

## Can I Honor my Father-in-Law as Sandak if I Owe Him Money?

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**Case:** Reuven borrowed money from his father-in-law. Subsequently, he had a baby boy and now wants to honor his father-in-law by asking him to serve as *sandak* at the bris.

**Question:** Is this a *ribbis* problem?

**Answer:** For *ribbis* to be forbidden *m'dohraysa*, it must be *ketzutzah*, meaning that the amount must be agreed upon in advance. The *Rabbanan* further prohibited a borrower from giving any gift to a lender because giving such a gift has the appearance of paying extra for the loan. Accordingly, it is forbidden by the *Rabbanan* for the borrower to do any favor for the lender because it would appear as if he is giving him *ribbis*. If, however, he would have done the favor in any case – whether he had been given the loan or not – it would be permitted. This means that if someone does a favor for his friend that he always does for him anyhow, or if he does something he would do for anyone (even if he never did it for this particular person per se), it would be permitted because the favor is clearly not related to the loan.

If someone owes a close relative money and gives him a *bracha* at his daughter's *chuppah*, it can be assumed that everyone knows he would have done so even without the loan, so it would be permitted. Similarly, everyone understands that a son-in-law would honor his father-in-law to be *sandak* even if he hadn't given him a loan; therefore, it would be permitted.