

Lee Goldstein

*Litman ben Avraham u'Fayga Chava*

June 14, 1950 – February 17, 2012

When faced with enormous tragedy it has been the tradition of our people to turn to the Torah for both comfort and support. As we turn to this week's Torah portion, *Terumah*, and explore the original plans to build the tabernacle, we are faced with these words: "*kol ish asher yidvenu libo tikhu et-terumati*" -- *You shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him.*" Unlike the Temple, which was built by forced labor, the sanctuary was to be created by big-hearted, generous, kind people. You know the type. People like Lee Goldstein. In his care for his mother, his wife, his children, his synagogue, his friends, his clients – Lee did not know the word "no." He was just the type of man Moses would have counted on to build a sanctuary, and for this reason alone, I can think of no better Torah portion in which to frame Lee's sixty-one years in our lives.

Lee was born on June 14, 1950 to Faye and Albert Goldstein, in Newark, New Jersey. Al sold and later trained others to sell *Encyclopedia Britannica*. As a result of this work, Lee moved around a bit in childhood, from Newark to Newton, Massachusetts, finally settling down in the Chatham neighborhood of Wilmington, where, at a strapping six foot four inches, he would go on to achieve stardom as an All Conference Player for the Brandywine High School basketball team. The local newspaper at the time commented that Lee SHOULD have gone on to be an All State Player, but there was a political need to include some Down State players which robbed Lee of this extra recognition. I have seen a photo from this era, with Lee posed with his life-long buddy, Bob Weiner, and his prom date, Ellen Lessner. Good times. Actually Lee out on a date – a rarity. During those years Lee had only one true love, and her

name was basketball. Well that's not completely true. Lee also had another true love...Jet, yes, Jet, Lee's black cocker spaniel with the big, floppy ears, an important friend for 15 years.

Thank goodness for Linda Helene, Lee's older sister by three years. With her ability to do impressions, her effervescent personality, her love to laugh and to get others to laugh, Lee was lucky to have her in his life. They had a great relationship. Lee looked up to her, which was saying a lot given Lee's height. Her death in 1967, when Lee was only 17, created a terrible void. It was a hard blow to him. I am sure it was an even harder blow to Lee's mother, Faye, who has a special place in our hearts this morning.

Faye said that Lee was a good boy growing up. Basically she told him what to do, and he did it. Of course there was that time in elementary school when Lee ran afoul of his teacher, the dreaded Mrs. Tweet. I'm not kidding, that WAS her name. Mrs. Tweet sent a note home to Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein informing them that their son, Lee, was misbehaving in class. The thing is, that note never got to Mr. and Mrs. Goldstein. Lee remembers crumpling it up, and throwing it in the sewer, the red ink bleeding into the water, like out of some Hitchcock movie. A few weeks later, a girl in the class, saw Faye, and then turned to her parent and said in a voice loud enough for Faye to hear, "Mommy see that lady, that's the lady with the bad boy." Of course that was back in the first grade and I am afraid Lee Goldstein's "bad boy reputation" did not stick.

Not only did Lee play basketball, he also played trumpet. His job at Camp Frank A. Day sleep away camp including waking his fellow campers with Reverie every morning, and putting them to bed with Taps every night. He remembered with anger how the camp administration confiscated his stash of new comic books during an outbreak of pink eye at camp – afraid that those comic books might be the source of the contagion. Imagine what those vintage 1950s comic books could have been worth today?

Lee graduated Brandywine High School in 1968. Now for the youngins in our congregation, that was at the height of the Vietnam War. And in fact Lee's draft number #331, was almost low enough to get him drafted. But that was not to be Lee's fate. Instead he and his roommate Bob Weiner began their lives as Blue Hens at the University of Delaware. He played on the university's basketball team and was so good that in his second year he was invited on to the Varsity team. Lee may have been the very first Jew invited into the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. They were looking for sports stars, and he fit the bill. His fraternity brothers nicknamed him "Goose," owing to his extraordinarily long neck. Lee remained close friends with his fraternity brothers to his very day, meeting them for cards or their annual homecoming football game gathering. Lee's involvement in fraternity life paved the way for his own children's involvement many years later.

Lee graduated UD with a degree in Political Science in 1972, and like his college buddy, Bob Weiner, chose to pursue a degree in law, but broke out on his own by pursuing his degree at South Texas College of Law, today a part of A & M University. Faye insisted it wasn't buddy Bob but rather Aunt Florence's aptitude test which pointed Lee in the direction of law. In the summer of 1973, Lee took a break from his studies and embarked on a road trip to see as many State Capitals as possible, culminating in a visit to Disneyland. This wasn't Lee's idea. He was just being a good nephew. His Aunt Bert and Uncle Nate, of Shoprite fame, had a huge mobile home and needed someone reliable to drive them around. Lee's willingness to do a road trip with his Aunt and Uncle speaks volumes about what type of *mench* Lee has always been, highlighting his love and loyalty to family.

In 1975, Lee graduated with a General Law Degree and started working for the Law Firm of Balick and Yucht. He worked loyally for this firm for 13 years until he went into business for himself in 1988. I had the pleasure of speaking to our congregant, Jeffrey Drowos, who tried everything he could to get himself up here from Florida to be with us today. Jeffrey has known Lee since Jeffrey was eight.

He shared with me that as a client, Lee changed his life in the most wonderful way. Others at Congregation Beth Shalom have also benefitted from Lee's legal advice and guidance, often offered for free for those who could not afford to pay. And Jeff, along with a whole host of Beth Shalom leaders, from Ron and Celina Reibman to Marty Mand, said that Lee was a dedicated leader to the synagogue, sitting in the same Treasurer spot his father, Al had occupied a decade earlier, to being a real shaker and mover in the Men's Club. After marriage, Lee maintained two full memberships for decades, one at Beth Shalom and one at Adas Kodesh Shel Emeth. Both synagogues benefitted greatly from Lee and Cindy's support and dedication, as seen in the large number of you who came out on a weekday to show your support and love.

Well I mentioned Cindy in passing, but let's get down to how they actually met. The year was 1980. Cindy was a sophomore at UD. Once again we need to turn to Bob Weiner who introduced Cindy to Lee as a Young Jewish Professionals gathering. Cindy thought Lee seemed nice enough, really tall, but what would she be doing with a man so old, a full decade her senior, already a serious lawyer? Strike One.

Still 1980. Still Bob Weiner. Always Bob Weiner. This time Bob had gotten himself and Cindy a gig on the Ziggy Gorsen Show. I am sharing this story with you just so I can say the "Ziggy Gorsen Show." Ahead of his time, back in 1980, Lee Goldstein was the only person Bob and Cindy knew with a Beta Video Cassette Recorder, so they asked Lee to tape the show for them. Then Cindy and Bob were invited to Lee's condo at the Rockford Towers to watch the show. Lee set up the video player, he set out two glasses of soda for his guests, and then he left. He actually left. What type of guy set out glasses of soda and then just leaves? At the end of the video, Cindy cleared the glasses and as she was washing them in his sink, she got this strange *deja vu* feeling that she had been at this sink before. It was what

Cindy would later call her famous “premonition.” It was such a strange feeling that she later shared it with her mother, Betty, and then put it out of her mind. Strike Two.

Fast forward three years. It is now 1983. Cindy is singing and waiting tables for the Candlelight Theatre production of *Man of La Mancha*. In the audience are Lee’s parents, Al and Faye. The owner of the theatre, John O’Toole, tells Cindy there is a lovely Jewish couple he wants her to meet during intermission. Cindy remembers her first impression of Faye. Very quiet. Very regal. Very beautiful. She looked just like Barbara Stanwyck. And in her quietness, she is checking Cindy out. Al ... not so quiet. He likes Cindy immediately, is thrilled to learn she is Jewish, and he gives Cindy his son, Lee’s card. Al says: “Call him. You gotta call him, because he won’t call you if we tell him to.” Well, Al was so friendly, so encouraging, that Cindy liked him immediately, so she called Lee. Fortunately, Cindy got the secretary, so she was able to leave a message and that put the ball in Lee’s court – basketball pun intended.

Cindy shared this story, including meeting Al and Faye, with Betty. Betty listened carefully and then said, “YOU KNOW THIS BOY!” “This is Al and Faye Goldstein’s boy, Lee, the fellow in whose condo you had the premonition while washing his drinking glasses.” So Lee calls and makes a date for them to go play Racquet ball followed by lunch at Kirkwood Fitness. And two years later, on February 16, 1985, they were married at Adas Kodesch, Rabbi Gerwurtz of AKSE and Rabbi Cohen of Beth Shalom co-officiating. And during the reception, when Lee’s dad, Al Goldstein, and Cindy’s mom, Betty Slomowitz got the mic, they took credit for getting the couple together – Al with the business card and Betty with the premonition reminder – proving what Hilary Clinton already taught us: “it takes a village.”

Faye called me up special, yesterday morning, to share with me something important. She wanted me to know how proud her son, Lee, was of Cindy. He loved to hear her sing. He loved to watch

her on stage. His loyal services as legal counsel for the Brandywiners, was certainly an expression of that love and pride he had for Cindy's singing. And having heard Cindy recently sing a duet with our own Cantor Ruth, during High Holy Days, it is clear that Lee had impeccable music taste. Faye also shared with me that it was the happiness and joy that Cindy and Lee created in their married life, that created the opportunity for her to spend so much time with the family and which led to Cindy and Lee putting an extension on their home, so Faye could move in permanently after Al's death. Cindy shared with me that it was Lee's loyalty to his mother which Cindy found so attractive in her future husband. She instinctively knew a man who showed so much love and respect for his mother would make a wonderful husband. This proves that not only were Cindy's premonitions accurate, but that she was and continues to be a very wise person.

In 1986, Cindy blessed Lee with his very own princess, Lara. Lara told me that she was always treated like a princess by her father, even up until the very end of his life. After all, he along with Cindy, were visiting Lara in Barcelona, when he passed. And just a day or two before, he saw the most extraordinary expensive black dress with purple flowers in an upscale boutique, had Lara model it for him, and then bought it for her ... just like that.

The two of them always had a musical connection, and this weird connection to the show, *Phantom of the Opera*. Lee would sing the music to Lara as a baby. When Lara was two or three and getting ready to experience her very first Halloween, while most daddy's were dressing their daughters as Disney princesses, Lee dressed Lara up as the Phantom in *Phantom of the Opera*, complete with that funky white mask and black cape. And when Lara turned five, Lara had her very first date. Lee took Lara, just the two of them, to see *Phantom* in Philadelphia. Lee would do anything to make his Lara happy.

In 1988, Jared came on the scene, from day one it was all about the basketball. Just recently they attended a Sixers Game and had such good seats that they were able to high-five the players as they left the court and ran down the tunnel to the lockers. In fact Lee's high-five with Jimmy Fredett was caught on t.v., and Lee ran that tape of his hand over and over again. Jared said it was their best Sixers game ever. Lee coached all of Jared's basketball games, from the YMCA to Maccabiyah. And Lee was always good for a one-on-one game with Jared, even when Lee's knee was giving him trouble. Lee's only concern was that he was worried Jared wasn't tall enough. Lee used to wonder if perhaps they should put Jared on a rack and stretch him, just to give him that few extra inches. Jared remembers his dad being really intense about basketball, it was more than an interest, it was his dad's passion, and it was a passion they could share together.

Adam rounded out the Goldstein clan with his appearance in 1994. Adam said that he and his father loved to talk "smack" to each other. To outsiders, Adam realized it could seem a little shocking, even disrespectful. But the goal was to make each other laugh. And Adam could do some real brutally funny impressions of his dad. When I heard this, I immediately thought what a blessing this type of verbal play must have been for Lee, because it sounded so much like the relationship Lee had with his sister, and that in a way, Adam filled the void left by the passing of his aunt so many years ago.

This week's Torah portion is about building a *mishkan*, a tabernacle, with the promise from God that if they built it, God would dwell in their midst --- "*asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham.*" All his life, a life which we wish was longer, Lee has been a builder. Lee built a business, where he provided wonderful legal care for those in need of his help. Lee helped build a Congregation Beth Shalom Men's Club and maintain a synagogue. Lee built an extension to his home so his mother would be safe and close to the people who love her. Lee built enduring friendships which have lasted decades. And most

important, Lee has built a wonderful family, with three wonderful, loving children, and a wonderful wife at the center, who was the apple of his eye.

And since Lee so appreciated Cindy's work with the Brandywiners, this wonderful musical organization has asked to join us today and follow a musical tradition unique to them, when one of their own passes away, for Lee was truly embraced as one of their own. May we strive to be generous of heart like Lee, and then Lee's memory will truly be for a blessing, *zichrona l'vracha*, and let us say *amen*.