

For Now and Forever



A number of years ago I watched the ceremonies as political control of Hong Kong

was (re)turned from the United Kingdom to China. A friend at the time had an interesting comment. He remarked how the British, who agreed to accept sovereignty over Hong Kong for 99 years, must have thought at the time of their agreement that the day would never come. But the Chinese took the longer view. And the day did come...

Sometimes as I stare at the headlines in a newspaper I wonder: which story here will stand the test of time? Which one of these important items will anyone remember next year? In five years? In 50 years?

Sometimes we spend energy and effort and passion on issues which loom large in the moment, but fade as the months and years go by. Indeed, some of what seem to be the cruelest cuts, the keenest hurts, some of what we worry about the most shrinks into far less significance with the passage of time.

But sometimes there is an issue, or an article—buried behind the current intrigues or somewhere in the back of the paper as likely as not—which we will come across, and we might not give it much thought at all, yet

that is the item which we will remember decades from now.

This year the Board of Trustees of Temple Shalom took a significant step. It happened in the middle of the Capital/Endowment Campaign (well, that is one which will remain with us for years as well, we hope), it took place while we were discussing other things. But it is a decision that this congregation will look back on with a longer view, as one of the most significant decisions in a very long time. I refer now to our recent acquisition of a Temple Shalom cemetery, a designated synagogue section at Garden of Remembrance Memorial Park. (And a special word of thanks to our congregation's cemetery committee, ably headed by Marta Tanenhaus, for making this happen!)

Now it is true, of course, that in the nearly half a century since the founding of our congregation, members have chosen to be buried in many different area cemeteries. And it is true, as well, that many of our current members have already purchased plots in other places. All of this will continue, and every family will make the decision that makes the most sense for themselves.

But I take a longer view, for a moment. The time will come, I believe, many (and it really should be many!) years from now, when someone will walk the grounds of Garden of Remembrance, and see all the different synagogue sections there. These hypothetical future strollers will look out at the Temple Shalom section, and be able to peek into what will then be our past. They will see a

place not just of individual markers, but of communal history. They will see a piece of who we by then will have been... because of the decision we took this year. Just a few months ago. There are other places in this Shofar as well as the last one where you can read more about the details and the arrangements, the rules and regulations governing our section of Garden of Remembrance, and the decisions the congregation has had to make about the cemetery. And now that we have a synagogue cemetery, there will be an effort, some time in the quite near future, to update and revise the very good work once put together by a congregant named Sid Levine, to detail in a concise and very helpful way all the questions and customs which arise at a time of loss, in a Funeral Practices guide. (Many of you may well have ideas or suggestions or questions which you think such a guide should cover; please feel free to forward your ideas to me at rabbifeshbach@templeshalom.net.) Details surround us—and the details of making arrangements are certainly important.

But for this moment what I am left with is simply an image: it is an image of the passage of time, of the tomorrows that will someday be yesterdays, and of quiet comfort and a sense of pride in a decision by a board, a step by a congregation. It is a vision of the future, and a job well done now.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael L. Feshbach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rabbi Michael L. Feshbach