

I've had the privilege to give a few speeches in this building honoring my dad's life, work, and passions. I never thought this would be one that came so soon.

I love my father. In the past, I've had to reconcile and speak about how he was also a part of the lives of everyone in this community - which is why he was maybe a little less in our lives than what he would have preferred. But the fact is he was *MY* father, my family. My role model, and I wish we could get some of that time back. He was the most optimistic of us, always believed in and sought out the good in people. He was better than the rest of us, more selfless, more levelheaded, and kinder. He committed his life to teaching and helping people cope with their own lives. He never wanted to be the center of attention, a celebrity rabbi, never would want to write a book. He wanted me to learn from him - from his mistakes and successes. He tells me all the time that I work too hard and too much, that I need to have a life. I don't know what that life looks like now. A future hypothetical partner he won't meet, a wedding he won't officiate or attend, and imaginary grandchildren he won't chase around with "the claw." Job frustrations and changes he won't council me through. I still needed him. And I know he needed me too. To drink a new beer with, to watch bad tv, to help him clean up spills and crumbs before my mom noticed them.

He was wise. He has made it clear for a long time how he wanted to be cared for in old age, how he wanted to go, how he wanted us to continue living our lives. I'm proud to honor his wishes. In his job, he's seen more illness, suffering, and death than any one person should have to see. He wanted us to have a plan for that. I called my parents from college once and caught them shopping for cemetery plots, to make sure they were in a nice neighborhood. I've seen countless beloved people pass away here in this community. Death was a regular topic of conversation, something to be expected and

prepared for, not something to fear. All the rabbinic and pastoral counseling doesn't work on me. He knew, and I know, there is no master plan, no divine intervention, no puppeteer in the sky. There is only a conductor, helping the musicians do their best and stay on track. Bad things happen because that is the packing peanuts that comes with the gift of life. You exist and try to make your time worthwhile. He made his time worthwhile. He inspired and loved, he laughed and celebrated, he made bad jokes and heard great music, he worked hard early in life to enjoy later in life. He loved Arnold Schwarzenegger movies, he introduced me to Motown, he took me to my first opera and gave me my first (several) tastes of beer and wine. He was mad when I got my nose pierced but later told me he thought it was cute. He was the rabbi in the leather jacket or the French cuffs. He worked hard to be healthy his whole adult life because he knew what could go wrong if he wasn't. We loved when he asked us if we wanted to split a big banana. There are many big bananas in our fridge right now.

He moved me to Maryland for college, then from DC to New York, and finally helped me move to LA. When he would come to LA, I know he felt sort of bad that he spent more time with his grandchildren than with me, but he would always make time to split a Shabbat afternoon snack, or to take my computer home to rebuild, to fix things around my apartment. He was just tall enough to replace my recessed lightbulbs with only a step-stool when they burned out, instead of the big stick I couldn't figure out how to use. I noticed my lights have been flickering the past few weeks. I wonder if now they'll just flicker forever.