

"If a man has a son who is disobedient and rebellious, who will not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother... then they shall lay hold of him and bring him out to the elders of the city." (21:18-19)

Here we study the law regarding the son who is a complete failure, for whom the *Torah* makes the parents seek for him an early death at the hands of the law as the only means to save him from complete ruin. This law, which pronounces the death-sentence for a youthful delinquent who is deemed "incurable", and declares his early demise as being the only means of salvation from future complete degeneration, it fixes that sentence on clearly defined factors of age and behavior, as well as the relationships of the parents to each other and to their child. *Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch Zt"l* notes that only when the parents work harmoniously on their child's upbringing and education does the fault lie in the incorrigible nature of their son. He states some of the factors which may be noted from the text and commentaries.

"Who will not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother..." When the boy has parents and they both exercise their influence on him, and have "one" voice, and stand over him with equal authority, and with the same agreed upon ideas, can they say to themselves that their child's failure is not their fault. If any one of these factors is missing, then the failure of the child is not solely indicative of his own disobedient moral nature. Perhaps under a better and more harmonious home life, he would have successfully adjusted and the present situation would have been different. Genuine agreement between father and mother is indicated to be a basic factor in raising children as interpreted in the laws of *ben sorer umoreh*. It should serve as a guideline for study, reflection and practice.