

“Honor your father and your mother...”

In memory of Dick Eber and Ardie Wandel

Zikhranam l'vrakhah, May they be remembered as blessings

This week we laid to rest two men who devoted so much of their lives to building community and to building a love of Judaism: Dick Eber and Ardie Wandel.

For both men, the community poured out *en masse* at the respective funerals to honor the legacy of Dick and Ardie and to console their grieving families. Just as we came together and reflected on their lives and the gifts with which they benefited the Jewish people, let us consider how apropos it is that this week we'll read *Parashat Yitro* (Exodus 18:1- 20:23) which includes the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments were inscribed on two tablets; the first tablet conveys laws that reflect our covenantal relations with God. The second tablet with the concluding five commandments deal with our moral obligations to each other. Therefore, the fifth commandment on the first tablet is the bridge that links one tablet to the other and the bridge that links our relationship to God with our relationship to one another. With this in mind, let us look closer at the fifth commandment:

Honor your father and your mother, that you may live long on the land that the Eternal is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

Why was the commandment for honoring our parents placed in the fifth spot, linking the relationship with God to the relationship we have with each other? Commentators have explained that our connection to God and to life comes through our parents. Therefore, honoring our parents is a religious and spiritual expression of our covenant with God. Likewise, acts that strengthen the faith and devotion to our sacred bonds with God demonstrate honor and respect for our parents.

Expanding on that theme, the *Mishnah* teaches that anyone who teaches you Torah is to be honored as if he/she was your parent:

One who learns from another a single chapter [of Torah], a single law, a single verse, a single statement, or even a single letter, must treat that person with honor. For so we find with David, King of Israel, who learned from Achitofel two things alone, and he called him his teacher, his guide, and his intimate friend, as it is said: 'And you are a man of my worth, my guide and intimate friend' (Psalms 55:14). And does not this matter allow for logical deduction: If David, King of Israel, who learned from Achitofel two things alone, called him his teacher, guide and intimate, one who learns from his fellow one chapter, one law, one verse, one statement, or even one letter, all the more so must he treat him with honor.

And with that, we pivot to consider the Torah that we learned from Ardie Wandel, the Hebrew tutor *par excellence*, who taught thousands of boys and girls as they prepared to become *B'nei Mitzvah*. Indeed, anyone who was taught by Ardie will proudly testify that as a tutor he did not limit himself to teaching just how to pronounce the assigned Torah and Haftarah

portions; he was not satisfied just helping students master the major prayers of the service. Rather, Ardie helped each of his students feel a love of Judaism and inspired all to keep studying and discovering the blessings of our faith.

Richard “Dick” Eber was one of Temple Sinai’s earliest members. He, together with his beloved wife Frances “Pinky” Eber, helped to build our community. His beloved family and friends filled the Zwerin Sanctuary to honor the legacy of a man who cared so deeply about Judaism and the Jewish people.

The deaths of Dick Eber and Ardie Wandel mark the passing of two “*Gedolei haDor*” (giants of the generation). One taught us chapters of Torah while the other helped to build a synagogue where we could learn Torah. Both found the strength, patience and dedication to teach not only their family and friends but also the greater community. Indeed, they both treated nearly everyone they met with words of wisdom and inspiration.

As we review the depth of the meaning of “Honor your father and your mother,” let us consider and pay homage to all the extraordinary people who have taken the time to teach us, to mentor us, nurture us and to believe in us. In turn, let each of us realize that whenever we teach and build we become partners in the sacred task to elevate the lives around us.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rick

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