

Got an Hour to Spare?

By Sandra Goldman, director, Hebrew Cemetery



Hebrew Cemetery director, Sandra Goldman

Austere days in the Jewish calendar are appropriate times to go to the cemetery. As it is mentioned in the code of Jewish law, it is proper to visit the resting place of the righteous during the High Holiday season and to pray in their merit.

Here in Charlotte we remember our loved ones with the Hebrew Cemetery's Annual Memorial Service on the Sunday between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Under big tents, approximately 250 people gather and attend the service which is led by the clerics of Temple Israel, Temple Beth El, and Ohr HaTorah. This year the service will take place on September 23 at 10:30 AM.

Over the past three years, I have organized this event, greeted attendees, hugged, and spoken to many who have grown close to my heart and with whom I have

built relationships. I have heard the rabbis read the names of the deceased aloud and listened to the mourners saying Kaddish. Until now I only had to repeat with the congregants: "Y'hay sh'may rabo"

This year will be different and difficult for me. I will have to say the entire Kaddish myself. Less than three months ago I buried my father z"l and so I have joined the club nobody wants ever to join. I've lost a parent. I still mourn his death and the pain is still raw. It doesn't matter that he was a very special man who touched the lives of many. He is gone and his loss leaves a great void.

However, I realize that I received a rare opportunity, a gift of sorts. My dad's passing and his funeral have taught me more than I ever could have imagined and will help me to improve my professional abilities.

At my father's funeral, the rabbi spoke of *ruach*, which could



be translated as wind, soul, or spirit. *Ruach* enables us to fulfill our own visions and gives an opportunity to realize and acknowledge the multitude of chances we have. When we connect with *ruach*, we can grow.

I now truly understand what it means to grieve for a loved one. I have learned that a daughter grieves differently than a wife, and I realize how important community and support really are after a loss.

Having received this gift of sorts enables me to be more sensitive to the needs of a grieving person, to channel emotions into the right direction and to do what needs to be done when a person passes away.

So, what do we see when we attend a memorial service? Why do we attend? We recognize familiar faces. We see sorrow and remembrance. We see tears and

we might even hear some laughter. We gather together because we all had a common experience – we lost someone we loved.

The memorial service itself is more informal than a funeral, no remains are present, and people can mix, mingle, and exchange recollections of the deceased.

Once a year we have the opportunity as a community to come together at the cemetery. By attending the Annual Memorial Service on September 23, you can, in keeping with our tagline, honor the deceased, celebrate their lives and embrace life's lessons.

It is not necessary to have lost someone in order to come out on a late summer Sunday morning to the cemetery on Statesville Avenue. You don't need to be

affiliated with any temple and you don't even have to be a member of the Hebrew Cemetery. Maybe just bring your very own *ruach*. Imagine what a powerful statement you can make by giving just one hour out of your busy schedule. Imagine how many families can feel comforted by your presence knowing that you care about them, that you care about your Jewish community.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the memorial service or if you want to become a member of the Hebrew Cemetery. I am also happy to guide you through the pre-planning process of purchasing plots. I can be reached via email at director@hebrewcemetery.org or on my cell at 704-576-1859. ☆

Judy Goldman Explores Sisterhood and Family in Her Heartbreaking and Uplifting Memoir, *Losing My Sister*

Book Release Event at Mint Museum on October 2

The relationship between sisters is often the longest in a woman's life. It can also be the most complex. Award-winning author and poet Judy Goldman explores the relationship she shared with her older sister, Brenda—from the joys of childhood to the sorrow of losing parents to the trauma of adult-sibling conflict to the agony of a sister's cancer—in her heartbreaking and uplifting memoir, *Losing My Sister*.



Growing up in a Jewish family in Rock Hill, South Carolina, Judy and Brenda do everything together. "Brenda and Judy. We're one long word," Goldman writes. They play piano duets, share bracelets, share everything. When the neighborhood bully throws a rock at young Judy, it's Brenda who takes off after him, giving him a beating so hard that a neighbor has to pull her off of him. Though their personalities are very different—Judy is the sweet one; Brenda, the strong one—they remain inseparable into adulthood.

As the two grow older, Judy and Brenda struggle to break free of their prescribed roles in the family, Judy becoming stronger and more assertive and Brenda more vulnerable. At their last parent's funeral, they finally overcome their differences and come back together.

A decade later, they both discover lumps in their breasts. Judy's tumor is benign, Brenda's malignant.

They confront their diagnoses together with love and understanding. But when Brenda's cancer recurs, the sisters become

mired in conflict. They finally find their way back as the possibility of permanent loss becomes very real. Before Brenda's death, the two sisters allow their relationship to shine like the marvelous thing it is.

"Throughout the years I was working on this memoir, I struggled with the question: Do I have the right to tell this story?" says Goldman. "Many, many times I decided to pull the plug. But having a voice is important to me. Telling this story — one that has preoccupied me for years — is important to me.

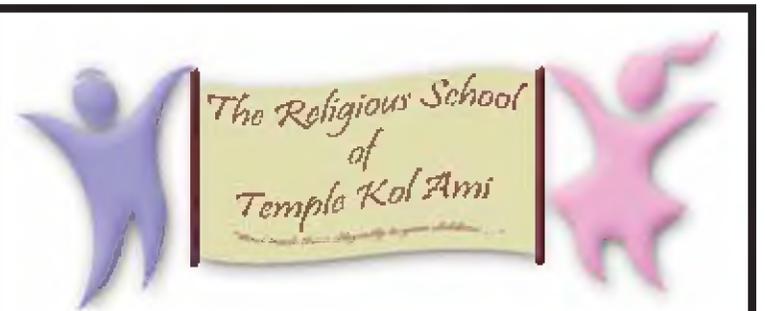
"My hope is that with this book I will speak to anyone who has ever had a sister."

Brian Metsner, Brenda's son, is looking forward to the book. "It's a unique opportunity to bring my mother 'back to life.' ...It will be fascinating to see my mother immortalized in Aunt Judy's words."

Judy Goldman is the author of two novels, *Early Leaving* and *The Slow Way Back*, and two books of poetry. Segments of this

memoir have been published in *Real Simple* magazine and the online journal *Drafthouse*.

There will be book release event at the Mint Museum on Randolph Road on October 2, 7-9 PM. ☆



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