

h special talents. Fulfill your
 en you are successful, remem-
 ind a meaningful way to con-
 d you can repay your Maker by

I'll always be with you and you

Love,
 Mom



Rosie Rosenzweig

The number of ethical wills written by women in the modern period is far greater than by women in earlier periods. This is in keeping with other, ongoing, salutary social developments. What is equally noteworthy is the observation that in their ethical wills women more often than men draw upon psychological insights to personalize their hopes and counsel. Rosie Rosenzweig is a contemporary wife and mother residing on the East coast. In addressing her children she individualizes her hopes for them on the basis of strengths and inclinations they possess. This emphasis, whether conscious or unconscious on the part of the writer, is reminiscent of the mode of the patriarchal blessings in Genesis 49 and in Deuteronomy 33.

This will, and the one that follows, was written at a workshop on ethical wills that was conducted at her synagogue Beth El of Sudbury, Massachusetts, as a way of preparing for Yom Kippur.

7/25/79

5 Tishre 5740

My dear family:

It seems appropriate that I just mailed a proof of a correction on my father's tombstone to the monument people. I was concerned . . . with the correct manner of recording his good name. He was a *Koben*, of the priestly class, and it had to be so recorded.

So is my link to you, not of words on dead stone, nor nitpicking, but of the good way to keep a good name, as a member of the family you came from, the family you'll spawn and the tribe from whose roots you flower.

Shakespeare did say "A rose by any other name still smells as sweet" (I know I had to remember that during my days on the printing press), but so it is with character from which emanates the good name . . . you can be in rags, in a poor state, a misunderstood laborer, a misunderstood professional . . . but your good character will earn you your way. It goes without saying you'll work hard toward your chosen goal by education, by working at occupations up the ladder, etc., but it is the uses of your intelligence as you would use it to build character that I would address now.

If there is a pleasure in acquiring knowledge, there is greater pleasure in applying it.

But what knowledge is useful to the end of building character?

I wish for you the joys of understanding the knowledge of our tradition to its deepest soul. I guarantee it will resonate in your heart at times of deepest trouble and soundest joy. There is a mellowness I would wish for you in your later years, that I now am just beginning to perceive.

For instance, take the commandment "Thou shalt have no other Gods before you." If the name of God, "Yehovah," means the future tense of "to be," then you as His reflection should also always be becoming . . . working for a future image of yourself, a better self of more enduring character. You take *teshuvah* [repentance] seriously, you change, you redeem your life, you take Yom Kippur seriously . . . and when you do this which is your tradition and your best selves, I live for you, my living heritage, my ever-bearing fruits.

I urge you to understand your roots, as they are in you as archetypes and beg you not to deny [them]. The Torah teaches logic, values, and history. For example, if you pass your enemy in trouble you are bidden to help him as you can and go on your way. Logically the seeds of a better future are here. Rabbi Jacob is quoted in *Sayings of the Fathers* (4:21) that this life is like a waiting room before the bigger banquet. Logically one should always be in preparation. This not only refers to afterlife but to your passages in life from decade to decade.

So many words I've written and so many generalizations. What about specifics:

I would like you to know my writings and keep them . . . however little of significance or insignificance I've produced. I want my grandchildren to know the fancies of my mind. That is who I am and all of substance I can give them. I leave three notebooks full of experiences with the weekly Torah Service. If nothing else, pass these on. This is my most important life through the decades. Keep family records, of our history, our events. It is a pleasure I want you to have. The only stability in a drifting society is the fabric of our family. Know who are its members and of what character.

It would be nice to always keep
Elizabeth, I wish for your happily toward the dream of fulfillment intelligence, is what I hope for your understanding, and wherever I possible. I trust the mountain-gui see. Be there for me.

Benjamin, I wish that your keen intuition that comes from the art the *Akedab* was remarkable. May grow older. I live for you in the your face, and the applause now original trailblazing.

Rachel, my youngest, who has family, the youngest, I want to be my worst. Listen to the still, small of what the people around you feel the momentary emotions of others

Sandy, should you outlive me, happinesses that endured and survive I urge you to hold on to your vision meet again as no quantum in the for whom it has charge. If I have

Remember, please, to talk to death, and forgive me for my terrible dealings, the commonsense *mit* with people and each other, I r You have been rigorously schoo how to put my body to rest. . . .

Live out your lives wisely, well

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It would be nice to always keep the house in some form.

Elizabeth, I wish for your happiness and stability. That your feelings fly toward the dream of fulfillment but still be balanced by your keen intelligence, is what I hope for you. I hope you remember our times of understanding, and wherever I am I will send whatever healing is possible. I trust the mountain-guide sense in you to go to peaks I'll never see. Be there for me.

Benjamin, I wish that your keen intellectual nature be rounded by that intuition that comes from the artist in you. At thirteen your insight into the *Akedah* was remarkable. May that become more cultivated as you grow older. I live for you in the applause of that day, that brightened your face, and the applause now for such continued adventurous and original trailblazing.

Rachel, my youngest, who has my name and my old place in the family, the youngest, I want to leave you only my best qualities and not my worst. Listen to the still, small voice of the best in yourself, regardless of what the people around you feel. Be swayed only by wisdom, and not the momentary emotions of others.

Sandy, should you outlive me, I release you to the memories of those happinesses that endured and survive me. I know you will forget all else. I urge you to hold on to your visions but ground them in reality. We will meet again as no quantum in the universe dies but is attracted to others for whom it has charge. If I have outlived you I go to meet you now.

Remember, please, to talk to one another on the anniversary of my death, and forgive me for my transgressions against you. Of all other dealings, the commonsense *mitzvot*, the good values, the way to deal with people and each other, I need leave you no further instructions. You have been rigorously schooled by me, and I assume you will know how to put my body to rest. . . .

Live out your lives wisely, well, and with few regrets.

Your loving mother