

This Week's Parshah - Parshas Kedoshim

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of

Yenta bas Binyomin a"h

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

The Parent-Shabbos Connection

One of the characteristics of this week's *parshah* is its wide-ranging nature. From the prohibitions against vengeance and sorcery, to *mitzvos* such as leaving produce for the needy and loving fellow Jews, a diverse array of topics is covered.

Even amidst this plethora of precepts, we do encounter a somewhat curious feature in the third verse, which states: אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שִׁבְתִּי תִשְׁמְרוּ אָנִי ד' אֱלֹהֶיכֶם "A man must fear his mother and father, and you must keep My Sabbaths; I am Hashem your G-d" (*Vayikra 19:3*).

While we see once again a display of varied topics, here we have them combined in a single verse. What could be the connection between revering parents and Shabbos observance? Rashi's comments seem to account for this arrangement. He explains the second half of the verse as limiting the extent of the first: While following the directives of one's parents is crucial, it can't be at the expense of Hashem's Word. Thus, if one's parents were to instruct their child to violate the Torah's precepts – such as by desecrating the Shabbos – Hashem's command takes precedence. "Fear your parents," but above all else – "Keep My Shabbos."

However, Rashi himself points out that this directive is not limited to Shabbos; any attempt on the part of one's parents to supersede Torah Law must be disregarded. By singling out Shabbos specifically, it still appears that these two entities possess some inherent connection. The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe*) advances some interesting approaches to clarify the interrelationship of respect for parents and Shabbos observance.

Sitting in the "Father's" Place

In fact, the Chasam Sofer demonstrates how – on a conceptual level – one might have thought that the observance of one would automatically preclude the fulfillment of the other.

As outlined in a number of *sefarim* (*Sefer Hachinuch*, *Chareidim*, *Chayei Adam*, etc.), the regard one must harbor toward parents is based in no small part on the simple fact that they are our life-givers. Their partnering with the Creator in effecting our existence is reason enough to accord them royal status in our eyes.

This aspect, of course, places great emphasis on the *beginning*, which accounts for the most significant contribution in this area. For the greater part of fetal development, and indeed growth and continued health throughout life, one's existence and functioning capacity is wholly dependent on the grace of the Almighty.

This would appear to conflict with the notion of Shabbos as we know it. The observance of this day reflects a focus on the *completion* of Creation: "B'nei Yisrael should keep the Sabbath... it is an everlasting sign that Hashem made the heaven and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day, He rested" (*Shemos 31:16-17*). Following the example of revering parents, however, one may have concluded that commemorating Sunday or Monday – the *beginning* of the Creation process – would be more appropriate. The verse of our *parshah* thus comes to set the record straight: *True*, Hashem states, *I have instructed that you revere your parents, thus*

celebrating the beginning of life. But when it comes to commemorating My act of creating the world, I desire that you focus on its completion; thus, it is “My Sabbath” – at week’s end – that you must keep.

The Chasam Sofer goes a step further in this regard. The particulars of this *parshah*’s mitzvah of *fearing* parents differ somewhat from those of the mitzvah of *honoring* parents (contained in the Ten Commandments). “Honor” entails such activities as providing care in the form of food and drink, while “reverence” is characterized by a show of deference. As such, one may not contradict them, nor sit in their designated place, etc. (*Kiddushin 31b*).

This itself might have served as a deterrent to observing Shabbos! By refraining from labor on the Sabbath day, one resembles the Creator Who likewise “rested” from His Creation activities. But, as stated, the dictates of reverence compel us *not* to occupy the “place” of the Object of our awe. Thus, by commanding us to fear parents – including the directive not to sit in their place – one may have concluded that keeping Shabbos might actually constitute a form of chutzpah, as we occupy the “place” of the Creator. To forestall this misimpression, then, the Torah instructs “Fear your parents” but is quick to add “and *do* observe the Sabbath.”

Who Should Regard Their Parents?

Until now we have discussed how the mitzvah of fearing parents may have conflicted with the Shabbos imperative. In yet another approach, the Chasam Sofer demonstrates that these two seemingly disparate directives actually complement each other.

At first glance, we might have categorized the precept of revering parents as belonging to the class of “rational” *mitzvos* (which one may have figured out even had there been no explicit command). A certain Talmudic teaching may give us reason to reconsider, however. The Gemara states that “It would have been preferable had man *never* been created” (*Eruvin 13b*). This notion seems to undermine a basic foundation of the imperative to regard our parents. Having stated previously how beholden we are to those who granted our existence, the Gemara’s statement may appear to us as somewhat striking; it implies that they may have rendered us a disservice! After all, man would have been better off never having been born.

But *Tosafos* adds a crucial caveat to this teaching. The Sages were referring to the average; the righteous are an exception. For such people, they and the world are better off as a result of their existence. As such, the rational basis for revering and respecting parents is restored; appreciation is due for the meritorious lives they bestowed.

Who, indeed, is considered “righteous”? The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (*10:1*) makes this clear:

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְעַמִּי כָלם צְדִיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ.

“All Yisrael have a portion in the World to Come; as it states (*Yeshayah 60:21*), ‘Your nation is completely righteous – they shall eternally inherit the Land.’”

The Chasam Sofer emphasizes that it is through Shabbos observance that a Yisrael is properly identified as such, and through Shabbos observance he earns the quality of righteousness. Through the offices of this precept, the Ramban explains (*Shemos 20:8*), a Jew fortifies within himself the essential principles of belief: the Creation and guidance of the world through Hashem’s Hands. It is thus considered equivalent to the entire Torah. Furthermore, by keeping Shabbos, one is absolved of his sins – even the most grievous, such as idolatry (*Shabbos 118b*).

This is the allusion contained in our verse. Shabbos elevates us to the level of the righteous; as such, our existence is justified, and we must revere the ones who bestowed us with it. It is particularly fitting for Yisrael to “Fear your parents”; why? *Because* “you keep my Sabbaths.”