

Honoring Parents Part 1

Source Sheet by Reuven Ibragimov

1. **Exodus 20:12**
(12) Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the LORD your God is assigning to you.

2. **Deuteronomy 5:16**
(16) Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that the LORD your God is assigning to you.

3. **Leviticus 19:3**
(3) You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the LORD am your God.

4. **Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 30b-31a**
It was taught that Rabbi (Yehuda) said: It is revealed and known to Him Whose decree brought the world into existence, that a son honors his mother more than his father, because she sways him with her words; therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, placed the honor of the father before that of the mother. It is revealed and known to Him Whose decree brought the world into existence, that a son reveres his father more than his mother, because he teaches him Torah. Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, mentioned the fear [reverence] of the mother before that of the father.

5. **Exodus 21:15**
(15) He who strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

6. **Exodus 21:17**
(17) He who insults his father or his mother shall be put to death.

7. **Kiddushin 30b**
The Sages teach: It is written, *Honor your father and your mother*, and it is also written (Proverbs 3:9), *Honor God with your resources*. The Torah equates the honor due to parents to that due to God Himself.
8. **Eved Hamelech, Yitro**
Even were one to honor his father and mother as he would a king and queen, he would still not fulfill his obligation [of honoring them], since the Torah compares their honor to the honor due to God Himself. Therefore one should imagine how he would feel if God were to show up at his doorstep – with what trepidation would he receive Him! The child should honor his parents with that same attitude.
9. **Yerushalmi Peah 3b**
Rabbi Tarfon's mother went to her courtyard to take a walk on Shabbat [and her shoe tore and she could not continue to wear them]. Rabbi Tarfon went and placed his two hands under her feet, and she walked on them until she reached her bed. One time Rabbi Tarfon became ill, and the sages came to visit him. His mother said to them, “Pray on behalf of my son, for he conducts himself with exceptional honor towards me.” They said to her, “What does he do for you?” and she relayed the occurrence to them. They said to her, “Even if he were to do this thousands upon thousands [of times], he would not approach one half of the honor that is stipulated in the Torah.”
10. **Kiddushin 31b**
Rabbi Avahu said, “Avimi, my son, is an example of one who has fulfilled the mitzvah of honoring [one's parents].” Avimi had five children who were ordained [as rabbis] while his father was still alive. Yet, when Rabbi Avahu came [to visit] and called out at the door, Avimi himself hurried and went to open it for him saying, “Yes, yes!” [I am coming to open the door] until he reached there. One day [Rabbi Avahu] said, “Bring me a drink of water.” He [Avimi] brought him [water and found him] sleeping. He stood over him [and waited] until he awoke.
11. **Sdei Chemed, Volume 6,**
Why do we not recite a blessing before performing the mitzvah of honoring parents [as we do before other mitzvot]? One reason is that the mitzvah of honoring parents has such high standards that it is exceedingly difficult to properly fulfill one's obligation. One might think that he has

honored his parents enough and in fact he has not even approached half his duty! Therefore, one does not say a blessing, for it might be said in vain...for not every person merits fulfilling this commandment properly.

12. **Sefer HaChinuch 33**
It is only appropriate for one to recognize and reciprocate kindness to those who have dealt kindly with him, and certainly not to act in a vile manner, estranging oneself and being an ingrate, for this is a bad character trait that is completely despised by both God and human beings. One should appreciate the fact that his parents are the source of his very existence in this world, and it is therefore appropriate for him to act as respectfully and beneficially as he can. Besides having brought him into the world, they also expended tremendous effort in raising him as a child.

13. **Sefer Chareidim Ch. 1:37**
The Midrash teaches that honoring parents is the debt that one owes his father and mother for all that they have done for him.

14. **Rabbi Yissachar Frand, Rabbi Frand on the Parsha, Ki Teitzei**
Honoring parents...goes against human nature. It requires us to acknowledge all they've done for us and show gratitude. It requires us to admit that we needed them, that we could not have done it ourselves. This is a difficult thing for the human ego. The ego would have us view ourselves as independent, self-sufficient and invincible. We can bring ourselves to thank strangers who do small things for us now and then, because this does not really affect our egotistical self-image. But when it comes to our parents, if we admit they did anything, we also have to admit they did everything for us. Our egos do not allow us to say, "I owe you everything." This then is the "most difficult of the difficult" mitzvot.

15. **Kiddushin 30b**
The Sages teach: There are three partners in the creation of each human being: God, the father and the mother. When one honors his father and mother, God says, "I consider it as if I live among this family and they show Me honor."

16. **Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Along the Maggid's Journey, pp. 65-66**
The son of a noted mathematician was a yeshiva high-school student who excelled in his studies. Like his father, he was bright and articulate, but his primary passion was Torah study, and he wanted to devote himself

entirely to learning Torah after his graduation. His parents, however, wanted him to go to college and prepare for a professional career... The father came to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein and said, "I am a mathematician, and I would like my son to enter the same field. I know that you would rather that he continue his Torah studies, but the rabbis teach (Kiddushin 30b), 'There are three partners in a person: God, his father and his mother.' You represent God's point of view – that my son should remain with his Torah studies, but my wife and I don't feel that way. We want him to go to college, and we are a majority of two to one. Doesn't the Torah say (Shemot 23:2), 'follow the majority'?" Reb Moshe smiled at the father and said, "Your arithmetic is incorrect. Let us think of the partnership in your son as nine shares. God has three-ninths, and you and your wife have three-ninths each (nine-ninths equals one whole unit). But God is a part of each of you as well, so you can speak for only two-thirds of your own self – the other third belongs to God. "Therefore," explained Reb Moshe, "three-ninths of your son, which is God's share, votes for him to remain in learning. One-third of both you and your wife – the part which is God's – also wants him to learn. If you add it all together, you have five-ninths in favor and only four-ninths against. Thus, the majority rules, and he should continue in yeshiva."

17. **Kli Yakar, Shemot 20:12**

"Honor your father and your mother" – This mitzvah concludes the first five commandments, which discuss [our obligations to] honor God. It is for this reason that in these first five commandments it says "God, your Lord," whereas there is no mention of God in the last five commandments, which discuss obligations between individuals. Although honoring one's father and mother is essentially an obligation between people, it is also related to God since there are three partners in [the creation of] a person: God, the father and the mother. If I respect my father and mother who are the ones who created my physical body – which will eventually wither and die – how much more I should honor my Father in Heaven, who granted me with the superior component, my eternal soul!

18. **Sefer HaChinuch, ibid**

After an individual has successfully integrated these [feelings of gratitude and appreciation for everything his parents have done for him] he will be able to ascend to a higher level – that of appreciating what God has done for him. God, after all, is man's ultimate Source, as well as that of all of one's forefathers all the way back to Adam. Additionally, God brought him out of the womb and into this world, provided his needs throughout his life, gave him a working body, and gave him an intellectual,

knowledgeable and insightful soul. Without this intelligent soul he would be like a horse or a donkey, with no understanding. One should contemplate how indebted he is to God and how great is his obligation to make sure to serve Him properly.

19. **Maharal, Tiferet Yisrael, Chapter 41**
Even after God commanded us to remember [by observing Shabbat] that the world does not exist by chance, it would still be possible to believe that *the individuals* in this world exist by chance and are not specifically created by God. One might think that existence in general must have been pre-ordained, but not the individual existence of each person...
By commanding us to honor parents, God is informing us that each and every individual exists by virtue of His specific will. If we, as individuals, were created by chance, there would be no reason to honor parents. It is for this reason that the Sages taught that when one honors his parents it is as if he has honored God Himself, for by honoring them he has demonstrated his awareness that God was involved in his own creation.

