

Newtown, Noah Pozner and a world reborn

By [MaryAnn McKibben Dana](#)

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Some of my Facebook friends have been posting beautiful, excruciating articles about the loss of Noah Pozner, the youngest victim of Newtown. He was a twin. He was a darling child. And his family has been thoughtful, yet unflinching, in their mourning of him.

You can read the articles [here](#) and [here](#)—please be warned that they are wrenching. You may forget to breathe.

But as I read them I kept thinking about an interview I heard years ago on Speaking of Faith (before it became On Being) [with Laurie Zoloth](#), a Jewish ethicist who studies the issues around human cloning. As you might imagine, she writes with a great deal of concern over the prospect of cloning a human being, and the tangled web of issues such a possibility would raise for society.

During the interview, Zoloth shared her experience of being part of a volunteer Jewish burial society. Jewish custom requires bodies to be buried before sundown if at all possible. Several years prior, on the day of Passover, she was called to take part in the burial preparation for a four-year-old girl. The girl had been running across the street to her father's waiting arms when she was hit by a car. Zoloth arrived at the funeral home with the other women to prepare the body, which was horribly, heartbreakingly broken. The preparations for burial included washing the body with water, and dozens of other careful, ritualistic details. "This little girl was the tiniest person we had prepared," Zoloth says. "I and all the other women there were frantic with grief."

And then, this Jewish ethicist who has spoken out against human cloning went on to say, "I knew at that point that I would have cloned her. If I could have. If I'd had the technology... I didn't care if it was risky, I wanted that baby girl back."

And yet the mother of this little girl, a woman of deep Jewish faith, said, "If you want to bring my daughter back, I need you to go to work in the world, to do acts of loving kindness and mercy, of justice and love. That will bring her back." This is the Hebrew

concept of *tikkun olam*, or “healing of the world.” In Jewish theology, it is this healing, this repair of the world, that will bring the Messiah. This is what will bring the lost ones back. The mother believed that completely.

Only through a radically altered world, a world of justice, peace and mercy, would her daughter be restored.

And Zoloth realized, “It is not the body that this little girl needs, it is a world reborn that this little girl needs.”

It is a world reborn that Noah Pozner needs.

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