Stephen Neuwirth: In Memoriam

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It is with great sadness that we record the untimely passing of Stephen Neuwirth, board member and major supporter of our Institute since its inception in 2007. Stephen was a well-respected attorney, a community leader, philanthropist…a really fine human being. We extend condolences to his wife, Nataly, and their four sons; to Stephen's father, siblings and extended family.

Within the Jewish tradition, we find insights on how to confront and cope with tragedies.

The Psalmist cries: "Min haMetsar Karati Y-ah," I call out to God from distress. When in pain, it is natural to cry out to God, to shed tears, to lament our sufferings and our losses. To cry out when we are in distress is a first step in the grieving process.

"Tefillah leHabakuk haNavi al Shigyonoth." Dr. David de Sola Pool has translated this passage: "A prayer of Habakuk the prophet, in perplexity." After crying out at our initial grief, we move to another level of mourning. We are perplexed. We want to know why this tragedy has happened? We want to understand how to reconcile this disaster with our belief in God's goodness. We are in a state of emotional and spiritual confusion.

"Mima-amakim keratikha Ado-nai." I call out to God from the depths of my being. This statement of the Psalmist introduces the next stage in confronting tragedy. It is a profound recognition, from the deepest recesses of our being, that we turn to—and depend upon—God. It is a depth of understanding that transcends tears, words, perplexity. It is a depth of understanding and acceptance that places our lives in complete context with the Almighty. We may be heart-broken; we may be perplexed; we may be angry—but at the very root of who we are, we feel the solace of being in God's presence. When we reach this deepest level of

understanding, we find that we don’t have words or sounds that can articulate this inner clarity. We fall silent.

During his bout with pancreatic cancer, Stephen Neuwirth demonstrated profound faith and immense courage. He maintained a spiritual composure. He went beyond feelings of sadness and despair, beyond perplexity at his situation: he reached to the Almighty “mima-amakim”, from the very depths of who he was. His faith and strength of character inspired everyone who came into contact with him during his illness.

It is said that when a loved one dies, part of us dies too. But it is also said that when a beloved person dies, part of his life continues through us…through family, friends, associates, all who benefited from the person’s life energy.

May Stephen’s memory be a source of strength, blessing and happiness to his family and to all who mourn his passing.