

It will be, when they will encounter many evils and troubles, this song will bear witness against them, for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring. (31:21)

The *Ponovezher Rav*, *zl*, once commented to *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, that the level of *siyata d'Shmaya*, Divine assistance, today (fifty years ago) superseded that of earlier generations. He based this on the words of the *Meiri* in his commentary (preface) to *Pirkei Avos*, where he writes that there were thousands of *Tannaim*. Proof positive, Rabbi Akiva (who was one *Rosh Yeshivah*) had 24,000 *talmidim*, students. Concerning those times, we apply the statement of Shlomo *Hamelech* (*Koheles* 7:28), *Adam echad mei'elef matzasi*, "I have found one man in a thousand." The *Midrash* (*Koheles Rabbah* 7:40) explains that the *chinuch*, Torah education, of Jewish children, and their individual ability to proceed higher and higher up the ladder of scholarship, has often been dependent upon "survival of the fittest." For instance, one thousand students entered *cheder* to commence the study of *Chumash*. Of these thousand students, one hundred would continue on to study *Mishnah*, of which ten would excel to the level of studying *Talmud*. Only one of these ten would "graduate" to become a teacher of *Talmud* and *halachah*. Out of a freshman class of one thousand students – one became a *Rosh Yeshivah*. Today, the *Rav* noted, the same thousand continue throughout the system to achieve a high level of Torah scholarship. Why is our generation different from all previous generations?

The *Rav* explained that the present generation has been given a special dose of *siyata d'Shmaya*. We have *bechirah*, free-will. Thus, Hashem does not intervene in our affairs. He allows us to make decisions by which we have to live. When we make the right decisions, we earn reward. When our decisions are incorrect/inappropriate or without common sense, we have to live with the consequences. In one area, however, Hashem intercedes: Torah. As it is written in the Torah (*Devarim* 31:21), "It will be, when they encounter many evils and troubles, this song will bear witness against them, for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring." Hashem promises us, *Ki lo sishkach mi'fi zaro*, "The Torah is our life. Without it, we are unable to exist." Thus, it stands to reason that, regardless of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, Hashem will never allow the Torah to be forgotten. Someone, somewhere will always be learning Torah.

Throughout the generations, Jews clung to the Torah. It was our mainstay, our anchor in the turbulent seas of life's challenges. The world went on as usual for those devoted to learning: some more, some less; some achieving elevated levels of erudition, some not so elevated. Hashem allowed us to decide – because we were learning. Torah reigned supreme. With the apathy that is overwhelming, with the challenges posed by modern society worming their way in and penetrating the hallowed bastions of Torah and *avodah*, however, it is no wonder that only the hardiest succeed to become erudite scholars imbued, not only with Torah, but ethics and morals as well. The nation would find itself hard-pressed to survive spiritually on the shoulders of a few. Rather than allow for this spiritual void to impact *Klal Yisrael*, Hashem "stepped in" to concern Himself with the dismal state of Torah life resulting from a dearth of Torah study. One only has to peruse

the history of Torah *chinuch* in America circa 1945, when the day school/*yeshivah* movement was started by Torah architects such as *Horav* Aharon Kotler, *Horav* Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, together with the *Roshei Yeshivah* who survived the Holocaust. These giants stood up to the apathy, ignored the naysayers and fought valiantly against the secularists who had entrenched themselves with one goal: to destroy Torah and make certain that it not develop a foothold in this country.

Such a scenario mandates a Divine intervention consisting of miracles of magnitude and abundance. Once Hashem decided to step in, He made Torah available to everyone. This resulted in the extraordinary surge of Torah in our day and age. Our goal should be a thousand going in, and a thousand *talmidei chachamim* prepared to take their places in a Torah society that will serve the needs of all Jews.