

## “Kids Today”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

In each generation the grievance has been the same: the young will not listen to the wisdom of their elders. Plato made the complaint in ancient Greece, as did the prophets in ancient Israel. Adam and Eve probably sat around the fire sighing over the new generation.

The antiquity of the grievance tells us something about its inevitability. Perhaps there is something healthy in the cycle: one generation’s task is to disapprove, the next generation’s task is to disregard. Now dissent is text messaged and twittered, but the pattern endures.

The seventeenth century’s most famous Jewish scholar was Rabbi Elijah of Vilna — the renowned Vilna Gaon. Once he noticed that a disciple was engaged in fasting and other ascetic practices. The Gaon pulled the student aside, and told him this was not the proper way to express his devotion to the Torah or to God.

“But my master,” said the student, “I have heard that when you were young you also engaged in fasts and similar practices.”

“I did indeed,” admitted the Gaon. “But it was not correct, and I regret it now.”

The student nodded solemnly and answered, “I too wish to have something to regret.”

And so it goes.