

Eulogy for Morris (Moshe) Green

For me, *Tisha B'av* has come early this year. The untimely passing of Morris (Mosheh) Green is nothing less than a *churban*, a cataclysm of enormous proportions. I am bereft of my dearest friend. I can imagine how dreadful is the blow to his wife and children.

I adored his family--his wife, his four children, his mother, his siblings. We grew up together, built families together, worked for the community together. I first met him 41 years ago when he and Aaron were saying *Kaddish* for their father, Joseph Green, who was a distinguished member of The Jewish Center. Now, his children are saying *Kaddish* for him. At The Jewish Center.

Moshe was brilliant, passionate, and funny--his whole body shook when he laughed, as if *all* of him was enjoying the fun. He loved his family, reveled in his creativity in business, and was ebullient in his works of charity.

He was a remarkably diverse person, and in everything he did--and he did so much!--he was always enthusiastic. He invariably manifested a youthful exuberance and that gave him a singular charm.

Our *sidra* of this coming Shabbat tells of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron by Korach and his coterie of malcontents. To indicate the divine confirmation of Aaron in his priestly office, Moses told the princes of all the tribes, including Aaron, to place their staffs--symbols of their high office--in the Tabernacle. They did this, and the next morning all were found unchanged except for the staff of Aaron, High Priest and head of the tribe of Levi. The staff had blossomed and, in the words of the Torah, ויצא פרח ויצץ ציץ ויגמל שקדים, it brought forth blossoms, it sprouted buds, and it grew almonds. The commentary of the Tosafot points out that the text implies that all of this was simultaneous, that whereas normally there are blossoms which then fall off to be replaced by buds, which in turn fall off and are replaced by the mature fruit, all of these miraculously occurred all at once.

Moshe Green was a personification of that capacity for doing so very many things at once. An idea germinated in the realm of business at the same time that another idea for family vacation with children and grandchildren blossomed, and meanwhile he was concluding an elaborate plan to advance the causes he believed in and for which he paid most generously. He possessed a capacious mind, his personality had breadth, his horizons were remarkably expansive.

At the same time, he remained a respectful person, with deference to rabbis and scholars. He was both a בעל דרך ארץ and a מוקיר רבן. A poignant example: During the forty-one years of our intimate friendship I often asked him to call me by my first name, but he refused! It was always "Rabbi Lamm" or Doctor Lamm."

He was my dearest friend. Our wives enjoyed genuine friendship with each other, our children went to school together and visited in each other's homes often and happily. We lived next to each other, we "davened" together, we walked to shul together, we bought cemetery plots next to each other. It was truly an eternal friendship.

He was my greatest confidante. I found him to be a seasoned and wise advisor, and indeed we turned to each other often when we felt advice was needed. His loyalty to me was full, total, and uncompromising. In addition, he was a generous friend who looked out for my interests when the burdens of my office prevented me from doing so for and by myself.

Moshe and I were אחים לדעה--ideological brothers, intellectual comrades. We both were committed to the ideal of Torah Umadda. I wrote and spoke about it, and he pursued it with vigor and sponsored publications and convocations advancing the cause. Indeed, Moshe was a significant philanthropist. He not only gave with an open hand, but practiced a hands-on approach in his charitable and communal work.

Where Moshe lived, there he contributed to its welfare. He divided his time between the U.S. and Israel, and he was a source of great benefit to both communities. He and Charlotte had a very special love for Israel. He got to know every cubic centimeter of Israel, especially Jerusalem, and could easily have served as a professional tour guide. It was he who dreamt the dream of erecting a major hotel in the most central part of the Holy City, and he worked indefatigably to build his lasting contribution to the sky-line of Jerusalem: the Sheraton Plaza Hotel. He felt that he thereby earned the honorific of בונה ציון, a "builder of Zion," and he cherished that edifice and all it meant for him. Wherever he went in Jerusalem, he would scan the horizon and cry out in joy, "Look, from here you can see the Plaza!"

He was a past Chairman of the Board of Bar Ilan University, and had a special affinity for its Kollel and, even more especially, the Midrasha--the women's institute for advanced Jewish studies. He took a personal interest in the students, many of whom came from impoverished homes and rose to great achievements, even to eminence. He was to receive an honorary degree from Bar Ilan the very day he took sick and returned to New York.

His interest in advancing the cause of higher Jewish education for women led him to support Nishmat. His appreciation of and devotion to Torah Umadda and Modern Orthodoxy caused him to take an active interest in such significant institutions as Kollel Eretz Hemda, Bet Morasha, and the Kollel Torah Mi-tzion and its far-flung activities in the U.S. He successfully urged the introduction of Torah Umadda type instruction at Hebrew University, which only recently elected him to its International Board. He was a--or the--major supporter of the Orthodox Forum--the Modern Orthodox think tank--and the Orthodox Caucus. He sponsored the publication of the *Torah Umadda Journal* and several volumes produced by the Orthodox Forum. He did all this on his own initiative-- *I never had to ask him!*

A number of years ago, the Orthodox Union awarded him its prestigious Keter Shem Tov award. He was a member of the presidium of the American Mizrachi. He sponsored various publications, the most recent of which was the *Bereshit* volume of *Daat Mikra*.

Here, at The Jewish Center, he was formerly Chairman of the Board. He was a member of its Chevra Kadisha and highly respected by several generations of members and leaders of the congregation.

In Yeshiva University Moshe found his ideological base and educational and religious home. He was a member of our Board of Trustees of the University, and a trustee and Chairman of the Executive Committee of its affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. It was for me, several years ago, a personal privilege to grant an honorary degree to Moshe, who with Charlotte was a Benefactor of the institution.

His philanthropy was not limited to institutions. He was most generous privately to individuals. As both a lawyer and an accountant, he did pro bono work for widows, for needy people of all kinds and stations in life.

But above all else, Moshe Green was a family man. He fulfilled as perfectly as possible the commandment to honor father and mother. I did not know him when his father was alive, but I was witness to his consummate devotion to his mother, the gracious and elegant Bertha Green. He grew up with his siblings, Aaron and (Rose) Miriam--like first great Biblical family. And how he adored and loved and respected and was proud of his children, Steven and Rena and Joseph and Ira, and their spouses and his grandchildren. It was a love and admiration that was thoroughly mutual. They learned from him how to practice the mitzvah of *kibbud av va'em*.

It should be said and repeated that in all this he was not a lonely pioneer. His beloved Charlotte was with him, at his side, in all his activities. She encouraged his charitable giving, his involvement with Yeshiva and other institutions, and of course the life of the family. She will be the one to miss him more than anyone else. Our hearts go out to her.

All of us, in so very many areas of life and society, will feel the pain of his absence. Oscar Wilde, in his *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, wrote the following couplet, so relevant to Moshe:

*For he that lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die*

Moshe lived many lives; he was a living dynamo in a variety of related and unrelated activities, areas, and institutions. And so he dies in more ways than one. And all who came in contact with him will grieve with his family and closest friends.

To Charlotte and the family let me say this: I--all of us--join you in your profound grief, but remember that he leaves you a great and enduring legacy. In the Second Book of Kings (2:11) we read of the Prophet Elijah taking leave of his cherished disciple, Elisha: "וַיְהִי הֵמָּה הוֹלְכִים" --they were walking and talking. What was the subject of their conversation just before Elijah was carried aloft to heaven, leaving the burden of prophetic leadership to the young Elisha? The Jerusalem Talmud attempts to lift the curtain and lets us in on the secret: they discoursed על קריאת שמע, על נחמת ציון, ועל מעשה בראשית --on the Reading of the Shema, on the consolation of Zion, and on the Creation (of the world). What a strange collection of themes for a farewell between master and teacher! Yet--it makes sense...and qualifies as a farewell to our dear and precious Moshe Green.

Moshe's life was characterized by the Shema; he had a profound faith in God and in Torah, loyally observing the sacred halakhic program in his life. He worked strenuously and successfully to build up Zion, and thus help ensure its consolation after its struggle with its enemies. And he endeavored to renew and rebuild the Jewish world after the devastation of the Holocaust.

That is his legacy to you. And to me. And to all who had the זכות to be part of his life.

And what a life that was!

תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים