



Kibbud Av va'Em כבוד אב ואם



Kibud Av Va'Em - honouring father and mother - is one of the very few commandments in the Torah which has an explicit reward. Jewish tradition teaches that this highlights the importance of the mitzvah. Honouring our parents is seen as a way of honouring God, who is the Parent and Creator of all. This understanding is reinforced by the fact that in the Ten Commandments, honouring father and mother (commandment number 5) is the transitional command between those obligations Jews maintain towards God and those obligations we maintain towards other people. The concept of honouring parents extends beyond just honouring one's own parents; the parents of others and the parental feelings of animals are to be honoured as well.

Blessing for the Study of Torah:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, vitzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, our Eternal God, Ruler of the Universe, Who makes us holy through mitzvot, and commands us to engage in the study of Torah.

פרשנות Commentary

Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut (born 1912) is the leading historian, scholar and representative of the Reform Movement. He is best known as the editor of the U.A.H.C.'s, *The Torah, A Modern Commentary*, in which he writes:

Jewish tradition has underscored the importance of one's duty to honour father and mother by listing it among the commandments on the first tablet. It is thus seen as concluding the catalogue of man's basic obligations to God. Parents are God's representatives and partners in the rearing of their children, and children who fail to respect this special position are offending against God as well. Even as the penalty of death is prescribed for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:15-16), so it is for striking, cursing - some say even insulting! - one's parents. No difference is made between father and mother (p.556).

In the *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, the compilation of Jewish laws and customs, it is noted:

What constitutes "fear"? One must not occupy the place appointed for one's father, in a council of elders or the place reserved for him to pray. One should not occupy the seat generally occupied by his father at the dinner table. One must neither contradict one's father nor even corroborate his words in his presence, like saying, "Father is right." To what degree shall parents be feared? If a son, attired in costly garments, were to preside over a meeting, and his father or his mother came and rent

מקורות From our Sources

From Scripture:

Honour your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land which the Eternal your God is giving you. (Exodus 20:12)

One who strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.... One who insults his father or his mother shall be put to death. (Exodus 21:15, 17)

The Eternal spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Eternal your God, am holy. You shall each revere your mother and father and keep my sabbaths; I the Eternal am your God. (Leviticus 19:1-3)

The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young vultures shall eat it. (Proverbs 30:17)

From the Teachings of the Sages:

These are the things for which no measure is prescribed: gleanings, first-fruits, the festive offering, deeds of loving-kindness and the study of Torah. These are the things whose fruits a person enjoys in this world while the capital remains in the world to come: honouring father and mother, acts of loving-kindness, and making peace between one person and another. But the study of Torah equals them all. (Mishnah Peah 1.1)

Of those who honour their parents, God says, I ascribe merit to them as though I had dwelt among them and they honoured Me. (BT Kiddushin 30b)

his garments, and struck him on the head, and spat in his face, he should neither insult them nor show distress in their presence, or display anger towards them; but he should remain silent and the Ruler who is the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One of Blessing, who thus decreed. He may, however, seek legal redress for the damages they have caused him.

What constitutes "honour"? One must provide them with food and drink and clothing. One should bring them home and take them out, and provide them with all their needs cheerfully. Children who provide their parents with fattened poultry, but do so with ill grace, incur Divine punishment. (Chapter 143:2-3)

שיחה Questions for Discussion:

It is interesting to note that we are not commanded to love our parents, but rather to honour and fear them. The fact that the Torah prescribes the death penalty for those flagrantly and violently disregard this command suggests that the need to honour parents is not only deemed important, but that the practise of honouring parents was something that was not well maintained. It is easy to extrapolate that those who fail to show honour and respect for their own parents will also have the same problem extending honour and respect to others.

- 1) What is the difference between "honouring" one's parents and "fearing" one's parents. How do you demonstrate honour and fear for your parents?
- 2) How is one to fulfil this commandment when their parents obviously do not warrant honour, through bad behaviour or disregard for their own parental responsibilities?
- 3) How does the commandment to honour one's parents make us better parents?

