



There is always something tragic when we find ourselves appreciating the beauty of a person only after their passing. As Am Yisrael living in Eretz Yisrael we are constantly surrounded by our fellow Jew, each of whom holds a hidden beauty. If we aren't careful, we may miss a critical opportunity to show them the love, understanding and respect they deserve.

Over the last five weeks of the Omer we have kept Minhagei Aveilut as many refrain from buying new clothing, getting haircuts, listening to music or getting married. In doing so, we tap into the loss of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 students who died because, “לא נהגו כבוד זה בזה,” they did not treat one another with respect. But after Lag B'Omer, will we return to the same people we were before the Omer began?

After the devastating events that took place in Meron last year, Lag B'Omer will never feel the same. In a stunning turn of events, instead of ending Lag B'Omer on

a festive high as we celebrated the hidden treasures of Torah, we spent those hours fulfilling the Mitzvot of Levayat HaMeit and Nichum Aveilim for 45 holy souls that were tragically taken from us. In the hours after we lit the fires of Meron, families, Yeshivot and communities from overseas and within Israel desperately tried to locate their loved ones. Too many found themselves en route to bury those they held so dear.

**On a day that has been designated for joyful celebration of the deeper, hidden beauty within Torah, it seems as if**

**HaKadosh Baruch Hu chose to bring home the sweetest of the sweet; each Neshama containing a hidden beauty that we could only fully appreciate after their passing.**

This past Friday we were notified of yet another tragic loss, with the death of Sgt.-Maj.

Noam Raz, a 47-year old father of six from Kida. Noam enlisted in the IDF in 1999 and served as a fighter, paramedic and sniper in the YAMAM counterterrorism unit for 23 years. During his service Noam participated in hundreds of counterterrorism operations, putting his own life at risk to save others.

Upon hearing the news of his passing I quickly called Oren Asulin, the Director of Programming at The Zula, who lives in



Condolences to  
Batia Macales and Rebbitzin Chaya Vogel  
on the passing of their dear brother  
**Yosef Moshe ben Daniel ז"ל**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Kida and was a neighbor and close friend of Noam. The pain in Oren's voice conveyed just how deeply the loss of Noam was felt. He described Noam as a quiet and powerful person with an inner peace. Noam was someone who was always ready and willing to help another person in need, without seeking recognition for his efforts. In fact, Oren and his family were one of many whom Noam directly impacted.

A few years ago, Oren's one-and-a-half year old daughter was caught under a car that reversed backward without seeing her. Noam was nearby and jumped into action. And while the chances were slim, Noam was able to stabilize Oren's daughter until she was able to be transferred to the nearest hospital in a more stable condition. Baruch HaShem, Oren's daughter defied the odds and survived. Since then, Noam continued to resist recognition and praise whenever Oren, his family or community members sought to show their appreciation.

For Noam Raz, saving Jews is how he chose to live his life each and every day. And he did so selflessly and quietly. I imagine that as time goes on, others will come forward and share stories of Noam's heroic and selfless efforts, helping us appreciate his deeper, hidden beauty that even his loved ones might not have known.

While we can never truly know the depths of a person's Neshama, in a country filled with HaShem's children, we must commit ourselves to treating each and every person with love, dignity and respect. My plea to HaKadosh Baruch Hu is that we learn to appreciate our holy brethren in their lifetime, and should not have to lose any more members of Am Yisrael in order to

see how incredible they are. I ask HaShem for the continued Nechama of the 45 families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones on the first Yahrzeit of their passing, the friends and family of Noam Raz, and all those who have given their lives to defend the Jewish people.

Together we can create a world of mutual appreciation and respect, bringing the end of Galut speedily in our days. I pray for the days when we can dance and rejoice in the Beit HaMikdash together, knowing that we made this world a better place.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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In loving memory of our  
beloved wife, mother, sister  
and Safta

**Rebecca  
Sprung a"h**

**רבקה חנה  
בת גולדה  
ושמואל יעקב ע"ה**

*Her devotion, passion and  
love for Israel and family  
inspires us all*