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Honor Your Father and Your Mother

20: 12

Honor your father and your mother REFLECT: Have I shown disrespect for my parents, or withheld my care for them? Have I been unable to appreciate them as gifts from God and refuse to consider their viewpoints as valid? Do I exasperate my children? Am I raising them in the training and instruction of the Lord?

Honor your father and your mother, so you may live long in the Land ADONAI your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12).

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with a promise, "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4).

As far as **Isra'el** was concerned, the fifth commandment had a promise of longevity that referred to the nation as a whole. Instead of meaning a long life for each individual **Israelite**, it meant that the nation itself would **live long in the land** of Canaan if **they** honored **their fathers and mothers**. On the other hand, cursing one's **parents**, the same as to rejecting **their** authority, was a capital offense. **ADONAI** commanded: **Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head (Leviticus 20:9 and Proverbs 20:20).**



The Scriptures direct every child to **honor** his or her **father and mother**. But just what

does it mean to **honor your father and your mother**? The Hebrew word **honor** literally means *to be heavy, weighty, to honor*. Today we would say that his or her words “Carry a lot of weight.” Someone whose words are weighty is someone worthy of honor and respect. However, we can learn even more about what it means to honor someone by looking at its opposite in the Scriptures. The literal meaning of the word curse is *to make light of, of little weight, to dishonor*. We would say their words “Carry very little weight.” Therefore, when **Ha’Shem** commands us to **honor** our **parents**, **He** is telling us that **they** are worthy of high value and respect.³⁷⁷

Our greatest example is **Messiah Himself**. Even though **God the Father** would wake **God the Son, morning by morning** and teach **Him** that **He** was destined to go to the cross (**Isaiah 50:4-7**), **Jesus** was still **obedient** to **His** earthly **parents** (**Luke 2:51**). Imagine that, the sinless **God** of the universe honoring **His** earthly **parents**! One of the ways that we are **conformed into the likeness of Messiah** (**Romans 8:29**) is by honoring our **parents**.

Without a doubt, there are some **parents** whose insensitivity and unloving actions have hurt **their** children deeply. What if you had a **father** or a **mother** was physically or psychologically abusive? What about the **parent** who has chosen **to be a friend of the world** and therefore become **an enemy of God** (**James 4:4**)? That **parent** loves everything that **God** hates. How can you **honor** that **parent**? I know that from a human perspective some **mothers and fathers** don’t appear to deserve **honor**. I am not saying **their** actions were not hurtful, nor am I rationalizing the negative effects **they** may have caused over the years. And if you are in physical danger, of course you need to get to a safe place away from **them**. You don’t have to subject yourself to abuse. However, I am saying that the only way to be free from the hurt is to **honor them**. Because every time we lower **their** value and cut **them** down, *we’re dishonoring a part of ourselves*. So if you are in that situation, what can you do? **You can make an unconditional decision to treat them (or their memory) as a valuable treasure, and granting them a position of respect and honor in your life.** I am not saying this is always easy, but the alternative isn’t very good either. In that way you can stop chasing past hurts and be at peace in the present.

Besides the fifth commandment, the book of **Proverbs** has much to say about honoring our **parents**. We **honor** our **parents** when we listen carefully to **their** godly counsel (**Proverbs 1:8, 2:1, 4:1, 5:1, 9:8, 10:1, 13:1** and **15:5**). We **honor** our **parents** when they see us acting wisely (**Proverbs 27:11**). Praising our **parents** brings light to our lives, but cursing **them** will snuff out our lamp (**Proverbs 20:20**). We dishonor our **parents** and bring **grief to them** when we act foolishly (**Proverbs 17:25**). Involvement in immoral relationships not only affects us, but also causes our **parents** to grieve (**Proverbs 5:1-23, 31:3**). Being

prideful, critical and judgmental dishonor our **parents (Proverbs 30:12-17)**.³⁷⁸

What happens if **a parent** has died and you cannot speak face to face? The memory of an absent **father** or **mother** can be just as vivid as real life. We carry those mental pictures around with us all our lives. Some people loved their **parents** deeply but never told them so. Others struggle with a painful past and have horrible feelings and memories of them. May I suggest that you write a letter to that person and share your feelings as if he or she were with you in person. Or if writing a letter is too difficult, make a recording that you can play back and listen to. Love the sinner, hate the sin. You can still be completely honest, and yet not sin with your words.³⁷⁹

Rabbi Sha'ul broadened the commandment to include both **children and parents**. This commandment deals with the consequences of family behavior. **Families** are a part of **God's** plan. No one is an island and **God makes a home for the lonely** when **He** places us **in families (Psalm 68:6 NASB)**. The nature of human life is that each generation begins where the previous generation places it. That's not some ancient, religious code. That's an indisputable fact of history. This means that both the blessings and the sins of the **parents** have an impact on the following generations. This is true genetically, physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. Each generation starts where the previous generation leaves off. And because this is the nature of humanity, we need a commandment to guide us.³⁸⁰