

Kislev 8, 5753
12/03/1992

ETHEL LEVY

THERE WAS A STRANGE RITUAL IN THE LIFE OF ETHEL LEVY. ONE OF SIX SIBLINGS, SHE HAD THE BLESSING OF LIVING LONG ENOUGH TO SEE HER EXTENDED FAMILY GROW. THERE WERE GRANDCHILDREN AND NIECES AND NEPHEWS AND THEIR CHILDREN - ALL VERY MUCH A PART OF HER LIFE. THE RITUAL INVOLVED ETHEL AS A MEASURING STICK OF MATURITY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINE THE EXACT DAY WE LEAVE CHILDHOOD AND ENTER THE ADULT WORLD. IS IT, AS OUR JEWISH TRADITION STATES, AT OUR 12TH OR 13TH BIRTHDAY? OR IS IT WHEN WE REACH 18? OR WHEN WE MARRY? IN ETHEL'S FAMILY, IT WAS NONE OF THESE. ETHEL WAS VERY PETITE. AS THE CHILDREN WERE GROWING THEY WOULD STAND NEXT TO HER AND TEASINGLY MEASURE THEIR HEIGHT BY HERS. WHEN THEY FINALLY WERE ABLE TO STAND UP TO HER, NOSE TO NOSE, THEY WERE CONSIDERED ADULT. ONE OR TWO MAY HAVE BEEN 9 OR 10 YEARS OLD WHEN THEY REACHED THE LOFTY HEIGHT OF SOMETHING LESS THAN 5 FEET. BUT AS THEY MEASURED UP TO HER, THEY WERE GIVEN THE MANTLE OF MATURITY.

THERE IS A METAPHOR IN THE ANECDOTE. ETHEL MAY HAVE BEEN SHORT IN STATURE, BUT WHEN IT CAME TO LIFE, SHE STOOD TALL AND PROUD.

SHE WAS A VERY UNDERSTANDING WOMAN. JERRY TALKS OF HER AS SOMEONE TO WHOM HE COULD BRING HIS PROBLEMS. SHE WAS SOMEONE "I COULD TALK TO ABOUT BUSINESS OR OTHER PROBLEMS. I KNEW IT WOULD BE IN CONFIDENCE. SHE WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR ME. SHE WAS A GOOD LISTENER."

ETHEL WAS PRIMARILY A FAMILY ORIENTED WOMAN. HER GRAND-CHILDREN AND NIECES AND NEPHEWS WERE INTERCHANGEABLE. LAYLA SAYS IT WAS AS IF HER CHILDREN HAD EXTRA GRANDPARENTS. THERE AS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. SURE IT WAS BUBBE MINI AND AUNT ETHEL, BUT THE FAMILY WAS SO CLOSE IT WAS LIKE HAVING TWO BUBBAS.

BEV REMEMBERS THE SPECIALLY CHOSEN CARDS AND GIFTS THAT ALWAYS CAME PROMPTLY TO HER CHILDREN DURING SPECIAL OCCASIONS. SHE NEVER FORGOT. YOU COULD ALMOST SET YOUR CALENDAR BY THE POSTMAN'S DELIVERIES.

ON THE ONE HAND SHE LIKED THE MODERN CONVENIENCES OF LIFE AND WAS UNDERSTANDING OF NEW TRENDS AND VALUES AND ON THE OTHER HAND SHE WAS CONTENT TO PLAY THE ROLE OF FINE LADY - IMPECCABLY CORRECT, PROPERLY SERVING GUESTS TEA AND PASTERIES ON HER FINEST CHINA.

IT WAS AS IF SHE LIVED IN TWO WORLDS. ONE THE OLD EUROPEAN WORLD INHERITED FROM HER PARENTS WITH HER MANY SUPERSTITIONS AND HER PERSONAL VALUES AND THE OTHER THE MODERN WORLD WHERE SHE WAS ABLE TO LISTEN SYMPATHETICALLY TO THE PROBLEMS OF HER FAMILY.

SHE WAS VERY SOCIALLY ACTIVE - BELONGING TO HADASSAH - PLAYING CARDS - BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS.

BOTH LAYLA AND BEV BELIEVE THAT ETHEL WAS BLESSED WITH PSYCHIC POWERS. EVEN WHEN SHE WAS LEGALLY BLIND, SHE WOULD GIVE READINGS. BEV RECALLS HER ABILITY TO "SEE" HER PREGNANCY BEFORE IT WAS ANNOUNCED. CONSISTENT WITH HER CHARACTER SHE "SAW" ONLY FUTURE BLESSINGS, NEVER SORROWS. SHE HAD FAITH IN GOD THE PROVIDER OF ALL BLESSINGS. FOR MANY YEARS A MEMBER OF BETH SHALOM, THE SYNAGOGUE AND JEWISH LIFE WERE IMPORTANT TO HER. SHE ATTENDED SERVICES REGULARLY; LIT SHABBAT CANDLES; AND SUPPORTED THE SYNAGOGUE.

PAUSE

ALMOST EVERYONE WHO KNEW HER SURPASSED HER PHYSICAL STATURE. BUT SHE WAS SMALL IN A PHYSICAL WAY ONLY. THOSE WHO LOVED ETHEL LEVY CAN HOPE THAT THE EXAMPLE SHE SET, AS WIFE, MOTHER AND SISTER, CAN BE INSPIRATIONAL TO THEM.

AND SOMEDAY - IF YOU TRY VERY HARD - AND CARRY WITH YOU THE EXAMPLE SHE SET - YOU WILL MEASURE UP TO HER STANDARDS.

SHE HAD AN EXTRA-ORDINARY RELATIONSHIP WITH HER SISTER MINI.
THEY DID EVERYTHING TOGETHER. AND LIVED CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER.

BEV RECALLS THIS FAMILY STORY. "WHEN ETHEL AND HAROLD MARRIED,
THEY MOVED TO THE GREAT METROPOLIS OF MANNVILLE WHERE HAROLD
OPENED UP A STORE. AFTER ONE DAY SHE WAS SO LONELY, SHE TOOK
A TRAIN BACK HOME TO NORTH BATTLEFORD. THEIR FATHER SENT MINI
BACK TO KEEP HER COMPANY AND SHE STAYED FOR TWO MONTHS. THEN
THEY BOTH CAME HOME. SHE WOULD STAY A FEW DAYS AND THEN GO
BACK. THEY WERE TOGETHER EVER SINCE.

IVOR AND LAYLA BOTH SPEAK OF ETHEL AS A "LADY". SHE WAS NOT
EXTRAVAGANT, BUT LIKED THE GOOD THINGS IN LIFE. SHE WAS ALWAYS
A GOOD MONEY MANAGER AND SHE WOULD HAVE TWO PUSHKAS - ONE THE
FAMED BLUE BOX FOR CHARITY AND THE OTHER FOR PERSONAL SAVINGS.

HER WORLD WAS A SYNTHESIS BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW.

YVES JAH 3
- 2 -

AND THOSE HERE TODAY WHO MOURN HER PASSING, WILL GIVE HER THE GREATEST OF LEGACIES IF HER MEMORY CAN INSPIRE THEM TO MEASURE UP TO HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HER BLESSINGS.

SHE HAD THE BLESSING OF HER LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH HER HUSBAND HAROLD. FOR 58 YEARS THEY SHARED THEIR LIVES. THEIRS WAS A LOVING, CARING RELATIONSHIP. THEY DID MUCH TOGETHER; SHE WOULD WORK WITH HAROLD IN HIS BUSINESS, HELPING OUT, BEING HIS FULL PARTNER. AND THEY WOULD RELAX TOGETHER LISTENING TO YIDDISH MUSIC OR TALKING.

SHE WAS A VERY STRONG-WILLED WOMAN; IT WAS THIS TRAIT THAT ENABLED HER TO SURVIVE THE 2 GREAT LOSSES SHE SUFFERED LATE IN LIFE; THE LOSS OF HER SON AUBREY AND OF HER BELOVED HUSBAND.

HER SON JERRY RECALLS THE SENSE OF INDEPENDENCE. "IF ANYTHING WENT WRONG, I WOULDN'T FIND OUT", HE SAYS, "SHE WOULDN'T WANT TO BOTHER US." SHE MAY HAVE BEEN HOSPITALIZED, BUT JERRY WOULDN'T FIND OUT UNTIL LATER WHEN HE WOULD BE TOLD, "SHE'S FIND NOW, SHE'LL BE COMING HOME IN ONE OR TWO DAYS."