

Educator's Guide

Honor your parents, the 5th commandment

Getting old can be terrifying, especially in a society obsessed with youth. In this episode we consider the reasons for why the 5th Commandment, "*Kibbud Av v'Em*," "honor your father and mother" instructs us to honor generations before us when, at first glance, they appear to have less and less to offer as they age.

[Link to video](#)

Big Ideas

1. Part of respecting our elders includes seeing the age and experience of our elders as relevant and valuable to us and our society.
2. A challenge of getting older and less reliant on our parents is to continue to see them as relevant and not take them for granted.
3. Honoring our parents is grounded in the Jewish value of *hakarat hatov* or practicing gratitude, and can serve as a model for our ideal relationship with God.

Essential Questions

1. How can we create more opportunities for intergenerational friendships and relationships?
2. How can we mine from our older generation their wisdom and insights to contribute to our lives and society?
3. How might we express gratitude to those who have helped raise us?

Discussion Questions

1. Respecting the voices of our elders:

- When presented with opinions of younger people or older people - who do you first think of as having something useful to offer you? Do you have built in biases around this? What is the basis of that bias?
- How are the opinions of older people received in our greater society? What are ways we can better appreciate and integrate voices from older generations in our communities?

2. Intergenerational living: Recently, there has been a movement advocating for college students to live with senior citizens. The students save money on paying for a dormitory in exchange for the senior citizens receiving help with chores around the house. This [article](#) adds an additional benefit, where both the college students and the senior citizens develop authentic friendships and are able to learn from one another. Ask your students:

- What is your reaction to this article? Is this something you would ever consider doing? Why or why not?
- How often do you interact with senior citizens on a daily or weekly basis? Do we have enough opportunities in regular society for different generations to interact?
- How does learning about this commandment impact your views on intergenerational living?

3. What category is honoring your parents? One approach to dividing up the Ten Commandments is to split them between the different tablets. Commandments 1-5 focus on Mitzvot between people and God (*bein adam l'makom*) and commandments 6-10, focus on interpersonal Mitzvot (*bein adam lechavero*).

- Why do you think Kibbud Av Va'Em is included in the category of Mitzvot between people and God (*bein adam l'makom*) instead of the category of interpersonal Mitzvot (*bein adam lechavero*)?
- In what ways can the relationship we have and the need to demonstrate respect and honor with our parents help us understand our relationship with God?
- Share [this text](#) with the opinions of the Kli Yakar ([Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz](#)) and [Rabbi Yosef Albo](#) with your students. Ask students: What is something you find compelling from these opinions? What is something you disagree with?

<u>Kli Yakar on Exodus 20:12:1</u> <i>Honor your father and mother</i> -- This mitzvah concludes the first five [of the Ten] Commandments, which all feature commandments that are <i>Bein Adam laMakom</i> (between people and G-d); this is why each of these 5 statements include the words, "Hashem your G-d," while G-d's name is not mentioned in the final 5 statements, which are <i>Bein Adam laChaveiro</i> (between people). <u>Even though the mitzvah of honoring your parents is indeed <i>Bein Adam laChaveiro</i>, but nevertheless it pertains to G-d. Our sages tell us (Kiddushin 30b) that there are 3 partners in creating a person: G-d, man and woman. If you honor your parents for giving you your physical life, then all the more so should you honor G-d for giving you your soul! (Translation: Sefaria)</u>	כלי יקר על שמות כ"ב: כָּבֵד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמֶּךָ. בְּמִצְוָה זוֹ חֲתָם חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרוֹת ראשונות המדברים בכבוד המקום ברוך הוא כִּי מִטַּעַם זֶה נֶאֱמַר בְּכָלֶם ה' אֱלֹקֶה וְלֹא הִזְכִּיר הַשֵּׁם בְּכָל ה' דְּבָרוֹת אַחֲרוֹנוֹת הַמִּדְּבָרִים בְּדְבָרִים שֶׁבֵּין אָדָם לַחֲבֵירוֹ, וּמִצְוֹת כְּבוֹד אָב וָאִם אֵע"פ שֶׁהוּא בֵּין אָדָם לַחֲבֵירוֹ מ"מ מִצְוָה זוֹ נוֹגַעַת גַּם בְּכָבוֹד הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ הוּא לִפִּי שֵׁג' שֶׁתִּפִּין בְּאָדָם הַקָּב"ה וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ, וְאִם תִּכְבֵּד אָב וָאִם בַּעֲבוּר שְׁמֵהֶם נוֹצֵר הַחֲמֵר וְהַגּוֹף הַכֹּלֵה וְהַבִּלָּה ק"ו בֶּן בְּנוֹ שֶׁל ק"ו שֶׁתִּכְבֵּד אֶת אָבִיךָ שֶׁבְּשֵׁמִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּךָ הַנִּשְׁמָה הַחֲלֵק הַמַּעֲלָה הַקִּים לְנִצָּח
<u>Rav Yosef Albo, Sefer Ha-ikkarim (Book of Fundamental Principles), notes (Book III, Ch. 26):</u> Hence, so that the rule of the king and the benefit he conferred upon them through redeeming them from slavery may not be forgotten, the children of every generation must obey their parents and accept their instruction. <u>Hence the fifth commandment teaches respect for tradition, by way of teaching children to follow the tradition of their fathers as one cannot conceive the truth of the past without being obedient to the tradition of the fathers and the wise men of one's religion. (Translation, Rabbi Binyamin Zimmerman, VBM)</u>	

Learning Activities

1. Lesson plan

- Lesson plan: Use our ready made lesson plan on this commandment [HERE](#).

- Make your own: Use this [blank template](#) to help you choose UED resources for your lesson based on Understanding by Design.

2. Defining the commandment: Ask your students to make a list of dos and don'ts for honoring one's parents. Then, look at the [Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 31a](#) which further defines the Mitzvah to honor one's parents.

Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin 31a The Sages taught: What is fear and what is honor? Fear of one's father includes the following: One may not stand in his father's fixed place, and may not sit in his place, and may not contradict his statements by expressing an opinion contrary to that of his father, and he may not choose sides when his father argues with someone else. What is considered honor? He gives his father food and drink, dresses and covers him, and brings him in and takes him out for all his household needs. (Translation: Sefaria)	קידושין לא. תנו רבנן איזהו מורא ואיזהו כיבוד מורא לא עומד במקומו ולא יושב במקומו ולא סותר את דבריו ולא מכריעו כיבוד מאכיל ומשקה מלביש ומכסה מכניס ומוציא.
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- Have your students compare their lists with the one found in the Talmud. Ask them: Is there anything on the Talmud's list you would add on or remove? Why or why not?
- Based on the Torah using, in different places, 'honor' on the one hand and 'fear' on the other regarding our obligation to our parents, the Talmud defines the parameters of each obligation. Why, in your opinion, does the Torah make such a distinction? What, at its core, is the difference between these two forms of respect?

3. Practicing gratitude: The video quoted the [Sefer HaChinuch \(33:2\)](#), an anonymous work written in 13th-century Spain, which grounded the reason for this Mitzvah to have gratitude, or *hakarat hatov*: *"the root of the Mitzvah to honor parents is that it is fitting to acknowledge and return kindness to those who have been kind to us; especially when it comes to parents, to take to heart that they are the reason we exist and brought us up."*

- Brainstorm with your students: what are ways that we can practice gratitude in our own lives?
- Run one of the following gratitude activities with your students:

- i. Encourage your students to write a letter to someone they are grateful to, thanking them for what they have done (it could be a parent, teacher, mentor, relative...). Afterward, ask your students to reflect on what this experience was like.
- ii. Have your students go around the room and share one thing that they are grateful for this week. Note that students cannot use an answer already given by someone else.

4. Putting our values into action: Organize a trip to a retirement or old-age home for your students. Beforehand, prepare your students for what to expect and encourage them to ask the residents they meet to share stories from their lives. Afterward, debrief with your students.

- What was something you enjoyed about it? What was challenging or difficult about this experience? Was there a particular moment that was especially impactful on you?
- Should these visits occur more frequently by schools or synagogues? Would you return to visit on your own time?

5. Interview project: Have your students choose a historical topic they are learning about in school and interview someone from that time about what it was like to live through that event (alternatively, they could watch first-hand testimony about some events online, such as about the Holocaust from the [USHMM](#), and from [Toldot Israel](#) about pre-state Israel). This could also be a unique opportunity for students to interview their parents about an aspect of their lives from before they were born from which a “life lesson” can be learned.

- Afterward, discuss with your students: What was different about speaking to someone who lived through that event versus reading about it in a book?
- What was something the person you interviewed shared which you found especially powerful?
- Share with students that they may be the last generation to hear first-hand testimony from Holocaust survivors. How can we continue to have these experiences after older generations pass away? (You can share the USC Shoah Foundation’s “[Dimensions in Testimony](#)” project as a possible solution).

6. Are there limits to Kibbud Av Va’Em? Are there limits to honoring and respecting your parents? Should these obligations exist even if a parent does not reciprocate and provide for their children? Ask your students to argue both sides of this issue and then share which one they agree with more. (For helpful resources, see articles [here](#) and [here](#) about whether or not one must honor an abusive parent according to Jewish Law).

Reflection Questions

- 1. Interacting with our elders:** Describe a relationship you have had with an older person (parent, grandparent, neighbor, teacher, mentor... etc).
 - What made that relationship special? What did you value most about this relationship?
 - Share two things that you learned from having a relationship with someone from a different generation.
- 2. Going above and beyond:** Read the story of Dama ben Netina from the Talmud ([Kiddushin 31a](#)) with your students.
 - Ask students to share their reactions to this story. Did Dama ben Netina go too far? Why or why not?
 - Share a time that you went the extra mile to honor a parent or older person. What motivated you to do so?
- 3. Sharing our wisdom with the next generation:**
 - Share a time that you taught something to someone younger than you, or were in a leadership role where you interacted with people younger than you (for example: in camp, youth groups, younger siblings...). What was that experience like? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?
 - Based on the value this commandment places on learning from our elders, should we also be seeking out opportunities to share advice and mentorship with people younger than us?
- 4. Connecting it back to the Ten Commandments:**
 - i. As a foundational principle of Judaism, honoring one's parents' leads us to see ourselves in the context of our elders and the wisdom of older generations. What do you think are the greatest accomplishments of the most recent past Jewish generations? What is our Jewish generation's greatest challenge?
 - ii. What is a way you can incorporate the wisdom from previous generations into your own life?

Further Learning

1. [The Aseret Movement](#), an organization devoted to embracing the Ten Commandments as the basis for Jewish life, for all Jews, irrespective of religious orientation or level of observance.
2. Rav Binyamin Zimmerman, "[The G-dly Element within Parental Care](#)" (Virtual Beit Midrash, Yeshivat Har Etzion). *This article discusses whether or not honoring one's parents is an interpersonal Mitzvah (bein adam l'chavero) or one between people and G-d (bein adam l'Makom).*
3. Rabbi Peretz Rodman, "[Must one honor an abusive parent?](#)" (My Jewish Learning)
4. Jisha Joseph, "[More and more college students are moving in with senior citizens and they're both enjoying mutual benefits](#)" (Upworthy).
5. Unpacked for Educators:
 - a. [The "Big Ten" series](#)