

The Weekly *Farbrengens*

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RESPECTING PARENTS (II)

THE EXTENT OF KIBUD AV VA'EIM

To what extent are we obligated to respect our parents? This, too, *Chazal* specify: "Even if one's parents take his pouch filled with golden coins and throw it into the sea, in front of his eyes, he should not shame them, nor shout nor show anger in their presence. Rather, he should accept the decree of *HaShem* ('Honor your father and mother') in silence."

(קידושין לא ע"א, רמב"ם ממרים פ"ו ה"ז, שו"ע יו"ד ר"מ ס"ד וס"ח)

From whom should we learn the extent of respect for one's parents? From *Dama ben Nesina*, a non-Jew from Ashkelon! Once, while he was sitting in the company of Roman noblemen, his mentally disturbed mother approached him, tore off the gold-embroidered silk cloak he was wearing, hit him on the head, spat in his face, and took a shoe and hit him. Despite all this, he continued to sit in silence. Moreover, when the shoe fell from her hand, he lifted it up and handed it to her so that she not be upset.

On another occasion, the *Chachomim* wanted to purchase precious stones from him for the *Ephod*, and were willing to pay a huge sum of money for them. Nevertheless, he turned down their offer, because the key to the box which held the precious stones was under the pillow of his sleeping father and the box was under his legs. *HaShem* rewarded him with a *Para Aduma* in his herd, and from this he gained the rich earnings he had lost from the missed opportunity.

(קידושין לא ע"א ובתוס', ירושלמי פאה פ"א ה"א)

Rebbi Tarfon treated his mother with such great respect that whenever she wanted to go to sleep, he would bend down, enabling her to clamber onto his back and climb into bed. Likewise, whenever she got out of bed, she would step down onto him and then onto the floor. Rebbi Tarfon once came to the *beis midrash* and began to speak highly of his degree of *kibud eim*. However, his fellow *Chachomim* told him, "You have not yet reached even half of the honor that one is required to show his parents. Has your mother ever thrown your wallet into the sea in your presence and you did not shame her?"

One *Shabbos*, while Rebbi Tarfon's mother was walking, her shoes tore. Rebbi Tarfon then placed his hands on the ground so that his mother could walk upon them, step by step, until she reached her bed.

And whenever Rav Yosef heard the footsteps of

his mother, he would say, "I shall stand before the approaching footsteps of the *Shechina*."

(קידושין לא ע"ב ועיין מהרש"א, ירושלמי פאה פ"א ה"א)

Chazal teach that even if one's parents are utter *resha'im*, one may not disrespect them. Indeed, even if as a result of their grave *aveiros* they had been sentenced to death by the *beis din* and were on their way to be punished, the son is forbidden to strike them or curse them.

(רמב"ם ממרים פ"ה ה"ב)

Someone once asked Reb Chaim Brisker, "Is it true that when the respect due to parents involves some monetary expense, it is the parents' responsibility and not the son's?"

"Yes," replied Reb Chaim, "that indeed is the *halacha*."

The man continued, "Then here is my question: My father lives in a distant town and I have just been notified that he is ill and bedridden. Trust me: I want, to fulfill the holy *mitzva* of *kibud av* by traveling to help him. But alas, what can I do? The way is a long one, the train ride is very costly, and my father does not have the money to pay for the ticket. Doesn't that mean that I am exempt from making the trip?"

"True!" answered Reb Chaim, "You are not obligated to take the train. Go instead by foot...!"

(אוצר כאר"א ע' תקמא)

CONSIDER

Why is one required to go to such great lengths to serve one's parents?

THE WAY TO RESPECT

Chazal warn us that even more important than any service we do for our parents, is the way we do it. To demonstrate this they relate the following stories:

There was a son who took care of all his father's needs, serving him the finest delicacies. Once the father asked his son, "My son, from where do you have all this?"

"Quiet, old man!" the son retorted. "Just eat in silence, like the dogs."

Another man earned a meager living by grinding in a mill. One day, the king's officers came to conscript his father for the dreaded rigors of their master's service. Seeing this, the son told his father, "Father! You can take my place in the mill, and I will do the king's service in your place, accepting any embarrassment it will entail."

The first son served his father gourmet dishes, yet earned *Gehenom*; the second made his father drag heavy millstones – and earned *Gan Eden*.

(ירושלמי פאה פ"א ה"א)

The *gaon*, Reb Avrohom Dovid of Butchatch, would review the *halachos* of *kibud av va'eim* thirty days before visiting his parents, in preparation for fulfilling this precious *mitzva*.

(אוצר כאר"א ע' תקנא)

Every day, the *tzaddik* Reb Yaakov Yitzchak, who is better known as the *Yid HaKadosh* of Pshis'cha, would conduct a *Gemara shiur* for some of his chassidim. During one such *shiur*, he came across a difficulty in the text, and sat still, deep in thought, trying to understand it. One of the chassidim, a youth who had been orphaned of his father, knew that the Rebbe could sit in such a trance for quite a while, and figured he'd have time to hurry home for something to eat. When he finished eating, and was about to rush back to his Rebbe's house, his mother asked him to bring her something from the attic. His immediate instinct was to continue on his way, in case the Rebbe had resumed the *shiur*, but then he stopped himself: "Isn't doing a *mitzva* the ultimate goal of all my learning? So how can I not fulfill the *mitzva* of *kibbud eim*?" He hastened to do his mother's bidding, and then returned to the Rebbe's house.

Immediately upon his entry, the *Yid HaKadosh* awoke from his trance and asked him what *mitzva* he had just fulfilled. The youth reported what had happened, and then the *tzaddik* explained, "When you entered, I saw the *amora* Abbaye accompanying you, and my question was clarified. Abbaye was an orphan, and because he was unable to honor his parents, he accompanies anyone who fulfills the *mitzva* of *kibbud av va'eim*, because he wants a share in the *mitzva*. And when he came here, together with you, he explained everything to me."

(תפארת היהודי אות קמ"א)



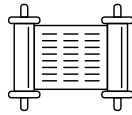
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PASSING BEFORE A DAVENER

If someone is davening *shmoneh esrei* in a place where people usually walk, may I pass in front of him?

It is prohibited to walk within four *amos* (approx. 6.3 feet) in the field of vision of a person davening *shmoneh esreh*, since this may disrupt their *kavana*, and since one is crossing between the one davening and the Shechina.¹ The Alter Rebbe adds that according to Kabbala, this prohibition applies also to walking on the side of the person davening even outside his field of vision.²

Though the original sources in Chazal discuss one davening *shmoneh esrei*, later *poskim* add not passing in front of one reciting *kaddish* or the *posuk* of *shema*.³ In a letter, the Alter Rebbe implies that one should avoid passing even during other parts of davening as to not disturb the person's *kavana*.⁴

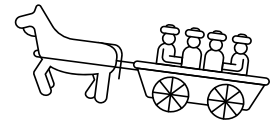
If stepping back three steps after concluding *shmoneh esreh* will intrude into the four *amos* of someone davening, one may not do so, even if that person began davening later.⁵

However, if someone positioned himself to daven in a place meant for people to pass by, some *poskim* permit passing him if needed, since he had no right to daven there.⁶ Others prohibit passing him nonetheless (though the person should be reprimanded). *Poskim* also permit passing someone davening with his eyes closed or with a *tallis* over his head.⁷ In cases of necessity one may be lenient, yet otherwise one shouldn't rely on these leniencies.⁸

One who knows that his davening will take longer than others should not position himself to daven in a central part of the *shul* which will inevitably cause people to pass him, rather position himself next to the *mizrach* wall (and "humility" in such a case is uncalled for).⁹

If one must hurry to a *mitzvah* (e.g. to daven with a *minyan* or to use the bathroom in a case of urgency¹⁰) and none of the above leniencies apply, some *poskim* permit passing a person who is davening, since the disturbance of the person's *kavana* is only a doubt, whereas the *mitzva* to be performed is certain.¹¹ Others argue that nonetheless the *mitzva* to be performed later cannot permit transgressing now, unless it is a *mitzva* of the public such as completing a *minyan* (or bringing a *sefer Torah* for *kria*).¹²

To remove a disturbance to those davening (such as to ask people outside the *shul* to lower their tone) would seem permissible according to all opinions.¹³



REBBETZIN CHAYA MUSHKA

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the wife of the Tzemach Tzedek, was born to her father the Mittlerer Rebbe and her mother Rebbetzin Shaina in the year תק"נ (1790) in Liozna. On the 5th of Kislev תקס"ג (1802) she married her cousin the Tzemach Tzedek at the age of 14. She passed away on Friday, Erev Shabbos Parshas Vayigash, the 8th of Teves, תרכ"א (1861) and is buried in Lubavitch.

An *agunah* once came to the Tzemach Tzedek with her son who was totally mute and hard of hearing. Her husband had been missing for seven years, and now, several *rabbonim* had given her permission to remarry, on condition that the Rebbe agreed.

At that time, *agunos* would sit outside the Rebbe's room and, when their turn came, present their case while the door to the Rebbe's room was wide open. The Rebbe would listen to their story and instruct them where to travel via the *gabbai*. This woman waited several weeks, but her turn had not come.

Desperate for relief, she placed her son under the table in the *yechidus*

room which was covered by a table cloth, and instructed him that when *yechidus* begins he should crawl out and hand the Rebbe her note. When the boy came out of his hiding place, the *gabbai* became very angry and shouted at him. The Rebbe calmed the man and then said to the boy: "Go and tell your mother that your father is alive. She should travel to Denenburg."

This *agunah* had been sitting outside and weeping about her misfortune, when suddenly, her son entered and cried out in a loud voice, "The Rebbe told me to tell you that Father is alive, and that you should travel to Denenburg." At this, the *agunah* fainted.

This double miracle caused a great commotion. But Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka remarked: "Just look at what everyone's gotten so excited about! By my father and grandfather, miracles were scattered about, and no one bothered to pick them up. Grandfather said that he would prefer it if people understood Chassidus; as for getting excited over miracles, we leave that for the *chassidim* of Vohlyn."

(אג"ק אדה"י צ"ח כ"ב מכל ש"ד)

A Moment with The Rebbe



WHO DECIDES THE HOME DÉCOR?

A struggling couple came to a *yechidus* seeking *shalom bayis* advice. After they left the room, the Rebbe wrote the husband a note:

"In continuation of our conversation:

"Following Chazal's guidance certainly benefits a person materially as well as spiritually.

"Since Chazal teach that in worldly matters one should consider the wife's opinion, the running and repairs of the home should be according to her view. This should obviously be done with *simcha*,

since this is a directive of Chazal.

"The greatness of a person is measured by fulfilling his *shlichus*, and creating a pleasurable environment for his family and acquaintances – not by being imposing on others in trivial matters, the beauty of the house, etc.

"In your spare time, make an effort to assist her with household chores. And try to discuss with your children what they have learned, etc."

(Teshurah Avtzon, Shevat 5765)

1. חיי אדם כלל כ"ו אות ג. וראה ביה"ל שם.
 2. שו"ע אדה"ו סי' קב ס"ד.
 3. ברכי"א אורח"י סי' נ"ה סק"ט (קדיש), ביה"ל סי' ק"ב ד"ה אסור בשם שלי"ה (שמע).
 4. אג"ק אדה"ו (מהדה"ח) אגרת סי"ו, וראה שם גם אגרת פ"א.
 5. שו"ע אדה"ו שם סי"ה.
 6. ראה מהרש"ם בדע"ת סי' ק"ב דה"ל קבר המזיק את הרבים. וראה הליכות שלמה - תפילה, ע' קטו.
 7. בא"א (בוטשטאט) שם סי"ד מתיר, אבל בביתאור הלכה ד"ה אסור כ' דלפמ"ש החי"א דטעם האיסור מפני שמפסיק בין המתפלל לשכינה אין להתיר, ויל"ע בדעת אדה"ו, דמחד גיסא הביא רק הטעם שמבטל כוונת המתפלל דלפ"ו בוונא שיעוצם עיניו פשוט שמוטר לעבור לפניו וכמ"ש הא"א, אבל לאידך אדה"ו הביא מהמג"א דעת חכמי הזהר שאוסרים אפי' בצדיהם, ולפי הזהר משמע שאינו תלוי בבלבול כוונתו וצ"ע.
 8. קצוה"ש הערות למעשה ע' ס'
 9. קצוה"ש הערות למעשה שם.
 10. היינו שיעבור על איסור בל תשקצו דלש"י אדה"ו (בסידור הנהגות בית הכסא, והוא כדעה הב' שבשר"ע מהדו"ב סי' ג סי"א) היינו הוא שהריש כבר בנקביו ומעמיד עצמו.
 11. אשל אברהם שם.
 12. שו"ת יד אליהו (לר"א מלובלין) סי' ו. וראה שו"ע אדה"ו סי' ס"ט ס"ד שאסור גם לצורך לפרוס על שמע.
 13. ס' ארבע אמות של תפלה ע' נח.