

# Weekly Teaching

December 1, 2017

Sadly, this week I learned that Angelo P. Campanella Z'L had suddenly passed away in late September.

Angelo was only a few years older than me, and because he was the co-owner of Angelo's Autobody in Stamford for these past 40 years—along with his brother James— I have had the occasion to visit his shop in need of their services on multiple occasions when my children, as new drivers, each bruised up cars, knocked off mirrors...

I am extremely loyal to Angelo's Shop.

I find the automobile to be an intimidating, yet necessary entity. I used to dread purchasing a car due to the need to take it to a mechanic, or a body shop. But, many years ago, after a bad experience at another body shop, I found my way to Angelo's.

There, I was greeted warmly by the owners, put at ease, and felt that their business integrity was self-evident. Additionally, the people in the office were just very kind. As I chatted with Angelo and James, I came to learn of their own strong activism within their church, and Angelo was a lay-preacher.

Angelo shared with me a sermon he was especially proud of, and I was very moved by his teaching. Angelo, while coming from a different faith lens than my own, essentially wished to emphasize the shared values of Judaism and Christianity. Working through the Sermon on the Mount, he prioritized the most important steps human beings can take so as to help better bring God's presence into our lives.

The Christian Testament texts Angelo chose, all have parallels in Jewish sacred texts.

- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."
- "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Angelo reminded his listeners that humanity needs to do a better job of reflecting God's righteousness to the world around them; to better bring God's light into our world so as to cast away the too often pervasive darkness.

He also made a point to emphasize that Jesus wasn't attempting to over-turn the law as taught in the Hebrew Bible, but rather, he wanted all people to learn and practice God's Commandments.

Reflecting on the Ten Commandments, he asked everyone to imagine what the world would look like if everyone would really follow the Ten Divine Precepts; a world where people didn't engage in giving in to their anger, but instead actively sought to bring peace and reconciliation wherever possible.

When I would chat with Angelo, I always thought of Martin Buber, the great 20th century Jewish philosopher who had had such a profound impact on both Jewish and Christian theology.

Buber emphasized that human beings could achieve an intimate relationship with God by cultivating an intimate interrelationship with their fellow human beings.

He also taught that every individual relationship could be special and distinct. The dialogue that was potentially possible is what we call the "I and Thou" relationship.

One of the profound teachings that I have always appreciated from Buber is that he stressed individual responsibility.

We can fall into the trap of “I-It” relationships, where we treat another like we would a car; a vehicle that serves us for an explicit purpose.

But, by pursuing the “I-Thou” relationship, we rid ourselves of pretensions and instead embrace the intimacy that can be possible when we really “see” each other; we are all created with the Divine Spark that marks our equal status.

I felt an “I-Thou” relationship with Angelo, and I hope he felt the same.

He lived a life that embraced our shared Golden Rule of Faith: “To love our neighbor like ourselves.”

He ran a business that always assured “just balances and just weights.”

And, for the individuals who were especially intimidated by their car, he made sure that there was never placed “a stumbling block before the blind.”

Angelo was an honest, kind man.

He is survived by his family, and his memory will eternally be for a blessing.

Zichrono L’vracha V’Shabbat Shalom!

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