

“The more meaningless an event, the more difficult it is to understand. The less we understand the purpose of things, the more we have trouble accepting them. The more purposeless and meaningless a death, the less we can understand and accept it.”¹

For anyone to stand up here and try to find meaning in the death of "A.", a woman who was taken from us much too soon, would be pointless.

There is no meaning in "A."’s death, and that is why it is so hard for us to accept. To understand the purpose behind the loss of this beautiful woman, this devoted mother, this loving wife, this beautiful daughter and sister, and friend, would be impossible. There is no meaning in "A."’s death, but her life, her life and the way she lived it, is full of meaning. For "A.", as we know, lived life to the fullest. This horrible disease grasped her and took her so rapidly that no one had time to prepare, or to say goodbye.

"E.", "T.", "R.", and "I."...

I was thinking about what I wanted to say to you ever since you left for Israel. I read the beautiful posts that Hadar posted on Facebook... I knew how loved "A." was here, so I wasn’t surprised ... and then I saw the last two postings that "A." put up herself, and I realized that she was speaking and telling us there what gave her life meaning.

The last posting was a picture she had seen on “That’s Life.” It said: “A perfect marriage is just two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other.” I remembered that I saw it before I heard that she was in the hospital and I remembered

¹ Chaim Rozwaski, *Jewish Meditations on the Meaning of Death* (Northvale, New Jersey: Aronson), p. 41.

thinking how beautiful it was. There was this picture of an elderly couple, with the wrinkled old wife kissing her wrinkled old husband on the cheek. And I thought about the two of you, "E.", and I thought what a great couple you are. You had "a perfect marriage." The two of you had a love that was so apparent to everyone, you could feel it. You could see it, just like you could be looking at the picture of the old couple.

Now, of course, thinking about it, I realize how heart breaking it is to look at that picture, for that "wrinkled" "old" look of that couple in that picture has been stolen from you. And the whole idea of the website that she took the posting from, "That's Life," is a bitter joke. For certainly, this is not what life is, or should be... we cannot accept that, nor will we accept the idea that this is how God operates, and who are we to question.

The second to last posting that "A." put up, "I.", was 210 photos from your Bar Mitzvah. I looked through them. It is filled with pictures of you and your friends, there are beautiful pictures of you, "T.", and you, "R.". There are pictures of your Dad, and your Savta, Gila, and hundreds of pictures of friends and family, many of people who are in this room. I searched for signs of your mom's impending death... and I couldn't find any. There were no signs of death there. There were only pictures of life. There were pictures of love, of living, of pride and happiness at what all of you have achieved so far, and what you will achieve: "T.", as you prepare to go to college — she was thrilled that you got into the college of your dreams; "R.", your mom loved watching you thrive at Schechter, she loved baking with you and coming up with new creations; and "I.", your mom was so proud of the man you have become. She loved planning and preparing for your Bar Mitzvah. She loved talking to you and how open you were about everything that was happening in your life.

"A." was speaking to us on Facebook about what was most important in her life: these final two postings make it very clear. Her life was about you, "E.", and the three of you, "I.", "R.", and "T."; and about her family; and her friends, who were also her family.

Friends describe her to me as a woman who was fiercely loyal, a proud mother, a beautiful, devoted, kind woman who was ready to do anything for them. They spoke about how "A."’s years were shorter than most, but that her days were fuller than most. They spoke of a woman who was dynamic and real, who not only lived her life, but who loved her life.

There is a beautiful passage in the Talmud about a person who is traveling through the wilderness and who comes upon a tree. The person sits by the tree for a while enjoying its shade. The person drinks from the stream that is beneath the tree and enjoys its fruit.

As the person prepares to leave and continue the journey the person wants to give the tree a blessing. The person thinks for a while, and then says: “Tree, how shall I bless you? Shall I ask that you provide good shade, you have already done that. Shall I ask that there be water beneath you to refresh those who are lucky enough to sit close to you; you have already done that. Shall I ask that you be blessed with good fruit to give to all who encounter you; this, also, you have done. So this is how I shall bless you: I shall ask God that all the seedlings that come from you should be blessed just like you.

We cannot make sense of "A."’s death. It makes no sense; it has no meaning. But "A."’s life... her life was filled with meaning.

May we, who were blessed to come under your shade, to drink from the nurturing waters you provided, and enjoyed the fruit you gave us so willingly, be able to go forth and share these blessings with everyone we encounter. Then your life, though physically over, will continue to shape our lives and our world

Tehi Nishmata Tzrurah beTzrur haChayim

May her soul be bound up in the bond of Eternal life.

Amen