

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

The people are reproved for their unwillingness to take counsel, to listen to the voice of experience. Those who have lived through ordeals, who have experienced the ups and downs of life, who have seen the reward and punishment incurred by the behavior of previous generations, have advice for us. We must seek out their guidance and listen to their opinion. The voice of experience is not hypothetical. It has lived through various situations and has learned how to handle them.

Horav Aharon Walkin, zl, supplements this idea. The determining factor by which one can discern who is a *chacham*, wise man, or a *rasha*, wicked person, is the individual's ability and desire to question. The *chacham* seeks knowledge, delves into the profundities of *Torah*, leaves no stone unturned in his quest for perfection. The *rasha*, on the other hand, believes he has all of the answers. Attempting to "justify" all of his nefarious deeds, he offers an excuse for every one of his iniquitous actions. If he were to ask, he just "might" discover that the *Torah* frowns upon the action that he is contemplating. The *rasha* is no fool. He is aware that when he questions the permissibility of a given endeavor, he might receive a negative response. Thus, he refrains from asking.

This disparity between the *chacham* and *rasha* is manifest in the difference in attitudes between these two of the "four sons" mentioned in the *Haggadah*. The *chacham* questions, while the *rasha* just makes himself heard. He has no concern for the advice of others.

The *pasuk* advises us to "ask your father and he will tell you." When you have the sense to ask your father, he will tell you to approach "your elders and they will tell you." Your own father will encourage you to go to his father, your grandfather, for advice. Your own father will not render his own decision as long as he is aware of a voice of greater experience than his. One who has a great mind is inclined to take counsel from the individual who has more life experience than he.