

Reminiscences occasioned by the passing of Jimmy Carter

By Lev Tsitrin

The news of President Carter's death naturally flooded airwaves and print publications with recollections. Here are mine.

To be sure, I was not personally acquainted with the deceased – we moved in very different social circles. Still, the news of his passing brought back a memory from roughly a quarter century ago or more – of me coming to a friend's office, and seeing him agitated and upset.



What happened? I asked. Well, he said, I've been booted from an on-line message board (this was in the very early days of the internet, before full-blown sites).

The message board in question was very near and dear to my

friend's heart, going to the very core of who he was – it was run by people who grew up in the then-Jewish Bronx, and dedicated to recollections (“remember that red-head girl? she was kinda cute! does anyone know what ever happened to her?”) and to organizing trips to distribute food to elderly Jews who did not move out when the neighborhood changed. My friend was very much a part of this. He sentimentalized his Bronx roots and cherished them – to the point of collecting Bronx maps that showed his old neighborhood.

Naturally, I was curious to learn how this rupture with his childhood neighbors and friends happened. Well, he said, one of those fellows died – and naturally, the tributes started pouring in. Someone posted on the board, “he was a nice man.” Another added “he was a kind man.” My friend, having known the subject of those comments full well, also added his two cents to this public memorial: “Yes, he was a good man. And yes, he was a kind man. Still, even as we mourn him, let's not lose the sight of the fact that he was a p@tz with a capital P!”

Upon which, the site administrator revoked his access.

Why would you say such a thing? – I demanded to know. Well, my friend replied rather vehemently – “because that's what he was!!!”

Why this particular reminiscence from the years long passed came to mind upon hearing the sad news of President Carter's passing, I cannot tell. Is it possible that it was because Mr. Carter, in his later life, felt it necessary to smear Israel with [apartheid](#) blaming it, rather than Palestinian intransigence, on the failure of the peace process? Was it because Mr. Carter was an anti-Semite?

Perhaps so – but the fact remains that while the nation mournfully lays to rest Mr. Carter's mortal clay, and the patriarchs and prophets of old gather at the pearly gates craning their necks to get a better look at the newly-arriving

saint, my reaction, like that of my friend of long ago is, "yes, he was a kind man. And yes, he was a good man. And yet _"

But let me stop here. As the Romans put it, "of the dead, either good or nothing." And YET...!