

# The Delray Democrat

## My Friend, Barry Silver<sup>1</sup>

*Steve West*

I lost a dear friend to cancer this week. His name was Barry Silver. He was a Rabbi, a lawyer, a social justice advocate, a musician, and a strong family man.

Barry had so much going on at one time I was sure that he was triplets. Actually he had several fundamental roles that he fulfilled with dozens of cameo parts to be played along the way.

One starring role was as a lifelong political activist. When he obtained his law degree he began to use his credentials to bring legal actions to protect the environment, fight censorship, and take on many social justice issues. As Barry Silver, Esq. he even took his quarrels with injustice into the Florida Legislature after being elected for a single term in 1996. His takeaway from that experience reinforced his independent nature, teaching him he could do more good working outside the system than within.



In his mantle as religious leader, “Rabbi Barry” was heartily loved by those who understood his struggle to help people liberate their minds from the superstitions and misinformation handed down by their uninformed ancestors and to use more evidence-based information to create a more rational decanter in which to age the fine wine of religion.

Barry pleaded his case by suggesting that organized religion stop regarding their “good book” as

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<sup>1</sup> [The Delray Democrat](#), April 2024, page 4.

divinely authored by their very own god whom they regarded as infallible. Those who took that advice were liberated to develop more independent thinking. Many who didn't understand his meaning felt uncomfortable and some even hated the challenge Rabbi Barry laid at their feet.

Following in the footsteps of his father, Rabbi Sam Silver, he created Cosmic Judaism, which synthesizes religion and science and employs that synthesis to ally the ethics and spirituality of religion with evidence-based knowledge to make the two disciplines more relevant and synergistic. It incorporates the ideas of great thinkers like Darwin, Einstein, Sagan, and Hawking. Barry calls on us to use our minds to support our beliefs with the indisputable knowledge we've gained in the last 5000 years.

In a beautiful coincidence, Barry's book, "Cosmic Judaism" was published and delivered to Barry the day he passed. That will be his legacy and he held it in his hands before he left us. Judy and I held those hands as he lay dying, his energy gone. He was still aware and responded with hand squeezes and an occasional love, ever holding Judy's eyes his with silent approval. His fight was spent and he was submitting to his fate with peaceful acceptance.

Barry was lucky to have come from a loving family. His mother, Elaine was an accomplished musician and the family rock. His father, Sam, was a forward-thinking rabbi and a loving and concerned human being. He was a huge influence on Barry and planted the seeds of Cosmic Judaism.

Barry's third role was as family man, and he played it as fiercely as he did his others. Francine was the family's rock, the nucleus of the family who held down the fort while Barry was bettering the world.

Barry always made time for his kids and respected their interests and their choices. Both boys were sports oriented - Brandon leaned to basketball and Ari "The Lion" had a talent for tennis. Both boys have exceptional intellects that shone throughout their studies. Barry gave each his loving attention coaching Brandon's basketball team and playing tennis with Ari; he even pawned Ari off on me for weekly tennis games and chats. The competition helped the boy's ego (I always lost), and we spent plenty of time talking about our common passion of social justice. These two young men are building their futures with their achievements inside and outside the classrooms.

On a personal level, our relationship goes back about 15 years. We have similar goals and souls so there was much to encourage it to advance down the road from acquaintances to friends. Needless to say, with two strong personalities there were a few speed bumps in the road. By virtue of our common bond we talked often and regularly over the decade and a half of our relationship. We mellowed over [the](#) last few years, and almost never did a week pass without our talking at least once.

Barry died way too early, removed by the manager from this playing field at the height of his game and with too many innings left unplayed.