

Dasha Goody

Sosia bat Reuven

Passed away June 7, 2001

16 Sivan 5761

In a few minutes we will here recollections of Dasha from her student and later her associate, Senator Tommy Banks, from her brother Dr. Manuel Shaw and from her nephew Barry Vogel. There are hundreds of you in this chapel who knew Dasha as a friend, family member or teacher, or perhaps all of these. We are fortunate to have read and heard from others who have shared their memories of Dasha in the media over the past few days.

These words and the discussions I had with her family over the past few days have added to my curiosity as to what influenced this person who has in turn affected the lives of so many others.

Although I knew Dasha through her membership in Beth Shalom Synagogue, I would not consider her someone who would be called religious in the usual sense. However the more I reflect on her life, the more I realize that she will be remembered not only for her creativity and ability to impart her skills to others, but also as someone who exemplified the ideals of a traditional Jewish person. In her own way she followed the customs written in our Torah and passed down the generations through the words of the Talmud and the teachings of our great sages.

There is a well known story of one of the disciples of Hillel, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai, who lived in Jerusalem around the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70. He was walking with one of his disciples Rabbi Joshua who looked at the Temple ruins and said " Alas for us! The place which atoned for the sins of the people Israel through the ritual of animal sacrifice lies in ruins!" Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakai comforted his student with these words " Be not grieved my son. There is another way of gaining atonement even though the Temple is destroyed. We must now gain atonement through deeds of lovingkindness and he then quoted the words of the prophet Hosea who said "Lovingkindness I desire, not sacrifice." We also find similar sentiments in the Book of Proverbs which states " Doing charity and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

I mention these passages to reiterate the long held view in Judaism that we must do more than merely observe rituals in order to receive forgiveness from sin.

We believe that God wants us to perform deeds that follow His attributes by doing acts of charity, justice and respect. Rabbi Yohanan also realized however that with the Temple gone Judaism was in great peril, and he recognized the need to create a new temple that would be built within the hearts of all of the people. He went on to create a school in the city of Yavneh that became the centre of Jewish learning for centuries to come that preserved the teachings of the Torah and created hundreds of scholars.

This is the tradition that Dasha is descended from. Hundreds of years later her grandparents were living in the area of the Russian Empire now known as Ukraine where Jews continued to practice their religion despite persecution from state sanctioned anti-Semitism. Dan and Brandy remember hearing stories of how the music from the synagogue choirs that their grandfather sang in was so beautiful that the doors of the building were left open because the people gathered outside on the street wanted to hear the voices joined together in prayer. Her family was also active in Yiddish theatre, bringing laughter and joy to a people who suffered through one of the darkest times in Jewish history. Eastern European Jews longed to emigrate to the freedom and better lives that awaited them in far off North America and when the opportunity arose they would do whatever necessary to make the long voyage.

Dasha's parents came to Canada early in the 20th century. They met, married and later moved to Vegreville where her father Roy operated a store called the Bon Ton. Shortly after Dasha was born in Edmonton 79 years ago, Roy and his wife Eva together with Dasha and her older sister and two older brothers moved to Winnipeg. She soon picked up her family's love of music and by the age of four she was already directing neighbourhood children in plays. Her early interest in performing took precedence in her life and it was only the strong influence of her mother, a piano teacher and singer herself, that kept Dasha in school for as long as she stayed. Dasha was already singing publicly at the age of 10. At 14 without her parents knowledge she auditioned for a well known Canadian band, The Earle Hill Orchestra, and she was subsequently hired to perform with the band during their stay in Winnipeg. Earle Hill wanted her to continue with the band on to their next stop at the Banff Springs Hotel but her mother wouldn't allow it. Shortly thereafter Dasha met a young man named Joe Goody and their relationship grew so strong that she even turned down a scholarship to the Juilliard School in New York. They were married when she was only 19 years old.

Joe came from a traditional Jewish family and Dasha put performing aside, devoting her life to him as he served in the army and later worked for Eaton's. She also became a mother as Dan was born in 1944. Shortly after the war ended, the Goody's moved to Edmonton where some business opportunities opened up for Joe. Brandy was born a few years later and Dasha's love of performing was rekindled.

Initially she offered her abilities to organizations within Edmonton's small Jewish community. It could be said that everyone in the community who could sing or dance was involved in one of Dasha's productions. Even Joe, who was always proud of her accomplishments managed to get himself a walk-on role, usually pushing a broom across the stage in the middle of a production, much to Dasha's surprise. Through her efforts hundreds of much needed funds were raised for local institutions. These shows lead to the creation of the musical theatre groups that I'm sure Senator Banks will talk about shortly.

Throughout her life Dasha took the time to work with people knowing that there was a spark inside them ready to be ignited. While Dan and Brandy remember the big names that would gather at the Goody's north Glenora home for Sunday night jam sessions, they also recall the many young people that Dasha took a special interest in, hoping to keep them off the streets and away from tragic consequences. She had faith in everyone and to the end of her life she was a mother, a director, and a spiritual inspiration to people who needed extra help. She was also a teacher, taking the skills she learned intuitively from her parents and passing them on to her students. She helped people who couldn't afford her normal tuition, knowing that they in turn would help others through the better life that they created for themselves.

She was also a wife and mother. Joe was still number one in her life for 47 years before he passed away in 1988. She was a demanding mother to her children, insisting that they complete their education. This meant saying no to Brandy who was offered a chance to join an early incarnation of the rock group, The Go-Go's as a drummer, just as her own mother had denied her the opportunity to join a band in the thirties. This time however Brandy took the offer of a music scholarship and completed her degree at Indiana State University. Dan, the possessor of a wonderful voice, emulated his mother by training as a Psychologist, like her, using his skills to help others.

She was also a proud grandmother to Michael and Paul, two of the greatest joys in her life who also honoured her commitment to education by working hard to achieve their university degrees.

Dasha has been honoured by so many. A Doctorate from the University of Alberta, Sterling Awards, induction into the Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame, Hadassah-WIZO and YWCA Woman of the Year, and much more. I'm sure the greatest honour she felt was through the success of so many of the people who's lives she touched. Whether this success was through the performing arts, through business or educational accomplishments, or through just becoming better people, Dasha's influence made a difference to them.

In the Jewish religious tradition we read portions from the Torah consecutively each week. Yesterday on Shabbat we read from the portion known as Behaalotecha, from the Book of Numbers. In this portion Moses complains to God that the burden of leading the children of Israel through the wilderness of Sinai is becoming too much for him. God responds by telling him to gather 70 men from the elders of Israel and have them stand with him at the Sanctuary. Chapter 11, verse 17 reads "I will descend and speak with you there, and I will increase some of the spirit that is upon you and place it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear alone."

The Biblical commentator Rashi explains that this verse means that Moses was like a candle that is used to light others; though it gives them light, it's own flame is undiminished. By saying that Moses's spirit would inspire the elders, God was telling him that their vision and understanding would come about through him.

Dasha illumined many candles throughout her lifetime, but her own flame continued to shine on. She recognized her role in passing on the tradition she inherited from her ancestors to complete the work of the Creator in making this world a better place. Only death could extinguish her flame but her memory will continue to shine brightly through those she inspired. We all learned something from Dasha, whether it was how to sing, dance, project our voice, walk in to a room, or the ability to inspire others to be better people. The greatest tribute we can make to Dasha's memory is to share the flames we received from her with others. In this way her spirit will continue to glow in generations to come.