TO MEMORY OF MISHA

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The death of someone close is always an irreparable loss.

In our case we have also lost an enduring moral support and a source of great spirituality, which is so essential in these hopeless times.

We, Misha's family, were completely shielded by him and not only from financial troubles. He was our "teacher" in a sense that it is characteristic to Judaism. His inviolability, that is, his loyalty to himself, in addition to his absolute chastity, common to only deeply religious people, gave us faith that every problem could be solved.

Misha shifted the scale of human virtues; next to him much often appeared trivial and even petty. Passionate in his predilections, he was nobly tolerant; in his conduct toward people there was a great surplus of kindness. However, this did not carry over to political leaders.

Misha's erudition was phenomenal. He had almost a complete mastery of almost all of the Romano Germanic languages (he had intended to continue learning languages, this being how he relaxed), and had read many authors in the original: Heine, Goethe, Rilke, French medieval poetry, Anatol France, Lorca, the list is endless. He loved Slavic languages and having learned Polish and Czech, read Mitzkewich, Senkewich, Tuvim, Ivan Olbracht and other works that were being translated into these languages, but not into Russian.

He knew history thoroughly and used it as an instrument in his passionate analysis of our Israeli reality. He made predictions that are still being quoted by his friends and till this day are still coming true. He also knew philosophy, modern and of antiquity. The diversity and depth of Misha's knowledge and his urgent interest in life made him a man more characteristic of the Renaissance (homo universale).

He was a master in every task he took upon himself: from restoring a torn book, fixing a tea kettle, polishing the surface of his desk, to building a house; in everything he was an expert, never an amateur.

Misha's life was heroic due to its intensity and to the high level of responsibilities he took upon himself.

He spent 8 years as a refusnik, spent in isolation from his favorite scientific research. He proudly overcame all difficulties, having to pursue translating instead of physics to support the family. In this the help of our close friend Inna Dolgov was priceless; accepting Misha's translations as her own. This was a risky situation for her, as it was for Mikhail Terentev, who hired Misha as his personal secretary to avoid him being persecuted as "a parasite". Misha continued his scientific work at home; his self-discipline was amazing.

At the same time there was the hard physical labor of constructing houses, so called "shabashka" [job on the side], with a few of his physicist-friends, a kind of fraternity. Misha left home at 4 or 5 in the morning and they would spend the night in an unfinished house, sometimes falling asleep covered by the first snow on their sleeping bags (this was during his work with Lyova Ponomarev). He would return with swollen red hands and would proudly show me his firm fist, in which he could knowingly hold every carpenter's tool. Before falling asleep Misha would retell me the censored jokes of Petya Volkovitsky and another guy going by the name, "Igorek". "Shabashka" and the friends he worked with remained in Misha's memory forever.

The girls were growing up, but getting the permission to leave didn't seem any more obvious than before. Dima Roginsky was one of a few people, who continually stayed in touch with us during those difficult years, after he left Russia for Israel. Misha's spiritual courage didn't waver; he studied Hebrew intensively, not only for his love of languages, but clearly understanding that without it he would not be able to live up to his expectations in Israel.

As a result of a construction accident Misha broke his leg. It was a complicated fracture and his "shabashka" had to end. He still continued to do translations. Retaining one's personality as well as professional ability under such circumstances is not something anyone could have done. I don't know of any other examples of people who managed to return to full scientific activity after an absence of 8 years.

Misha started to look for work starting with his very first days in Israel. The first year was very difficult, consisting of part-time work, teaching at the University of Jerusalem and at a college in Ariel. At last Misha received an invitation to give a seminar at the Technion, and after that the opportunity to start working there. His academic activities in Israel included teaching and almost every year there was a different course, each one meticulously prepared and planned. The work with grad students included constant contact and much patient help. The teaching required a lot of energy and was very taxing for Misha, but he enjoyed watching the success of his students: David Bar-Moshe, Bilha Segev, Yohai Ben-Horin, Nurit Kraus and a few others, all very grateful. The research was viewed by Misha as a kind of craft in the truest sense of the word. He was truly an artist, with inspiration at his service.

I grew up with Misha's sister Ina (her real name was "Naina" and that's how they called her at school). We lived in neighboring houses and were in the same class at school starting with the first grade. Fate was such that the place where we lived, Trubnikovsky street, brought us together. Our Jewishness was obvious to us both and it literally attracted us to each other.

As a child I visited their home. The atmosphere in Misha's family was amazing, rising out of mutual respect, love and attention; it was the tone that emanated from Misha's mother, Tamara Efremovna. Years later Misha told me, "Mother loved me so much, that I can't even remember her ever having raised her voice at me. If I was guilty of something, her reaction was one of bewilderment." Misha was in complete harmony with his father. To his younger sister Naina he was a beloved brother and a spiritual guide. Misha's family, first his parents and sister and later, myself and our girls, were always at the center of his attention and concern.

In our postmodern times Misha was a rare example of loyalty to such concepts which aren't in vogue any more: honor, dignity and responsibility. This also included his clear self-identification: always a Jew and never a citizen of the world, about which nobody ever had any doubts. This is how it was in Moscow, and this is how it was in Israel. His dignity and responsibility determined his fate, and it wasn't an easy one; responsibility for himself, for the children and the children's children; the satisfaction of feeling "a proud Jew" in his historical motherland, the only place where he felt at home, in Israel. Here he was happy. It is unbearably painful that this happiness lasted such a short while.

Translated from Russian by Maria Marinov