

EC

Eternal Connections

BUILDING
OLAM HABA AWARENESS

Mitzvos are opportunities

Grab the Chance!

Originally from England, Reb Yaakov had been living in Yerushalayim for many years, where he became a close *talmid* of Harav Dovid Soloveitchik, one of the great *roshei yeshiva* of Yeshivas Brisk. Harav Dovid lived to the advanced age of 98; as he got older, it became necessary for him to have a *gabbai* to drive him around and to tend to all his needs. His *talmid* Reb Yaakov had the wonderful merit of filling this role.

Rav Dovid trusted Reb Yaakov and loved him dearly. He knew that he could truly rely on him to understand and fulfill his needs. He also knew that any sensitive matters to which Reb Yaakov might be privy would remain under wraps.

One day in late winter, Reb Yaakov received a call from one of his siblings in England: "Yaakov, as you know, Totty and Mommy are no longer able to care for themselves. They need someone to be with them all the time to ensure that their needs are being met. Most of the time we fill this role. But now, with Pesach approaching, do you think you could come to England to take care of them over *yom tov*?"

Reb Yaakov was ready to make the trip to help his parents. But one thought troubled him: *Who will take care of Rav Dovid when I'm away? He relies on me for so many things, particularly at yom-tov time, when many people come to visit and ask for berachos. How can I leave him at such a time? But how can I not help my parents, who really need me as well?*

Instead of trying to resolve his dilemma on his own, Reb Yaakov decided to ask Rav Dovid himself to answer the question. He knew that Rav Dovid's reply would not be clouded with personal considerations, but would reflect the *ratzon Hashem* in this situation.

Rav Dovid answered Reb Yaakov's query with a story:

As you know, my mother and some of my siblings were killed during World War II. From the day my mother died, I accepted the responsibility of caring for my father. Until I got married, I slept in the same room as him. I never went to sleep before he went to sleep, and I always made sure to be up very early so that I would be awake when my father awoke. There were some nights when my father would learn until two or three o'clock in the morning. Despite my exhaustion on those nights, I would not think of going to sleep as long as my father was still awake.

*Of course, after my marriage, I could no longer be with my father all the time. But I still made sure to visit him two or three times a day(!). Perhaps this is why Hashem has granted me a long life (as the *passuk* says: *Kabeid es avicha ves imecha, l'maan ya'arichun yamecha* – Honor your father and mother in order that your days should be lengthened).*

*And now, you have the opportunity to go to England for yom tov to take care of your parents – and you're asking me whether or not you should go?! You have such an opportunity for *kibbud av va'eim*, and you want to know what to do? Grab it!*

(Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, *My Parents and Me*, ArtScroll/Mesorah, pages 50-52.)

The mitzvah of *kibbud av va'eim* can feel so challenging to many people. A very helpful mindset is to remind yourself that each chance at fulfilling this mitzvah is an invaluable opportunity to be seized and cherished.

Take This Home

The *Chayei Adam* (67:3) tells us that the focus of *kibbud av va'eim* is how we think about our parents. Regardless of their status in others' eyes, they must be *chashuv* (important) in *our* eyes. Can you pause for a minute and consider one thing you admire about your parents and that you want to emulate? [Note: Chazal tell us that the main mitzvah of *kibbud av va'eim* is after a parent has passed away (see below). So this can certainly be done if your parents are deceased.]

In Short

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Igeres Hateshuvah*, os 59) writes an amazing thing regarding the way parents benefit from the deeds of their children:

...And when she [the mother] has passed on, and her children have *yiras Shamayim* and are busy with Torah and *mitzvos*, it will be considered as if she is still alive and performing *mitzvos*, and she will be on an elevated level in *Olam Haba*.

It is clear from all of the above that it is not possible for one to turn his focus from the mitzvah of *kibbud av va'eim*, even after his parents' deaths. And not only is there an obligation after their deaths, but it is a greater obligation than before.

(As quoted in *Sefer Chovasi B'Olam*, page 117)

It Happened to Me!

My Olam Haba Moment

Since my parents moved within walking distance of our home several years ago, they began inviting our children to join them sometimes for meals on Shabbos. Over time, they began requesting more and more frequently that our son Sruly join them for *shalosh seudos*, until he became their regular guest; they particularly enjoy his company and the way he sings *zemiros*.

Now that Sruly is in *mesivta*, we don't get to see much of him during the week. He leaves early in the morning and arrives home not long before bedtime. Shabbos is our main opportunity to spend some time with him. And yet, his presence and participation bring my parents so much pleasure that we have encouraged him to continue his "*minhag*," a weekly fulfillment of *kibbud av va'eim*. Opportunities for *kibbud av va'eim* are not available in the same way when you are no longer living in the same household, so when they come our way, we try to grab them!

– E.B., Lakewood

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