



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melaveh Malkah Parshas Kedoshim 5768

In Parshas Kedoshim, the Torah commands us to honor the elderly.

מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקּוּם וְהִדְרָת פְּנֵי זָקֵן וְיִרְאַת מְאֻלְקִיךָ אֲנִי ה' (ויקרא י"ט:ל"ב)
You should rise in the presence of an old person and you should honor the elderly (and sages), You should fear your G-d, I am Hashem.

“Isi ben Yehudah says, מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקּוּם includes anyone with white hair. R. Yochanan says that the *halachah* is in accordance with Isi ben Yehudah’s opinion. R. Yochanan would stand up before non-Jewish elders. He said, כמה הרפתקי עדו עלייהו דהני ‘How many events have they experienced! Rashi explains the term הרפתקי as “events and troubles, and they saw many miracles and wonders”
(קידושין ל"ג.)

Clearly, if we need to honor even non-Jewish elders, how much more should we honor an elderly Jew, even if he is an *Am Ha'aretz*. When we honor an elderly *Am Ha'aretz*, it awakens his desire to learn Torah and keep its mitzvos. The opposite is certainly true. An elderly *Am Ha'aretz* who is treated dismissively by the younger generation won't be motivated to learn and grow. Hakadosh Baruch Hu commands us to honor even those who weren't fortunate enough to learn Torah and keep mitzvos in their youth. Hashem loves every Jew and wants us to ensure that even an elderly ignoramus will experience positive interactions that inspire him to learn and grow in his final years. It's never too late!

I once asked someone who lives in *Chutz La'aretz* and works primarily with non- Jews if they honor the elderly in the same way that we do. He



responded that they certainly care about the needs of the elderly and try to help them in every way possible. However, their kindness to the elderly is motivated primarily by mercy and pity rather than *kavod*. *Bnei Yisrael* are commanded not only to feel mercy for the elderly and to care for them, but especially to honor each older person because he has experienced so much in his life.

In the summer of 5735, the *Beis Yisrael zy*"a visited Chaifa. One day, while walking with the Rebbe in the pre-dawn hours, he spoke about the Ponovozher Rav zt"l. He praised the Rav's great power of rhetoric and, as an example, repeated a thought from one of the Rav's *drashos*.

One of the Ponovozher Rav's projects was the establishment of an orphanage for children who had survived the Holocaust. The dedication of the orphanage was a very moving event. When the Rav spoke at that dedication, he quoted the Gemara (חגיגה י"ד.)

"When Rav Dimi arrived, he said that Yeshayahu cursed Yisrael with eighteen curses, and was only satisfied after uttering the final curse, (ישעיהו ג"ה) "יְרֵבּוּ הַנְּעָר בְּזִיקָן – the youth will behave arrogantly towards the elder."

The Rav asked why among all of the horrifying physical and spiritual curses that preceded this one, it was particularly this final curse that satisfied Yeshayahu? He answered that the severity of this last curse can be understood in light of R. Yochanan's teaching that we must honor even elderly non-Jews because they have experienced so much in life. After the horrors of the Shoah, we find ourselves in a situation where children have suffered so terribly, in so many ways, that rather than bow their heads before the life experience of the elderly, they will declare that they have experienced far more than any old man or woman

If we had the ability to measure the pain and suffering that these children have endured, we would discover that in the span of a few



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years, they have undergone more adversity than an entire generation of people who lived to an old age. Therefore, even though the young are usually expected to stand up and honor the elders who have experienced so much, in our generation, the elders need to stand up and honor these children who have endured unfathomable torture and hardship.

This was the *navi's* intention when he concluded the series of eighteen curses with the prophecy that a time will come when the elderly will have to stand up in the presence of youths who have more life experience than their elders.

Baruch Hashem, in our generation neither we nor our children have had to endure the torture and atrocities of the *Shoah*. However, we must realize that all around us, there are young children who have undergone horrible traumatic experiences. We may not be aware of their pain because they usually hide it from those around them.

Therefore, we must do everything possible to honor and value each person, whether old or young. This doesn't simply mean that we should have mercy on them but that we should actually honor them. The Torah's commandment **מפני שיבה תקום** should be viewed as an *Av*, the prototype of our obligation, whereas our obligation to honor each person should be viewed as *Toldos*, "offspring" of that same initial obligation.

The days of *sefiras ha'omer*, when the *talmidim* of R. Akiva died because they didn't treat each other with *kavod*, is a most fitting time to try harder than ever to be careful with the *kavod* of others, and to increase love and unity among us.

We find that the *Sfas Emes* (קדושים תרמ"ג) explains;

“קדושים תהיו” - this *parshah* was said at **הקהל**, (the gathering of the entire nation), for it isn't possible to be worthy of *kedushah* without *bitul* to *Clal Yisrael*. As the *pasuk* says, **כָּל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קְדוּשִׁים (במדבר ט"ז:ג)** - All of the nation are all *kedoshim*, meaning that when they are unified as



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one they are *kedoshim*. This is why most of the *dinim* in this *parshah* are *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

Also, when Bnei Yisrael are unified, the hand of the wicked has no control over them, and they (the wicked) separate from them, and as a result of this, *kedushah* is present among Yisrael. This is the primary aspect of *galus* - the inability to unite because we have been scattered among the *reshaim*. And they (the *reshaim*) prevent *kedushah* from dwelling in Yisrael.”

These words of the *Sfas Emes* teach us that the more we try to care for the *kavod* of others, whether big or small, we will we be *zocheh* ly”h to experience the future *geulah* which depends on the matter of *achdus*.
ותחזינה עינו בשובו לציון ברחמים אכי"ר.



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