. Thus, if the wealthy seek to declare sole ownership of the *Torah* for themselves or their children, without providing equal opportunity for those who are not affluent, the *Torah* proclaims that this is wrong! The *Torah* is wed to all Jews. To deprive any Jew - be it due to lack of funds or religious background - is to tear asunder this relationship mandated by Hashem.

We may also note the use of the name "Yaakov" which implies *Klal Yisrael* in a humbled state, as opposed to "Yisrael" which is a metaphor for strength and dignity. The *Torah* belongs to all Jews, regardless of their background, intellectual acumen or financial profile. It is their heritage and inviolable right.

The name Yaakov also applies to the attitude one must have when studying *Torah*. To attain the level of *Yisrael*, implying strength and sovereignty in *Torah*, one must first go through the channels of Yaakov, humbling himself to accept the words of the *Torah*.

Horav Moshe Feinstein z.l. interprets this *pasuk* as establishing the attitude of love that is inherent in *Torah* study. He compares the *Torah* to a bride who purchases a beautiful piece of jewelry before her wedding. Undoubtedly, she is overjoyed and excited. She will always treasure this piece of jewelry. Can this excitement compare, however, to the bride who receives a heirloom piece of jewelry that was the prize possession of her beloved grandmother? Because of its sentimental value she will never part with this gift. The *Torah*, which we study today, is the very same *Torah* which Moshe *Rabbeinu* had on *Har Sinai*. This is the source of its endearment to us. Perhaps, in order to appreciate the *Torah*, it is essential to recognize its genesis.

People fail to appreciate the inestimable value of every bit of *Torah* one absorbs. There is a famous

story which occurred concerning *Horav Moshe Feinstein*. The story demonstrates the esteem in which he held the most elementary achievement in *Torah*. There was a young student who, after becoming a *baal teshuvah*, began devoting most of his time to *Torah* study to the point that he became very proficient. When the boy's father reached retirement age, he started to follow in the same path forged by his son. He became an observant Jew. He was despondent, however, over his inability to study *Torah* due to his lack of basic skills. When his time on this world would be over, with what would he face the Almighty?

Observing his father's depressive state, the son attempted to dissuade him, claiming he would have to master too many skills to achieve *Torah* erudition. The father would not be deterred from attaining his goal. He studied Hebrew and Aramaic. He learned to read. Slowly he began to learn a "*blatt*" *Gemorah*, folio of *Talmud*. This came with great difficulty because everything was completely new to him. It took a number of years, and the father finally completed one *blatt Gemorah*!

The father glowed with pride and excitement as he told people of his major "accomplishment." Indeed, he told his son he planned to celebrate the occasion with a "*siyum*," a festive party which is made at the culmination of a complete tractate of *Talmud*. The son, who felt his father was too enthusiastic about his moderate success, turned to *Horav Feinstein* for advice in this matter. *Horav Feinstein* responded in the affirmative, adding he would himself attend this joyous occasion.

The *seudah* was indeed festive, crowned with words of *Torah* and blessing from the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah*. With tears in his eyes, the father rose to thank all those assembled for attending and enhancing his *simcha*. He said, "My life is now more meaningful. Now I am no longer afraid to die, for I have prepared my *blatt Gemorah* with which I shall meet the *Ribono Shel Olam*."

That night the father went to sleep, never to wake up in this world. He passed away in his sleep, a true penitent and *Torah* Jew. In his eulogy for him, *Horav Feinstein* noted, "There are those who acquire *Olam Habbah* with one hour of serious spiritual elevation on this world, and then there are those who acquire their portion in the world to come with one *blatt Gemorah*, as did our deceased. His love for *Torah* and perseverance in attaining its knowledge opened the gates of *Olam Habbah* for him!"