

KIBUID

AV V'EIM

כיבוד אב ואם



HONOR YOUR FATHER & MOTHER

compiled by Rabbi Jack Abramowitz

אב The word father in Hebrew is אב, Av. The value of א, alef, is one, symbolic of Hashem. ב, beis, means house or home in Hebrew. The father is the start of the alef-beis; he is the one who starts the home. The numerical value of the word אב is three, corresponding to the three forefathers of Judaism, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, whose example the father must strive to emulate.

The Hebrew word for mother is אם, Eim. This is spelled the same as the word im, meaning "if." **אם** This shows us that the family follows the path laid by the mother, if she goes in this direction, or if she goes in that. Additionally, throughout Jewish history redemption has been brought about through great alef-mem pairs (Aharon & Moshe in Egypt; Esther and Mordechai in Shushan; Eliyahu and Moshiach in the near future). This is symbolic of the great potential within every mother.

בן If the mother is Jewish, the child is Jewish; if not, not. The nature of the child follows the mothers. Similarly, the word for son בן, ben, is comprised of the letters beis and nun, the letters immediately following alef and mem (mother). This is demonstrative of the manner in which the children follow the mother.

Daughter in Hebrew is בת, bas. **בת** Again we see a reference to בית, bayis, a home. This generation's daughters will be the next generation's mothers, the cornerstone of the Jewish home. But in order to turn a בת into a בית, one first has to add the element of the yud. Yud is the letter of Hashem's name. Hashem is the crucial ingredient needed to ensure the continuity of the Jewish home.

Adapted from The Secrets of Hebrew Words by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

The Iuchos

(the two tablets upon which Hashem gave Moshe the Ten Commandments) are divided into two sections. On the first tablet, Moshe was given the mitzvos bein Adam l'Makom, the commandments that are between a person and Hashem. These include observing Shabbos and not worshipping idols. Inscribed on the second tablet were the mitzvos bein Adam l'chaveiro, the mitzvos between a person and his fellow man. Among these are not stealing, killing, or committing adultery.

So why is honoring our parents on the first tablet, which is reserved for mitzvos that are between us and Hashem?

In truth, honoring our parents is an aspect of honoring Hashem. All three of them – our mothers, our fathers, and Hashem – were partners in creating us. When we honor our parents, it is an honor to Hashem. Conversely, when we shame our parents, we are not only a disappointment to them, but to Hashem as well.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 31a) relates that when Hashem pronounced the first two of the Aseres HaDibros (Ten Commandments), "I am Hashem..." and "Thou shall have no other gods..." the nations of the world said "He is only giving the Torah for His own honor!" But when he pronounced the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and mother," they admitted that the whole of the Torah was true. The lesson of this Gemara is that it is only through honoring our parents that we can truly begin to understand what it means to honor Hashem.



THE STORY OF DAMA BEN NESINA

Our Sages tell us that to understand the extent to which we must honor our parents, we must learn from the examples of Dama ben Nesina.

A non-Jewish merchant named Dama ben Nesina of Ashkelon possessed some jewels needed for the ephod (Kohein Gadol's breastplate). The treasurers of the Beis HaMikdash offered him 600,000 gold dinars, far more than their worth. But the key to the safe where the jewels were kept was under his father's pillow and Dama refused to wake him, no matter how great the profit.



A year later a parah adumah (red heifer needed for a particular service in the Beis HaMikdash) was born in his herds. The Sages returned to purchase it.

Dama ben Nesina said to them, "I know you would pay any amount I asked for this cow, but all I desire is the sum I lost by honoring my father."

On another occasion, Dama ben Nesina was sitting among high ranking Roman officials, decked out in silks and gold. Along came his mother, who was disturbed, and ripped his clothes and spit in his face. Nevertheless he did not embarrass her.

Kiddushin 31a

ABIMI says that one person can feed his father fattened fowl and sin while another person can make his father work in a mill and earn Olam Habah (Paradise).

How so? There was one man who used to serve his father choice

pheasants. When the father asked how he could afford such luxuries, the son yelled at him, "Shut up and eat, old man!" This is a grave sin.

There was also a miller whose father was summoned to work

SELECTED LAWS OF KIBUD AV V'EIM

- One must stand for one's parents the first time they enter the room in the morning and in the evening, and in the presence of other people. (The Sefardic custom is every time they enter the room, even 100 times a day.)
- One should serve his parents cheerfully, providing them with food, drink, and other comforts.
- Even if one's parents become senile or mentally disturbed, one may not embarrass them or speak to them disrespectfully.
- One may not call his parents by their first name. One may not even refer to them by name when they're not around. If there is someone with the same name as your parent and your parent is also there, it is preferable to call that other person by his full name, so it should not appear that you are calling your parent by name.
- Striking one's parent is a grave sin. If one struck their parent and drew blood, in the time of the Beis HaMikdash (Temple) he would be liable to the death penalty. Cursing one's parent, even after their death, is likewise a severe aveirah (sin).
- One may not contradict one's parents.
- One may not sit in their parent's designated place.

for the king. He said to his father, "go and run the mill for me. Since the royal service involves verbal and physical abuse, I will go and suffer it in your place." This merits Olam Habah.

Kiddushin 31a and Talmud Yerushalmi

25 TIPS FOR KIBUD AV V'EIM

- Walk or take your bike instead of making Mom or Dad drive you.
- Cook dinner.
- Walk the dog.
- Come home on time.
- A few minutes early wouldn't kill you, either.
- Did you hug your parents today?
- After Chanukah, clean up the menorah and put it away.
- Call your folks just to let them know you're okay.
- If your parents mistakenly accuse you of something your sister did, don't raise your voice; politely ask if you can explain.
- Do a load of laundry.
- Ask to be excused before leaving your parents' presence.
- Set the table.
- Clear it, too.
- If you see your parent doing something prohibited by the Torah, do not say, "that's not allowed." Instead, gently ask, "does the Torah say that we should..."
- Stop arguing with your brother; Mom doesn't need the noise.
- Ask "is there anything I can do for you?"
- Do not contradict your mother or father.
- Speak softly and politely to Mom and Dad.
- Watch your younger siblings.

- These suggestions on how to honor your parents also apply to your grandparents, adoptive parents, stepparents, your mother-in-law and father-in-law (when you get married) and your older siblings.
- Come when your parents call for you.
- Tell your Mom and Dad how much you appreciate them.
- Clean for Shabbos without being asked.
- Stand up when your parent enters the room.
- Say "I love you"- it doesn't hurt!

THE TORAH SAYS...

- Honor your father and mother so that your days may be increased on the land which Hashem has given you.
Shemos 20:12
- Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death.
Shemos 21:17
- Every person must respect his mother and father, and must observe my Sabbath; I am Hashem your G-d.
Vayikra 19:3
- Whoever intentionally wounds his father or mother shall be put to death.
Shemos 21:15
- Cursed is the one who is disrespectful to his father and mother.
Devarim 27:16
- Hear, my son, the musar (moral lessons) of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother.
Mishlei 1:8
- Honor your mother and father to the same degree you honor Hashem because all three were partners in your creation.
Kiddushin 30b



A man approached Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk with a question. His father was ill in another city far away. Since there is a machlokes (difference of opinion regarding Jewish law) as to whether one must spend money in order to fulfill the mitzvah of honoring one's parents, he wanted to know whether he was obligated to spend the large sum necessary to take the train to visit his father.

"You are not obligated to spend the money to visit your father," the Rav answered him. "You can walk!"