THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: Honoring our parents

□□□ □□□ □□□□ □□ □□□

Today we will see some examples of honoring our parents

QIDDUSH

In most Sephardic families, children pay a special tribute to their grandparents and parents on the occasion of the Qiddush. The children would come to be blessed by their father and mother on Friday night, even when they are older. The parents or grandparents bless the child with the Priestly Benediction (*yebarekhekha haShem veYishmerekha...* Many parents would also say: *yesimekha/yesimekh Eloqim*) and any additional prayer that they want to offer to see their good wishes for theirchild fulfilled. Immediately after that, the children would kiss the hand of the grandparents and parents as a signal of honor, love and devotion.

ALIYA LATORA

When a grandparent or a father is called for an Aliya laTora, all the members of the family will rise at their seats in the synagogue honoring their elder. This recognition is accorded by children, younger brothers, and sometimes nephews of the elder, who has been called to the Sefer Tora. As he returns to his seat, his grandchildren and children express their reverence for him kissing the back of his hand. When an older patriarch of the community is called to the Tora it is not uncommon to find dozens of people rising in his honor.

NAMING OUR BABIES

Naming our children after our parents is considered one of the highest ways of paying honor (kabod) to the parents. It is an ancient tradition, very carefully kept in Sephardic communities. In general, the first boy will be named after the husband’s father’s name, the first girl after his mother, the second boy after the wife’s father’s name, and the second girl after her mother’s.

Now, in the Ashkenazi community, children would not name their babies after their parents while their parents are alive. Why? It is a very practical matter. As we explained yesterday, it is not permitted to call our parents by their name. We have to

address them as ‘Father’, ‘Mother’. According to the Ashkenazi tradition, this restriction includes mentioning one’s parent’s name, *even when calling somebody else.* For example; if my father’s name is Ya’aqob and a friend of mine is called Ya’aqob, I shouldn’t call my friend by his name in the presence of my father, because it will ‘sound’ disrespectful to mention my father’s first name in his presence, even when addressing somebody else. Therefore, if my father Ya’aqob is alive and I name my son “Ya’aqob”, every time I would call my son in the presence of my father, it would be disrespectful to my father. And this is why, according to the Ashkenazi tradition, one should not name one’s children after one’s parents, while the parents are alive.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Talmud (Kiddushin 32) asserts that children are not obligated to support their parents financially if the parents have the means to support themselves.

However, when the parents cannot work because they are too old, and/or they don’t have the means to support themselves, it is a Mitsva to support one’s parents financially and provide them with food, clothing, shelter, and whatever necessary for a livelihood with dignity.

The obligation to support one’s parents in these circumstances must be divided amongst all the children, based on each one’s financial ability.

If the parents have the means to support themselves but they don’t want to spend from their own assets and/or they choose to live in a very low standard of living, then the children are not obligated to provide additional financial assistance to their parents.