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Gladys Rich Zutz
Golda bat Yisachar u'Fayga
1921 - 2005

Gladys Zutz passed away last week on the eve of the *heilige Shabbos*, the holy Sabbath. Our Jewish mystics say that only the *tsadikim*, the most righteous, the most holy, of our people pass from this world to the next on the Sabbath. But what made Gladys holy? It wasn't her weekly attendance at Shabbat services. The answer to this question is found within the Torah portion we read on the Sabbath of her passing: *Parshat Vayikra*, the opening section of Leviticus, the third of the five Books of Moses.

In this Torah portion we learn that our ancestors would select between five different sacrifices to come close to G-d, and experience holiness. The sacrifices, called *korbanot*, in Hebrew, included: the *olah* burnt offering, the *mincha* grain offering, the *zevah shlaymim* well-being offering, the *hataf* sin offering, and the guilt *asham* offering. Five different offerings, five different ways of being holy. As we review Gladys' life, with the help of her daughter, Marsha, son, Larry, and granddaughters, Jessica and Lisa, we realize that she led a very holy life, epitomizing what it means to be a Jew, and what it means to be a *mench* – a good human being.

Gladys was the youngest of three daughters born to Russian-born Barney Oscar Rich and Fannie Goldich Rich. Gladys' older sisters, Ruth and Bebe are still with us. Gladys was born on September 25, 1921, in Philadelphia, but raised her entire life in Wilmington, never more than two blocks away from Congregation Beth Shalom. Gladys' father began his career as a peddler, using a horse-drawn carriage to transport his wares. Over time, and with much hard work, he transformed his business into a successful chain of Delaware drug stores, which was eventually sold to Sunray Drug Stores. While Barney spent a lot of time and energy developing his livelihood, Gladys' mother, Fannie, exerted herself completely to the well-being of her family, helping older relatives who had escaped the horrors and hardships of European anti-Semitism and economic deprivation for America, as well as caring for her husband and children. Perhaps it was from her mother that Gladys learned the value of always putting her family first. Unheard of for the time, all three Rich sisters attended college – quite an accomplishment.

After graduating P.S. Dupont High School, and attending Highland Manor Finishing School in New York with fellow student Lauren Becall, Gladys enrolled in the Health, Science and Nutrition major at the University of Delaware. She should have graduated with her Bachelor's degree with the Class of 1943. However the pressures of raising a family and pursuing her studies proved too demanding, and she withdrew from the program one month prior to graduation, typically putting her family above herself. In honor of her sacrifice, her family has established the Zutz Scholarship for a senior female student at the University of Delaware who demonstrates noteworthy leadership skills. The intent of the scholarship is to inspire women to complete their education, even with families to raise. By the way, Gladys was presented her University of Delaware diploma in 1993, some 50 years later – but her certificate properly places her in the Class of 1943.

From childhood to the present, Gladys had a wide circle of admiring friends. Among

those friends was fellow-Wilmingtonian Harry Zutz. If you include Gladys and Harry's young great-grandchild, the Zutz Family are six generation Wilmingtonians, so their roots go down deep in this community. Harry began dating Gladys in earnest back in late 1939, when she was 18. Among the restaurants they frequented in their courtship was the Charcoal Pit of their day, the Spik and Span, home of the mile long hotdog. After three years of dating, Henry popped the question and they had intended to elope. However because they did not realize they would need a blood test, their plans were foiled. What to do?

Gladys' connections to Beth Shalom, particularly the Kraft family, stretched right back to her childhood. Both Rabbi Kraft and his lovely wife, Leah, were beloved Hebrew school teachers to Gladys. Rabbi Kraft would later confirm Gladys. So it made sense, then, that the Krafts were instrumental in marrying Gladys and Harry. Rabbi Kraft performed the service and Leah did the dishes. They were two of twelve guests invited to the ceremony. The service was held in Gladys's childhood home at 403 W. 20th Street. Two of the huppah holders, Harry's younger brother, Ted, and dear family friend, Mace Burger, are with us this morning. With Gladys maintaining an ordered, loving home environment, Harry was able to launch Zutz Insurance, in business since 1940. The young couple bought a house on 35th and Washington, and they have called Wilmington their home for more than 30 years.

In 1944, Gladys gave birth to the first of their two children, Marsha. Marsha remembers her mother making her feel safe and secure in her childhood, with a home that exuded regularity and consistency. Among her favorite dishes her mother used to make, Marsha's favorites included Gladys' noodle pudding stuffed with apricots, her spaghetti with meat balls, and her Swedish sweet and sour meat balls. Marsha said her mother was quietly demanding. Holiness was expressed through her strong moral compass. Gladys had a very strong sense of what was right and what was wrong, and she passed that down to Marsha. She also made sure that Marsha had a good Jewish education. Marsha, like her mother, was confirmed on the bima of Congregation Beth Shalom. Marsha would later marry Dr. Howard Borin, again on the bima of Congregation Beth Shalom, and later their children, Lisa Borin Ogden, who will address you in just a little while, and their son, Josh, would celebrate their respective bat and bar mitzvahs on the bima of Congregation Beth Shalom. Through Gladys' fine example, three generations of her family have culminated their Jewish studies on the pulpit of this synagogue – now that's holiness. Gladys *shep naches*, took special pride, in her granddaughter Lisa's admission to Law School, her passing the Delaware Bar, and her work in Senator Joe Biden's offices in Wilmington and Washington, D.C. Josh took real joy in seeing to his grandmother's every need, and be her chaperone, especially to art museums, both in Delaware and in Florida. He loved just hanging out with her.

I have Marsha to thank for really getting to properly meet her mother. In the fall, shortly after my arrival to Wilmington, Marsha created the wonderful Wilmington Forum series, which featured among great luminaries, my hero, Nobel Prize winner Elie Weisel. Marsha made me and my wife her special guests and put me at her mother and father's table. It was such a pleasure to spend the evening with them, and to see what great pride they had in their daughter's great accomplishment. I can understand why Gladys had the reputation of being such a gracious and lovely lady – she was that and more!

In 1946, Gladys gave birth to a son, Larry. He remembers his mother always being there for him. He also remembers that she was tough, a real taskmaster. If one looks carefully at Larry, one might detect that Larry's left ear is slightly longer than his right. That is because his

mother, Gladys, dragged him by that ear to religious school. Her persistence resulted in Larry becoming a bar mitzvah. So often did Larry repeat his Torah portion over and over again, in preparation for his special day, that Marsha can still chant it. Larry also remembers his mother's cooking, but for him, it was her brisket that merited special praise. And well into her 80's, Gladys made a delicious kosher chicken...but nobody knows the recipe. Both Larry and Marsha said that their mom really knew how to make the Jewish holidays come alive with wonderful family meals. In fact, unaware of any pending health problems, Gladys was already having Harry prepare extra portions of homemade horse radish for the family Passover seder, and an extra large supply of gefilte fish is already downstairs in her basement, just awaiting special preparation for the family meal. For 55 years Gladys prepared the family seder. This first Passover without her will be especially difficult for the family. May the holiness of her example inspire future generations of Zutz grandchildren to carry on their grandmother's tradition of making the Jewish holidays special.

Larry's wife, Joyce, remembers her mother-in-law as being so special in the way she made her feel like a daughter, something she appreciated, having lost her own mother too early in her life. Larry and Joyce's daughter, Jessica, lovingly remembers her grandmother's very distinctive laugh, kind-of high pitched, coming from the belly. She really enjoyed laughing. In laughter, there is holiness. Gladys also *shepped naches* from Jessica's admission to prestigious Stanford University.

Gladys' other youngest grandson, Michael, treasured his grandmother's smile. Through her smile, she would make others smile as well. He, along with all the grandchildren, spoke of their grandmother's limitless generosity. Harry said that her motto was "shop to you drop." But not necessarily for herself, but rather for the grandchildren. Both her children agreed that at her essence, Gladys was generosity personified.

Aside from *shepping naches* for her children and grandchildren, in later years, she developed a great love of traveling with Harry. Together they have experienced every continent around the world, spent an entire month living in China, traveled to exotic places like Fiji, and toured every country in Europe. But what gave Gladys the greatest pleasure was her nine visits to the State of Israel. Harry said more than anything, she absolutely loved the people of Israel. They excited her.

The other love of her later years was her art. She began with paint and later, after moving to Florida, explored sculpture, moving from stone to clay, from primitive to modern, with special attention given to faces, especially the faces of women. Perhaps after seeing to the needs of her children and husband, she could now take that tremendous energy and redirect it into her creativity. Her artistic expression was boundless and her works of art are a great pleasure to her children and grandchildren. In art, she also found the holy, the Divine.

She, partnered with Harry, has been a force for tremendous good in the Wilmington Jewish community. The Zutz leadership in the Jewish Federation, Jewish Community Center, B'nai Brith, the Avoda Club, Beth Shalom, and especially the Kutz Home, has been legendary. Their generosity has been the source of great holiness in this community.

There is a wonderful Midrash about last week's Torah portion which really personified Gladys. The Hebrew name for the portion is called "*Vayikra*". It is Hebrew for "and God called Moses out." If you look at the Torah text, the last letter of this word, the aleph, is written much

smaller than the other letters. The Rabbis developed a lovely story about why this letter is smaller. It seems that Moses did not wish to be singled out as being more special than his fellow Israelites. When he read that God was calling him out from among his fellow Israelites, Moses asked God to retract the word. God explained that once written, God could not undo the sentence in the Bible. But out of deference to Moses, God caused the aleph to appear smaller, to represent Moses' humility. In the same vein, I had wanted to sing the traditional "Woman of Valor", *Ayshet Hayil*, for Gladys, but it seem that she had made it very clear to Harry and her kids that she would never want to be remembered that way, because she could never measure up to that super woman, first mentioned in the Book of Proverbs. Marsha, in retrospect, could not help but comment on the irony, because in truth, her mother truly was deserving of being called a woman of valor.

Her sudden passing of a cerebral hemorrhage came as quite a shock for her family. In our Midrashic tradition, it said that it was the patriarch Jacob who first prayed for illness preceding death, so that he could take proper leave of his children and tell them everything that was in his heart. Although Gladys' passing was very sudden, both her children, and all four of her grandchildren all agree that Gladys did not need a long, prolonged illness to prod her into letting her loved ones know what she thought of them. Gladys had long ago made her feelings quite clear – they all knew and experienced her tremendous love for them, son and daughter in-law included.

I began my talk about Gladys by using the words of Leviticus to explore the holiness in her life. The last word is love. Members of the Jewish community felt it in her graciousness, Jew and Gentile alike experienced in the oft-repeated observation: "she was a lovely lady". But most importantly her family felt her love in the care, generosity and thoughtfulness she directed towards them, and especially to Harry. She was indeed a source for holiness. *Zichrona l'vracha*: May her memory be for a blessing as she continues her journey from this world to the next.