

# PARENTING BY EXAMPLE

*by Rabbi Yaakov Menken*

*"Corruption is not His -- the blemish is His children's, a crooked and twisted generation. Behold, to HaShem you have done this, your Maker and the One who established you." [32:5-6]*

The Shaar Bas Rabim provides a homiletic interpretation of these verses. He says that they provide a profound lesson in parenting.

Some people, he says, behave incorrectly -- and they know it -- and yet, it does not bother them. Although they do not follow the Mitzvos, they feel no guilt for their actions, nor do they try to improve.

And yet, at the very same time, they expect exemplary behavior from their children. They expect their children to follow the path of Torah, to study and perform the Commandments. And if, or when, their children deviate from that path, it causes them a great deal of anguish.

Says the Shaar Bas Rabim -- they have been ensnared. They are making a tragic mistake. They need to understand: just as they expect their children to follow the straight path, the Holy One, Blessed be He, wants that from His children as well.

The children see that their parents do not listen to the voice of their Father in Heaven -- so why should they do any differently? By not listening to their parents, they follow their parents' example in two ways: through their misbehavior itself, and through their rejection of their parents' wishes. This is exactly what they should be expected to do -- so the parents should not be surprised if their children go off course.

This is what the verse says, translating just one or two words at a time: "his corruption" -- the fact that he himself is corrupt -- "no" -- this doesn't bother him at all; but "his children" -- the same corruption from his children -- "their blemish" -- it is a painful blemish in his eyes. This is "a crooked and twisted generation" -- such a person is mistaken, crooked in his thinking. "It is to HaShem that you do this" -- you yourselves are doing precisely the same thing to HaShem, Blessed be He, and "He is your Maker, the One who established you." He wants from you, as His child, that you follow the good and straight path -- and if you do not listen to your Father, how can you then expect from your children that they should listen to their parents?

If you would like to have children who are upright in their behavior, says the Shaar Bas Rabim, then you must be upright in your behavior. If you listen to your Father in Heaven, then your children will

listen to your own voice.

We all want our children to be good people -- I think it is natural for parents to want their children to "turn out better than we did!" We want our neighbors and friends to be good as well. The Shaar Bas Rabim is telling us that the way we can influence others -- especially our children -- is to influence ourselves first.

This is, of course, the ideal time for us to reexamine our actions, and improve them. On Yom Kippur we can start anew, and set ourselves in the right direction. We can only lead by example!

Good Shabbos, and may you be Sealed in the Book of Life,

Rabbi Yaakov Menken