

EULOGY FOR JOSEPH WARBURG

When the Biblical Joseph died, the Torah describes in three words what happened shortly after that: "ויישם בארון במצרים" he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. The Zohar was intrigued by the spelling of ויישם; having the two letters *yod* in a row is not at all common in the Torah. The Zohar was probably also motivated by the fact that this letter is often the symbol for God or Godliness, since it is the first letter of שם הוי"ה, the Tetragrammaton. It therefore concluded that each of the two letters *yod* stands for a different covenant: תרי יודיין דנטר בריתא דלעילא ודנטר בריתא לתתא, one *yod* stands for conforming with the covenant of man with the Above, i.e., the רבונו של עולם, and the other represents abiding by the covenant Below, i.e., amongst human beings.

That interpretation by the Zohar of the uniqueness of Joseph who lived up to the two covenants, also defined *our* Joseph, Joe Warburg. He was a two-covenant man, one who was loyal to his Maker and gracious to his fellowman. To use the Yiddish (and probably German as well), he was equally "צו גאט און צו לייט", covenanted to God and to man.

Joe was true to his בריתא דלעילא — he rarely missed the daily מנין, and who forced himself to attend Shabbat services even when in pain or disabled by weakness. He was genuinely pious, a שומר מצוות כהלכה. He and Ilsa raised their children, Joan and Ronnie and David, to be highly educated in Torah and in worldly careers. Almost all their children and grandchildren studied at Yeshiva University.

Joe was a leader in this community, and his form of leadership was not by exercising his power, but by using his vast influence as a role model for an Orthodox Jew. For he was by all means gentle, soft-spoken, polite— a marvelous representative of the best of German Jewry— a classical case of a German-Jewish gentleman: mature, knowledgeable, elegant, dignified, respectable. He was an advocate of *Torah Umadda* or more likely its German-Jewish, Hirschian version, *Torah im Derech Eretz*. He certainly was a responsible member of the covenant Above: נטר בריתא דלעילא

Equally, he was loyal to his social-communal duties: נטר בריתא דלתתא. A person's social and moral *Gestalt* is expressed in the first instance in his relations with his or her spouse. And Joe and Ilsa made of their marriage, which lasted a bit more than 60 years, into a showcase of what a Jewish marriage, in observance of the Covenant Below, ought to be. And Ilsa, you proved to be a fabulous, loving devoted wife — always helpful, and never complaining especially in these last difficult years.

As his מחותן, he and Ilsa and my wife and I, enjoyed wonderful, affectionate, respectful relations. It could never occur to me even to think a negative or critical thought about Joe or his beloved Ilsa. Joe possessed the kind of dignity such that you would never even contemplate saying or doing something in his presence that was inappropriate or gossipy or hurtful. I never heard from him a single word of לשון הרע, nor do I believe that he could constitutionally be capable of such a dastardly thing.

Over 25 years ago, in the early years of my presidency of Yeshiva University and before their son David married my daughter Chaye, I was told by my associates who were planning an event in this community led by Rav Moshe Tendler, that I ought to meet especially one outstanding and upstanding member of the community — Joe Warburg. I was told that he was a special kind of

person: a בעל צדקה who was as modest as he was generous, a man who was honorable and decent and respectful. He was a דנטר בריתא לתתא, who thoroughly and happily and elegantly carried out the moral and ethical teachings of the human Covenant, here below, in this busy, grasping, imperfect, and often disappointing world.

These two covenants spelled out the fullness of his commitment to the Torah in both realms – the divine and the human, בין אדם למקום ובין אדם לחברו...

God spared him so that he could have this last opportunity to enjoy two wonderful Pesach *sedarim*. We might now say to and of him: Joe began his סדר of life with קדש and רחץ, with sanctity and dedication, with purity and cleanliness of mind and heart and tongue. Joe is now finished with his duties; his life's *seder* is done. And so we reach the tenth and last part of the *Seder*: נרצה, "accepted," mission accomplished, his sacrifices received in love by the Master of the World. We can say of and to him: כשם שזכה לסדר אותו כן יזכה לשכרו. חסל סידור פסח כהלכתו. Joe's *seder* is done, performed according to the laws and rules ordained by our Heavenly Father. Now we pray that just as he performed his *seder* with such integrity and elegance and honor, so may he be privileged to join the Heavenly *Seder* in the presence of the Almighty in the World of Truth and in the presence of those deserving of the gift of eternity.

May his tradition of abiding by the תרי יודיין forever be a source endless pride and honor and consolation to you, Ilsa, and to your children and grand-children, to their children, to his loyal and loving brother Ralph, and to the entire family, for years and years to come.

תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים