

**ע"ה Eulogy for Judith Lamm Young**

Still staggering from the trauma of the dreadful news of the demise of my niece, Judy Young, I find myself unable to offer adequately either my feelings of bereavement or an evaluation of her short but full life. My initial reaction is to quote Kohelet: וְהָיָה דִמְעָתְךָ הָעֲשָׂקִים וְאִין לָהֶם מִנְחָם. You, I, we---all feel robbed, violated, devastated by Judy's sudden death. And the pain is so great, that there is no consolation.

But If I can't find my own words, let me imagine what Judy would say to eulogize herself: Knowing her attitude and her exceedingly firm *bitachon*, I believe she would say: *DON'T CRY OVER ME!* She would assure us that:

\*"The רבש"ע has been so good to me. He gave me distinguished parents who granted me inspiration and space to grow true to my own nature.

\*I married a hero of Yiddishkeit, a prince of /love, of decency, of devotion and a genuine חכם תלמיד and educator. We had a wonderful life together;. And he was my חברותא as well.

\*I beat back the המות מלאך several times –after the doctors had despaired of my recovery. As a young wife, they warned me that I would never be able to bear a child. But the רבש"ע had His own plans, and I was blessed with seven outstanding children –*all loyal to Torah and תלמוד תורה and גמילות חסדים*; In words of this week's Haftorah, רָנִי עֲקָרָה לֹא יִלְדָּה פֶּצַחִי רָנָה וְצִדְקָלִי. In my battle for life—I won! So -- celebrate my life with me! Of course, there will be tears and you'll miss me—but remember always to be thankful to the Almighty on my behalf for all the חסד He showed me.

Judy was a rare individual: she was a born leader – intelligent, energetic, strong – willed, single-minded to the point of stubbornness, charismatic, endowed with a

powerful personality which made her such an inspiring teacher and innovative educator (whether or not one agreed with her educational philosophy) who influenced the lives of hundreds and brought them closer to תורה ומצות . And to think that all that primordial energy and all that talent and that long record of achievement- - all thrived in one short and fragile frame! How did she manage to pack all that superior ability and creativity into barely 50 years?

People noticed that as the חפץ חיים grew older, he increased his activity in the study of Torah and *Chesed* . When asked to explain this phenomenon, he offered the following parable: Life, he said, is like a post card. At first you write in large, bold strokes and indulge in pedestrian commonplaces – “How are you? I wish you were here” and similar platitudes. But as you come closer to the end of the postcard and realize there is precious little space left for the really important message you want to deliver, you begin to write in packed sentences, with no superfluous words. Life, he concluded, is like that post-card: The older I get, the more concentrated must my activity become and must be focused only on that which truly counts.

That, to my mind, was both the conscious efforts she made never to waste a moment, and her unconscious awareness of the shortness of life. Judy was an unusually effective pedagogue she was also a gifted organizer. She not only established and administered schools and *Chesed*-institutions world-wide. Both by native inclination and by the experience of possibly imminent mortality, she shunned ביטול תורה. She heeded scrupulously the teaching of R. Eliezer: שוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך.

Thus it was that Judy became such a popular teacher and achiever who succeeded in her life-long ambition to fulfill the words of the Sages:אהוב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה. She was indeed a first-rate מרביצה תורה, whose energy flowed from her profound בטחון.

I often think of Judy: what if she were born a male instead of a female? I am convinced that if she were born male, she would be a ראש ישיבה...On second thought, not a ראש ישיבה, but –a *Rebbe*, who would command the loyalty of hundreds of Hasidim, who would teach not only by words but by example of love and of חסד and

מעשים טובים, guiding her Hasidim in all facets of their lives, perhaps even to the point of receiving קוויטלעך ... That was the kind of personality she was..

People say that Judy was *frum*, and indeed her piety was genuine .. But I believe she was possessed of a very special kind of פרומקייט or piety.

Let me explain by a sharp insight of the famous Gerer Rebbe, the שפת אמת Why, he asked, do we not recite a *berakhah* when we perform the mitzvah of *tzedakah*?

Actually, the greatest of the Halakhic sages dealt with the question and came up with a number of relevant answers. But the Gerer maintains that the reciting of a blessing before giving alms to the poor fellow standing before me creates a *mechitza* or barrier between me and the recipient of my largesse. The Torah wants me to relate to the needy person as to a subject, not an object—a human being with his own dignity and importance, and not merely an excuse or medium for me to perform a mitzvah and thus enhance my religious experience. The blessing, however important and conscientiously performed, is still incomplete if it interferes with human dignity, כבוד הבריות and the very human relationship between me and my fellow man.

That is what was so different, so sensitive, so special about Judy's שמירת המצוות. Judy didn't use people, even for a mitzvah,. If the recitation of a blessing would result in transforming your fellow "human" into a "thing," better skip the *berakhah*.

Her foresight led her to plan for her children to be self-sufficient. She taught them to be independent just in case she has to leave for an extended period. But that wise intuition will serve as well at giving them the worldly wisdom of working for themselves and their family.

So, to the children we say: she will always be with you, invisible but with a warm heart and a strong hand. She taught you to be independent, so *go ahead and be strong and independent*. Do it, and learn as well to be *interdependent*, by growing closer to each other as the months and years go by.

I am confident you can do it, both because that is the way she taught you —*and* because we all — your uncle David and aunt Dodi, your grandparents, but especially



your wise, loyal, and devoted father, will guide you. He is a rare treasure. You can always rely on him. His extraordinary intelligence, his undying love for your mother and you, will be the major source of your strength in the years ahead. I know how much you respect him, but I predict that as time goes on, you will respect and admire him even more

Any loss of a life is a catastrophe for the mourners, but none is so thoroughly distressing and unbearable as the loss of one's child.

In the Psalm we read during Ellul, David laments the demise of his parents *en passant*, just mentioning it without much comment: *כי אבי ואמי עזבוני וה' יאספני*— my father and mother have left me but God takes care of me. The loss of a parent is most unfortunate, but it is part of nature, and consolation can be sought and successfully received.

But the same David, confronted by the dying child that Bathsheba bore to him, falls apart in grief. So bitter is his grief, so disconcerting his conduct, so extravagant is his mourning, that his courtiers fear for his sanity.

In the case of the loss of a parent, there certainly is pain and suffering, but there is a limit to it; it does not exceed human endurance. Not so the loss of a child. Nothing can compare to it.

So, to my dear brother and sister-in-law -- what can I or anyone say to you to assuage your pain -- parents who raised a child through all the dangers and mishaps of childhood, who nursed her through dreadful diseases, who raised her as a role model for thousands, only to lose her at the height of her adulthood? Any words of comfort I can attempt will sound puerile and insensitive. You knew her longer than anyone else. You gave her love, care, worry, anxiety, pride – and the *chinukh* out of which she developed her ambition to live a life of Torah and holiness. And you invested in her your love and devotion, your dreams for a future that would be sated with *nachas*

A personal word to my brother: I can't -- no one can --comfort you. You are the leading expert in the field, one who has written with scholarship and compassion and

- sensitivity about death and mourning. Thousands upon thousands have sought relief from their suffering in your books and your lectures. . No one can properly be מנחם you. So – *you must console yourself – yourself and your wife..*

So, I am back t where I started: והנה דמעת העשקים ואין להם מנחם ...

I can only conclude with the wise words of Bruriah as she presented the lifeless bodies of their two sons to their father, R. Meir: “The Almighty gave us a פקדון to watch over and protect; but sooner or later we must return the gift to Him.

ה' נתן וה' לקח יהי שם ה' מבורך

**תנצב"ה**