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"If you had to pass on just one nugget of Jewish wisdom to your children, what would it be?"

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

As soon as I read this question I knew right away how I would come up with my answer. I would ask my wise son, Oren, soon to be fourteen, what he thought. He was multitasking at the time: eating breakfast, listening to music and on Instagram, which fortunately left open another channel for my question. He offered three rapid-fire answers.

First, he said, "You mean, like *dor va-dor*?" Yes, I said, precisely, and it immediately occurred to me that his meta-comment on the idea of passing down wisdom "from generation to generation" was, itself, a nugget of Jewish wisdom. The act of transmission and the commitment to it --- "and you shall teach your children" --- is a primary idea, preceding and outweighing the specific content to be passed down.

But what of the content? Oren's second and third answers, tied together, were quick to follow. First he quoted me Rabbi Tarfon's line, "It is not for you to finish the task, but nor are you free to desist from it." This quote is a mantra in our home and our community, but Oren made clear that it meant much more for him than mere lip service. This message, he elaborated, was what informed his activism and feeling of social responsibility. It served as motivation to work towards bettering the world with full awareness that the task would be too big for him or anyone of us alone. When pressed, he affirmed that he thought it was a very Jewish notion, though not exclusively Jewish. He then added on Rabbi Hillel's classic line, "If not now, when?" as a fitting coda.

Needless to say, my wife and I are *kvelling* that the nuggets have already been transmitted and received!