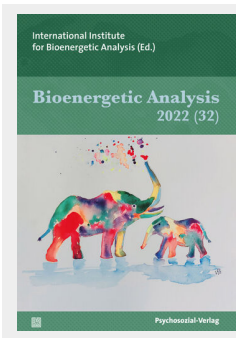


*Lynn Greenhough, Odila Weigand, Vita
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Honoring Bennett Shapiro



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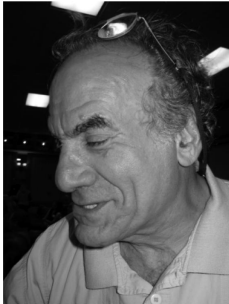
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This eulogy was delivered by Rabbi Lynn Greenhough when Ben was buried Tuesday Nov 16, 2021¹



Bennet (Ben) Shapiro, Benjamin ben Benjamin v'Yohanna

Born: March 26, 1932, St. Louis, Missouri

Died: November 14, 2021, 10 kislev 5782

Buried: November 16, 2021, 12 kislev, 5782

Historic Jewish Cemetery, Victoria BC, Rabbi Lynn Greenhough

What does it mean to live with generational angst, a torment of darkness in the soul – where and how to find the light? I think these questions and this quest dominated the life of, Ben Shapiro.

In our morning blessings we read:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, יוצר אור ובורא חשך.
עשה שלום ובורא אֶת הַפֶּלַל ... בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, יוצר המאורות

Blessed are you, God our God, Ruler of the universe, who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates all things ... Blessed are you, God, who forms light.

1 This Eulogy was shared courtesy of members of the Western Canada Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis (WCIBA). Our thanks and condolences to Bennett's family for sharing this Eulogy.

God created light and fashioned darkness, and in doing so created Seder, order in Creation. For, as God filled Creation, with all of its variations of lights and darkneses, so too are we each our own manifestations of creation, of light and darkness. Shadow, darkness, forms us, and allows us to envision pathways of light and love, or union.

Ben was born in St. Louis, and his childhood/adolescence was turbulent. His mother, from the Loeb family, wrestled with her sons very being, a wrestling for identity and control, both caught in that tangle of self and other similar to that of Jacob's wrestling with his angel/demons. That wrestling would never abate; it would act to inform Ben's work for his lifetime. Darkness reveals light, and released from those inner devils – as Ben termed them, came Life Force.

Ben married Millie, and adopted her daughter Lucinda, when Lucinda was 8. In many ways Ben didn't know how to father, he had to learn – as do we all – how to become a parent. But in his final hours he could speak his truth of his love for her, his daughter.

Ben was internationally renowned for his work; he published papers by the hundreds. Bioenergetics, a field that provides for releasing emotions from physical bodily restraints, was his training ground, with his mentor and teacher Alexander Lowen, which then allowed him to develop his ideas about Life Force, his true métier. How can we become who we are meant to be – how can we resolve that question of purpose?

Ben was in Esalen in its early years, in 1966–67. The hot tub of Esalen was a meeting place for many souls disaffected with traditional therapeutic methods – one can only imagine those conversations in the steamy waters, overlooking Big Sur. Those formative waters of Esalen coalesced within Ben and he continued his journey of honing his own methodologies. His practice would unite physical and emotional selves, and release the internal demons of both himself as therapist and mentor and those of his clients, releasing darkness into joy, peace, union.

Ben was a mentor and a teacher to many; his students spanned the globe. 'All the world's a stage ...' Ben loved that world stage. Increasingly, he became focused on transmitting his ideas, spending long stretches of time away from home. Home, for Ben, was both internal, as he formulated his ideas, and external, his work, necessitating travel far beyond Victoria; he spent many years in Europe attending workshops and conferences where he tutored and trained his devotees. From the mid '80's through 2016, Ben created innovative psycho-therapeutic programs, wrote training manuals and worked in private practice. The family home was full of people, of life energy, with both Millie and Ben sharing their creativity and talents.

Sadly these last years have been difficult for Ben as kidney disease kept him close to home, closer than his spirit wanted many days. Lucinda was his advocate, his window, his confidante, and she tirelessly worked to keep him comfortable.

People knew Ben variously as demanding, and gentle, brilliant and wise, self-absorbed and loving. He loved to laugh, he was honest, Ben lived for his work. And many lived and will continue to grow into themselves through his life's work.

May all who knew Benyamin ben Benyamin v'Yohanna hold their facets of memory into light, into blessing, into life.

My Experience with Bennett Shapiro

Odila Weigand, São Paulo, Brazil

Bennett Shapiro opened a bright space in my professional and personal life. My first encounter with Ben was at one of the Whistler workshops, in the late 1980s. He taught about rescuing the vital energy invested in negativity. The transparent logic of his teaching enchanted me and led me to become his attentive follower. I learned a lot, but most of all I really liked that big and kind person, intense and witty, able to humorously bring to light the pains deeply hidden under layers of stubbornness and rigidity. From therapist and teacher, he became my friend. I was surprised because he sent me some of his articles before publishing, asking for my opinion. I know he used to ask some colleagues, and included me.

I had the pleasure of translating several of Ben's articles into Portuguese and spread them among the Institutes of Bioenergetic Analysis in Brazil. We organized some workshops with Ben at the Institute of Bioenergetic Analysis of São Paulo, for teachers and students. He left his mark on all of us. One cannot talk about Resistance, Transference, and Counter Transference without remembering his subtly ironic way of, wearing a smile and wistful eyes, and with a clever sentence or two, transform resistance into insightful understanding. Playfully and without pain.

With the changes in the universe of body psychotherapy, starting around the 1970s, following the transformation of culture and what was called the passage from Oedipus to Narcissus, Ben again offered us a series of therapeutic resources to work with early traumas. The Boundary Building and Curling series have become invaluable resources for body psychotherapists and clients, especially in these months of pandemic and online psychotherapy.

Ben, you touched our feelings, induced us to laugh and cry, but above all you helped us to grow. I like to imagine that your spirit remains curious and creative, always searching for authenticity at the core of each individual or situation.

Your physical presence has faded but you inhabit the heart and memory of those who had the privilege of knowing you.

Memories

Vita Heinrich-Clauer, Osnabrück, Germany

Bennett Shapiro, a dedicated International Bioenergetic Trainer in the tradition of Alexander Lowen, died in November 2021 at the age of 89. His death has moved many of us, as his life and work did deeply in various ways. Ben was characterized by colleagues who had known him with respect and admiration. He was seen as creative, brilliant, inspiring, humble, integer, warm, gentle, loving, honest, headstrong, self-absorbed and all the time ready for a good laughter. This is just a choice of some of the echoing words when he died. I can affirm everything from my personal experience with him!

When Ben first came to my place he asked if I would have enough pillows for him in his guest bed! Amazingly he ordered 6–7 of them! That time I didn't understand the deep meaning of working day and night on boundaries to limit one's fears and shadows. Later he did a lot of energetic work with cushions to teach us about containment of fear. His focus was always on our dark sides and devils, and at same time on fear, fear of life, life and life force.

Ben has been my most important teacher, supervisor, colleague and friend. He had not been part of my bioenergetic training which went from 1985–1991 with Eleanor Greenlee and Frank Hladky. He never had been entangled that way with me. Thus, I felt mainly supported as a person with my therapeutic skills – and less formally educated or evaluated by him.

From 1994 on we started a postgraduate training with him following the idea of Ali Peters. Right away, I was fascinated and frightened by his strong presence and self-assurance. At the same time, I felt his warm-hearted never-ending questioning of a person's mask – the false self. Also, he didn't hide his tears at all when he felt a colleague was in danger of losing his/her true self.

Learning from him was like discovering a new bioenergetic Continent. This was especially true with his understanding and teaching of narcissism, of the darker sides of a person, and of borderline organization. This was so enriching. His playfulness and humour when giving direct feedback to sabotaging games in con-

tact with oneself and others was unique. Often it has been hard to stomach what he said!

From 1996 on, I invited him once a year to come to my city to give me supervision in my office. He worked with my patients in front of me. This was a new way of supervision for me and gave me a lot of insight – as well as sometimes thrills to my patients. His big shoes standing in the entrance were sometimes the first threatening impressions a patient had of him. And so, this initial contact with him triggered their full awareness and loosened their mask and the psychological defenses that they used every day.

Ben teased me a lot with phrases like “you little psychologist, you are cocooning me!” or “what the hell is countertransference?” Later on, he was working on the base of countertransference as if he had never done this before. And he could work in a unique way with the patient’s resistance and devilish games. Once he fell asleep while working with a patient of mine in my office. She had resisted all the time and he seemed to lean back and think about the process. But then he started snoring. My patient looked amused at first. He woke up and asked, “did I fall sleep?” I answered, “you even snored.” He nodded his head and said to my patient who was a Marshall-Arts therapist, “can you at least enjoy that you are so strong that you got a trainer to fall asleep? I am well-known for being able to work with resistance. But you got me!” From that moment on the session went well as she could then go with his interventions.

He went with me into a church in Osnabrück “Let’s pray that BA will survive!”

In summer 2009, Jörg and I spent three weeks in Vancouver/Canada visiting Ben in his private house for a while before starting a trip on Vancouver Island. I will never forget a seven hours hike we did up the Pacific coast with him. He was a fatherly caring host, giving his best by serving us a breakfast according to our wishes, and at the same time prescribing where we should go. We were quite ready, after five days of being in his hands, for the two of us to begin our adventure on Vancouver Island alone.

I can only write this way about our contact because he knew about his “bothering” parts himself. He could confess his pushy, impatient parts and one could share those things with him frankly. This directive and constantly advisory part of him sometimes bothered me a lot and sometimes made me very angry – in his supervising work as well as in private contact. He was the one who gave way to my endless fighting with him without being mad at the end with each other. He could pick up the theme the next day and he could apologize. I loved him for this. Those qualities were precious for me. Ben gave me a picture of Marlene Dietrich, with her voice and her androgyne luscious expression, because he thought I al-

ways came along as too shy and girly-like. Ben inspired me to sing a song for my pelvis “Only you”, and copied the song text for me. But first he sang it for me.

He supported me becoming a Faculty member and International Trainer. Later on, he teased me all the time because of my engagement on behalf of the IIBA in committees. We were struggling, he coming from the “lonely rider” position, and me coming from the wish to belong to a family. I tried to bring it to his consciousness that he is part of the family IIBA and that he needs it. But how could I dare to talk to him about neediness!

Later on, he started publishing in the IIBA Journal again, and wrote some excellent papers. He did not cite papers except Lowen and Reich. It seems that he didn't have the need to read other books, but to explore Lowen's and Reich's concepts for himself. For instance, his concept of charging-containing is something that I had not learnt before and have not seen described elsewhere. Also, another of his unique contributions was the combination of body work with vocal expression in a way that does not lead to exhaustion and feelings of emptiness, but results in the building up of boundaries and the energizing of the person. Also, he was fair in handling payment, not charging as much as others in his role as International Trainer – once reducing his fee when he felt he had got a lot for himself during the work. Ben, in his last years, taught bioenergetics by using pictures of types – like Stan and Ollie – to explain personality dynamics, and not only explaining them, but energizing them bodily.

In 2017, after he had turned 85, he gave a last workshop in Osnabrück with Miriam from Brazil, Hugo from Switzerland, Luca and Paola from Italy, Jörg, Hauke, and me from Germany. This was my last precious experience with him in his presence. The last time that I saw him. It was painful to see him losing his capacity to walk due to his Parkinson disease. But at the same time it had been an amazing experience to see him again as curious and driven as ever by his wish to explore more of the vitalizing exercises he endlessly invented during the last years of his work. I had, over the years, a lot of grandfatherly transference onto him but did not experience him as being old. Then at his last visit I had to acknowledge his illness and I felt like my “grandfather” was now becoming a person whom I should care for during the days he was working with us.

Dear Ben, I hope you were able to leave this world in agreement with yourself and that you knew deeply that you were so important and precious to so many of us! And that you could see that the IIBA wasn't moving away from the heritage Lowen gave us, and that your parting wasn't a lonely trip you did all by yourself! We will miss you and the quality of a creative follower and son of Al Lowen who became a very enriching and unique grandfather for us.

Rest in peace! And please, don't try to convert all the virgin angels in heaven by telling them about their devilish parts! If you are in heaven!!!! Wherever you are now I won't ever forget you.

Bennett: Bringer of Light into the Darkest Places

Garry Cockburn, Wellington, New Zealand

When the telephone would ring at 7.15am on a Saturday morning – something that happened five to ten times a year for a period of about 10 years from 2005 onwards – I knew that when I sprang out of bed and answered the phone, I would hear a distinctive voice say, “Hi Garry, its Ben here.” It was a privilege to be one of the people around the world whom Ben would contact to share his latest techniques to be “road tested”, or to talk about the ideas in his latest draft paper.

I am forever grateful to Ferrell Irvine from Chicago, who emigrated to New Zealand in 1991 in order to set up a Bioenergetic Training course. Ferrell, who had met Ben at Whistler Conferences in Canada, insisted that Ben come to New Zealand to teach in the training programme, which he did in November 1992 and December 1993. Bennett then stayed in regular touch with us from that time until we last saw him at Victoria on our way home to New Zealand after the Toronto Conference in 2017.

Ben would often express his gratitude for his colleagues on Vancouver Island and members of the Western Canada Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis for being supportive of him and his explorations. That admiration was mutual as Amey Lariviere, also from Victoria recently wrote,

“I have known Ben a very long time. He was my Bioenergetics trainer in the late 80's and early 90's and I have worked with him throughout the years and in his latter groups till he retired in August 2019. What an immense amount of knowledge he possessed. So brilliant. We were all so blessed to have learned from him and to experience his love and zest for life and all our 'devils.'”

Ben wasn't particularly interested in psychoanalytic theories or reading 'about' psychotherapy when I tried to suggest interesting theoretical lines of enquiry. Rather, he was a committed student of the muscular energies of the body, and all his work was a meditation on Lowen's writings and diagrams, especially Fig. 6 in Chapter 2 of *The Language of the Body*. Ben would often remind me that the original title of that book was *The Physical Dynamics of Character Structure* in

order to emphasize that the energetic and psychological dimensions of life were rooted in the physical body. An intrepid explorer of the heights and depths of the human experience, Ben was always ready to defer to Alexander Lowen's wisdom. As Ben once said to me, "whenever I climb a new peak of the Himalaya's, thinking I have made a new discovery, I always find a cairn of stones that showed that Lowen had already been there."

While Ben may have sincerely believed this to be true, all those who experienced his brilliance, his joyous sense of humor, his profoundly sensitive radar at detecting the 'devil' in every form of resistance, be it at the 'nah-nah-nah-naah-nah!', the 'ha-ha', the 'heh-heh' or the maniacal levels, or his commitment to helping groups understand that the negativity that necessarily arises is a treasure to be savored and worked with, or his work on boundary-building, all knew that they were in the presence of a uniquely creative and brilliant therapist. And to have been taught by him, gave one the confidence to bring light and love into the darkest places, to struggle with demons, not only of one's patients, but also of one's own, as that is what he profoundly modelled in his own struggles to free his own life force.

Michael Maley, a longtime colleague of Bennett's and a member of the '79ers, has written to Bennett, "I only have fond memories and feelings about our interactions in the Bioenergetic community ... the discussion we had around the importance of relational connections in therapeutic work, the walks together and the foot-races we used to have at conferences, the dinners we shared, and the visits to your home on Vancouver Island. I hope that wherever you are is pleasing to you as you prepare for your next adventure. Love, Michael."

Members of NANZIBA and the IIBA are forever grateful for having known and been taught by Bennett Shapiro. And as Ferrell Irvine wrote to me when hearing of Bennett's passing, "So sad for all of us. I loved that man!". So sad indeed, and so loved by us all.