

Rabbi Michael S. Beals
April 17, 2006
Wilmington, Delaware

Edward Lipman
Yehuda bed Leibel v'Leika
October 16, 1927 - April 16, 2006

As Edward Lipman passed from this world to the next, Jews all around the world were settling into their celebration of the Passover holiday. Although not mentioned in the *Pesah hagaddah*, during this Festival of Freedom, many of our thoughts turn to Moses, the architect of that original push for religious freedom. Moses also sustained the Jewish religion under the most difficult of circumstances. As we examine the life of Edward Lipman, we find that one important theme the reoccurs is that like Moses, he too, did much to sustain Jewish life in his family under difficult circumstances. The very survival and health of Judaism in the Lipman family rests on certain key actions and attitudes which Eddy Lipman demonstrated in his life.

Eddy was the youngest son born to Louis and Lillian Lipman. Paul, Eddy's big brother has since passed away but we are blessed to have Eddy's sister, Ruth, with us this afternoon. Eddy always loved his sister Ruth and her children, Howie, and the twins, Randy and Lisa. He would have loved to have spent even more time with Ruth than he did, and always stressed the importance of sibling love with his own three sons. Eddy was born on October 16, 1927 in Vineland, New Jersey. Vineland attracted many Jews from Eastern Europe because of the chicken farms and egg industry, although the Lipman's were not known as farmers. Eddy's father, Louis was a salesman, in whose footsteps Eddy would eventually follow. It is from Eddy's mother, Lillian, that Eddy learned the importance of love of family. From his father, and from the tough economic times he grew up in, Eddy learned the importance of self-reliance and the importance of working hard for what you wanted. Eddy would later impart this value to his own children by telling them: "you respect it more, you cherish it more if you EARN it."

Eddy graduated Vineland High School in 1945. He then enlisted in the Air Force, serving our country in the Korean Conflict, from 1946 through 1950. He was stationed in Texas where he valiantly served as a typist, having mastered the one finger hunt-and-peck method of typing which he could execute on not one, but on both hands. During these years and those that followed the war, Eddie developed a wonderful personality. He never met a person he did not like or who did not like him. He took a genuine interest in people. This character trait would serve him well in his professional and in his personal life. It is a gift he would pass down to future generations of Lipman's.

In 1954, seeking the benefits of a Jewish social life, Eddy abandoned Vineland and headed south to that Jewish cultural mecca, Wilmington, Delaware where he attended a dance at the Jewish "Y" located at 6th and French Streets. There, on the dance floor, he picked out a good looking young woman with a blue sweater, and that's what he went for...in his words, "he went for the top, and was underneath the top." At this point I should interject that this is a very Jewish, religious approach, as the Rabbis state in Pirkei Avot, *al tistakel b'kan kan*, "don't judge the flask by its outer finery rather by the contents found within." Inside and out, Eddy liked what he saw in

Rachelle and he promptly made a date with her for the following Saturday night. He showed up at the door with a dozen eggs for Rachelle's mother, Dorothy, and said to her: "you're my date, so here's a dozen eggs from Vineland." Well Rachelle's mother fell in love with Eddy on the spot. Rachelle was attracted to Eddy's good looks: he was tall, had lots of wavy hair, was very well dressed, and very well mannered. They dated from the end of 1954 through 1956. During a family gathering in November '55, Rachelle's grandparents said "let there be a hussana", and then Rachelle's grandfather wanted to make sure that Eddy understood that a hussana meant an engagement, at which point Dorothy shewed them out the door.

On August 13, 1955, Eddy prepared to propose. Her parents knew he had the engagement ring, so they got their still and movie cameras out, preparing to capture the moment on film. Unfortunately Rachelle was unaware of all these details. She was angry that in the past, Eddy had been late for dates. So to spite him, she made Eddy wait one full hour while she stalled in her room. To further punish him she put on a black dress, a color she knew Eddy despised on her. Then after making him wait, she slowly came down the stairs, in her words, "like Miss America," as the movie captures a nervous Eddy getting down on one knee, ring box opened and at the ready. Rachelle said: "what's going on?!" And when she realized, she felt just awful. But of course, she said yes. January 8, 2006 marked Eddy and Rachelle's 50th wedding anniversary. Back in 1956, the ceremony was held at the Penn Sherwood Hotel in Philadelphia, officiated by Rabbi Gewurtz of Adas Kodesch. After a year in Vineland, the young Lipman couple settled in Wilmington, where Eddie worked first as a salesman for Sears, and later as a very successful insurance salesman for Mutual of Omaha.

Larry – Eddy and Rachelle's eldest son, was born in 1957. Eddy was seldom home because of his work, and from his absence, Larry learned self-reliance, just as Eddy learned the same trait from his father. Eddy also imparted family pride and dignity by telling Larry that he must not embarrass him because he carries the same family name. And finally, Eddy taught Larry the importance of earning the things you wanted in life, rather than expecting your parents to buy them for you. Larry says, unfortunately, he was not able to pass this last value on to his own children. Larry said that life with his father was a bit of an emotional roller coaster – often his father could be very loving and kind, these were the highs in the relationship, at other times, more distant, and these were the lows. The upshot for Larry was that all these experiences made him stronger in adulthood. Larry would go on to marry Deborah, and together they blessed Eddy with two grand children, Bryan, 19, and Lauren, 15.

In my opinion, Eddy's middle child, Mark, is one of the most beloved guys you will meet at Beth Shalom, and maybe Eddy has something to do with this. Mark was born in 1959. He remembers, as a child, going to the market with his dad, and his dad seemed to know everyone, and would strike up conversations with everyone. Although Mark is far more quieter than his dad was, and although because of these experiences, in adulthood Mark hates to linger at stores, never-the-less, like his father, Mark knows how to make people feel good about themselves. Like his dad, Mark takes a genuine interest in other people, and knows how to make them feel important. I know of what I speak because as Mark's rabbi, I have experienced this myself when in Mark's company. And Mark, along with his lovely wife, Karolin, and two daughters, Danielle, 19, and Jillian, 15, are among my daughters all-time favorite baby sitters.

Paul, Eddy's youngest son, also provided his father with great pride and joy, first by

marrying Heidi, and then by blessing him with three children: Reed, now 17, and Sloan, 13, and Betsy, 12, who together will celebrate their b'nei mitzvah on June 17. I know that Eddy will be missed at this simcha, and would have been proud to see this continued embrace of Judaism throughout the generations in his family – from choice of spouses to continued dedication to Jewish education for the next generation.

It was Mark who pointed out to me his father's unique commitment to Judaism. When Larry, Mark, and Paul, were growing up, Eddy help prepare the breakfasts for the Minyanaires, a program designed to keep post bar mitzvah boys involved in their Judaism and their synagogue at Adas Kodesch. Even after the boys long finished their minyanaire commitment, Eddie continued to prepare breakfasts for the group, feeling that he wanted to "give back" to the Jewish community. Eddy Lipman served the Jewish community in a variety of ways. He served as President of the Wilmington chapter of the Jewish War Veterans, President of the Men's Club of Adas Kodesch, and even President of the Moses Montefiore Society, the oldest Jewish organization in Delaware.

But Eddy did more than occupy positions of high office within the Wilmington Jewish community. He also, in front of his children, took principled stands in the name of his Jewish faith. When Eddy learned that Larry's graduation from Concord High School was scheduled for Shabbat, Eddy asked Larry what he thought of that. Larry said he did not like it. So Eddy went through B'nai Brith to discuss the issue with the School Board and successfully got the graduation changed to Sunday.

Earlier still, Larry was once tied up by local boys, sprayed with water, as they accused him of being a Christ killer. Eddy went to Rabbi Gerwirst for guidance, who in turn went to the children's priest. These were the days before Vatican Two. The priest turned to the rabbi and said, "but you did kill Jesus, you are Christ Killers." Eddie was appalled at the priest's behavior. Eddie took to the matter directly to the Archdiocese, and they offered a letter of apology.

Mark believes that watching his father take these stands, coupled with his father's desire to give back to the Jewish community, gave Mark the impression that these actions and attitudes are reasons why his brothers and he chose to marry Jewish women and raise their children in committed Jewish homes.

Aside from Jewish issues, Eddie was also very protective of his three sons and much later he felt great guilt that he did not spend more time with his children while they were young. He more than made up for this neglect in the lives of his grandchildren. Paul's grandson, Brian, said that "when grandpa visited me, he made me feel really good, he would throw me up in the air." Eddy's nephew, Howie, said exactly the same thing.

Larry said it all goes back to Sales 101: "it's all about the other person, NEVER about you." Eddy made people feel as if they were worshiped. Rachelle, in particular, felt that in his best moments, Eddy treated her as a queen. Through Eddy's insurance sales awards in the Chairman Council, Eddy and Rachelle got to travel to wonderful places like Hawaii, Canada, California and Bermuda.

It was the patriarch Jacob, who according to Midrash, first asked for illness preceding death so he could take leave of his children. Well it has been a long goodbye for Eddie, who first began showing outward signs of dementia as early as 1998. He has suffered from Alzheimer's disease for the past five years, but through great personal self-sacrifice, Rachelle was able to keep

Eddy out of the nursing home until the past three and a half years, when she no longer had the strength to care for him adequately at home. But even in the nursing home, just as in earlier years, Eddy Lipman was loved by everyone, because he was always able to make everyone feel special and important.

From having watched Jillian in action in our Hebrew school, where she has worked one-on-one with students, Jillian had learned well the art of making people feel singularly important, and as a result, has gotten the very best out of them. This is a special gift Eddie imparted to his grand daughter. And it was Jillian, who during her trip from Wilmington down to Florida last March of '05, who was able to break through the haze of her grandfather's Alzheimer's disease. When it was explained to him that Jillian had traveled all the way from Wilmington to visit him, he cried upon realizing what she had done for him, and in turn, Jillian cried too.

Eddy's last fully coherent sentence was directed to Rachelle on his last trip to the Nursing home. He said to her: "you were a wonderful wife and I loved you so much."

And Rachelle's last words to Eddy were said more recently. She said: "I am your wife, Rachelle. I am with you. You sons, Larry, Mark and Paul are with you. You were a good father, a good son, and a good husband. God is waiting for you. We give you permission to go. God is waiting for you." And with that permission granted, Eddie quickly and quietly passed from this world to the next.

Like Moses, Eddy did much in word and deed to ensure that there would be a future generation of Jews. And he accomplished that which many Jews in Wilmington and elsewhere have failed to do: all three of his boys cared enough about their Judaism to marry Jewish girls, and together raise their children with good Jewish educations to ensure that each of their children would be called to the Torah as a bar or bat mitzvah. It did not come easy. Like Moses, Eddy took on leadership roles in his community and took principled actions in the name of his Judaism.

At this Passover season, may we be inspired by Edward Lipman's good example and inspire our children and our children's children to strongly embrace their Judaism, inspiring yet another generation to preserve our people and our legacy, and let us say *amen*.