

# An Honourable Month

The Gemara (Kidushin 31a; See Yerushalmi Peah 1:1) tells us how far אב extends from a story of Dama Ben Nesina, a non-Jew. Why from a non-Jew?

It is because of Esav that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed (See Tehillim 137:7). It of course is no coincidence that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed in the month of אב, as Esav is the one who excelled in אב, as אב. In fact, Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel remarked that no one honoured his father more than he did besides Esav (Devarim Rabba 1:15). Additionally, R' Eliyahu Capsali (1490–1550) in his Sefer Meah Shearim (Shaar 206). (The Sefer Meah Shearim was the only major work written exclusively on honouring parents until recent times. His works remained in manuscript form until recently when it was published from the manuscript with source notes and commentary, introductions and indexes by R' Avraham Shoshana in 5761.) writes that the most difficult of the exiles is Galus Edom (Esav) and it is the longest of all. Why? This is due to the honour that Esav gave his father. The Meah Shearim also writes there that even though Esav was a complete *rasha* and committed the most serious sins... because he honoured his father exceedingly, that merit was extended and remained for his children and all his future descendants.

We see that Esav's son Elifaz also had this strength of אב (since it is in his genes from Esav) as he pursued Yaakov in order to kill him because his father commanded him so (Breishis 29:11). The name אליפז is a contraction of א-לי (א-לי is fine gold as in Shir Hashirim 5:11) since he took Yaakov's money.

The Chassam Sofer in Toras Moshe in Vayeitzei shows us an incredible allusion to this: שבע וילך חרונה מבאר (Breishis 28:10) is an acronym for בא מיד רשע שהוא בן עשו ויתן לו יעקב כל חזר ריקם נשאר המקל.

The Maharal (Chidushai Aggados, Kidushin 31a) teaches us we are commanded to respect our parents since they brought us into this world (see Baba Metzia 33a). (Incidentally, the Rema in Yoreh Deah 240:18 writes that there is no obligation to honor a father who is a *rasha*, wicked person, unless he did Teshuva. However, it is forbidden to cause him pain – Shach, Yoreh Deah 240:20.) Honouring parents is more related to non-Jews since they have עולם הזה and as the Midrash tells us Esav took עולם הזה and Yaakov עולם הבא (see Yalkut Shimoni 110, Breishis 25:22, Rashi). This is why Esav honoured his father more, since this world is his portion and his father is the one who brought him here. It is for this reason that we learn the extent of אב from a non-Jew.

Once, when R' Yisrael Salanter had a yartzeit for his mother, another person wanted the amud (to be a Chazzan for davening). R' Yisrael Salanter conceded. Someone present was stupefied as he told him, "You can excuse your own honour but not of your mother's!" R' Salanter's reply was, "I am certain my mother has bigger *nachas* from me to give in than fight." In a similar vein, the orphans of a father who died suddenly wanted to do a project in honour of their father. They asked a Gadol who told them not to fight to be Chazzan for the amud during the year of the yartzeit. That is the best merit for the father.

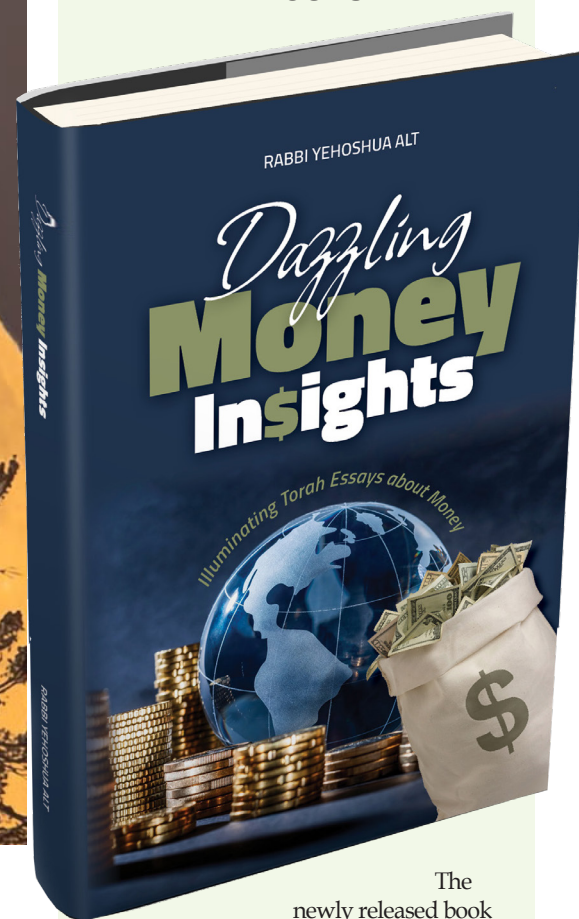
Tangentially, it says כבד את אביך ואת אמך למען יארכון ימיך and your mother so that your days will be lengthened (Shemos 20:12). This is also understood as a cause and effect. That is to say, your children will treat you the way you treated your parents. One who treats his parents well will live longer because his children will reciprocate as they will follow the example he set by dealing with his parents.

The Gemara (Kidushin 31b) accentuates the אב of אבימי כבוד to his father אבהו ר'. It comes as no surprise that the letters of אבימי rearranged spell אב, the month of אב. Furthermore, the name אבהו is comprised of the letters א, ב, ה, ו. This is understood if we analyse the section of the blessings and curses in Parshas Bechukosai. The blessings are from א to ה (... בחוקתי...) – from the first letter of the א-ב to the last. This is in contrast to the curses there which are from ה to ו (ואם ה ו to א). Hence, the א, ה, ו of אבהו is the opposite order of the curses, as they are א ו and then א ה since the curses won't last.

Another connection we see of parents to children in context with the month of אב is the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza which caused the Churban, destruction of Yerushalayim (Gittin 55b), since קמצא and בר קמצא, as the Maharsha (Gittin 55b, s.v. *v'amar*) tells us, can be a father and son, as בר means the son of.

In light of what we said, we can understand why the Mitzva of אב is in Parshas Vaeschanan (5:16), as it falls out in the month of Av. We should all strengthen ourselves in אב, thereby causing the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash.

RABBI YEHOShUA ALT



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