

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



## FOR THEIR SAKE, NOT OUR SAKE

*Likras Shabbos Parashas Chukas 5781*

Dear Parents,

A major focus of the children's extra-curricular learning this year has been on *Kavod* – understanding and demonstrating the many forms of giving and showing honor. For children, the most immediate expression of this concept is *Kibbud Av V'Eim*, honoring and revering parents. *The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Siman 240)* is replete with clear and specific *halachos* that are Torah obligations of children towards parents.

As with all other *mitzvos*, parents have an obligation to train and educate their children in the proper observance of these laws. Despite its importance and centrality to being an upstanding Jew, it is an area of *Chinuch* that most parents struggle with and are frequently unsuccessful with, to their great dismay. Having respectful children who are cooperative, supportive and reverent to the parent is a value on both the *Lishma* (altruistic) and *Lo Lishma* (self-serving) level. It would seem every parent would figure out how to achieve such a result. What's the problem?

There are numerous factors to consider. I would suggest the following: Most of us enter parenthood at a time in our life when we perceive ourselves as barely out of childhood. We have spent the vast majority of our life as subservient to parents and teachers. Our self-image is hardly one that allows us to be comfortable with being the object of another human being's honor and reverence. We look up to our own role models of people who deserve respect and *kavod*. We have a difficulty seeing ourselves in such a role.

As our children reach the pre-school years and become independent beings with a developing awareness of interacting with others, our obligation to help train them in proper *Kibbud Av' Veim* begins in earnest. However, our day-in and day-out struggles with these very still self-centered little beings makes that focus extremely challenging. When the children show zero regard for our needs or feelings, and we are feeling overwhelmed by the seemingly endless number of tasks awaiting us, it becomes easy to take the path of least resistance. We give in to demands, we ignore slights to our honor and self-respect, and we all too often allow patterns of disrespectful behavior to take root.

A small sampling of this creeping disrespect may be helpful in realizing what is taking place. A child returns home after a day of play group or school and dumps their backpack right inside the door. Do you work on training the child to properly handle the shared responsibility of maintaining an orderly and neat home, or do you just avoid the whole issue and do it yourself? When you pick up your child from a playdate or school and the child is not happy with your timing, do you simply accept the verbal abuse or do you confront it and explain "that is not the way to speak to Mommy. Let's try it again." When a selection in your supper menu is not to your child's liking, do you allow them to openly and disrespectfully express disdain for your culinary skills and choices, or do you have a way to

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acknowledge their feelings while correcting the way in which they are expressing them? If a pattern of disrespect is allowed to fester and take root when the children are young, it becomes that much harder to redirect as they get older. We therefore need to shift our attitude in how we relate to our children's behavior towards us. We don't need to feel that we are deserving of respect because of who we are. We need to realize that it is for our children's sake that we need to demand respectful behavior. They have an obligation to act respectfully towards their parents and it is our responsibility to help them achieve that.

Although the *halacha* may allow a parent to forego his own honor in certain circumstances, it is not a blanket license to do away with the foundational *halachos* of *Kibbud Av V'Eim*.

Summertime is a time when rules and obligations are relaxed and we want our children to experience more independence and freedom as part of their healthy development. It is also a time for parents to redouble their efforts to ensure they are raising Torah Jews who are growing in their respect for their parents. The respect children show for their parents will impact the respect they will have for teachers and *Rebbeim* and ultimately, the reverence and honor they will have towards *Hashem* and His Torah. Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos* and a rejuvenating summer of growth and *Kavod*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

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