

Every man: Your mother and father shall you revere. (19:3)

Reverence and fear (which is the literal translation of *tirah*) are closely related. I think fear born of reverence is unlike fear which is the result of retribution. Thus, one is to fear his/her parents through the lens of reverence and esteem in which he holds them. This *mitzvah* prohibits anything negative, such as sitting in a parents' seat, contradicting or interrupting them. One should act toward a parent in much the same manner in which he respects a monarch. The Torah should have simply written: Your father and mother shall you revere. Why does the Torah add *ish*, every man? The *K'sav Sofer* explains that *ish* refers to an adult who has achieved independence, who is no longer supported by his parents. He is an *ish* on his own. One should not think that this *mitzvah* is incumbent only upon the younger generation. Indeed, it is probably more vital when one is older and thinks that he is on his own. Parents remain parents, regardless of their age and the age of their children. When we were younger, our parents addressed our every need. Later in life the tables are quite possibly turned, and the parents might require the assistance of a child. This (perhaps unwelcome) circumstance should not alter the reverential attitude a child manifests toward his/her parent.

Horav Yechezkel Halberstam, zl (popularly known as the *Shiniaver Rav*), eldest son of the venerable *Zanzer Rav*, the *Divrei Chaim*, was a brilliant *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, without peer. Even as a youth, his fame as an erudite scholar had spread throughout Jewish intellectual and *halachic* circles. His father once asked him to join him in adjudicating a difficult question concerning an *agunah*, abandoned wife. (This term is used to describe a woman whose husband is missing and not yet declared dead, due to a lack of proof if there is no body, identifying marks, DNA, etc., or a woman whose recalcitrant husband refuses to grant her the Torah-mandated *get*, divorce, usually due to extortion on his part.) When the *Shiniaver Rav* arrived at the inn where he was to stay, he asked his aide to bring him (from the local *shul*) a *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah*. (This is one of the four sections of Torah Law authored by *Horav Yosef Karo*. This section treats all aspects of Jewish law not pertinent to the Hebrew calendar, finance, torts, marriage, and divorce. It is, thus, the most diversified section of *Shulchan Aruch*, dealing with a multitude of issues.) Well aware that the *Rav* was probably anxious to review the more relevant *halachos* concerning *agunah*/dissolving a marriage, he asked the *Rav*, "Perhaps his honor meant *Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer* (which discusses issues of marriage and divorce)?" The *Shiniaver* replied, "Do not worry. I am clear in the laws regarding an *agunah*. I have no reason to review them. My issue (for which I want the *Yoreh De'ah*) is that I will be sitting in judgment together with my revered father. It is possible that we might not share similar views on the *halachah*, how it should be interpreted and adjudicated. I am overly concerned that in the ensuing discourse I might cross the line of *Kibbud av*, honoring my father. Therefore, I want to review the laws of *Kibbud av v'eim*, which are located in *Yoreh De'ah*."

The *Imrei Emes* (as a youth) was taking a train trip with his mother and a number of family members. He sat toward the back of the car, while his mother sat in the front with other members of the family. During the trip, he washed his hands to eat a quick sandwich (meal) after which he

bentched. He then walked up front to say something to his mother, who was unaware that he had just eaten. She said to him, "You must eat. It is too long of a trip to go without food." He immediately took a slice of bread, washed, ate and then *bentched*. He did all this to satisfy his mother and to fulfill the *mitzvah* of honoring her. It never entered his mind to say, "I have just eaten," because it was his mother's idea that he eat, and he would not deprive her of her motherly satisfaction of attending to her son's needs.

A woman came with her teenage son to the *Baba Sali*. Her son, sadly, was sporting shoulder length hair and the garb reserved for the more "creative" members of the (then) hippy generation. The boy manifested all of the obvious signs of one who was seriously depressed. Women did not speak to the *Baba Sali*. The *gabbai*, secretary of the *Chacham*, read the mother's request concerning her errant son: "Will the *Chacham*, please bless my son that he return to Torah observance and that he respect his parents?" The *Baba Sali* listened, but said nothing. Suddenly, it became evident that tears began to flow down the cheeks of the holy *tzadik*. He said, "Oy! If I could only have my mother (alive), I would carry her on my shoulders and dance from great joy!" When the boy heard these words emanate from the saintly *Baba Sali*, he turned to his mother and said, "*Ima, slichah*, I ask your forgiveness. I apologize for the pain that I have caused you." When the *tzadik* heard this, he said to the boy, "Leave your sinful behavior, and all of your (past) sins will be absolved."

Hearing the sincerity in the *Baba Sali's* voice, as he described his intense love and longing for his mother, brought the boy back to religious observance.