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Eulogy for Howard Rein z'l

Delivered by his son, David, on December 28, 2016

As I stand here today, speaking on behalf of my family, I would like to thank Hashem for how blessed we have been for the life and love of my father.

Born in 1942, my father was a war baby. His mother, my Grandma Pearl, was afraid of the German bombs falling on London's East End, so she and my Grandpa Abe, moved to the relative safety of Leeds. There, my father was born. My Grandpa Abe, had a store on Chapeltown Road where my Dad must have learned the values of stamina and hard work, which he exhibited all his life.

The childhood he told us about was a happy one, full of playing football, rugby and cricket and watching his beloved Leeds United and Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

He went on to Leeds University Medical School. We never really heard much about his studies. Only the friendships, some of which lasted a lifetime, and the practical jokes, such as taking skeletons on a bus or putting teacher's cars on the building's roof.

He met my Mum on a bus in Leeds. She was the most beautiful girl from Allerton High School and he made sure that he was invited to the same party as her that night. They went on to marry after he graduated Leeds Medical School and they settled in Bournemouth. At first, they lived in Toft Mansions on the East Cliff, then Huntly Road, and then Talbot Avenue, where they lived happily together for almost 40 years.

My sisters and I grew up as doctor's children. That meant having breakfast with my Dad as he read medical journals packed with truly revolting pictures of skin conditions, blood, pus, and disfigurements. When his patients had especially interesting conditions, he took photographic slides, which he'd sometimes send to medical journals, and which made for a particularly stomach-churning slide-show.

Whenever we were unwell, we were usually told it was "nothing" and would go away by itself. Of course, sometimes it really was nothing. Once, Sarah and I tried to avoid cheder by drawing felt tip measles on each other's faces. That didn't quite fool him. However, once I had such an explosive case of mumps that he took a picture for his slide show. That's how I knew, medically speaking, that I'd made it into the big time.

His life was characterized by incredible sacrifice and dedication to helping others - certainly not the stereotype of an only child. As a General Practitioner for decades to thousands of patients across many of the town's poorer areas, he gave advice and comfort to generations of numerous families at their most difficult times. Not that he would ever say or suggest it,



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but he saved countless lives through his devotion.

As if being a GP were not more than a full time job, he then combined that with serving as a Police Surgeon for Poole for decades. This meant thousands more days and nights on call, and continual trips back and forth to police stations, crime scenes and courts. As children, it seemed like he never got a full night's sleep and never got a weekend off. We got used to eating dinner at 9 and that a phone call could call him away at a moment's notice.

Through all of this, he was extraordinary about maintaining his patients' privacy and dignity. While numerous friends and members of the shul were patients, I really have no idea exactly who, and certainly never heard anything about anyone's condition. With that in mind, I think he could never understand how confidential shul board business could become widely known within minutes of a meeting.

As children, we treasured our time with him. We loved his sense of humor, his spot-on animal impressions (which he probably never shared with you), and his funny stories and jokes - always funny, without ever being cruel. I grew up reading the newspaper with him, listening to the radio news as he drove me to school, and then the TV news. My whole life, he was my go-to person to discuss and debate ideas and current events. When reading the news in the future, it will be strange and empty knowing I cannot discuss it with him.

Beyond family and his profession, his life revolved around shul and his Judaism. Somehow he found time to serve on the shul board for years, as shul Treasurer, as Chair of the Education committee, as the unofficial shul doctor with a medical room at shul, as a leader of the Shul Aid fundraising committee, as a leader of the Magen David Adom and Technion organizations in the town and in countless other roles. I think some of his proudest and most meaningful memories were of his trips to bring support and supplies to the Jewish community in Soviet Leningrad, especially in light of their later freedom.

Shabbos and Yom Tov was a time we always loved spending together. Many of our happiest memories will be our laughter and discussion at Friday night dinner and Shabbos lunch. Time spent building, decorating and eating in the Succah. Seders with family and friends. Fasting together on Yom Kippur.

As he grew older, the father turned into a father-in-law and a grandfather seven times over. My father loved Howard, Dave and Diane as sons and daughters and they have repaid him with incredible acts of menshlikeit and love. My father was very proud that all 7 of his grandchildren attend Jewish schools. Even though they are in three different continents, my Dad travelled the world to be at all of their important events and to inspire that generation just as he inspired mine.

He also had more time to spend on his intellectual passions. His book collection grew and grew, as any visitor to the house cannot miss. And from almost the very first day of his retirement to his last he pursued his Masters and then Ph.D in Jewish History, culminating



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in him becoming Dr. Dr. Rein only a short time ago.

A life should not be characterized by its ending or by disease. However, there are some thoughts I want to share about this challenging year.

We found out his diagnosis on a Friday in February. Doctors are not the best patients - perhaps because they have seen the cruelty of disease too many times - and he certainly didn't sugar-coat for us the likely outcome or how rapidly it could occur. That night, I thought about how many times my Dad had made kiddush for us and I couldn't bring myself to say the words. Instead, my son Oliver stepped up and made kiddush for us.

We had planned to host everyone for Pesach two months later in New York. Truthfully, we didn't know whether he would make it that long. My wife, Diane, insisted to me that, whatever were to happen, we should instead have Pesach together as a family in Bournemouth and that we should do it in a way that imposed the least burden possible on my Mum. Somehow, operating remote control from New York, Melbourne and London, Diane, Sarah and Annabel pulled it off.

At the Seders, my Dad was the one who couldn't bring himself to say kiddush and so this time I had to step up. We had an emotional, joyous and memorable Pesach with all seven grandchildren there for my father.

We didn't know what the future held, but knew the prognosis was bad. It was truly a miracle that, until about two weeks ago, the disease had not progressed. At Pesach, I don't think any of us expected to make it to Chanukah, but for three nights we lit an electric menorah in his hospital room and he heard his grandchildren sing Ma'ah Tzor one last time. It seemed fitting that, just as we commemorate the oil that unexpectedly lasted 8 days on Chanukah, so too we were thankful for the 8 months that we had with my father between Pesach and Chanukah. On the third night of Chanukah, which we expected would be his last, we added a Shehechianu bracha to thank Hashem for allowing us all to reach this season.

Throughout this period, people often asked me "How is your Mum?" The only truthful answer was "Unbelievable." Her strength, unflappability and dignity have been inspirational. She devoted herself to my Dad her whole life, but this past year it was absolute. Married 48 years, they didn't quite reach their golden wedding, but their marriage was stronger than diamond.

I have more people to thank than I could possibly mention.

His devoted friends, who I won't mention by name, but many of whom he has known for decades. Your kindness was incredible. You helped with meals, with making our house safe for my Dad, with getting him over the line with his Ph.d, and most of all with morale.



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To Rabbi Jesner and Pamela, who offered not just spiritual advice and support, but deep friendship and kindness. And to my own Rabbi, Dale Polakoff and his wife Ellen, who incredibly are on their way from New York to support us at the shiva, which is truly a great honor for my father.

I want to deeply thank those who have prayed and davened for my Dad over the year, including those around the world who told me they davened for him daily, when they lit Shabbat candles, or when they were at the Kotel. I'm sure their actions contributed to his long reprieve from the worst effects of illness, as did all of your words and deeds of kindness over the year.

To our families:

My sisters and their families for their incredible support. Annabel was constantly shuttling between Bournemouth and London, made everything happen, and my brother-in-law Dave has been a true mensch, doing the tasks in the house that my Dad could not do.

Sarah has come back and forth from Australia multiple times over the year, was always on the phone to support my Dad despite the time difference, and her husband Howard even took the time to visit my Dad in Bournemouth when visiting his own gravely ill father in Manchester, who we now miss dearly.

To my wife, Diane, for her kindness, good advice, and ability to get things done. And to my children for their extraordinary support. Just to give an example, yesterday they visited my father in hospital, only a few hours before he left us, and sang the three verses of the Shema to him. Then, when my father returned home for the last time yesterday evening, they sat with him and said tehillim all night long.

The true legacy of my father will be the good deeds of the generations that follow. On that score, it will be some legacy indeed.

From Alexander, Oliver and Sophia

Hello, my name is Alexander and this is my brother Oliver and my sister Sophia, and we would like to take a moment to reflect on everything our Grandpa has taught us. Although we may live a few thousand miles away in New York, we still feel extremely close to him. Whether in person or over the phone, we loved sharing with him what we learned in school, getting his medical advice for our various and frequent injuries, or just chatting about the perpetual misfortunes of his favorite football club, Leeds United. The week before my bar mitzvah, our family dedicated a Sefer Torah to our four grandparents, and we were honored to have Grandpa write in one of the final letters.



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Grandpa was subsequently called up to that Torah at both Oliver's and my own bar mitzvah when we read the Torah, and was also present when my sister read Megillat Esther at her bat mitzvah. We were always excited to have Grandpa at our house every year for Sukkot. In fact, this time last year we were privileged to spend Chanukah with him at our house in Great Neck. Though Grandpa taught us many lessons, it was his Ahavat Yisrael, his love for Israel, that stood out.

I think anybody who has visited the Library of Congress knows it pales in comparison to Grandpa's library of Jewish history. Grandpa loved to tell us stories of his visits to Israel when it was still in its infancy, such as when he saw blown up tanks in the desert from Israel's numerous wars. His connection to Israel added another layer of meaning to when we prayed for his health last summer at the Kotel, and will be constantly on my mind during my upcoming trip to Israel.

Thus, we think it is fitting to remember him on Chanukah, a holiday closely connected to the story of Israel. Though most people associate Chanukah with the miracle of oil lasting eight nights, Chanukah is really a story of Jewish independence. For hundreds of years following the Babylonian expulsion, various foreign empires ruled Israel, and the Jews suffered religious persecution. In response, the Chashmonaim led a successful revolt, giving the Jewish people political sovereignty over Israel. A similar story occurred almost 2000 years later in 1948, with the founding of the modern State of Israel.

Now, for the first time since the story of Chanukah, the Jewish people are once again sovereign in Israel. To us, and our grandfather, these victories against all odds were the true miracles of Chanukah. We will always remember our Grandpa for his humor and kindness, but most of all, his seemingly unending knowledge of Jewish history, and his devotion to the Jewish people. Just a few days ago, we had the privilege of lighting Chanukah candles by his hospital bedside one final time, a mitzvah that was fitting of Grandpa's legacy. May his legacy of Ahavat Yisrael, as well as his love for everyone continue to be a blessing to us, to our people, and to the world. Amen.

I would like to read a few words written by my 15 year old cousin Mia Singer from Melbourne, Australia:

I have so many happy memories of my Grandpa Howard. I remember when I was little and sitting with him at a wedding, he let me cover all of his face with stickers. He really would do anything to make me smile. He continually made me laugh with his dry sense of humour.

He would do anything to make me feel special, apart from letting me win board games! He always beat me and never let me win! However, I once remember playing the Mastermind game with him and beating him! I said "Grandpa, how did I beat you?" He said "Mia, I'm



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colour blind!"

He was the smartest person that I ever met. I find it truly inspirational that after his diagnosis he continued to finish his PhD. A true example of persistence, that will always drive and inspire me.

Even though we lived far away, we got to spend lots of happy times together. I loved it when Grandma & Grandpa came to stay with us in Australia. They came for so many weeks that it felt like they were actually living in the same City as us, which I loved. We spoke regularly on the phone and despite the distance I always felt very close to him.

Grandpa Howard's kindness to so many people over the years reflects so much in the way that my Mum has brought up me and my sister Lila. I hope to live my life in a way that would make him proud.

2nd night shiva speech, Marcelle

This coming Shabbat we will read the Parsha of Tazria-Metzora. The beginning of Parshat Tazria culminates one of the sections of laws about purity. Purity is a theme of Sefer Vayikra, and is a matter which the Torah discusses in great length, which may beg the question why is Judaism so obsessed with purity?

The Ketav Sofer gives one answer that is very pertinent. On a pure biological level, humans are not so different from animals. The difference comes because man is entrusted with a specific task by Hashem, and this gives him a higher spiritual position than other animals. Whilst man is engaged in achieving his task a part of the Shechina (Divine presence) dwells inside him, and this is the "Tzelem Elokim"- being in the image of G-d. Like we treat shuls as being different and more special and holy than other buildings because part of the Shechina rests there, likewise humans are different to other creatures because they are made holy by the presence of the Shechina in them. At the end of life, when a person has completed their appointed task, their soul, and the bit of the Shechina that was within them, returns to Hashem.

Yesterday Grandpa's soul returned to Hashem, after a life filled with so many great and wonderful things, that I would like to believe that he achieved far, far more than the task which was assigned to him!

I have very vivid memories from when I was younger of Grandpa saying that he was delivered from his terrible ordeal during the war with a specific task from Hashem - to go and help others.

This he did, in many ways, financially, personally, and by being generally kind, thoughtful



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and considerate of the needs of others. Over the past couple of days we have heard many stories of my Grandpa's wonderful actions, and I am sure that we will continue to hear more throughout the week.

Grandpa had incredibly strong Emmanah in Hashem. Many people live their life believing in Hashem, but it is a life that largely follows through the motions; keeping Shabbat, going to shul, keeping a Kosher home, and so on. Grandpa's faith was never running through the motions, He had a true personal relationship with "his friend upstairs", a kind of relationship that is incredibly rare and very special. Grandpa always understood fully that he was not in control and did not call the shots; Hashem directed his way in life.

Because of this great belief, Grandpa also said that when his time came to return to his Maker he could face this without fear. As Grandpa never thought that he was in control, he was satisfied that Hashem knew best. This was never a censored subject, or a taboo, but a simple fact. Grandpa internalised more fully than most that his destiny was not his to decide, but lay in the hands of Hashem.

Grandpa was blessed to have a large and loving family, who respected and admired him greatly. I hope that this thought is of comfort to everyone, and that we can all take forward this very strong belief and faith which so characterised my Grandpa.