

Eulogy for Sara Wolch Sara bat Leib August 5, 1996

This past Shabbat we read in our Torah the portion Ekev. We are nearing the completion of the book of Deuteronomy, and Moses realizing that he will not enter the promised land continues to encourage the Children of Israel to trust in God and to reap the wonderful rewards which He will provide for them if they observe the commandments in the Torah. He even warns the Israelites to beware of the pitfalls of their own future prosperity and military prowess which can cause them to forget God and his commandments. Unfortunately as we see from studying the history of the Israelites over the next generations that they rode a roller coaster of good times and bad, bountiful crops and famine, freedom and oppression that eventually resulted in the destruction of the Holy Temples and dispersion into the Diaspora. Most of us in this room are descended from these people who found their way to Eastern Europe forming communities where they could again study torah, raise families and eek out a modest living.

In Ekev we read that 'Man does not live by bread alone' and our great, great grandparents interpreted this to mean that wherever one lives it is important to study Torah and we saw a renaissance of the study of the ancient books in the Yeshivas of Poland, Russia, Germany and France. But for reasons which may be hard to understand but must be accepted as Gods will, our people again were forced to flee for freedom---among them Leon Freifeld, his wife and children, including 5 year old Sara who in 1907 found a new home on the Canadian prairies. A year later the family moved to Bruderheim, a town northeast of Edmonton, where they joined other Jewish families as merchants to the farmers in the area. As the children grew older Leon recognized that his children needed to learn the morals and ethics of Torah and so again the family moved, this time not running out of fear but seeking the wisdom of teachers and learned men and women who would guide the Friefeld children on to the path that made them respected members of our community whose deeds live on through their descendants today.

Sara was a fun loving girl, showing signs of her musical creativity at a young age when she learned to play the guitar. Perhaps inspired by her father she enrolled at MacTavish Business School, but showed her independence after graduation by taking a position at Home and Pitfield. *instead of working in one of her father's businesses.*

*or her
athletic
ability
- respiration
at the Barnes
Pinkat
11/24/95*

Soon after she met the man who would become her partner in life for fifty years, Jacob Wolch, known to everyone as Daidie. Mr. Freifeld set the young couple up with a store in the town of Bashaw and for the next decade they worked hard to perfect their business skills and save money so that they could return to Edmonton in 1941 and start the next chapter of their life with their son Ron. Jacob worked for the Army and Navy store, then as a purchasing agent for the federal government and then started his own business, Wolch's Frozen Foods, the pioneer in the frozen food storage industry in Alberta.

Back in the city, Sara immediately become involved in Edmonton's active Jewish community. She played prominent roles in both National Council of Jewish Women and Hadassah-Wizo. Sara helped in the organization of the early Hadassah Medical Service Teas and the Bazaars. She operated one of the most successful profit makers at the bazaar. A booth called Treasures, which consisted of used donated goods which were repaired by Sara so that they could be sold at much higher prices. She was honoured by Hadassah for her innovation and dedication to the Bazaar.

If you visit with her family this week make sure Ron shows you some of his treasured collection of photographs of his parents. I had been brought up with stories of how difficult life was in Edmonton during the depression and war years. Seeing early pictures of Sara Wolch, a beautiful , dignified, woman, described by Naomi as -an elegant woman head to toe- reiterated my belief that our people have always overcome adversity and tough times with hard work and a belief in our laws to ensure that our traditions continue. Her Capitol Hill home was a symbol of her striving for perfection, nothing was out of place. It was a gathering place for Ron, Naomi and their young children, Gary and Doug who would enjoy Sunday night dinner followed by the Ed Sullivan Show. She believed in education and was proud that her son Ron as well as Gary and Doug all graduated from university and entered respected professions.

Sara Wolch, was a women dedicated to family, especially her sister, Stella Aaron, of blessed memory, and to her friends whom she continued to play bridge with even when her failing health meant always meeting at Sara's apartment. She was a talented woman who late in her life took up painting, and created oils that are now in the homes of family and friends. The Wolch's were active members of Beth Shalom and were proud of Ron who served the synagogue as a volunteer and board member. Sara Wolch was a supporter of the state of Israel who shared in the pride of its creation in 1948. Daidie and Sara visited Israel twice including 1977

for the Bar Mitzvah of their oldest grandson Doug. Whether in smaller centers like Bashaw or in Edmonton, Sara stood proudly as a Jew, standing up against anti-semitism or anti Israel rhetoric.

Perhaps one of the rewards of the hard work that Daidie and Sara put in over the years came when Daidie was able to sell his company and he and Sara pursued their love of sport and travel. Among the highlights was in 1972 when they were in Moscow to witness Canada win the first Russia-Canada hockey series. But they loved Edmonton and always returned from trips and cruises never considering a permanent move away. After Daidies passing, only days after their 50th wedding anniversary, Sara continued to be active in the community, still the elegant woman we see in early pictures.

Sometimes even the toughest come up against a battle they cannot win. Five years ago Sara contracted Alzheimers. She fought against its terrible ravages for as long as she could but three years ago but never a person who wanted to be a bother or a burden she moved to a convalescent home to get the full time care she needed. Ron and Naomi knew that her time to go was close. But Sara's last act was an example of her concern for others as she waited until 9:00am to pass away yesterday morning so that no one would be disturbed by a call in the middle of the night.

Sara Wolch is a true daughter of Israel. Her 92 years were devoted to the continuity of our people through her love of family and friends, her work for the Jewish community of Edmonton and Israel, and her acceptance of the laws and traditions of our people. Our early rabbis told us that every Jew stood at Sinai as Moses brought down Gods commandments. The example of Sara Wolch's life suggests that perhaps her spirit also stood at the borders of the holy land as Moses reminded our ancestors that trust in God's laws would yield the promise of wonderful rewards.

Adonai natan v'Adonai lakach, yehi shem Adonai mevorach
The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away, praised be the name of
the Lord

May her memory be a blessing to her son Ron, daughter-in-law Naomi,
grandsons Doug and Gary, cousins, nephews and nieces and all who mourn
her loss.

Tehi neeshmitah tzrorah beetzror hachaim
May her soul be bound up in the bond of life. Amen