

Rabbi Michael S. Beals  
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Diane Barton  
*Dina Pella Chaya bat Heschel v'Noma Martel*  
April 29, 1959 - August 4, 2005

This week Jews all around the world are concluding their reading of the fourth book of the Torah, Numbers. We, too, have gathered to mark a conclusion, a conclusion in the extraordinary life of Diane Barton. Perhaps more to point, this week's Torah portion, *Masei*, documents and celebrates the travels of the Jewish people, from slavery in Egypt to the brink of their crossing the Jordan River into the Holy Land. So, too, in Judaism we believe in the enduring power of the soul, and even though we bid farewell to Diane's precious body that endured so much, we know in a very deep way that her soul has crossed the Jordan, and free from her cancer, she too has entered the Holy Land. And finally, it is most appropriate that Diane made this spiritual crossing from this world to the next when in the Torah we read about the daughters of Zelophad. These extraordinary women took on Moses and the patriarchal society of their day in order to argue for women's inheritance rights. That these women were taken seriously by Moses, and that God affirmed them somehow reflects what a wonderful woman Diane was too.

This extraordinary woman was the first born child born to Howard and Naomi Barton, on April 29, 1959. From her mother, Naomi, who was a gifted jazz pianist and academic achiever, Diane inherited a great love of music. In high school Diane played piano too, and guitar, flute and piccolo, and sang in the Howell High School choir in Monmouth County, New Jersey. From her father, who for 20 years got up at 5 a.m. in the morning, for a two hour bus trip into New York for his engineering work, Diane inherited an incredible work ethic which would sustain her in her own professional work.

As Diane was inspired by her parents, so too, was she an inspiration to her siblings, Suzanne and David. Suzanne was inspired by her sister's emphasis on health and nutrition, and especially the need to exercise. David, who followed in his sister's footsteps at Cornell, said all he had to do was introduce himself, saying: "Hello, I am David Barton, Diane Barton's brother," and all doors opened to him at Cornell. He said that Diane paved the way for him. Of course being the sibling of a perfectionist was not always easy for Suzanne and David.

It was sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade that Diane had an epiphany and knew she needed to be a doctor, and she never looked back. She graduated as an undergraduate in Nutrition from Cornell University and then went on to Temple Medical School in Philadelphia where she completed her medical education and became an internist. For the past 20 years she has run her own practice in Cherry Hill, in connection with Cooper University Hospital.

Diane was an extraordinary doctor. Through wonderful listening skills, huge reserves of patience, and vast amounts of compassion, Diane could figure out what was wrong with her patients where other doctors failed. Take, for example the five year old with fainting spells who she correctly diagnosed as needing a pace maker. Time and again her patients wrote that Diane Barton literally saved their lives. Perhaps her medical successes can be attributed to the emotional relationships she developed with her patients. During her seven-year battle with advanced ovarian cancer, Diane excelled as a doctor because she excelled as a patient who then took that

understanding and plugged it right back into her practice of medicine.

Her practice of medicine took a huge leap forward when, one and a half years ago, accompanied by her sister Suzy, Diane went to Kenyon Ranch spa in the Berkshires, which specialized in classes on exercise, nutrition and healthy living. During her stay there, Suzy said that Diane embraced it all and realized that this approach to living could make a vast difference to the patients at the Oncology Department at Cooper Hospital. Diane imagined the introduction of complimentary medicine, which would include yoga, acupuncture, music therapy, and the like, as part of the treatment of people suffering with cancer.

As a tribute to her pioneering work in complimentary medicine and oncology, only two and a half months ago, Cooper University Medical School renamed her program the Diane Barton Complementary Medicine Program. As a way of perpetuating Diane's work and vision, loved ones and friends are encouraged to donate to this program in Diane's memory.

But perhaps the greatest honor of all was Dr. Ed Viner, Cooper University Medical University's Chief of Medicine, who awarded Diane the first annual Diane Barton Caring Award. The award will go to the resident or medical student who shows extraordinary care of patients. In his presentation of the award, Dr. Viner said that "Diane Barton is the quintessential and prototypic physician, in the full sense of the word." The award went on to read that "Diane Barton has established the gold standard in medicine."

Diane was the person that EVERYONE went to for advice. And in listening to the problem, Diane treated the splinter of her nephew or niece with the same attention and care as she would a devastating illness. She always made the time to patiently listen.

The last seven years of cancer have been tough on her and her family. Nobody expected her to live this long, but her desire not to give up coupled by her belief in complimentary medicine extended her life and made her a better doctor as she took her insights as patient and applied it to her.

As I said earlier, this week we read about the journeys of our ancestors, the Israelites, from slavery to freedom, from Egypt, a very narrow place, to the Holy Land, an expansive place, flowing with milk and honey. So we mark the end of Diane's physical journey on this earth and pray for her safe passage on the spiritual journeys still to come. May her memory be for a blessing.