

Dear Readers,

Today's column I am writing at my mother's behest: Last week my wife and I were blessed with our first grandchild, thank G-d, a beautiful baby girl, Penina Chaya Gross. Mom said I must write a column on having a grandchild; so here it is, and hello there Mom!

The fifth commandment is "Honor your father and your mother". A question is posed in Jewish law; does this commandment also include grandparents?

There are authorities of Jewish law who maintain that this mitzvah applies only to one's parents but not grandparents (Based upon the early authority *Maharik*, root 30/44).

Many sources, however, indicate that grandparents are included in the mitzvah of honor. The Torah tells that Jacob brought offerings to "the G-d of his father Isaac" (Genesis/Braeshis 46:1). Why did Jacob not mention that he was offering to the G-d of his grandfather Abraham, who was the one who taught monotheism to the world and made G-d known among the nations? Rashi, (the classical 11th century commentary), gives the following explanation, based upon the *Midrash*: "One is obligated *more* in the honor of one's father than the honor of his grandfather". Rashi's expression of *more* of an obligation to one's father infers that there is an obligation to one's grandparents as well.

Based on this and other sources, *Code of Jewish Law (Yoreh Deah 240:24)* rules that one is obligated to honor one's grandparents, as they are included in the meaning of the commandment.

The rationale of this position is based on the statement of the Talmud in numerous places, "*b'nei banim harei heim k'banim*", or "the children of one's children are as one's own children." We find this in the Torah, when Reuven tries to make a deal with his father Jacob to bring Benjamin with him and his brothers to Egypt, despite his father's concern to lose the last remaining son from his wife Rachel. Reuven says "...my two sons you can kill if I don't bring him back to you..." (Genesis/Braeshis 42:37). In the next verse, Jacob refuses to send him. Rashi explains that Jacob did not accept his son Reuven's deal, as his words are the words of a fool; "are they his sons and not mine?!" One's grandchildren are like one's own children!

We find further evidence to this concept in the first mitzvah in the Torah: "Be fruitful and multiply..." (Genesis/Braeshis 1:28). This mitzvah is fulfilled by having children, namely a son and a daughter (Talmud Yevamos 61b). The *Code of Jewish Law* rules that if one's son and daughter are not living, but they have a living son and daughter, then the mitzvah of having children is fulfilled through the grandchildren. (*Even Ha'ezer 1:6*).

Finally, the Talmud learns from a verse that anyone who studies Torah with their grandchild, it is as if he personally received the Torah from Sinai. (Kiddushin 30a) This is because he has connected the future generation with the past one, ensuring the eternal transmission of Torah. That's partly why I wept the first time I held my granddaughter last week. Another part of me wept out of the joy of witnessing the great miracle wrapped up in this tiny bundle. Many of you know what I mean. Those who don't yet, you have my blessings to witness it one day soon!