



**In Memoriam
Bob Feldman 1932-2010**

Email 2/25/10

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Thursday, February 25, 2010

Dearest friends,

We were told, immediately after dad's tragic fall on Shabbat morning, that if he didn't come out of his coma in 24 hours, he would likely never come out. He has been in a coma for 6 days. Between Saturday and now, Thursday, I have spent 3 nights with my dad in the hospital. At first, I stayed with him because it's Jewish law that a gosaiz, a person approaching death, should never be left alone. I slept in dad's hospital room to take care of him. He was so vulnerable. He would have no advocate. I held his hands. I rubbed his chest and belly. I tried to comfort him in any way I could.

However, before I fell asleep last Saturday night, a new reality dawned on me. I had been mistaken. I cried and sang and pleaded, over and over I hugged my dad's broad and powerful shoulders. 100's of times I kissed him on his forehead. The man who could who always make me feel safe, continues to be my strength, even while in a coma. My dad was comforting me. Even while in a coma, dad inspires me to see a world full of beautiful and exciting potential. Logically, I guess, this should not be such a surprise. But I truly have been shocked by this aspect of my experience.

My dad was the consummate back rubber and belly rubber. Whenever I felt bad or sad or scared or tired, my dad would rub my belly or my back – over and over and over – for nearly 50 years. He never tired of this. And neither did I tire of his touch. It brought me great comfort and peace. Like a genetically programmed instinct, over the last 5 days I've rubbed my dad's belly and chest a million times. I have no idea if he feels it. I love trying to bring a sense of calm and peace to my father. Its occurred to me that I also do this at night for Gavi. I love channeling my abba. Before falling asleep, Gavi often asks me to rub his back. By allowing me to rub his chest, I feel my dad taking care of me.

This past 5 days has been the most spiritually intense time in my life and in the life of my family. Our trust, our ability to listen, to honor, and to hold each other has been amazing. We've never felt closer than we do right now. One question that's crossed my mind is: "What will it take for my family to sustain this closeness, this tenderness, this ability to listen to and honor each other? Can we avoid and overcome pettiness and anger in the future? Can we come to trust and presume the absolute best in each other?" I'm hoping, praying, for my family and for all of us at Temple Beth-El and beyond, that we ask ourselves, that we commit ourselves today, to loving each other in a more sensitive, more compassionate way.

Its 11:30am, Thursday. I just returned after spending the night in the hospital. Later this afternoon, from about 3-4pm, the whole family will gather in my dad's room. We'll laugh and cry. We'll tell stories. We'll ask dad for forgiveness and we'll do our best to give our forgiveness to him. After we've said all we can say, then we'll perform a havdalah ritual, similar



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to but different from the traditional ritual on Saturday evening. As the ritual that separates Shabbat time from week-day time, spiritually intense time from work-life time, it feels appropriate. Also, my dad loved the flame and melody of havdalah. We'll sing the melody, at around 5pm, Thursday, as dad's ventilator is removed. He'll likely survive for only a short while after.

I feel, on the one hand, genuinely at peace. My dad and I, thank God, have an unbelievable relationship. I am lucky and blessed beyond belief. Every time we leave each other, my dad and I exchange huge hugs and kisses. We express a very deep love. At every goodbye, there is a palpable feeling that conveys something like: "If this is the last time we ever see each other, our minds are at peace and our hearts full, of love, devotion, respect and we are full of extraordinary gratitude."

And yet, I am devastated beyond words. There is so much more for us to share. His grandchildren -- b'nai mitzvah, college experiences, weddings; Temple Beth-El and her extraordinary potential. My dad revels in my life and my successes. Too much, has he kvelled over me and my life. There is so much yet to do that will never be done. Not in this realm.

For those of you who have learned to speak with your parents from a distance, I will look to you for guidance. Thank you in advance for your kindness and wisdom.

Shabbat shalom,
Meir