

So now, write this song for yourselves. (31:19)

The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Tefillin, Mezuzah V'Sefer Torah* (7:1) writes, "It is a *mitzvah* from the Torah incumbent upon each and every *Yid* to write a *Sefer Torah* for himself, as it says in the *pasuk*, "V'atah kisvu lachem es ha'Shirah ha'zos." (Since one cannot write *parshiyos*, chapters of the Torah, at various intervals and put them together, the exhortation to write *Shiras Haazinu* implies that it should be written as part of the entire Torah.) "Even if his forbears left him a *Sefer Torah*, he still has a *mitzvah* to write his own *Sefer Torah*. If he writes it with his own hand, it is considered as if he received it (from Hashem) on Har Sinai!"

"Even if his forebears left him a *Sefer Torah*," his son must initiate personally, or by agent, to write his own *Sefer Torah*. Why? If he has his father's *Sefer Torah*, why must he write another one? The *K'sav Sofer* explains that the *mitzvah* to write his own *Sefer Torah* is to protect the son from becoming complacent with Torah. It is important to remember the past and connect with it, but... he must also do his own thing. Add his own initiative, so that he has his own *chelek*, portion, in the Torah.

We can extrapolate from here to other *mitzvos* and Jewish practice and observance in general. It is wonderful to carry on the traditions and rituals of the past, but one must build on them; otherwise, he risks the danger of complacency. If one's father would learn a *Mishnah* between *Minchah/Maariv*, the son should attend a *shiur* in *Gemarah*. If his father sang one *niggun* at the *Shabbos* table, he should build on it and sing a repertoire of songs. When one learns, it is appropriate to recall and relate the questions and explanations of his *rebbeim*. He should add his own *chiddushim*, original thoughts, thus building on the foundation of Torah learning that inspired him.

One who writes his own *Sefer Torah* is tantamount to being at *Har Sinai* and receiving the Torah from Hashem. The Almighty gave us the Torah to learn, to be *mechadesh*, to build upon it, to plumb its depths and uncover its myriad secrets. This, too, is a form of writing one's own *Sefer Torah*. The Torah was meant to be studied on every level. It was not meant to be a relic that is stored in the Ark, to be removed only when necessary. It is our life. Without it, life is mere existence.