

Mandle Nozick – Menachem Mendl ben Yehuda Leib

Passed away July 27, 2008 24 Tammuz 5768

This coming Shabbat we will read the last portion in the book of Numbers, Ma'asei. We read how Moses records all the stages of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, from Egypt to the steppes of Moab where they can see the Promised Land.

Rabbi Itzhak Horowitz of Yaroslav commented that from the time that the Holy One brought them out of Egypt until they reached this point 40 years later, much had befallen them, both favourable and unfavourable. Each stage that is recorded would enable them to recall what occurred at that place. They would remember both the kindness shown to them by God as well as the sufferings they endured for their disobedience so that in future they would act rightly and not sin.

Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno suggested that the stages of the journey be written down to make known the Israelites merit in putting their trust in God to take them through the unknown wilderness so that they eventually deserved to enter the land.

And finally Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov said that whatever happened to the people as a whole will happen to each individual. All the 42 journeys of the children of Israel will occur to each individual between the time he is born and the time he dies.

In reading these commentaries written by these sages between 200 and 500 years ago I see affirmation of why it is so important that we stand before family and friends to remember a loved one who has passed on, not only to recall their accomplishments, but also to be guided in how to live a more rewarding life.

As we have heard through the loving words of his grandchildren and daughters, Mandle Nozick lived a full and I believe satisfying life. I have resisted using a more superlative adjective to describe his life because I don't think that Mandle would appreciate what he might think of as an exaggeration. It's true that there are no buildings or monuments bearing his name, but it can also be said that our community would be much poorer had Mandle not chosen to spend almost his full life here. He was a person who always gave more than he took, devoting his efforts into his family and community before himself.

Mandle was born to Leo and Evelyn Nozick in Vegreville in 1922. Mandle developed an early love for the dream of a modern state of Israel from his father who served under Joseph Trumpeldor in a British Army unit formed to fight the Ottoman Empire in the battle for Palestine. Together with their relatives in the Shaw, Newhouse and Rudolph families they were among the pioneers of the Edmonton and Northern Alberta Jewish communities. Together with his cousin, Mandel Bloomfield, of blessed memory, he attended Talmud Torah. Norma told Cantor David Mannes the story of how one of the teachers punished Mandel Bloomfield by striking him with a ruler. Mandle Nozick was so infuriated that he punched the teacher getting himself expelled temporarily. Mandle always believed that his class at Talmud Torah was the worst behaved ever although I

think that may be challenged by some of us who attended in more recent years. Maybe Harold Samuels can confirm this for us.

His early experiences didn't stop him from becoming an exemplary student and he was accepted to the pre-Med program at the University of Alberta. Unfortunately while in university it was discovered that he had eye problems that would get worse with the immense amount of reading necessary for his studies so his dream of being a doctor ended. While at university he was an officer in the ROTC and managed to get the plum job of teaching weaponry to the female cadets. Tragically his cousin Mandel, an air force pilot, was shot down and killed in action and Mandle's determination to fight on for his fallen friend and cousin overcame his vision problems and he enlisted.

During training he was seriously injured in a grenade explosion, enduring many operations which kept him in the hospital for months. After the war and his recovery he put off finishing school to work for the family business in Winnipeg. One hot summer weekend after work he and a friend drove to the resort of Clear Lake north of the city. That's when he first laid eyes on Norma. She was walking along a road in the town with a friend who knew Mandle's buddy. Norma, who was well known in Manitoba as a singer and had spent the previous few years entertaining troops, wasn't too impressed with Mandle who was covered in dust and tired after a full day of work and then the drive to Clear Lake. But Mandle told her later it was love at first sight.

Mandle cleaned himself up and proceeded to spend the next two weeks devoted to Norma. This culminated with a visit to the Winnipeg Public Library where Norma worked. Deep in the stacks amidst the encyclopedias and historical volumes Mandle presented her with a velvet box containing a wedding ring. Norma accepted and they were married in March 1947 at Shaarey Tzedec Synagogue in Winnipeg. 18 months later their daughter Merrilee was born and three years after that a second daughter, Hanita. In 1950 Mandle and Norma were among the thousands of people who were affected by the Great Winnipeg flood so they moved to Edmonton to work at the Edmonton branch of Nozick Wholesale. When circumstances saw the Edmonton operation close down, Mandle, now nearing 40, with a wife and two young children, faced the challenge of starting a new career. First he tried real estate but soon entered the insurance industry, taking a leap of faith by starting his own agency.

This proved to be the right decision for him as his strong set of values and ethical behaviour led to his success and the respect of his peers in his profession. Norma and Mandle quickly became involved in the growing Edmonton Jewish community. Both girls were enrolled in Talmud Torah. Mandle joined the board of the school as well as that of Beth Shalom where his uncle Harry Bloomfield was a president and later executive director. Mandle, who loved to play sports as a child joined the Menorah Curling Club ultimately serving as its president. He was also active with United Jewish Appeal and in recent years contributed his knowledge of our community as a Vice-President with the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta. He will also be missed by his colleagues at the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha.

Mandle's daughters remember their father as a genuine and good man who was not vain but took pride in the way he dressed. Merilee remembers that when she wanted to buy a

new dress or coat Mandle, with his experience in the wholesale clothing business, would make her check the garment inside and out to make sure it was well made.

Hanita remembers June of 1967 when she was trying to study for her Grade 9 exams and the TV was blaring away in the kitchen with coverage of the 6 Day War in Israel. Her parents, like Jews everywhere, showed concern for the future of the state. This love for Israel affected Hanita as she ended up making aliyah and living in Israel for 15 years.

Merrilee admired the way her father treated his clients, looking after them patiently one at a time. She feels that his care and devotion for others led her to a challenging career as a special education teacher.

They also remember Mandle as a man ahead of his time in taking on responsibilities within the family. Each morning he made breakfast for Norma and prepared the school lunches for the girls.

Holidays revolved around the row of cottages at Ma-Me-O beach with the Rudolph and Lyon families. Here the younger cousins carried on the closeness enjoyed by their parents and grandparents who overcame obstacles to build a comfortable life for the new generations.

Mandle and Norma visited Hanita and Aaron many times in Israel especially after the births of Omer and Maya. The last visit was 12 years ago, when a huge contingent of family traveled to Israel to celebrate Omer's Bar Mitzvah. In a touching moment, never to be forgotten by the family, Mandle placed a tallit that had belonged to his grandfather around Omer's shoulders as he read from the torah on top of Massada.

With Hanita and family in Calgary and Merrilee in Lethbridge there were many trips south especially for Passover where Mandle conducted the fastest seder in the west.

The Babylonian Talmud in Tractate 49 says "The love of parents goes to their children, but the love of these children goes to their children."

Hanita and Merrilee have lived this lesson as they have passed on the love they experienced to Samara, Omer and Maya. In just a few weeks Samara will stand under the chupah in Calgary as she marries her *besheret*, Shai Berger. A few days ago I spoke with her about how her sorrow over her grandfather's sudden loss has her reconsidering the celebrations at this joyous event. I know that your grandfather will be remembered and I know that with the help of your rabbi and family you will have a simcha that will make your grandfather proud.

It's not only family that will miss Mandle. His poker buddies including Bernie Dlin, Bernie Adler, Shelby and Stan Smordin, Saul Reichert, Abner Rubin are grieving his loss. Mandle and Norma were regulars at the Jewish Drop-In Centre, especially on Tuesdays for bridge with Ruth and Harold Samuels, Marilyn & Leo Lyman and Ed &

Paula Snyder. He will also be missed by friends at the Edmonton Cardiac Centre where he exercised to fully recover from a serious heart attack.

Believe it or not Mandle found time for peace and reflection through his love of classical music, opera and reading.

Despite officially retiring from business a few years ago he continued to support the new owners of his company by working as a consultant showing up at the office regularly every day. Merrilee and Hanita are overwhelmed by the number of calls they have had from business associates and clients since the news of Mandle's passing became known.

On a personal note, Mandle was one of those who made sure that I didn't mess things up too badly while I was executive director at Beth Shalom. As a former board member he was concerned for the future of the synagogue and every time we were fortunate enough to enhance our building he made sure that we were properly insured even if it meant giving the business to another company.

He also made sure that I remembered the legacy of my predecessor, his uncle, Harry Bloomfield. Mandle wasn't necessarily a regular shul attendee but he did come to morning minyan to mark the yahrzeits of his parents each year. When I saw him I knew I'd be interrogated after the service about my progress in getting the picture of Uncle Harry that he donated framed and mounted

While Mandle's passing was sudden and unexpected he was still blessed with a full life of 86 years but like Moses who was unable to enter the Promised Land he may have had a few things left to do. As Joshua assumed the mantle of leadership from Moses, so today we witness a new generation accepting responsibility for the institutions and the community that their grandparents and parents worked so hard to establish and maintain.

This coming Shabbat we read about the circumstances that caused the children of Israel to travel through the wilderness for 40 years. Let us also pause to remember the life of a man who through circumstances did not become a great surgeon, or a wealthy industrialist but who was a mensch, who lived his life his way and gave his heart and soul to his family and community.

*T'hi nishmata tzroora beetzror hachaim*

May his soul be bound up in the bonds of life

Delivered by Neil Loomer at the Chesed Shel Emes July 31, 2008

