

"For blood pollutes the land." (?"? ?"?)

The word "*yachnif*" is a derivative of the Hebrew word "*chanufah*" which means flattery. It seems peculiar that the *Torah* uses such a word in regard to murder. *Horav Moshe Feinstein Z"l* cites the contrast between the perspectives of the *Torah* and contemporary society regarding murder as the *Torah's* basis for the use of this word. Current society deplores murder because of its damaging effect on the world. For example, if a nation feels that another nation is a threat to its future, it will wage war against that nation. Indeed, many nations feel that war is constructive, for it rids the world of various threats to humanity.

The *Torah*, however, has a different viewpoint on this subject. The prohibition against taking a human life is founded in the great value of an individual human personality. Man is created in the image of Hashem, and he is endowed with the highest potential. A human being that has the opportunity to attain such high goals is highly valued by the *Torah*. Man's place in the universe is too significant to permit us to surrender even one human life.

In this context, we recognize man's distinct place in the world and we profoundly respect the value of his life. When a man takes another human life, he indicates a disdain for his potential contribution to the world. He views him as secondary to national loyalties and of no importance to civilization. When man acts this way, he ascribes greater importance to the land, thereby "flattering" it. The *Torah* admonishes us against this perverse outlook. The world was created solely to serve as the forum for the spiritual growth of each individual. Denying man's superiority over the land constitutes a distorted sense of value, which reflects a misguided servitude to the land.