

For I have known him to the end that he may command his children and his household after him. (18:19)

Various means are available to infuse our children with a love for *Torah* and an appreciation of its *mitzvos*. Most of these methods are successful only under the immediate direction of the guardian or teacher. Our mission as parents and educators is to imbue our charges with such a devotion that, when the child has grown up and attained the independence which comes with adulthood, he will continue to attach importance to the teachings of parents and former teachers.

Rabbi S.R. Hirsch z.t.l. explains that such obedience, which develops as the child matures, is the prime objective of all education. For this reason, Hashem chose Avraham as the progenitor of His people. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*. Avraham could be expected to choose the best method for educating his children and the rest of his household to follow Hashem's mandate, therefore, even *uhrjt*, after Avraham departed this life, his descendants would continue to walk in the ways of Hashem.

Rabbi Hirsch further explains that the secret for success is in teaching by example. When parents act in a manner befitting members of the *Torah* nation, then their children will have reason to look up to them as moral and spiritual superiors. Children honor and respect those whom they perceive are deserving of this reverence. True obedience is generated, not by the substance of what is being asked, but rather by the character of the person who is eliciting the obedience.

Children are perceptive. They notice weakness in character, which will invariably limit their resolve to obey. One should not expect a child to acquire a virtue which he himself does not possess or one for which he is ill equipped to set a good example. A child's preparedness to obey of his own free will is the only source of genuine obedience. This type of obedience will endure when a parent is absent and continue to endure for generations to follow.

Rabbi A. Malka, Shlita, extends this idea in his interpretation of this *pasuk*. It was not Avraham *Avinu's* nature to demand behavior of others to which he did not personally adhere. His personal example was the epitome of education. He was a living example of unparalleled faith in the Almighty. His children and students, who were privy to this amazing display of *emunah*, faith, were thereby inspired to follow in his path. This is the alternate meaning of *uhrjt*, after him. Only after Avraham tread the path did he ask others to follow, *uhrjt*, after him. Thus, his educative process succeeded in inculcating a *Torah* nation with everlasting belief in Hashem.