

ב"ה

A Father from Far: Respecting a Non-Jewish Father*

Question

How does the commandment of honoring one's parent apply to a scenario where the father is not a Jew?

Does the child mourn his father? Must he—or may he—sit *shiva* for him, rend his garments, and recite the *Kaddish*? Is the traditional formula of "*Hamakom yenchem eschem*" etc. recited?

If the response to any of the above questions is in the negative, what things can or should take its stead?

Overview

The Torah states¹ regarding the commandment of honoring one's parents, "Honor your father and your mother, in order that your days be lengthened on the land that the Lord, your G-d, is giving you."

The parameters of this commandment are not always that straightforward. In today's society where intermarriage is unfortunately not uncommon, a situation may often arise in which an individual will have a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father. How does *kibbud av va'eim* play itself out in such a scenario?

This paper will discuss whether the Jewish offspring is commanded to honor his father at all; what the parameters of that respect are in general; and what they are following his father's death.

In order to properly address this question, a general overview of the concept of honoring one's parents will be provided, as well as the various reasons given for the

(*) המאמר נערך על ידי חברי המכון הרבנים שליט"א: מנחם מענדל מלול יהודא אלטיין ואברהם בערגשטיין.

(1) שמות (כ, יב): "כבוד את אביך ואת אמך למען יארכיך ימך על האדמה אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לך".