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Azkarah for Mordechai Elazar ben Simcha z'l

Thank you all for coming today - we appreciate the time taken to spend with us at the stone-setting of our dear father, husband, brother, uncle, and Grandfather Mordechai Elazar ben Simcha z'l.

A year has gone by fast - it is said that time is a healer, but I don't believe that's totally true. The pain surely lessens, but that pain, loss and emptiness is never truly gone.

People who have that connection with a father, husband, brother, uncle, grandfather can't just look at the amount of time that has passed and live the way we used to.

Knowing that we could call him and speak to him. Knowing that we could visit and talk to him. Knowing that we could call him up and ask a question about how to do this, or how to do that - his opinion on anything we thought to discuss together.

Asking his advice or opinion on something, and then invariably trying something different, and then in hindsight realising and understanding that with age and experience comes a wisdom that we children have yet to grasp.

And only now - surely realising it more as we age and grow, in a world without someone who it would have been wonderful to have still here with us to talk to and share.

I'd been trying to write this for weeks, but as is the way in these times, other things came up -

mostly revolving around family and keeping up with the pace and pressures of work and daily and weekly routines.

Nothing much has changed for generations though - we carry the same difficulties in different guises, but then as it is now, the same underlying



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importances remain - that of continuity and family.

Continuity comes in many forms and can be taken in any way - all of us experience continuity of some type. Some things we want to break free from, and some things we want to grasp hold onto for dear life of and not let go.

My father embodied continuity in the simple teaching, as is repeated everyday in the Shma:

"You shall love the L-rd your G❖d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

"And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart.

" You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise.

Without fail the simplicity of the statement and command guided his everyday life and how he behaved and taught us, more so through his deeds and actions rather than words and speeches.

In Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 6 talks about the ❖doers' of the Torah rather than it's studiers.

❖Great is Torah, for it gives life to its doers in this world and in the world-to-come.

It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and those that support it shall be happy.'

Sitting shiva at the home we lived and grew up in was intense as it was meant to be. There is no escape or denial of what happened the day before | and we couldn't reject the sad truth of what we now had to live and come to terms with.

I found my faith and belief in olam haba helped me through the grief, knowing that the soul cannot be finite and has a power and a source from where it comes from and goes to with the many trials and journeys it makes throughout our human experience.



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He taught us through actions, to never give up, to keep going - again, not so much with words but being front and center the person to lead the way and did not shy away from getting involved and stuck in.

But this was done in his humble and humorous and quiet way, never imposing but supporting through his presence, knowing that no matter how hard or how tired or difficult the situation was - only by facing the challenge because it won't just go away, would you be able to succeed and push through the other side.

Life is difficult, but it's there for you and you need to live the good and the bad - but make good from the bad and take more good from the good. You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control how you react to it.

Now all of this was mostly non-verbal, I don't know how he did it but he managed to impart this knowledge, wisdom and strength in this quiet humility. He was tolerant, and patient with us - absolutely without ego.

As I spoke with people who also lost parents, what I took from them and some of those conversations was the idea of a golden thread - something that holds us together and gives us value.

We learned from him the practical with strength.

From a young age, especially after barmitzvah - we were doing things that wasn't for the majority done in modern suburban communities, but was considered part of the rites of life where he grew up and what he wanted to teach us:

Going back to what I started off saying about continuity and the Shma:

You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise.

Walking for an hour from home to get to shul on shabbat and chagim Helping at the shul at the Dolly Ross Home, talking to the elderly guests and helping out with the services and reading haftarah Preparing for chagim, especially early



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morning for Pesach as an example, all the way through to late into the early morning hours,

Hospitality without end

Going to funerals, visiting shiva houses - showing the impact of grief and loss, preparing for a knowledge that in life there is real sadness that exists on everybody's path - that he helped show me through acts of kindness.

These are by no means unique to only to us, and they would of course happen to others as well

- We just had to decide how to take these practical lessons that he taught us through love of God and the Torah;

- that he most definitely took upon his heart, - and most definitely taught them thoroughly to his children, - spoke of them whilst sat in his house, - when he walked on the road, - when he lay down and when he rose.

I'm only sharing part of the life we shared, and I cannot highlight every unique aspect of his life and our history beyond this speech of gratitude for the life he gave us - but it was comforting to read the messages of condolences that we did receive, showing how our father was viewed by others,

which was fascinating to read and show how other people's shared interactions with him was very similar to our experience, as well showing us that what you see is what you get, and what we got was good indeed.

So although we didn't go to a jewish school, we lived a jewish life which was tough looking back given we were religious jews living nowhere near others, or closer to the Synagogue but still kept kosher, shabbat, chagim and everything in between as if we were living in the jewish residential hubs in London, where everything is on the next street or round the corner.

You shall love the L-rd your G♠d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

This was his and my mother's success.



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Without their strength and dedication (to their children and each other) none of those commitments would have been possible to achieve.

I speak on my own behalf and the way I teach my children using that idea of this golden thread, that something - that has continuity, that something - that holds us together and gives us value, something that ties my relationship with my father, to his relationship with his father, and ultimately my relationship with my children and their relationship with their children to come besrat Hashem.

I try to emulate him by showing my children the way to be, the way things are, the way things could be, the way things can't be, the way things may be, the way things ought to be, the way things I'd like them to be and the way things sometimes need to be.

Whatever I do in life - - before but since his passing even more so - I understand from him where I came from, what I am, where I belong.

Pirkei Avot was one of his favourite books to study - and I could go through the chapters and pick what I thought could summarise him as a person, his mindset and his beliefs and what drove his personality - but I found so many - that would fit so well - but not give completely who he was.

One that stood out for me though - was the following from Rabbi Elazar:

❖ Know before whom you toil, and that your employer is faithful, for He will pay you the reward of your labor. ❖ ❖

That sentence really was very close to the embodiment of his character, and his outlook - what guided his every day, and we could see and feel it when we spoke to him and were with him.

And just to end as well with one of the well known verses in Kohelet, which he also used as reference sometimes in our many discussions - and also one of his favoured texts:

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;



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1. A time to be born, and a time to die;
2. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
3. A time to kill, and a time to heal;
4. A time to break down, and a time to build up;
5. A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
6. A time to mourn, and a time to dance;
7. A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
8. A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
9. A time to seek, and a time to lose;
10. A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
11. A time to rend, and a time to sew;
12. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
13. A time to love, and a time to hate;
14. A time of war, and a time of peace.

The future is not certain and we can never know what will happen - but if I approach life with just some of the traits and derech eretz my father Mordechai had, and impact my children with some of the wisdom and laughter he shared with us - I know we cannot go far wrong at all.