How NOT to honor our parents

24th of Cheshvan, 5771

Actions and attitudes

Keeping our parent's dignity while performing the Mitzvah of Honoring our parents, is learned from a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, which states that it is possible to feed one's parents succulent hens and still be considered a wicked son, while it is also possible to force one's parent work on a grindstone and be considered a righteous son.

The Talmud illustrates these two cases with two real stories:

First case, a son gave his father succulent luxurious food, but when the father asked where the food came from, the son answered "Quiet, old man. A dog eats quietly, so you should eat quietly." This son, the Talmud says 'inherits hell'.
The second case involved a son who worked at the grindstone for his father. One day, the King summoned grindstone workers to the palace to endure back-breaking work. The King expected one worker per family. The son decided to tell his fatherto take his place at the family's grindstone and to work, so that the father would not suffer or be treated in an undignified manner before the king. The son goes to do back-breaking work for the King instead of his father. This son, the Talmud says, 'inherits paradise'.

Many times honoring our parents depends mainly on our attitude.

When we take care of our parents, we should do our best so they should never feel they are a burden for us. They should never feel humiliated while we attend their needs.

Adapted from The Jewish Encyclopedia of Moral and Ethical Issues (Rabbi Amsel)

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