

"And you shall show respect to elders and fear your G-d." (19:32)

The honor and respect afforded to a *Torah* scholar and teacher is expressed in the following statement: "*The fear of your teacher shall be similar to your fear of Heaven*" (*Avos* 4:15). *Chazal* in various places have described in clear terms the severe punishments for those who do not show proper respect to their *Torah* teachers. *Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz Zt"l* explains that the rationale for this is because improper respect for teachers and elders weakens their leadership and diminishes their overall influence on us. Lack of respect for elders means, in effect, the elimination of *Torah* leadership over *Klal Yisroel*. The Jewish people are different from other nations in that they cannot survive without the institution of "elders". Although other nations can exist without being led by sages or elders, it is *Klal Yisroel's* uniqueness that make their elders a necessity rather than a luxury. Surpassing the power of the elders is tantamount to striking a fatal blow at the very core of the life force of the Jewish people. They are a link in the chain of *Torah* transmission from *Har Sinai*.

The *Alter of Kelm Zt"l* offers some insight regarding the wisdom of elders. The wise man in his youth grasps things theoretically, but as he grows older, he sees that which was described to him become real and actual. The experience of life transforms intellectual theory and logic into reality and fact, which causes this knowledge to be ingrained within his being. Wisdom which was previously cold, impersonal, and abstract now becomes apparent. Our elders serve as a beacon of knowledge, who, through their life experience, have been able to acquire *Torah* perception in its truest sense.