

Poetry by Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller, z"l

Betty Ann's husband, Dan Miller, explained what inspired his wife to write the poem Tapestry:

During a very difficult surgical procedure over 20 years ago, Betty Ann experienced a vision. It was a vision of life and community as a tapestry or prayer shawl of the intertwined threads of our lives. This vision gave her tremendous comfort and strength to live with the challenges of chronic illness. She struggled for years to express this vision in writing; the result ultimately being this poem. I have read it countless times in the year since her passing. I have shared it with family and friends. It has given all of us a great deal of comfort in knowing Betty Ann is indeed still here with us, still connected to us through time and space.

Tapestry

I see each individual life represented by a single thread. Each thread is tied on and woven into the other threads that were there before and that come after. The varieties of threads create a beautiful pattern that flow through the fabric as if on the breath of life itself.

When I am closest to the image of the tapestry, all I can see is my own thread and the few threads directly around me. When I stand back and look at as much as I am able, I see that my life thread is but a fragment of a whole whose beginning and end is out of my view. I also notice other things. I notice that the pattern of the tapestry changes and yet feels familiar. I notice there are knots, and frays and warped areas throughout the shawl. I notice vibrant colors, and even deadly colors. Colors that make me weep with joy, and colors that cause my retreat. I notice holes, tears, rips, and uneven weave. I notice patches, and darning, and do-overs.

When I look very closely, I see my thread has many frays and knots and pulls. I see places where it seems that the thread is even broken and then resumes its weave farther on in the pattern. I see when my thread has been ripped. Other times, I can see my thread blowing in a breeze, barely connected with any will and no strength...that is when the other threads around me hold my space in the tapestry.

Even as they weave their own definition of color and texture, they remind me of my place. They share mending materials; they make suggestions for knots. They show me different and new directions of weave, maybe stronger ones and simpler ones. They even might share a piece of their own thread, which can be very close to breaking too. They always pull me back in, when my broken thread is beginning to float away...

This is when the real healing begins and the tapestry repairs its holes. This is when the threads of the many separate lives take on an inexplicable iridescent gold aura. This is when I am no longer afraid and alone because someone has held onto my thread for me with his or her own life. They hold on, while I mend my own thread.

The whole tapestry is once again salvaged and strengthened. Its beauty is calming and comforting. It seems to be life itself, or maybe life's companions, love and compassion. The golden thread is woven so gently into so many of the single threads. In and out, all over every perfect and imperfect thread of the tapestry, it continues its elegant journey, floating effortlessly and endlessly through time and space with our frayed and broken... and golden threads in it.

