

The Magnificent Association between the Following Two Commandments:

“אנכי ה' אלקיך” - “כבד את אביך ואת אמך”

“I Am Hashem Your G-d” and “Honor Your Father and Your Mother”

Recognizing and Appreciating the Kindness Performed on One's Behalf!

In this week's parsha, parshas Yisro, we learn of the phenomenal revelation on Har Sinai and the giving of the Torah to Yisroel. Hashem descended on the mountain and gave voice to the Ten Commandments — the foundation of the entire Torah. In this essay, we wish to examine the fifth commandment — an important, positive commandment that we are obligated to fulfill on a daily basis — (Shemos 20, 12): “כבד את אביך ואת אמך למען יאריכון ימיך על האדמה אשר ה' אלקיך נותן לך” — Honor your father and your mother, so that your days will be lengthened upon the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you.

Concerning the importance of this Mitzvah, we have learned in the Gemoreh (Kiddushin 30b): “תנו רבנן נאמר כבד את אביך ואת אמך, ונאמר (משלי ג ט) כבד את ה' מהונך, השוה הכתוב כבוד אב ואם לכבוד המקום, נאמר (ויקרא יט ג) איש אמו ואביו תיראו, ונאמר (דברים יג) את ה' אלהיך תירא ואותו תעבוד, השוה הכתוב מוראת אב ואם למוראת המקום” — Scripture equates honoring one's parents with honoring the Omnipresent. Similarly, Scripture equates revering one's parents with revering the Omnipresent.

Later on, the Gemoreh (ibid.) states: “תנו רבנן שלשה שותפין” — the Rabbis taught that there are three partners involved in the creation of a person — HKB”H, his father and his mother. Rashi explains that one's parents provide the physical, bodily structure, while HKB”H supplies the neshomeh. “בזמן שאדם מכבד את אביו ואת אמו, אמר הקב”ה — מעלה אני עליהם כאילו דרתי ביניהם וכבודוני” — when a person honors his parents, HKB”H states: I consider it as if I had dwelt among them and they had honored Me. This statement can be understood in light of the following Gemoreh (Sotah 17a): “דריש רבי עקיבא, איש ואשה זכו שכינה ביניהן” — Rabbi Akiva expounds that when a man and a woman are meritorious, the Shechinoh (the Divine Presence) dwells among them. As Rashi explains: Hashem split His name, “yud-kei,” in two and placed the letter “yud” in the word for man, איש, and the letter “hei,” in the word for woman, אשה.

Consequently, when a person honors his parents, HKB”H considers it as if they, the parents, had honored Him. Having a righteous child is testimony to the fact that the parents merited the Divine Presence in their home — the presence of the ה"י in their names and in their midst.

The Latter Commandment Makes It Evident that the First Commandment Is True

While discussing the commandment of honoring one's parents, it is worth examining the magnificent association between the first commandment (Shemos 20, 2): “אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים” — I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery — and the fifth commandment (ibid., ibid. 12): “כבד את אביך ואת אמך” — Honor your father and your mother. Regarding this association, the Gemoreh teaches us (Kiddushin 31a):

“דרש עולא רבה אפיתחא דבי נשיאה, מאי דכתיב (תהלים קלח ד) יודוך ה' כל מלכי ארץ כי שמעו אמרי פיך, מאמר פיך [בלשון יחיד] לא נאמר אלא אמרי פיך [בלשון רבים], בשעה שאמר הקב”ה אנכי ולא יהיה לך, אמרו אומות העולם לכבוד עצמו הוא דורש, כיון שאמר כבד את אביך ואת אמך, חזרו והודו למאמרות הראשונות. רבא אמר מהכא (תהלים קיט קס) ראש דברך אמת, ראש דברך ולא סוף דברך, אלא מסוף דברך ניכר שראש דברך אמת.”

When HKB”H proclaimed the first two commandments, the nations of the world stated that He is doing so for the sake of His own honor; however, when He pronounced the fifth commandment, they retracted their position and acknowledged the first two commandments. Rovo derives from the possuk (Tehillim 119, 160): “ראש דברך אמת” — the beginning of Your utterance is true -- that the latter statement confirms the veracity of the former.

Rashi explains that when the nations of the world acknowledged that it is necessary for one to honor one's parents, they reasoned that, all the more so, one must honor G-d. Not only is He a partner in a person's creation, like one's parents, but He also determines their very life and death. So, although they initially found fault with the first two commandments, they ultimately conceded to their veracity after hearing the fifth commandment.

This statement of the Gemoreh's has provoked many questions and commentaries. Even before hearing HKB"H's command to honor one's parents, the nations of the world should have comprehended the obligation to honor the Almighty. After all, their very existence depends on Him. Even so, they suspected HKB"H of uttering the first two commandments for the sake of His own honor. How, then, did the commandment to honor one's parents dispel their suspicions and refute their criticism? Even a great king can command his people to honor one of his ministers in an honorable, princely fashion; this is still not the same as the manner in which they would honor the king himself.

It is even more bewildering after considering that our sages found proofs from pesukim in the Torah that HKB"H equated the obligation to honor one's parents with the obligation to honor HKB"H. How did the nations of the world, however, learn out this obligation after only hearing the Ten Commandments? They could have very easily concluded that the first commandment — I am Hashem, your G-d — was intended to demand His own honor as ruler of the universe, while the fifth commandment — Honor your father and your mother — was merely intended to instruct people to respect their parents as is customary throughout the world.

The Minchas Chinuch's Inquiry Concerning the Mitzvoh to Honor One's Parents

To resolve some of these issues, I would like to draw attention to an inquiry found in the *Minchas Chinuch* (Mitzvoh 33, 3). He questions whether the Mitzvoh to honor one's parents falls into the category of mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom" — commandments between man and G-d — or into the category of mitzvos "bein adam l'chaveiro" — commandments between man and his fellow man. In fact, how this Mitzvoh is classified has halachic implications. For, we have learned in the Mishnah (Yoma 85b): **"עבירות שבין אדם למקום יום הכפורים מכפר, עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חבירו"** — Yom Kippur provides atonement for transgressions classified as "bein adam la'Makom," but does not atone for transgressions classified as "bein adam l'chaveiro," until one attempts to appease the other person involved. Now, if we determine that

the Mitzvoh to honor one's parents is a Mitzvoh "bein adam la'Makom," then repenting on Yom Kippur provides atonement for a transgression in this category; however, if we determine that it is a Mitzvoh "bein adam l'chaveiro," Yom Kippur does not provide atonement unless a person first appeases his parents.

In fact, the *Minchas Chinuch* remains uncertain with regard to this inquiry. After much consideration, we can suggest that the Mitzvoh to honor one's parents is truly a synthesis of both of these categories of mitzvos. By equating honoring HKB"H with honoring one's parents, it appears that this Mitzvoh belongs in the category of "bein adam la'Makom." Yet, one's parents are living beings who need to be appeased if they are disrespected; otherwise, Yom Kippur does not afford atonement for a transgression of this type. From this vantage point, the Mitzvoh to honor one's parent would appear to belong in the second category — "bein adam l'chaveiro."

To understand the matter better, let us add the following perspective. Why does Yom Kippur fail to provide atonement for transgressions of mitzvos between man and his fellow man, until the involved party is appeased or reconciled with? The answer, clearly, is because teshuvah — repentance — requires asking forgiveness from the party that was offended.

Now, regarding transgressions of the "bein adam la'Makom" category, when a person performs sincere, wholehearted teshuvah, he asks for HKB"H's forgiveness for acting disrespectfully; consequently, Yom Kippur is able to provide atonement for him. Transgressions "bein adam l'chaveiro," however, arise from the fact that one has caused his fellow man distress or harm. Certainly, it does not suffice to request forgiveness from HKB"H in this sort of matter; one must approach the injured party directly and appease them.

This would seem to be the case regarding the Mitzvoh to honor one's parents. A person is commanded to honor his parents; if he fails to do so properly, asking forgiveness from HKB"H alone will not suffice. Surely, one must ask forgiveness from one's parents for not respecting them properly. In fact, the Gemoreh states (Kiddushin 32a): **"האב שמחל על כבודו כבודו מחול"** — a father is able to relinquish the honor that is due him. Now, if this was purely a matter "bein adam la'Makom" — between man and Hashem — the father's relinquishing his honor would be to no avail.

HKB"H Included the Mitzvoh of Honoring One's Parents among the Mitzvos Bein Adam La'Makom

I feel compelled to suggest a reason as to why HKB"H chose to separate in the Ten Commandments the commandment to honor

one's parents from the commandment to honor Hashem. Whereas "אנכי ה' אלקיך" is the first commandment, "כבד את אביך ואת אמך" does not appear until the fifth commandment. Seeing as HKB"H equated their honor with His own honor, why do three other commandments appear between these two commandments? Why are they not mentioned together, one after the other?

Let us introduce a valuable insight provided by the Kli Yakar on the possuk: "כבד את אביך ואת אמך" — Honor your father and your mother. He proves that the Mitzvoh to honor one's parents is a Mitzvoh "bein adam la'Makom" based on the commentary of the Ramban in this week's parsha (Shemos 29, 13). The Ramban teaches us that the two "luchos" divided the commandments up into two distinct categories. The five commandments on the first tablet were comprised of mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom." By contrast, the five commandments on the second tablet were comprised of mitzvos "bein adam l'chaveiro."

The Kli Yakar provides us with a tremendous insight. Due to this division, HKB"H mentions the two names "ה' אלקיך" -- Hashem, your G-d — in each of the first five commandments; whereas, He does not mention the name of Hashem at all in the second five commandments. This highlights the fact that the first five commandments constitute mitzvos between man and G-d, while the latter five commandments constitute mitzvos between man and his fellow man.

Thus, we are confronted by the following question: why did HKB"H include the commandment of "kibud av v'em," honoring one's father and mother — which seemingly is a Mitzvoh "bein adam l'chaveiro" -- among the first five commandments? Furthermore, the two names of Hashem are mentioned in the possuk which is part of this commandment: "למען יאריכון ימיך" — "על האדמה אשר ה' אלקיך נותן לך" — so that your days will be lengthened upon the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you. This emphasizes the fact that this is indeed a Mitzvoh "bein adam la'Makom," because HKB"H equates the honor due to a parent with the honor due to Him. This is the gist of the Kli Yakar's powerful insight. It is important to note that this idea was previously described in the Baal HaTurim HaShalem al haTorah and in the Maharal of Prague's Tiferes Yisroel (Chapter 36).

"Kibud Av v'Em" Is a Bridge Connecting the Two Luchos

We can now begin to understand, to some small degree, why HKB"H chose to arrange the commandments in this order — with the Mitzvoh of honoring one's parents as the fifth commandment. First, though, let us introduce a concept found in the Bnei Yissoschor (Sivan 6, 2), presented in the name of the

great Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz, zy"a. In all things in the world, we find an intermediate point that connects two opposite categories. For instance, the ape represents an intermediate stage of development between human beings with the faculty of speech and the animal kingdom; the way words are actually written in the Torah versus how they are actually pronounced — "kri u'chshiv" — connects Torah she'bichtav with Torah she'b'al peh, the Written Law and the Oral Law; "tosefes Shabbas," the temporal extensions of the Shabbas, as it enters and as it departs, constitutes an intermediate status between Shabbas and the weekdays; the neshomos of Jewish converts represent the bridge between Yisroel and the nations of the world.

As we have seen, the Mitzvoh of "kibud av v'em" contains elements of both mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom" and mitzvos "bein adam l'chaveiro." Since HKB"H compared their honor to His honor, it is considered a Mitzvoh between man and G-d. On the other hand, since we are commanded to honor and respect them as human beings in this world, it is considered a Mitzvoh between man and his fellow man. Therefore, HKB"H placed this commandment specifically as the fifth and last commandment on the first tablet. Thus, it constitutes an intermediate step and bridge between the two tablets; it is the ideal connection between the mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom" and the mitzvos "bein adam l'chaveiro."

This now illuminates for us the Gemoreh's statement cited above: "בשעה שאמר הקב"ה אנכי ולא יהיה לך, אמרו אומות העולם לכבוד עצמו הוא דורש, כיון שאמר כבד את אביך ואת אמך, חזרו והודו למאמרות הראשונות" — when HKB"H uttered the first two commandments, the nations of the world said, disparagingly, that He was making this statement for the sake of His own honor; upon hearing the utterance of the commandment to honor one's father and mother, they recanted and acknowledged the first two commandments, as well. In other words, when the nations of the world saw that HKB"H commanded that parents should be honored in the fifth commandment — the last of the commandments dealing with mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom" — they realized the extreme degree of HKB"H's humility. Not only did HKB"H command that parents be honored, but He even equated the level of honor that they deserve to His own; hence, He included that commandment among the mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom." This confirmed that when HKB"H said: "אנכי ה' אלקיך" — I am Hashem, your G-d — He was not demanding honor for His own sake, but rather for the honor of Yisroel, as their G-d.

How nicely this explains Rovov's addendum: "ראש דברך אמת, ראש דברך ולא סוף דברך, אלא מסוף דברך ניכר שראש דברך אמת" — from Your final utterances, we realize the truth of Your initial utterances. The Maharsha in Chidushei Aggados (ibid.)

questions Rovo's reference to the Mitzvoh of "kibud av v'em" as **"סוף דברך"** — Your final utterances. After all, it is only the fifth commandment, not the last commandment. He resolves the difficulty, by explaining that Rovo meant to say that it is the final commandment of the first set of commandments — the ones etched on the first tablet.

Still, it is necessary to explain why Rovo felt compelled to emphasize this point — that the Mitzvoh of honoring one's parents is the final utterance of the first tablet -- **"סוף דברך"**. According to our discussion, however, it makes perfect sense. Rovo intended to reinforce Ulla's contention. He stated that when the nations of the world saw that HKB"H placed the commandment of "kibud av v'em" at the end of the first tablet — which contained only mitzvos "bein adam la'Makom" — He revealed that he was equating the honor due a parent with His own honor.

This, then, is the significance of Rovo's statement: **מסוף** "דברך ניכר שראש דברך אמת" -- from Your final utterances, we realize the truth of Your initial utterances. In other words, the fact that HKB"H included the commandment to honor one's parents at the end of the first set of commandments — which deal exclusively with mitzvos between man and G-d — is definitive proof of HKB"H's extreme humility; as a result of this tremendous humility, He equated the honor due to a parent with His own honor. This proved to the nations of the world that **"ראש דברך"** — even His very first utterance of **"אנכי ה'** — **אלקיך** — was surely **"אמת"** — unbiased truth, not intended for the sake of His own honor.

One Must Honor One's Parents in Recognition of Their Favor

Continuing our journey along this exalted path, let us endeavor to explain the intimate connection between the first commandment -- **"אנכי ה' אלקיך"** — and the fifth commandment -- **"כבד את אביך ואת אמך"**. One of our early commentaries, the author of the Chinuch (Mitzvoh 33) explains the rationale underlying the Mitzvoh of honoring one's parents. We must recognize the debt of gratitude that we owe them for bringing us into this world and for their sacrifices on our behalf while raising us. He writes:

"מצות כיבוד אב ואם, לכבד האב והאם, שנאמר (שמות כ יב) כבד את אביך ואת אמך וגו', ובא הפירוש (קידושין לא:), אי זהו כיבוד, מאכיל ומשקה, מלביש ומכסה, מכניס ומוציא. משרשי מצוה זו, שראוי לו לאדם שיכיר ויגמול חסד למי שעשה עמו טובה, ולא יהיה נבל ומתנכר וכפוי טובה, שזו מידה רעה ומאוסה בתכלית לפני אלקים ואנשים. ושיתן אל לבו כי האב והאם הם סיבת היותו בעולם, ועל כן באמת ראוי לו לעשות להם כל כבוד וכל תועלת שיוכל, כי הם הביאוהו לעולם, גם יגעו בו כמה יגיעות בקטנותו."

He cites the Gemoreh (Kiddushin 31b) which states that honoring a parent includes giving them food and drink, providing them with clothing, covering them and assisting them to get about. Then, the Chinuch adds a very important point. By recognizing the debt of gratitude we owe to our parents, we begin to appreciate the tremendous debt we owe to HKB"H for bringing us and all of our ancestors into this world and supplying us with all of our needs throughout our lives. Without the spiritual soul that he endowed us with, we would be no better or wiser than a beast of burden, such as a horse. It is essential to keep this in mind as we serve Hashem.

It is important to understand where the Chinuch derives this association from — between recognizing our debt of gratitude to our parents and recognizing our debt of gratitude to HKB"H, our Creator. Undoubtedly, his source must be the Gemoreh's statement quoted above: **"בשעה שאמר הקב"ה אנכי ולא יהיה לך, אמרו אומות העולם לכבוד עצמו הוא דורש, כיון שאמר כבד את אביך ואת אמך, חזרו והודו למאמרות הראשונות."** when HKB"H uttered the first two commandments, the nations of the world said, disparagingly, that He was making this statement for the sake of His own honor; upon hearing the utterance of the commandment to honor one's father and mother, they recanted and acknowledged the first two commandments, as well. Let us also recall Rashi's comment: **"כל שכן שחייב אדם בכבודו, שאף הוא שותף בבריאתו כאביו ואמו וחיינו ומותו מסורין בידו"** — if we are obligated to honor our parents, all the more so should we be obligated to honor HKB"H.

Thus, the intimate connection between these two commandments is quite apparent. Hence, the Chinuch teaches us that the commandment **"כבד את אביך ואת אמך"** comes to teach us about the commandment of **"אנכי ה' אלקיך"**. Just as we are obligated to recognize our debt of gratitude to our parents, all the more so must we recognize our debt of gratitude to HKB"H — Who created us and provides us with all of our needs.

The Basis for Fulfilling All of the Mitzvos Is Our Debt of Gratitude to Hashem

It turns out, amazingly, that with the first commandment -- **"אנכי ה' אלקיך"** — HKB"H intended to convey the message that the basis for our obligation to fulfill all of the mitzvos of the Torah is the recognition of our debt of gratitude to HKB"H for taking us out of Egypt. Rashi expresses this point in his commentary on this possuk in the name of the Mechilta: **"אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, כדאי היא ההוצאה שתהיו משועבדים לי"**.

Thus, the intimate connection between the first and fifth commandments is even more apparent. The Mitzvoh to honor one's parents derives from the debt of gratitude we owe to our parents for bringing us into this world. Similarly, the commandment "אנכי ה' אלקיך", which signifies our acceptance of the Almighty's sovereignty over us, stems from our recognition of our debt of gratitude to HKB"H for taking us out of the land of Egypt -- "אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים".

Upon further consideration, we realize that this important principle — that our obligation to perform all of the mitzvos stems from our debt of gratitude to HKB"H — coincides beautifully with HKB"H's statement delivered by the prophet (Yeshayah 43, 21): "עם זו יצרתי לי תהילתי יספרו" — I fashioned this people for Myself, to sing My praise. We see that the purpose of creation is that Yisroel should speak the praises of Hashem. In this manner, we express our recognition of the debt of gratitude we owe Hashem for all of the kindness and mercy He has shown us.

Notwithstanding, it is now incumbent upon us to reconcile an apparent incongruity. What does it mean that HKB"H wants us to fulfill the mitzvos due the debt of gratitude we owe Him for releasing us from Egypt? What is the significance of the statement: I fashioned this people for Myself, to sing My praise? Surely, we cannot accept these statements at face value. Surely, HKB"H, the Master of the Universe, does not require the praise and recognition of lowly creatures of flesh and blood.

This same difficulty can be raised regarding what we have learned in the Mishnah (Ovos 6, 11): "כל מה שברא הקב"ה בעולמו לא בראו אלא לכבודו, שנאמר (ישעיה מג ז) כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי בראתיו יצרתיו אף עשיתיו" — Whatever HKB"H created in His world, He created solely for His own glory, as it is said (Yeshayah 43, 7) — "All that is called by My Name and that I have created for My glory, I have formed, even made." We must attempt to make sense out of these statements. For, it is implausible to say that HKB"H only created the world for the sake of His own glory.

The Purpose of the Mitzvos Is to Be Connected with Hashem

Let us explain the matter based on the following Gemoreh (Makkos 24a): "שש מאות ושלוש עשרה מצוות נאמרו לו למשה... בא חבקוק והעמידן על אחת שנאמר (חבקוק ב ד) וצדיק באמונתו 613 — mitzvos were given to Moshe... Chavakuk came along and incorporated them into one, as it is said (Chavakuk 2, 4), "but the righteous person shall live through his faith." In

Chidushei Aggados (ibid.) and in Tiferes Yisroel (Chapter 55), the Maharal of Prague provides the following clarification: "כי על ידי אמונה יש לאדם דביקות בו יתברך, כי אין עצם האמונה רק הדביקות בו יתברך, שהוא מאמין בו ומתדבק בו יתברך באמונתו" — faith, "emunoh," allows a person to connect with the Holy One; the essence of "emunoh" is being connected with Him; a person has faith in G-d and, thus, is connected with Him.

The Maharal's statement can be understood in light of a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Vayishlach 170b). HKB"H gave us 248 mitzvos "aseh," positive commandments corresponding to the 248 limbs and organs in the human body; he also gave us 365 mitzvos "lo ta'aseh" corresponding to the 365 sinews in the human body. This indicates that the purpose of performing the 613 total mitzvos is to connect our entire physical being — limbs, organs and sinews — with HKB"H, Who gave us the Torah.

In this manner, we can understand the statement that Chavakuk incorporated all of the 613 mitzvos into one basic principle — "emunoh" in Hashem. Seeing as the purpose of performing all of the mitzvos is to insure that we are connected with Hashem, in effect, the basis for all of the mitzvos is "emunoh" in Hashem. We must have faith that all of our needs and sustenance come solely from the Holy One. This belief keeps a person connected with Hashem at all times.

How nicely this explains the phraseology: "וצדיק באמונתו" — "but the righteous person shall live through his faith." Through "emunoh," faith, we merit staying connected with Hashem, the source of life. The possuk spells it out very clearly (Devorim 4, 4): "ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום" — but you who are connected with Hashem, your G-d, you all remain alive today. Seeing as being connected to Hashem — "deveikut b'Hashem" — is a conduit of life, therefore, regarding "emunoh" in Hashem, which accomplishes this connection, it states: "וצדיק באמונתו יחיה".

"Dveikus" in Hashem Hinges on the Awareness that We Are Dependent on Him

Upon careful consideration, we realize that staying connected with Hashem — the source of life — hinges on a person's awareness that his entire existence and all of his successes rest solely in the hands of Hashem. For, the moment a person believes that he is responsible for his own success, he no longer needs to remain connected with Hashem; at that point, he will disconnect and separate himself from the conduit of life. Concerning this eventuality, the possuk in parshas Ekev states (Devorim 8, 11):

“השמר לך פן תשכח את ה' אלקיך... פן תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת, ובקרך וצאנך ירביון וכסף וזהב ירבה לך וכל אשר לך ירבה, ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה' אלקיך המוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים... ואמרת בלבבך כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה, וזכרת את ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל.”

“Take care lest you forget Hashem, your G-d, by not observing His commandments, . . . lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle, and your cattle and sheep increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase — and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, you G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery, . . . And you may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d, that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth.”

Here the Torah warns us, in no uncertain terms, to avoid the pitfall of becoming haughty and taking personal credit for our material, worldly gains. We are admonished never to forget that the Almighty is the source of all wealth.

How enlightening are the words of the great luminary, the Chasam Sofer, in Toras Moshe (Ekev 57b). He explains the formula of the berochoh which is recited after drinking water: **“ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, בורא נפשות רבות וחסרונן, על כל -- מה שבראת להחיות בהם נפש כל חי, ברוך חי העולמים”** Blessed are Thou, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies; for all that You have created with which to sustain the life of every being. Blessed is He, the life of the worlds.

This berochoh expresses our gratitude to Hashem for two things — firstly, for the simple fact that he created us **“בורא נפשות רבות”**. Yet, even more importantly, we thank Hashem for creating us deliberately with deficiencies: **“וחסרונן”**. This insures that we turn to Hashem to fill our needs and deficiencies; thus, we are constantly aware of Hashem’s favors and thank Him on a regular basis for filling our deficiencies. This deliberate creation of deficiencies is the more significant

of the two matters. For, due to these deficiencies: **“ברוך חי העולמים”** — we will merit having a relationship with HKB”H both in this world and the World to Come.

We can now shed some light on the issue discussed above. We asked why does the performance of mitzvos stem from the appreciation of the debt of gratitude we owe HKB”H for taking us out of Egypt. We also questioned why HKB”H requires the deeds and praise of lowly creatures of flesh and blood for the sake of His honor. HKB”H created Yisroel to perform His mitzvos and to sing His praises for their own good. For, by praising Hashem for every kindness and favor He bestows upon us daily, we remain connected and attached to Him, fulfilling the dictum: **“ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם -- היום”** — but you who are connected with Hashem, your G-d, you all remain alive today.

We have now gained a greater appreciation for our sages’ enigmatic statement: **“בשעה שאמר הקב”ה אנכי ולא יהיה לך, אמרו אומות העולם לכבוד עצמו הוא דורש, כיון שאמר כבוד את אביך”** and Rashi’s comment: **“כל שכן שחייב אדם בכבודו, שאף הוא שותף בבריאתו כאביו ואמו -- וחיינו ומותו מסורין בידו”** **“אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך -- מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים”** — they felt that He was demanding His own honor and requiring that people recognize their debt of gratitude toward Him.

Nevertheless, after hearing HKB”H utter the fifth commandment -- **“כבוד את אביך ואת אמך”** — they renounced their original position. For, this latter commandment obligates a person to recognize a debt of gratitude to his parents for bringing him into this world and caring for him during childhood. This clearly proves that HKB”H is not concerned with His own honor and the recognition of the debt of gratitude owed Him. If HKB”H’s sole concern was for His own sake, He would not have demanded that a person appreciate the kindness and debt of gratitude owed to one’s parents. It is patently clear, therefore, that HKB”H’s sole interest is to benefit His creatures. By recognizing their debt of gratitude to HKB”H, they will perform mitzvos and remain permanently connected with HKB”H — the source of life.



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