

Sol Lucow

Shalom ben Baruch u'Bracha

Died November 25, 2002

21 Kislev 6763

In the Book of Proverbs we read; "The human spirit is the light of God".

Within each of us, God implants a divine spark. Each of us has the obligation to tend this spark and fan it into a flame that will light up one's own life and the lives of others.

A lit candle can be snuffed out, or it can burn out, or it can kindle other candles. When the flame is passed on to others, the flame will continue to burn long after the original candle has been extinguished.

Throughout Sol's long life the light of his flame shone brightly illuminating the sparks of those around him. My recollections of Sol are highlighted by his devotion to the morning services at Beth Shalom. When we made the concerted effort to have a minyan every morning, Sol was one of those that we could count on to ensure that we had the 10 people necessary to conduct the complete service. Even on cold winter mornings when the short walk from his apartment to the synagogue was uncomfortable for him Sol was there waiting for the doors to be opened at 7:30 a.m.

I'm sure this dedication was a product of his years in Vegreville, when he was one of the stalwarts of the small Jewish community, where the need for everyone's support in keeping the tiny synagogue alive was so important. Over the last few years his health didn't allow him to attend services on a daily basis but whenever he had a Yahrzeit, an anniversary of the death of one his or Bessie's relatives, he was there to say the Kaddish prayer. Not only did he say the prayer but without fail he would give me a donation in their memory to be used to ensure that our synagogue services continued to thrive. Sol followed the time honoured custom of giving Tzedakah in memory of his loved ones so that in their name further good would come.

While we generally translate 'Tzedakah' as charity, it really means righteousness and is described by the prophets of Israel as belonging to the highest values of religious life. Today it is associated more with the virtue of righteous generosity, a way of improving the world's balance specifically by giving to others or to institutions whose work helps various causes.

Sol's devotion to the Jewish Drop In Centre where he was the volunteer bookkeeper is legendary. I'm sure most of us have heard the story of how a few weeks ago a sudden illness meant he had to be taken from the Centre by ambulance, but as he lay on the stretcher he still managed to assure everyone within earshot that the books were balanced.

In Judaism it can be said that one earns the title of 'Tzaddik' or righteous one primarily due to acts of extraordinary generosity and selflessness within the human community. Essential to the character of the tzaddik is humility, meaning an aversion to being publicly identified as a doer of good deeds. I know that Sol did not look for glory or recognition in his dedication towards the communities and organizations he supported but because of his work this world is a better place for the rest of us.

The greatest tribute we can make to Sol's memory is that we pledge to support causes that need our help through donations of time or money. In perpetuating ideals important to Sol we ensure that his soul is bound up in the bond of life and his flame will continue to burn for many years to come.