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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
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Parashat Va'etchanan

The Great Benefit of Observing the Mitzvah of Respecting One's Parents

Our *parasha* states (5:16), "Respect your father and mother as Hashem, Your G-d, has commanded you, so that He should act kindly with you on the land that Hashem, your G-d, has given you."

Questions:

- 1) In *Shemot* (20:12) we learn that the first pair of *luchot* contains a commandment to respect one's parents along with a guarantee for long life if one does so. Yet in our *parasha*, when relating what was inscribed in the *luchot* the commandment is accompanied by the words "so that He should act kindly with you." What is the reason for this addition?
- 2) Furthermore our Sages (*Pe'ah* 1:1) teach us that *kibud av va'em* is one of the mitzvot for which an individual eats the "fruits" of the mitzvah in this world while the crux of the mitzvah is enjoyed in the World to Come. From where do our Sages know that *kibud av va'em* is rewarded also in this world? Do our Sages not state (*Chullin* 142a) that mitzvot are not rewarded in this world?

The Way of the World

Sadly, as we have seen throughout history, that subsequent generations are not on as high a level as that of their predecessors. The concept of *kibud av va'eim*, honoring one's parents, has changed drastically, going from one extreme to the next. At the end of *Masechet Sotah*, our Sages teach us that in the times preceding the coming of Mashiach, *chutzpah* will reach its peak, and the young will brazenly disrespect the elderly. This prophecy truly seems to have been fulfilled in our generation. At the root of the problem lies the fact that children do not realize that every request their parents make of them is a *mitzvat esei deOraita*, a positive Torah commandment just like wearing tefillin, sitting in a sukka, shaking a lulav, or eating matzah on Pesach. Furthermore, the reward for honoring one's parents is inestimable, as we will soon explain. However, the reality is that we find our parents' requests burdensome, and we therefore either do not do what they tell us or we procrastinate until they ask us a second and third time. However, the Torah teaches us that anyone who merits having parents to honor, has a golden opportunity to earn merit and great benefits in his lifetime. On the contrary, children should argue over who will merit the mitzvah of bringing *nachat ru'ach* to their parents.

So That Goodness Should Never Cease from the Jewish People

The first and second question we posed above was already asked and answered by the *Gemara* (*Baba Kama* 54b). There the Sages ask why the word *tov*, "good," did not appear in the first pair of *luchot*, yet did appear in the second. Rashi explains that in the second *luchot*, the word *tov* appears in the



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pasuk we opened with, "so that He should act kindly (*yitav*) with you," referring to the benefits gained by honoring one's parents. The Gemara quotes Shmuel the son of Nachum as explaining that the word *tov* does not appear, because the first *luchot* were ultimately to be broken. The Sages ask why that was a reason not to include the word *tov*, to which the Gemara replies, "Heaven forbid that good should cease from the Jewish people." Firstly, we see from the *luchot* that the mitzvah of *kibud av va'em* is different than other mitzvot in the sense that one is not only rewarded for fulfilling it in the next world, but he is rewarded in this world as well. However, this was only mentioned in the second *luchot*. This is because the first *luchot* were ultimately smashed, and if the goodness merited by one who observes *kibud av ve'em* appeared there, then Heaven forbid, the goodness would have ceased from amongst the Jews.

Enjoying the "Fruits" of the Mitzvah in this World

How an individual merits reward for the mitzvah of *kibud av* even in this world, can be learned from the episode recorded by our Sages (*Kiddushin* 31a) about a non-Jew from Ashkelon, Dama ben Nesina. The gemara relates that the Sages requested to purchase from Dama stones for the *efod* for 600,000 coins; according to another opinion, he was offered 800,000 coins. However, the key that would open the compartment where these stones were stored was lying beneath the head of his father, who was sleeping. Despite the potential for enormous profit, Dama did not wake up his father to take the key. The following year, Hashem rewarded Dama, and a *para adumah*, a red heifer, was born to him. The Sages, eager to purchase it, approached Dama, who said, "I know that if I request all the money in the world, you will give it to me. Nevertheless, I ask no more than the amount I originally lost on account of respecting my father. Rabbi Chanina remarked, "If this is the reward earned by one who is not commanded to perform the mitzvah, and nevertheless observes it, how much more so will someone who is commanded to observe it be rewarded."

One Merits Wisdom Because of *Kibud Av Va'em*

The *sefer Maaseihen Shel Tzaddikim* relates a story which teaches us how one merits wisdom by respecting his parents. The Yehudi Hakadosh was once sitting with his students and came upon a difficulty in a particular *sugya* involving the Sages Abaye and Rava. They were thinking deeply into the question and analyzing it for a long time. One of the students, an orphan from his father, was very hungry. Therefore, he decided to go home quickly, eat something and return to the *shiur*. Upon entering his house, his mother was delighted to see her only son. He asked her to quickly prepare him some food, which she did. When he finished eating, his elderly mother asked if he could help her by reaching an item that was too high for her to reach. However the son apologized, saying that he was in middle of a *shiur* and that now he had to return. With no other choice, his mother agreed, and the son left. On his way back, though, the son regretted what he had done; shouldn't he fulfill the Torah that he learns? He therefore went back home and quickly did what his mother had requested, much



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to her delight. She blessed him, and he left. The very moment he returned, the Yehudi Hakadosh picked up his head and announced, "Welcome! I now understand the *sugya*!" The Rav asked his student to tell him what had happened, but the student did not understand what he meant. So he told him that he had initially refused to do what his mother had asked him and then he regretted it ... So the *tzaddik* said, "You should know that because of the mitzva of *kibbud em* that you performed, Abaye accompanied you on the way back here, and he explained me the *sugya*." For Abaye was also an orphan, and he especially loves those who fulfill the mitzvah of *kibbud av*, illuminating their eyes in Torah.

Story About the *Chacham* Salman Mutzafi

Rav Mutzafi was once learning together with the *chacham* Rav Tzadka Chusin, and they were studying the topic of *kibud av va'em*, which appears in *Masechet Kiddushin*. Rav Tzadka asked Rav Mutzafi how he conducts himself when his mother enters the room. Rav Mutzafi answered that he stands up slightly. Rav Tzadka therefore asked him why he does not stand up fully, as the *halacha* requires. He then ceased learning with him until he accepted upon himself to stand up fully to honor his mother, for without this he would not merit Torah wisdom.

A Great Reward

Our Sages (cited in *Seder Hadoros* and *Me'il Tzedaka siman 441*) have furthermore related to is a story that teaches us about the great reward earned by one who fulfills this mitzvah: It was revealed from Heaven to Rav Yehoshua ben Ilem that his neighbor in the World to Come would be Nanas the butcher. The next day, he appeared before his 80 students and told him that he could not learn Torah with them that day, for how could it be that after a lifetime of Torah learning and mitzvot and never having walked even 4 *amot* without tefillin, that he would have the same portion in the World to come as a butcher? He decided that he must investigate the deeds of this butcher, to determine why he was so meritorious. The students celled Nanas, but he did not wish to come, saying that he was unworthy to appear before such a great man like Rav Yehoshua. Rav Yehoshua therefore went to Nanas himself. When Nanas saw him he fell to his feet; how could it be that Rav Yehoshua had come to him? He then asked Nanas what meritorious deeds he had. He answered that he was a butcher, and he has elderly parents whose legs were amputated. Every day, he bathes and dresses them. Hearing this, Rav Yehoshua exclaimed, "You are so fortunate! Now I understand why you deserve to be on the same level as me, despite the fact that that I have spent my entire life studying Torah and you have not. You have merited this because of the mitzvah of *kibud av va'em*." **From here we learn that *kibud av va'em* is equal to all the other mitzvot.**

Words of Mussar

We have learned just how much an individual must seize the opportunity to respect his parents. By doing so, he merits long life, wealth, wisdom, and a share in the World to Come equal to that of a Torah great. Therefore, any request made by one's parents make should be carried out with great



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alacrity, as if he has found an enormous treasure, since he is fulfilling a Torah requirement. He should not denigrate it or push it off. All the more so, because pushing it off is likely to distress his parents, and there is a requirement for one to refrain from causing them anguish in any way. For even if it is not his fault, he will still be punished, as we find regarding Yaakov Avinu and Yosef. By acting accordingly, he will merit all the aforementioned *berachot* and benefits. *Amen*.

Shabbat Shalom
Rav Mordechai Malka