



פרשת יתרו

CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

SANDCASTLES

וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה מִשָּׁחַת עֲנָנָא יִקְרָא לְקַדְמוֹת חֲמוּי וּסְגִיד
וַיִּשָּׁק לַיהוָה וַיִּגְיֶירָה וְשִׁילּוֹ גִבּוֹר לְחַבְרִיהָ לְשָׁלֵם

“And Moshe went out of the Clouds of Honor toward his father-in-law, bowed to him and kissed him, and converted him, and each greeted his friend”

(Targum Yonason, Parshas Yisro 18:7)

Avraham ben Avraham, the famous *ger tzedek* of Vilna, was born as the illustrious son of Count Stanislaw Potocki, a famous and wealthy Polish nobleman. Young Valentin, as he was called, was groomed by the powerful monks of the local Dominican church to be a high-ranking priest. The monks planned a bright future for him, but he had other ideas. An encounter with a Jewish girl chased by Polish thugs led him to the Jewish community of Vilna, where his soul drew him to truth. After a lot of study, he fled the church, converted to Judaism, and became a *talmid* of the Vilna Gaon.

Choosing the name Avraham, the *ger* studied Torah with *hasmadah*, becoming a great *talmid chacham* and *tzaddik*. But his life was filled with danger—his conversion was illegal and insulting to the Dominican church, and he was hunted by Polish authorities.

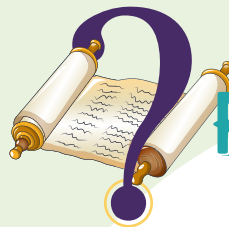
One day, when Reb Avraham was sitting and learning in the *beis midrash*, a child entered the room. It was the son of the local tailor, and he had regrettable *middos*. Something angered the boy, and he began to shout and scream at the person who had made him upset. His language grew ugly and unfitting for a Jewish child and included *nivul peh*.

The *ger tzedek* was present at this scene and made one observation. “Such chutzpah and *neveilah* can only have one source,” he commented. “The Gemara is clear—it is from

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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 When is the word **רָעוּהוּ** used to refer to the relationship between a Jew and a **גוי**? Two **גוים**? When does it specifically not refer to a **גוי**? When does it refer to an animal? When does it refer to a brother? To Hashem? When is a similar word used for two women?
- 2 What are the *Aseres Hadibros*, in order?
- 3 Where is there a “final letter” in the middle of a word?
- 4 What are six meanings of the phrase **וַיִּחַד יָתְרוֹ**?
- 5 Who had seven names? Who had ten names? What were they?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 7

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: The *poritz* forces Reb Aharon and his wife to give up their child, Efraim. He sets them free and deports them to a distant land.

T

he *poritz* took Efraim home and renamed him Johann. He announced to all his friends that he'd had a baby and told everyone the child was his. He and his wife, the *pritzza*, raised the boy as their own.

Of course, Efraim/Johann grew up knowing nothing of his Jewish parents or *yichus*. He was raised in the household of the *poritz*, and no expense was spared.

Efraim turned out to be a sweet, good-natured child. He was well liked by his friends and teachers. His new "parents" never told him he was not really their child. Efraim was very happy and comfortable in the home of *poritz* and the *pritzza*—he knew no other life. They hired special teachers and tutors, and had every skill and wisdom taught to him.

Efraim proved to be a good student, and quickly learned the many types of wisdom and knowledge his teachers offered. He excelled in mathematics, languages, and sciences. He was taught to paint, to write, and to ride. He could read by age three and was soon challenging his expert teachers to find material he had not yet mastered.

In honor of Efraim's sixth birthday, the *pritzza* threw a grand party. The *poritz* invited nobles and dignitaries from cities far and wide, and even acquaintances from beyond Poland came to meet and celebrate the young prodigy.

One of the guests at the party was a brilliant and cultured scholar, who also excelled in music. At the party, he pulled the *poritz* aside. "Your son promises to grow into a refined young man," he noted. "But there is one thing missing from his education. He is not cultured in the ways of music! He must learn to play, to sing, and to write music and critique it. But no little Polish school of song will do. I advise you to send him to the grand music school in Paris, France. It is the world's finest and most cultured institution, and Johann will come back, after one year, as a more well-rounded child."

The *poritz* and his wife thought it over and agreed. They sent Efraim off to the great music school in Paris for one year. He returned a year later, as promised, even more refined and talented than before. He had learned all about music and discovered a great love for music and for his favorite instrument, the harp. Efraim brought a special harp back with him to Lunchitz, and he would often play beautiful music for his "parents."

All was well and comfortable for Efraim...until he approached the end of his twelfth year. One night, exactly one month before his thirteenth birthday, Efraim began to have a strange dream. A man he did not recognize appeared in the dream. He was dressed as a Jew, with a beard and *peyos*.

"Efraim!" the man in the dream said. "Your name is Efraim, not Johann! You are a Jew!" Efraim awoke. *Strange dream*, he thought, but put it out of his mind.

But the next night, the man appeared again. "Efraim! You are a Jew! You are my son!" The man identified himself as Reb Aharon. "You are not the son of this *poritz* and his wife. You are my son! You are my only son and you were stolen from me by this cruel *poritz*."

Again, Efraim awoke. He looked in the mirror over his dressing table. "Johann is your name," he said to his reflection, and carried on with his day.

Reb Aharon was not going to give up easily. That night, he appeared again. "Efraim, *mein teire kind*, you are a Yid! Get up, run away from here! Go to the Jewish community in town and tell them you are my son. They will save you!"

The dream repeated itself, again and again. Each night, the man who called himself Reb Aharon grew more and more insistent. "You must flee this thief, this kidnapper!" he urged. "Run away from the *goy*! You must go!"

Efraim kept the dream to himself, but it was bothering him, and the strain began to show. He tried playing his harp to calm himself. "Flee! Flee! Go!" Reb Aharon yelled at him in the dream. "It is two weeks to your bar mitzvah. I was quiet till now, but now you must learn Torah and mitzvos! You must keep Shabbos! You must put on *tefillin*!"

Finally, the dream broke through the child's defenses. He woke up screaming in the night, drenched in sweat and trembling. The *poritz* and *pritzza* rushed to his side. "What is it, my son?" they asked.

"Who am I? Am I your son?" Efraim cried. "This man in a dream keeps insisting that I am his son, and that I am a Jew!"

TO BE CONTINUED...

2



DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. These can be split between the three *seudos*.

לא תחמד... וכל אשר לרֵעֶךָ

"Do not desire...anything that belongs to your friend" (*Shemos* 20:14)

We can control our actions, but how can the Torah ask us to not even want that which is not ours?



BEIS HALEVI:

The antidote to desire is fear. One does not have any *ta'avah* for something in a fire, or on a thinly frozen lake. We must have such great *yiras cheit* that all desire is destroyed.



REB ZUSHA OF ANIPOLI:

One cannot desire anything if he feels like he has it all! Our *middah* of *histapkus*, or satisfaction and joy with what we have, can be so great as to block any desire for someone else's things.



IBN EZRA:

One does not desire things totally out of reach, just like a peasant wouldn't dream of marrying the princess. We only desire other people's stuff because we think we could have had it ourselves. If we realize that Hashem distributes possessions, and that which goes to another could never, ever have come to us, we will not desire it.



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Parshah summary

Parshas Yisro is about the giving of the Torah and the unique role people—Klal Yisrael—were given in the function of Torah itself in the world.

Yisro arrives and converts to Judaism, and immediately has input: he adds a *parshah* to the Torah, devising the system of *dayanus* we used for generations, and to some extent use today. Klal Yisrael then undergo their own “conversion”; they are offered the Torah and accept it, both willingly and by force (they stood “under the mountain”). They are warned away from the mountain, but Moshe is given unique access, and the people all hear Hashem Himself. We receive the Torah but are killed and revived by it. We ask to change the system—we hear eight out of ten commandments from Moshe, not Hashem directly. The *parshah* ends with the commandment of establishing proper respect for the *mizbe'ach*.

Although Torah is Divine, everlasting, and unchangeable, it has been sent down to earth, and we have been given a unique power to understand, *pasken*, and apply it, to some extent: השליך אמת ארצה. Even Yisro plays a key role in it. This *parshah* establishes both the awe in which Torah must be held—and the awe in which the Jewish People must hold themselves, for their lofty level.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. Ask yourself, if you were born a gentile, with your current understanding and feeling, would you convert? Would you say *naaseh v'nishma*? Take some time to think about that question. If the answer is yes, reinforce it; if it is no...do the work to make it a true yes.
2. Contemplate on the impact *maamad Har Sinai* must have had on you, and the greatness and Divine connection of man, specifically Klal Yisrael. Use this as a *mussar seder* to build *gadlus adam*—and use that to win your battles with the *ye-tzer hara*—this week.

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. a) Jew and גוי—Yehudah and הַעֲדֻלְמִי רַעְהוּ
b) Two גוים—*Dor Haflagah*: וְיִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שְׁפַת רַעְהוּ
c) Not a גוי—גוי שור את שור רַעְהוּ—גוי. Chazal יגדו שור איש את שור רַעְהוּ to exclude a גוי. *darshen*
d) Animal—ברית בין הבתרים
e) Brother—when Yosef seated the brothers in order.
f) Hashem—אֵל מִשָּׁה פְּנִים אֵל פְּנִים כְּאִשׁוֹ—וְדַבֵּר ה' אֵל מִשָּׁה פְּנִים אֵל פְּנִים כְּאִשׁוֹ (Shemos 33:11).
g) Women—וְיִשְׁאָלוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רַעְהוּ—וְדַבֵּר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וְיִשְׁאָלוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רַעְהוּ (Shemos 11:2).
2. אֲנֹכִי, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ, לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שְׁמִי, זָכוֹר אֶת, כְּבֹד אֶת, לֹא תִרְצָח, לֹא תִנְאָף, לֹא תִגְנֹב, לֹא תַעֲנֶה, לֹא תִחַדְדִּי
3. In the haftorah: וְלִשְׁלוֹם אֵין קֶץ (Yeshayahu 9:6).
4. a) Onkelos, Rashi: “And Yisro was happy.”
b) *Targum Yonasan*: “And Yisro laughed.”
c) Midrash: “Yisro got wrinkles out of pain for Egypt.”
d) *Baal Haturim*: “Yisro unified his heart to Hashem.”
e) Gemara: “Yisro had a *bris milah*.”
f) *Ohr Hachaim*: “Yisro got ‘goosebumps’ out of joy.”
5. Yisro: רַעְהוּ, יִתְרוֹ, חוֹבֵב, חֵבֵר, קִינִי, פּוֹטִיאל
Moshe: מִשָּׁה, יִרְדּוּ, חֵבֵר, יְקוֹתִיאל, אֲבִי גְדוֹר, אֲבִי סוֹכֵנו, אֲבִי זְנוּחַ, טוֹבִיָּה, שְׁמַעְיָה

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

BACKGROUND TO THE HAFTORAH

After the death of Shlomo, Rechavam overtaxed the people and lost control of the ten *shevatim*, and the kingdom split. Several *nevi'im* spoke to the kings of Israel, who were all *resha'im*, while others spoke to the kings of Yehudah, who were good until Achaz and Menasheh.

Yeshayahu was a prolific *navi* who lived concurrently with others (Hoshea, Michah, Amos, Oded), from the reign of Yotam in Yehudah through his own grandson, Menasheh, who killed him for his critical prophecies.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Although it is the sixth *perek* of *Sefer Yeshayahu*, this is Yeshayahu's first *nevuah*. He is appointed to carry Hashem's message to the people and is shown a vision of the *Shechinah*—*maaseh merkavah*—and is frightened he will die, because he is impure and lives among “impure people.” The *navi* is punished for that negative comment about Klal Yisrael, and a seraph (using tongs, because it is too hot even for him) takes a coal from the *mizbe'ach* and touches it to his lips. (A leader may criticize the people when speaking to them, but not to Hashem. This would later kill Yeshayahu, for when Menasheh's men pursued him, he said a *shem* and hid in a tree. The men hacked it with axes and were only able to penetrate the spot parallel to his mouth.) In the vision, only Hashem's “legs” are in the *Heichal*, which is filled with smoke; the *Shechinah* has already begun to depart.

Ashkenazim add another part to the haftorah: Achaz, the wicked king of Yehudah, is threatened by a coalition of forces including Pekach ben Remalyahu, king of Yisrael; and Retzin, king of Aram (the Pelishtim and Edom were also involved). The coalition had wanted Achaz to join forces with them against Tiglas Pileesser of Assyria. He refused, so they attacked, intending to replace him with Ben Tavel, a king who would listen to them. Hashem sends Yeshayahu and his son to tell Achaz not to fear the “smoking, fading firebrands,” because He will save him. Achaz, of course, doesn't listen, and appeals instead to Tiglas Pileesser for help, sending him treasures from the Beis Hamikdash. The Assyrian king does help; but once Assyria gets its foot in the door, it is not easy to get them out, and the stage is set for the coming conquest by Sancheriv.

The haftorah then skips to *perek* 9, ending with a prediction of the rise of King Chizkiyahu, who will restore the *malchus* of Torah.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The reading of *maamad Har Sinai* on Shavuot is followed by the haftorah containing the *maaseh merkavah* vision of Yechezkel, while this one contains the similar vision of Yeshayahu. It is far shorter, and Chazal explain that Yeshayahu was less “impressed” by the vision, because he lived in Yerushalayim, while Yechezkel lived in *galus*. In the *parshah*, Klal Yisrael were also somewhat “used to” seeing miracles, like Yeshayahu.

The haftorah also makes the point that a leader should have respect for his constituents, not speak evil of them, and should listen to advice. Yeshayahu and, *l'havdil*, Achaz failed in this regard, while Moshe accepted the recommendations of Yisro and Klal Yisrael.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

A newly elected and empowered president and his party would do well to take the concerns and opinions of the people seriously, even those who voted against them. It is disingenuous to advance one's own agenda and call it “unity.”

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a *mamzer!*”

The boy was infuriated even more by Reb Avraham's comment, and he ran home to report it to his father. The tailor was none too pleased about it either. “How dare he say something like that about me and my son!” the tailor stewed. “He's only a *ger* himself! What does he know about *yichus!*” The tailor's anger boiled within him, and he decided to get his revenge.

A few days later, the tailor stood in a police station. “I know where Valentin Potocki is!” he whispered to the Chief Pavel Dumkov. He ratted out the holy *ger*, and before long, a task force of police, Dominican monks, and servants of Count Potocki were banging on the door of Avraham ben Avraham. He was arrested and returned to his hometown.

The church officials and his parents gave Avraham two choices: return to Christianity and renounce Yiddishkeit—or be burned at the stake. The holy *ger* did not hesitate for a moment and rejoiced at the chance to give his life for *kiddush Hashem*. Priests and his parents tried for a long time to change his mind, but he would have none of it. The Vilna Gaon offered to rescue him by saying a special *shem Hashem*, but he was unwilling to do that either. He was executed on Shavuot and said a special *brachah* on the mitzvah of giving one's life for *Shamayim*. The Gra would later comment that had ten *Yidden* heard and recited “Amen,” Mashiach would have instantly arrived!

Shortly before the sentence was carried out, the tailor who had snitched on him came to visit him in jail. Tearfully, the tailor begged for his forgiveness, which the *ger* readily granted. “Please, please have mercy on me,” the tailor cried, “and when you get up to *Shamayim*...please don't take revenge on me, and don't ask the Heavenly Court to punish me for causing you this terrible fate!”

The *ger tzedek* laughed. “Don't worry, my dear tailor,” he said. “Let me explain how little you have to fear with a *mashal*.”

“Two young brothers were once playing at the seashore. There was good, wet sand, and one, let's call him Yankel, built a sandcastle. He worked hard on it and was proud of it. Berel, his younger brother, was jealous and annoyed, and as kids might do, by-accident-on-purpose just happened to step on the castle and smash it to bits. Yankel was really upset!

“Many years later, the two boys went their separate ways. Yankel became a great king and nobleman, and owned cities, lands, and countries. He had a huge army and collected millions in taxes every year, while Berel...Berel was just a slave.

“Soon after Yankel became king, Berel found his way to the foot of his brother's throne. ‘Please,’ he cried, ‘I'm sorry about the sandcastle! Please don't take revenge on me!’

“Obviously, Yankel just laughed. ‘Please,’ he said. ‘Do you think I care about that silly old sandcastle you destroyed? I have cities and countries, tens of real castles, and innumerable riches. I don't care about the castle! Do you really think I will try to take revenge for it?!’”

The *ger tzedek* turned to the tailor. “I am going to place where I will be close to Hashem, with unimaginable *s'char*, beauty, and light. Do you think that when I get there, I will care about the body I lost? Do you think I will try to take revenge on the person who cost me this silly old body?!”

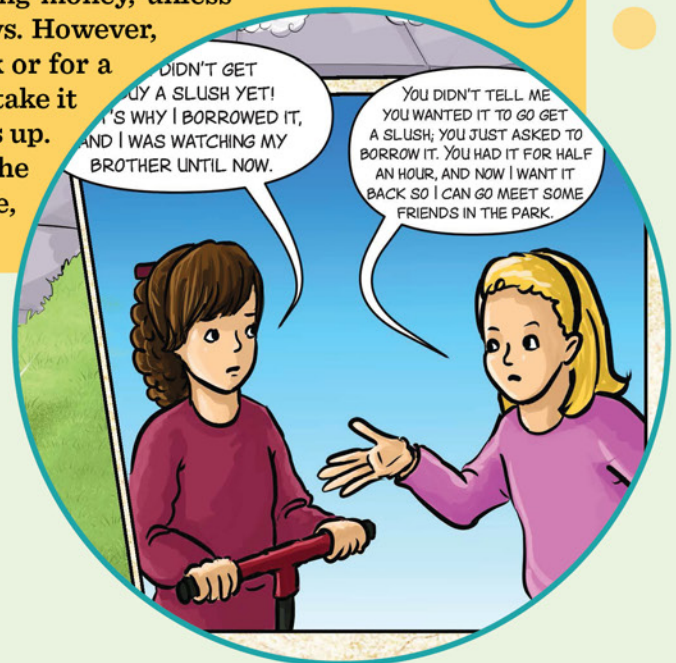


OUT FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

THE DIVIDED RIDE

Generally, there is a distinction between borrowing money and borrowing an object. When borrowing an object the owner may take it back immediately but when borrowing money, unless specified, the borrower may use it for 30 days. However, if the object was borrowed for a specific task or for a specified amount of time, the owner may not take it back until the task is completed or the time is up. Therefore, since Leah never specified that she wants to use the scooter for a specific purpose,



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אָנְכִי ה'... וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרַעְךָ...

(Shemos 20: 2-14)

There are 613 mitzvos in the Torah, and 7 mitzvos that are *d'Rabbanan* (not based on a *d'Oraisa*).

All are alluded to in the *Aseres Hadibros*.

- Number of letters in the entire *Aseres Hadibros*: 620, or 613+7
- Final 7 letters, אֲשֶׁר לְרַעְךָ, “that are your friends,” refer to the mitzvos made by people “like us,” i.e., Chazal—*d'Rabbanan*.
- Final 7 letters represent, and hint, to the 7 *d'Rabbanans*:

1. אבילות
2. שמחת חתן וכלה
3. רחיצה (נטילת ידיים)
4. לחם ומאכלי עכו"ם
5. רשויות (ערובי חצירות ותחומין)
6. עמלק (פורים)
7. כהנים (נס חנוכה)



THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY

Just before the building of the Second Beis Hamikdash, the *navi* Zechariah ben Berachiah (the second Zechariah, who was not a *kohen*) received a lengthy *nevuah* on the 24th of Shevat. The *nevuah* comprises most of the first six chapters of *Sefer Zechariah*, including the haftorah for Shabbos Chanukah and *Parshas Beha'losecha*.

The Persian King Darius (Daryavesh) II had recently given permission for the Jewish people to begin work on the Second Beis Hamikdash, but there were obstacles and troubles. Most of the *nevuah* encourages the people, and their leaders, Yehoshua Kohen Gadol and Zerubavel, to push ahead with the project. Parts of the *nevuah* predict the future coming of Mashiach.

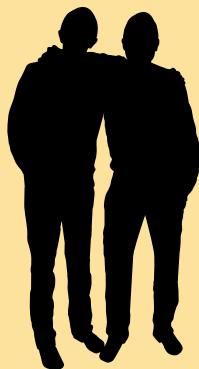
The month of Shevat is explicitly mentioned, and some *mefarshim* interpret it as a reference to a *shevet*, or stick, with which Hashem will punish the nations that have tormented us.

The *Rishonim* note that beginning with this *nevuah*, the visions are difficult to understand, and will not be properly interpreted until Eliyahu Hanavi comes. The Radak understands that this is because the power of prophecy was already fading, and the *nevi'im* received visions without clear explanations. Zechariah was one of the last *nevi'im*, and he was also a member of the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah*.

The *nevuah* begins with a vision of a night scene, with several horsemen (*malachim*) standing in a swamp growing *hadass* plants. The horsemen represent the kings of foreign countries, and the leader explains to Zechariah that they have been off exploring the world. One of the men reports that all is peaceful while Klal Yisrael has been in *galus* for 70 years. The leader of the horsemen asks Hashem when He will save Klal Yisrael, and Hashem responds with words of encouragement and consolation.



HALACHAH



Honoring an Older Sibling

כבד את אביך ואת אמך
(Shemos 20:12)

וי"ו יתירה לרבות את אחיך הגדול
(Kesubos 103a)

Is one obligated to honor his older brother?

The Gemara (*Kesubos* 103a) derives from the extra *vav* in the phrase **וְאִתְּךָ** that one is obligated to honor his older brother. This halachah is commonly quoted as sourced from the word **תא**, but the Gemara in fact says that **תא** teaches that one must honor a stepparent. *Shulchan Aruch* (Y.D. 240:22) *paskens* the halachah, and the Rama adds that the mitzvah applies even if the younger sibling is a greater *talmid chacham* than the older.

What is the reason that one should honor an elder sibling?

There are three approaches to this mitzvah. According to the Ramban, one is obligated to honor an older sibling because it is generally the will of the parents to do so; the mitzvah is therefore an expression of the mitzvah to honor parents. The Rambam understands honor for an older brother as an

independent halachah, possibly only *d'Rabbanan*. A third source says the older brother often takes the place of the father, and the mitzvah is therefore an extension of honoring the father. The Arizal explains that the flow of the soul of a person derives from his parents through the older siblings.

What are the practical differences between the reasons?

There are many. For example, if the purpose of honoring a sibling is because of what the parents are likely to want, it would no longer apply after the parent has passed, or if the parent expressed otherwise. However, if it is because the sibling takes the place of the parent, it would apply even more significantly after the parent has passed.

Can anyone be *mochel* their *kavod*?

If the point of the mitzvah is that it is the will of the parent, only the parent can be *mochel* the *kavod* of the sibling. If it is an independent halachah, the parent

cannot be *mochel* it; only the older sibling himself can do so.

Is one obligated to honor all his older brothers, or only the oldest brother?

The Beis Lechem Yehudah says that the obligation only applies to the oldest brother, in accordance with the opinion that he takes the place of the father. Shvus Yaakov agrees, but others say the mitzvah applies to all older siblings.

What about an older sister?

The Birchei Yosef quotes the Arizal as ruling that one must honor an older sister, just like an older brother. But the Mabit and Shvus Yaakov say the mitzvah does not apply to an older sister, but they do note that it is *derech erez* to honor an older sister.

What about a half-brother?

Half-brothers are included. The *limud* for the mitzvah comes from the extra *vav* attached to the **תא**, which itself includes a stepparent.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"I'M UP ALL NIGHT WONDERING, WHY DO PEOPLE FIND IT SO HARD TO GIVE A COMPLIMENT?"

—Rav Meir Chodosh, explaining to a *talmid* a 2:00 a.m. why he literally couldn't sleep.



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