



# Chai Mitzvah Family Education

## CHAI MITZVAH FAMILY EDUCATION TOPIC 4 Interpersonal Relationships

Chai Mitzvah family education materials are designed for use in a school family education setting, by Chavura family groups, or by individual Chai Mitzvah participants with their families.

The Chai Mitzvah program includes learning, social action, and ritual. Family education materials include texts for learning, suggestions for increasing meaning in ritual observances, and links to social action opportunities for each topic. Choose the discussion questions and activities that best suit your group or your family.

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 notes for leaders (family or group facilitator)

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 activities specifically designed for groups

 suggestions for meaningful ritual observance

 social action opportunities



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# Interpersonal Relationships



## notes

Honoring parents and raising children are not simple tasks. Interpersonal relationships are complicated and evolving, involving tensions around favoritism, competition for attention, and tensions between generations. The following texts explore the roles of parent and child from different perspectives.



## introduction

**What do children owe their parents?** The fifth commandment outlines the relationship between children and their parents. It is found in Exodus, and is later repeated in Leviticus. There is a slight change of wording from Exodus to Leviticus - in Leviticus the Hebrew word *yareh* is used instead of *kabed*. While *yareh* is often translated as “revere,” Everett Fox (a contemporary scholar and well-known translator of the Bible) translates it as “to hold in awe,” which more accurately captures the subtlety of the Hebrew word.



## texts

### Biblical Commandments

כִּבֵּד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמֶּךָ לְמַעַן יָאָרְכוּ  
יְמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ:

Honor your father and your mother, in order that your days may be prolonged on the soil that the Eternal your God is giving you. *Exodus 20:12*

אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי  
תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Each person — his mother and father you are to hold in awe, and My Sabbaths you are to keep: I am the Eternal your God! *Leviticus 19:3*

### Rabbinic Understandings

ת"ר איזהו מורא ואיזהו כיבוד? מורא  
לא עומד במקומו ולא יושב במקומו  
ולא סותר את דבריו ולא מכריעו כיבוד  
מאכיל ומשקה מלביש ומכסה מכניס  
ומוציא איבעיא להו.

Our rabbis taught: What is “awe” and what is “honor”? “Awe” means [that a child] must not sit in the [father’s] seat nor stand in the [father’s] place, nor contradict the words of [the father], nor tip the scale against him [by siding with his opponents in a dispute]. “Honor” means that a child will provide [the parents] food and drink, clothes and covering, and lead him in and out [when they are old and need a helping hand].

*Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 31b*

### Later Understandings

As Moses descended from Mount Sinai bearing the Ten Commandments, rabbinic tradition imagined one tablet to contain five statements intended to govern our relationship with God, while the second recorded five brief laws governing relations between people. Oddly, the fifth commandment, “You shall honor your father and your mother,” was included on the first tablet. Long ago, the rabbis understood this apparent error of placement to suggest a profound truth: that honoring one’s parents is to be understood essentially as an act of worshipping God.

*Rabbi Danny Nevins in The Observant Life, p. 674*



## conversation

- Read the Biblical Commandments texts. What do you think is meant by the words “honor” and “hold in awe”?
- Read the text under the heading Rabbinic Understandings. How do the Rabbis of the Talmud define “honor” and “hold in awe”? In what ways are these definitions the same as yours, and how are they different?
- Read the text under the heading Later Understandings. Why do you think that honoring your parents is considered an act of worshipping God?
- In what ways do you think a child’s relationship to his/her parents changes as he/she grows up? How do these changes reflect the ideas of “honor” and “hold in awe”?

# Interpersonal Relationships



## introduction

**What do parents owe their children?** The Talmudic source reflects the fact that traditionally the commandments for child-rearing were seen as the obligation of the father. In modern times, the obligations outlined in our traditional sources are seen as the responsibility of both the father and the mother.



## texts

### Biblical Understandings

חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֶר עַל־פִּי דְרָבּוֹ גַם פְּרִיזְקִין  
יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנּוּהָ:

Train a child in the way he ought to go; he will not swerve from it even in old age. *Proverbs 22:6*

### Rabbinic Understandings

ת"ר האב חייב בבנו למולו ולפדותו  
וללמדו תורה ולהשיאו אשה וללמדו  
אומנות וי"א אף להשיטו במים רבי  
יהודה אומר כל שאינו מלמד את בנו  
אומנות מלמדו ליסטות. ליסטות סלקא  
דעתך? אלא כאילו מלמדו ליסטות:

The father is bound in respect of his son, to circumcise, redeem (perform *pidyon ha-ben* for the firstborn), teach him Torah, take a wife for him, and teach him a craft. Some say, to teach him to swim, too. Rabbi Judah said, "He who does not teach his son a craft, teaches him to be a bandit..." And some say, "[He must teach him] to swim, too." What is the reason? His life may depend on it. *Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 29a-32b*

יומא חד הוה אול באורחא חזייה לההוא  
גברא דהוה נטע חרובא אמר ליה האי  
עד כמה שנין טעין אמר ליה עד שבעין  
שנין אמר ליה פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין  
שנין אמר ליה האי [גברא] עלמא  
בחרובא אשכחתייה כי היכי דשתלי לי  
אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי.

Once, while the sage Honi was walking along a road, he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him, "How many years will it take for this tree to give forth its fruit?" The man answered that it would require 70 years. Honi asked, "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. So, too, will I plant for my children." *Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a*

### Later Understandings

If you truly wish your children to study Torah, study it yourself in their presence. They will follow your example. Otherwise, they will not themselves study Torah but will simply instruct their children to do so.

*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk 674*



## conversation

- Write a list of all the obligations of a parent to a child according to the sources above. (You can use the "Notes" space on page 6.) Underline the obligations that relate to the child's physical well-being. Circle the obligations that relate to the child's spiritual well-being. Are some obligations both underlined and circled? In your opinion, what is the relationship between the two?
- What modern obligations might you add to the list?
- *For parents:* What are some values you hope to pass on to your children? Are there actions that you currently do or could begin doing to help your children internalize these values and make them a part of their own lives?
- *For children:* What values have you learned from your parents? In what ways do you hope to be like them when you grow up? How have your parents taught these values to you?
- Based on the sources above, what is the goal of Jewish parenting?

# Interpersonal Relationships

## activities

### **Super Model Family**

*For children:* Your parents set a good example for you. Here is a way to let them know how awesome they are! Design a magazine cover that shows one, or both, of your parents doing something that has helped you learn an important value. Draw their faces, or use photos. Add a few words to tell about your parents. Use the template on supplement page A.

*For parents:* You have seen your children learn from you. Their actions make you proud! Design a magazine cover that shows your children doing something that reflects a value you have taught. Draw their faces, or use photos. Add a few words to tell about your children. Use the template on supplement page A.

*For groups:* Display the magazine covers on a bulletin board or scan and post on your website!



### **Bless the Children**

Many Jewish families bless their children on Friday night or at other special occasions. This tradition can contribute to a special feeling of closeness and spirituality. The blessing is based on the priestly blessing (*Numbers 6:24-26*) with a different introduction for boys and for girls. For more information, go to <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blessing-the-children/>

### **Family Toss & Match**

This game is a fun way to think of the values that parents pass down to children and the actions they do to help the children learn these values and make them part of their lives.

#### **You'll need:**

- dice template (supplement page B)
- pencil or felt tipped markers
- scissors
- tape

#### **What to Do:**

1. **Make the dice.** *Parents:* Choose six actions that you feel represent your obligation to your children, according to and/or inspired by Jewish texts. Write each action in one of the boxes in the PARENTS template. *Children:* Copy the six actions from the PARENT boxes into the CHILDREN boxes. Illustrate them if you like. Cut out, fold, and tape the templates to make a pair of dice.
2. Use the dice to play **Family Toss & Match**. *Directions:* Parent rolls his/her die first. Child rolls second. If the items on the dice match, the child gets a point. Child rolls again, and then Parent tries for a match. The first person to get three matches is the winner.

# Interpersonal Relationships



## social action

- **Volunteer with your family!** Go to [www.generation.org/parents](http://www.generation.org/parents) to find a family volunteer opportunity near you.
- **Family volunteer vacations** are a great way to enjoy family time while giving back. All of the places listed below are geared towards families.

Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, Kanab, Utah: [bestfriends.org](http://bestfriends.org)

Sierra Club, White River National Forest, Colorado: <http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/>

Global Volunteers, Kincaid, West Virginia: [globalvolunteers.org](http://globalvolunteers.org)

Solmar Foundation, Cabo San Lucas, Mexico: [solmarfoundation.com](http://solmarfoundation.com)

Give Kids the World Village, Kissimmee, Florida: [gktw.org](http://gktw.org)

Global Citizens Network, White Earth Reservation, Minnesota: [globalcitizens.org](http://globalcitizens.org)

Youth Rebuilding New Orleans: [yrno.com](http://yrno.com)

The Nature Corps, California state and national parks: [thenaturecorps.org](http://thenaturecorps.org)

Globe Aware, Costa Rica and elsewhere: [globeaware.com](http://globeaware.com)

Reading Road Trip, Sandals Resorts, West Indies: [sandalsfoundation.org](http://sandalsfoundation.org)



## link to additional information

- Information about **Pidyon Haben**, redemption of the first born son:  
[http://www.aish.com/jl/l/b/Pidyon\\_Haben\\_-\\_Redemption\\_of\\_First\\_Born.html](http://www.aish.com/jl/l/b/Pidyon_Haben_-_Redemption_of_First_Born.html)



# Supplement

## Parent Puzzle

In Hebrew, every letter has a number value. That system is called **gematria**.

Here's a fun puzzle for parents and children to solve together using **gematria**!

You have probably been told (by your parents!) that the fifth commandment is to “honor your father and your mother.” But how are you supposed to do that? Use the **Gematria Chart** and the **Word Bank** to solve the riddle. *Fill in letters from right to left*, because Hebrew is written right to left. The first one is done for you.

### Gematria Chart:

א = 1 / ב = 2 / ג = 3 / ד = 4 / ה = 5 / ו = 6

ז = 7 / ח = 8 / ט = 9 / י = 10 / כ = 20

### Word Bank:

אָהָבָה    כִּבְד

With a number value of 13, this word means love:

$\frac{\quad}{5} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{5} \quad \frac{\text{א}}{1}$

With a number value of 26, this word means honor:

$\frac{\quad}{4} \quad \frac{\quad}{2} \quad \frac{\quad}{20}$

When you double the value of the word “love,” you get the value of the word “honor.” So, the way to honor your parents is to show them double the usual amount of love!



**Chai Mitzvah** was created as a way to engage adults in a Jewish journey throughout their lives. **Chai Mitzvah** encourages adults to take some time to reflect on where they are Jewishly and what they would like to achieve. **Chai Mitzvah** family education materials provide adult participants with a way to share the Jewish journey with their families.

There are five steps to becoming a **Chai Mitzvah**:

1. Attend nine study sessions, with a specially designed curriculum.
2. Identify something Jewish you want to learn.
3. Take on or deepen an existing Jewish ritual.
4. Engage in a social action project.
5. Celebrate your achievement!

It is our hope that **Chai Mitzvah** will serve as a catalyst and ignite deeper Jewish engagement and continued growth into the 21st century.

***Chai Mitzvah** is an unaffiliated, non-profit independent 501(c)3 corporation, funded through donations and grants. Please consider sponsoring a **Chai Mitzvah** program in your community or making a gift today.*

# TIME

FAMILY



TO MAKE DICE:  
Write an action in each square.  
Cut along the solid lines.  
Fold along the broken lines.  
Tape together.

