

Senior Planning: a Jewish Guide

Modern technology provides method for preserving loved ones' history

By MICHAEL SCHIMMEL

The question of how to perpetuate the history of family members, from one generation to the next, continues to be a problem in the mobile society we live in today. What we have lost are the stories and memories about those who have passed and the ability to tell them to future generations.

Each and every one of us is connected with essentially all aspects of our friends and families through a new world filled with social networks

helping to share everything online in words, pictures and videos. The digital world we live in has altered all aspects of our lives. Whether we like it or not, the Facebook generation, consisting of our children and grandchildren tweeting, sending text messages, along with instant messaging at all hours of the day, forever has changed the ways we communicate and document stories. Many of us no longer live in the same neighborhood with parents, siblings, cousins and extended family. Our

loved ones are dispersed and living throughout the country and the world. The weekly family dinners have morphed into holiday dinners and/or yearly family reunions. Those dinners or get-togethers, which helped tie us to our heritage are melting into a new social world that has no boundaries, and sometimes it feels as though we are losing a sense of our history.

How do we regain some sense of who we are and where we came from so that our children and our children's children will know their history?

The National Jewish Memorial Wall, NJMW.org, can help answer that question. It is a resource dedicated to providing a platform around *LDor v'Dor* – From Generation to Generation. NJMW is an online location, designed around sharing stories, pictures and more about our families and friends, for future generations, in a tasteful and appropriate manner.

In September 2012, NJMW introduced this unique service that has been well received by some of the largest national nonprofits, such as Jewish National Fund, along with a warm reception by local synagogues and other Jewish organizations. There is a natural allure for maintaining and passing along to future generations their family recipes, hobbies and other memories that should be documented in some fashion. NJMW is focused on ensuring that these stories and pictures are not forgotten, because they were untold or sit under beds in

a shoebox.

This easy-to-use website allows users to create tributes and properly document family history within the constructs and traditions of Judaism. NJMW helps to engage members of local Jewish communities, and also provides an outlet and resource for those who have moved away, but maintain strong ties to a particular geographic area and organization.

NJMW's sister site, *Shiva.com*, is an access point for those who recently have lost a friend or loved one. Whether one has suffered a personal loss or is aware of a friend's loss, *Shiva.com* provides a resource for planning and supporting a *shiva* and helps begin the process of remembrance and commemoration. *Shiva.com* has a partnership with My Jewish Learning, in order to provide authoritative information on *shiva* and Jewish rituals.

Thanks to the relationship between the two websites, NJMW.org and *Shiva.com*, people have a way to remember, commemorate and perpetuate loved ones' memory in a traditional fashion. Additionally, the sites provide users a way to ensure that the legacy, stories and meaning of their loved ones continue to be told into the future.

NJMW and *Shiva* provide a solution that leverages today's technology with the traditions of the past.

Michael Schimmel is co-founder of NJMW.org and Shiva.com.