

# Honoring Rabbi Shay and the late Lila Mintz

By Scott Herman

Rabbi Shay and Lila Mintz have been beloved and revered teachers and leaders in the Western New York Jewish community for over 4 decades. So when Lila passed away in August, and after Shay returned from Israel where she was buried, he wanted to celebrate her life beyond just memorializing her. Working closely with Rabbi Perry Netter of Temple Beth Tzedek and Federation staff and a number of community members, Shay's hope was realized in a beautiful "celebration" on December 3rd. Close to 150 individuals including former students of Shay's living outside of the community and family members of Lila's, gathered in the TBT sanctuary to share stories and memories of Lila but also to honor and bid farewell to the Rabbi, who plans to return to Israel permanently. The event was a very moving, emotional program. We told stories, honored Shay and Lila's accomplishments, prayed together, laughed and cried.

Shay and Lila Mintz worked to create a life together, which will become an enduring legacy and will benefit our community for generations to come.

They have been extraordinary benefactors of the Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies – creating and building permanent endowment funds for a variety of special purposes and projects. They were the founders of the People of the Book Fund, which was established in 1984. Today, it is by far the Foundation's largest endowment dedicated to the support of the Jewish Community Book Fair at the JCC, as a result of the Mintz's sustained contributions and those of other Book Fair Patrons.

In 1986, Lila and Shay were one of the four original founding couples who created the Foundation's Israel Scholarship Program which provides financial assistance to high school and college students to travel to Israel on study missions and organized pilgrimage programs. The Katz and Mintz Family Israel Scholarship Fund is a permanent endowment that makes annual grants to worthy students. The Foundation also administers the Rabbi Shay Mintz Hillel Intern Fund which was created with gifts from Lila and Shay. These funds are available to support staff intern positions



Lila & Rabbi Shay Mintz (photo courtesy of Scott Hermon)

at the Hillel program of the University at Buffalo.

Lila was a loving mother of 3 children, ten grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Though tragedy struck Lila's first husband and oldest son, she maintained a positive outlook on life. This positive outlook is a core of who she was. Lila lost her eyesight to Retinitis Pigmentosa, an inherited genetic disease. She knew it was coming and faced it with grace and dignity. Shay and Lila continued to travel together. Shay was her eyes – and when her memory began to fade, Shay became her guide, to protect her and care for her. And when he could not do it anymore, he made sure that she was comfortable and cared for at Weinberg Campus. Shay showed us by example how to treat a loved one with kindness, with caring, and with dignity.

Shay is the son of Polish parents who immigrated to Israel in the 1920's. He was born in pre-state Israel, grew up there and attended two yeshivot and served in the army as a chaplain. He participated in the Sinai Campaign and was discharged as a lieutenant. His father, Benjamin Mintz, was a member of the first Knesset of Israel after Israel won independence in 1948. He later went on to be vice speaker of the Knesset and a cabinet minister. A few years ago, Shay published a book about his father, which is currently only available in Hebrew, but should be released in English soon.

Rabbi Mintz came to the United States in 1965 first to South Bend, Indiana, where he worked as the principal of United Hebrew School and also started the Jewish Studies program at Notre Dame University. Rabbi Isaac Klein brought Rabbi Mintz to Buffalo

in 1970 as the educational director of Temple Shaarey Zedek. While he was there, he went by "Mr. Mintz" because he did not want to confuse people as to who was the congregational Rabbi. Shay was also involved in the Hebrew schools at Beth El and Temple Sinai and was also involved as a

Rabbi-in-residence at Camps Lakeland and Centerland. He served on countless boards and committees for the Jewish Federation of Buffalo, as well.

In 1986 Shay became the director of Hillel at the State University of NY at Buffalo. It was supposed to be temporary, but he got hooked. He served in that position for 14 years and continued doing High Holiday services for many years following. The high energy he brought to the services attracted students and community members from every stream of Judaism. He crafted his services to be understandable, inclusive and enjoyable to all.

Rabbi Mintz officiated at my wedding and hundreds of other weddings, bar mitzvahs, brit milah, and funerals. He helped us celebrate the joyous events with enthusiasm and high energy and sheltered us through sad times.

Thank you Shay and Lila for all you have done for the Buffalo Jewish community. We will remember Lila fondly and send warm thoughts to Shay as he returns home to Israel. Shay, you will forever be my favorite rabbi.

**The Big Bake  
HAMENTASCHEN**

**Tuesday, Feb. 23rd, 2016**  
6:30–9:30 pm  
Artisan Kitchens and Baths, Buffalo, NY

**\$15/person**  
(includes all supplies plus food and drinks)

**Advance RSVP Required**

**Event Details & RSVP @**  
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