

"And it happened that as she gave birth one put out a hand, the midwife took a crimson thread and tied it on his hand ... And it was as he drew back his hand that behold his brother emerged: ... Afterwards his brother on whose the hand was the crimson thread emerged." (38:28 - 30)

Zerach tried to emerge first, but Peretz pushed ahead and was born first, fulfilling the Divine plan. *Rashi* notes that the *Torah's* mentions the word *sh*, hand, four times. He cites the *Midrash* which interprets this apparent redundancy as an allusion to Zerach's descendant, Achan, who committed four sacrileges. Other commentators say it refers to the four things which Achan took from the spoils of Yericho. This action on the part of Achan was prohibited. Thus, it greatly angered Hashem. This statement is enigmatic! What relationship is there between the unsuccessful action of an unborn infant and his descendant four generations later? Was Achan's pernicious act of rebellion against Hashem's decree a retaliation for his still unborn ancestor's "attempt" at premature birth?

Horav Dovid Shneur, Shlita, derives a remarkable lesson from these *pesukim*. The impact parents have upon their children is overwhelming. An unborn infant "attempted" to precede his brother and usurp the *bechorah*, primogeniture, for himself. This improper act, albeit unsuccessful, influenced a descendant four generations later to commit a blatant act of defiance against Hashem. How much more so should we be vigilant in everything we say and do, so that we do not predispose our children and students to replicate or even surpass our thoughtless, and at times, misinterpreted actions.

Every parental compromise in the areas of decency and observance can result in a tenfold deviation from proper conduct on the part of their children. On the one hand, parents can be the shining example for their children to emulate. On the other hand, they can serve as the "inspiration" for corroding their offspring's moral development. Any form of inconsistency in *Torah* observance, be it blatant or subtle hypocrisy, will lower our children's values and standards and will weaken the spiritual legacy we bequeath them. Parenting implies responsibility, which is perceptive and active, consistent and pragmatic, from the children's birth until they reach self-sufficient maturity.

There is a timeless story which sums up this concept. There was a man who, as he amassed more and more wealth, became increasingly self-centered. He became obsessed with hatred toward every imagined competitor. His only ambition in life was the pursuit of "himself". His personality deteriorated with his success. He would boast of his amazing wealth, while simultaneously permitting his aged and invalid father to live in a rundown, filthy, ramshackle apartment.

One cold, wintery day, this soulless person told his only son, "Your grandfather has been complaining about the cold. Take this blanket to him, and tell him not to bother me so much.

Everyday he asks me for something else." The young boy left and returned much later than expected. Noticing how long he had been gone , his father demanded an explanation for his tardiness. "You could have taken the blanket to your grandfather and returned much more quickly," the father admonished his son. "True," answered the boy, "but I was delayed because I was cutting the blanket in half. I gave Grandfather one half and the other part I'm keeping for you, Father, for the time when you will be as old and sick as he."