

Eulogy of Louis Silver  
Eliezer ben Hillel  
Date of Death: October 8, 2008, 9Tishray 5769  
Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

The image of the SEFER HAHAYIM - the Book of Life – Is an image that we employ often during the ten days that have just passed, the days of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. The idea is a powerful one, for in a profound sense, each of our lives can be likened to a book. Birth, life and death are each major divisions of the book. Every important period constitutes a chapter in the book filled with the details of words spoken or left unsaid, of deeds done or neglected.

In the library of the world of people, there are all sorts of books. There are books filled with excitement that one reads with bated breath not knowing what the next page will bring. And there are also quiet books which tell a simple story of a good life lived with dignity and love. Each person is the author of his/her own life's book, and our readers are those who have known and loved us and have been influenced by the words we write during our lifetime.

Today we have gathered to write the final chapter in the SEFER HAHAYIM, in the book of life, of Lou Silver, Eliezer ben Hillel v'Rosa.

Lou loved Beth David Synagogue. He loved volunteering at the the shul. Many years ago, he used to teach Sunday School – He taught for many years, until it was his daughter Jackie's turn to be in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and then he called it quits for that endeavor. Along time ago, every Wednesday evening, he used to pick up Naftali Kagan, who lived in a rooming house downtown, and bring him to Minyan. By the time I got to Beth David a mere eighteen years ago, Mr. Kagan was long deceased, but Lou was still a minyan regular – on Shabbos with Sylvia, and in the last year, after her death, to say kaddish, every single day.

He was the ultimate fixit man around the shul at East Lake Drive, and later on Winview. He put up the sukkah and brought the schach – the thatched green cover every year – In the early years, he was the only Jewish guy with a truck. Every year before the High Holidays, he would hand-tighten all of the seats that had come loose since the last new year. He helped set up the picnics that the congregation had in the park.

For many years at the shul on Winview, he was the chair of the building and grounds committee and a hands- on supervisor – purchasing, making sure that the bills were correct, asking different firms for bids, working with generations of custodians – Russel Gilreath, Leroy Becton, and Steve Shub.

Many of you know that Lou worked for many years for Southern Plate Glass- first as an employee, and ultimately as an owner. About ten or fifteen years ago, he decided that he want to commission stained glass windows for the shul – He knew someone from his glass days who worked in stained glass, and he and Sylvia wanted to give this as a gift to the shul which they loved. Well, we already had all these windows on the sides, but up in the front, over the emergency exit doors, there were just large clear glass. I remember saying to Lou – but if you put stained glass there, how will we be able to tell when it gets dark on Yom Kippur afternoon? He said to me in that gravelly voice – “Rabbi don't worry about that,” and then for what seemed like months, Lou worked, and nudged, until we came up with a concept, and then he shepherded through many drafts of designs to ultimately create the beautiful set of windows depicting the six days of creation that we enjoy today. And yesterday, I remembered Lou

telling me – “Rabbi don’t worry about that” - we had no trouble telling when it was time to end Yom Kippur.

Lou was proud of Sylvia for organizing and running Vatikim – the Seniors’ program here for 10 years. He was a regular participant, and whenever he wasn’t here on Tuesday noon, we knew that something was wrong. After Sylvia’s death, Lou continued to attend, and then, when he was 92, he turned his attention to something else – flowers. He established a Sylvia and Lou Silver flower fund, so that we could have beautiful fresh flowers grace our bimah every Shabbat.

When Lou and Sylvia first moved to Greensboro, they were part of the Lindley Park Ghetto – Stangs, Ingbers, Buricks, Feiners, Leblings, Gainers, Romers, and others. For a short time, they moved to Charlotte, but Sylvia was unhappy there, and they soon moved back, first to Lake Jeanette, which was clearly too far from the shul, and besides, Sylvia wanted to have a 27410 zip code, so they moved to Bridgewater, and then when the stairs got to be too much, when Lou was 83 years old, in 1998, they moved right next door. It was close, and comfortable. We all loved him. He was a delightfully sometimes challenging figure at Board meetings – He was on the board for at least one hundred years, and would worry aloud that the synagogue was paying too much for something, or that something else wasn’t being taken care of properly, or that kids were climbing on the roof, and damaging it.

The staff at the synagogue adored him – Marsha Norris and Beth Baylor, and Leslie McGee and Kathy Clontz would all fuss over him, and Steve Shub said that he was a great boss and a great friend, and a Jewish person who you could really look up to. Lou’s son, Bob, told me that he and Jackie felt safe about living far away from Lou and Sylvia, because they left them in the care of 400 families – children and grandchildren and friends, who loved them. Well, the reverse was also true – that Lou and Sylvia took care of us as well, for many years.

You will hear much more tribute to Lou, and much more about his life from Bob, and from Lou’s grandson, Travis, who will also deliver eulogies this afternoon. But I do want to make one more observation. I recently came across a beautiful piece written by a colleague Peretz Rodman, which I think is meaningful today.

In Mt. Rainier National Park in the State of Washington, there is a grove of trees on a small island in a river. The trees’ location has protected them from fires, avalanches and floods for ten centuries. Because of that, some of the trees have grown to gigantic proportions, and because of those trees, the area is known as the Grove of the Patriarchs. These are trees of a strength and magnitude rarely encountered.

Once in a while one of those breathtaking ancient trees succumbs to the force of the winter winds. At a certain place on the trail, the National Park Service has posted a sign to make sure you sit up and take notice of a surprising phenomenon. Two trees have fallen, having been knocked over in one of those storms, and these two adjacent trees have fallen in exactly opposite directions, with their uprooted trunks facing each other. Why, asks the Park Service’s rustic wooden sign, would one storm knock down two trees not in the same direction but in opposite directions? The winds, after all, blow one way and not the other.

The answer is also on the sign: Only one of the trees was felled by the storm. The two trees, though, had grown side by side for so many hundreds of years that their root systems had become intertwined—

*inextricably* intertwined. When the winds toppled one ancient tree, the other could no longer cling to the earth and in short order it, too, swayed and fell.

So it is, not infrequently, with two human beings. After decades of sharing every day with each other, their roots, the source of their nourishment and stability, grow to be inseparable. When one is felled by the ravages of illness or misfortune, the other finds it difficult to remain anchored, to draw sustenance. Like those trees in the Grove of the Patriarchs, together they reach great heights, and together they return to the earth.

Louis and Sylvia, are in our Grove of the Patriarchs. Lou and Sylvia were married for 56 years, and died only eighteen months apart. We say a final farewell to Lou, today, just a short time after we brought Sylvia to her eternal resting place. They were inextricably linked. They cared for each other, she took care of him, and he took care of her, and once Lou's job of caring for Sylvia was done, he too, could lay down to rest.

Louis Wilson Silver, Eliezer ben Hillel v'Rosa, left this world after 93 years of life, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Tishray, erev Yom Kippur, in the new year 5769. To those he loved the most:

Jackie and Dan, and Bob and Rhonda,  
To grandchildren Travis, MacKenzie, Whitney, Justin and Brian;  
To David, who cared so deeply about , and for, your brother Lou,  
and to nieces and nephews Andrea and Bruce, and Jed  
To Randy and Aileen, Harriet and Paul, Hillard and Abby, Marty and Susan, Marvin and Ann;  
To those who cared so for Lou and Sylvia – Dorita Free and James Moore;  
And for all of us who knew Lou Silver, loved and honored him, and now grieve at his death,  
Our hearts and arms reach out to each other in comfort and consolation. May Lou's memory always be a blessing for us.

Burial will follow this service at the Durham Hebrew Cemetery, in the Silver family plot. Lou's parents and grandparents on both sides are buried there, Sylvia is there, and now that will become Lou's resting place as well. The family has provided buses to transport people to Durham and back, in the parking lot.

Bob and Jackie will be returning to their homes to sit shiva, which will conclude on Monday afternoon because of the upcoming Sukkot festival.

Please rise for the El Maleh Rachamim, the memorial prayer.