

The belt with which it is emplaced, which is on it, shall be of the same workmanship, it shall be made of it. (28:8)

Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad, derives an important educational principle from this *pasuk*. One's children are referred to as *begadim*, children. This is implied by the *Navi Zecharyah* (3:4), when *Yehoshua Kohen Gadol* is admonished, *Hasiru ha'begadim ha'tzoim meialav*, "Remove the soiled garments from him." Concerning this, *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 93a) ask, "Was it the practice of *Yehoshua* to wear soiled garments?" They respond that the *Navi* refers to his sons who had married out of the faith. Thus, we see that children are likened to one's garments. Perhaps, I might add, as the popular maxim goes, clothes make the man; children are often a reflection of their parents, or rather, we can often see the parents in their children.

The *pasuk* teaches that the *Cheishev ha'Eiphod*, belt of the *Eiphod*, which is on it, must be made *k'maaseihu*, of the same workmanship (as the *Eiphod*), unlike the *Kispos ha'Eiphod*, shoulder straps, which are sewn on. The *Cheishev* was *mimenu yiheyeh*, made of it. When one seeks to impart the Torah way of life to his children, the appropriate path by which they will achieve character trait refinement and develop strong erudition, he must teach by example, by personally living a Torah life. One will find himself hard-pressed to teach his children the importance of: *tefillah b'tzibbur*, davening with a *minyan*; listening to *Krias haTorah*, the reading of the Torah; Torah *sedarim*, study sessions. If he himself does not adhere to his own teachings, then *mimenu yiheyeh*, it shall be made of it. The father's and mother's actions set the tenor for their children's Torah's lives. If the father *schmoozes* during *Krias haTorah*, so will his son. The *sefer Kzeh Reeh v'Chanech* (quoted by *Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita*) relates an incident which underscores the overriding significance of positive parental prototypical involvement in their children's upbringing. *Rav Plitnik*, a student of the *Chafetz Chaim*, served as *Rav* in Liverpool, England. A devout *Rav*, whose uncompromising standards and encyclopedic knowledge of Torah were well-known, he nonetheless had difficulty establishing a close working relationship with his congregation. The lack of closeness did not disturb him as much as the constant belittling and abuse that he suffered from his president. An arrogant man, whose claim to fame and power was his wealth, the *Rosh HaKahal*, president, went out of his way to show the *Rav* who was actually in charge.

One evening, the president appeared at the *Rav's* door, disheveled, depressed and crying incessantly. "What is wrong?" the *Rav* asked. "My daughter, my only child, the love of my life, just informed me that she is engaged to marry – a gentile! What should I do? What can I do?" he cried bitterly. "*Rebbe*, I have made your life miserable for years. Please forgive me and speak with my daughter. I know that I do not deserve your forgiveness, but I realize now the error of my ways."

The *Rav*, of course, acquiesced to the president's plea. The man might be a boor, but why should his daughter suffer? He called for the daughter, and, after speaking with her for quite some time, received the same response that she had given her father. She was not reversing her position. The

marriage was on.

A week passed, and the president once again stood on the threshold of the *Rav's* home. "Why did you not help me in my time of need? My family is falling apart, and you are unable to convince my daughter not to marry a *goy*! How could this be?" the man railed on, as usual blaming only the *Rav* for all of his problems (common fare for those who refuse to acknowledge their own shortcomings).

The *Rav* listened patiently, and, when the president took a break from his tirade, he interjected and said, "Let me share a story with you. A doctor discovered a serum that could cure one of the most devastating illnesses in recent times. This doctor was a special person, who -- out of the goodness of his heart -- traveled from city to city, doling out doses of his precious serum to save thousands of children. During one of his trips, he was waylaid by ruthless thieves, who took what little money he had and sadly also took the serum which he was bringing to the next town. The doctor was spared by the skin of his teeth. On the one hand, he was grateful to the Almighty for having been spared from a brutal death, but, on the other hand, he mourned the loss of the serum, knowing that hundreds of children would now perish. It would take weeks to produce more serum, which could help others. The children in the next city were beyond his help.

"Arriving at the town, he was met by a throng of people, parents waiting to receive the life-saving medicine that would regenerate their children. How surprised he was to see at the head of the line, none other than the leader of the thieves that had robbed him of the medicine. The robber did not recognize the doctor when he brought in his very sick son to be seen. The doctor checked the child and gave the father the grim diagnosis. 'Surely you can do something to save him. You are the genius with the wonder medicine. You must save my son,' the thief begged.

"Under normal circumstances, I could have helped your son back to health, but, on my way here, I was held up by a band of merciless thieves who stole my money and my serum. Do not blame me -- blame them!" the doctor responded.

"At that moment, the robber understood what had happened. The message was all too clear to him. He was responsible for his son's premature death."

Rav Plitnik concluded the story. He looked across the table into the face of his president and said, "You should know, Torah scholars have a unique attachment with Hashem, through the Torah they study. As a result, they are able to inspire their congregations. This is possible, however, only as long as the congregants respect, revere and hold dear the *talmid chacham*. As long as there is respect for the *talmid chacham*, he can have an influence on the people. Once the people lose respect -- for whatever reason -- the congregants are culpable, not the *rabbanim*. I could have helped you only if you would have respected me for the Torah which I embody. Once you lose respect, I am rendered powerless."

It happens all the time. Children grow up in a home in which all they hear is abuse: against the

Rav, the principal; the *rosh yeshivah*; the spiritual leadership. *Mah yaase ha'ben v'lo yecheta*, "What else can the child do but sin?" Whom should he respect? His parents "robbed" him of the life-sustaining serum. Now, they have only themselves to blame.