



*We are stretching in ahavas yisrael together to create  
z'chusim for K'lal Yisrael in these urgent times.*

לעלוי נשמת  
יעקב בן לוי ז"ל

**Review:**

Last week's stretch of the week was: Make this the week you make the call about a shidduch idea.

Please allow ONE person to share her experience with this exercise for ONE minute.

**Lesson #30**

כבוד אב ואם  
**Kibbud Av V'Aim**  
**Honoring Parents**

**Halacha:**

The Torah teaches us how to relate to parents in two separate mitzvos: Kabeid es avicha ve'es imecha... -- "Honor your father and your mother, that you may live a long life on the land that HaShem gave you" (Sh'mos 20:12), and Ish imo ve'aviv tira'u - "Each person should revere his mother and his father" (Vayikra 19:3). From these pesukim we learn that every person should behave toward his parents as he would behave toward someone before whom he respects deeply and before whom he stands in awe. He should indeed perceive his parents as a king and queen, and in his every interaction he should be careful to give them the honor and reverence he owes them.

One of the underlying foundations of these mitzvos is the basic human quality of hakaras hatov, the gratitude we should feel toward the people who brought us into this world and who do so much for us throughout our lives. Even the nations of

the world recognize the need to respect parents as a matter of common human decency. There are few qualities more despicable than ingratitude toward those who have been kind to us. By fostering this sense of appreciation, we will achieve a deeper understanding of our debt of gratitude toward HaShem for all that He does for us every moment of our lives.

However, our obligation remains even when the aspect of gratitude is not so evident. We are required to honor our parents even if they did not teach us Torah and did not provide for us in any way, as we learn from the Jews in the time of the giving of the Torah, who spent forty years in the dessert. They were provided with all their needs, spiritual and physical, Torah, food, clothing, directly from HaShem, yet still they were expected to fulfill these mitzvos.

The significance of this mitzva is evident from the words of Chazal, who point out that the Torah equates honor and reverence for parents, and the issur of cursing them, with those same obligations toward HaShem. When we fulfill these mitzvos, Chazal add, the Shechinah abides among us, and if, G-d forbid, we neglect them, we cause pain, so to speak, to the Shechinah and banish It from our midst. (Mishpetei HaShalom 21:1-2)

(Excerpts from The Code of Jewish Conduct by Rabbi Yitzchok Silver)

**Story:** (based on a true story)

For as long as I can remember my relationship with both my mother and father has been strained. Rarely a day would pass that I didn't feel frustrated or upset at something my parents did. I know they were good parents, however the combination of my stubborn tendencies and my parents liberal life style resulted in major friction and unfortunately many arguments.

I remember as I grew into my teenage years witnessing a conversation between two cousins. Granted, everyone was aware that my aunt had some personality issues which many found bothersome and annoying. However, my older cousin Chana, aware of my aunt's challenges, somehow was able to cope, honor and respect her mother at the same time. Once when Chana was chatting with her sister, I overheard her speaking about a recent incident when their mother displayed this particular character trait in public.

"Mommy got really upset with the store clerk today and really gave him a piece of her mind. She wasn't out of control but it was loud enough that many customers turned around to see what was going on. In the end, she did get what she wanted!" she relayed with a giggle.

"Yes, I heard about it from a friend. I'd want Mommy vying for me anytime I need to deal with insurance companies. She is so persistent! That's our mother!" she responded with a genuine smile.

I saw in her eyes that she knew her mother was challenged in the area of aggressiveness yet was able to see beyond it and appreciate her for who she was. Feeling ill equipped to handle the unwanted ways of my mother, I felt compelled to ask Chana how she was able to brush off the incident as if it was a small issue -- not letting it embarrass her. She replied that although she didn't love this particular midda, she had grown used to it and had worked on herself enough to even be able to laugh about it rather than get upset. This was a completely novel concept to me. I felt more challenged in my relationship with my parents. Although I do have a deep appreciation for my mother and father, I often feel frustrated with their comments and opinions and find myself blaming them for various problems I encounter. "If only they did more for me", or "if only they didn't spoil me so much." My list could go ad infinitum. However, as I grow and raise my own children I realize that for the most part, parents do the best they can with the tools they've got. I find I need chizuk in this mitzva because most of my friends seem not to be as challenged and I don't find many who relate to my feelings. I read in a book that the reason HaShem created the parent/child relationship is to teach us the concept of hakoras hatov. Theoretically babies could be picked from trees but HaShem chose to have people come from people so that we always feel beholden to those who brought us into the world. This ultimately is to help instill within us the ability to develop authentic gratefulness and connectedness with HaShem. Through developing a relationship with our parents, with all that it entails, we enable ourselves to understand more fully, everything HaShem does for us.

Although my relationship is often still strained, with awareness, I have begun to realize that that much of the tension I experienced was of my own making. Ultimately how I view, treat, and speak to my parents influences my relationship with HaShem and helps empower my will and drive to improve myself. By focusing on my parents' positive qualities and verbalizing my appreciation to them (even when I don't feel like it), I realize this is practice in appreciation for everything HaShem has given me and done for me. As a Jew, my whole purpose of existence is gratitude to HaShem for my life; this begins with my parents. Gratitude allows me to develop a midda all on my own, rather than expecting others to act according to my design.

### **Discussion Question Options:**

Do parents owe their children anything?

What causes people to stop blaming parents and childhood for their problems and start viewing their challenges as coming from HaShem?

How can one develop within the youth of today a sense of gratefulness for the good that others do for them?

### **Stretch of the Week:**

Call, write, or express through tefilla, the hakoras hatov (gratefulness) you have towards your parents (or other parental figure) for anything they have done for you during your lifetime.