

Eulogy for Minnie LeBane Miriam bat Tzvi Hersh
Passed away June 23, 1998

This past week in the synagogue we read the Torah portion, Shelach Lecha, which contains the story of the twelve spies that Moshe sent in to Canaan to see if the land could be conquered by the people of Israel. The negative reports delivered by ten of the spies, and the resulting complaints by the Children of Israel led to a further 40 years of exile in the desert for the people, and their ultimate exclusion from the Promised Land. God laments to Moses that despite the miracles he has performed for them, including the exodus from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea and the daily rations of manna and fresh water, the people still doubted His ability to fulfill the promise of a new life in the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

After spending time with Minnie's family last night it occurred to me that if she would have been present at that time, perhaps the course of history would have been changed. But we are fortunate that she lived in our time, because her role in the lives of so many has made our community a better place.

She was not a complainer - she lived life to the fullest and made sure that every person she came in contact with - whether family member or friend - shared her positive spirit. She took what life gave her - overcame the setbacks- and became the matriarch of a family that respected and revered her.

Originally from North Battleford, Saskatchewan, one of six brothers and sisters, she was married in 1935 to Sid LeBane a clothing traveler from Winnipeg. She operated a ladies wear store while he spent much of his time on the road throughout the prairies. As in any community with a small Jewish population Minnie was soon involved in the local organizations, while ensuring that Ivor was trained for his bar mitzvah with one of the Jewish teachers in town. In 1951 the opportunity came to move to Edmonton. Not only did it mean a more profitable territory for Sid but a chance for Minnie, Ivor and Bev to reunite with her parents who had moved to Edmonton earlier, and the joys of being with their relatives in the Osten and Podolsky families. She wasted no time in joining the social and organizational circles of the

larger Edmonton community. Minnie was active in Hadassah and the Beth Israel Sisterhood, and also worked at Nantel's Ladies Wear.

She was part of a social scene that holds some of the earliest memories for my generation. Memories of friends gathered in homes full of warmth, playing cards, laughing and sharing in a never ending array of home made cakes and cookies. Memories of holiday gatherings with rooms full of grandchildren, nephews and nieces, and the aroma and taste of chicken soup, knishes, kasha and sweet and sour made with love, from recipes passed down through the generations. These are the memories that Minnie's family will have forever - but family did not just mean children, grand children and siblings. It meant nieces and nephews that thought of her as another Baba. It meant cousins that called her Auntie - it meant friends and friends of friends that shared in her generosity .

There were some advantages to being just a little closer to Minnie. Grandchildren would come for Shabbat dinner and end up staying the night. The next morning each one was treated to their own special and unique breakfast. Minnie always fought for the underdog and if it meant a dispute between Ivor and Bev and her grandchildren - the grandchildren were always the underdogs. Her home was a refuge for Marcie, Jodi, Mark, Sidney and Robbie, who knew that their grandmothers kitchen was a place to be cheered up and a place where there was always lots to eat. She had patience galore - loving family- not material gains, and these visits were her treasure. They got her through the tough times - the loss of her husband Sid who passed away too early in 1963 after 28 years of marriage and later in her life the tragic loss of her grandson Sidney.

Minnie remained active until the last few years of her life. She loved to travel. She visited Israel. She spent many winters in Hawaii. She traveled across Canada attending the simchas of family members and friends. And if she couldn't be there she made sure that a part of her was. She mailed Hamantaschen to her granddaughter and her family in Victoria, and fruitcake to nephews in Toronto.

Minnie continued to be an excellent host. Bev remembers that on New Years Eve her mother would gather all of the liquor not finished through the year and pour it into a big punch bowl. Every year was ushered in with a new combination. Robbie remembers that even when a holiday dinner table was

full, his grandmother remembered what each of the grandchildren liked in their soup and served and then scooped it away when it was barely finished - an early example of Jewish fast food.

She was passionate about hockey--following Oiler games on radio, TV and in the newspapers. She had a marvelous sense of humour and wasn't afraid to express her opinions. Family always came first and she insisted that her children and grandchildren keep in touch with her no matter where they were.

Minnie's lived a complete life to the end. She was spared from lingering illness that often clouds our memories of those blessed with long life. Only last Sunday she was with her family at Ivor's for dinner. She read the sports pages, watched the TV news, and exhibited the sense of humour that was one of her attributes. When her time came, it was quick and painless, surrounded by loving family.

For myself and I'm sure many of you here, Minnie's passing severs one of the last, if not the last link to a generation that meant so much to those of us who remember living in Edmonton in simpler times. When wealth was measured in children and grandchildren, when social life was a swirl of family and friends in the living room, and love was poured into every bowl of chicken soup.

She gave so much for so many. Ivor and Bev, Marci, Jodi, Mark and Robbie and her great grandchildren Spencer, Jeremy and Josh lead us in mourning her loss,- but we are all richer for knowing her.

When we read the portion of Shelach Lecha, some might ask why did God tell Moshe to send spies into Canaan. Why didn't they just march in to the land and conquer it with God's help. Our sages have said that God wanted a commitment from the people. He wanted them to be partners in the process of building a home for the generations to come. And now we are challenged to be partners, to carry on the name and the legacy of our beloved Minnie, to play our roles as active participants in lives dedicated to family and community.

Tehi nishmata tsroorah beetsror hachayim

May her soul be bound up in the bond of life