

"Honor your father and your mother." (20:12)

The Exodus from Egypt and the revelation of the *Torah* on *Har Sinai* are the two basic focal points in the history of the Jewish people. They constitute the foundation for our submission to Hashem. Although these events are actual historical truths, the acknowledgment of them is solely dependent upon tradition. Tradition is developed by the loyal transmission by parents to children and by the children's willing acceptance of these ideals from the hands of the parents. Thus, the continuity of Hashem's great institution of Judaism rests entirely upon the obedience of children to parents. Consequently, the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents has become the basic condition for the eternal existence of the Jewish nation. That it is included as one of the Ten Commandments underlines the pivotal nature of this *mitzvah* in Jewish life. Through father and mother Hashem gives the child not only his physical existence, but also the bond which joins the child to his Jewish past. The child must receive from his parents the Jewish mission in knowledge, morals, and education so that he, too, can transmit the tradition to his children. Without this bond, the chain of generations will be broken, the Jewish past will be lost to the future, and the Jewish nation will cease to exist.

scf is defined as the expression of the moral and spiritual worth of a being., The term is related to *scf* - heavy, weight, or mass. Truly, we may deduce that *scf* is the spiritual "weight" of a being. Consequently, *scf* means "show your estimation of the value thereof." This *mitzvah* enjoins us to demonstrate through every aspect to our behavior how thoroughly we are permeated by the significance that Hashem has given our parents in regard to shaping us. This includes our complete obedience in carrying out their wishes reverentially.

Parents are the harbingers of Hashem's wishes. Through the fulfillment of this transmission parents achieve their highest goal. The parental mission (and not the amount of self-sacrifice and care accorded to their children) constitutes the basis for the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents. This act of "honoring" attains greater centrality with the children's maturity. Fulfilling the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents extends what might be the "natural" feelings of gratitude to parents, for it represents an act of sublime spiritual devotion to Hashem.