

Remarks on the Passing of Malkah Schulweis
By Sylvia Bernstein-Tregub, Chair of the Harold M Schulweis Institute
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We, we are the fortunate ones. We, who have a friend whom we admire and care for. Whose judgement we trust and whose wise counsel we rely upon. We are the fortunate ones who are left to mourn because the memories, while very painful, are also very beautiful. Malkah was such a friend, she was my friend and this was a friendship that grew through the years, and I do miss her. As our husbands became ill and very sadly passed away, we looked to each other for support and comfort which was given lovingly and unfailingly.

Malkah's home was warm and welcoming, tastefully appointed and open to host community, student, faculty and synagogue events. She was a most gracious hostess who generously shared many favorite recipes and culinary tips while also forging a new model for the role of a rabbi's wife. Rabbi Schulweis and their children Eitan and Cindy, Seth and Esther, Aylisa and Peter and her grandchildren and great grand children were the joys of her life. And the love was reciprocal for each day she would receive a call from at least one of them. For her 90th birthday she gathered the family together from near and very far as they celebrated a happy and very meaningful reunion. Professionally, Malkah was a respected therapist and a brilliant and sought-after educator equally at home on a university campus, in a child's classroom and on this Valley Beth Shalom bimah. Following morning Shabbat services, congregants lined up to speak even briefly with her and she remained gracious and generous with her time and counsel.

One of my pre-Covid memories was of sitting with Malkah during services each Shabbat morning. She had always read the Shabbat

par'sha during the week and came prepared to discuss a passage. She would follow the chanting... line by line and then stop, pointing at a word and say excitedly, "Look, look at that." And of course I did. "I never noticed that before. Our sages were truly wonderful. Judaism is such a rich and vibrant tradition." And then she would explain what that phrase meant to her and how it was as relevant today as when it was first written. In addition to the many books she read, each morning she would also read the NYTimes and when we would talk, often on a daily basis, after we reassured each other of each family's well-being, she would suddenly ask if I had read Tom Friedman's column in the OpEd section and we would commiserate on the sorry state of world affairs. Even when her health was in decline, to the best of her ability, she kept current and engaged. During the Covid lockdown it became harder to keep in touch and sadly we spoke less frequently. Each time we did I feared it would be the last and so I was delighted, as was she, when Seth arranged for us to speak just last week. And we savored each minute of our conversation which indeed proved to be our last.

Several months ago, while too ill to watch, Malkah was very pleased when I shared with her that the synagogue had continued the tradition of annually marking the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Schulweis. In years past a noted Jewish leader and scholar was invited to teach. Due to Covid, we presented, which proved to be, a highly acclaimed Zoom Havdallah service and program commemorating his 6th yahrtzeit. Accessible on The Schulweis Institute and VBS website, as well as on Facebook and Youtube, this program was viewed by over 1400 people. We asked the viewers to be the teachers and share their Schulweis stories. It was a very moving exercise that was followed by many requests to do this again... which is under consideration. Now, I mention this because as many of you know, this technology was way beyond Malkah's comprehension, just using a cell phone was a challenge, but she was

absolutely delighted and somewhat amazed that all of this worked_and that it enabled the Schulweis Institute and Valley Beth Shalom to continue to make the Rabbi's moral vision, his profound teaching and his poetry available to scholars and students and to all of us throughout the world. This was the Institute's and Malkah's mission. But as for herself, Malkah was very modest and I do recall how much convincing it took when Valley Beth Shalom chose to honor her a few years ago. I do admit that we were all a bit nervous, because, after all, this was for Malkah and we set the bar very high.

In the preface to Rabbi Schulweis' keepsake book *From Prose to Poetry*, that contains over 100 of his poems, he wrote and, I now excerpt, "these poems remind us that we are more than atoms and molecules. We are the light and language of God". And on the occasion of their anniversary, he dedicated this poem entitled "Yet" (For Malkah) that concluded with

We have reached the –
The harvest of many years
Children and children's children now
Dance and play before us
And in their eyes we see yet another part of ourselves
The best is yet to be.

Malkah was blessed and remains a blessing to all of us who were touched by her presence. We were and remain the fortunate ones.

Sylvia Bernstein-Tregub.

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