

WORDS SPOKEN AT A GRAVE SITE



Marion Dreyfus

by Phyllis Chesler

Together with Moshe Rabinowitz, her brother, and my rabbi, Benjamin Skydell, I helped organize a funeral service for my dear friend, Marion Dreyfus (z"l). She died on Thursday, August 10, 2023, and was buried on August 13, 2023.

Her death was utterly unexpected. Here is what I said at the grave site in Old Montefiore Cemetery in Queens on a fiercely hot day.

Marion was larger than life—so colorful, so whimsical, so creative; what she did with scarves, how she wound them round her head into the most amazing turbans, constituted performance art—and add to that her jewelry, her elaborate makeup, her matching tunics, caftans, cloaks, and multi-colored fur coats—and truly, you would think you were dining with a Jewish grandee in Turkey or India some centuries ago.

Yes, Marion was larger than life and now she might also be larger than Death. Friends, family, editors, publishers, and political allies will all remember her pithy, hard-hitting, sometimes outrageous words and ideas as long as they live.

Marion was a woman of great passion and boundless energy. She was a dear friend and a frequent Shabbos guest—but she was also a fine poet, an accomplished journalist, in both the arts and the sciences, a world traveler (she visited at least 107 countries), did five tours of duty in the IDF—and she was also a professional calligrapher, a graphologist, an actress, a wit, and a quintessential Dame About Town.

She used to bike everywhere and she lived to tell the tale of countless stolen bikes in this fair city of ours. Her life was hard, not easy. Her laptop and her cellphone defeated her again and again; money was a constant worry, as was the state of the Union, and above all, the state of Israel. She worried about her sister in Chicago as well and spent long hours trying to contact her.

Marion studied Torah with Fern (Ariella) and myself on Sunday evenings. We were always suspended in time, out of step, between parshiot, and thus, we always had the choice of either lingering overly long with the last chapter, or beginning the next one a day early.

And now, Marion, once so vital; Marion, who was just here among us—now Marion, your Miriam Dvorah, is with you, God. As Isaiah said: “Nahamu, nahamu, Ami...be comforted my people....Cal

Habasar hazir...All flesh is grass...yavaaysh hazir naval zif...the grass withers, the flower fades...V'Dvar Eloheynu yakoom l'olam...But the word of our God shall stand forever."

(Isaiah 40:1; 40: 6-8).