



# MISHNAS CHAYIM

# משנת היום

## MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

A project of CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH • Parshas Yisro 5768

The fifth of the Ten Commandments is *kibbud av v'aim*, the obligation to honor one's parents. While the *mitzvah* seems simple enough on the surface of it, the *Minchas Chinuch* (*Mitzvah 33:3*) raises an interesting question which touches upon the very essence of this *mitzvah*.

Just about everybody can think of someone who neglected to treat his parents with the proper respect at some point in life. When this individual decides to do *teshuvah*, from whom should he ask forgiveness for this lapse? Although his parents would seem to be the most obvious candidates, the *Minchas Chinuch* points out that the issue may not be so simple.

Every *mitzvah* falls into one of two categories: *bein odom laMakom* (*mitzvos* between man and Hashem) or *bein odom lachavairo* (*mitzvos* between man and his fellow). Essentially, the *Minchas Chinuch's* question boils down to this: To which category does *kibbud av v'aim* belong?

The offender—in this case, the neglectful child—must obviously ask forgiveness from the one he has wronged. If the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'aim* is considered *bein odom lachavairo*, the child must beseech his parents for their pardon. However, if the *mitzvah* is to be categorized as *bein odom laMakom*, then the offense is considered to have been perpetrated against Hashem, and forgiveness must be sought from Him.

*Very nice, you may be thinking. But why on earth should I consider kibbud av v'aim to be a bein odom laMakom type of mitzvah? After all, it involves interpersonal relations with parents, including serving them, according them honor, etc. Obviously, the mitzvah is bein odom lachavairo!*

Good point. Let us reexamine the two possibilities for the proper categorization of this *mitzvah* by turning to the words of Chazal. Perhaps they will shed light on the subject, enabling us to fully appreciate the question of the *Minchas Chinuch*.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin 30b*) highlights the importance of the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'aim* by equating the honor due to parents with the honor due to Hashem Himself. This comparison could be the basis of the statement of the *Sefer Chareidim* (*ch. 9*) that a person must view his parents as if they are members of the aristocracy. Whether one's parent is a nuclear physicist or a zoo-keeper, in the Torah's eyes he must be regarded by his offspring as a person of noble and elevated stature. Consequently, we can begin to appreciate the view of this *mitzvah* as *bein odom laMakom*; since, in essence, this commandment requires us to recognize that our parents' status approaches the Divine.

On the other hand, the Mishnah in Bava Metzia (2:11) leads us to a deeper understanding of the second approach, classifying this *mitzvah* as *bein adam*

Dedicated in loving memory of Anna Miriam bas Moshe & Yached Samuels ע"ה

נפטרה ח' תשרי תשס"ז

by Harry and Rachel Skydell, New York, NY

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a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his Neshamah.



**MISHNAS  
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# משנת חיים

*lachavairo*. In the midst of detailing the particulars of *hashovas avaidah*, the Mishnah drops a line which reveals something about the very essence of *kibbud av v'aim*. The Mishnah states:

אֲבֹתָא דְאֲבֵי וְאֲבֹתָא דְרַבּוּ, שְׁל רַבּוּ קוֹדְמָתָא,  
שְׁאֲבֵי הֵבִיאוּ לְעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. וְרַבּוּ שְׁלַמְדוּ חֲכָמָה  
מִבֵּיאוּ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

“If someone encounters two lost objects, one belonging to his father, and the other belonging to his *rebbe*, priority should be given to his *rebbe*’s object. The reason (for this) is that although **his father brought him into this world**, his *rebbe*—who taught him Torah—has afforded him the ability to advance to the World to Come.”

Through its terminology, the Mishnah reveals a fundamental reason for a person to feel a sense of obligation to his father: because he “brought him into this world.” We are eternally beholden to our parents for granting us life; the least we can do to attempt to repay them is to accord them honor. (Nevertheless, one’s obligation to his *rebbe* is greater, since his *rebbe* brings him into the Next World, which is the better one by all accounts.)

This idea forms the basis of the Talmud Yerushalmi’s depiction of the obligation to honor parents as a form of *payraon chov*, repayment of a loan (*Kiddushin ch.1*). In other words, if we classify the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'aim* as *bein odom lachavairo*, an interpersonal *mitzvah*, its essence can be described as similar to a monetary obligation.

Whichever way you look at it, the question of the *Minchas Chinuch* has really come to life. Since a solid case can be made to relegate the *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v'aim* to either category, we can appreciate the *Minchas Chinuch*’s uncertainty in classifying it.

Although we may not have resolved the *Minchas Chinuch*’s question, hopefully, we have at least gained a heightened appreciation for the essence and importance of this *mitzvah*.

And I bet that our parents really appreciate that!

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