

## **Eulogy for Maurice Handelsman - 15 September, 1995**

Maury Handelsman, Moshe Ben Noach V'Sara, was a man who gave of himself to others throughout his 91 years. A refined gentleman of great passion and compassion, he leaves his three children and nine grandchildren the memory of a man of wisdom, kindness and modesty.

Maury knew he was dying but he accepted the inevitable with strength, talking openly with his family about his life and his feelings for them.

Maury was an independent man and it was only in the last few years that he chose to live in Canterbury Court, not wanting to be a burden to his family.

Maury's death at this time gives us the opportunity to reflect on our Torah portion and the approaching holy days.

We read this Shabbat the portion Ki Tavo. After 40 years of wandering in the desert, the children of Israel are preparing to enter God's Promised Land. Moses, who knows that he will not enter the land, is delivering a series of farewell discourses to the people that demand obedience to God. He promises material reward for obedience and material punishment for disobedience. In Ki Tavo we hear the 'Tochecha', or warning, of what will befall those who break the covenant.

In Deuteronomy, Chapter 27, Verse 16, we read  
cursed be he that dishonoureth his father or his mother.

Why is this warning so important as to be included among curses for idolatry, injustice to the helpless, immorality, murder, bribery and general disobedience of the law..

We find one answer in the Talmud which says that there are three partners in the creation of each person - the father, the mother and God. Respecting one's parents is thus part of respecting God.

This also applies in a positive direction. Our sages tell us that each curse that was delivered on Mount Eyval was accompanied by a corresponding blessing on Mount Gerizim, so a person is blessed for just holding his or her parents in high esteem.

Maury passed away in the month of Elul when we begin to examine our lives and relationships. How have we failed, failed others, failed our own selves and failed God?

Alert to his last few days, Maury used the summer and the month of Elul to prepare himself and his soul for its heavenly passage. He lived through the summer so that every day could be spent, with his grandchildren sitting for hours at his side, repaying him for the love he bestowed on them through the years. He waited until his beloved daughter, Sharon, arrived to say her good-byes. And I think he waited until this week to give his family the opportunity to be reminded of the significance of this week's Torah portion, the admonition to honour one's parents - and the blessing that follows those who assent.

During Elul it is a custom to visit the graves of our loved ones in the hope that they will intercede on our behalf with God during this period of judgment.

Could there be a better emissary, for his family and all of those who knew him, than Maury Handelsman, Moshe Ben Noach V'Sara, a man of eloquence and compassion - a true gentleman -

Tehe nishmato tzerurah bitzror ha chayim

May his soul be bound in the bond of eternal life.