

פרשת קדושים

One of the first *mitzvos* mentioned in this week's *parsha* is the *mitzvah* of תיראו ואביו תיראו, and there is no shortage of queries asked on this *pasuk*. One major question is why the line begins with singular form by starting with "איש," and then suddenly becomes plural with the mention of "תיראו." The *Tzror HaMor* explains that at times this *parsha* speaks בלשון יחיד, and at times it speaks בלשון רבים, but the question remains: why are both forms present? In *HaEmek Davar*,¹ the Netziv says that saying "איש" in singular form comes to teach us that even if a person has greater stature than his parents, he nonetheless must provide them with the respect that they deserve. Another big question that's asked regarding this *mitzvah* is why the mother gets the first mention over the father regarding this *mitzvah*. After all, the *mitzvah* is called אב ואם כיבוד - why is it different here?

The *Mechilta* in Parshas Yisro,² as well as the Gemara in *Kiddushin*,³ provide a very famous answer to this question: this language usage is HaKadosh Baruch Hu revealing that a man will naturally fear his father more than his mother, so therefore the מורא אם, maternal fear, is placed before paternal fear. The *Kli Yakar*⁴ adds that אב כיבוד, paternal respect, takes precedence over אם כיבוד to prevent a man from being lenient in his paternal respect in favor of his maternal respect - respect and fear should both be equal with regarding the treatment of one's parents.

The idea of providing one's parents with the respect and trepidation that they so rightfully deserve should not be taken lightly, and there are many famous occurrences with *gedolim* who stressed the importance of this great deed. Stories have been told about how HaRav Yehudah Zev Segal, *zt"l*, the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, expected his students residing in the *yeshiva* dormitory to write to their parents regularly. He would say that before writing or phoning a parent, one should have in mind, "I am now about to fulfill the *mitzvah* to honor one's parents," and Rosh Yeshiva valued this *mitzvah* so much that he would ask his *talmidim* to permit him to drop their letters into a mailbox on his way home so he could have a share in their *mitzvah*. Additionally, there is the famous story with Dama ben Nesina,⁵ a gentile in Ashkelon who displayed one of the most incredible examples of תיראו ואביו תיראו in the way in which he displayed such honor and fear. A group of Chachamim once came to purchase some of Dama's precious stones for the *bigdei kehunah*, but the key to the safe that held the stones was beneath the pillow of his sleeping father. Dama refused to wake his father, even at the expense of losing a sale, and for his righteousness, he was rewarded with a rare pure *Para Adumah*, (a red heifer that is used for purification) being born to one of his cows. He sold it to the *Beis HaMikdash*, thus being recompensed for the money he lost when he refused to wake his father.

From these commentaries and examples illustrating the ideal of תיראו ואביו תיראו, we can see the incredible value that this characteristic possesses, and we should be *zocheh* to use it as a contribution to the *geulah*, and eventually the days of Mashiach.

¹ העמק דבר ויקרא יט:ג ד"ה איש אמו וגו

² מכילא יתרו פ"ח

³ קידושין לא.

⁴ כלי יקר ויקרא יט:ג ד"ה איש אמו וגו

⁵ עבודה זרה כד.