

“Guard the Shabbos day to sanctify it, as Hashem, your G-d, has commanded you.” (5:12)

Rashi explains that Hashem commanded us to observe the *Shabbos* in Marah, even before the Giving of the *Torah*. Likewise, in regard to the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av v'Eim*, honoring one's parents, *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who assert that we were commanded to honor our parents in Marah. This is enigmatic, since in the *parshah* that tells about the *manna*, the *Torah* also details the laws of *Shabbos*. Why do they not say, “*kaasher tzivcha*,” “As He commanded you,” in the *parsha* of the *manna*?

Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, z.l., gives a practical response to this question. The *mitzvos* of *Shabbos* and *Kibud Av v'Eim* have one common thread between them: They each comprise an example of the type of *mitzvos* which coincide with common sense. *Shabbos* is a day when one rests; he eats good meals, he dresses in a manner unlike his usual weekday dress code. Indeed, observing *Shabbos* is not necessarily an indication that one is overly pious, because it is a *mitzvah* that is truly relaxing and enjoyable. *Kibud Av v'Eim* is, similarly, a *mitzvah* that human nature would demand we observe. Parents go through so much to raise a child. They sacrifice everything for the physical, spiritual and educational development of their children. The very least we should do in compensation is to grant them the respect they deserve. This is the very reason that Hashem gave *Klal Yisrael* these *mitzvos* in Marah, a place that derived its name from the *marah*, bitterness, exhibited by the Jewish People when they arrived there.

It is comfortable to observe *Shabbos* and *Kibud Av v'Eim* when life is going easily and there are no challenges to overcome. What about a situation in which observing *Shabbos* means great difficulty in securing a job? Or honoring parents in the proper manner demands great expense that one cannot afford? What about a circumstance in which one feels no appreciation towards his parents because he matured despite the miserable home life they provided for him? Does *Kibud Av* apply here also? Is *Shabbos* to be observed under trying physical and material conditions?

Yes! This is what “Marah” teaches us. We are to observe these two “common sense” *mitzvos* – regardless of the circumstances, even if they are bitter. This is specifically why the *Torah* does not add that *Klal Yisrael* was commanded concerning *Shabbos* in the *parshah* of *manna*. People might suggest that *Shabbos* was given to those who eat *manna*, who have no concerns about earning a living. It was given to everyone, under all conditions. Regrettably, some of us have a difficult time reconciling ourselves to this concept.