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Wilmington, Delaware
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Shirley Martin
Sara bat Velvel v'Rachel
March 24, 1927 - March 9, 2006

In the week that Shirley Martin passed from this world to the next, Jews in synagogues all around the world were reading from the 27th chapter of Exodus, *Parshat Tetzaveh*, which opens with the description of the *ner tamid*, the Eternal Light, which adorned the *mishkan*, the traveling sanctuary in the desert. The *ner tamid* stood for God's enduring presence. It said to Jews then, and it says to Jews now, that we are not alone. Even in the loss of a loved one, and I know everyone here is familiar with loss, we are not alone. We do not need to bare our losses alone. And certainly, you will soon learn, that in life, Shirley showed a great amount of compassion and sensitivity, so no one around her ever felt alone.

Shirley was the eldest child born to William and Rae Holtzman (my grandparents were also named William and Rae and so I already feel a special closeness to her). She was born on March 24, 1927 in Philadelphia, which means she was almost two weeks away from celebrating her 79th birthday. William and Rae went on to have two more children, Arnold and Lorraine. Arnold will be addressing you in just a moment. Lorraine, who was 12 years younger than Shirley, describes her older sister as "beautiful inside and out – caring, considerate and thoughtful. To know her was to adore her. She loved to be with her family."

When Lorraine was 17, their mother, Rae, died, and Shirley brought Lorraine to live with her. Shirley wrote a letter to Lorraine's late husband, Jerry, which I will read at *shiva* on

Tuesday. In the letter Shirley told Jerry that her house was Lorraine's house, and that she could live their as long as she needed. In reflecting upon the letter, written back in 1957, Lorraine commented that "one could not have had a better sister."

Shirley graduated Overbrook High School in Philadelphia and worked for a dentist during World War II. She later did secretarial work. Later still, she moved to Wilmington, where she lived most of her life. She worked at The Gift Box over on Kirkwood Highway, right next to her brother-in-law, Jerry's, Mr Pizza Shop. She always liked to have family close at hand.

In 1948 Shirley married her first husband of eighteen years, Gerald Cohen, no relation to Lorraine's beloved husband of blessed memory, also Gerald Cohen. It was Lorraine's husband's good fortune to have the same name as Shirley's husband because it got Lorraine's Jerry through the door. As Shirley put it: "with a name like Jerry Cohen, he can't be bad." Of course we know Shirley was right. Lorraine enjoyed a life time of joy with her Jerry Cohen.

In 1950, Shirley and Jerry became the proud parents of a boy, Stuart. I am sad to tell you that Stuart passed away in 2003. What a great sadness it must have been for Shirley. However Stuart blessed Shirley with two incredible grandchildren: Jodi and Steven. We are blessed to have Jodi with us, and we are keeping Steven in our prayers as he undergoes surgery even as we speak. Jodi, in turn, blessed Shirley with two great-grandchildren, Alec and Jack. In fact, many of us believe that Shirley held on to life so she could meet her newest great-grandson, Jack, who was born on January 10th. When Jack was only seven weeks old, Jodi made the two hour trip down from Northern New Jersey to Wilmington so Jack and Shirley could meet. Everyone who saw Shirley that day remarked that they could not remember a happier day in her life, nor a bigger smile on her face since entering the Kutz Home, than on the day when Jodi brought Jack to meet

his great grandmother – what a great mitzvah Jodi performed on that day!

In 1953, Shirley was blessed with the birth of a second child, this time a girl. Charlene is with us today. Charlene always felt so loved and cared for by her mother Shirley. There isn't anything that Shirley would not do for her Charlene. She is remembered lovingly.

Shirley married Woodrow Martin in 1969. They were married for 26 years.

Shirley's commitment was not only to family. She also expressed her commitment to Judaism, and to Israel, through her devotion to Women's American ORT. This fine organization provides job training and education both in this country, and in Israel, especially for new *olim*, new immigrants to the Jewish State, so they can become productive Israeli citizens. Shirley rose through the ranks of this organization, eventually serving as president of her Philadelphia chapter.

Shopping gave her great pleasure – from Value City to the finer clothing stores of Philadelphia, Lorraine said of her sister: "Shirley was born to shop." Shirley also loved to go to the movies and the theatre – especially the Chapel Players in Newark. She was addicted to Harry Belafonte, but she never told him. She also loved Oriental Art, and was reputed to have a very fine Buddah collection.

To put it simply, Shirley LOVED life, so it was with great sadness when she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer last April. Up until this time, Shirley never complained of poor health, and even after the diagnosis, after the surgery, Shirley never complained. Shirley went into the Kutz Home this past October, where she received excellent care – she even played bingo while she was there, and just a few days before her passing, she indulged in having her hair done. She enjoyed life for as long as possible.

This past week we read about the Eternal Light, the *ner tamid*, in the weekly Torah

reading. Let us be inspired by Shirley's light, especially her love of family and her love of life. May we keep Shirley's light alive in our respective lives, and then her memory will be for a blessing.