

**Eulogy of Rabbi Aaron Landes (z"l) by
Haazan Emeritus David Tilman**

Dear members of the family of Rabbi Aaron Landes, z"l, colleagues, members of Beth Sholom Congregation, and good friends:

In the Torah portion of Shmini, following the tragic death of the sons of Aaron the High Priest, Nadav and Avihu, we read in Chapter 10, Verse 3 of Vayikra: *Vayidom Aharon*, and Aaron was silent. The death of our Rabbi, teacher, and friend, *Moreinu Harav Aharon Ben Harav Elchanan Ozer V'hannah Pesheh* has left all of us silent in our sadness and grief. Our Aharon has been silenced forever. But this sanctuary, in which Rabbi Landes presided over our davening, our Torah study, our Shabbat, Holiday, and High Holiday observances and celebrations, the *B'nei* and *B'not* Mitzvah and Confirmations of our children, and countless weddings, baby namings, and wedding anniversaries, will forever resound with the wisdom, teachings, and preachings of Rabbi Aaron Landes, z"l. (Walk to Rabbi's podium) I could always tell when Rabbi Landes was especially passionate in his message. He would hold his lectern with both hands, place his food on the bottom of the podium and lean in! You can see that the bottom is all worn out!!

I stood together with him for 26 years, 1975 to 2000, as we presided over all of these milestone events in all of our lives, and I listened, internalized, and absorbed his words into my own evolving Jewish identity, both personally and professionally.

In November 1974, Rabbi Landes called me in my NYC apartment, inviting me to interview for the position of Hazzan at Beth Sholom Congregation, a call that changed my life. In March 1975, I was formally invited to become Hazzan by President Myron Sloane and past president Len Cantor, z"l. A few weeks later, Rabbi Landes sat with my father, Alexander R. Tilman, z"l, and me in the lobby of Grossinger's Hotel. He said to my dad, "Mr. Tilman, I want you to know that I shall be your son's best friend. I shall protect him; I shall make sure that he receives everything he needs to do his work; and I shall guide him every day." At that moment, I decided to accept the position. I want all of you to know that he was true to his word, until and including the very last time I saw him, 12 days ago, on Friday afternoon before Pesach.

For six years, Rabbi and Sora made me a *Ben Bayit*, an adopted son in their home. I enjoyed their gracious hospitality and their love and companionship for every Shabbat and Festival meal for those six years.

Our endless conversations covered a vast assortment of topics: we talked, first, about synagogue issues. He taught me to make changes slowly; evolution was a better approach than revolution, he said. He told me that half his own work was making SHALOM, making peace, among family members, congregants, officers, board members, and even members of the congregation's staff. He believed with all his heart and *Nshamah* in the supremacy of Jewish education and in the inviolability of Jewish law based on the Conservative Movement's teachings. He always said that we are only as strong as our congregants who share our commitments to Jewish education,

Jewish law and Mitzvot. In return, he told me that I taught him just how powerful Jewish music was as a vehicle for teaching Jewish values and identity. I was required to remember always that Rabbi Landes didn't like surprises! I saw that he was always prepared! Whenever we had Shabbat dinners at the Synagogue, he would say that, "This is not the Fischman Auditorium; this is our home!" Of course, each and every bride and groom was "a very handsome couple." But there was no couple more handsome than Rabbi Landes and his *Rebbetzin*!

We talked about love, about courtship, about marriage. Rabbi Landes and his family waged a major campaign encouraging me in my growing relationship with Ellen, my wife of 33 years, with G-d's blessings! After we became engaged, and we had informed our parents, we went straight to the Landes home on Fisher Road at 8 am, on Sunday morning, December 14, 1980. The entire family ran downstairs in their pajamas to celebrate with us!!!

We received sage premarital advice and counseling both from Rabbi Landes and from his beloved mother, Bessie. She told us never to have a major and potentially difficult discussion without first sharing a substantial meal!! We asked Rena, Rebecca, Joshua, and Tamar to be bridesmaids and usher at our fantastic wedding, presided over by Rabbi Landes. Rabbi Landes officiated at the Bnei and Bat Mitzvah of Avrum, Howard, and Alana. Just three weeks ago, he had enough energy to wish us Mazal Tov and *Yiasher Kokhakhem* at the news of Howard's forthcoming Rabbinic ordination and his acceptance of the position of second Rabbi at the Jacksonville Jewish Center.

Two weeks ago, I told him that the most important lessons he taught me were how to be a devoted and loving husband, and how to be a nurturing and loving parent. I also told him that, in my opinion, his greatest accomplishment, greater even than his work at Beth Sholom Congregation and for the US Navy, was earning the infinite love, devotion, respect, and admiration of his *Rebbetzin*, and his four sensational children, their spouses, and their children.

On every morning of the just completed Pesach holiday, we all sang Psalm 115, verses 12-18 of Hallel. From this pulpit, Rabbi Landes would invite us to sing "*Adon-i Zecharanu Yvarech,*" and I would lead everyone, (SING) *Y'varech et Beit Yisrael, Yvarech et Bet Aharon, Yvarech et y'rei Adon-i, Haktanim im haG'dolim.*"

Last week, I led Hallel at the Ramah Darom Pesach retreat in Clayton, Georgia, and I understood this Psalm in this manner: G-d Almighty, Bless this Jewish home, bless this home of Aaron, this Bet Aharon, Beth Sholom Congregation, the synagogue of Rabbi Aaron Landes, z"l. Bless us who believe in G-d, as we have been taught by *HaRav Aharon ben HaRav Elchanan Ozer v'Hannah Pesheh*, bless our Beth Sholom Congregation, including the youngest children, our senior members, and everyone in between!

May his memory be for a blessing!