

<p>[Exodus 20:12 (JPS)]: Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.</p>	<p>כְּבֹד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יָאָרְכוּן יְמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ:</p>
<p>[Leviticus 19:3 (JPS)]: You shall each revere [alt. “fear”] his mother and his father, and keep My sabbaths: I the LORD am your God.</p>	<p>אִישׁ אָמוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת־ שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:</p>

- What do “honor” and “revere/fear” connote, and why does this commandment come at the end of the first tablet (that is, among the commandments concerning the relationship of humans with God)?
- Does honoring denote more than respect or obedience? Is there a cultic element in honoring?
- What is the significance of the biblical motive for honoring parents (“that you may long endure on the land”)?

1) **Cultic:** “Duties of the Son” from *Tale of Aqhat*¹

nšb . skn . ilībh . One who raises up the stela of his father’s god,
 bqđš ztr . ‘mh in the sanctuary the votive emblem of his clan;
 lārš . mššũ . qtrh one who sends up from the earth his incense,
 l’pr . đmr . ātrh from the dust the song of his place;
 ṭbq . lḥt . nišh one who shuts up the jaws of his detractors,
 grš . d . ršy . lnh one who drives out anyone who would do him in;
 ‘ā’ḥd . ydh . bšk’r’n . one who takes his hand when (he is) drunk,
 m‘msh [k]šb’ . yn one who bears him up when he is full of wine;
 spũ . ksmh . bt . b’l one who supplies his grain(-offering) in the Temple of

¹ Translation from Jacqueline Vayntrub, “Transmission and Mortal Anxiety in the Tale of Aqhat,” forthcoming in *“Like Ilu Are You Wise”: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literature in Honor of Dennis G. Pardee*. As she observes, “The poem is organized into two halves, a division marked by differences in the syntactic structure.... The first half outlines activities performed by the son for the father that are not bound to a specific occasion or situation whereas the second half emphasizes the son’s duties in specific contexts.”

Ba’lu,

[w]’m’nth . bt . il his portion in the Temple of ’Ilu;

tḥ . ggh . bym [ti]ṭ one who rolls his roof when rain softens it up,

rḥṣ . npṣh . bym . rṭ one who washes his outfit on a muddy day.

2) **Halakhic:** Rambam, *Hilkhot mamrim* (“Rebels”) 6:1-5 (exc.)²

<p>Honoring one's father and mother is a positive commandment of great importance, as is fearing one's father and mother. The Torah equates the honor and fear of one's parents with the honor and fear of God Himself.³ It is written, “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12) and “Honor God from your wealth” (Proverbs 3:9). Similarly, with regard to one's father and mother, it is written, “A person must fear his mother and father” (Leviticus 19:3), and Deuteronomy 6:13 states: “And you shall fear God, your Lord.” Just as He commands us to honor and fear His great name; so, too, He commands us to honor and fear our parents.</p>	<p>כבוד אב ואם מצות עשה גדולה וכן מורא אב ואם. שקל אותן הכתוב בכבודו ובמוראו. כתוב (שמ' כ יב) "כבוד אב אביך ואבך אמך" וכתוב (משלי ג ט) כבוד אבך ה' מהונך. ובאביו ואמו כתוב (ויקר' יט ג) איש אמו ואביו תיראו וכתוב (דב' ו ג) "את ה' אלהיך תירא". כדרך שצוה על כבוד שמו הגדול ומוראו כך צוה על כבודם ומוראם:</p>
<p>...A father is mentioned before a mother with regard to honor and a mother is mentioned before a father with regard to fear to teach that they are both equal with regard to fear and honor.</p>	<p>... הקדים אב לאם לכבוד והקדים אם לאב למורא ללמד ששניהם שוים בין למורא בין לכבוד:</p>
<p>What is meant by fear and what is meant by honor? Fear is expressed by not standing in his place, not</p>	<p>אי זהו מורא ואי זהו כבוד. מורא לא עומד במקומו. ולא</p>

² Adapted from https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1181857/jewish/Mamrim-Chapter-6.htm. For a compendium of Rambam’s rabbinic sources along with other commentary, see <https://www.sefaria.org/topics/honoring-parents?tab=sources>.

³ In the *Qur’an*, honoring parents is frequently coupled with serving God. *Qur’an* 2:83 describes the covenant taken over from the Israelites as “Worship none save Allah (alone), and be good (*iḥsānan*) to parents and to kin and to orphans and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and establish worship (*ṣalāt*) and pay the alms (*zakāt*).”

<p>sitting in his place, not contradicting his words, nor offering an opinion that outweighs his.</p> <p>He should not call him by name, neither during his lifetime nor after his death. Instead, he should say: “My father and my master.” ...</p> <p>What is meant by honoring them? One should bring them food and drink, clothe them and cover them from their resources. If a father does not have financial resources and a son does, the son is compelled to sustain his father and his mother according to his capacity. He should bring him out and bring him home and serve him in all the ways one serves a teacher. Similarly, he should stand before him as one stands before a teacher....</p> <p>A son is obligated to honor his father even after his death. What is implied? If he repeats a teaching in his father's name, he should not say: “This is what my father said.” Instead, he should say: “This is what my father, and teacher - may I serve as atonement for him - said.” When does the above apply? Within twelve months of his passing. After twelve months, he says of him: “May he be remembered for the life of the world to come.”</p>	<p>יֹשֵׁב בְּמִקְוֹמוֹ. וְלֹא סוֹתֵר אֶת דְּבָרָיו וְלֹא מְכַרֵּעַ אֶת דְּבָרָיו.</p> <p>וְלֹא יִקְרָא לוֹ בְּשֵׁמוֹ לֹא בְּחַיָּיו וְלֹא בְּמוֹתוֹ. אֶלֶּא אֹמֵר אָבִי מְרִי....</p> <p>אִי זֶהוּ כְבוֹד מֵאֲכִיל וּמְשַׁקֵּה מְלִבִּישׁ וּמְכַסֶּה מְשַׁל הָאֵב. וְאִם אֵין מְמוֹן לְאָב וְיֵשׁ מְמוֹן לְבֵן כּוֹפִין אוֹתוֹ וְזֵן אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ כְּפִי מֵה שֶׁהוּא יֻכֹּל. וּמוֹצִיא וּמְכַנֵּס וּמְשַׁמְשׁוֹ בְּשַׁאֲר הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁהַשְּׁמָשִׁים מְשַׁמְשִׁים בְּהֵן אֶת הָרֵב. וְעוֹמֵד מִפְּנֵי כְּדָרְךָ שֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד מִפְּנֵי רֵבוֹ....</p> <p>וְחַיֵּב לְכַבְּדוֹ אֶפְלוּ לְאַחַר מוֹתוֹ. כִּי־צַד. הִיָּה אֹמֵר דְּבַר שְׁמוּעָה מִפִּיו לֹא יֹאמֵר כִּד אָמַר אָבִיא. אֶלֶּא אֹמֵר כִּד אָמַר אָבִיא מְרִי אֲנִי כְּפֶרֶת מְשַׁכְּבוֹ. בְּמֵה דְבָרִים אֲמוּרִים בְּתוֹךְ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ שְׁלֹא־חַר מִיִּתְנוּ. אֶבֶל לְאַחַר שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֳדָשׁ אֹמֵר זְכָרוֹנוֹ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:</p>
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3) **Theological:** Bahya b. Asher on Exod 20:12⁴

<p>We have been admonished heretofore about honoring our primary most exalted Parent on high [=God], and now the first tablet is concluded with</p>	<p>הַזְהִירוּ עַד עַתָּה בְּכַבּוֹד הָאֵב הָרֵאשׁוֹן הָעֵלְיוֹן יִתְבַרַךְ וְעַתָּה רֵצָה לְחַתוּם הַלּוּחַ בְּכַבּוֹד הָאֵב הָאַחֲרוֹן</p>
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⁴ More elaborately in *Qad ha-qemah*, s.v. *yetzer ha-ra*.

<p>honoring our latter parent below. In other words, just as I have commanded you with respect to honoring Me, I likewise command you today to honor your parents, who are My collaborators in your formation. Scripture does not specify the nature of this honoring, because you must learn it by analogy with honoring God.⁵ Just as it says that one must acknowledge the existence of the primary Parent as one’s God, one is obliged to acknowledge the parenthood of one’s father and mother. Just as one cannot deny God, one cannot deny one’s parents. One is, furthermore, obligated not to swear falsely or vainly by the name or by the life of one’s parent, and one may not serve a parent for the sake of inheriting money, honor, or stature. There are, in addition, specific things under the rubric of honoring parents about which we have been commanded, and the Sages have explained what they are: providing them with nourishment, clothing, and aid in moving about.</p>	<p>התחתון ואמר כשם שצויתך בכבודי כן אני מצוך היום בכבוד אביך ואמך שהם שותפין עמי ביצירתך. וסתם הכתוב ולא פירש הכבוד הזה כי יש ללמוד אותו מכבוד האב הראשון יתעלה, וכשם שהזכיר באב הראשון יתברך שיודה בו ובמציאותו שהוא אלהיו כן יתחייב שיודה במולידיו שהם אביו ואמו, וכשם שהזכיר לא יהיה לך שלא יכפור בו כן יתחייב שלא יכפור באביו לומר על אדם אחר שהוא אביו, ויתחייב עוד שלא ישבע בשם אביו וחיי אביו לשקר ולשוא, ושלא יעבוד אותו מפני ירושת ממון או ירושת כבוד ומעלה, ועוד יש בכלל הכבוד דברים שנצטוינו בהם והחכמים פירשו אותם והם מאכילו ומשקהו ומלבישו ומכסהו ומניסו ומוציאו.</p>
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- 4) **Rubric:**⁶ Jacob ben Hananel Sikili (Cordoba→Damascus, 13th-14th cen.), *Torat ha-minḥah*,⁷ sermon 25

<p>Commandments that contained within the utterance “Honor your father...”</p>	<p>המצות הנכללות בדיבור כבוד את אביך:</p>
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⁵ Cf. Malachi 1:6: “A son should honor his father, and a slave his master. Now if I am a father, where is the honor due Me? And if I am a master, where is the reverence due Me?—said the Lord of Hosts to you, O priests who scorn My name.”

⁶ Are the 10 Commandments specific core principles, rubrics (“chapter headings”) under which all the *mitzvot* may be subsumed, some combination of the two, or something else entirely?

⁷ See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. Vol. 18, pp. 574-575. He composed *Torat ha-minḥah*, on the weekly Torah portions, at the behest the Jewish community he served in Damascus.

<p>Contained within “Honor your father and your mother”: all the commandments entailing acts of gratuitous charity, love of one’s fellows, and drawing one’s kin near; also, commandments that involve enhancement of the virtues of mercy and love—having compassion for animals and all creatures, and honoring the elderly and the wise.</p>	<p>ובכלל כבוד את אביך ואת אמך, כל המצות שיש בהם גמילות חסדים וצדק, ואהבת רעים ואוהבים, והקרבת הקרובים. וגם המצות שיש בהם תיקון מדות הנפש במדות הרחמים והאהבה לרחם על בעלי חיים ועל כל הבריות ולכבד הזקנים והחכמים:</p>
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- 5) **From Generation to Generation:** Joseph Albo (Castile, 15th century, work completed ca. 1425), *Sefer ha-iqqarim* (“Book of Principles”), 3:26 (trans. Isaac Husik)

<p>Then comes the commandment, “Honor your father and your mother.” For it is well known that the king who built the city does not reveal himself every day to the men of the city. And while the men of that generation, who saw the king come into the city, remember that he built that city and freed them from bondage, and that they accepted his sovereignty, those who come after them, having never been slaves, and not having seen the king enter the city, may rebel, thinking that the city has always been theirs, and that they have no overlord. There is no way of escaping such folly except by submitting to parents and receiving instruction from them. For the parents will inform the children that they were slaves and that a certain lord freed them from bondage, that it was he who built the city and settled them therein. Hence it was necessary, in order that the rule of the king throughout the city and the benefit he conferred upon them in freeing them from slavery might not be forgotten, that children of every generation</p>	<p>ואח"כ אמר כבוד את אביך ואת אמך לפי שהוא מן הידוע שאין המלך שבנה המדינה נגלה בכל יום לאנשי המדינה ההיא ואם יזכרו אנשי הדור ההוא שראו ביאת המלך אל המדינה את קבלת עול מלכותו ושהמלך בנה המדינה ושהוציאם מעבדות לחרות הנה הבאים אחריהם שלא הרגישו בעבדות כלל ושלא ראו כניסת המלך במדינה יבאו למרוד ולחשוב שהמדינה היתה שלהם תמיד ושאינן להם מושל עליהם ואין דרך לצאת מן השטות הזה אלא בהיותם נכנעים אל האבות ומקבלים המוסר מהם כי הם יודיעו את בניהם איך היו עבדים ושאדון אחד הוציאם לחרות והוא שבנה המדינה והשכין אותם בתוכה ולזה היה מן ההכרח כדי שלא תשתכח ממשלת המלך מעל המדינה והטובה שעשה עמהם שהוציאם מעבדות</p>
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<p>should obey their parents and accept their instructions. Hence the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and your mother,” teaches respect for tradition, viz., that a person should follow the tradition of the fathers, which is a fundamental dogma of all religions. Their existence cannot be conceived unless a person is obedient to the tradition of the fathers and the wise men of that religion.</p>	<p>לחרות שיכנעו הבנים בכל דור ודור אל האבות ויקבלו דברי מוסרם עליהם ובעבור זה בא הדבור החמישי שהוא כבוד את אביך ואת אמך להזהיר על הקבלה ר"ל שימשך האדם לקבלת האבות שזה עקר כולל לכל הדתות שלא יצויר מציאותן אם לא יהיה האדם נשמע לקבלת האבות וחכמי הדת.</p>
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6) M. Kalisch,⁸ *Exodus* (London, 1855), pp. 273-276 (exc.)

(273) [T]he conscientious observance of the filial duties forms the foundation of all our obligations towards our fellow-men. For the family is the basis of society; and the parents are the centre of the family.⁹ The disorganization of family-life in a state is the surest and most melancholy symptom of its decay.... (274) The very wording of our commandment proves that it has a political background; it promises long life in the land, in which the Israelites were to form a nation; domestic virtues are a guarantee for social and civil excellence.... (275) In order to secure a more conscientious observance of this duty, the reward is added: a long life in the promised land.—We are no admirers of artificial or mystical explanations;¹⁰ but it may be safely admitted, that filial disobedience does not only indicate, in the organization of the individual, a moral and mental anomaly, but also a physical disorder, which renders a long and happy life almost impossible.

⁸ M(arcus) M(oritz) Kalisch (1828-1885); b. Treptow, earned degrees at Berlin and Halle; emigrated to England in the wake of the 1848 revolutions; pioneer of biblical criticism in England, also secretary to Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler (1848-1853); from 1853 tutor to the Rothschild family, giving him time to produce his commentaries and other writings. *Exodus* was the first published volume of a planned critical edition of the Torah with commentary. *Genesis* and *Leviticus* followed, but the project was cut short by ill health and an untimely death at the age of 57.

⁹ [T]he parents are the visible representatives of God; the *dii terrestres*; they are the middle link between the children and God as Creator (p. 275, Kalisch’s emphasis).

¹⁰ Viz., the traditional notion that “length of days” = life in the “world to come.”