

I BEG OF YOU, DON'T MURDER ME

By Ozer Bergman

"Honor your father and mother as God your Lord has commanded you. As a result, you will live long and [well] ... Do not murder ..." (Deuteronomy 5:16-17).

Things are being born all the time. In fact, somewhere in the world, right now, as you read this, a flower is blooming, a cat is having kittens and a canine mommy is taking a first look at her new puppies. Where do all these new babies come from? Like all of God's wonders, they come from—and lead to—God's *kavod* (glory), which is the purpose of Creation.

But as we all know from what we see—and don't see—all around us, God's *kavod* is hard, if not impossible, to detect. Why? Because *Bereishit*, the opening utterance of Creation, is ineffable, soundless. And because it is quieter than a whisper, a lot of *kavod*-hidens, distracters and detractors were able to smuggle themselves in to our corner of Creation. These no-goodniks make doing mitzvahs—and feeling their pleasantness—a real challenge. (Challenges are good for us. That's why God whispered *Bereishit*, so the no-goodniks could get in and make our lives interesting.)

The very first mitzvah in the Torah, to be fruitful and multiply, increases God's *kavod* in two "directions." One is across the face of the earth *now*, and the other is across the face of the *future*. Because this mitzvah is so central to the purpose of Creation, the no-goodniks go all out in trying to make "multiplication" sensational, wanton and purposeless, and us crazy and crazed in the process. It is thanks to the no-goodniks that many find it difficult to find a suitable marriage partner, to maintain a happy/holy marriage, and to "multiply" in a holy/relaxed state of *da'at* (consciousness).

This is why honoring our parents is so powerful a mitzvah that it brings good,

long life in its wake. Honoring our parents is our silent utterance that our creation *truly* comes from God's *kavod*, and not from the no-goodniks' lies, fantasies and filth. God *is* life. God *is* good. So connecting to Him via this mitzvah brings a good, long life.

This is one reason why the holy Torah segues from "Honor your father and mother" to "Don't murder!"* When the Torah tells us not to murder, she means, "Don't destroy—build!" No matter how noble our parents or their best intentions, they, too, were victimized by no-goodniks at the moment of our conception. So it's easy for us to be taken in by the no-goodniks and find ourselves taking up their cause, destroying things—or, God forbid, people!—so that those things and people won't give birth to God's *kavod* that they were meant to bear.

Before we finish, we must make clear that not all killing is murder. When justified, killing can lead to giving birth, to fostering growth. Our first patriarch, when he was still called Avram, was afraid that his taking of human life during war was wrong and that punishment was due him (Genesis 15:1). No, said God. You cleared the vineyard of thorns. It is now more ready to be fruitful (*Bereishit Rabbah* 44:4).

Yet there is a certain degree of tension. God had promised Avram wealth (Genesis 12:2), so when the King of Sodom offered Avram wealth, why did he refuse? (*ibid.* 14:21-23). Was this not fulfillment of the promise? No, says the Maharal of Prague. Avram knew that God would not fulfill His promise in this way, with blood-money. God's promises of kindness must—and will—come in a kinder way.

* Please note that there is a difference between murder and killing. Murder—wanton ending of human life—is never permitted. Sadly, there may arise situations when killing is not only permitted, but required. Of course, only the Torah determines when killing is justified and who may execute it.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Likutey Halakhot*,
Kibud Av V'Eim 4:2

SIDEPATH

Always be joyful, for with happiness you can give another person life. Your friend may be in terrible agony and not be able to express what is in his heart. As long as there is no one to whom he can unburden himself, he remains pained and worried. But if you come along and greet him with a happy face, you can cheer him up and literally give him life. The Talmud teaches that two *badchanim* (merrymakers) were declared "dwellers in the World to Come" merely because they made others happy (*Ta'anit* 22a) (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #43).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

3:23 I pleaded with God at that time, saying

We Should Pray Even If Our Prayers Are Imperfect

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the goal in prayer is to achieve *deveikut* (deep attachment to God). However, if a person cannot pray with *deveikut*, he shouldn't say, "There's no point in my praying at all." Rather, he should put into his prayers as much effort and concentration as he possibly can. For at a later time, when he does pray with appropriate *deveikut*, all of his prayers will ascend together with the prayer that he prayed properly.

This is alluded to in the present verse. "I pleaded"—Moses always pleaded with God. Sometimes he prayed with great *deveikut*, and other times, when he could not achieve that *deveikut*, he nevertheless prayed with all his might. "At that time, saying"—when the time came that he did merit to pray with *deveikut*, that effortless "saying" ascended and carried with it all his other, less acceptable prayers (LM I, 99).

4:3 God your Lord destroyed every man among you who followed Ba'al Pe'or ... But you who are devoted to God your Lord are all alive today

When We Seek God, He Gives Us Life

This passage teaches that people should attach themselves to God, as a result of which they live—whereas those who do not attach themselves to God are destroyed. Yet further on, Scripture relates: “God your Lord is a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24). That being the case, it should be impossible for a person to attach himself to God.

The answer is that God’s holiness sustains those who seek Him and destroys those who turn away from Him.

A similar dynamic pertains to the *tekheilet*, the blue-dyed strand of wool on the *tzitzit*. *TeKheiLeT* (תכלת) is similar to *TaKhLiT* (תכלית, ultimate goal) and *TiKhLeh* (תכלה, consume). When a person strives for the *takhlit*, the ultimate goal, which is God Himself, the *tekheilet* assists him to enter the realm of holiness. But if he does not seek holiness, then the realm of holiness is closed to him and he is *tikhlah*, consumed (LM I, 49:7).

4:9 Make them known to your children and grandchildren

We Should Develop Three “Points” Daily

The Torah describes three levels: you, your children and your grandchildren. Rebbe Nachman teaches that a person should strive to develop three “points” each day. One is the point of the *tzaddik*—one should speak to a *tzaddik* or a teacher each day. The second is the point of a friend—one should speak to a friend each day. The third is the person’s own point—one should speak out his heart before God each day, developing a personal relationship with his Creator.

Studying Torah by yourself is equivalent to developing your personal point. Studying with your child is equivalent to developing the point of a friend, for you have someone else to converse with and study with. Studying Torah with a grandchild is equivalent to developing the all-encompassing point of the *tzaddik*. This is understood from the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—a father, a son and a grandson, representing all three points (LH V, p. 55a-110).

4:39 Know it today and take it to heart: God is the Lord in the heavens above and upon the earth below—there is no other!

God Can Be Known Only Through Faith

Some people think that this verse instructs us to know God intellectually. Rebbe Nachman says this is absolutely wrong. The only way to know God is through faith, as it is written, “And I will betroth you to me with faith, and you will know God” (Hosea 2:22) (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #217).

6:4 Hear, Israel! God is our Lord. God is One

We Must Find Satisfaction In Our Accomplishments

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: Even if a person recited the Shema in the morning and the evening, he fulfills the mitzvah of “This Torah should not be removed from your mouth” (Joshua 1: 8) (*Menachot* 99b).

This is an expression of the idea that a person must be satisfied in life even if he just has a little (LM I, 54:3). One must strive to learn as much Torah as possible. However, even if he falls short of his goals, he should be happy with what he has accomplished.

6:6 These words that I am commanding you today

We Can Harness The Power Of Each Day

The *mitzvot* that God commanded should appear fresh to us each day (Rashi).

Just as we wake up refreshed each day, with our minds and intellects renewed, we should make the effort to renew our approach to God daily through the intellect of the Torah (LH I, p. 27a).

Each day, the Evil One finds a new way to entrap us. Buoyed by a new approach and new feeling, we can meet the adversary head on and be victorious (*ibid.*, IV, p. 6a).

KITZUR L”M WEEKLY

14 — To Draw Peace (continued)

17. It is very good for a person to rely on nothing but God alone. For when a person does not rely on God, he must struggle and search for all kinds of stratagems. For example, when he needs a cure, he must run around after all kinds of medicinal herbs. Sometimes, however, the herbs that he needs are not available in his country, while the herbs that are available are not good for his

particular affliction. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, is good for all afflictions in order to heal them, as it is written, “God is good for everything” (Psalms 145:9). Furthermore, God is always available for every person, as it is written, “For what great nation has God as close to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call Him” (Deuteronomy 4:7; see *Devarim Rabbah, Parashat Va’etchanan*, on the verse, “For what great nation is there,” and *Yerushalmi, Berakhot* 9).

Therefore, when one has a sick person [in his home], God forbid, he must rely entirely on prayer and supplications. This is something which is easily attainable, and it will certainly always help him. But in order for a person to be healed by doctors’ remedies, he must seek and search a great deal in order to find a doctor who can cure him. Moreover, the truth is that in most cases, there is no such doctor available, and most of the time, the doctors do more harm than good. (See *Pesachim* 113a: “Rav said to his son, Rabbi Chiya, ‘Do not take medicines.’” Rashi explains there: “Do not be accustomed to taking medicines, because ‘All medicines that are good for this are bad for that’” [*ibid.*, 42b]. As Rashi explains: What is good for one ailment causes or aggravates another.)



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