

Eulogy for Michael Klein November 13,1996

It is always a tragedy when death takes from our midst one who is so young. The natural order of things seems twisted, the rule of nature seems broken when a parent buries a child. Questions seem unanswered, gaps unfilled. There will be joyous occasions marred by an empty chair that should have been filled. There will be an emptiness in the lives of loved ones that will always be a reminder of their loneliness. Friends and family may be haunted by the twist of fate that took Michael from us. We may question our faith and ask why a loving G-d would allow the accident to happen 8 years ago that changed the lives of a family forever. In his book When Bad Things Happen To Good People Rabbi Harold Kushner writes that G-d is not like a human parent who watches as his child takes its first shaky steps or struggles with an algebra assignment, and who says to himself, "If I intervene, I will spare my child a lot of pain, but how will he ever learn to do it for himself?" A human parent in that situation has the possibility to intervene if the child is on the verge of doing himself serious harm. But G-d has set himself the limit that he will not intervene to take away our freedom, including our freedom to hurt ourselves and others around us. He has already let man evolve morally free, and there is no turning back the evolutionary clock

Michael's death does not negate the meaningful role he played in so many lives. His young age does not limit the love and friendship he was able to give. The last few years of his life pale in comparison to the happiness he was able to give to others. Ultimately, the ordeals he faced since the accident were overcome, not by his death, but by his life. By the love he gave, by the influence he will continue to exert on those who knew him.

Michael's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Alberta was the fulfillment of a dream not only for himself but for his father, of blessed memory, who was unable to enter the engineering program.

Michael inherited many of his father's skills and as early as 2 Years old he amused himself by taking his toys apart. Eventually he even mastered the ability to put them back together again. He had an insatiable curiosity. Susan still remembers the look on Michael's face when, after he climbed into the washing machine, he ordered her to turn it on. Fortunately Vi was close by

and was able to remove her damp son before the next cycle began. Together with Joel he designed and built a wooden foldup ashtray/candy dish combination made of an old orange crate that still sits in Vi's home.

As a child he attended Talmud Torah, was Bar Mitzvahed at Beth Shalom, and summered at Camp B'Nai Brith and Camp Hatikvah. When he reached High School, he was able to take the drafting and science courses that took on the path through university and into his life's work. Anything mechanical, whether it was souping up model car racers, launching model rockets, or flying a remote control helicopter - it came naturally to Michael. Even before his teens, he built a motor scooter affectionately known as "The Beast" which worked well enough that he was noticed by the police who brought him home for operating an unlicensed vehicle. In his teens the driveway sometimes seemed like an auto repair shop as he fixed his friend's cars. In more recent years he used his refined skills to hand craft beautiful TV cabinets and build a fireplace in his condo.

Joel and Susan recall that when Michael worked on his projects he made sure everyone got involved. He was always ready to explain something and make sure that everyone felt that they were taking part. Michael chose his friends carefully but they lasted a lifetime. Even after he became ill, friends would still come to the house to help Vi with the yardwork, paint the fence, and do other chores. They did it for Michael, out of love and respect.

Shortly after graduation, Michael moved to Calgary to work for Alberta Energy. Here, freed from the constraints of study, he lived life even fuller. With his new friends from the company, he got involved in sports, went scuba diving, canoeing and white water rafting. He and Joel took luge lessons at Olympic Park with the dream of representing Israel in the Winter Olympics. Michael was willing to try anything - next on his list was parachuting but he never got the chance.

No one should have to experience the pain that the last 8 1/2 years have brought to Michael's family and friends. The family is grateful to Alberta Energy and Michael's work partners who have been so supportive and caring.

Michael was a fighter. Vi knows that he worked hard to try and get better. He responded to physiotherapy - continuing to never do anything halfway. He was constantly visited by Vi, Susan, Joel and friends and they sensed that

he knew they were there. Although he was non-verbal he did say one word often - Mom.

Vi worked hard to keep traditional experiences a part of Michael's life. While he was at Lynwood, she organized Shabbat and holiday celebrations for Michael and the other Jewish residents.

Michael was Vi's ray of sunshine but ultimately pneumonia, which Michael contracted last winter, weakened him and he could fight no more.

All who knew Michael are in pain this day. There is a sadness in your hearts, there are tears that need to be shed.

May we find comfort in the knowledge that Michael was a warm person who loved and was loved. He will be remembered for a life that was meaningful - a life well lived, a life that will inspire those who loved him. He was a young man who made a difference, and we pray that his soul will be bound in life eternal. The lord is his portion.