

For they are a generation of reversals, children whose upbringing is not in them. (32:20)

Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl, adds a practical, sadly common, insight concerning the *dor tahapuchos*, generation of reversals, when everything is topsy turvy. Veritably, the way of the world should be that a father teaches/sees to his son's Torah-learning development and focuses on his spiritual growth. Conversely, the son is responsible for the support of his father. As a parent ages, daily work becomes a greater challenge. It is up to the son to arrange for his father's sustenance and wellbeing. Today, however, it is the other way around. Fathers no longer involve themselves or care about the son's Jewish education. They worry about their livelihood, how they will make it. High school, college, graduate school – everything but *yeshivah*. Sons have also reversed their roles. Rather than concern themselves with their father's physical needs, they address their spiritual needs, such as *kaddish* when the time comes, and the *matzeivah*, monument, over the grave. They even pay an annual visit to recite a few Hebrew words and bring flowers. *Banim lo eimun bam*, "Children whose upbringing is not in them." They do not carry out their appropriate purpose in life.

Rav Ferber quotes a contemporary who addresses the well-known *pasuk* in *Malachi* 3:24,25, "*Hinei Anochi sholeiach lachem es Eliyahu HaNavi... v'heishiv lev avos el banim v'lev banim el avos*, "Behold I will send to you Eliyahu HaNavi... and he will return the heart of fathers to their sons, and the heart of sons to their fathers." The often-quoted *pasuk* has become the standard for *kiruv*, outreach/return to the ways of our parents throughout the millennia. The *Rav* had a different twist. When Eliyahu will come, he will initiate the change, such that fathers will no longer worry only about their son's physical/mundane development, but also, more importantly, their spiritual evolution. Likewise, the sons who heretofore have only cared for their parents after they pass on will now address their physical health and welfare. We eagerly await that glorious day of Eliyahu HaNavi's arrival and hope that the reversal of foci will occur.

In some instances, fathers/parents do not spend time personally involved in their children's spiritual development – because they are out saving the world, reaching out to those in need of spiritual sustenance. *Kiruv* and *chinuch* are critically important fields of endeavor – for those who have the talent and the learning to succeed. It is a vital obligation on all Jews to be *mesakeh es ha'rabim*, bring merit to the multitudes. *Horav Chaim Vital, zl* (*Shaarei Kedushah* 2 *Shaar* 7), writes that those who achieve leadership positions throughout the generations merit this only after bringing Jews closer to their Father in Heaven. Avraham Avinu merited his extraordinary qualities only after he devoted himself to reaching out to a pagan filled society. It is told that an *avreich*, young *kollel* fellow, approached the *Brisker Rav* and asked his sage advice on how best to raise *frum*, Torah committed children in a society plagued with all forms of moral filth. The *Rav* replied, "I am unable to give you advice. However, one phenomenon I have observed: Those people who devote themselves to *zikui ha'rabim* merit that their children grow up to be committed Jews."

The *Chasam Sofer*, *z'l*, once expressed his dissatisfaction over the fact that he was so involved with his *kehillah*, congregation, and the Torah world in general, that he was unable to learn properly and spend time with his own children. Upon sharing his feelings with another *Rav*, he was told, "Hashem takes care of the children of those who devote their time to helping His children." The awesome *z'chus of zikui ha'rabim* will serve to protect his children – if he is sincere in his service to Hashem.