

HONORING PARENTS

INTRODUCTION TO HONORING PARENTS

Introduction to Honoring Parents

Honoring your father and mother—the fifth of the *Ten Commandments*—heads the *mishna's* list of *mitzvot* for which you receive reward in this world as well as in the next. It is one of only two *mitzvot* for which long life is promised (the other is *shilu'ach ha'kein*—shooing away a wild mother bird before taking her eggs). This *mitzva* especially refers to giving your parents food and drink as well as helping them get dressed, get covered, and go out and in. But it also includes:

- Not sitting in your father's chair.
- Not calling your parents by their first names.
- Not disagreeing with, not correcting, or not contradicting your parents if doing so will upset them.
- Agreeing with them by taking sides in an argument (doing so is considered disrespectful since they do not need your agreement).
- Not waking them up when they are sleeping--unless they would want you to do so.

Whatever applies to fathers also applies to mothers, such as not sitting in the parent's chair.

NOTE Many of these *halachot* may be overridden at the parent's request; for instance, you may correct your parent or call him or her by first name if he or she wants you to do so.

All parents—whether biological or adoptive, Jewish or non-Jewish—must be treated well, acknowledging the good they did for the child (*hakarat ha'tov*). If any parent opposes the observance of Jewish laws, the child should limit contact with the parent.

HONORING PARENTS: NAMES

Honoring Parents: Names: Saying Your Parents' Names

Children should not normally call their parents by name, nor say their parent's name without mentioning that this is their parent, as follows:

- When praying for your brother's recovery from illness (*refu'a*), say:
 - Your brother's name,
 - *Ben imi* (son of my mother) or *ben imi morati* (son of my mother, my teacher), and
 - Your mother's name.
- When praying for your sister's recovery from illness, say:
 - Your sister's name,
 - *Bat imi* (daughter of my mother) or *bat imi morati* (daughter of my mother, my teacher), and
 - Your mother's name.
- An *aliya* for your brother, say:
 - Your brother's name,
 - *Ben avi* (son of my father) or *ben avi mori* (son of my father, my teacher), and
 - Your father's name.

HONORING PARENTS: ADOPTIVE

Adoptive Parents: Acknowledging the Good

Adoptive parents must be treated well by the adopted child, acknowledging the good they did for the child (*hakarat ha'tov*). But they are not considered *halachic* parents and the child may not be required to give them the honor that is required by the *Torah* for natural parents.

HONORING PARENTS: NON-JEWISH

Respect for Non-Jewish Parent

Treat a non-Jewish parent who does not interfere with the Jewish observance of his or her Jewish child with more respect than any other person, even though the specific laws of honoring a Jewish parent do not apply.

HONORING PARENTS: NON-OBSERVANT JEWISH

Shabbat/Jewish Festivals with a Non-Observant Jewish Parent

You should spend *Shabbat* or *Jewish festivals* with your non-religious Jewish parent (even in a non-religious environment) if he or she wants you to, as long as you can still observe all of the *Shabbat* or *Jewish festival* laws AND if your parent needs your help.

NOTE You do not need to stay with your parent if your parent does not need your help or if you will not be able to fulfill all of the requirements of *Shabbat* or the *Jewish festival*.

HONORING PARENTS: ABUSIVE JEWISH

Honor an Abusive Jewish Parent but Not Suffer

A child is not required to suffer from any type of abuse (not physical, emotional, psychological...) from a parent, but the child should honor his or her Jewish parents as much as possible without suffering.

NOTE Consult a *rabbi* to define individual cases of abuse by parents because the issues are complex.