

Vayelech

We read "Now, therefore, write ye this song and teach it to the children of Israel."¹ This injunction is listed as the final mitzvah in the Torah. The *Rambam* states:² It is a positive mitzvah on every person in Israel to write a Sefer Torah for himself as the passage reads: "Now therefore write ye this song." One is obligated to write a Torah even though he may have one as an inheritance from his parents yet the obligation remains to have his own personal Sefer Torah. If one fills in or corrects even one letter it is considered as if he had written the complete Five Books of Moses. Thus we have the custom for the *Sofer*, who completes the writing of a scroll, to trace the final letters of the Torah in outline only. At the festive celebration called the *Siyum*, each letter in those sentences is filled in by a different person, who thereby symbolically take part in the writing of the sacred scroll.

*Sefer Ha-chinuch*³ comments that although the Biblical injunction is fulfilled only with a Torah Scroll, yet we are not to lose sight of other *seforim* of Torah content. Publication and distribution of these volumes must also be implemented. It has a direct connection with the Biblical injunction of "write ye this song."

The *Chofetz Chaim* poses an interesting question: The commandment to write a Torah comes after the previous passage which reads "and I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evil that they shall have wrought, in that they turned unto other Gods." The linkage of these two sentences teaches us that Torah has the unique quality to protect us even in times of trouble and stress. Also in a time of *Hester Ponim*, when G-d's presence is hidden, the illumination of Torah-beams will guide us in the difficult times we encounter. The Talmud⁴ refers to the passage "For the mitzvah is a candle and Torah is a source of

light." Just as light illuminates the surroundings and prevents a catastrophe, so, too, Torah offers a shield of protection unto mankind.

The words of the *Chofetz Chaim* spoken more than fifty years ago, is of great relevance to us today.

Israel finds itself surrounded by a veil of hostility and hatred on the part of the world community of nations. Anti-semitic acts of violence are on the rise world-wide. As an example we recall the recent bombing of a synagogue in Vienna and the many casualties brought about as a result of this act of terror. The proposed sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia does not give us any comfort.

At this juncture in history, as we usher in the New Year, we must redouble our efforts in *Limud HaTorah* and the performance of mitzvos. This endeavor will help to brighten our horizon and hasten the day for our ultimate redemption.

FOOTNOTES

1. Devorim 31:19
2. Hilchos Sefer Torah 7:1
3. Mitzvoh 613
4. Sotah 21a