

A Eulogy - for Perl Prokosz

The custom, in our home of old, was that a eulogy was delivered for a good Jew¹ - a Torah scholar, a *tzadik* or a righteous woman. Were we to keep this tradition, Pere'le, many eulogies would need to be delivered, in order to give expression to your good deeds, which you performed with your heart and soul all your life. And, to enumerate them all, entire volumes would need to be written.

True, in life, you received much praise, because anyone who came in contact with you immediately perceived your qualities and good traits and your crystal-clear character. You generously supported people, even during times when you yourself was forced to skimp on your bare necessities. No one knew of this, besides you and me. You demanded that this be true anonymous charity. Even should I reveal these secrets, it would perhaps sound like an exaggeration or boasting. Nevertheless, this is the sacred truth. Through your good deeds, you reached such a level, as if you did not live in this world, but were as an angel, in heaven, or as expressed by Icchok-Lejbusz Perec in one of his stories - "*If not even higher!*"²

I knew you for twenty-seven years and, during that entire period, I saw and learned only good from you - nobility, sublimity, tenderness, modesty and, above all, the trait of being able to suffer a grievance with such ease.

I do not tell you these praises only today, when you have departed to eternity, in the sense of "*Acharei mos - kedoishim*"³. I said the same words to you throughout the entire course of our twenty-seven years living happily together. I constantly wondered at your capability to sacrifice yourself for others. Not long ago, while you were still alive, I told a friend of ours that only an angel could possess as much goodness as you – and our friend seconded my opinion.

Your name, Perl, characterises you and fits your resplendent personality, for our whole family was adorned by you, as with a true pearl. Were we to liken our family to a book, you were the outer binding, keeping the entire family whole. This glorious binding has been torn, and the book has lost its integrity. All that is left are just [loose] pages, *shaimes*⁴, threatened to be blow away by the faintest wind.

¹ [TN: Among Polish Jews, the term "good Jew" was used in ref. to particularly righteous individuals, and it is synonymous with the forthcoming Hebrew term "tzadik". Emphasis by using words in Yiddish and their equivalent in Hebrew is a common device in Yiddish literature.]

² [TN: In his short story by the same title – "If Not Even Higher" – I.L. Peretz tells of a fictional tzadik who was wont to disappear at the time the congregation said Selichos (penitential prayers before the High Holidays), giving rise to the rumour that he was ascending to heaven, until someone once followed him secretly and saw that he disguised himself as a Ukrainian peasant in order to perform charitable works without being recognised. After this, whenever that person heard someone say that the Rebbe was ascending to heaven, he would retort, "If not even higher!"]

³ [TN: Heb., lit. "After death – holy"; popular Jewish saying to the effect that after people die, the living tend to say only good things about them, which is taken from the fact that, on most years, the weekly Torah portions of "Acharei Mos" (Leviticus 16:1-18:30) and "Kedoishim" (Leviticus 19:1-20:27) are read together – thus, "Acharei mos – kedoishim".]

⁴ [TN: Heb., "names" (שמות, pronounced "shemot" in modern Heb.); term used to define dilapidated books, or even small fragments thereof, containing or even just potentially containing the name of God or any of His attributes, which although worthless as books in practice, are nevertheless considered sacred, requiring them by Jewish religious law to be ritually buried, and not just tossed out or incinerated, as a common piece of paper would.]

It is difficult for me to believe that I shall no longer see your radiant face, which was always adorned with a smile, even in hard, bitter moments - and there was no lack of those in the time of the Second World War. The void, left by you, can never again be filled.

I witnessed your soul parting from your body. I saw how your coffin was lowered into the grave. And yet, I am still unable to come to terms with the idea that you have departed to eternity, from whence there is no return. And it is difficult for me to believe that I shall no longer see your bright, smiling face, that I shall no longer hear your sweet voice.

I also promise to devoutly carry out your unwritten will:

- 1) To continue your good deeds.
- 2) Not to have an angry heart at anyone, even should a person wrong me accidentally or on purpose.
- 3) Above all, that which you considered as a kind of Holy of Holies - to look after our child, may he live on to have a good life, for whom you were always prepared to sacrifice yourself. I take upon myself the obligation and commitment to fulfil your desire and uphold it by all means possible.

With a broken heart, immersed in agony and with the greatest reverential awe, I bow my head before your sacred memory.



The heroic partisan fighter Janek Krauze RIP⁵

⁵ [TN: As we have seen several times throughout this book, this photograph has no connection with the article above.]