

Grilli Visit
November 11, 2005
Pamela Rosen - Olga's Granddaughter

Good Evening/Afternoon Rabbi Edwards, congregants, and friends, My name is Pamela Rosen, and Olga is my grandmother.

I have been asked to sum up in five minutes or less the meaning of this weekend for myself and my family. Unfortunately, I cannot sum up an event as meaningful as this, even if I had 100 minutes. The best I can do is speak about one meaning that has resonated with me.

The history of Jews in 20th century Europe is dark and hard to grasp, especially growing up in a diverse city like New York or LA where diversity, multiculturalism, and individuality are celebrated qualities. I grew up surrounded by friends and family that were like me or were curious to learn about my culture and traditions. I was fortunate to never experience, and thus never fully understand, anti-semitism. The accounts of the persecution suffered by my ancestors were words on paper. I was never able to fully grasp the ramifications of these words, and in many ways they were unbelievable to me.

In the world of education we separate students into three groups based on what type of a learner they are. There are auditory learners, visual learners, and Kinesthetic learners. I fall into the Kinesthetic category, people who learn things best in a hands on setting.

I am lucky, because throughout my life my grandmother has provided me with the hands on learning experience. Through her stories and recollections I have been able to create personal meaning out of the events of the past that were so devastating and senseless.

In math, students from all three learning groups use manipulatives to understand complex ideas. For myself and all of us, my grandmother is like one of these manipulatives, she is the tangible element that helps us get our minds wrapped around the destructive events of the holocaust. Aside from being a fantastic wife, mother and grandmother, she is the physical link between the past and present.

Just being here and being able to look at and touch this Torah that tied not only to my family's history, but to everyone's history as a 21st century Jew, deepens my understanding of our history. I feel very lucky to be here with all of you strengthening our appreciation of our history. I know we will all

remember this special moment and keep it alive, the way my grandmother has kept her history alive, by sharing it and passing it down.

For me this weekend is an opportunity to gain more knowledge from my grandmother and to gain perspective on the history of the Jewish people and my ancestors by sharing the learning experience with everyone here. Seeing this Torah that is part of my grandmother's and my whole family's history being given a new life here in your Synagogue is knowing that while many may have perished in the holocaust, they are not forgotten.

When my grandmother first told me about BCC and the Torah, I was amazed. It almost didn't sound real, and in a way all of us being here today is like a fairy-tale ending. For BCC congregants hearing my grandmother's story is a view into your Torah's past. For us, meeting all of you has given us a window into the future. The new life being created here for the Torah that my great-great grandfather held, connects all of us. BCC has enlarged our family. Thank you very much.