

## These are the offspring of Aharon and Moshe. These are the names of the sons of Aharon. (3:1,2)

*Rashi* observes that while the *pasuk* states that the following are the offspring of Aharon *HaKohen* and Moshe *Rabbeinu*, it only lists the names of Aharon's sons. This, says *Rashi*, teaches that whoever teaches his friend's son Torah, it is considered by the Torah as if he caused his birth. Thus, Aharon's sons, who were Moshe's students, are also considered to be Moshe's sons. *Horav Meir Chodosh, zl (Or Chadash)*, quotes the *Sifri's* comments to the *pasuk*, *V'shinantem l'vanecha*, "You shall teach them diligently to your sons" (*Devarim* (6:7), *eilu talmidecha*; "These [sons] are your students."). The *Mashgiach* quotes the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka*, who asked that if the purpose of the *pasuk* is to inform us of the importance of teaching our students diligently, it should have written, *v'shinantom l'talmidecha*. Why write sons and mean students? Just write students. The *Alter* explained that the Torah is imparting to us that a *rebbe* should feel as close to his students as he does to his son. The love that a father/*rebbe* has for his son should be commensurately shown to his student. The joy that a father bespeaks toward his son should, likewise, be manifest toward his student. Indeed, the *Mashgiach* was known to show extreme love for his students – as he did to his sons.

The *Mashgiach* extends this idea further. The *Talmud (Bereishis 5b)* relates that Rabbi Yochanan tragically buried his ten sons in his lifetime. When his tenth son died, Rabbi Yochanan kept a small bone from the deceased in order to use it to comfort families who had sustained similar tragedies. He sought to demonstrate that he, too, had suffered extreme tragedy and pain; he, like *Iyov*, had buried ten sons. Nonetheless, he did not defer to despair and melancholy. He strengthened himself and used his personal tragedy as a springboard and model to help and to comfort others: "I kept on going; so can you."

Rabbi Yochanan represented fortitude at its apex. To sustain one *potch*, Heavenly slap, after another, up until the point that he had lost all ten of his sons, was not just ten tragedies, but ten levels of tragedy – each one more intense than its predecessor. With great resolution, faith in the Almighty, he continued on. According to the *Mashgiach*, this passage in the *Talmud* appears inconsistent with a passage in *Bava Metzia (84a)* which relates that when *Reish Lakish*, Rabbi Yochanan's greatest student and study partner, died, Rabbi Yochanan was inconsolable. His pain was so intense that it was physically and emotionally unbearable; he would walk the streets, tear his clothing and cry out, "Where are you *Ben Lakish*?" (The name by which *Reish Lakish* was called.) He did this until he lost his mind. When the sages saw how badly *Reish Lakish's* death affected him, they prayed that his life come to an end.

Bearing all this in mind, the *Mashgiach* asks: Rabbi Yochanan buried ten sons – yet, he survived, and was able to help others. When his student died, he became so crestfallen that he ultimately lost his ability to think coherently. How do we reconcile this disparity? The *Mashgiach* explains that we now understand the depth of *V'shinantom l'vanecha, eilu ha'talmidim*. The relationship between

a *rebbe* and his *talmid* should be such that the *rebbe* feels that without his student, he is unable to live! This is not simply about maintaining a long distance relationship between *rebbe* and *talmid*. It is about life and death. Without one's student, life is not life; it is not worth living!

*Horav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, zl*, was *Rosh Yeshivas Chevron* in *Eretz Yisrael*. He guided the *yeshivah* through the turbulent storms of World War I, nurtured it during the post-war recovery years, and agreed with the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka*, to move the *Yeshivah* to *Eretz Yisrael*. He spent long months on the road, traveling throughout the diaspora seeking funds for the *yeshivah*. He was able to handle it all – except the Chevron Massacre-during which Arab marauders murdered twenty-four *yeshivah* students in the most heinous and cruel manner. The pain and anguish broke the *Rosh Yeshivah*. He became ill, and he never recovered. A *Rosh Yeshivah* without his *talmidim* has no life.