YIZKOR 5787
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About 10 years ago, author David Brooks wrote an opinion piece for the New York Times entitled *The Moral Bucket List*. In it, he reflected on the difference between career success and achieving a generosity of spirit or depth of character. He shared the idea that generally speaking we aspire to two sets of virtues: resume virtues and eulogy virtues.

He wrote, "The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral — whether you were kind, brave, honest or faithful. Whether you were capable of deep love."[1]

Brooks acknowledged that while eulogy virtues are more important, our culture and our educational systems emphasize career success. Our society seems focused on accumulating things, growing status and amassing followers and not as concerned with investing in the qualities one needs to radiate inner light.

I started thinking about this article again after Dolly Parton died last month. Because, while she was, by any measure, incredibly successful as a singer, song writer, actor and businessperson, it was her inner light, her kindness and her generosity that inspired deep admiration and loyalty from people who inhabited all walks of life.

Since her passing, we have heard again and again about the way she lifted up her hometown, invested in children's literacy, and in medical research, the way she was capable of bringing people together across the political spectrum and social divide. That she sang like a bird, won 11 Grammy Awards and had 55 top ten hits, feels almost beside the point.

This actually didn't surprise me in the least. Because when I sit with a family- to help them prepare for the funeral service of their loved one and I ask them to tell me about that person's life, it is when I hear about family gatherings and personal rituals connections to friends, personal interests and signature dishes and about their dedication to causes bigger than themselves that I truly sense how they were loved.

Sitting here today, mourning those we have lost, I know you understand this truth. We can be proud of our loved ones' resumes: the college they attended, the jobs they held, the prestige they earned. But what we *miss* the most about them, is how they made us feel. What it was to be in their presence. The advice and mentorship, the conversations, the stories you heard a thousand times, the inside jokes, the laughter, the tears. The meals shared and trips taken. Simply put…. the way they were part of our lives.

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[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/12/opinion/sunday/david-brooks-the-moral-bucket-list.html?_r=0

When the person we love has died, who they “were” feels less important than what they meant to us. What they did out in the world suddenly feels far less essential then how they touched our lives.

And if they happen to have been professionally successful, how they used their power and status, their wealth and influence to help others. Were they generous with their wisdom- mentoring others? Were they generous with their money- lifting others up? Were they generous with their time- helping others to build successful lives as well?

Not all of us get to live lives of prestige or financial success. Not all of us get to be ‘an influencer’ beyond a small circle of trust. But every one of us can live a life of meaning. Every one of us can achieve a generosity of spirit. Every one of us can be cherished and loved.

Thinking now as we do about our grandparents, our parents, our husbands or wives, our friends, our brothers, our sisters, our children who are gone, we know the ache we feel is in missing THEM and not in the missing of what was written on their resume.

Dolly Parton- was amazing- but not because she was a talented entertainer. She was inspiring because she used her gifts to make other people’s lives better.

As we remember our loved ones- let us reflect on how we are better for having had them in our lives. Let their legacy of goodness, kindness and compassion inspire us to maintain that same legacy as well.

YIZKOR, we remember.