

My friends, tonight I want to speak to you about the death of America's most famous Arab. Some have called him the most famous Arab in the world. Before I continue, I want to tell you that this talk was written before the death of Moammar Qadaffi, who was certainly not an American Arab anyway. I also want to tell you a very little piece of a familiar story, a piece you may not know. You won't get the connection at first. That's just part of my dynamic writing style! Sit tight and it will all come together.

We all know that like Hank Greenberg before him, Sandy Koufax famously refrained from pitching on Yom Kippur, even when Yom Kippur fell on the first day of the World Series, a game that Koufax was slated to pitch. What you might not know is that Sandy did not simply stay at home in Los Angeles. He flew back to Brooklyn. His mother had passed away, and he went to spend Yom Kippur with his father, Irving Koufax. Did you know that piece of the story?

Now let's talk about the death of America's most famous Arab. Who is, allegedly, America's most famous Arab? Steve Jobs. You didn't know Steve Jobs was an Arab? Then you missed the headline in the New York Times that said, "Steve Jobs, Son of a Syrian, Is Embraced in the Arab World." And if you did not realize that Steve Jobs was not merely America's most famous Arab but the most famous Arab in the world, then you missed the headline in the International Business Times that said, "Steve Jobs Dies: He was the Most Famous Arab in the World." The New York Times also printed the outright lie that Steve Jobs traced his roots back to Syria.

Steve Jobs was the son of Paul and Clara Jobs. They were his parents. But there are some among us who have decided that it is suddenly of great significance that

Steve was adopted by Paul and Clara Jobs. His biological mother was American. She was pregnant by a Syrian man, who by all accounts is a fine and decent man. But neither of his biological parents had anything to do with raising Steve Jobs. Paul and Clara Jobs adopted him as a baby, and they were his parents. They were not his adoptive parents. They were his parents. Fifteen years ago, the same New York Times interviewed Steve Jobs and tried to refer to Paul and Clara as his adoptive parents. Steve immediately and emphatically cut them off and said, "They were my parents."

I have two points to make. One is, I acknowledge, speculation on my part. The second explains why this topic became a Shabbat sermon.

First, my speculation. I would bet anyone and everyone here a quarter, if only there was a way to prove that I'm right or wrong, that if half the genetic material that became Steve Jobs had come from an Armenian, there would be no headlines about the death of America's most famous Armenian. Had the material come from a Scandinavian, no headlines would have trumpeted the news that the world's most famous Scandinavian had died. This reeks of politically correct propaganda. There are those of us who believe the Arab world *as a society* has given the world virtually nothing but oil and terrorism. Yes, there are individual exceptions. Of course there are. Anwar Sadat comes to mind, whose legacy of peace between Egypt and Israel is now endangered. Certainly there is no question which society, Arab or Israeli, has made the most positive contributions to the world. But now some of the media want us to think that all of the innovations that came from Steve Jobs and Apple "traces [their] roots back to Syria." Steve Jobs *never* traced his roots to the Syrian man who impregnated the woman who delivered him. He traced his roots to his parents, Paul and Clara. Again, this is nothing against the Syrian

biological father. That man never tried seek fame or fortune as the father of Steve Jobs. In fact, he did not even know that the child he fathered and was adopted was the famous Steve Jobs until 2005.

Now, why is this a Shabbat sermon? Because Judaism has a very strong position on the issue. Judaism does not put its emphasis on bloodlines. Judaism's emphasis is on love and values, so much so that there is no such process as adoption in Jewish law. Please be clear—that does *not* mean adoption is against Jewish law. *It means exactly the opposite.* It means that Judaism is so clear that love and values trump bloodlines that the Talmud simply says, “Who are the parents of a child? The ones who raise the child.” It's as simple as that, my friends. It is just that simple.

Let me illustrate the point. My closest friend in the world is my brother. If we were to line up my brother, Marc Klein, and me and ask people to pick out the pair of brothers, everyone would think it was Marc and me. Imagine what would happen if I got a phone call from Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania saying, “We've just complete a review of our records, and we've discovered that there was a mistake. David Sendrow is not really your brother. Your real brother is Irving Knishman of Levittown.” Would I stop loving David; would he no longer be my closest friend in the world? Would Irving Knishman and I fall into each other's arms, weeping with joy? I trust you see that each of these questions is rhetorical.

But as much as wish I could leave it at that and not reopen an old wound, I cannot. Do you know the cruelty that resulted from putting blood above love and values? Do you remember Baby Richard, the four year old boy who had been adopted as an infant and was taken from his loving parents when his previously absent sperm donor decided to assert his so-called parental rights? It was one the lowest

moments in America's judicial history, and the victim was a four year old boy, pulled from the arms of his loving parents and handed to a stranger who shared his DNA. That is what putting blood before love and values brought about.

So now I conclude, my friends. But before I finish, I have a loose end to tie up, do I not? Remember Sandy Koufax? Remember how he flew from Los Angeles to Brooklyn to spend Yom Kippur with his father? Irving Koufax was Sandy's mother's second husband. Irving adopted Sandy. And Sandy said more than once in published interviews, "When I speak of my father, I'm speaking of Irving Koufax." When Steve Jobs spoke of his parents, he spoke of Paul and Clara Jobs. The New York Times and the International Business Times could never have gotten away with printing what they did during Steve's lifetime. Now that he's gone, they did the very thing they knew he could not abide. It is a *shonda*. They should be ashamed.