



**In Memoriam  
Bob Feldman 1932-2010**

**Email 2/23/10**

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Hi all,

It is with unbelievable sadness and pain that I'm writing. My family has suffered a shocking and impossible-to-believe loss. I hope that you don't find the details in this email too specific or in some way off-putting. Writing brings me a small sense of calm, a little bit of relief.

This past Shabbat morning, 48 hours ago, the Feldmans were about to celebrate the simcha (joy) of my dad reading from the Torah and my nephew Jeremy becoming bar mitzvah. We were in Cherry Hill, NJ, where my parents and sister and her family live. My dad and Jeremy are unbelievably close. For 6 years, my parents have lived with my sister Jodi, bro-in-law Dave and Jeremy and little sister, Emma. My dad lives for these kinds of occasions. As he left the house Shabbat morning with my mom, he told Emma that they would dance together that afternoon and evening. The day before, Friday, my dad told my brother Joel "I have not felt this great in years." My dad just turned 78 on January 21.

My parents arrived at shul at 9:25am, for the 9:30am service. My dad dropped my mom off at the door. My dad parked the car in a very icy parking lot. He got out of the car and before advancing more than a few steps, he suffered an unbelievable fall, apparently falling straight back, landing on his head. An ambulance came within 10 minutes, he was rushed to the nearest ER and then in less than 1 hour medi-vac'ed to the Cooper Trauma Center (Camden, NJ), a close distance from the ER. The docs discovered a fractured skull, a long blood vessel traveling along his temple bleeding in numerous places, significant blood pressure building in his brain, a very large blood clot and significant pressure on his brain stem. By the time surgery began dad was already in a coma of some degree. His brain function was diminished such that the docs inserted a respirator just before surgery.

The surgery, oddly, seems to have gone well. Bleeding largely stopped, blood removed, pressure lowered, fractured bone removed and put back and, to the docs surprise, it seems that no stroke has followed. Also remarkable is that my dad's vital signs and his blood work are now excellent.

Sadly, now 36 hours later, my dad is still unresponsive. He is in a coma. There are 3 primary causes for our great fear: the fact that dad has not come out of the coma is a bad sign. The longer he is in the coma, the less likely it is that he ever will come out. Second, since he was already in the coma by the time of surgery, the odds are again lower that he will improve beyond that. Third, it is virtually guaranteed that if dad were to come out of the coma, he would be a very different person than for the prior 78 years. It seems quite possible, if not likely, that in a rather short period of time, we'll have a shocking decision to make.

This is an unbelievable experience. What was about to be one of the happiest weekends in my dad's and my family's life turns out to be the most tragic. There's never a good time or enough time. Its never the right time. And yet, its still so unbelievably challenging to accept, to live with, to think about.



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I want to share a thought, an insight maybe. My family, which is quite close to begin with, is closer than ever. There is even more kindness, effort, love, compassion, affection than usual. There are virtually no feelings of annoyance. (Quite unusual J). My dad used to say to me, "Don't wait for the funeral." I've always appreciated that wisdom. Don't wait until its too late to say and do the kind, loving, caring word or deed. Don't wait to laugh, to visit, to learn, to sing, to share our appreciation until . . ."

The way my family and friends have 'hung out together' reminds me of the real essence and goal of shabbat. Responding to tragedy, coming together to support each other, the closeness which comes from crying together and from concentrated and intentional time together, turn out to have a potential quite similar to a family and/or a group of friends who regularly and intentionally gather together on Friday night or Shabbat lunch. Both have the capacity to create a closeness, support, kindness, joy and love that feel to me, the whole purpose of our lives. This simple and obvious connection feels, at this moment, quite deep.

Please know that I will love to hear from you. Your prayers, your personal stories, your concerns, your offers of help, will mean the world to me and Tara. Please reply directly to this email address. Just hit reply. Also, just as I absolutely do not want you to feel obligated to reply, please don't be offended if I don't get back to every one of you in a personal email. One last request -- in the event that we don't know each other well, please don't be too shy to say to me: "Meir, I emailed you and told you about xyz. . ."

Finally, please know that I am unbelievably grateful for your friendship, concern and kindness and for your generosity in all of these areas. Please pray and pray and pray, not so much for a miracle for my dad, but for the miracle that we can share the greatest kindness and love with each other and with the people who matter most in our lives.

Meir