

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.