

## "אמונה ובטחון"--Issues of Faith and Trust

### in the Face of Tragedy"

*INTRODUCTION: a very, very difficult topic--the most intractable of all and the greatest challenge to אמונה ובטחון--yet cannot escape it. This talk--really שיעור--is dedicated to memory of Aaron Heller ע"ה. We welcome his mother, Mrs. Klausner, and join all of you in extending condolences and expressing commiseration.*

#### 1. חיזוק האמונה in the face of tragedy:

a) Two problems--death itself; and death so young. The first focuses on אמונה ("how can a good God allow death?") and second on בטחון ("how can we trust a God who takes away one so young?"). But at bottom they are one and the same.

b) an ancient yet perennial problem: Israelis for fallen young comrades, Holocaust--and every death since Adam & Eve

c) Autobiographical--Joshua Kaufman and Saul Goodman  
ע"ה--I had to confront the fact of death, thought too young to ask the more advanced question, "but why so young?" I felt weak, vulnerable. I never forgot them--part of my maturing process--painful but inevitable. And, in me, led to compulsiveness about time and getting things done before it's too late; workaholic  
(here: story of Dov Sadan and how he was able to be so productive)

d) Need to divide into 3 parts: philosophical, moral, emotional

#### 2. Philosophical-- evil & death--the theodicy problem. Samuel, David, Solomon--רשע וטוב לו, צדיק ורע לו. Question asked; no answer given

Yes, it is an injustice built into the fabric of life. JFK: "Life is unfair"; and so is death!

Not to ask the question is escapism; to expect a satisfying answer is arrogance; to bow in faithful acceptance is true אמונה. Thus: *JOB*...

Continuation: רינאי--אין בידינו לא משלוות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים

And here is where אמונה comes in: acknowledgement of His justice although *beyond our ken*... That = essence of צדוק הדין

So, do not expect me to answer question of "Why?" I know only that my אמונה insists that טוב ה' לכל ורחמי על כל מעשיו; that there is an עולם הבא והשארית הנפש ותחתיה"מ; that by definition we are both physically and metaphysically limited--so that there must be death and there can be no full understanding of the why's and wherefore's.

3. Moral -- awareness of mortality, vulnerability. *Especially when one so young passes away...*

גמ' מועד קטן: אחד מבני החבורי שמת ידאגו כל בני החבורה

And--here is where בטחון comes in: Rav on ברכת גבורות בשמ"ע--תחתיה"מ כשיא תיקון המעוויות ע"י הקב"ה

Moral character of G-d; confidence it will find its fulfillment in conquest of death itself

4. Emotional -- silence as a reaction (friends of Job); is psychologically valid for the מנחם; but the אבל has a tougher problem, though he/she too must ultimately arrive at a silence that bespeaks not only resignation but אמונה ובטחון

*ANGER*--OK; it's one of the several steps (Kubler-Ross) in reacting to death-- denial; anger; bargaining; depression; acceptance. So, anger is a sign of healing--but not if you stop there. Anger won't erase awesome fact of our mortal nature. Must give way before more mature understanding of mystery of life & death and our constitutional inability to grasp what is beyond our ken, such as צדיק ורע לו

*Halakha on אבלות* parallels and stimulates psychological development of grief and consolation

*Also* -- for those of us (maybe *all* of us) whom this terrible tragedy has shaken as we contemplate our own finitude, *how do we cope with fear of death*: Rav (איש ההלכה)--by objectifying death. So, R.Hayyim learning הלכות טומאת מת; psychiatrist Viktor Frankel in concentration camps...

*On highest level*, death must not only be acknowledged as a fact of life until eschatological resurrection, but more: -- as a מצוה!

Commentaries: צדיקים היו נוטלין ידיהן לפני מיתתן;

and Zeide-- because it's a מצוה ...

5. Where do we go from here? -- *First*: S.R.H. on David's למה עזבתני ...

So too: we feel we have to *do something* -- and at same time "objectify" death--so: learning program by all his friends, dorm mates; and special מצוות in his memory. Do in his memory, so that he'll live on through you

*Second*: Also--learn emotional-moral-spiritual maturity from role models. such as: parents of late Nachshon Waxman הי"ד-- their deportment was a קידוש השם ברבים...

-Father: "No answer to prayer?" "Yes, but answer was No."

-So--grateful for all *other* prayers answered; and--

-showed how if he had been saved, number of other soldiers would have been killed

-Mother asked all Israel light Shabbat candles + 1-- had זכות that thousands who usually not light candles, did!

- Let me discuss these 2 responses as spring-boards for our own religious-psychological dilemmas and for our social action

*The father concerning prayer--*

-Can prayer avert death? No, it can't. All men are mortal.

-Can תפילה or תהילים postpone death? Yes, it can.

-Is it a trick that always works? No, most certainly not. The reason the answer is sometimes No, is that religion is not magic, there is no secret theurgy that forces G-d to do our bidding. There is only the humble prayer of the broken heart who pleads but knows it has no claims on the Almighty.

All real, genuine, Jewish תפילה is predicated on the one word IF -- if He wills it He will respond to our importunings; if not--it is His choice. He remains a שומע תפילה, even an עונה תפילה--but there are no guarantees as to His answer.



***Now, for the Mother's Response-- on unifying Jews--***

-all that week in October, Israel Radio would begin with,  
בוקר טוב, כולנו משפחת וקסמן . Some 50,000 Israelis at Wall--from Haredim to  
pony-tailed and ear-ringed types.

***-So, my question: if that tragedy can unite Jews otherwise  
so far apart, should not untimely death of Aaron Heller unite the  
student body of YU? --tell us that we are all one...not envious  
IBC, resentful JSS, disdainful MYP???***

6. Mrs. Klausner, we join you in your endless grief and extend our  
heartfelt consolation to you. We admire your dignity and composure  
in the face of your broken heart, and we fully understand your  
searching questions, your anger, your silent and perhaps not so silent  
cries.

We not only offer נחמה to you and to all Aaron's friends and all our  
students and faculty who mourn for Aaron.

We also offer *consolation to yet Another*.

Explain: ש"י עגנון- "רשות" על הקדיש -- *we have to console G-d...!*