

It was more than a half-century ago that I, then a budding sociologist, became fast friends with Joshua Fishman, then a newly-minted social psychologist. The place was the research shop of Dr. Israel Chipkin, a veteran in his field whose stylish dress, speech mannerisms and surname seemed to suggest something British that did not quite square with the function of the place. For we were engaged in the production of data and studies on Jewish schools for the Jewish Education Committee of New York City.

Our relationship soon extended to our families and I learned to address Joshua as Shikl, a Yiddish diminutive of his Hebrew name---do I have that correct? Our close personal friendship dates from those early days.

That happy experience at the J.E.C. and Shikl's subsequent engagement and early achievements at Yeshiva U led me to expect that my friend would follow a career pursuing some mainstream social psychological issues in the field of education. Imagine my amazement, therefore, when some years later I learned of his deep involvement in the sociology of language, a field of study that at the time seemed to be positioned in some obscure area of my discipline.

Amazement soon became awe at his prolific production of studies in this field. So frequent was this output that it led me to expect, and to express during our occasional contacts, that the recent news of the publication of one work signaled the completion of another.

Somehow all this got accomplished despite---or is it because of---the annual wandering between the hurly-burly of the Bronx and the near-nirvana of Palo Alto!

I recall a conversation with Shikl some dozen to fifteen years ago in which he voiced concern that with age 70 looming in the near future he might somehow have to complete or curtail his studies. Perhaps it was the skepticism in my response and in my facial expression, perhaps not, but when I last checked there was still another work seeing the light of day.

Looking back over Shikl's entire career it is difficult for me to dismiss the thought that Gele, his loving and loyal wife, had something to do with it.

Is it then now too unrealistic to extend to him the traditional blessing of the Psalmist: may he go from strength to strength?

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