

The following text is the beautiful and fitting eulogy written by and delivered by Rabbi David Glanzberg-Krainin, religious leader of Beth Sholom Congregation, at the funeral of longtime ZOA member and ardent Zionist Mae Linder Lobel, who passed away on March 26.

There's a Hebrew word that was coined in the late 30's and 40's that captures something essential about **Mae Lobel** (of blessed memory). The word I am referring to is **Sabra**—and it refers to someone who was born in what was then called Palestine—and in what is today the State of Israel. To this very day, if you are born in the State of Israel, you are called a **Sabra**. Native-born Israelis are called **Sabras** because in that part of the world there is a tenacious, thorny desert plant, called a **tzabar**—a plant in English we know as a prickly pear. A **tzabar** is actually a cactus that has a thick and tenacious exterior skin which conceals a sweet, softer interior. Native-born Israelis are given that name because they are supposedly tough on the outside, but delicate and sweet on the inside.

In my mind **Mae Lobel** was constitutionally a **Sabra**—first and foremost because her love for—and her defense of—the State of Israel was at the center of her entire being. **Mae** was a fierce advocate for the State of Israel—and **Mae** had very little tolerance for those who were critical of Israel and Israelis. But on a deeper level, any of us who knew **Mae Lobel** would tell you that any of that occasionally toughness on the outside that you saw was simply a result of the *fierceness of her values*. For when you took the time to truly understand who **Mae** was as a person, it was deeply evident that beneath that fierce exterior and those passionate convictions was a woman who was both sweet and soft on the inside.

And so as we mourn the passing of **Mae Lobel** this morning, we mourn a woman who lived a life of deep conviction and true courage; someone who was loving, caring, devoted and who possessed of a remarkable inner strength. A

woman who was both fierce in her convictions and loving at her core who took great joy in the gift of her life. **Mae Lobel** leaves behind a legacy both of fighting for the things that mattered most in her life while at the same time being filled with contentment for the many gifts that she believed she had experienced in her life. For these reasons, the pain of **Mae Lobel's** passing is tempered only by the appreciation for the passion with which she lived.

We can't tell you what year **Mae** was born because she never liked to reveal her age. But we can tell you that **Mae** was the youngest of four children born to **Mary and David Linder**, and that she grew up in Bayonne, NJ. **Mae** was raised in a traditionally observant Jewish home; her father went to minyan every morning at the Orthodox synagogue. **Mae** graduated from Bayonne H.S. and then attended New York University where she earned a degree in Dietetics. Had she been born a decade later, **Mae** would have undoubtedly gone to medical school. She was an astute observer of how the human body works. There were several occasions in her life when friends would have illnesses that no physician was able to diagnose that **Mae** was somehow able to figure out what was wrong. After graduating from NYU, **Mae** went to work for the VA as a dietician and later became a supervisor at the VA hospital.

Mae wound up meeting the love of her life **Sy** at the Tamamint Resort. **Mae** was scheduled to go with a friend who got sick at the last minute so **Mae** went without her. One night at dinner **Mae** was conversing with a woman who happened to know a gentleman that she introduced to **Mae**. After a conversation that lasted for several hours, **Sy** went back to his room and told a friend that he had just met the woman that he was going to marry. Within six months of that

meeting, **Mae and Sy** were married thus beginning a partnership that would last for the next 32 years until **Sy's** passing 28 years ago.

Sy had a job working at the Naval Air Development Center in Warminster so the two moved to the Philadelphia area—first settling in Lynnewood Gardens—and then moving to the house in Huntingdon Valley where **Mae** would live for the next 57 years. First **Susan** arrived on the scene, then along came **Eve, Beth and Judith. Mae** adored parenting her daughters. She had an incredible gift for taking the routine and turning it into the magical. Going out for ice cream in the summer could turn into an occasion for a party. Putting on some music could easily turn into a dance party. **Mae** would be the first to tell you that the most important thing she did with her life was being a mother to her four children.

But **Mae's** life was defined by far more than her role as a mother—important as that was to her. **Mae** loved nature and spending time Down the Shore at LBI and North Haven where she looked forward to the magnificent sunsets. **Mae** appreciated the arts and culture—there were frequent trips to concerts, to museums, and to art exhibitions. And **Mae** was an activist through and through. **Mae** made sure that she and the family never missed celebrating Israel's Independence Day. **Mae** helped to found many local chapters of Zionist organizations including the Philadelphia chapter of the ZOA. **Mae's** passion for the State of Israel was ignited in her early 20's when she went to Brandeis-Bardin Zionist Camp. That love of Israel permeated everything **Mae** did in her life. She did Volunteers for Israel on eight separate occasions and worked on IDF bases each time she went. **Mae** was incredibly proud of her service to the State of Israel.

Mae loved creating a Jewish home for her family. She celebrated all the Jewish holidays and helped instill a deep love of *Yiddishkeit* in her children. **Mae**

was also active as a community leader. When the **Lobel's** first moved into Lower Moreland, there were not a lot of Jews in the neighborhood. **Mae** would think nothing of going to the local Fire Dept. and telling the volunteer firefighters that they should plan to have their book sale on a different date so that it did not conflict with Sukkot. Of course, the firefighters had never heard of Sukkot, but they were invariably willing to change the calendar when **Mae** explained the meaning of the holiday.

And **Mae and Sy** were both incredibly devoted to Beth Sholom Congregation where they were fixtures in the congregation for decades. **Mae** saw in Beth Sholom her extended Jewish family. She was a constant presence at Shabbat morning services—always there with her hair done and a beautiful hat—and reminding me that it was unseemly to look at the rabbi when he crossed his legs on the bima!

Mae had taken on leadership roles in almost every part of congregational life at Beth Sholom having served on the Education Committee; the Religious Committee and becoming VP of Sisterhood. For decades **Mae** would come to synagogue on Friday afternoon to help get the cakes set up for the Oneg following services. **Mae's** presence at Beth Sholom was deep and it was profound. And so, too, will her absence be felt so keenly by our community.

But at the center of **Mae Lobel's** life was her family. It started with her husband **Sy** with whom **Mae** shared her life. **Sy** suffered from deteriorating health for the last eight years of his life. During his entire convalescence, **Mae** was devoted to **Sy** constantly—never complaining; making sure he got to doctors appointments; serving him healthy food, and keeping him going. She was an

extraordinary caregiver—not only to her husband—but to her parents as well when they got sick—even as she was raising four daughters.

And as a mother, **Susan, Eve, Beth and Judith** will all tell you that **Mae** encouraged each of her children to be their best. For **Mae**, education was what mattered greatly—the only thing more important was that her daughters should be *mensch*s. **Mae and Sy** made sure that their children could go to Camp Ramah in the summers where they learned to truly embrace their Jewish-ness. Making sure that her kids had an education and a love of *Yiddishkeit* were by far the most important things in **Mae's** life—anything material was inconsequential. And **Mae** was truly delighted when **Eve and Michael** were married.

And if her children were the lights of her life, **Mae's** grandsons **Avi and Zachary** were the jewels in her crown. **Mae** could never get enough of her grandsons—just being with them would bring **Mae** so much joy.

Mae was also a beloved sister to her siblings **Yetta, Bertha and Solly**. And **Mae** had long and abiding friendships with many of her neighbors—and her many friends from Beth Shalom. Though **Mae** had suffered a stroke and then some seizures towards the end of her life, **Mae's** indomitable spirit never waned. Less than three weeks ago, **Eve** watched as her mother held forth in a book club discussion extolling the virtues of the Jewish mother and decrying the way these mothers were often depicted negatively in contemporary culture. Right up until the end of her days, **Mae** was fighting the good fight.

And so, amidst the grief that is found in this chapel this morning, there is also a sense of deep gratitude that I imagine all of you are feeling as you reflect back on **Mae Lobel's** life: a life filled with loyalty and devotion to her family and to her friends; one filled with a passionate love of the State of Israel and of the

Jewish people; and one filled with the knowledge that she would always be there for you whenever you needed her. **Mae** was deeply grateful for the life that she lived and for the relationships that she nurtured. **Mae** was an honorary **Sabra**—fierce and courageous on the outside; loving and sweet on the inside. Indeed, it is **Mae's**, love, commitments, and sense of purpose that are indeed her enduring legacy. Therefore, let us conclude with the words of our Jewish tradition, *Zichrona livrakha*—that **Mae Lobel's** memory will live on as an everlasting blessing—and to that, let us say—Amen.