

Lessons *from* Sam



By **BRENT TWORETZKY**
Husband of Randi Zuckerberg

TZEDAKAH HAS BEEN A CORE VALUE in my family for generations. My great grandparents were active within their local Cape Town, South Africa Jewish community, and they passed down their love of tzedakah to my grandfather, Sam. My grandfather's influence can be found in the way I practice this principle with my family. It's in the tender moments on Shabbat when I teach my children the importance of giving to those less fortunate and in the volunteer work I pursue to create a better world for my children. I cherish the lessons my grandfather taught me and hope they continue to inspire my family and influence how we practice tzedakah for generations to come.

I grew up in the suburbs of Cape Town, within a close-knit Jewish community of 20,000 people. My grandfather Sam was a builder by trade, and he dedicated himself to volunteer work within the community. Sam was especially involved with local homes for the handicapped and elderly. We shared many Saturdays in his workshop where he'd tell me about his service projects and we'd work on small pieces together, such as sanding a door or building a chair.

Though my grandfather didn't seek credit, he felt pride in being able to apply his talents to helping others. Every now and then he'd take me to see our Saturday projects actually being used by the people he served. I knew I wanted to follow in his footsteps and make a difference in people's lives in my own unique way, I just had to figure out how.

When I attended high school, living with my family in South Florida, I learned to code and fix computers. I was already an active volunteer at my school, but my grandfather encouraged me to share my engineering skills with others who could benefit from my abilities. The first time I volunteered my programming abilities was to support the National Conference for Community and Justice. My work helped to increase productivity, which enabled them to hold even more community events. I felt an extra sense of satisfaction that I could be there for others in a valuable, unique way, just as my grandfather had done as a builder.

Currently, I sit on the board of Reboot where I help to scale our impact to the broader Jewish community through digital initiatives. I am also an advisor to HarvardX, an online education non-profit, where I help build high quality online access to education. Most recently, I approached Harold Grinspoon with a few ideas of how I could be helpful to PJ Library. Luckily, he agreed and I'm now collaborating with others interested in furthering PJ Library's mission.

My time as an advisor for PJ Library has been personally rewarding, not just in the work we're doing, but in how I'm able to share it with my children. Though they are still a little young to fully understand the impact of volunteering, I look forward to teaching them more and more as they grow, instilling in them the same love of tzedakah that has been alive in my family for generations.

BRENT TWORETZKY is Executive Vice President, Product, at XO Group, where he leads product management, design, and user research. He focuses on scalable ways to improve the modern Jewish and broader community, and serves on the board of Reboot, the Nextgen board of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and the advisory committee of HarvardX. Brent earned bachelor's degrees in Computer Science and Statistics from Harvard, and an MBA from Stanford.

Generations of gratitude



By **RANDI ZUCKERBERG**
Wife of Brent Tworetzky

ONE OF THE THINGS I FIND BEAUTIFUL ABOUT JUDAISM is it encourages you to understand the past in order to have a better understanding of where you're going. In our world of technology, we live incredibly fast-paced lives. It's easy to constantly look forward, always thinking about what's coming next. When I'm able to pause and reflect on my rich heritage, I'm reminded of the lives of my grandparents and their dedication to our family and their community. It's in these moments that I fully appreciate where I come from and what lies ahead.

Thinking back, I remember my childhood dreams of being a singer and the support my family provided me. My grandparents came to as many performances as they could, although I'm sure they were telling my parents that I should ditch the singing and become a doctor or a lawyer, but still, they were always there for me. My grandparents were working class New Yorkers through and through. My grandfather on my father's side, Papa, as we affectionately called him, worked for the postal service and occasionally drove a taxi. He used to tell me the most valuable thing I could acquire was a NYC taxi medallion...I wish he was here to see how all of that has changed with services like Uber and Lyft and to discuss what he would think is the most valuable investment today.

The support from my grandfather on my mother's side was both emotional and literal. Thanks to a scholarship from the NYPD

Shomrim Society, a society that provides educational assistance to the children and grandchildren of Jewish police officers in New York City, I was able to attend Harvard. During his lifetime, I had a vague notion of the scope of his service, but it didn't really sink in for me until his funeral. When I watched the moving military procession and saw the letter of commendation from the White House, I understood that he had truly dedicated his life to the community and our country.

After graduating Harvard with a degree in psychology, a series of fortuitous events led me not to the microphone stand, but to a promising career in the booming tech industry. As my career brought me into the spotlight, it also gave me opportunities to fulfill the dreams I shared with my grandparents so long ago. I kept singing when and where I could and, a few years ago, I was invited to sing for the late President of Israel, Shimon Peres, and Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, at a Shabbat dinner in Davos, Switzerland.

I was nervous, but I thought about what an honor this was for me, my family, and my community—about just how far I had come from the grandchild of a police officer and a postal worker/taxi driver, to a technology executive singing for the leaders of Israel. Before I began singing I paused, took a deep breath, and gave thanks to the generations before me who brought me to this moment. I only wish that all my grandparents had been alive to see the video on Facebook.

RANDI ZUCKERBERG is an entrepreneur, investor, bestselling author, and media personality. As an early employee at Facebook, she led major marketing initiatives in the company's formative years, and has gone on to launch Zuckerberg Media, with the mission of creating media content that puts intelligent, tech-savvy, entrepreneurial women and girls at the forefront. She is the author of three bestselling books and travels the world, speaking about technology, entrepreneurship, the importance of women and underserved communities in tech, balancing work and family, and shockingly...how to unplug!