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Honoring Parents

A *Baraisa* was taught before Rav Nachman: When a person pains his parents, Hashem says: It was good that I did not dwell amongst them, for if I would have dwelt amongst them, they would have pained Me.

Rabbi Yitzchak says: Whoever sins privately is as if he is pushing away the feet of the Shechinah. This is as the verse says, “So says Hashem, the heaven is My seat, and the land is my footstool.”

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi says: It is forbidden for a person to walk four cubits with an upright bearing. This is as the verse states, “The world is filled with His honor.”

Rav Huna, the son of Rabbi Yehoshua, did not go four cubits with his head uncovered. He would say: The Shechinah is above my head.

The son of a widow once asked Rabbi Eliezer: If my father and mother ask me to bring them a drink at the same time, which should I listed to first? He replied: Leave the honor of your mother and do the honor of your father, as both your mother and you are obligated in your father’s honor. He went before Rabbi Yehoshua, who gave the same reply. The son then asked: “What if my mother is divorced?” Rabbi Yehoshua said, “From between your eyebrows it is apparent that you are the son of a widow. Put the water between them in a bowl and make noise towards them as one does to chickens.” [*Rabbi Yehoshua answered him in a humorous way because he saw that he*

was asking the question as if it pertained to him, when it in fact did not (the Maharsha explains why he did not give this answer originally).]

Ulla Rabbah taught a lesson at the entrance of the *Nasi’s* house. What does the verse mean when it says, “All of the kings of the land will laud you, for they heard the words of Your mouth?” It does not say the “word” of Your mouth, but rather the “words.” This means that when Hashem said, “I am Hashem...There should not be for you (*other gods besides Me*),” the nations of the world said that He is teaching for His own honor. Once He said, “Honor your father and mother,” they agreed to the first commandments as well (*for certainly, one must honor God, Who was a partner in a person’s creation, and life and death are in His power*).

Rava says: This lesson can be derived from here. The verse states, “The first of Your words are true.” Does this mean the last ones are not true? Rather, it means that the later words (*commandment to honor parents*) verify the first words.

They asked from Rav Ulla: How far does one have to go when honoring his parents? He answered: See what this idolater did in Ashkelon. His name was Dama ben Nesinah. Once, the *Chachamim* proposed a deal which would have given him a profit of six hundred thousand gold *dinars*. However, the key to the goods was under his father’s pillow, and his father was sleeping, so he did not pain his father.

Rav Yehudah says in the name of Shmuel: They asked Rabbi Eliezer how far one must go when honoring his parents. He answered: See what this idolater did in Ashkelon. His name was Dama ben Nesinah. Once, the *Chachamim* proposed to buy stones for the *eifod* (*article of clothing worn by the kohen gadol*), in a deal which would have given him a profit of six hundred thousand gold *dinars*. Rav Kahana taught it was eight hundred thousand. However, the key to the goods was under his father's pillow, and his father was sleeping, so he did not pain his father.

The next year Hashem repaid him, as a red heifer was born in his herd. The *Chachamim* came to him. He said: I know that if I ask for all of the money in the world you will give it to me, but I only seek from you the money I lost due to my honoring my father.

Rabbi Chanina says: If someone who is not commanded in honoring his parents acts in this fashion, certainly one who is commanded to honor his parents must do so. This is as Rabbi Chanina says: A person who is commanded to do *mitzvos* and does it, is greater than one who is not commanded to do it and he does it anyway.

Rav Yosef says: Originally I thought that if someone would tell me the law is like Rabbi Yehudah who holds a blind person is exempt from performing *mitzvos*, it would cause me to make a Yom Tov (*as Rav Yosef was blind*). This is because I am not even commanded to do the *mitzvos*, yet I do them anyway. However, now that I heard that Rabbi Chanina says that a person who is commanded to do *mitzvos* and does it, is greater than one who is not commanded to do it and he does it anyway, if someone tells me the law is unlike Rabbi Yehuda I will make a Yom Tov.

When Rav Dimi arrived (*from Eretz Yisroel*) he said: Once he (*Dama ben Nesinah*) was wearing fancy gold clothes and sitting amongst the important people of Rome. His

mother came and tore the clothing off him, hit him on his head, and spat on him, and he did not embarrass her.

Avimi the son of Rabbi Avahu taught: There can be a person who feeds his father pheasant and thereby he will be driven from the world, and there is a person who makes his father grind a grindstone and because of this he receives a portion in the World to Come.

Rabbi Avahu said: My son Avimi upholds the commandment of honoring one's parents. Avimi had five sons when his father was alive. Even so, when his father Rabbi Avahu would knock on the door, he would ensure that only he opened the door, and he would call out, "Yes, yes (*I'm coming*)" until he would answer it. One day, his father asked him to pour him a drink. By the time he got back to his father with the drink, his father had fallen asleep. He bent over him and waited until he woke up. Afterwards, he had a Heavenly burst of inspiration and understood the meaning of the chapter in Tehilim starting "A song of Asaf."

Rav Yaakov bar Avuha asked Abaye: When I come back from studying, my father and mother have both already poured me drinks. Which one should I take a drink from? He answered: Take the drink from your mother, as your father is a learned person, and it bothers him that he has to serve you (*even though he does it willingly, it bothers him somewhat*).

Rabbi Tarfon had a mother whom whenever she wanted to go up to her bed, she would step on him to help her go up, and she would likewise step on him to get down. One day, he made it be known that he was proud of this when he was in the study house. They said to him: You still have not gotten to half of the limits of honoring one's parents. Did she ever throw a wallet (*there is an argument among the commentaries whether this means her wallet or his wallet*) into the sea and you did not embarrass her?

When Rav Yosef (*who was blind*) would hear his mother approaching, he would say, "I will rise before the Shechinah."

Rabbi Yochanan says: Praised is one who never saw his parents (*as it is so difficult to fulfill this mitzvah properly*). When Rabbi Yochanan's mother was pregnant with him, his father died. When she gave birth to him, she died. This happened to Abaye's parents as well.

The *Gemora* asks: Is this true? Doesn't Abaye always quote things from his mother?

The *Gemora* answers: These are quotes from his adoptive mother.

Rav Assi had a mother who was very old. She demanded jewelry, and he gave it to her. She demanded that her son find her a man she could marry (*after his father had died*), and he said he would try. She demanded a man as good as Rav Assi. This caused Rav Assi to move to Eretz Yisroel (*as he simply could not fulfill her demands*). He heard that she was following him to Eretz Yisroel. He therefore asked Rabbi Yochanan: Can one go from Eretz Yisroel to outside of Eretz Yisroel? He said: No. He asked: What if it is to greet my mother? He answered: I do not know. He waited a little and then came back to him. Rabbi Yochanan said to him: Assi, you are going back? Ha'Makom (*Hashem*) should send you back safely. Rav Assi went before Rabbi Elozar, and asked him: Heaven forbid, perhaps he (*Rabbi Yochanan*) is angry with me! Rabbi Elozar asked him: What did he say to you? Rav Assi answered: He said "Hamakom (*Hashem*) should send you back safely." Rabbi Elozar remarked: If he would have been angry with you, he would not have blessed you. At this time, he found out that his mother had died. He said, "If I would have known (*that this would be the question*), I certainly would not have went (to greet her body outside of Eretz Yisroel (see *Pnei Yehoshua*)).

The *Baraisa* states: One should honor them when they are alive and when they are dead. What is an example? If someone knows his father is respected in a certain place, he should say to the people there that they should send/help/exempt him because of his own standing (*even though they respect him as well*), but rather because of that of his father. How does he honor his parents when they are dead? If he was saying over a Torah thought from his father, he should not say, "This is what my father said," but rather he should say, "This is what my father, my teacher said, I am the atonement of his laying (*death*)."
He should add this last phrase within twelve months of his death. If it is more than twelve months, he should merely add, "His memory is a blessing for eternal life in the World to Come." (31a1 – 31b2)

INSIGHTS TO THE DAF

HONORING PARENTS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

WHAT IS THE LIMIT?

There are two major categories under which the halachos of conduct towards parents are subsumed: *kibud*, honoring them, and *mora*, revering them.

KIBUD AV V'EIM - HONOR OF PARENTS

Kibud is accomplished in three different ways:

1. Through the children's thoughts - children are supposed to view their parents as being honorable and respected people - even if they are not considered as such in the eyes of others. This attitudinal aspect of the mitzvah is the main part of *kibud* (1);
2. Through the children's actions - this includes feeding, dressing and escorting them, and generally assisting them in all of their needs as a servant would do for his master.



These actions must be done b'sever panim yafos, pleasantly and enthusiastically. The manner in which one assists parents is a crucial aspect of the *mitzvah* (2). Even if the child is in the midst of learning Torah, he must stop to assist his parents (3).

3. Through the children's speech - e.g., when a child is honored, he should credit his parents for the honor bestowed upon him. When a child asks others to grant his request or to do him a favor, he should not request it in his own merit, but rather, in the merit of his father or mother [when applicable] (4).

Parents may excuse their children from the mitzvah of *kibud*(5). In fact, it is advisable for them to do so. A parent who constantly exacts respect from his children will surely cause his children to be punished on his account (6). Consequently, although according to the *halachah* (7) a child should stand up when a parent enters (8) the room (9), in practice this *halachah* is not widely observed. It is safe to assume that most parents excuse their children from demonstrating this honor towards them (10), and since they do, the children are not obligated (11). It is recommended, though, that children ask their parents explicitly if they excuse them from demonstrating this *kibud*¹².

Reciting Kaddish after a parent's death falls into the category of *kibud* (13). Consequently, a parent may excuse his child from saying Kaddish after his passing (14).

MORA AV V'EIM - REVERENCE OF PARENTS

The second category of the halachos governing the conduct of children to parents is *mora*, reverence, or fear. It means that one should act towards his parents as he would towards a sovereign with the power to punish those who treat him disrespectfully (15). Specifically, this commandment prohibits a child from sitting in his parents' set places at home or in shul, interrupting them,

contradicting them [in an abrupt or disrespectful manner] and calling them by their first names (16).

Most *poskim* maintain that parents may also excuse their children from the mitzvah of *mora* (17). Consequently, it has become customary that children sit in their father's place in shul, since parents are not particular about this show of respect (18).

Parents may not, however, allow themselves to be degraded, hit or cursed by their children. Those actions are not excusable (19).

Even if a parent is, G-d forbid, insane and has embarrassed the child in public, it is nevertheless forbidden for the child to shame or degrade the parent (20). One may, however, take steps to ensure that his parents are not publicly embarrassed [e.g., one may arrange to have others bar the parents from a public gathering, etc. (21)].

When an elderly father lives with his son, the son is not required to give up his seat at the head of the table (22), although the custom in many homes is to do so (23). In any case, the son must allow his father to wash his hands first and to be served first (24), etc.

A son should preferably not daven Shemoneh Esrei within four amos [approximately eight feet] of his father (25).

If her husband objects, a married woman is not required to honor her parents. She is, however, obligated to revere them and to avoid demeaning them (26).

FOOTNOTES:

1 *Chayei Adam* 67:3. See explanation in *Sichos Mussar* (5731, *Ma'amar* 22).

2 *Y.D.* 240:4.

3 Pischei Teshuvah 240:8; Harav S.Z. Auerbach (oral ruling quoted in Kibud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam, pg. 25).

4 Y.D. 240:5; Chayei Adam 67:5.

5 The parents may change their mind and revoke their exemption - Maharam Shick Y.D. 218.

6 Y.D. 240:19. See Alei Shur pg. 261 for elaboration.

7 This is a Biblical obligation - Rosh Kiddushin 1:57. There are various views in the poskim as to how many times per day this obligation applies - see Chayei Adam 67:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 24; Shevet ha-Levi 1:111-4; Avnei Yashfei 1:185.

8 According to some poskim, the obligation to stand up for a parent begins when the child hears their footsteps - see Gilyon Maharsha Y.D. 240:7 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24. Other poskim rule that the obligation begins only when seeing them - see Chayei Adam 67:7; Chazon Ish Y.D. 149:10.

9 Y.D. 240:7. This is an obligation of kibud - Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:24; Chazon Ish Y.D. 149:4; Gesher ha-Chayim 20:9.

10 See Sefer Chasidim 152 and 339.

11 Even when parents have exempted their children from honoring them, if the children honor them they are fulfilling a mitzvah- R' Akiva Eiger and Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 240:16.

12 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Avnei Yashfei 1:185 and in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam pg. 49.

13 Chayei Adam 67:6.

14 Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 344:1.

15 Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos 211.

16 Y.D. 240:2.

17 Birkei Yosef 240:13. See also Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:133.

18 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:9.

19 Teshuvos Rivash 220; Meishiv Davar 2:50. See Minchas Shelomo 32.

20 Y.D. 240:8-10.

21 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:32. See Tzitz Eliezer 12:59.

22 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11.

23 She'arim ha-Metzuyanim B'halachah 143:2. Harav S.Z. Auerbach, Harav Y.S. Elyashiv and Harav C.P. Scheinberg

are quoted (Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam, pg. 19; Kibud v'Yiras Horim K'hilchasam, pg. 62) as ruling that it is proper for the son to offer his seat to his father. If the father declines, then the son may sit there.

24 Aruch ha-Shulchan 240:11; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv and Harav B.Z. Abba Shaul (oral ruling quoted in Mora ha-Horim v'Kibudam, pg. 19).

25 O.C. 90:24 and Mishnah Berurah 73, 77, 78. See Beur Halachah there.

26 Y.D. 240:17, Shach 19 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 38. See, however, Tzitz Eliezer 16:28.

DAILY MASHAL

The Radiant Point in Each Person

HaRav Chaim Shmulevitz zt'l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Mir in Yerushalayim, wondered how a Jew could carry out the mitzvah of honoring one's father properly. The Torah compares parents' honor to that of Hashem! How can a son honor his father in such a sublime way? Aren't there sons have find it difficult to properly honor fathers whose conduct is unbecoming? R. Chaim replied: Every Jew has a shining inner point in his *neshamah* that is unique to him. With a bit of reflection, a son will find his father's unique shining point, and then it will be easy for the son to accord him his due honor.