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A751

EULOGY FOR ISIDORE STRICK

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1. I knew I.S. about 21 years. When we first met, he was a young man, not much older than I am now. Yet for me, he filled a variety of roles, as I suspect I did for him: he was my friend -- and when we corresponded, which was not infrequent, our remarks were full of good-natured banter; underneath the thinly veiled insults was a world of admiration; He was my brother, to whom I looked to for advice; a father figure to whom I turned for solace and encouragement; and a student, to whom I taught Torah.
2. I knew four generations of the family -- from his father, the old man from Colechester (and what a good son Izi was!), to his nephews and nieces and their children.
3. He had no children of his own, but was a fatherly person. He was patriarchal in his way. He was the focus of his family, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces.
4. Yesterday was Shabbat Shuva. There are two great verses in the Bible concerning teshuva or return:
 - a) in the Psalms
... אלק יא לאר אבול כח אד אלקים
 - b) Joel
... קק' ה סל סלול נאר

Every human being, insofar as he is of אלק יא or mortal, must ultimately submit to the divine command to "return" to his earthly origin. For ^{as} we like it or not, life is limited, and we know that it must come to an end. Man must submit to the command to return to earth.

But someone who is more than just a mortal, someone who transcends the category of אלק יא and achieves the category of Israel, a "champion of the Lord," such a person returns, ~~also~~ in a different sense. He returns not only to the earth, but that in him which is ineffably precious returns -- ~~to his~~ ^{to the} divine source.

So we are gathered here at the remains of our dear friend Izi, Israel ben Avraham Zvi, not only to see him off as he returns to the dust of the earth which was his origin, but also, we bid him farewell with the words ^{סלול נאר}, return O Izi, ^{קק' ה סל} -- because there was something in you which was admirable beyond words, and lovely and precious beyond telling.

Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz used to say that the founder of Hasidism was called R. Israel Baal Shem Tov (the Master of the Good Name), because when you want to arouse a drowsy person, you shake him. If he is in a coma, you shout at him, and in the last extremity you call him by his name so that perhaps that will wake him up. When the Baal Shem Tov came to our people of Israel, it was a coma, and therefore he called it by its name, trying to arouse it.

Izi, our Israel, was the kind of man who by his very presence -- his sweetness, his affability, his gentleness, his integrity -- evoked from everyone only the most positive and constructive reactions. What a master of a "good name" he was!

5. Izi was what a Jew should be: a *pinel* ... thoughtful... independent in his thinking... conservative in his temperament. He was a man of sweetness and gentle humor. He was a pillar of Kodimah, the Springfield Hebrew Day School, YU. One story: he once approached me to ask whether he should give to a local charity or to an Israeli charity. ~~I~~ He studied both, and at that moment opted for the local charity. He gave me a very handsome check and -- then went and gave to the Israeli charity as well! He loved Israel. He was a man of utter honesty who could not abide a phony and would not suffer artificiality. He had no tolerance for the salesmen of delusion. He was loyal to his friends, associates, and employees, and was beloved by his family. Joe was for him not only a brother-in-law and partner, but a veritable brother.

6. Above all, he was for Helen the light of her life and the strength of her existence. Helen, you made a home for him -- surrounded him with security and love and concern and comradeship.

7. May his memory and spirit be a source of strength to you.

8. *אנחנו פה*, Izi, and remember Helen and family and friends for *האנשים האלה*. As you go before the *אלהים* we say to you *אנחנו פה* we commend your spirit in the hands of the Lord, now that you go to your long sleep, and also for the promise of the awakening that is to come; *אנחנו פה*, with your body that returns to its origin and dust, we bid farewell to your soul as it rises to the Lord; *אנחנו פה*, Izi, the Lord is with you, do not be afraid.