

CEMETERY DEDICATION TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

Barbara Saragovitz, Temple Shalom Cemetery Committee

It was the 18th of Tishrei 5765, October 3, 2004, when we marked a significant congregational milestone by dedicating the Temple Shalom Cemetery at Garden of Remembrance. From beginning to end, the Dedication was special, providing a collective sense of pride and belonging. We were not mourning; but rather acknowledging our responsibility as Jews and as a congregation, as well as addressing our new level of maturity by providing a place of peace for our loved ones.

Starting things off, Sheldon I. Grosberg, Executive Director of Garden of Remembrance, welcomed Temple Shalom for joining the other 12 congregations in making ... "a covenant with the visionaries of the past and the generations of the future." Rabbi Feshbach then took the podium and expressed deep appreciation to all the volunteers and congregational leaders whose efforts on the Temple Shalom Cemetery Committee brought us to this day.

He and Rabbi Serotta then led us in prayer setting the tone, while Cantor Tasat's voice added meaning to the words. When opening prayers and responsive readings were completed, we heard remarks from three distinguished Temple leaders – Rabbi Feshbach, Temple President, Marilyn Ripin, and Cemetery Committee Chair, Marta Tanenhaus.

Two themes threaded through their speeches repeatedly pulling the occasion together. First was *Chesed shel emet* – support and services that help and comfort a bereaved family. In her remarks, Temple President, Marilyn Ripin said, "Since Abraham purchased the Cemetery of the Patriarchs at Cave Machpela, Jewish communities have tended first to the establishment of a proper Jewish cemetery." For years the Temple has provided solace and support to the bereaved except one thing was missing – a Temple Shalom place to bury our loved ones. As Marilyn reminded us, "Today...we fulfill our personal and community obligation as Jews to care for the dead.

The other theme was how a cemetery links us to our personal and communal histories – a catalyst for stirring memories and sharing stories. Marta Tanenhaus, Chair of the Temple Shalom Cemetery Committee, shared why she chose to lead the effort to



establish a cemetery. "I wanted to help create for my new Temple community what my family and I have with my parents' congregation in upstate New York. . . [N]ow, I visit that cemetery at least twice a year, and at those times, revisit the history of my family and the Jewish community. As I place a stone on each grave I visit, memories of my childhood and family and religious life flood back. I take my children with me and am able to tell them rich stories about their relatives and their lives in our Jewish community. It is a great gift to have this visual and emotional history of my family roots and that of my community."

With our own memories whirling in our heads, we walked to the actual site of the Temple Shalom Cemetery to "turn a simple earthen plot into a sacred space." Director of Education, JoHanna Potts opened this part of the Dedication discussing the importance of what we were about to do as well as the significance to us as a congregation. She reminded us of how our actions will help to demonstrate the power of the Jewish lifecycle.

Cemetery Committee members and their families symbolically linked us all to our ancestors and the land of our people's birth by scattering soil collected by Temple members from across Israel. As Rabbi Feshbach reminded us, "We infuse this place with sanctity by establishing here a bond with all the generations of our people, a bond rooted in both the soil and the spirit of Jewish life."

With the amazing voices of the Shir Shalom choir and his guitar, Cantor Tasat led us in singing Psalms 16 and 23. Simply put, a highlight of the Dedication.

Preparing for the final part of the day's ceremony, Rabbi Serotta provided teachings from

the Torah, setting a context for our visit to the Ganizah, the place where Jews bury old and damaged books and materials containing God's name. Once again, we walked. We transported ourselves down the path to the Garden of Remembrance Ganizah. Young and old passed books and materials to the grounds person who laid them in the Ganizah. As is our Jewish custom when we bury something sacred, each person put a trowel's worth of dirt (also from Israel) on top of the items. Rabbi Serotta led the Kaddish De-Rabbanan prayer and there we ended a moving, spiritual day.

As Temple President, Marilyn Ripin said "It is fitting and appropriate that we meet here today to dedicate the Temple Shalom cemetery garden during the festival of Sukkot. Surely our cemetery represents the final hope that God will always spread over each of us a shelter—a Sukkot—of peace."

For more information about the Temple Shalom Cemetery at Garden of Remembrance or to purchase plots, please call Susan Zemsky, Executive Director, at (301) 587-2273.

IN THE COMMUNITY

How to Get a Job With the Federal Government - presented by a Certified Federal Job Search Trainer. Workshop is 2 sessions. Session I - November 3rd, 6:30-8:30 PM, Federal Job Search and Resume. Session II - November 10th, 6:30-8:30 PM, Writing Effective KSA's. Cost is \$35 per workshop for JCC members, \$40 for non-members. Participants must sign up for both sessions. Call the JCC at 301-348-3860 and register for program 04FSC004.

And don't forget about our free Networking Group on 11/18, 6:30-7:30 at the JCC of Greater Washington. Our first meeting on 9/23 was a success and we welcome new participants! Call JVS at 301-587-9666 to register. [A](#)