

Dorothy Schonzeit Klein
Devorah bat Chaim v'Gittel
October 16, 1925– March 27, 2009

Dorothy Klein passed away in the week when her fellow Jews throughout the world were opening up *Vayikra*, Leviticus, the third book of the Torah. The primary focus of this *parasha* addresses the various types of sacrifices our ancestors made in order to come close to God. Sacrifices. Upon reviewing Dorothy's life, especially in her loving care of her father, husband, son and daughter, the Torah portion nicely frames her life. Not that Dorothy would have referred to her care of loved ones as "sacrifices." She simply did what needed to be done, and always rose to the occasion.

She was born Dorothy Schonzeit, on October 16, 1925 in Newark, New Jersey. She was the eldest of two girls born to Hayman and Gertrude. Dorothy's younger sister of seven years, Sandra, is with us this morning and she appreciated her older sister. The Schonzeit's lived in relative comfort in the Italian section of Newark. It was a good thing that Hayim ran a women's and children's clothing store, as it turns out that his Italian neighbors liked to spend money on clothing for their many children. Dorothy's home was a kosher one, although girls were never afforded the same level of Jewish education as the men in the family. Her father was an active member of his synagogue, which explains why we are here, in the Ahavas Shalom section of the cemetery— buying cemetery plots was an important way of supporting your synagogue in those days.

Dorothy graduated from Barringer High School in 1942. She was the class valedictorian. Education was a strong value which Dorothy embraced all of her life, for herself, for her children and for her grandchildren. Of all the Jewish values Dorothy could have chosen to embrace, this was, by far, the most important as you will soon see. From high school she went on to the New Jersey College for Women, now Douglas College, the women's section of Rutgers. She graduated in 1946 with a degree in Chemistry, at a time when it was exceptional for women to pursue university education in the sciences. The friends Dorothy made at college she kept all her life. After college she worked for a pharmaceutical company. Then she met Henry Klein.

"When Dorothy Met Henry," the stuff of movies, well not quite. The story is a little complicated but it goes something like this. The Schonzeit's, and here it would be useful to explain that Schonzeit is German for "good times," were friendly with their cousins, the Scheinzeit's, who were friendly with Lil and Al in Carney, New Jersey. They knew that Henry Klein was freshly discharged from the army and that Dorothy was freshly graduated from university. So it was only natural to get these two young Jewish kids together. As far as juicy details of first dates and courtship, I have nothing to offer as Henry and Dorothy were very private people, so you will just have to use your imagination. I CAN tell you that they were married on March 21, 1948, at Temple B'nei Abraham by Rabbi Prince in Newark, NJ. I was privileged to see the wedding photos and Henry looked very dashing in his top hat, Dorothy elegant in her wedding dress, and both very serious.

Dorothy traded in a potential career in pharmaceuticals for home making and Steven was born in 1949. She was a dutiful mother, serving as a Den Mother for Steven's pack, as well as in Steven's school on the PTA. Dorothy was an excellent cook. Steven's favorite meal was his mother's prime rib. While Steven was a resident in pediatrics at Duke, he had a severe allergic reaction. Dorothy dropped everything, and traveled from New Jersey down to North Carolina to care for him. It would be the first of many times that she sacrificed for the well being of a loved one.

Dorothy gave birth to Shelley in 1954. They enjoyed a very good relationship. Shelley's favorite dish that her mom cooked was veal parmigian. (I was reassured that the meat was kosher). Dorothy took a gourmet cooking class to expand her repertoire even further, showed great aptitude, but her husband was a strict meat and potatoes man, so Dorothy never realized her true culinary potential. At any rate in her second year at the University of Vermont, Shelley had to return home because of back problems. Dorothy took Shelley to what felt like millions of doctors looking for treatment, and once treatment was secured, there were multiple visits from

Newark into New York City at Columbia Presbyterian for physical therapy. And while Dorothy was caring for Shelley, she was at the same time caring for her father, at home, who had suffered a stroke. Again, sacrificing for loved ones came to define an important part of who Dorothy was. During the last ten years of his life, Dorothy took her husband for regular chemotherapy treatments at Sloan Kettering. Again, sacrifice for loved ones was Dorothy's basic nature.

The sacrifice that Dorothy showed for her loved ones was reciprocated. As I came to say Viddui for Dorothy to help her transition more easily from this world to the next, I watched Steve's wife, Frances, in action during the last hours of Dorothy's life. With her sister-in-law on one side, her husband on the other, Frances was every much a daughter as if she has been born to Dorothy. The love and care I saw Frances give to her mother-in-law must have been very much like the love and care Dorothy had given to her children, father, and husband throughout the years. This love, and sacrificing for loved ones, was even passed down to the next generation. Even before David married Laura, both of them were attentive to her needs, and how delighted Dorothy was to be able to muster the strength to attend their wedding back in September 2007, only five weeks out from major surgery. Even before the wedding Laura was acting like a devoted granddaughter to Dorothy.

And of course the last person who was able to get a smile on Dorothy's face was her beloved granddaughter, Anna. There was a deep love and affection between grandmother and granddaughter. Both Anna and David were spoiled by both Dorothy and Henry during their visits down south to babysit when the Kleins made their home in Montgomery, Alabama. Education was such an important value to Dorothy -- not only in her life, but that of her family as well. She was so proud of Steven becoming a doctor and Shelley becoming such a business success at Kraft Foods as their Financial Director for more than 25 years. Dorothy was also very proud and very supportive of her grandchildren's education, both at Tower Hill, and then later at their respective universities.

Dorothy's forty-six years of marriage to Henry were precious to her although she was very private about her feelings and not into P.D.A. -- public displays of affection. Together, they enjoyed playing cards. Dorothy was a champion bridge player. She was also involved in the community, serving as president of the Women's Division of the Fairlawn Chapter of the American Jewish Congress. Most important, she loved to travel with Henry. They traveled to Spain several times and also to Israel. A highlight for the family was when Dorothy took her two children, her daughter-in-law, her daughter-in-law's mother, and her two grandchildren on a once-in-a-life time family trip to Israel. She knew it was something that her late husband, Henry, would have wanted and she was glad to do it.

Dorothy was a loyal, lifelong friend, especially to her college friends Rhoda, Audrey and Lee. And her most recent friend was her caretaker, Leoni Wilson, whose birthday is today, and who never-the-less chose to spend it here with us, honoring Dorothy. Dorothy and Leoni had made plans to go out for pizza today to celebrate. I know how grateful the family is to Leoni for her friendship and care.

Dorothy has been fighting ovarian cancer for the last four years. It must have been very difficult for such a private person to have to give up that privacy in a nursing facility. But through it all, Dorothy maintained a sense of humor, dignity, and seldom complained. She was a trooper. Dorothy taught us as much about how to live as how to die. This week's Torah portion was all about sacrifices, and Dorothy, in many ways, was all about sacrifices as well. Like the ancient Israelite ancestors described in Leviticus, Dorothy's gifts were free-will offerings. All her kindnesses to others were done with a glad heart, quiet, without fuss, but with dedication and reliability. She was an inspiration not only to her biological family, but also to her daughter and granddaughter-in-law, all who responded in kind to Dorothy's sense of sacrifice and care for others. So we say of Dorothy, may her memory continue to be for a blessing and an inspiration to all of us, and let us say *amen*.