

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Talmud and Midrash with a Twist **[73]**

Rav Assi Left Her and Went to the Land of Israel Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 31b

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Background to Our Story

Rabbi Assi



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi_Assi

Assi II (Assa, Issi, Jesa, Josah, Jose) was a *Jewish Talmudist*, known as an *amora*, who lived in the *Land of Israel*, of the third generation, 3rd and 4th centuries, one of the two Palestinian scholars known among their contemporary *Jewish Talmudical* scholars of *Babylonian* as "the judges of the Land of Israel" and as "the distinguished priests of the Land of Israel," his companion being *R. Ammi* (*Git.* 59b; *Sanh.* 17b). Assi was born in *Babylonia*, where he attended the college of *Samuel of Nehardea* (*Yer. Ter.* i. 40a; *Yer. Er.* vi. 23d) but later emigrated in consequence of domestic trouble.

Honor your father and your mother



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor_your_father_and_your_mother

Honor your father and your mother is one of the *Ten Commandments*, which are widely understood as moral imperatives by legal scholars, Jewish scholars, Catholic scholars, and Post-Reformation scholars. The *Book of Exodus* describes the Ten Commandments as being spoken by God to *Moses*, inscribed on two stone tablets by the finger of God, or written on tablets by Moses.

Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Hashem your God is giving you. – Exodus 20:12

In the *Torah*, keeping this commandment was associated with individual benefit and with the ability of the nation of Israel to remain in the land to which God was leading them. Dishonoring parents by striking or cursing them was punishable by death. In the *Talmud*, the commandment to honor one's human parents is compared to honoring God.

What constitutes "honor?" One must provide them with food and drink and clothing. One should bring them home and take them out and provide them with all their needs cheerfully. – Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 143:7

The commandment to honor one's human parents is compared, by at least one writer, to honoring God. The Talmud says that since there are three partners in the creation of a person (God and two parents), honor showed to parents is the same as honor shown to God.

The Text: Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 31b

רַב אֲסִי הָיָה לִיהָ אִמָּא זְקִינָה. אָמְרָה לִיהָ: בְּעֵינָא תְּכַשִּׁיטִין. עֲבַד לָהּ. בְּעֵינָא גְבָרָא. וַיִּיעֵין לָהּ. בְּעֵינָא גְבָרָא דְשָׁפִיר כּוֹתֵד. שְׂבָקָהּ וְאָזַל לְאַרְעָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל.

Rav Assi had an aged mother.

She said to him: I want ornaments. So, he made them for her.

[She said to him]: I want a husband. [Rav Assi replied]: I will look for one for you.

[She said to him]: I want a husband as handsome as you. [Rav Assi]: left her (after arranging for someone else to care for his mother) and went to the Land of Israel.



Explaining the Story

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why was Rav Assi's mother behaving the way she was behaving?

? Why did Rav Assi leave for Israel (after arranging for someone else to care for his aged mother)?

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! Know your limitations! The lesson Rav Assi transmitted to us through his painful and taxing experience.



Rav Assi wishes to honor his mother, but the unique circumstances of their relationship lead him to realize he will lose his temper if he doesn't remove himself

from the scene. After leaving his mother in safe hands, he leaves for the Land of Israel, both to ensure his mother's wellbeing and his own.

Rav Assi's lesson is clear: know your own limitations! If you don't, you, or someone else, will eventually get hurt.