horeinu in the Parsha

Parents above all

Issue no. 148

Weekly Torah forum to deepen halachic and ideological knowledge and to strengthen the mitzvah of kibbud av va'eim

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Dibros Kodshecha

Kibbud Av V'eim in the Parshah

In *Sefer Yosher Hori*,[1] Rabbi Yosef Rappaport brings proof from the Midrash on the *Akeidah* regarding an important halacha: even if a father forgoes his honor, a child is still not permitted to cause him pain or strike him, and doing so remains a transgression. The Midrash[2]:, which shows how *Yitzchak Avinu* took great care to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring his father during the *Akeidah*: When Avraham sought to bind his son Yitzchak, he said to him: 'Father, I'm young, and I fear that my body may tremble from fear of the knife **and cause you pain**, and the slaughtering may thereby be rendered invalid,' *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* writes a slight variation on the wording: "Yitzchak said to his father Avraham: 'Father, please bind my hands and feet tightly because of the convulsions, so that I do not accidentally compromise your honor. .'"

The *Radal* suggests that the correct reading may be "because of the convulsions,[3] coming from the term for kicking out the hands and feet during spasms. *Targum Yonasan* translates: "that I should not convulse because of my pain" — meaning that due to his suffering, he might reflexively kick out his leg and strike his father. This concept is also hinted at in *Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Yalkut Shimoni*.[4] where the *pasuk* "Honor your father" is fulfilled by Yitzchak when he allowed himself to be bound like a lamb to the slaughter.

Tanna Devei Eliyahu Rabbah (ch. 27) offers a further *chiddush*: Yitzchak said to his father Avraham: 'Bind me well and place me upon the *Mizbeach*, lest I sin against you and be found liable for two deaths before Hashem." Yitzchak feared two sins punishable by death: failing to honor his father properly and invalidating the korban by striking a parent. Because of this, he was terrified that his convulsions might cause him to kick his father and incur a heavenly capital punishment.

R' Yosef Rappaport says all these Midrashim are difficult to understand. Yitzchak feared that the natural spasms following shechitah might cause him to kick his father or inflict pain. Surely Avraham would have forgiven him, since he wanted to do the *Akeida*. From a halachic standpoint, no forgiveness was required, as the convulsions were caused by Avraham's act of shechitah. Why was Yitzchak concerned that he would transgress

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kibbud av and incur a heavenly death penalty? After all, a father may forgo his honor.

This addresses the question: A father can only forgive disrespect, not physical injury or pain. As the Sefer Chassidim notes (par. 573), when a father waives his honor, earthly courts forgive the offense, but before Hashem one remains liable to death. *Yitzchak Avinu* therefore feared he might kick his father, knowing that his father's forgiveness would not suffice in this case.

1. סימן ו' עמוד קי"ח 2. מדרש רבא פרשת וירא נ"ו, ח'. ובפרקי דר"א ל"א, 3.כההיא דחולין לז. 4. פרשת ואתחנן רמז תת"ל

Way of Life

Kibbud Av Va'eim in Halachah and Minhag

Just as it is the duty of every Jew to learn the halachos applicable to everyday life, from berachos and Shabbos to shemiras halashon, so is he obligated to learn and review the laws of kibbud av va'eim, a constant and very serious mitzvah. Neglecting this study is liable to lead the person to unwittingly violate many halachos.

Based on the sefer Vayevarech David, by the illustrious Rabbi Yisrael David Harfenes, moreh tzedek and rabbi of the Yisrael VeHazmanim Synagogue and Community, Williamsburg

Sitting in One's Parents' Place When They Are Absent — Part I

One may not sit in his father's seat in shul or beis midrash, nor in his mother's seat in the women's section—even when they are not present—unless they have waived their rights and granted permission. The *poskim* debate whether this prohibition applies to a seat reserved exclusively for Shabbos, for weekdays only, for *Shacharis* but not *Minchah* and *Maariv*, or vice versa. (Siman 6, p. 108)

Some *poskim* maintain that if one's father has a fixed place to daven only for *Shacharis*, but does not sit there for *Minchah* and *Maariv*, the prohibition against sitting in one's father's place still applies. Rabbi Shalom Elyashiv z"l ruled accordingly. However, if the father prays there only for *Minchah* and *Maariv*, the son may sit in the seat when his father is absent, as a fixed place for those prayers is not considered a designated seat. In practice, Rabbi Azriel Auerbach said that it is preferable for the father to waive his right in such a case. (Notes of Rabbi Y. Shuv *shlita*)

If a father purchased a seat with the explicit intent that his sons could use it in his absence, this is entirely permissible and does not constitute a deficiency in honoring or revering one's father. In the *sefer Ohel Yaakov*[1] citing *Meshiv Nevunim* (vol. 6), it explains that, if that intention existed at the time of purchase, the seat is considered jointly designated for both father and sons. Even though the father was the primary purchaser, the sons may use the seat whenever he is absent. Furthermore, if he explicitly stipulated at purchase that they could use it in his absence, it is not considered his designated place at all, and they may sit there freely. The halacha of "a designated seat" for one's father or mother applies not only to a fixed place in shul, but also to a fixed seat in the car, as well as to a regular armchair at home, etc. Unless they explicitly say everyone may sit there whenever the parents are absent, one must avoid sitting in their seat.

When the Torah states, "So that your days may be prolonged," it is not simply a promise of reward. Rather, it tells a person: after all, your own days will also be prolonged in the land; you too will become a parent, and you too will reach an age when you will need your children. If you honor your father and mother, your children will likewise honor you in your old age. (*Abarbanel*)

1. על שו"ע ר"מ הל' כיבוד אב ואם

In Our Fathers' Footsteps

True Stories of Kibbud Horim

One never distances oneself from Father.

A man once came to see the *Chozeh of Lublin*. He asked for a *Bracha* and went on to elaborate at length on how they were related to get a warm *bracha*! The *Chozeh of Lublin* replied dismissively, "It's a distant relationship." The man later related these words to the great R' Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz, who advised him to stand near the *Chozeh of Lublin* while he said the *chazaras ha-shatz*. He advised him that when the *Chozeh of Lublin* says, "אלוקי אברהם אלוקי יצחק ואלוקי יעקב," he should humbly whisper, "*This is a distant relationship*," for we are removed from them by many generations; how, then, can we ask that their merit protect us?

The man followed Rabbi Naftali's advice, and indeed, the *Chozeh* heard his words. After davening, he graciously received the man.

When the Brisker Rov heard this story, he very much enjoyed it and added, "One is never distant from a father." A grandfather's watchful eye protects his descendants across the generations.

I wish to hear Havdalah from Father.

Rabbi David Heller of Lugano, Switzerland, shared the following story: When the Belzer Rebbe, Rabbi Aharon, arrived in Eretz Yisrael, the young Rabbi Meir Halevi—son of Maran Rabbi Yitzchak Zev— went to greet him while still single. The Rebbe had a custom to shake hands with bearded men, while greeting clean-shaven youths with a towel-wrapped hand. As the beardless young Rabbi Meir stepped forward, those nearby whispered to the Rebbe, "This is the son of the Brisker Rav." Hearing this, the Rebbe immediately removed the towel and shook his hand directly.

One Shabbos, when the Belzer Rebbe, Rabbi Aharon, was leading his Tish, the great Rabbi Meshulam Dovid Halevi joined him. Although it was already *Motzaei Shabbos*, the Rebbe was still eating *shalos seudos*.

When the Rebbe was told that the son of the Brisker Rav had come, he offered him a cup of wine. Since Rabbi Meshulam Dovid Halevi never ate or drank after Shkiah, he explained that he could not join the l'chaim, as he had already benched but had not yet made *Havdalah*. The Rebbe responded, "Nu, then make *Havdalah* right now over the cup of wine." Rabbi Meshulam Dovid replied, "I have the custom of hearing *Havdalah* from Father." Deeply impressed by this response and by his dedication to hearing *Havdalah* specifically from his father, the Rebbe said, "זייער גלייך, זייער גלייך" — "Very proper, very proper."

(*Facts and Practices of the House of Brisk*, vol. 3, p. 200)

Behind the Scene

A *maamar Chazal* or halachah related to *kibbud av va'eim* is concealed in the picture. Send in the solution, and you'll be entered to win a prize!

Solutions may be sent by
email to: riddle@horeinu.org
fax to: 077-602-1640

Solution to Behind the Scenes –
Esav's descendants fall only at the hands of Rachel's descendants." This may be explained as follows: Esav's merit to endure across the generations stemmed entirely from the profound honor he showed Yitzchak, just as Rachel's descendants merited survival because they never caused Yaakov pain. The Meshech Chochmah (Shemos 28:9) points to a profound historical parallel: Every single one of the Shevatim caused their father pain by selling Yosef, and Yosef himself did not tell his father where he was. Only Binyamin remained entirely clear of causing any grief.

The raffle winners were informed of their win.

On a Personal Note

A heartfelt letter received by one of Horeinu's facilitators from a young woman navigating the challenges of kibbud av va'eim

I'm sitting in my room, holding this notepad in my hands... the one where I'm supposed to write down something I appreciate about my father daily. But what am I supposed to appreciate about my father?! I'm writing this with a heavy heart... I searched everywhere; I truly did. I sat for hours, struggling to find something, a single moment, an action, or even one word, I could lean on and say: For this I admire him; for this I honor him. Yet every time, there was nothing, only an aching void. Not because I don't want to find it, but because it hurts too much.

My friends talk about their fathers as pillars of strength; I listen, and I smile while something inside me tightens. No one teaches you how to handle such struggles, or how to honor someone when your heart tells you otherwise.

Then I remember that the Torah did not write, "Honor your father and your mother only if they are worthy of it." The mitzvah was given without conditions. When we stood at Har Sinai, we received this mitzvah too among the *Aseres HaDibros*, without any footnotes. I once thought that was unfair. Today I understand it carries a strong message for me: the Torah trusts I can withstand this, even when it's difficult.

There's another factor I can't ignore. I'm here. I can breathe, think, and feel, even if this pain is part of the life I was given. Our *Chachamim* taught us that a father and mother partner with Hashem in creating a child. Without my father, I would not be here. I cannot erase that, nor do I want to. This is the first and most fundamental *hakaras hatov* a person has to have! One that needs neither justification nor feelings. It is simply the undeniable truth.

I have come to realize one more truth. When I carry anger, only my own shoulders bear the weight. My father goes on with his life, while I'm left carrying extra weight in my heart. Yet whenever I manage—even for one minute—to offer a measure of respect, something inside me settles. My breathing deepens, and my heart grows a little lighter. In my soul, I feel that bitterness only pulls me under, while honoring frees me. Perhaps that is precisely why the mitzvah was given this way: not for our parents, but for us!

I do not honor my father because he has earned it. I honor him because it is Hashem's will. After all, he gave me the gift of life. That does not mean the pain vanishes, nor does it mean I have to pretend things are not the way they are. One can show respect while holding the pain in that very same heart. This is my choice. It doesn't solve everything, but it gives me strength to move on.

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V'heishiv Lev

Questions and Answers from the Desk of Rabbanim and Therapists

? We eagerly look forward to Horeinu's weekly newsletter, which continues to inspire and uplift us week after week! It is so important to strengthen this subject within our community, and *b"h*, your efforts are bearing fruit; educators across the community are becoming more aware of this important topic and the tremendous need for *Chizuk* and guidance. Horeinu has become so firmly established that various publications now frequently refer their readers to its newsletters.

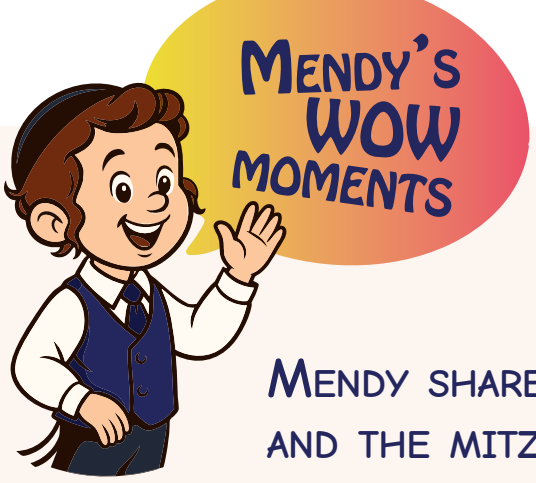
I would like your guidance on finding a good therapist. —one with *Torah haskafos* who knows the *halachos* of *kibbud av va'eim*. My eighteen-year-old daughter has a very particular challenge in her relationship with her mother. She feels the current situation has become "very unhealthy." Until now, she has been very respectful and faced her challenges with remarkable courage. She is looking for a therapist or mentor who can teach her practical coping skills to help her heal.

> Thank you for your kind words. B"h, public awareness is growing, and we are receiving wonderful feedback. Many young adults and adult children are seeking guidance on how to honor their parents through difficult times. The question is always how to honor, never whether to honor. This is deeply inspiring; it shows that this generation seeks Torah clarity and truth and stands firm against modern professional advice that encourages estrangement.

This generation, so often mislabeled as undisciplined, finds its true strength in its independence. With renewed awareness, people are starting to recognize the need to reject advice to sever ties with parents, reject this dangerous approach, and insist on fulfilling the mitzvah we accepted at Har Sinai: "כבד את אביך ואת אמך" — Honor your father and your mother.

If this shift is to reach the therapeutic world—stopping the unfortunate trend where professionals inadvertently drive a wedge between children and parents—we must first recognize a vital truth: honoring parents is a *Mitza D'oraysa*, and staying connected to one's roots is ultimately in the child's best interest for his emotional and spiritual well-being, while ensuring the child's safety whenever necessary. The public must make a clear, unequivocal statement: We will not accept therapists who foster estrangement in any form. Only when the public makes this stance clear from the outset, remains vigilant, and resolutely rejects even a single session with any therapist who creates distance from parents, will we see real changes, bs"d.

You can direct questions to Horeinu advisers
via the email address appearing
on the last page.
Confidentiality guaranteed



written by Y. Binyamin

Mendy shares a story about Tatty and Mommy and the mitzvah of kibbud av va'eim

Three Eggs and One Cup of Sugar

Ima always seems to know where everything is, whether it's hunting for Leiby's shoes after he's turned the entire house upside down, or figuring out which child left the bathroom light on when everyone insists they haven't touched the switch since Rosh Chodesh.

But this week, I discovered that even Ima can forget. And that realization cost me three eggs and a cup of sugar.

It all began on Thursday afternoon. Ima was standing in the kitchen, baking a chocolate cake for Shabbos. I hovered nearby—mostly to help lick the chocolate out of the mixing bowl—make sense, since one must be careful about bal tashchis, of course. Suddenly, Ima realized she was short of three eggs and a cup of sugar. She asked me to run down to the Friedmans to borrow the missing ingredients. The next morning, Ima handed me three eggs and a cup of sugar to return. I trotted back down, handed them to Mrs. Friedman, who wished me a warm "Good Shabbos," and headed back upstairs. Until then, everything had been simple. The problem began on Monday.

Ima suddenly remembered she hadn't returned the borrowed ingredients to the Friedmans. "But Ima, I returned them on Friday!" I said, but Ima was convinced I was mixing up the trip I made to borrow them with the one I made to return them. I tried to convince her that I had taken care of it. I even reminded her that Mrs. Friedman had wished me a Good Shabbos. But Ima had already pulled eggs from the fridge and measured out a cup of sugar.

Just then, Chani, Roni, and Leiby walked in. Within moments, the family started debating whether I had returned the eggs or it was just my overactive imagination. Chani suggested I might be mixed up; Roni advised staying out of it, though returning the ingredients anyway couldn't hurt; and Leiby wondered if maybe the eggs had cracked on the way down the stairs. It's good to know that, in times of need, I have only one person I can count on myself!!

The truth is that I was a little hurt. I'm nine years old, not two. I'm totally capable of remembering walking down a flight of stairs carrying three eggs and a cup of sugar! If someone asked what I had for lunch on Friday, I might have to think twice. But three eggs and a cup of sugar? That's practically an historic event.

I was about to explain exactly when I went and what the neighbor said, and maybe even invite Mrs. Friedman to testify before the family's investigative committee. But then I held myself back.

I thought about my mother. She wasn't trying to

(continued on page 7..)

upset me. She had forgotten, and she wanted to make sure we didn't owe the neighbors anything. If I kept arguing with her in front of everyone, I might prove I was right, but Ima would feel uncomfortable. So, I kept quiet, took the ingredients, and went downstairs.

Mrs. Friedman opened the door and smiled when she saw me. "Mendy, you already brought those back on Friday!" she said. I explained that Ima just wanted to make sure we didn't owe them anything. Mrs. Friedman told me to tell Ima everything was fine—as far as she was concerned, we didn't owe them anything!

I ran back upstairs carrying the eggs and sugar. With every step, I pictured walking into the living room and making a statement: "Well! I told you so!" Honestly, it would have been a glorious moment, especially seeing Chani's face. Leiby might have been impressed (even though you can never really know with him)/

But then I thought: What for? So that Ima should feel embarrassed for forgetting?

I quietly slipped into the kitchen, put the eggs and sugar back where they belonged, then went to the living room, where everyone was hanging out. Ima asked if I had returned the borrowed ingredients, and I said yes. Ima looked relieved that it was all sorted out, thanked me, and we all went back to what we had been doing.

No one applauded me. Chani didn't admit she made a mistake. Roni didn't retract his halachic ruling. And Leiby didn't apologize for suspecting I had broken the eggs.

But that night, as I lay in bed, I thought of something interesting.

I know that kibbud av va'eim means listening to one's parents, speaking respectfully, and not contradicting them. But this week I discovered something deeper: sometimes honoring a parent means safeguarding their dignity, holding back from proving we were right, to avoid causing them discomfort.

And that's not easy. Sometimes it is far harder to bite your tongue and skip saying, "I told you so!" than to give up your favorite snack—especially when you know you're right and even have witnesses.

The next morning, Ima thanked me again for my help. I just smiled. She had no idea what I had given up for her sake—but I knew. And that was enough.

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Created by the Worldwide Horeinu organization. Our goal is to spread awareness and help Klal Yisroel strengthen the mitzvah of kibbud av va'eim with the guidance of gedolei Yisroel Registered organization #580780617

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