

Eulogy for Judith Goldman

I am the eighth and last one to speak the eulogy over Judy Goldman. Seven dear and beloved relatives and friends have spoken eloquently, sincerely, and sensitively about Judy--and we have still not scratched the surface. Nor can we.

Judy has been referred to by the honorific first bestowed upon praiseworthy Jewish women by King Solomon, אִשַּׁת חַיִּל, a "woman of valor" or excellence or accomplishment. The verse reads, אִשַּׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמְצָא, "a good woman who can find?," and proceeds to adumbrate the qualities and virtues of an אִשַּׁת חַיִּל.

The great Kotzker Rebbe wonders: why is Solomon asking who can find an accomplished woman? Why the intimation that she is difficult to find? And he answers: because a truly outstanding woman is ultimately unknowable, because even when you think you know her, you discover another layer of qualities, and after that yet another and more deeply embedded identity, and a still deeper nature. Hence, אִשַּׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמְצָא.

This is true of our Judy--there were many layers of her personality; indeed there were simultaneously and in glorious coherence a number of Judys. Let us enumerate some of them, omitting the details already covered by previous speakers.

There was the **Beautiful Judy**--always attractive, elegant in her carriage, her look, her poise. She was an inspiration, looking much younger than her years. She had a special spark--who else would think of even entertaining the impulse to call her sister Jean and say, "There's a chocolate convention in town; let's go!" or, a bit later, the same invitation to join her at a strudel convention! She possessed what almost could be called charisma--one that proved so very intriguing and attractive. All this was accompanied by an irrepressible sense of humor. Judy had a special flair, a quality of personality that was so indomitable that many others found her somewhat intimidating. Indeed--she didn't suffer fools gladly; but she suffered them...

Then there was **Responsible Judy**--who felt she owed it to the community to exercise leadership on its behalf, and so she participated in and led groups such as the UJA, Beautiful Israel, the Sisterhood of Fifth Avenue Synagogue, Yeshiva University Women's Organization. This leadership was always imbued with her own sense of values, and that is why, when it came to secular organizations on behalf of Jewish causes, she insisted that they not flaunt their indifference to Jewish observance by flouting acceptable standards of Kashrut and Shabbat.

And of course there was always **Motherly Judy**. It was not easy raising three strong-minded, talented sons in the years of her loneliness and want, but she did it--with love and devotion and concern and care.

And Jack and Judy--what a love story! They were married for 25 years, and they were glorious ones for both of them. They loved each other--and learned from each other. Her sublings--Burt and Gloria and Mindy--were devoted to her. Most especially close was her identical twin, Jean. They were inseparable--spiritually and psychologically, they were Siamese twins. We all know, Jean, how terribly difficult parting from Judy will be for you. And I consider a sacred duty to acknowledge here and now, as we bid Judy a last farewell, your extraordinary devotion to and love for her during the 14 years of her deprivation. In those years of Judy in the desert, you--and Herb--were her oasis, her guide, her support.

And **Pious Judy**-- Judy took her Judaism very seriously. She was proudly Orthodox in both practice and conviction. "I really believe in the רבשיי," she said--and meant. Her תפילה was regular and moving. As one of her nieces remarked: she was a role model of how to combine a "with it" worldliness, a sparkling vivacity, with profound יראת שמים. Her special concern never to miss שבת מברכים; although she had a calendar, she always asked Gloria to remind her, because that was one Shabbat she didn't want to miss "shul." As luck would have it, she expired yesterday--שבת מברכים...

In dying as in living, Judy was "different", just special. When she knew she was going to die, several weeks ago, she asked that the family gather at the hospital. The scene was reminiscent of the death of the patriarch Jacob. We assembled around her bed, and she was matriarchal but--without pretense, and the scene was dramatic but not melodramatic, sober--and not without a touch of her irrepressible humor. She bade us all, collectively and individually, farewell; she recited the Shema and the וידוי. She asked that her children progress in their development as good Jews. She was determined to leave this world as a pious, devout Jewess--and she did. Her Yiddishkeit was deeply embedded in the innermost folds of her personality. Her mother would have been so very proud of her!

Throughout, there was **Courageous Judy**-- willing risk the unknown to salvage her life and that of her children from unhappy situations. But really it was more than courage. She had an indomitable *spirit*. Even when mired in poverty, she was not *poor*; her taste and standards remained high and challenging. When beset by crisis, she regained her balance. When her fortunes were at a precarious low point, her dignity remained uncompromised and her spirit unbroken. Adversity never crushed her; on the contrary, it toughened her resolve and buttressed her optimism. Neither מצול nor צרות and she had much of each--made a dent in her faith. Her religious devotion was affected neither by success nor failure

One cannot refrain from mentioning **Cultured Judy**. She was sophisticated, had a lively intelligence, was a voracious yet discriminating reader, organized book clubs and gave splendid and literate reviews; she loved opera, music, art, and had a way with words. She had high standards and held others up to them--but mostly held herself to the highest standards.

She adored poetry. It is, I believe, appropriate to read a few lines from one of her favorite poets, Edna St Vincent Millay:

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground;
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind;
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned
With lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

And yet... אשת חיל מי ימצא--who was she *really*? All these qualities of character added up to an unusual individual--but the sum was more than the parts. Because ultimately -- מי ימצא? She was, in the far reaches of her personality, in the innermost core of her נשמה, unknowable. Much as we knew her, we did not know her. She will always remain, for us, the Judys we knew--and the Judy we could not know, shrouded forever in sweet mystery, veiled by a tantalizingly attractive inscrutability.

When Aaron lost his two great sons in a disaster in the משכן, we read וידם אהרן--he kept his silence, he didn't utter a word in his grief. The Rabbis express their admiration for his self-restraint: אהרן קיבל שכר על שתיקתו, he was rewarded for his silence. But Onkelos, the Aramaic translator, while agreeing and translating to ושתק אהרן, also has another interpretation in an alternate version of the Onkelos text: ושבח אהרן (כן הוא בת"א: בחומש כתר תורה, ע"י בתו"ש) that Aaron praised his deceased sons! These two translations seem diametrically opposed to each other--and yet both are right. For, when it comes to certain special people, both speech and silence must be appropriated to do justice to them

Such is the case with our Judy. We have here exercised the ושבח and, knowing full well that we can never say all that can and should be said, we retreat into silence. But the silence is not only that of despair at the inadequacy of our powers of articulation and the poverty of language in general, but also the knowledge that Judy was far more complex, far more profound, and that each of us wants to cherish her in his or her own way, privately, personally, individually.

Thus, our silence itself becomes a threnody; the restraint of speech communicates more than the most eloquent eulogy. In the words of poet Owen Meredith:

There are moments when silence, prolong'd and unbroken,
More expressive may be than all words ever spoken.

So, we dedicate, each of us, the gift of our silence to the memory of our beloved
Judy.

Farewell, dear Judy. We loved you and admired you. And oh, how we shall miss
you.