



In loving memory of Devora Bas Aharon o"ח

Mrs. Doris Weiner ❖ A Woman of Valor

My Honor, Your Honor

"Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be lengthened upon the land which Hashem, your God gives you" (Shemos 20:12). Respecting parents is the foundation of human life. The mother and father bring the child into this world. He owes his life to them! For this act of kindness alone, he must be grateful all of his days. How does he express this gratitude? By respecting and fearing his parents. Many *halachos* are based upon the principle of showing deference to the father and mother in every way possible.

Humility is a marvelous character trait. The Torah praises it profusely. What should a child do if his parent is very humble and feels uncomfortable with the honor bestowed upon him? How can the child honor him? The following story about Rav Avraham Yehoshua Heshel from Opta, who is known to us by the name of his sefer, "Ohev Yisrael," illustrates how a son cleverly honors his humble father.

The Ohev Yisrael was one of the great tsaddikim of his time. Thousands of chassidim were drawn to his holy presence. From time to time, he would travel around the surrounding communities to visit his followers and inspire them with his Divrei Torah and Chassidus. During one of these trips, hundreds of people came to the crossroads outside of the town to greet the Rebbe. This happened not once, not twice, but every time, outside of every town that the Rebbe visited.

The Opta Rav was uncomfortable with this overwhelming tribute. He sought consolation from his son, Rav Yitzchak Meir from Zinkov, who accompanied him on the trips. "Why do these people give honor to one who does not deserve it?" Rav Yitzchak Meir understood that all of the admiration distressed his humble father. He tried to soothe his father by making the following statement. "The people are not coming out to honor my dear father, rather they gather at the crossroads to honor me."

When the holy Ohev Yisrael heard these words, he was comforted, and did not speak about the matter the rest of the day. However, the next day he asked his son, "Why do so many people honor you? What compels the residents of every town that we visit to leave their homes and go to the crossroads to greet you?"

Rav Yitzchak Meir saw an opportunity to give his father *nachas*. He smiled and said, "It is very simple. They honor me because I am the son of the Tsaddik from Opta." The Rebbe was very pleased with this answer. He replied to his clever son,

"You speak the same way that Yosef HaTsaddik spoke to his brothers." 'And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt' (Bereshis 45:13). Was Yosef bragging about his accomplishments? Of course not! He was a tsaddik! Rather he was directing the honor to the one whom it was intended for. All of the glory that was awarded to Yosef in Mitzrayim was only because he was the son of Yaakov Avinu. Both Yosef HaTsaddik and Rav Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov knew how to honor their fathers. Their respect showed deference to their father's humility. We can learn a lesson from them that will guide us in honoring our parents.



Kinderlach . . . Yosef HaTsaddik and Rav Yitzchak Meir of Zinkov teach us a new aspect of honoring our parents: Firstly, we should strive to accomplish great things in our lives. What is stopping us from becoming tsaddikim and tsidkianos? Nothing! We just need to work hard and pray to Hashem for Siyata Di'Shmaya (Heavenly Assistance). Secondly, how should we relate to our great achievements? We should give credit to whom it is due - our parents. Without them, we would not be here in this world! They gave us the very gift of life, which comes before anything. They also nurtured us, cared for us, and educated us. Therefore, they are the ones who deserve the honor for our accomplishments. Whatever honor comes to you, give it to them. My honor is your honor.

The Appropriate Place

The giving of the Torah. Hashem comes down to this world to reveal Himself to the Jewish people. Monumental, spectacular, momentous -- adjectives are inadequate to describe this event. Where is the appropriate setting for such an event to take place? How about the breathtaking landscape of the Swiss Alps?

Certainly a beautiful backdrop, but not quite right for the occasion. What about the beach of the Mediterranean Sea? The clear blue rolling waves are an impressive testimony to Hashem's brilliant artistry of this world. True, but not appropriate for the giving of the Torah. How about the fertile fields of the Nile River valley? A place lush with Hashem's vegetation. True, but something is still missing. No, the perfect place for this cataclysmic event is . . . the desert. The desert? A desolate place with no wildlife, vegetation, or water? Yes, the desert. Well, there are many breathtaking spots in the desert. Tall mountains that rise from sand dunes. It must have been on one of those beautiful majestic desert mountains. No, the giving of the Torah was on Mt. Sinai. A very low mountain. That is the place that Hashem chose to give the Torah.

"And they (the Jewish people) traveled from Refidim and came to the Sinai Desert. (The nation of) Israel camped there in front of the mountain" (Shemos 19:2). The Keli Yakar comments that when they left Refidim they were not yet ready to receive the Torah. They were fighting in Refidim. The Torah can only be given when there is peace among the Jewish people. That is why the Torah was given in the third month (Sivan) whose mazal is twins, the sign of love between people. They traveled from Refidim, meaning they distanced themselves from the fighting, and they came to the Sinai Desert. This placed was ideal to establish peace among them. Fighting comes from a desire for honor. When they saw that Hashem chose Mt. Sinai, a very low mountain, as the place for the giving of the Torah, they realized that Hashem favors humble people. Therefore, they humbled themselves and established peace.

Kinderlach . . . Now we see how important peace is. Without peace, there can be no Torah. How do we work on establishing peace in our lives? By humbling ourselves. On most disagreements, give in to the other person. Let him have it his way. Even if you think you are right. Making peace is what is truly right. Let everyone at the Shabbos table describe a situation where he made peace. Tell a different story next week, and the week after. Soon it will become second nature. Kinderlach, the skill of making peace with people is one of the most important things that you can learn in your whole lives!

Parasha Questions:

- Why was it worthwhile for Hashem to take us out of Mitzrayim? (Rashi 20:2)
- Why is the mitzvah of honoring parents taught directly after the mitzvah of honoring Shabbos? (Baal HaTurim 20:12)
- How do we actively remember Shabbos all of the time? (Rashi 20:8)