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“Scarecrow and a yellow moon, Pretty soon a carnival on the edge of town. King Harvest has surely come.”

- The Band

It’s JJ Greenberg’s sixth yahrtzeit this Tuesday, the 8th of Tishrei (Oct. 7), and that song by The Band made me think of him: this season of the year, autumn, a scarecrow dressing up to get the crows laughing rather than be scared; the end of something, harvest moon, a carnival on the edge of town (JJ’s sprightly, puckish humor being a midway all his own); his eyes and insides “harvested,” a word that is still unsettling. And he’d dress as the king, King Elvis, if not King Harvest.

Actually, it doesn’t take too much to get anyone who knew him to be thinking of him.

Once upon a time: A very young JJ and his sister Goody in the morning, outside SAR, about 9:15, late for school, walking down a path, picking flowers. A woman saw them and thought, “They look like Hansel and Gretel, without a care the world.”

She sees them still.

It comes and goes like a dream.

JJ—Natan Yosef HaKohen Ben Harav Yitzchak HaKohen u’Bluma Haleviah – died in Israel in 2002, in a traffic disaster, hit while biking. He was 36, and you couldn’t help but think of him as not only twice chai but with 48 hours in his day, for all the time he made for just about everyone he knew, from nieces and nephews, to grandparents, to instinctively knowing who needed a phone call, to conversing with the guys sweeping up when everyone else went home.

(Here's something I heard too much in 2002 and never want to hear again: That "more Israelis were killed in traffic accidents than were killed by terrorism." And that means what, exactly? Other than callousness about both.)

As his sister Deborah said of JJ, "there are not enough colors in this world to do him justice. He was so handsome—tall, and lean, with the most beautiful soulful grey green eyes, and the sweetest smile. And yet, with all this handsomeness, his greatest beauty came from within, from his beautiful neshama."

Obituaries said he was "an ascendant star in Jewish communal service," helping to develop the Birthright program and Makor, but his life was such a kaleidoscope that his day job, splendid as he did it, was as incidental to his truest self as journalism was to Clark Kent.

Hillel's Rhoda Weisman said JJ was "like an angel. He never saw anyone's weakness as an end in itself. He just showered people with love and respect. He loved life with more passion than anyone I've ever known."

As JJ's father, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, said at the time, "We are a family of Kohanim. JJ loved to duchen (go up and bless the congregation), especially because the key to the Priestly Blessing is the requirement that it be done in a spirit of love; that act made him joyful and excited. Most of all, he loved to duchen when we went up together to bless as a family, and he stood with his two older brothers whom he loved and strove to live up to. So, in JJ's memory, I would like to offer the blessing of a Kohen to everyone. May God bless you with a child so loving, so kind, so good, so continuously supportive and protective, so wise, so Jewish, so devoted to Clal Yisrael, so modest, so funny, so gentle, so zany, so weird, so individual, so free of spirit, so religious, so cool, so honest that even if you knew, as we now know, that at the end of 36 years, the life together would conclude with this unspeakable heartbreak, with this inexplicable tragedy, with this endless pain, you would still say, 'Give me this child.' Every day of our life with JJ was a permanent blessing."

His blessing lives with every visit to the web site of the HOD (Halachic Organ Donation) Society, www.hods.org, and the JJ Greenberg Memorial Website, [here](#) .

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