

To Reb David -
2216 11th Ave Ray

fulfillment," and never so unsure where to find it. For this we go to therapy, jogging, new diets and self-help books, but rarely to the rabbi. For past generations, "fulfillment" was associated with fulfillment of *mitzvot* (commandments). For many of us, *mitzvot* are "experiences" for a self to have. Modernity has elevated the idea of the autonomous, freely choosing self, yet seeks endless new ways to escape this freedom.

The modern period moved the Jews outward, out of the ghetto into the mainstream. Now the fairly well-accomplished, post-modern Jew needs to turn inwards—yet not to the innerness of what has been called "the imperial self," to the self as God, whose kingdom is ultimately a barren one, but to a deeper self, to the *soul*, where self reaches beyond itself to other, to God. Such a turn should not be mistaken as a concession to or imitation of the narcissism of our times. It is a reaching back to the still small voice inside which has been muffled in the whirlwind of our times.

Such a turn is not a selfish withdrawal or evasion of the world, but a confrontation with the foundations of our very being, of our Jewishness. And perhaps that is precisely why we evade it. Caught in the conflicts, confusions, pressures of the secular world, religion and tradition have come to represent good feelings, harmony, surcease, warmth. We do not really want or expect our Jewish lives to demand as much of us, to contain as much tension and struggle as our professional or secular lives. True spirituality, however, means constant strife, not "peace of mind." For true spirituality means constant ascent towards goals which enlarge even as the struggler goes towards them. At the level of soul, self is in conflict with self, restless, not resting in identifications, experiences, emotions, or ideologies. Such a spirituality avoids the dangers of a narcissistic innerness because it always challenges itself.

We Need Texts for a Modern Spirituality

The Torah portion which describes Abraham's call to become the first Jew (Gen. 12-18) is entitled *Lech Lecha* after its two first words. This phrase is redundant in Hebrew. It literally translates as "go, get yourself," or as some interpret it, "go to yourself." Abraham's going to himself, to his inner self, coincides with his going out of himself, his leaving his family and native land to journey to a new place. And so also a real innerness should lead outwards as well; but the balance of inner and outer is especially difficult to attain in our time, one in which God may not seem near at hand or speak to us as directly as to Abraham.

What the texts will be for such a modern spirituality I cannot now say. They have yet to be determined. But both modern Jewish scholarship and modern Orthodoxy, I think, have failed so far to create the texts for a modern spirituality or to help us renew the old ones. And to a large degree Orthodoxy has managed to insulate itself from the shocks of modernity. Of course, Orthodoxy can offer older classics such as Luzzato's *Mesilat Yesharim* (The Path of the Just) or R. Jonah of Geronah's *Shaarei Teshuvah* (The Gates of Repentance) or the tales of R. Nachman. Yet we also need new classics, those which speak from the crucible of the modern experience of Judaism; for example, from the flames of the Holocaust. Interestingly, the Jewish feminist movement is one of the few areas where "devotional spirituality" is seriously and unabashedly discussed, for here Jewish women are struggling to find a new voice, to redefine and intensify their relation to God, Torah, and the community of Israel.

Yerushalmi laments in his book *Zachor* that modern Jews are turning away from the Jewish past offered by the historian towards literature and ideology for a new methahistorical myth. In-

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deed, contemporary secular poets, writers, artists, composers do often take up the neglected task of articulating a modern spirituality. Yet all too often, they lack any serious Jewish knowledge and have no deep roots in Jewish tradition. They do, however, reflect back to us the vacuity of our spiritual lives.

As spiritual novices despite our worldly sophistication, many of us will find such a turn inward uncomfortable, find ourselves stammering. Yet there is comfort in the fact that even on *Yom Kippur*, on the holiest day, the day of greatest innerness and return, our prayers are formulated in the collective, not "I have sinned," but "we have sinned." At the depth of soul, one encounters the Other. Moreover, the Torah portion that the rabbis ordained we read on *Yom Kippur* (Lev. 16) contains not only the story of the scapegoat ritual but also the laws concerning forbidden and incestuous sexual relationships. At the height of our holy introspection, we are to be reminded of our utter earthliness, our humanness, our connection to this coarse world. We should not be tempted to think that our peaks of piety so exalt us that we transcendently leave this world. Then, even then, the struggle with self remains at one of its basest levels.

So, what do we do now? Now when our defensive strategies have begun to wear thin, now after *Yom Kippur*, we again struggle, we reach inside spiritually, we try to connect the inner and the outer. Now, we do *teshuvah*. ●

My inner world

Eugene B. Borowitz

I hadn't thought much about my spiritual quest over the years until now.

Much of my Jewish religious life derives from an ambivalent impression of my Ohio childhood. I liked being Jewish. I even enjoyed religious school and going to services. But it exasperated me that my teachers and my rabbi could never explain Judaism in any way that made sense to me. When I discovered philosophy and the social sciences weren't any smarter, I decided to become a rabbi.

Then my ambivalence intensified. I loved the Hebrew Union College in theory but only occasionally in practice. Once again my teachers left me badly disappointed. Along with my two close friends, Arnie Wolf and Steve Schwarzschild, I figured I had better build my own sort of Jewish faith and find my own way of explaining it. And that's what I'm still doing.

A consequent student experiment was critical. I wasn't worried about my intellectual life. That came easily to me. But making personal contact with God was strange to my American upbringing. So I decided to try to learn to pray, not just at the daily college service but by myself. That way there would be no dodging God. Besides, some others of my class and I wanted to be more Jewish. We knew we were modern. What bothered us was how to be Jews. Another lifelong quest. So I tried to learn to pray alone from a prayerbook. I started with the *Union Prayer Book* and worked with it for some years. Later I pushed my religious growth further by extending my *davening* (praying) through gerrymandered *siddur* (traditional prayerbook) services. Daily prayer has been the bedrock of my Jewish life— and a continual judgment. Let me explain.

Attempting to Link Work and Faith

Early on I decided to pray in my office, to link my work and my faith. Nothing I regularly do is more difficult for me. I find it a terrible trial to pay attention to God when all around me are reminders of things I need to work on. Frequently I discover my *kavanah* (concentration) has broken and I am thinking about one of my projects instead of talking to God. I hate that— but it is the fundamental spiritual problem of my life. How do I keep God ahead of all my schemes? How do I subordinate everything I do, especially all the good, Jewish things, to God and what, as best I can figure it out, God wants of me and the Jewish people? In sum, how, in my life, do I make and keep God one?

I do many other Jewish things but I now want to say a word about my other search, the intellectual one. Here I've been fortunate. I've been spared the religious pain of having to surrender early religious beliefs I've later found inadequate. Instead, much of what I always thought was a good explanation of Judaism has fallen by the way. At the same time, the path I started on as a student— radically theological yet deeply practice-, text- and community-oriented; personalist, not rationalist; richly particularistic without being ghettoizing or a-ethical— now holds a substantial number of our community. Of course, it also helped that I started out more with questions than with certainties. And I have been content to accumulate partial insights and be patient until I gained a more rounded vision.

Sometimes I am troubled that I have not been overwhelmed by the problem of evil. Surely there is enough of it around and we Jews have seen it at its worst. Intellectually, I think my turmoil has

been relatively moderate because I never believed God was, in Dick Rubenstein's words, "the ultimate, omnipotent actor in history." It also helped that I did not believe I had to have or was entitled to rational explanations of everything. For an intellectual, I seem to be able to live with a good deal of mystery.

Aware of God's Routine Gifts

Humanly, I simply find I cannot rail at God for long. Here an experience was instructive. In 1953, on my way to do a funeral, my automobile was hit by a semi-drifter who had borrowed an uninsured car without brakes. Two days later I was in my naval base hospital with a ruptured kidney. Waiting for it to heal, it occurred to me the rabbis were right to have a blessing for excretion, so I taught myself the text. Ever since, when my kidneys work or I defecate, I have said it. It does not always mean much to me— but it, more than any of the other blessings I daily say, continually reminds me of what God regularly gives me.

I have also been spared great personal tragedy and physical pain. There has been suffering, to be sure. My family has known cancer of the brain and of the pancreas, two cases of Alzheimer's disease, several instances of coronary artery disease, and disturbing if not incapacitating neuroses. I obviously cannot take *rofe chol basar* (who heals all flesh) at face value, but I remain fundamentally moved by *umafla laasot* (and who works wondrously).

I struggle with many of the things that bother other rabbis. People don't seem to care very much about Judaism. Regardless of my best efforts they do not take it very seriously or find my understanding of it very compelling. Despite the occasional life I've touched and the faithful remnant who care, I often feel that, on the human level, my work doesn't really mean very much. It helps when I can remember that God will one day win out even without my success. I found it hard to acknowledge that I was not the Messiah, not even the bringer of the Messianic Age. It is harder still remembering that I am not God.

The Lonely Man of Faith

My greatest spiritual shock has come from the intense loneliness I feel as a Jew. My ethical and cultural friends think religion odd. My Jewish companions, the few who are learned and serious, think Reform Judaism intolerably undemanding. I do have the rare good fortune to have Reform colleagues with whom I can discuss Jewish intellectual issues. But we go rather independent ways when it comes to understanding our Judaism, par-

ticularly should we ever talk of Jewish faith.

My sense of isolation is intensified by my strong commitment to the notion of Judaism as a community religion. Even desiring a rich Jewish ethnicity makes one an alien to much of American Jewish life. But if one wants to be a self and fulfill oneself in a Jewish community of selves, in Buber's sense, then alienation becomes the common stuff of one's Jewish existence.

I have some partially effective strategies to alleviate my solitariness. I am blessed with a good marriage and kids who still talk to me, and I work hard at keeping it that way. I have a few friends and enjoy a few pleasures. And I try to create community wherever I can. My greatest challenge is to transform my classroom from the rigid, hierarchical one of my school years to one of interpersonal exchange while not sacrificing the demands of Jewish learning. That effort has also given me my greatest rewards. Furthermore, I have the joy of working with colleagues who agree that we must make a serious effort to have our school less an institution than a community. And from time to time we and our students actually bring it into being.

Mostly I have learned a new aspect of Jewish messianism. Of course I hope for justice and look forward to peace. I still aspire to the ultimate vindication of the Jewish people and, through it, of all humanity. But now, too, I long for redemption from the *galut* (exile) of loneliness, for that day when we shall all be one as persons and one in community— for only on that day will God be one in our lives as God, to God, is God. ●

Judaism is my art form

Raymond P. Scheindlin

Theology and theological problems have never occupied a central part of my consciousness, despite lifelong intense involvement in Judaism and despite a rabbinic education. I do not think this is because Judaism lacks a theological dimension or because the curriculum of my rabbinical school was flawed, but rather because of a personality that does not feel strongly the issues with which theology is concerned. I tried for years to think theologically, to explain the Jewish component of my life on either a rational or a mystical-spiritual basis. But at age forty-four, I am finally ready to

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acknowledge that neither label correctly identifies my inner life.

Morality is no more important a part of my inner life than is theology. I would like to believe that my behavior is fundamentally moral. I do try to face up to lapses in my behavior, to identify and understand my wrong choices in the hope of being able to avoid repeating them. But I do not believe that the impulse to do this derives from the rabbi in me. There has been so far one occasion in my life when I attributed a moral choice to my Judaism, but in that situation I was one of two Jews in an otherwise non-Jewish environment, and it may have been my isolation that led me to credit the tribe with a choice that was entirely personal. On the whole, I believe that morality is a personality trait.

A Medium for Expressing My Inner Self

Where I really and truly feel Jewish is in my *feelings*. How often I have heard my rabbinical colleagues mock from the pulpit Jews who don't keep kosher, don't go to synagogue, and don't study Torah, but claim to have a Jewish heart. I feel close kinship for these "cardiac Jews," the objects of such rabbinical scorn, for in principle, my Judaism is like theirs, only more involving.

How rich has my "cardiac Judiasm" been for me! It has occupied my intellectual life for decades, filling me with curiosity about our heritage of language, literature, folkways, and history, curiosities which have over the years spilled outwards to the cultures that have influenced Judaism and been influenced by it, and which now, in my fifth decade, I find radiating beyond this circle to analogous aspects of more remote cultures. My interest in our national language, an obsession for most of my life, became the basis of my livelihood, and, what is more important, a means of enriching my use of my native language.

But Judaism has given me something even more precious than an intellectual life. It has given me a means of expression, a substance in which to work the feelings that *are* my inner self, a form in which to pour the undifferentiated, chaotic internal energy only partly put to use by my life with others. It is the area in which raw feeling can find expression. It is an art form.

When I think of Judaism as an art, I do not mean that I collect paintings of families at the *Seder* table and recordings of Hasidic hits. I mean that I perform Judaism as a pianist performs Chopin, reproducing the notes, tempo instructions, dynamic and articulation markings exactly as written in the score, but imbuing them with my

own distinctive temperament. I cannot know what Chopin felt when he composed, and if I did I could not summon up *his* feelings to give life to the music. I can only let the score unleash my *own* feelings, and in the dynamic tension between the composer's score and my own personality, make the music come to life.

Words Cannot Express the Feelings

When we say of a musical composition that it is happy or sad, tortured or tranquil, we have said nothing of importance. The exact emotional content of a work of art cannot be adequately expressed in another medium (in this case, language) because the emotions it releases are richer, more intense, and more complex than the form itself. The performer and the participating listener are both individuals who have the capacity of making the connection between the art form and their ineffable inner selves. I am drawing my examples from music because it is the secular art most familiar to me, but I mean these generalizations to apply equally to the other arts, including Judaism.

By analogy, I cannot say of Judaism that it means to me theology, morality, ethnicity, or anything else that can be expressed in another medium. It serves my inner self as a self-sufficient medium of expression. There may sometimes be an occasion to describe the feelings released by Jewish rituals. Then I can speak of joy, exultation, misery, guilt, gratitude, historical identity, and other words that only hint at the true emotion without expressing it. For example, "historical identity" seems to be incongruous with the other items in the above list, since it is a fact, not a feeling; but to me, Jewish ritual unleashes its "feelingness" so that in my Jewish context it is as much feeling as the other items.

Like Art, Judaism Requires Study

Like other art forms, Judaism requires talent and disciplined study, both to perform and to appreciate. I have worked hard at acquiring the skills of my art, and it has repaid my pains. It has also *caused* me some pain, but mostly because I misunderstood it or allowed myself to be oppressed by others' misunderstandings. I love to perform Judaism by studying and teaching Hebrew poetry, reading *Maariv*, reading the Torah in synagogue, acting as *Baal Musaf* (the leader of the Additional Service) in my congregation on the High Holidays, giving my children their *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah* lessons, etc.

Some of these activities are useful (by reading *Maariv* I find out what is happening in Israel),

edifying (studying Hebrew poetry stimulates my thinking), helpful (reading the Torah in my synagogue is a service to the community), or conducive to warm intergenerational relations (*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* lessons), but these are incidental benefits. These activities are my particular life. If I did not know about them I would engage in other activities that are useful, edifying, helpful, and conducive to warm intergenerational relations, as do many others with great success. But then I would be someone else.

In the summer evenings of my teenage years I used to take long walks through my rose-scented suburb, chanting to myself the Psalms and the Song of Songs, sometimes in pious fervor, sometimes in heroic jubilation or adolescent misery. Later I tried to sort out these pious and romantic emotions, but today I gladly let them free to “serve in confusion.” Since I have given up trying to arrange and categorize, my inner life has been richer and I have felt whole. ●

Taking the first step of *teshuvah*

Hershel Jonah Matt

A rabbi's lot, so very often, is a frustrating one. The level of *mitzvah* observance among Jews, of regular prayer, of Jewish knowledge and Torah learning, of Jewish interest and involvement, of ethical behavior, of Jewish discipline, is usually so low, and even when present is apparently so lacking in *kavanah* (the proper intention) and so devoid of *kedushah* (holiness), that as a rabbi I often find myself filled with resentment, self-doubt and a sense of failure, despair and desperation. Then, seeking to suppress all these, I tend to compensate by adopting the stance of disdainful superiority. Why are almost all of “them” so ungrateful for my faithful rabbinic service and fine example, so unresponsive to my sincere and urgent pleas, so resistant to my earnest efforts to have them become good Jews like me? Alas, that is the way I feel much of the time.

And yet, there are some moments, as when the *Yamim Noraim* (Days of Awe) approach, and at least occasionally between *Yom Kippur* and the next *Rosh Hashanah*, that my righteousness, so sharply contrasted with their unrighteousness, is recognized even by me to be self-righteousness.

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Ungrateful? Is it not I who am ungrateful? For is it not an undeserved privilege to be able to study and teach Torah, to be looked up to as authority or at least as guide, to be a source of strength and hope in time of trouble, to lead others in prayer to God, to spend so much of my time in doing *mitzvot*?

Besides, even assuming that the level of my Jewish living is so superior to theirs, was I not reared in a richly Jewish home, given an extended and intensive Jewish training, and then elected to a position that makes it in many ways both more convenient and more mandatory for me to lead a Jewish life? (Said a business man in my very first congregation, when I was indiscreet enough to bemoan my lot to him: “Why, Rabbi, you are able to do meaningful things during your working hours; I can find meaning in my life only after hours!”)

Assessing My Own Deeds

Furthermore, even if quantitatively my observance of *mitzvot* is greater than theirs, can I be so sure that qualitatively this is so as well? Is my own *davening* (praying) really so fully characterized by *kavanah*, so free of *machshavot zarot* (distracting thoughts), so untainted, when in the presence of others, by self-display? As to my Torah learning and Torah-teaching— how much of it is solid, authoritative, thorough, profound, and reverent, and how much is superficial, distorted, careless, biased, show-offy, even fake? And isn't my observance of the various “ritual” *mitzvot* often automatic, perfunctory, hurried, or calculated to impress? And when it comes to taking a stand on sensitive public issues, speaking out on morally outrageous acts committed by Jews or non-Jews, avoiding the use of stereotypes and slogans in my public pronouncements and private conversation, how courageous, or even honest, have I been?

And with regard to my personal behavior, toward my neighbors in the apartment, toward unkempt beggars who approach me on the street, toward the bosses and braggarts and bores I encounter, toward the troubled and lonely and bereaved, toward the fellow passengers on bus and train, toward members of my extended family, and even toward members of my immediate family, is such behavior really of superior moral quality? And what if the true motives behind even my “good deeds” were to be examined closely?

Is this an ideal model of a Rabbi, of a Jewish leader, of a Torah-teaching, Torah-loving, Torah-living Jew? How urgently I need to say— and

mean— the yearly “*al chet...* (for the sin...) *selach lanu*” (forgive us) and the year-round “*selach lanu... ki chatanu* (forgive us... for we have sinned).” How urgently I need to do *teshuvah*.

God Makes Teshuvah Possible

I need to do *teshuvah*. But can I? Even if I have not remained completely unrepentant since the *al chet* of last *Yom Kippur*, even if I have at least occasionally really meant the *selach lanu* of my regular weekday prayer, still, the accumulated load of unacknowledged unrepented sins is large and heavy. To undo all those sins of commission, to make up for all those sins of omission, seems impossibly difficult. It is just too much; I just can't do it. I cannot do it all alone.

But I'm not alone; God is present; God is with me. Therefore, matching my need to do *teshuvah* are the means to do *teshuvah*; what I need to do I'm able to do. What a blessing, what a miracle, that *teshuvah* is available.

The only problem, and the mystery, lies in beginning: who is to take the initiative in *teshuvah*? Surely it is God, who calls to me, as to each one of us, “Turn back to Me.” Or is it rather I who must go first, uttering the first word, taking the first step; and only then will come forth divine assistance, the Helping Hand? But then again, what is that first word of mine as I *chozer b'teshuvah* (return in repentance)? Is it not: “*Hachazirenu* (turn us), You, O God, must help me, enable me, to turn.” But once again— we have come full circle— God says to me: “First *you* must turn, even a little, and then I'll turn, immediately.”

We cannot solve the mystery of “who goes first” in *teshuvah*. But then we need not solve it. It's enough to know that the possibility and reality of *teshuvah* are there. Or rather, here. ●

Answering a personal call from Sinai

Yaakov Kornreich

The task of *cheshbon hanefesh*, self-examination, is more difficult than may be, at first, apparent. Human nature makes us all masters of self-deception. When we look in the mirror each morning, we do not often recognize that which we do not wish to see in ourselves, although it may literally be staring us in the face.

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A case in point is the reaction of the rest of the Jewish community to what is termed the *baal teshuvah* (repentance) phenomenon. The nomenclature is telling because it implies that the rest of us are not *baalei teshuvah*, and are somehow superior to those who are. In fact classical Judaism bids us all to be *Baalei Teshuvah* throughout the year and especially during the High Holiday season. This is an example both of the Torah's realistic recognition of the inevitable imperfection of the human condition, and its optimistic faith in the human potential for self-improvement toward the high goals it sets for us. But first, we are required to take an honest look at our lives and to confront our shortcomings.

For those of us who already follow a religious lifestyle, that task is complicated by a tendency towards self-righteousness that can arise from the continuing effort to fulfill the myriad of obligations that Torah and *mitzvot* impose upon us. It is all too easy to forget that the rote performance of a *mitzvah* does not necessarily fulfill its obligation. Furthermore, the zeal that we may show in the scrupulous observance of the *mitzvot* between man and God must be matched by equal zeal and scruples in our relations with our fellow men and women. It sometimes takes a shock, a disruption of our normal lives, to jar us into the realization that a more thorough self-evaluation is necessary.

I recently suffered such a trauma, the passing of my mother, which has forced me to reconsider my life in general, and how well my practices measure up to my Orthodox goals and standards in particular. My mother had been living with my wife and children and me in our Brooklyn home since my father passed away seven years ago. She had been an invalid for several years previously, and my father had taken care of her in their home in Miami Beach, where I had grown up. I had left for college, *yeshivah* and permanent residence in New York City a dozen years earlier.

After considerable youthful soul-searching, I had previously chosen a more religious lifestyle than that of my parents. Initially this was a source of friction between us, but they eventually accepted my religious commitment. Somewhat later, I came to realize that they, too, were living their lives as Jews as best they could, and had made great personal sacrifices to enable me to follow my own goals. They had hoped that I would follow an academic career in the sciences, upon which I had originally embarked.

I had never intended to become a Jewish communal professional, and never seriously pursued

semicha (rabbinic ordination) in my *yeshivah* studies, even on the post-graduate level. My experience as a volunteer advisor in the early Orthodox outreach programs which eventually gave rise to the *Baal Teshuvah* phenomenon of today, led me to believe that I could be more effective as a religious layman, working to influence my peers, than as a stereotyped clergyman who would forever be *different* from my congregants. Through the mutual learning experiences of my outreach work, I gained many insights into Jews of all backgrounds, including my own parents, and developed a deeper understanding of what Judaism demands of us all.

According to our tradition, the 600,000 Jewish souls who witnessed the Revelation at Mt. Sinai and who responded to *Moshe rabbenu* and the Almighty with "*naase venishma*"—("we will obey (the *Mitzvot*) and we will try to understand") represented all the Jewish souls to come throughout the ages. The Talmud also teaches us that Rabbi Akiva was capable of deriving 600,000 separate interpretations for every crown of every letter of the Torah. I believe that the prominence of the number 600,000 in both lessons is not accidental: that it teaches us that for each Jewish soul, every one of us, there is a separate and unique interpretation of the Divine Torah message. Our task is to discover that personal message and mission in the Torah, and then to do our utmost to fulfill it.

My initial pursuit of an academic career ended with the cutback in government funds for scientific research in the early 70's, and I fell back upon (or was guided to?) my current calling in Orthodox Jewish journalism. I had always enjoyed the challenge and satisfaction of writing and, in the course of my outreach work, I discovered a need in the Orthodox community for what skills I have learned in the communication arts. Thus, I succeeded in turning my avocation into a career, while serving my faith and people. In the process, I have tried to help others discover the beauty of the Torah heritage for themselves,

and I have enjoyed the rare privilege of regular publication.

In my personal life, I have been blessed with a devoted and loving wife, as well as four unique and wonderful children. Whatever success I have achieved in Jewish communal service has largely been purchased with time and effort to which they rightly should have had first call. My wife's patience and strength have helped me through my darkest periods of self-doubt and discouragement, and her constructive criticism and persistence have helped me produce my best work. My children are a constant source of joy and inspiration to me, and their continuing devotion to me despite my neglect and occasional impatience with them is a blessing of which I fear I am unworthy.

One of my bitterest disappointments was that my mother died just three months before my firstborn son's *bar mitzvah*. But she did have the constant joy of watching him and his younger brother and sisters grow, day by day, for seven years. Courageously overcoming her physical handicaps, my mother participated fully in all family occasions, both happy and sad, and thus was a lasting inspiration to us all. While my wife bravely bore much of the burden of her care, and I was not always as dutiful a son as I should have been, I have the consolation that my mother's last years were still, in many ways, her happiest.

For the future, I face the personal challenge of reconstructing my family's life to fill the void that her passing leaves. I hope to set a personal example to my children that better practices the life of Torah and *Mitzvot* which I have encouraged them to follow. Professionally, I hope to use my position and skills to the best advantage of my people and beliefs.

I pray to the Almighty for the wisdom and strength to justify the faith of my family and community, and to follow in the paths of His Torah in the year to come. ●