

“Ask your father and he will relate to you, and your elders and they will tell you.” (32:7)

The *Kelmer Maggid*, z.l., addressed the redundancy of this *pasuk* homiletically. In earlier generations, children asked their father questions regarding religion, its codes and laws – and they received an answer. Regrettably, in contemporary times, many fathers are no longer "equipped" with the answer. Thus, they tell their children to turn to their elders, the grandfather who still remembers the answer. Let us for a moment analyze what has occurred. While it is true that many fathers are ill-prepared to respond to their children, what is the reason for this? Where were their fathers, the grandfathers, to whom we are now turning for answers, when their own children were growing up?

Perhaps we can offer the following response: The Torah uses two expressions for communication between the generations, *haggadah* and *amirah*. The latter form, *amirah*, is a softer tone, more explanatory than the former, *haggadah*, which implies simply relating an answer without really getting into its underlying rationale. When a child grows up in a home in which his questions are answered curtly, without feeling, without looking to establish a rapport between father and son, he is in danger that at one point he will no longer accept the answer, or – even worse – he will refrain from asking. This child will become an adult who has no answers, who will send his son to his grandfather, who will, hopefully, be able to answer with sensitivity and warmth. As a postscript we might add that the *Kelmer Maggid* made this statement over a century ago. Unfortunately, today the grandfather is not distinguishable from his son; he also has no answers. The only cure for illiteracy is a Torah education.