

WHO LOVES YOU!

by Rabbi Label Lam

Most will agree, depending upon taste and temperament, that the centerpiece of the holiday of Shevuos is not the cheesecake but rather the Ten Commandments. It is worth taking note that the Ten Commandments are divided equally on two sides, five points and five. Since there are many more words and total print in the first five, if all is of equal font size, it makes more sense to balance them two and eight. We understand, therefore, that it is by design that the first five mediate between man and G-d, while the second side relates principles of human conduct between man and his fellow man.

A huge question begs for an explanation. "Why is the 5th Commandment, "Honor your father and mother!" to be found on the side between man and G-d? Are not parents humans? How does it fit?

The Chovos HaLevavos, at the end of his chapter on "Reflection" about how G-d's wisdom, kindness and unity are manifest throughout the universe writes the following: "Imagine your-self in this world to be like an infant that was born in the king's prison. The king had mercy on the child and ordered that he be provided with everything that was good for him and that which was needed for his welfare. The child grew up and became intelligent, and knew nothing but the prison and what was inside it. The king's special messenger visited him regularly and brought him all that he needed; a lamp, food, drink, and clothing.

The envoy of the king informed the boy that he was a servant of the king; that the prison and everything in it, as well as all the food that was brought to him, belonged to the king; and that it was his duty to thank the king. The young man then said, "I praise the owner of this prison who has taken me as his servant, singled me out for all his bounties, and has watched over me and cared for me." The messenger of the king replied, "Don't speak like that lest you be considered a sinner! The king's domain is not limited to this prison alone. The broad expanses of his lands are infinitely larger than this tiny prison. Neither are you his only servant. His servants are innumerable; the favors and kindness he has bestowed upon you are nothing compared to those he has bestowed on others and his providential care for you pales in comparison with his providential care for those besides you."

The young man then replied, "I know nothing of what you have mentioned. My understanding of the king is only in accord to what I have personally seen of his favor and power." To this, the envoy of the king answered, "Say, 'I praise the supreme king, whose dominion knows no bounds and whose goodness and kindness are without limit. Among the multitude of his vast hosts, I am of no account;

and in the greatness of his power, my affairs are as nothing."

The young man now understood what he had never understood before of the king's nature. Awe for the exalted stature of the king gripped his soul and filled his heart. The king's goodness and graces to him were magnified in his eyes. In light of the king's exalted stature and his own insignificance in the scheme of his kingdom, his appreciation for the gifts the king had bestowed upon him was amplified"

The holy task of the parents is like that of the king's agent. They are not just bearers of the king's material goodness, like scrumptious cheese cake and such, but also, in the intellectual realm, they are empowered to install an expansive view of reality in the minds of their charges. Getting that message home qualifies parents for their sacred place on the Holy Tablets, below those revered and comforting words, "I am HASHEM, your G-d Who took you out of Egypt..." As if to say, "From the beyond highest heights of the universe to the deepest depths, my child, guess Who loves you!" Text Copyright © 2005 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.