

Lessons of the Quarterback

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Each person stores up wisdom in theory until it can become wisdom in life. For years we may have heard that absence makes the heart grow fonder; suddenly separated from someone we love, the words become vivid and true.

In a long letter to his brother and sister, Keats — who died at the tender age of 25 — wrote, "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced — Even a Proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it."

We teach our children truths knowing that they are not yet ready to appreciate them. The Kotzker Rebbe pointed out that the first paragraph of the shema teaches "and these words shall be on your heart." Surely they should be *in* our hearts? But hearts are not always open. If we learn them and repeat them, however, then in receptive moments, when our hearts are open, the wisdom will sink in.

Part of the task of education is to emulate the quarterback; he throws the ball ahead of the receiver who is in motion. We need to teach ahead of the life experience of our children. They are constantly in motion, and will catch the wisdom if we pitch it a few steps ahead.