

Transitioning A Life

Dear Rabbi (Mehlman),

I am writing to you for some counsel, deep and wise, that you gave to me two years ago on the eve of my wedding to Jack. We had come to you (and you had so graciously given us the time) on a busy Shabbat afternoon, to talk about our soon-to-be interfaith marriage, with all of what living as an interfaith couple means in terms of family, tradition, values, and most particularly the intertwining of rituals given to us by our heritages that mark our passage on this earth, from birth to death.

You were able to tell me that if I found meaning in Judaism, separate from my relationship to Jack, I could find a spiritual home. Judaism could add meaning to my life (as I was slowly beginning to realize). Further, that at every significant juncture of my life you predicted that I would rework these issues of lineage, so intrinsic are they to my very being. Whether I was Jewish or not, these traditions could, if I let them, bring power and meaning to my life—at births, marriages, deaths—at all of life's transitions. I remember your respect for our courage, cautioning us not to underestimate the power of our differing heritages, and finally giving us blessing.

I want to thank you for your kindness and care. I now find myself at such a juncture and your words provide me clarity and solace in what I believe shall be one of the greater transitions I make in my life. Soon I shall be leaving my life-long home in Vermont to join my husband in our new life in Boston. I am now Jewish (I converted over a year ago—a joyous time for me) and I look forward to the Jewish community I shall join in Boston.

Yet I am also a northern New England Yankee. I spend time sitting with my father, now in his seventies. He does not know that I come to say goodbye to the days I have lived within seven miles of him. He does not say that he knows I might not return again to these parts in his lifetime. He likes Boston, but I can tell he doesn't completely understand why I prefer he no longer gives me Vermont Life Magazine at Christmas. We talk of the summers gone by, we watch the sun go down, red and hot. Yet he supports me in my new life, from rural to city, Christian to Jewish. And he loves the son-in-law that I know he feels took his daughter away from these hills. I never knew such love as his

would so break my heart.

As I say goodbye to Vermont and rearrange my relationships with my family, leave this soil, this way of life, these mountains, I hear your words in me, spoken that day in your study as though it was yesterday, yet here I stand. Your words bring me a new echo, a new path, and have proven to be real and true at this time of change. So I thank you for predicting these moments for me. As I practice my Judaism and prepare for this new year, how grateful I am to know such beauty, such awe: a way of life, sturdy as the mountains I have known all my life, as precious as dew upon a spider's web in the morning of a new day.