

January 13, 2023 – כ' טבת תשס"ג

## HESPED for Els Bendheim by her daughter Debra Eisenberg

Our mother died in her hundredth year...B'Seivah tovah

אמא שלנו נפטרה בשיבה טובה בשנתה המאה

Our mother lived in good health ... with a far reaching scholarly and inquisitive mind.

She knew 8 languages... Dutch, English, Hebrew, French, German, Svitche Deutsch, Latin and Greek and she could switch between them effortlessly.

Part of the secret to her long life... aside from good genes...was her unending interest in what was going on around her and ....far afield from her

חלק מהסוד לחייה הארוכים - מלבד גנים טובים... היה העניין הבלתי פוסק שלה במתרחש סביבה...וגם דברים רחוקים ממנה

Our mother – Els Salomon Bendheim, daughter of Ivan and Sophie Prins Salomon.  
Sister to Robert, Erna, Theo and Herman.

Aunt to... Barbara and Jimmy A”H and Lillian, John, Oliver, Carla, Jack and Jonny.

A little background...

Our grandmother Sophie Wilhelmina Prins, a certified nurse in Amsterdam married the widower Ivan whose first wife succumbed to the Spanish flu in 1918... taking on his 3 young children as her own and then adding our mother and our uncle Herman to the blended family.

In 1938, our grandfather, with foresight, realized the need to leave Holland.

בשנת 1938, סבא שלנו, עם ראיית הנולד, הבין את הצורך לעזוב את הולנד.

From 1938 to 1939 he attempted three separate times to leave Amsterdam...finally succeeding in getting visas to Canada.

The family moved to Montreal.

### המשפחה עברה למונטריאול

Els – aged 15 – was furious as she loved her life in Holland – that love and strong connection remaining with her all through her adult life – no matter where she lived.

Els graduated Westmount High in Montreal and went on to McGill University.

At that time our grandfather was able to secure visas to the US and off they went again – children and assorted friends and relatives who had joined the household. They moved on to NY where our mother had transferred to Barnard College graduating with a BS in Chemistry.

During that time, her brother Robert befriended a Yankee - Charles – or Charlie as he was known by all... and the rest is history.

משם הם המשיכו לניו יורק, שם אמא התחילה ללמוד בברנרד קולג' עם תואר ראשון בכימיה.

במהלך אותה תקופה, אחיה רוברט התיידד עם מישהו אמריקאי - צ'ארלס - או צ'רלי כפי שכולם הכירו אותו... והשאר היסטוריה.

Our mother was so proud of her heritage – her lineage.

**She** set the tone for a healthy balance of Torah and Mada, both in our home and as a model for others.

אמא שלנו הייתה כל כך גאה במורשת שלה – בשושלת שממנה היא באה – והיא זאת שיצרה את הטון לאיזון בריא של תורה ומדע הן בביתנו והן כמודל לאחרים.

Always looking for more and more familial connections... Keeping up with everyone who remembered ...or didn't ...their connection with her.

Our late sister Judi often said that our mother remembered things about people that they had spent a lifetime trying to forget.

היא תמיד חיפשה עוד ועוד קשרים משפחתיים...ושמרה על קשר עם כל מי שזכר...וגם כאלה שלא...את הקשר שלהם איתה. אחותנו ז"ל ג'ודי אמרה לא פעם שאמינו זוכרת דברים על אנשים שהם ניסו כל חייהם לשכוח.

Our father... very American...our mother ..not so...

It was our mother who kept us out of school to give us skiing lessons on a little hill in Central Park - across the street from our apartment.

It was she, who skied in Switzerland as a child; who initiated and encouraged the family ski trips to Aspen and then Vail...without compromising halacha

Our mother, a true renaissance woman always had enormous intellectual curiosity... specifically... Jewish learning –

אבא שלנו... היה אמריקאי מאוד... אמא שלנו... לא כל כך...

אמא שלנו היא שהוציאה אותנו מבית הספר כדי לתת לנו שיעורי סקי על גבעה קטנה בסנטרל פארק - מול הדירה שלנו.

היא הייתה זו שגלשה בשוויץ בילדותה; שיזם ועודד את טיולי הסקי המשפחתיים לאספן ולאחר מכן וייל.

לאמא שלנו, אשת רנסנס ...תמיד הייתה סקרנות אינטלקטואלית עצומה במיוחד... ללימודי יהדות-

She edited numerous books for various Jewish and secular authors and authored books and an autobiography.

She never tired of getting involved in Mikveh, Eruv and any endeavor....anywhere around the world...and she never ever thought twice about calling anyone whom she felt might be relevant to the cause – day or night.

Our mother took on the anti- smoking campaign single handedly in Israel – designing and printing posters.... and then went from Yeshiva to yeshiva to hang them up.

She was a woman **way ahead of her time!**

Our parents were inextricably tied to Shaare Zedek and Yad Sarah.

Our mother's parents donated the first generator to Shaare Zedek in the old building and...

all those beautiful pictures of tulips adorning the walls in Shaare Zedek are our Mom's photography and she spent endless hours in the hospital supervising their placement.

American friends of Yad Sarah was established in her home more than 40 years ago. Our parents used to shlep boxes and suitcases from NY, filled with equipment.

Many of you here may have been enlisted as well to share in the shlepping.

הורינו היו קשורים קשר בל יינתק לשערי צדק וליד שרה. הוריה של אמנו תרמו את הגנרטור הראשון לשערי צדק בבניין הישן... וכל התמונות היפות של הטוליפים התלויות על קירות שערי צדק הן צילומים של אמא שלנו והיא בילתה שעות אינסופיות בבית החולים בפיקוח על הצבתם.

חברים אמריקאים של יד שרה הוקמה בביתה לפני יותר מ-40 שנה. ההורים שלנו נהגו להביא קופסאות ומזוודות מניו יורק, מלאים בציוד. ייתכן שרבים מכם כאן גויסו גם כן להשתתף בהובלה.

Our parents were part of the core group that established Manhattan Day School in New York.

Our parents were among the founders of Yeshiva University High School for Girls in Manhattan enabling many from the Tri-state area to have a more local option.

Our mother together with our father hosted ... we have no idea how many people, who would turn up for a day and often stay for years..

Helping anyone and everyone....which included many parties for singles – with successes – some here today...!

Just a week ago, she paid a shiva visit and offered to prepare food for the aveilim.

**She was an indomitable figure.**

Our parents taught us the value of hachnasat orchim and gemilut chasadim ...

...even though many a time we complained about being put out of our bedrooms as kids and sharing our home with ...sometimes whole families who were complete strangers

Fast forward, the seven of us and our spouses went on to build our own families - collectively A TRIBE .

ההורים שלנו חינכו אותנו לערכים של הכנסת אורחים וגמילות חסידים - למרות שפעמים רבות התלוננו על כך שהוצאנו מחדרי השינה שלנו כילדים וחלקנו את ביתנו עם... לפעמים משפחות שלמות שהיו זרים לחלוטין.

בדילוג קדימה, שבעתנו ובני הזוג שלנו - המשכנו לבנות את המשפחות שלנו – **ביחד נהיינו שבת**.

Our parents were delighted to have the noise and the tumult that came along with all of us.

Long Beach, their summer home – was a magnet. Manhattan, Riverdale and Jerusalem...all magnets....

The open house - and their unspoken creed.... if you make it easy to come – they come.

And we came.... and so did the grandchildren, the great grandchildren and the great greats.... and many many others – because it was made so welcoming ...

Just a few weeks ago – the chanukka party at Gan Rechavia...boasted almost 200 ... and Simchat Torah typically gets even more...

הבית הפתוח - והאמונה הבלתי נאמרת שלהם - .... אם אתה עושה את זה קל להגיע - הם יבואו. והגענו.... וכך גם הנכדים, הנינים ובני נינים... ורבים אחרים - כי זה נעשה כל כך בברכה... רק לפני כמה שבועות הייתה לנו מסיבת חנוכה בגן רחביה... והגיעו כמעט 200 אנשים מהמשפחה... ובשמחת תורה יש אפילו יותר!

Looking back....the endless supply of pizza bagels, ice cream ...barbeques, get-togethers.... the endless heap of dirty towels left behind, the indestructible furniture the almost ...."anything goes" policy.

The larger credit goes to our mother who managed the borderless establishment

As years went by – our parents began taking their grandchildren on a roots trip to Holland.

45 grandchildren and they all went to Holland to see the house on Van Eichenstraat where our mother grew up – much to the annoyance of the current owners.

Oma Els took everyone to see the tulips at Kukenhoff, to dress up in local costume in Volendam and of course to eat “neuve Haring”

אומה אלס לקחה את כולם לראות את הטוליפים ב Keukenhof-להתלבש בתחפושת מקומית ב -  
Volendam וכמובן לאכול "נובה הרינג"

Mommy, Oma Els...you never tired of this trip – you loved going and looked for any excuse for years to go back.

You have such wonderful memories that were never obliterated by all the ugliness that happened there. Frankly, Amsterdam was in many ways “home” for you.

We learned from our Mom not to be afraid to have an open house.

That Pesach cleaning was not the same as spring cleaning.

We learned the lesson of “hiddur mitzvah” in the feeling, the foods and the frolic of chaggim.

We certainly have all integrated those lessons and live them... and have passed them on to our offspring.

And time moved on...tennis was replaced by Rummikub and Othello – willing to play Shabbat afternoon with any and all of the grandchildren.

Ping pong persevered and many many passed through your portals either to beat an old woman or be beaten by one.

And the Yom Keif....what a magical day.

It was your idea, Mom, to mark Daddy's yartzheit with fun and activities for all. There is not one family member who would give it up.

It is the most amazing way to have brought... all of us together.

והיום כיף... איזה יום קסום. זה היה הרעיון שלך, אמא, לציין את יום הזיכרון של אבא בכיף ופעילויות לכולם ביחד.

אין בן משפחה אחד שיותר על זה. זו הדרך המדהימה ביותר להביא את כולנו יחד.

Our father, Opa Charlie ...died over 25 years ago – neither he nor you anticipated that you would outlive him this long.

You weren't a shut-in.... I don't think there was anyone invited to more bar or bat-mitzvas, weddings, and parties than you – you could have gone to a few every day and as you always said..... I'm so happy to go and **they** were truly happy you came...

Mom...your magic wand of connectivity is unmatched!

We are forever grateful for the care and constancy shown our mother over the years by Bernice – the constant in our mother's life, Rachel, Chana, Dvora, Anne and a special shout out to Yechiel for his enormous "staying power" – you all truly loved her.

Forgive us if we have not mentioned all the other people who were so instrumental in our mother's ongoing care.

Mommy...you were our model for so many things... a wonderful, giving and supportive mother-in-law to Harris, Giti, Barry, Marvin, Donna, Aver and Billy. You embraced all your mechutanim and shared in their smachot and sorrows. We are trying to follow in your footsteps.

To my siblings... and that clearly includes our spouses...We are quite an amazing team. May we remain so for many years to come.

ועכשיו...לשבת שהורינו, אומה אלס ואופה צ'רלי הביאו לעולם הזה....

אז...מה המורשת שלכם? מהי ניצחיות ההורים שלנו?

זכרו את הכנסת האורחים שלהם וכמה התעניינו באחרים...

זכרו את חשיבות המשפחה

זכרו את הדברים שהם עשו כדי לשמור על משפחתם ביחד... איך הם יצרו הזדמנויות בשביל כולכם להיות יחד

זכרו כיצד הם הרחיבו ושיפרו את עולמכם...את חייכם

זכרו - זה לא תמיד קשור למה שאתה עושה - אלא איך אתה עושה את זה

זכרו...המורשת שלכם!

And now ...to the tribe our parents ...and your Oma Els and Opa Charlie brought to this world...

So...What is your legacy?

What is our parents' nitzchiyut?

**Remember** their hachnasat orchim and how interested they were in others...

**Remember** the importance of family

**Remember** the things they did to keep their family together ... bringing you all together

**Remember** how they expanded and enhanced your world...your lives

**Remember** - It's not always about what you do - but rather how you do it

**Remember**...this is your legacy!

MOMMY

נוחי בשלום על משכבך

תהי' זכרה ברובה ויתהא נשמתה צרורה בצרור הסיים

And finally, one of our mother's favorite songs is Shir HaMaalot...

**Kids...take it away**