

January 4th 2019 / 27th Tevet 5779

Dear chevreh,

After sitting in silence for a week on a meditation retreat with everything that comes up when you place no diversions and addictive devices in front of you, I have been visited often in dreams and in waking moments by both of my fathers, the one who raised me and who I got to be with until 10 and a half years ago, and the one who left this world only four months ago. It's still hard to imagine I will never see them again - at least in body during my lifetime. I still feel that the world is missing a piece without these two wonderful people.

Scholar Aviva Zornberg once quoted from a Midrash that teaches about rupture and continuity regarding the impact of a single human being's life. "Wherever it is written [in the Torah], 'It was *after, acherei* [the death of a person]', the world rolls backwards. If God had not raised up *others, acherim*, to fill their space, the world would have rolled back to nothing." Zornberg describes this possibility of regression when someone dies. She says that the Sages are not talking about the obvious cliché that if we didn't have biological children, that the world would end in one generation. Instead, she explains that the Rabbis are saying that every time a person dies, there is a crisis in *being*; the *being* of the world is teetering when someone dies. Everything this person stood for -and which we optimistically assume will stay after him or her - is at risk; the tendency is towards inertia except for the fact that God raises up others, students, children, others who share the values of the one who died, and who provide continuity. <https://www.bac.org.il/sdrvt/video/dr-aviva-zornberg-genesis-parshat-chayei-sara>

A week ago today the world and in particular the Jewish people lost a great man, writer and peace and hope activist, Amos Oz. There is a fear among many that his death is also the death of a moderate Zionism, as he was a committed and passionate Zionist who saw early on that occupation would not be in Israel's best interest, let alone the interest of Palestinians. Amy Wilentz from the Nation writes, "How will Israel imagine itself with this uncompromising truth speaker no longer on the scene? What is Israel without its Oz?" <https://www.thenation.com/article/amos-oz-israel/>

And yet one of his closest others, his daughter, writer Fania Oz-Salzberger explains,

"Father died, and anyone who thinks that hope...died in Israel with the death of Amos Oz, did not really know father, because father knew that we would go on... We will die but [hope] will not, as long as he has here children and grandchildren and friends and students, and readers, and interlocutors and fair people who disagree with him and who are worthy of him, it will not die. I am talking about the hope that there will be true peace here between democratic Israel, a state of the Jews and of all its citizens, a state of law and social justice, a state in which the language of Torah will flourish, as well as Jewish and Hebrew culture, and with them Arab and world culture." [Ha'aretz 1/2/19]

Ken yehi ratzon. Let it be so.

Whether it's with important figures in our Jewish world, in our national/political world here in the United States, or in our personal world, let us remember that spheres of influence are profound and that we too are living out values that we hope will be carried on by the next generation, whether our children, our students, our patients, our readers, or others we touch. We can honor the memory of those who have passed on by continually acting in ways that keep their memories alive and provide a path for those who come next.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Diana