

Eulogy for Burton Margolus

August 16, 1994

TODAY IS THE 9TH DAY OF THE HEBREW MONTH OF ELUL. THE WHOLE MONTH OF ELUL IS A PROCESS OF PREPARING OURSELVES FOR THE COMING HIGH HOLY DAYS. THE SHOFAR IS BLOWN AFTER EVERY MORNING SERVICE WITH THE PURPOSE OF ROUSING THE PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE. DURING ELUL WE BEGIN TO WISH EACH OTHER SHANA TOVA -- A GOOD NEW YEAR. MANY PEOPLE VISIT THE GRAVES OF THEIR PARENTS AND OTHERS WHO ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WOULD INTERCEDE ON THEIR BEHALF WITH GOD DURING THIS PERIOD OF JUDGMENT. THIS CUSTOM ALSO EXPRESSES A DESIRE TO REMEMBER THE PAST AT A TIME OF TRANSITION WHEN WE MOVE FROM THE OLD YEAR TO THE NEW. WE ARE NOT ONLY RECALLING OUR MISDEEDS OF THE PAST YEAR, BUT ALSO IMPORTANT MEMORIES OF PARENTS AND OTHERS WHO DEEPLY AFFECTED OUR LIVES.

BURTON MARGOLUS AFFECTED THE LIVES OF EVERY MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY WHETHER THEY KNEW HIM OR NOT. HIS LIFE SERVES AS AN INSPIRATION FOR US AS WE EXAMINE OUR OWN LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS.

FOR THE PAST 22 YEARS, BURTON MARGOLUS WAS FRUSTRATED BY AN ILLNESS THAT PREVENTED HIM FROM DOING MORE FOR HIS COMMUNITY AND FAMILY. THIS MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO MANY OF YOU, FOR DESPITE BEING DIAGNOSED WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE AT THE AGE OF 50, BURTON CONTINUED AS A VOLUNTEER FOR A LENGTHY LIST OF CAUSES, FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THE DISEASE WHICH FINALLY CLAIMED HIS LIFE WHILE HIS LOVING WIFE EVA SAT AT HIS BEDSIDE ON SUNDAY.

WHILE I WAS VISITING WITH THE FAMILY YESTERDAY, A FRIEND FROM VANCOUVER CALLED EXPRESSING HIS SORROW AND SHOCK AT BURTON'S PASSING. MONA REMARKED THAT AFTER SUCH A LONG ILLNESS YOU WOULD THINK THAT PEOPLE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED THAT HER FATHER HAD GIVEN UP THE FIGHT BUT

YEARS. CAMP B'NAI BRITH WAS PRIVILEGED TO HAVE BURTON AS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD FOR 25 YEARS INCLUDING 5 AS CHAIRMAN.

THE TALMUD TORAH WAS ALWAYS A MAJOR INTEREST FOR BURTON. HE WAS A HOME AND SCHOOL PRESIDENT AND SERVED ON THE BOARD OF THE TALMUD TORAH SOCIETY FOR 20 YEARS INCLUDING 6 AS FINANCIAL CHAIRMAN.

BURTON WAS AN ACTIVE AND DEDICATED ZIONIST, GENEROUS WITH BOTH TIME AND MONEY. HE SERVED ON THE STATE OF ISRAEL BOND EXECUTIVE BOARD FOR 12 YEARS AND 15 YEARS ON THE EXECUTIVE OF HISTADRUT. HE WAS A DEDICATED MEMBER OF THE EDMONTON U.J.A. BOARD FOR 18 YEARS AND SERVED AS ASSISTANT CHAIRMAN OF THE 1968 U.J.A. CAMPAIGN. HE ALSO SERVED ON THE BOARDS OF THE SENIOR'S DROP-IN CENTER AND THE EDMONTON JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL.

FOR MANY OF US BURTON'S INVOLVEMENT WITH BETH SHALOM SYNAGOGUE WILL YIELD OUR FONDEST MEMORIES. I REGRET THAT OUR RABBI, JACOB ROSNER, IS NOT HERE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO BURTON IN HIS ALWAYS ELOQUENT WAY BUT I THANK THE FAMILY FOR ALLOWING ME TO REPRESENT BETH SHALOM AS WE REMEMBER BURTON TODAY.

BURTON'S INVOLVEMENT WITH BETH SHALOM BEGAN WHEN HE WAS ADVISOR TO THE YOUTH GROUP AND SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER FOR 4 YEARS. HE WAS A MEMBER OF OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS. HE SERVED ON VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE SYNAGOGUE'S COMMITTEES BRINGING HIS CONSIDERABLE ENERGIES TO BEAR ON WHATEVER TASK HE UNDERTOOK. HIS GREATEST EFFORTS, HOWEVER WERE RESERVED FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE DEBT INCURRED BY THE SYNAGOGUE AFTER THE 1980 FIRE WHICH NEARLY DESTROYED THE BUILDING. NO SINGLE INDIVIDUAL COULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB IN TACKLING SUCH AN ENORMOUS PROJECT. BURTON SERVED ON THE RITUAL COMMITTEE AND LEARNED TO BECOME CHIEF GABBAI AT THE SIDE OF THE LATE HARRY BLOOMFIELD, AND FULFILLED THIS ROLE UNTIL ILLNESS PREVENTED HIM

SPENT AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY. BUT NO RESENTMENT IS SHOWN.
THERE IS PRIDE IN THE VOICES OF EVA, NORMAN, JACK AND MONA WHEN THEY TALK
OF BURTON'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS. TO HIS FAMILY, I SAY THANK YOU.
THANK YOU FOR SHARING THE PRECIOUS YEARS YOU HAD WITH HIM WITH THE REST
OF US.

HE WAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN INSPIRATION TO A GENERATION OF NEW
COMMUNITY WORKERS WHO ARE RENEWING THE COMMITMENT TO INSTITUTIONS
THAT BRING JEWISH EDUCATION, CONTINUITY AND YIDDISHKEIT TO EDMONTON.
IN THIS MONTH OF ELUL AS WE PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE UPCOMING HIGH
HOLIDAYS, MAY ALL WHO MOURN HIS LOSS RENEW THEIR DEDICATION TO OUR
COMMUNITY IN HIS MEMORY.

LET US TAKE COMFORT IN THESE WORDS BY MILTON STEINBERG:

*"DEATH CANNOT BE AND IS NOT THE END OF LIFE. MAN TRANSCENDS
DEATH IN MANY ALTOGETHER NATURALISTIC FASHIONS. HE MAY BE IMMORTAL
BIOLOGICALLY, THROUGH HIS CHILDREN, IN THOUGHT THROUGH THE SURVIVAL OF HIS
MEMORY; IN INFLUENCE, BY VIRTUE OF THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS PERSONALITY AS A
FORCE AMONG THOSE WHO COME AFTER HIM, AND, IDEALLY, THROUGH HIS
IDENTIFICATION WITH THE TIMELESS THINGS OF THE SPIRIT.*

*WHEN JUDAISM SPEAKS OF IMMORTALITY IT HAS IN MIND ALL THESE. BUT ITS
PRIMARY MEANING IS THAT MAN CONTAINS SOMETHING INDEPENDENT OF THE FLESH
AND SURVIVING IT; HIS CONSCIOUSNESS AND MORAL CAPACITY, HIS ESSENTIAL
PERSONALITY; A SOUL."*