

## “Children of the Wilderness”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

The French writer Andre Malraux opens his autobiography, *Anti-Memoirs*, with the story of meeting an old comrade — a soldier with whom he fought in the war many years ago. The man subsequently became a Priest. He told Malraux that from years of listening to confessions he had learned two things about human nature: that people have more trouble than he imagined and that, “there is no such thing as a grown-up.”

In translation, this may be taken to be the central message of the Torah. Israel is called *B'nei Yisrael*, the children of Israel — and they often behave like children at their worst — whining and ungrateful. Moreover, they do experience great suffering. Indeed, when the Torah ends, when Deuteronomy concludes, the Israelites have not reached the promised land — they are still in the wilderness.

So we might recast the message of Malraux's friend as the guiding image of the Torah — we are children of the wilderness. Throughout life, limitation and suffering endure. We never arrive, and too few of us wander with the poise and maturity life demands.

Children need a parent and in the wilderness each of us needs a map. God and Torah are the aids for our wandering. So let us, children of the wilderness all, join hands and find the way together.