

Honoring Henry Weinberg on his 90th birthday
January 12, 2020

It is my pleasure to speak to you about our friend Henry today. We have just celebrated the holiday of Chanukah where we are expected to increase light in the world – to brighten our community through each of us being a candle. Henry has been a candle for so many years and been one of the brightest lights in our community. He is truly a partner with God in the repair of our world.

He demonstrates his light through his many acts of loving kindness.

We know that Henry is a man of strong feelings. You never have to ask, “Henry, how do you really feel about this?” When he is happy or pleased, he doesn’t just say it’s good – he says it’s “outstanding!” Occasionally – rarely, he’s unhappy or displeased and he will say, “I’m very upset about...” He’s also been known to shed a tear or two or three or more – especially about his pride in his children and grandchildren.

Henry’s priorities are his family, synagogue and community. In our Torah portion this week, at the end of the book of Genesis, about Jacob’s death; the Torah stresses that Family is prior to all else.

Family is the most important part of Henry’s life. Judaism stresses; from Generation to Generation, linking us to our past and future. Henry’s grandparents were among the founders of the Synagogue. His father was president of the congregation. His father and uncle both chaired the cemetery committee. Their service has been a model for him to both follow and then teach to

new generations. Henry demonstrates great respect for those who came before him and truly honors them.

We are taught in the *Shema – Vischenantom L'vanecha*, “you shall teach them diligently to your children.” Henry has passed along his love of Judaism and its teachings to his children and to the joy of his life, his grandchildren. Like Jacob, he blesses them all. He is also a teacher/mentor for many of our children as they prepare for B'nai Mitzvah.

With the Synagogue, Henry has followed his father's example as President of the congregation and has been the ritual chair. Perhaps his greatest service is with the Cemetery Committee where he has been the chair for 40 years. Henry cares for the cemetery just as he would his own home. He treats every family who is burying a loved one as if it was his own family.

With our community, Henry grew up here. He was in business for 38 years in the downtown and worked with the state Treasurer's office for 15 years. He worked with many service clubs. He is a Historian on the downtown and on the Jewish community.

Everybody knows Henry. When you go out with him, people are always greeting him or he is saying hello to them. He doesn't always remember their names but they know him.

When they wintered in Florida, he was active in the community there too. I cringed when he told me that he was a COP. I felt better when he explained that it was the Civilian Observation Patrol (COP), and that he didn't carry a weapon!

After his retirement, Henry devoted more time to service here in Altoona. He volunteered at the UPMC Emergency Department.

They love him there! Of course, it helps that he is always bringing them trays of Maxine's cookies. He also volunteered with SCORE and continued to work with students on their Torah Portions. He also has more time for his joy of being with his grandchildren, especially the twins.

I began my remarks by stating that Henry was a bright light and good partner with God in making a better world. I want to conclude by saying to Henry – You aren't just a good partner, you are outstanding!