‘My father’s honor is not for sale’

10th of Cheshvan, 5771

Respecting one’s parents means: avoiding anything which would bother them or would make them feel uncomfortable.
For example, it is forbidden to wake up one’s parents from their sleep. Unless the son knows that waking them up will be for their own benefit-if they have to take an important medicine- or if the parents asked the son to wake them up, he should not disturb his parents’ sleep.

The Talmud illustrates this rule with the story of Dama ben Netina, a gentile:

‘It happened once that one of the precious stones fell out of the High Priest’s breastplate, and was lost. Seeking a replacement, the sages were referred to Dama ben Netina who had the exact jewel they sought. They offered him 100 dinar (gold coins), and Dama accepted their offer. When he went to fetch the jewel, he discovered that he could not access it without waking his father up. So he returned and informed his clients that he could not provide them with the expensive jewel. Assuming that he was trying to renegotiate the price, they increased the offer until they reached a sum of 1000 dinar. When his father finally woke up, he brought them the jewel. When the sages gave him the 1000 dinar Dama refused, and he only took 100 dinar as they had initially agreed, saying: “Do you think I would sell the honor of my father for gold coins? I refuse to derive any material benefit from having honored my father!”.

Dama ben Netina is both, an example of respect for his parents, because he refused to wake him up, and an

extraordinary example of honor and integrity, because he declined to extract a material benefit from honoring his father.

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