

Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב:) - שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

A Sichah from Maran HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein *shlita*, Rosh Yeshivas Ponevez • Parashas Vayeishev 5782

464

The Importance of Kibbud Av v'Eim

The mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim*, honoring one's parents, is an extremely serious mitzvah — it's one of the Aseres haDibros, and one who fulfills it receives tremendous *sechar*. It states in the Torah (*Shemos* 20:12), "Honor your father and mother so that your days shall be lengthened" — the Torah promises longevity for fulfillment of this mitzvah. Regarding this mitzvah's importance, Chazal tell us (*Kiddushin* 30b) that the obligation of honoring one's parents is comparable to honoring Hashem!

This mitzvah is also a logical, intuitive mitzvah. Rationally speaking, it's the right, correct thing to do. It's human nature to honor one's parents, and when a person does not honor his parents, he is not acting properly. It's such a given, that even non-Jews understand the importance of this mitzvah, as the Gemara explains (*Ibid.* 31a).

And yet, the Gemara goes on to say (*Ibid.* 31b), "*Ashrei mi she'lo chama'an*" — Fortunate is one whose parents passed away before his bar mitzvah, because fulfilling the mitzvah *b'sheleimus* is exceptionally difficult. *Kibbud av v'eim* is an extremely grave mitzvah and it's incredibly hard to fulfill the obligation, so someone who never saw his parents is fortunate that he did not have to withstand this *nisayon*. That's how serious and important the mitzvah is.

The Obligation Begins at Bar Mitzvah

When a child is still young, he doesn't have enough understanding or intelligence to fulfill the mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim*, but when he becomes bar mitzvah, he is immediately obligated in the mitzvah. He must understand all the ramifications of the mitzvah and fulfill it according to halachah. It seems to me extremely unusual for a bar mitzvah boy to be careful about *kibbud av v'eim* — not to make any demands of his parents, to honor them, and to make sure not to offend their dignity.

Even mature, grown people don't always treat their parents properly, with the necessary respect, honoring them *b'sheleimus*.

And once a person grows up and realizes that up until then he had not been treating his parents properly, and he makes a decision to act as he should from now on, this is all good and well for the future, but what about his past actions and behavior?

Now while the reality is that parents usually are not *makpid* on their children and they do judge them favorably, that is the parents' prerogative. The child himself is obligated to honor them even if they don't demand it.

If a child, from bar mitzvah age and on, did not honor his parents properly, he must do teshuvah for his past actions! Even if his parents are not *makpid*, the son sinned — in *Shamayim* they recorded that he did not honor his parents properly — and he must follow the steps of the *teshuvah* process as explained in *Shaarei Teshuvah*. One must repent even for an unintentional sin.

Enabling Others to Fulfill This Mitzvah

There was a certain person whose parents died when he was young and he never merited fulfilling the mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim*. He yearned to fulfill the mitzvah and thought about how he could do it. He came up with a solution — he'd fulfill the mitzvah through other people. He extended financial help to a number of people whose parents needed assistance, but the children did not have the financial means to help them. This way, they had the necessary funds to honor their parents. And that's how he enabled others to fulfill *kibbud av v'eim*.

It's well known that when a person enables others to perform mitzvos, it's as if he performed it himself, and the mitzvah is attributed to him. In this regard, the *Chovos HaLevavos* writes (*Shaar Ahavas Hashem* chap. 6) that the incredible *zechus* of *zikkui harabbim* is inestimable. When a person influences others and is *mezakeh es*

harabbim, all good deeds performed by the people he influenced are attributed to him, and he reaps tremendous *zechuyos*. Therefore, if other people need funds, and he gives them the money to fulfill *kibbud av v'eim*, he is a partner in their mitzvah. This man was a wise, clever man, as it states (*Mishlei* 10:8), "The wise-hearted will take *mitzvos*." And this is how he merited fulfilling *kibbud av v'eim*.

Orphans Merit Special Hashgachah

Practically speaking, how did he have money? He was orphaned at a young age and grew up without parents — where did his money come from, and what is the reason for his affluence?

Rav Yonason Eibeshitz, the Tumim, wrote a letter of consolation to his sister-in-law after her husband passed away. She was a young widow with little children and she was worried about their future. She was concerned both about their *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*, material and spiritual, future. The Tumim wrote her a long letter (printed in *Pnei Baruch*); the following is an excerpt: "We see clearly that most youths who are successful in Torah, wisdom, *yiras Shamayim*, and business are orphans. Because HaKadosh Baruch Hu supervises them with special *hashgachah* since He has pity on orphans." This is the reality: orphan children who don't have parents are more successful in life, both materially and spiritually. These youths, who don't have parents to help them, are more successful than others because they have special *siyatta d'Shemaya* from HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Who is the Father of orphans.

If so, now we understand how this man who grew up without parents had extra money. He had special *hashgachah* from the Father of orphans, and due to this *siyatta d'Shemaya* he had enough money to use for *maasim tovim*.

The truth is that he performed many *maasim tovim* aside from his *kibbud av v'eim* project, and he had many other *zechuyos*. Someone once told him, "You should know that you have lots of *zechuyos*," and he responded that *gedolei Yisrael* told him the same thing. He was involved in many good deeds, Torah and *chesed*, and he had the means to finance these deeds. He was willing to give *tzedakah* to any worthy cause; he donated generously to *yeshivahs*. And this all was the result of the special *hashgachah* he merited since he was orphaned as a child.

He went out of his way to help *talmidei chachamim*. Some *talmidei chachamim* did not want to accept gifts — they preferred learning *Torah mitoch hadachak*. So he looked for creative ways to help them. He approached one *talmid chacham* who desperately needed help and bought a stock of *sefarim* that this man had written. This way, he wasn't giving him a gift, he was paying for the *sefarim*. Then he left the *sefarim* with the author and told him he was just leaving them with him for a while, and he could give them out to whomever he wanted. Whenever this *talmid chacham* gifted anyone with a *sefer*, he would say, "This is not my *sefer*, I just received permission to give them out." Those were his strategies in order to merit *mitzvos*!

Honoring Parents by Naming Children

What's the reason for the custom of naming one's children after his parents? Why don't we name children after Moshe Rabbeinu; why give the parents' names? The reason is: *Kibbud av v'eim*! In some communities, names are given even when the grandparents are still alive.

This has been happening since the time of the Tannaim. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 15a) mentions Hillel, Shimon, Gamliel, and Shimon — who were the *nesi'im*. There was Hillel HaZakein, his son Rabbi Shimon, Rabban Gamliel *ben* Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Shimon the son of Rabban Gamliel. Here we see that Rabban Gamliel named his son Shimon, after his father.

Rabbeinu HaKadosh (also known as Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi or Rebbi) had a grandson by the same name: Rabbi Yehudah Nesi'ah. This is mentioned in *Gittin* (76b): "Rabbi Yehudah Nesi'ah, son of Rabban Gamliel, son of Rebbi." They both had the same name, and this was probably an honor. I believe the Gemara cites many more examples of grandsons named after their grandfathers, but I don't remember them now. This is *kibbud av v'eim*.

A Name Influences the Child

There's another aspect involved in naming a child, which may also be a *zechus*. Chazal say (*Berachos* 7b): "*Sh'ma garim* — One's name is the cause." A child's name can cause him to be similar to the person he is named after. That's what's known.

I once heard that if there's a grandfather in the family who wasn't such a great *tzaddik*, and the parents give their child his name but have in mind that they're naming after

a *gadol* with the same name, it's very good. For example, the grandfather's name was Moshe, and they think about Moshe Rabbeinu. I know someone who named his child after a family member, but it was no big *zechus* to name after this person. So when the man gave the name his family had asked him to give, he had in mind that the name should be after a *gadol* with the same name. And this child grew up to be an *adam gadol* — the name gives *zechuyos*!

Regarding the custom of giving two names to a child after two different grandfathers, I heard that while this does honor both grandparents, the name does not benefit the child with the characteristics of either grandparent. It honors the grandparents, but for the child's own good, if they'd give him one name, he would be like that specific person. If two names are given, it's a different name.

These are extremely relevant topics. When it's time to name one's child, it's important to remember that it's not a simple matter. It's important to think about it at length beforehand and ask an *eitzah* about which name to give, because it has an influence on the child afterwards. There have been instances where a child's name was chosen unfairly — it did not honor the grandfather — and the child was not successful. I know one story like this. That's why it's extremely important to consult before naming each child — how and what should the name be, based on *tzedek* and *yosher*.

Making a Name for Yourself — Kesser Shem Tov

All this applies to the name parents give their children, but there's a name that every person can make for himself. The Midrash says (*Tanchuma* beginning of *Parashas Vayakhel*): "Rabbi Meir says, as long as a person is involved in many mitzvos, he acquires a name for himself. We find that there are three names a person has: one his parents give him, one that other people call him, and one that he acquires for himself. The best of them all is the one he acquires for himself." See there.

[In Rav Ben Tzion Felman *zt"l*'s writings, he cites Rabbeinu *shlita*: "This must be explained. A person's name expresses his essence and his qualities. Some people inherit qualities from their ancestors, as Chazal said (*Eduyos* 2:9), 'The father gives merit to son...' And there are other qualities a person earns based on what other people call him. That is, a person is influenced by his surroundings and the people he associates with, as the Rambam writes (*Hilchos Dei'os* chap. 6). And when he's in a good environment, he is influenced for the good, as

the *pasuk* states: 'One who walks among the wise will become wise,' so that's where his qualities come from. And then there is the quality that a person acquires on his own, through his *amal*, toil... and *l'fum tza'ara agra*, the reward is in proportion to one's effort.]"

It says in *Avos* (4:13), "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of *kehunah*, and the crown of royalty. And the crown of a "good name" rises above them all." It would seem that there are four crowns, not three, because the crown of a "good name" is the fourth one.

Let us explain the concept of a "*kesser shem tov*," the crown of a good name. In the past, we mentioned the Targum Yonason's comments on *Vezos HaBerachah* (*Devarim* 34:5), who says that Moshe Rabbeinu had all four crowns: the crown of Torah, *kehunah*, *malchus*, and *shem tov*. He writes: "The crown of a good name is acquired through good deeds and humility."

Moshe Rabbeinu was *anav mi'kol adam*, "the humblest of men" (see *Bamidbar* 12:3). There never was and never will be someone as humble as he. He saw prophecies with "*aspaklaria ha'meirah*," a clear vision (see *Yevamos* 49b). This caused him to merit unparalleled *sheleimus* in the *middah* of humility; since he saw the truth with such clarity, he felt there was nothing to feel important about. Moshe Rabbeinu's *maasim tovim* also added to this merit. For example (*Shemos Rabbah* 2:2) the pity he showed for a little goat, and that's what gave him the merit of a *kesser shem tov*. Indeed, it's just like the Targum Yonasan writes: "Through his good deeds and his humility."

[That's why the crown of a good name rises above them all. It's really not four crowns — it's just three and one — because the *kesser shem tov* is something general that encapsulates and increases *sheleimus* in the three other crowns. Humility and good deeds strengthen the three other crowns, adding to their *sheleimus*. — From Rabbeinu's teachings; see too *sefer Darkei HaChizuk, pirkei hadrachah*, p. 144.]

This is the concept of a "*kesser shem tov*." It's the name a person creates for himself, and as the Midrash states, it's the best name of them all.

Yehi ratzon that we all merit to perform good deeds like these, in deed, speech, and thought, which will give each of us a *kesser shem tov*, the crown of a good name!

Rabbeinu's Address to the Leaders of the Syrian Congregation Shaare Zion of New York during Their Recent Visit to Eretz Yisrael

People who toil in Torah are happy about it; Torah learning gives a person more joy than anything else! The reason is because the Torah is holy and the holiness of Torah provides joy. Additionally, the fact that we are Jewish is a reason for joy, because every Jew is holy and every Jew has a holy *neshamah*. Only a Jew has a holy *neshamah*; a non-Jew does not. It's well known that Jews have a special personality; you probably see this — and it comes from the *koach* of *kedushah*. We received the Torah at Har Sinai, and we have a holy *neshamah*. This is a cause of joy for anyone who is Jewish, even if he's not *chareidi*. He has a different personality than a non-Jew and he has a holy *neshamah*. *Ashreinu* — How fortunate we are, how good is our lot that we are Jews.

But we must be aware of the fact that this obligates us! We must act in a way that the *neshamah* wants to act; we cannot let our physical side drag us down. We have a *yetzer hara* and *yetzer tov*, and we must act the way the *yetzer tov* wants, not the *yetzer hara*. Unfortunately, there are Jews with a Jewish *neshamah* who don't know that they have to act differently, and they don't understand that they could be much happier and lead much better lives. They don't realize that they aren't happy now, and they don't have the joy that *chareidi* Jews have, and we have to pity them! In our prayers we say, "Return us our Father to Your Torah" — who are we referring to? Am I only asking for myself? After all, the prayer is in the plural form; we are praying for all of Am Yisrael! We are praying that they do *teshuvah*, that they learn Torah, that they become as happy as they can be. *Hasheveinu l'Torasecha, v'karveinu la'avodasecha* — bring us close to *avodas Hashem*. Aside from Torah learning, we ask for help with prayer and performance of good deeds. And then we say, "return us in complete repentance before You." We are praying for all of Am Yisrael, they are to be pitied and we feel bad for them. We ask Hashem to have mercy on them and send them a Heavenly wake up so that they'll have a good life.

QUESTION: What's the most important rule nowadays when it comes to *chinuch* of one's own children at home?

RABBEINU SHLITA: The most important thing in *chinuch* is the personal example, the way a person acts at home: act with good *middos*, speak gently, don't argue with your wife — treat her with dignity and honor, and if something's not right, keep quiet, don't insult. Just be respectful and keep quiet! With your children too, *chinuch* has to be without pressure or force. Children do what their father does. Whatever they see their father and mother doing has an influence on them. That's *chinuch*: the parents' behavior and their personality. Parents' personality and their actions influence their children's *chinuch*. It's impossible to be *mechanech* children by force and through harsh criticism. That's not *chinuch*. It will just make things worse.

QUESTION: How can we help our children aspire for greatness?

RABBEINU SHLITA: Tell them stories of *gedolei Yisrael*. Tell them how they started out, how they behaved, discuss their behavior, tell the children about what good *middos* our *gedolim* had, talk about their *middos tovos*. There are so many stories, but now's not the time to discuss them. *B'ezeras Hashem*, may we all — all of Am Yisrael — merit to act and be like Am Yisrael is supposed to be. May we exhibit Am Yisrael's special personality!

Please daven for
גיטה פייגה בת רבקה
לרפואה שלימה ומהירה
בתוך כל חולי ישראל

For donations or dedications of the Hebrew and English flyers, or to receive the *sichos* to your email, please contact: darkei.hachizuk@gmail.com

The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va'ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein's home.