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Congregation Beth Shalom
Wilmington, DE
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Adolph Glass
Avram ben Lepa u'Vitya
March 16, 1919 - October 29, 2006

Lech l'cha, “Get Thee Out,” commands God at the beginning of this week’s Torah portion. And Avram went. With his wife, his son’s brother, with what little they could carry they went. This week Jews throughout the world celebrate the life of Avram. Much later in the story, he will receive a new name, Avraham, Abraham. And we will celebrate this first Jew, who provided the foundation for not only Judaism, but for Christianity and Islam as well. We will note his much-famed hospitality. With his wife, Sarai, at his side, his tent was open on all sides, just like a *huppa*, a Jewish wedding canopy. In Avram and Sarai’s tent, it was always “open house.” And through this first Jewish couple, other people came to know the beauty of Judaism as well.

Today we celebrate the life of Avram. Although most of you know him by another name. It might have been Avram Glazerman if you were alive 90 years ago, or perhaps Adolph, if you were his baby sister or if you were angry with him, “kid” if you were his older brother, Dr. Glass to five generations of grateful denizens of the Mount Airy neighborhood of South Philadelphia, Dad to four loving children who idealized him, Grandpop or just plain “Pop” to five grandchildren who adored him and whose grief is most profound, or to many of you gathered today, including the love of his life, Mildred, simply – “A.”

But in this synagogue, in this sacred sanctuary, which he called home for the first three High Holy Days of which I have presided as rabbi, he was known as *Avram. Avram ben Lepa v'Vitya*. And that was how he was known from *Tsom Gedalya*, the day after Rosh Hashana, when he first took his fall, a fall which would prove fatal, to October 29th, when *Avram's* name was recited with love, on our healing *misheberach* list, every time we read from our sacred Torah scrolls in synagogue.

Avram Glazerman was born on March 16, 1919. He was the third of four children born to Lepa and Vera in Odessa, Russia. Avram’s granddaughter, Rachel, in her poem: *Adolph Glass: From Shtetl to City*, identifies the *shtetl* which *Avram* called home as *Krivoser*, and describes it as “already decomposing where is barely stood.” This gives you a sense of the abject poverty into which Avram was born. In this poem, granddaughter Rachel also narrates the horrific pogrom in which Avram lost his father back in 1921 – which left Avram fatherless, but not really fatherless. Because Avram’s oldest brother, Sam, quickly filled the vacuum, and Avram would look upon this oldest brother as both brother and father for the rest of his life. The other Glazerman children included Morton and Pauline. We are blessed to have Pauline with us today. We cherish her presence as we know Avram cherished his baby sister.

Thank God for Uncle Leo. The founder of the Ritz Cinemas in Philadelphia, Uncle Leo had already come to the Golden Medina, the Yiddish term for America, a land whose streets were paved with gold, some years earlier. He had made his fortune in the embryonic film industry, as a creator of cinema chains. One movie house in Philadelphia still bears the name, “the Leo.”