

Tribute delivered by Joy's friend Leah Schlager at the *hakamat matzeiva*, Eretz Hachaim, December 23, 2004

Because of the discrepancy of our ages, I've had occasion to tell this story frequently in the last few months. Joy had been my student in 7th and 8th grade. At graduation, she left the stage, gave me a kiss and said, "Good. Now I can call you Leah." She had determined that we needed a change in roles. It took me a little longer to catch up.

William James wrote that "the greatest revolution of this generation is the discovery that men, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives." When I read these lines, I immediately thought of Joy. She had determined to people her life with the relationships she needed in order to become the person she wanted to be and to live the life she wanted to live. And somehow she had determined that she needed each of us here to be part of her life.

And for Joy, the relationship each individual played in her life was always greater than merely the one assigned by social or professional circumstances or even family affiliation. She managed to have a separate and unique relationship with each member of my family. So that when I spoke to my husband to say... "By the way, I spoke to Joy today and..." He'd respond, "Yes, I know, I also spoke to Joy today." When my son helped her move from one Manhattan apartment to another—a narrow fourth-floor walk-up to where he carried her boxes and boxes and boxes of books—she wanted to thank him by taking him out to dinner. I warned him not to let her take him anywhere too expensive. He told me not to interfere; his relationship with Joy was his own and had nothing to do with me. My daughter had occasion to tell me the same thing several times. I would guess each one of you can relate a similar story.

Even her relationships with her parents, brothers, sisters and brothers and sisters-in-law were not merely ones created by biology or marriage, but rather each one was re-initiated, consciously sought out and thought out and re-incorporated anew and very personally and individually into her life.

I guess we learned the lesson from her because when Jerry came into the picture, before too long I would come home and tell my husband, "I spoke to Joy and..." And he'd respond, "Yes, I know. Jerry and I already spoke today. We're taking care of it."

We now know that the cancer was probably always there and therefore we were all going to end up here today. But this tragedy would have been that much greater had she missed the last 20 months of her life. You here in Israel had the pleasure of participating in her wedding to Jerry. We in the States had the even deeper satisfaction in witnessing her marriage. This marriage, barely 14 months, was hers and somehow also our reward *baolam hazeh*, made possible by years of changing the inner and therefore outer aspects of her life. We are here, including Jerry, because she selected each us to share in her world. She chose to be happy, to love, to participate, to make every relationship count and therefore we will all be a bit lonelier without her.

Morris West wrote that loneliness is inevitable and that the worst of all loneliness is death. But it unavoidable. Friends die. Family dies—lovers, husband, wives. There is no pill to cure this or magic formula to make it go away. However, if we look beyond ourselves and see the loneliness of others...if we choose to comfort others and not merely ourselves, we would realize that we are not alone and are all part of the family of man. We who are here are all part of the family Joy created. We will miss her always, but I know had circumstances been reversed, she would have missed us too.