



The People's Doctor Newsletter deeply regrets to inform you of the untimely death on April 5, 1988, of Dr. Robert S. Mendelsohn. The following are excerpts from the wonderful eulogy delivered for him by his son-in-law, Rabbi Martin Lockshin of Toronto, Canada:

On a joyous Jewish holiday such as Passover, detailed eulogies that pay full honor to the deceased are not allowed. Instead, though, I will share with you a short Torah thought, which I will try to connect to the life of my father-in-law, Dr. Robert Mendelsohn.

The psalmist says, "Happy is the man who refuses to sit, to stand or even to walk together with groups of bad people or fools." The psalmist recommends that we all avoid being identified with any group whose values are less than perfect. The poet's righteous man is a lone tree planted firmly by the water, not one tree among many in a forest.

The danger, of course, of such an approach is that the person who rejects all groups with less than perfect values may end up writing off the world and becoming a cynic, a hermit or both. For that reason, the Rabbis always taught: "Do not spurn or reject any man. For there is no man who does not have a time and a place. Try to find the good in every man and every movement."

The challenge then is to find a balance between the skeptical aloofness of the psalmist and the Rabbis' statement that there is good everywhere. My amazing father-in-law found that balance. There was *no* group anywhere where he belonged, but he connected and cooperated with so many disparate groups with whom he shared some values without ever relinquishing his unique identity.

He wasn't really a macrobiotic.

He wasn't really a devotee of chiropractic.

He wasn't really a vegetarian.

But he could cooperate with and work with all these groups for common goals and be honored, respected and trusted by all these groups even though he never claimed to be one of them.

Dad wasn't really a *hasid*, but he cooperated and worked together with *hasidim* on many projects.

Dad certainly wasn't a fundamentalist Christian, but when there was a confluence of interests, he'd work closely with them for some common goal—"Don't reject out of hand any man, but don't join yourself onto a group of fools or wicked ones, a group whose values aren't yours, a group whose values will yet compromise your values."

So Dad was a great healer, a great doctor, who refused to toe the medical establishment line. Dad was a brilliant scientist who delighted in pointing out just how unscientific science is.

And Dad was a pious religious Jew. Religious Judaism was one of the few groups that he never criticized, but still Dad never entirely “fit in” as a typical member of any group or subgroup of Judaism.

Dad was the most original and creative thinker I knew, and yet he was no *luftmensch*, no ivory tower academic. To the contrary, he spent hours and hours helping people and solving other people’s problems, not just those of a medical nature. Hundreds of people knew that Dr. Mendelsohn was the one who would think of some solution to their personal problems, and very rarely would it be a solution that they had already thought of.

In this non-*hesped*, this pseudo-eulogy delivered on Passover, one is not supposed to dwell on grief, but it would be unfeeling not to mention at least in passing the immense pain of those who mourn.

First of all, one thinks of his proud and loving mother, my gramma, Mrs. Rosamond Mendelsohn, who is now experiencing the terrible pain that most parents are mercifully spared—the loss of a child.

His brothers, Mordechai and Allan, who often saw Dad as more than just an older brother as they grew up in a house where he was the oldest male after their father died at a tragically young age.

His daughters, Ruth and Sally, who had such a special relationship with their father. All of us who know that relationship from up close constantly strive to figure out how to establish with our own children as close and as mutually respected a relationship as Dad had with his daughters.

And most of all, my mother-in-law, his wife Rita. The two of them certainly knew how to have fun together, how to parent together, how to grandparent together, and how to work together. I have always admired their relationship, but this last weekend, I had the *zekhut*, the honor, to be in their house with them, just the three of us, and to see the love, the devotion and the respect for human dignity that mom showed to her ailing husband and the tremendous gratitude and love that he expressed to her as she played the role of his nurse and perhaps also his doctor. At times, I felt almost like an intruder at an intimate encounter, but mostly I felt privileged to have seen such a model of true husband and wife devotion.

His loved ones will miss him, not just the official mourners, but also the unofficial ones—his proud and loving mother-in-law and father-in-law; his loyal sons-in-law; his loving and admiring grandchildren—Channa, Jonah, Shoshanna, Lea, Noam and Elie; his extended family; his hundreds of grateful patients; his dedicated medical disciples, and his numerous friends.

But I would venture to say that he will be missed not only by loved ones and friends and not only by his millions of readers and media followers. Just before Socrates died, he prophesied that even those Athenians who opposed him and found him overly critical would come to miss him and his attempts to get them to think and reason. I think Socrates was right. I too predict that even establishment doctors and establishment scientists who rejected and fought his criticism while he was alive will yet miss having a worthy intellectual foe to wake them up from their intellectual stupor, blindly following the accepted dogma of the Religion of Modern Medicine.

May his memory be a blessing.

That concludes Rabbi Lockshin’s eulogy. The Newsletter will continue.