

Youngster's Last Stand

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Q I work in a retirement home, where certain elderly residents walk past me several times a day. Must I stand up for them every time?



A The Torah (Vayikra 19:32) commands, “*Mipnei seivah takum* (In the presence of an old person shall you rise).” The obligation to stand is incurred when the elderly person comes within four *amos* of where you are sitting (Y.D. 244:2), whether he is walking or being pushed in a wheelchair (ibid.).

A person becomes a *seivah* at age 70 (Y.D. 144:1). Many cite the Arizal, who says the age is 60 (Birkei Yosef ibid., Minchas Chinuch 257, et al.), and it is commendable to follow his view.

If you are unsure whether an approaching person is old enough, stand, because it is a *safeik de'Oreisa* (Sheivet Halevi 5:130).

Personal greatness or Torah scholarship is not required; one must stand to honor even an older ignoramus (Y.D. 244:1). But someone who is antagonistic to Torah should not be honored (ibid.). A nonreligious Jew—even one who cannot be faulted for this because he was never exposed to authentic Judaism—need not be honored (Sheivet Halevi 9:198).

However, kiddush Hashem should be considered, and one should stand where appropriate (ibid.).

There is no obligation to stand before a non-Jewish senior, but one must still show respect verbally and offer a supporting hand (Y.D. 244:7); early *poskim* debate whether this obligation is *de'Oreisa* or *deRabanan* (see Bais Yosef ibid.). It only applies to a decent person who fulfills the *sheva mitzvos bnei No'ach* (Sefer Yerei'im 233).

Some *Acharonim* say the mitzvah only requires standing up for men. In practice, one should follow the stringent view and stand up for women as well (Sheivet Halevi ibid.).

You need only rise for a particular person two times each day. On the third and subsequent encounters, you may remain seated (Rama 242:16).