

## ROSH HASHANAH REMARKS

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Ten years ago this winter my wonderful brother in law Arnold passed away, and one of our tasks after his death was to sort through his books and find them new homes.

I've been thinking about this because one of our Rosh Hashanah prayers -- the New Year's refrain, really -- is that we be "inscribed in the Book of Life," and because sometimes our life story will literally be told by the books that we've read and loved.

Arnold was a gifted doctor with a million and one interests. In one of his bedroom bookcases, for example, were:

Training Your Parrot  
The New Parrot Handbook  
African Gray Parrots  
Guide to a Well-Behaved Parrot  
Birds for Dummies  
Your Pet Bird: A Buyer's Guide; and  
My Parrot, My Friend

Arnold never had a parrot. He never had a pet of any sort. But in case he might be interested one day, he wanted to be ready!

He was a Civil War buff, with multiple bookcases filled with -- among lots of others:

The Civil War Battle Guide  
Antietam Revealed  
The Battle of the Ironclads  
Lincoln at Gettysburg  
The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War  
The 3 volume boxed set on the Civil War by Shelby Foote, and  
The 3 volume boxed set on the Civil War by Bruce Catton

He was a train collector with books on steam and diesel locomotives, night trains, classic trains, model trains, and dining by rail.

He was a fabulous cook with dozens of books on Italian, French, Indian and Asian cooking, on soups, stews, salads, pizzas, low-fat Mexican, and -- no surprise! -- the "Too Busy to Cook Cookbook".

He was an amateur painter, with books on pencil drawing, landscapes, still life, and watercolors.

He was a world traveler, and initially I was surprised when I didn't find any traveler's phrasebooks. Then I found his shelves of dictionaries:

Cassell's Spanish/English  
Cassell's German/English  
Cassell's Italian/English  
The Larousse French/English  
The Illustrated Larousse  
The Petite Larousse  
The New Cassell's French  
A book called "500 French Verbs"; and  
A second book called "2,001 Spanish Verbs" -- apparently he thought he had a lot more to say in Spanish than in French!

Even all these titles are just the very tip of the iceberg. Some of my other favorites were:

The Power Look at Home: Decorating for Men  
The Idiot's Guide to Motorcycles  
Opera: A New Way of Listening, and  
Science for the Airplane Passenger

There were also classics, new fiction, biographies, and history, including all 11 volumes of Will and Ariel Durant's The Story of Civilization.

I tell you all this because I loved Arnold -- and miss him -- and because I think that his books give you a sense of his life. As a newly-retired bookshop owner, I also love the idea that the Book of Life and a life with books might be related. So on Rosh Hashanah, maybe -- just maybe -- it's possible that God will inscribe us in the Book of Life not only by virtue of the things that we do, but also by virtue of the ideas -- and ideals -- that we've found in the books that influence and guide us.

Jerry and I wish each of you a happy, healthy and book-filled New Year. May we all be inscribed in the Book of Life -- and may our bookshelves tell a full, and wonderful, life story.

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