
Words of Tribute

JACOB J. SCHACTER

מוסוד ליד:
ה', מי יגור כאהלך, מי ישכן סוּר קִשָּׁךְ.
והלך תבוס ופעל צדק, ודבר אמת כלבו.
לא רגל על לשטן, לא עשה לדעה רעה,
חזרפה לא נשא על קרבו.
נבזה בעיניו נמאס, ואת ידא ה' יסבר,
נשכע לדורו ולא ימר.
בספר לא נאן בנשך, ושחזר על נקי לא לקח;
עשה אלה לא ימט לעולם.
(תהלים פ"ו)

This psalm (Psalm 15) was Rabbi Jung's favorite part of Tehillim. He always asked me to prepare it for him to recite at every funeral. I somehow never believed that the time would come when I would have to stand and recite it for him. I never imagined that this day would come—when so many of us would gather, in such large numbers, to bid final farewell to our beloved teacher, role-model and friend; husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

How will we be able to function without his encouragement and advice, without his towering presence which graced this sanctuary and world Jewry for close to seven decades?

Who will now comfort us in our times of sorrow?

Who will encourage us in our moments of despair?

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The Shulhan Arukh tells us, at the beginning of Hilkhos Hanukkah (Orah Hayyim 670:3):

“אין מספידים בזה אלא להכם בפניו.”

“On Hanukkah, we are only allowed to eulogize a *hakham* in his presence.” If ever there was a *hakham*, *manhig*, *ish hesed ve-yashar* who merited a *hesped*, surely he was, without doubt, our own beloved Rabbi Jung.

Rabbi Jung was taken from us on Shabbat Hanukkah and the Gemara (*Shabbat* 21b) asks the famous question: “מאי חגיגת?” “What is the essence of Hanukkah?” “What is the message of Hanukkah?” The Gemara continues:

“דחנו רכנו בכל” ה' בכסלו ימי רחמינו, חמניא אינון ולא לספר ברוך.”

This rabbinical statement is not to be understood as a continuation of the question. This is not a description of that Hanukkah whose significance remains yet to be explained but, rather, these words are, in fact, the answer to the question.

“דלא לספר ברוך” – “What is the lesson of Hanukkah?” – never to feel that it is necessary to give a *hesped* for *Klal Yisrael*; never to despair; never to give up on the vibrancy and vitality, on the continued existence of the Jewish people.

The *Hashmonaim* taught this to us twenty-one centuries ago, and Rabbi Jung taught this to us in our own century. What an extraordinary life! What outstanding accomplishments! What countless *zechuyot*! It would be impossible for me to even begin to do justice to this life and to this personality were I to speak for many hours, but I believe that this was one of Rabbi Jung's greatest achievements. He arrived on the shores of America on January 2, 1920, and, as he wrote in his autobiography, “American Orthodoxy at the end of the second decade of this century had not yet begun to come of age.” Characteristically, he was being very kind. American Orthodoxy was rapidly fading into oblivion at the end of the second decade of this century. As he told us many times, during those years, “Orthodoxy in America was a bad joke.” And he came to this country and said, “No, this must change.” “דלא” “לספר ברוך” – We are not ready to deliver a eulogy or write an obituary for American Orthodoxy.

It is important for us to pause and review some of his many achievements if only to remind ourselves what one person can accomplish in a lifetime. Rabbi Jung went to work and, among other activities:

- he built dozens of *mikvaot* across this country, insisting that they be clean and aesthetically pleasing;
- he founded America's first school to train *mohalim* – to insure that *milah* be done properly and safely;
- he organized American Orthodoxy institutionally and, from 1928 to 1936, served as President of what was then the Rabbinical Council of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America;
- he founded and for decades served as chairman of the New York State Advisory Board for Kosher Law Enforcement – to insure that *kashruth* standards be strictly monitored by a government regulating agency;
- and he did more and more and more.

In those critical years when Orthodoxy in America was hanging by a hair, he brought to it a great deal of sophistication, dignity and class. Through him:

מסורת נבונים ביד חלשים
 ורבים ביד מעטים
 ומכשלים ביד טהורים
 ורשעים ביד צדיקים
 וזרים ביד עומקי תורהך.

He made Orthodoxy viable in this country long before it became fashionable and, if we stand tall today, it is because we stand on the shoulders of Rabbi Leo Jung.

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How significant to me is the fact that our beloved teacher was named Eliyahu—ha-Rav Eliyahu ben ha-Rav Meir Tzevi.

In the *Zemiroth* we sing on *Motzaei Shabbat*, we refer to Eliyahu by three different names or characteristics: "ha-Navi," "ha-Tishbi," "ha-Giladi."

Our Eliyahu was a wonderful *Navi*—in terms of "וזהו אהרן ירד נביאך" (*Exodus* 7:1). He was one of the most powerful and eloquent spokesmen for social justice in general and for Judaism in particular in this last century. For decades he lectured on college campuses and in community centers across America and throughout the world about Jewish ideals and values.

We at The Jewish Center were blessed for well over a half century to have him as our *Navi*, our preacher and our teacher. We will never forget his many "*vertlakh*":

- the *mashal* about the feathers in the marketplace • illustrate the dangers of *lashon hara*;
- his repeated use of the phrase "חן חסד ורחמים," which really characterized his life;
- his consistent reference to the pasuk: "חוט ומשאלש לא במהרה נתקן";
- of course, "the three R's": "righteousness, reverence and *rahamanut*" which he interpreted, as you know so well, from the root of *raham*, to mean not "mercy" but "mother-love";
- and all the phrases he coined that we won't hear ever again—whether it be "humanitization of humanity" or "Judaism in the concrete" or many, many others.

Rabbi Jung had a profound effect as a teacher not only on the adults in our shul but on the children as well, whom he personally blessed every Friday night. About a year or two ago, I began to be concerned that he was walking home alone from shul, but I knew that I couldn't ask him if I could arrange for people to accompany him because he would have undoubtedly refused. He was fiercely independent until the very end. So I told him that there are young people in our congregation who don't really know him; and I want them to get to know him, to learn from him, to benefit from his wisdom and *divrei Torah*. Would it be all right if they would walk him home from shul and could he reach them something for those few minutes it would take to get to his house? He said to me, "If you think it

will be helpful, then I agree." And so a group of boys began taking turns accompanying him home and developed a very close relationship with him. I know their hearts are broken today and my heart is broken with them.

After davening yesterday, a young girl in our congregation came over to me. I think she sensed that I was very upset, and she said to me: "Rabbi Schacter, are you sad about what happened to Rabbi Jung?" I said, "Yes, I'm very sad." And she said to me, "I'm sad too. You know, he spoke funny but he always said 'hello' to me." Yes, Rabbi Jung was our Eliyahu "*ha-Navi*"—our teacher, our spokesman, our guide.

But in addition to being Eliyahu "*ha-Navi*," he was also Eliyahu "*ha-Tishbi*." Hazal tells us that whenever we reach an impasse in a halakhic discussion, "חשבי חשבי תרץ קשייה ואכתייה." Our Eliyahu "*ha-Tishbi*" was *metaretz* for us the serious "*kushyot ve-ibaayot*" we had as a community when it came to harmonizing our Orthodoxy and our modernity. As a product of Hungarian yeshivot and the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin on the one hand, and the universities in Berlin, Marburg, Cambridge and London on the other, he was a living embodiment of the well-known principle of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*. What he wrote about his own father is equally true about him as well: "Moses and Hillel were at the core of his philosophy of life. Kant, Shakespeare and Goethe were auxiliary sources of his personality." He moved comfortably in many worlds and enjoyed relationships with Rav David Tzevi Hoffman, the *Hafetz Hayyim*, Sarah Schenierer, and Rav Kook as well as with Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Louis Marshall, and Harry Emerson Fosdick.

In his thirty-seven books on numerous subjects, in his hundreds of articles and thousands of lectures on Ethics, he brought together "*Torah*" and "*madda*" and the process was *metaretz* for us our philosophical and conceptual "*kushyot ve-ibaayot*."

But while the entire world benefited from his writings, we in The Jewish Center benefited from his presence. Throughout the years, he was *metaretz* for us so many of our own personal "*kushyot ve-ibaayot*." We had doubts and questions and frustrations and we turned to Rabbi Jung for guidance and encouragement. We walked with him around the reservoir; we walked with him up and down Central Park West; we sat with him in his office or in his apartment. He rejoiced with us in our times of happiness and comforted us in our times of tragedy and sorrow.

And finally, Rabbi Jung was Eliyahu "*ha-Giladi*." The Torah tells us (*Genesis* 31:48, 52):

"על כן קרא שמו גלעד . . . שר הגל הרה, ועדה המצבה"

Eliyahu "*ha-Giladi*" is the Eliyahu who amassed a "*gal*," a veritable mountain of achievements and accomplishments. "*ועדה המצבה*"—not that the "*matzevah*" is an "*ed*," but, on the contrary, the "*edah*" is a "*matzevah*." The greatest tribute to this Eliyahu is the "*edah*" that was the beneficiary of his *hesed* and *zedakah*.

What was Rabbi Jung if not a *baal hesed* and *baal zedakah*?! He devoted his life to helping people—through The Jewish Center Torah Society or Rabbonim Aid Society, through his work for Yeshiva University, Kfar Eliyahu, Chabad, the Jewish Academy for Arts and Sciences, Poalei Agudas Yisrael, the JWB, the JDC, the JNF and literally countless other organizations and causes for which he raised millions upon millions of dollars.

How proud he was of the eleven hundred and seventy-six affidavits he was able to arrange to bring some nine thousand victims of Nazi Germany to safety and freedom, of the Bais Yaakov school he built in Crakow in the late 1920s, and of his so many other worthwhile activities and involvements. "הצרי אין כליט" (Jeremiah 8:22), this "Giladi" was a "tzari"—a source of comfort, healing and support for the tens of thousands of people who were direct beneficiaries of his hesed.

"אלירה הנביא, אליה החשבי, אליה הנלטי" . . . "סאי תובס; . . . ? ולא למסר ביהן": never to despair of nitzhiyut yisrael.

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Rabbi Jung belonged to all of *Klal Yisrael*; he belonged to all of us at The Jewish Center, but, most of all, he belonged to his family—to his wife, Mrs. Jung; to his children, who respected and adored him—Erna, Rosalie, Julie and Micky; to his sons-in-law, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Without a doubt it was they who knew him best and without a doubt it is they who will miss him the most.

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There is so much more that can be said. There is so much more that must be said but I want to conclude on a personal note.

I want to ask *mehilah* from Rabbi Jung. *Katonti mi-kol ha-hasadim* that I should have had the priceless *zekhut* to become your student, your friend, your "honorary grandson" during these last six years. I have always felt humbled in your presence. I feel very inadequate to the task given me by your family to represent them and the entire community in my remarks today. I have no doubt, Rabbi Jung, that I was unable to do justice to even a fraction of your greatness and *maasim tovim*, to paint a full and accurate picture of your personality, but I know that the *malakhim* who are right now accompanying your *neshamah* to the *kisei ha-kavod* will be far more eloquent than I could possibly be in presenting before *Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu* your extraordinary accomplishments and achievements.

And I ask *mehilah* for a second reason. I believe you knew, and now you certainly know, that I tried at every opportunity to give you the *kavod* that you deserved. But maybe there were occasions when I was a little lax; maybe there were occasions when others were also a little lax and did not pay you the respect that was befitting you. Surely, it was only because they were simply unaware of who you were and what you had done. And so, on my own behalf as well as on theirs, I want to ask you *mehilah*.

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In the very last paragraph of his autobiography, Rabbi Jung wrote as follows:

As one grows older, one's horizon becomes larger. There is an increasing sense of loneliness. Not only close relatives, but friends of one's youth, adolescence and maturity in increasing numbers go to their Eternal Reward. It is only steadfast loyalty to the welfare of the Jewish people and to the

imperishable glory of the Torah that keeps one dynamic, optimistic and at peace with oneself. Long ago Rabbi Tarfon said, "It is not upon you to finish the work but nor may you ignore your responsibility." I feel sure there are enough men and women in the camp of Israel to take the flag from one's weakening hands, uphold it, salute it, work for it and initiate a happier chapter of Jewish and general history.

"נפלה עטרתא שויט"; an era has come to an end. Rabbi Jung lived a long, full and beautiful life and now the flag is in our hands. May we prove to be worthy of the challenge.

הרב אליהו בן הרב שא"ר זכ"ל, זמר צדיק לברכה
 חזקא נשמתו צדורה בעצרת החיים.

MARTIN SCHWARZSCHILD

Just seven months ago I had the honor of addressing those assembled at our Annual Dinner, which this year paid tribute to Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung on his 95th birthday, his 70 years in the rabbinate and the 65 years he and Mrs. Jung were associated with The Jewish Center. Tonight it is my privilege to recall the pastoral side of Rabbi Jung. Others, I'm sure, will speak of his impact on the community and on world Jewry, and of his many associations with the diversified faces of organized Jewish life—all of which knew no bounds for this cultured, international personality.

But his first love, after his family—his devoted Irmalce, his daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren and great-grandchildren—was The Jewish Center family. He used that phrase with a twinkle in his eye and with a tone that conveyed the love he had for all those who were part of it.

And, indeed, he did know all who were part of it. For as far back as I can remember, the seat behind my right shoulder as I stand before you tonight was occupied by Rabbi Jung. From that vantage point, in one keen glance around this synagogue, Rabbi Jung would note which members of The Jewish Center family, his family, were present.

From his first days at The Center in the early 1920s, Rabbi Jung wanted to become acquainted with each and every member. He would place a phone call indicating a request for a visit, and then he and Mrs. Jung would go to the family's home. There they met with the multi-generational family. The Rabbi was an astute psychologist, and was rapidly able to size up the human situation. In the home setting, a pat on a child's head or a stroke of his or her little cheek made the Rabbi a friend, rather than the authority figure who preached from this *bimah*. He had a listening ear for the grandparents who would say, "You know, Rabbi, it's a different country. We don't understand its mores." He developed relationships with husbands and wives, and friendships with children who would soon become the parents of the next generation. All of these personal ties were to last for decades.

These visits were also not just one-time affairs. As the head of the "family," how often did the Rabbi come to see his flock? He was there socially, to give counsel, to prepare for *smalot*, and he was ever there in the hour of need. When a member of

REVERENCE,
RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND RAHAMANUT

Essays in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung

Edited by Jacob J. Schacter



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