



## Coming Full Circle Completing My Mourning

### Time of Return to Celebrations

*Parashat Pekudei*, which completes the book of *Shemot*, is all about completions. As the Mishkan (Tabernacle) is brought to its final completion, I complete my 12 months of mourning for when my dear father Shlomo ben Yisrael Leib מ"כ"מ was brought to his final resting place. How can the completion of the Mishkan be likened to the completion of a mourning period and to the completion of a life in this world? The Mishkan is the home for The Holy One – the Collective Soul of the world. “When the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Hashem filled the Mishkan” (*Shemot* 40:34), the Divine Presence found Her home in this lower world. Life is the integration of soul and body – when the soul enters the body that is going to be its home in the lower world. Death is the dissolution of body and soul into two separate entities – a separation of the spiritual self from its physical vehicle – the home of the soul in this world. When talking about a person leaving his body, we prefer to use the term, ‘passing’ rather than ‘dying,’ because the eternal soul never dies. It only leaves its temporary physical abode in this world, in order to reunite with its ultimate spiritual home in the World-to-Come. The Torah designates no less and no more than 12 months of mourning for a parent, even during a leap year (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah* 391:2). Throughout my mourning period, I felt as if part of my soul was with my father in his eternal home. This made me more prayerful and internal, less preoccupied with the physical world. During this time, I have been concerned with the bridge between life and death and with my own mortality. Now, after 12 months – at the onset of the happy month of Adar II – my husband tells me, “It’s time to let go of the mourning in order to return fully to life in this physical world.” As we complete the Book of *Shemot*, with Hashem’s presence filling this world, it is time for me to release the sadness of mourning and to allow Hashem’s presence to reside more fully in our home. “The Shechina rests specifically on those who are happy and in a joyous mood. Prophecy cannot rest upon a person when sad or languid, but only through happiness” (Rambam, *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 7:4).

### Spiritual Detox for Returning the Light of the Shechina

The Book of *Bereishit* opens with “Let there be light” (*Bereishit* 1:3). At the conclusion of the Book of *Shemot*, we come full circle with Hashem’s final deed which is in a sense the very same action that began the original creation. On the day when the Mishkan was set up on earth... a thread of the primordial light, issued forth joyously, with the Shechina and descended into the Tabernacle below... (*Zohar, Shemot* 149a). Thus, the Book of *Shemot* is a new beginning – a new creation. Our purpose in this world is to return this Divine light into the world by building a home for the Shechina. Detoxing, which has become a popular trend that can mean just about anything, may be one way of making our body a home for the Shechina. The more we detox and purify our body from excess cravings and attachments to comforts, the more room we make for the Shechina. The last period of a person’s life, when he is no longer preoccupied with making money and with embellishing his ego, is a refinement period for spiritual pursuits. Yet, we don’t have to wait until then to bring the Shechina into our lives. King Solomon could not have been much older than 12, when he built the Temple which became the abode for Hashem’s glory. “...For the glory of Hashem filled the house of Hashem. Then said Solomon, ‘Hashem said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built You a house to dwell in, a settled place for You to abide in forever’” (I *Melachim* 8:11-13).

## My Father's Wisdom

Although my father מ"כ"מ was known as Sally, in his later years he chose to be called by his real name 'Solomon' or 'Shlomo.' Father built many homes. In addition to building our two childhood homes in Lyngby, I will never forget the dollhouse he built for us with three floors and different kinds of electric lamps, that would turn on when you pressed various buttons. With great flair for details, he fashioned windows with curtains, a dining room with tables and chairs, a living room with a sitting area, the kitchen with all the paraphernalia, and several bedrooms, with bed stands. Miniature people populated the dollhouse, and we would play with it for hours. As his namesake 'Solomon,' father was not only a highly intelligent man but also filled with wisdom. I recall that from a young age, I asked him to explain to me the wonders of nature, such as why the sky was blue and why the snow was white? How plants grew and how big the stars were etc? For every one of my curious questions, father always had an answer. He demonstrated with a football, how the earth would encircle the sun while also spinning around its own axis, thereby causing the seasons, day and night. Like Solomon, father was very intuitive, and always sensed when any of us three sisters were sad. He would then wrap his loving arm around us with a few words of comfort. The words were not important. What mattered was the feeling of being understood and that our father was there for us through thick and thin. I believe it was this ability to understand others compassionately that made my father such a popular doctor, especially with his female patients. He understood the importance of the psychological impact on healing, long before it became popular. I remember when we fell and got hurt, he used to say, "Just say seventeen, and it will go away!" and so it usually did. On the first of Nissan, Moshe erected the abode for Hashem on earth (*Shemot* 40:2). Two days later, this past year, my father's soul rose on high to enter Hashem's heavenly abode. May the soul of my father, Shlomo ben Yisrael Leib, be bound in the bundle of life! תנבצ"ה

## Letting Go of Grief

Here is a poem I wrote to describe my ambivalent feelings upon completing the 12 mourning months. As the pain in my heart diminishes, it feels as if part of my father is accordingly fading away. I nurse a fear of letting go of the deep pain of grief, to allow life to move on, without mourning for my father. In a sense, it feels as if letting go of grief is letting go of my love. Although I experience these feelings, I also know that as my 12 months of mourning pass, I will be able to return into regular life celebration, while keeping a place in my heart for my dear father. I truly experience how the Jewish way in mourning supports the mourner to gradually let go of grief.

At the Shivah they said the year would go fast.  
 How could I know that I would want it to last?  
 The closeness of your spirit I invite,  
 with every candle light that I ignite.  
 I kiss your photo with affection,  
 seeing you in my own reflection.

Although you are no longer in your skin,  
 I feel your presence in my heart within.  
 Somehow so very real you seem,  
 when you come to me in a dream.  
 You speak to me when no one hears.  
 For you I relish shedding many tears.

Being in mourning helps me console,  
 through connecting with your soul.  
 It is comforting to keep your memory aflame,  
 by adding mitzvot to elevate your name.  
 I happily a wedding leave  
 in order to for you to grieve.

How can I begin to dance again?  
 Without looking back to when  
 I threw handfuls of soil on your grave,  
 and cried until I knew you forgave.  
 I covered your serene face with a sheet,  
 placing white cotton socks on your feet.

As your body lies in the ground  
 is your naked soul unbound?  
 I would never ever be able to know,  
 how hard it is to let your spirit go.  
 I wish I could do more  
 to help your soul restore.

I sense how you feel all my love,  
 being happy with me from above.  
 I will keep teaching Torah as my role,  
 to continue helping elevate your soul.  
 Although we are temporarily apart,  
 I will continue to keep you in my heart.



[This article describes my conflicting feelings](#)

