

Annual Community Memorial Service

Nearly 300 Jewish Charlot- teans gathered on a beautiful and sunny day right after Hurricane Matthew at the Hebrew Cemetery for the Community's Annual Me-

morial Service. It is a special service that is held all around the world between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. On this day we remember our lost loved ones and celebrate and honor their lives. Our community's annual memorial service is especially meaningful because all clergy serving the Greater Charlotte Area unite together in prayer. This year Congregation Ohr HaTorah's Rabbi Yossi Groner led the service. The complete text of his remarks follows.

Board president, Brian Yesowitch, spoke to the crowd about his legacy gift to



Girl Scout Troop #1240 with LJCCEO Peter Blair.

the cemetery through the Create your Jewish Legacy program. Peter Blair, CEO of the LJC presented the Girl Scouts Bronze Achievement Award to the Jewish Girl Scout Troop # 1240 for cre-

ating a searchable digital archive of the Cemetery, having compiled over 1,100 photos of grave markers for the international website billion-graves.com. In addition, Mike Littauer, Vice President of the Board of Trustees, announced the "Silverman Circle" artwork, a beautiful tree of life will adorn the cemetery entrance for all to enjoy. Marc and Mattye Silverman are donating this one of a kind piece that will be created by eminent North Carolina sculpture artist, Jim Gallucci. Vice President Littauer also



spoke about 5777 and 2017 marking the cemetery's 150 year anniversary. Details of the celebrations in 2017 will be announced soon. For more information regarding funeral pre-planning, plot sales, membership or leaving a bequest, please contact our Director Sandra Goldman at 704-576-1859 or director@hebrewcemetery.org. The staff and board of the Hebrew Cemetery Association wishes everyone a happy and prosperous 5777. ☆



Marc Silverman with information on "The Silverman Circle."

Rabbi Groner's Remarks at the Annual Community Service at the Hebrew Cemetery

In these heightened days of awareness, the days before Yom Kippur, we assemble here, at The Hebrew Cemetery, as a community, to reflect, remember and give honor to those who are dear to us in soul and spirit as they live in our hearts forever.

King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes, the Book of Kohelet, in describing a visit to a house of mourning; *V'Hacai Yitein El Libbo* - that the living should take it to heart. This applies when visiting a cemetery as well.

We the living, when visiting loved ones at the cemetery, are to take to heart the life lessons we learn from those who departed, internalize it and apply these lessons to daily life.

So what are the lessons for us the living? I would like to suggest two lessons that we could take to heart.

One lesson we learn is that physical life is not forever and hence we need to fill the time we have on earth with matters of value and meaning. While visiting here we are to reflect on our own lives and see how to make it more meaningful and filled with productivity and content.

When our time comes and our soul ascends to heaven we are not asked how we enjoyed life or how much time we spent vacationing, rather, as the Talmud puts it: The heavenly court asks the soul, have you dealt with people with integrity? Do you set aside time to study Torah? Did you work to improve our world and make it a better place?

The definition of a long life is not only the quantity of time, it is also, the quality of time. Some people have lived short lives in years but lived long lives in meaning and accomplishments.

For us the survivors it is never too late to make up for lost time. That is indeed the power of Teshuva - return to the way we are meant to be. It is during these holy days that we have the power to transform our past and make our days, years and decades ahead of us meaningful and filled with quality.

A second lesson we learn is the value and preciousness of genuine communication. Here on this sacred ground we communicate silently, we express our feelings and we know that they are genuine and authentic. Here we do not hide behind the external façade of how we look or dress, neither do we communicate through an artificial device. Here we experience the real thing.

It is here at the eternal resting place of our loved ones that we feel

the yearning to reconnect to tell our loved ones how we love them. We want them to know how we long for one more embrace, for one more kiss, for one more handshake, and for one more meaningful conversation.

Yet, we do not despair, as Judaism teaches that the soul of the departed lives on and it bonds with us on a deeper, and more spiritual way than even in its lifetime.

Deeds of Tzedakah done in their merit is like sending the departed soul a hug, our study of Torah in the soul's merit gives it a spiritual boost in its journey of the beyond.

This is more relevant today than ever before. As advanced communication technology has improved our global connectivity to the point that there is here and here is everywhere, it poses the risk of us using devices in place of genuine undistracted communication. I have seen a couple sitting in the same room engrossed in their devices that the wife needed to text her husband to get his attention. It is genuine communication that allows us to bond as humans.

So the lesson we learn is to be genuine in our communication. Be real and be a Mensch.

The living should take to heart visiting the cemetery is like taking a tour of our roots. The Mishna in Ethics of Fathers says: Know where you came from to know where you are going. Our roots are deep and being deeply grounded we can soar to the greatest heights.

We are living in precarious times. On the one hand, we have never had it so good. In the scheme of the historical timeline of Jewish life, we are living in the best of times. That is socially, financially, and democratically.

We are also living in times of worry, young people are being lost to Judaism and many have apathy towards Israel.

It is the duty of our generation to take responsibility and act.

Yesterday we read in the Torah the description the last two commandments of the 613 commandments of the Torah. These were the last commandments that Moses transmitted to the people of Israel on the day he passed away.

612 is to assemble all the Jewish people at the conclusion of the Sabbatical year where the King of Israel would address them with words of strength and encouragement. Lesson: Assembly, families bonding together and strengthening our roots.

613 is the Mitzvah of writing a

Torah. Everyone is obligated to write a Torah or at least write a letter in the Torah. Or to sponsor a letter in the Torah. Yes it still done the old way by human touch where a scribe write the sacred words with a quill. Lesson: Hands on Judaism. Give the youth a taste of authenticity and they will ask for more.

I would like to close with a quote from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

"Jews are among the world's most enthusiastic users of information technology and have contributed disproportionately to its development (Google, Facebook, Waze). But we still write the Torah exactly as it was done thousands of years ago - by hand, with a quill, on a parchment scroll. This is not a paradox; it is a profound truth. People who carry their past with them, can build the future without fear".

We have a wonderful future ahead. It is up to us the living to take the lessons to heart apply them. May we all be granted a *Gmar Chatima Tova* a good and sweet year. ☆



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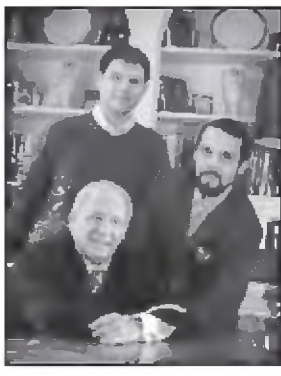


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