



The Fifth Commandment

Dear Parents,

We know that the *Aseres HaDibros*, found in this week's *Parsha*, form the foundation of Torah law and Jewish life. Each of the commandments is significant in its own right. Interestingly, there are interconnections between them that bring out even greater meaning and importance for us.

Let's look at the 5th commandment – *To Honor Your Father and Your Mother*. It is the final *Dibur* of the group of the first five, which are inscribed on the first of the two *luchos*, tablets. *Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, zt'l*, brings in his *Sefer Ozneim L'Torah (Shemos 20:12)*, the question of why were the *Dibros* not all written on one tablet?

He explains that the first five serve as a foundation and preparation for the final five.

It is difficult to forbid such things as murder and immorality, behaviors that a person may feel uncontrollably driven to commit, unless and until there is a solid belief in *Hakodosh Baruch Hu*. It is only reasonable to expect a person to be able to restrain himself when he is convinced that there is a Supreme Being who sees all, knows all and cares and is involved in our lives, rewards good and punishes evil.

The first four *Dibros* focus on embedding *Emunah* in a person's heart, with *Shabbos* being the most tangible manifestation of that belief. If so, why indeed is the mitzvah of *Kibud Av V'Aim* included in the first five? *Rav Sorotzkin* answers that the *Mitzvah* of *Kibud Av V'Aim* is integrally connected to the mitzvah of *Shabbos*, the foundation of *Emunah*. The parents are responsible to guide and supervise their children to ensure that they keep the laws of *Shabbos* (אתה ובנך ובתך). The children in turn are commanded to listen to and follow their parents. Commandments four and five have to work together.

It follows from this cornerstone of obligation and responsibility, that the entire family will follow the laws of *Shabbos*. From this foundation will emerge a solid edifice of belief in the G-d who created the world in six days.

As we approach the mid-point of our year-long *Project Derech*, focusing on *Hilchos Kibud Av V'Aim*, it should be noteworthy to appreciate that the children are not only strengthening their performance in one of the 613 *mitzvos*. The efforts of the *Rebbeim*, *Moros*, parents and most importantly the *talmidim* and *talmidos* in learning and putting into practice the numerous facets of the fifth commandment, go well beyond honoring and revering parents.

The time and involvement we put in are directly impacting the overall worldview of our children. When children come to understand that they must listen to parents not merely out of love or *Hakoras Hatov* for all that the parents do, but because Hashem commands it, they are more likely to sincerely and enthusiastically embrace the lessons of *Emunah* and *Bitachon* that are presented in the first four *Dibros*.

Once the entire package of the first tablet is embraced and appreciated by the child, they are now ready to face the challenges of living in this world and society. **The spiritual firepower that they've developed will ignite an enhanced sensitivity to the needs and rights of other people.**

By appreciating what can be achieved when we raise our children to care about *Halacha* and to uphold the Torah's values and beliefs because *Hashem* says so, parents will be empowered and motivated to prioritize inspiring, guiding and supervising their children to carefully and enthusiastically observe all *mitzvos*. The result will be the creation of a spiritually sound *mentsch* who can successfully navigate the challenges and opportunities of our world.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,



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