Rabbi Solomon Maimon: In Memoriam

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(Rabbi Solomon Maimon passed away September 26, 2019. Several months ago, the Sephardic community of Seattle honored him on his 100th birthday; I had written words of tribute for that occasion...and I reprint these words here as a eulogy.)

Words of Tribute in Honor of Rabbi Solmon Maimon's 100th Birthday

From Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Shir haShirim asher LiShlomo: The Song of Songs of Solomon

Each of us is a composer; through our lives, we write a song. The song reflects who we are, what we value, who we love…everything we are.

There are three kinds of songs.

The first kind has a melody and words. It is an expression of how we interact with others, what we say and what we do.

Rabbi Solomon Maimon—(Uncle Solomon to me and to his many other nephews and nieces)—is composing a magnificent song. It is a song of strength, hope, courage, love of Torah, love of Israel. The Almighty has granted him rare talents of mind and heart. He has devoted a lifetime—and may he be blessed with additional years—to teaching Torah. No other rabbi gives sermons as Uncle Solomon has given. He is a natural story teller, he knows how to capture our attention, to make us think, to make us better human beings. He has brought generations of us closer to Torah and mitzvoth through the resonance of his voice, the wisdom of his words, and the integrity of his personality. He was a guiding force in the establishment of the Seattle Hebrew Day School. He was the pioneer in Sephardic camping. He personified a rabbi who devoted himself selflessly to his congregation and community—in a spirit that blended solemnity and joy.

Moshkheini aharekha narutsa—Draw me in, we will rush to follow you.

The second kind of song has a melody…but no words. It is too deep for words. This song contains our inner thoughts and feelings. It is a kind of song which is private, but that others can still hear even if they can't grasp its full meaning. Uncle Solomon began serving Sephardic Bikur Holim many years ago. As a young man, he was filled with ideas and ideals, hopes and aspirations. He worked tirelessly to bring his vision to life among his family and friends, his congregation and community. It is quite usual for rabbis to "burn out" with the passage of time. Although they rejoice in their successes, they grieve at their inevitable failures. The hopes and ideals of youth give way to somber realities. But while many rabbis are crushed by their setbacks, Rabbi Maimon has literally been an eternal light. Uncle Solomon's song—the one with melody but without words—is a song rejoicing in his many blessings. But we also can hear the sad tones, the losses of loved ones, the unfulfilled hopes and dreams. We sense the well of contentment…and of restlessness.

Ani yesheinah velibi er: I sleep, but my heart is awake.

The third kind of song has no melody and no words. It is a private song between our souls and our God. No human beings have access to our own deepest song.

Rabbi Moshe Almosnino, a great sage of 16th century Salonika, wrote a commentary on *Shir haShirim*. He suggested that King Solomon wrote this book at an advanced age. As a young man searching for truth, Solomon wrote Koheleth. As a more mature man who was king of Israel, he wrote Mishlei to provide moral guidance to his people. But then he reached his highest level when he composed *Shir haShirim.* In his other books, Solomon identified himself as a king, as the son of a great father. He wanted to impress his readers with his credentials. But he introduced his ultimate song, the *Shir haShirim*, only with his name—Shelomo, Solomon. He no longer needed to impress people or prove his worth to them; now it was just between him and God. His name, Shelomo, was enough; he didn't need any other credentials.

And now, Rabbi Maimon sings his own special *Shir haShirim.* He stands on his own merit, in the eyes of God and humans. He doesn't need to impress us or recount his achievements. His life speaks for itself. His Song of Solomon is a beautiful, powerful and mysterious song.

Uncle Solomon: the song of your life has been a source of inspiration to all of us. You have impacted on this community and have made truly remarkable achievements for Torah, for Judaism, for society at large. So many of us—and I include myself in this—would simply not be who we are had it not been for your influence.

I would like to add a word of tribute to the memory of Aunty Sarah. We lovingly remember her sincere piety, her graciousness as a hostess. Your living room on 26th Avenue was like an extension of our own home. You and Aunty Sarah—Cheryl, Abraham, Mordecai and Michael—were—and remain—foundation stones in our own lives. Though so many years and so many miles have separated us, in our hearts and souls we know that we are all part of the same song.

Haveirim makshivim lekoleikh hashmi-ini: Your friends wait to hear your voice…let me hear it.