

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

One fears his father more than his mother. *Rashi* explains that this is why the Torah places mother first. A child naturally fears his father more than his mother. He is instructed that Torah does not “play” by the rules of nature. Both parents are the same. Likewise, concerning the *mitzvah* of honoring a parent, the Torah mentions the father before mother, because a child is predisposed to honoring his mother. Thus, the Torah teaches that both parents are on the same level. The Jew does not act because he is so inclined. He acts in accordance with Hashem's dictates.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, notes that *kibbud av v'eim*, honoring one's parents, is the first *mitzvah* a child is educated to observe (everything else occurs after he/she knows to listen to parents). He/she is taught that *mitzvos* are not guided by natural tendency – but by Divine mandate. One should never promote the performance of one *mitzvah* over another. All 613 *mitzvos* are part of one aggregate. We say in *davening*, *Ki heim chayeinu*, “For they are our life.” The spiritual “body” is comprised of all *mitzvos* together. We have no approach such as: pick and choose; perform what is convenient; what I feel has greater importance; those to which I can personally relate. The lack of one *mitzvah* creates a void, a spiritual deficiency in the body, which leaves one handicapped. Achieving perfection in this world, which is one's entry pass into the next world, is based on the performance of all *mitzvos*.

An *avreich*, kollel fellow, completed *Shas Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, which is far from an easy feat. This is a milestone achievement deserving of outstanding recognition. The problem is that, when one achieves such an elevated pinnacle in learning, he gets carried away, often thinking that he is no longer a flesh and blood creation like everyone else. This *avreich* wanted badly to begin studying *kabbalah*, esoteric knowledge, the secrets of the Torah. He went to the *Steipler Gaon, zl*, assuming that the sage would be so “in awe” of his achievement that he would permit him to embark on the journey of studying *kabbalah*. Albeit impressed, the *Steipler* replied that the Torah's breadth is beyond comprehension. He should now focus on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Tur*, *Rambam* and *Poskim*. The young man left slightly deflated, not having received the response for which he had hoped. As soon as he reached the outer door, the *Steipler* called him back.

“Perhaps now is the time for *kabbalah*.” The young man heard the word *kabbalah*, and his eyes lit up in the hope that he was being granted permission to take his studies to the next level. He was wrong. *Kabbalah* also means to accept upon oneself. “Yes, now that you have completed *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, I fear that you might get carried away and that your success will go to your head. Therefore, it is important for you to make a *kabbalah*, to accept upon yourself that, in addition to your continued learning, you will help out in all aspects of your home.” In addition to becoming a scholar of note, he should not forget that he has a family – a wife and children, who need his support in all areas.