



THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

16 – 17 December, 2005

16 Kislev, 5766

Parashat Vayishlach
(Genesis 32:4–36:43)

Rabbi Michael Schwartz
Cantorial Soloist Julie Howard

D'var Torah by Rabbi Michael Schwartz

Shalom Chaverim,

Ner H' Nishmat Adam, "The candle of God is the soul of a Human." (Prov. 20:27).

The Festival of Lights, Chanuka, is approaching. One of the holiday's messages is that each of us has the power to dispel darkness in the world, for the soul implanted within us is an infinitely holy and precious spark of divinity: a candle for God. We must guard our delicate little flame and cast our glow.

We may never know who will see by the light of our flame, where or to whom we may bring illumination and warmth. We ourselves may never see what dark corner is brightened by our reflected, refracted light.

Not long ago, there was a man, a Jew, who lived and died. His name was Anatoly Livshits. He was born in Kiev in 1936, and was orphaned, apparently, during the war. He studied and worked as an engineer and a computer programmer in Russia and the Ukraine. Remarkably, in 1979 he was able to leave the Soviet Union for Israel.

Anatoly departed Israel for Canada in 1988. He worked there as a programmer, and later found work in his field in Austria, in Germany, and the United States. He spoke nine languages: Russian, Ukrainian, English, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, and Hebrew. At some point he became a Certified Clinical and Medical Hypnotherapist. Apparently, he was fascinated by languages, culture, and "memory psychology, gerontology, neuroscience, hypnotherapy, and intuition", and he was eager to continue his studies in psychoanalysis, and psychopathology.

In 2002 Anatoly Livshits arrived in China to study psychology and the Chinese language. He lived and studied at Shenzhen University for the last two years. This past June, he was mugged. He was pushed and broke his hip. He believed the power of the mind and the cosmos would heal him, and he refused medical treatment.

I know I've painted but a faint and blurred portrait of a man, all that the glimmer revealed. Perhaps the hard light of his soul's candle dispelled shadows elsewhere. I believe it was a beacon that beamed as well as it knew how.

Anatoly Livshits died with no known relative surviving. He never married or had children. He was, apparently, nearly penniless. Our Jewish Community took the responsibility of arranging for a dignified Jewish funeral at our cemetery here. I am profoundly, deeply, moved by the care and kindness of our community members and of the Chevre Kaddisha – the burial society – for their concern, expense, and eagerness to engage in the *mitzvah* of burying the dead. Thank God our community has a cemetery and the resources to engage in the truest act of kindness, a kindness that can never be repaid, a kindness extended to a stranger unaffiliated with the Jewish community in any way, though a fellow Jew nonetheless.

If "the candle of God is the soul of a Human," then a community of souls must be God's lighthouse.

We still need to erect a *matzeivah*, a gravestone. You are invited to participate in this *mitzvah* of true kindness. Donations may be made through the UJC office.

May our community's reciting of *kaddish* this year for Anatoly Livshits recall his soul for good and make his memory a blessing.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Michael
14 Kislev 5766

15th December, 2005