

The Hebrew Cemetery Annual Memorial Service Honors the Past, Embraces the Future

By Kelly Reed Keeling

On the morning of Sunday, September 8, over 300 people gathered at the Hebrew Cemetery on Statesville Avenue for the Annual Memorial Service. During the Days of Awe, it is a long-held Jewish tradition to go to the cemetery. This year's memorial service reflected the spirit of the cemetery's mission to Honor, Celebrate, and Embrace both those who have passed and those who mourn the passing of loved ones.

Hebrew Cemetery Association President, Brian Yesowitch, welcomed all to the cemetery, and shared his appreciation for the hard work put forth by the grounds and construction crews in preparation for the service. Board Member Lorrie Klemons chaired the planning of the service. Elyse Bodenheimer, a CIDS graduate and current high school junior, opened the service with a reading of her poem, "The Voice." Our community's Jewish Girl Scout Troop #1240 led by Deborah Leighton greeted guests with a cold bottle of water and assisted with the tzedakah collection.

At the service, Karen Knoble shared a lovely tribute to her father-in-law, Shelly Bobrow, as she told how the level of Jewish community support and rituals during his passing years ago were the impetus for her increased commitment to Judaism. Ms. Knoble noted the uniqueness of the Hebrew Cemetery, which is "independent of any single Temple, yet it receives halakhic guidance from Rabbis representing multiple Jewish traditions." Ms. Knoble and her husband, Barry Bobrow, created a legacy gift for the Hebrew Cemetery because "we feel that it is important to play a role in creating and caring for this sacred ground."

Past-president Kevin Levine presented Honorary Life Appointments to Nat Roberts and Hilbert Fuerstman, who have given over 40 years of service to the cemetery. Brian Yesowitch also expressed appreciation to Norman Steinberger for starting a funeral assistance fund.

One of the reasons the Annual Memorial service is so special is that it is the only time in the year that all the area's clergy gather together to conduct a joint service. Rabbi Groner of Congregation Ohr Ha Torah led this year's service. In his sermon, the rabbi shared the teaching of Rabbi Israel Baal Shemtov regarding "how the fulfillment of each creature is to help another." This sentiment was illustrated through a story of a leaf, which gently falls, and in so doing, protects a snail from the burning sun. Furthermore, Rabbi Groner shared with the attendees the significance of the phrase, "T'hei Nishmto Tzurah bitzror hachaim - May his or her soul be bound in the bond of eternal life." This teaching, said Rabbi Groner, reminds us that "[o]ne does not need to wait for death to live eternal life. As Jews we have this opportunity and mandate in our life time and that is by engaging in a life of Torah



Left to right: Lori Levine Sklut, Eric Sklut, and Barbara Sklut

and mitzvot."

The community read the Mourners Kaddish after the area's rabbis shared the names of community members and their loved ones who passed in 5773. The service celebrated the richness each of these persons added to the tapestry of our lives and to the well-being of the world.

Another cause for celebration is the near completion of the cemetery's Memorial Building.

Prior to the service, Building Co-Chairs, Bill Gorelick and Marc Silverman commended cemetery director, Sandra Goldman, for her tremendous efforts at fundraising, public relations, event planning, and construction coordination during the past year.

Marc Silverman emphasized that everyone's help still is required to complete the Memorial Building's construction and the expansion. As Charlotte's oldest Jewish institution, the Hebrew Cemetery welcomes your support. You do not need to be a member to participate in the campaign, and pledges are payable over five years. For every \$1000 you pledge, you may honor a loved one or couple, living or deceased, and yourself be recognized as the contributor on the Memorial Wall.

Bill Gorelick announced plans to develop landscapes for the Silverman Entry Circle, the Blumenthal Garden, and other sitting areas. Mr. Gorelick highlighted that "[the cemetery's] expansion



Local clergy at the annual Memorial Service. Left to right: Cantor Andrew Bernard, Rabbi Jonathan Freirich, Rabbi Judy Schindler, Rabbi Murray Ezring, Rabbi Noam Raucher, Rabbi Chanoch Oppenheim, Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede, Rabbi Yossi Groner.

is more than a building, but also will add approximately 1500 gravesites" to the property. By October, the dome of the building will be installed.

Following the service, guests had the opportunity to walk down the brick pathway and tour the building.

The focal point of the Memorial Building's Mindy Ellen Levine Chapel is the recently installed Beth El marble ark.

For more information about

honoring loved ones on the Memorial Wall, or to learn more about preplanning and membership, please contact Sandra Goldman at director@hebrew-cemetery.org or 704-576-1859. ☆



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