

Rabbi Norman Lamm

Aug. 14, 1951

Eulogy for Mrs. Mary Bernard

Riverside Chapel

1. Ayshees Chayil (With introd'n) p 317b

2. Hashkiveynu p 114

3. Dear friends,

Unfortunately, I never had the honor of meeting the deceased personally. I never had the pleasure of seeing her and talking to her in the synagogue which she so loved. But one did not have to meet Mrs. Mary Bernard to know her. I never saw her, <sup>but</sup> her reputation greeted me before she did or could. Like the luminaries of the heavens, of ~~whom~~ the Psalmist writes: <sup>neither</sup> *אֵין שָׁמַיִם וְאֵין אֶרֶץ וְאֵין מַלְאָכִים וְאֵין בְּרִיָּה וְאֵין מִיּוֹן וְאֵין מְנוּחָה וְאֵין מְנוּחָה וְאֵין מְנוּחָה*, that although "there is <sup>neither</sup> no speech nor language, and their voice cannot be heard, yet their sound is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world", so with Mary Bernard <sup>וְאֵין מְנוּחָה</sup>, though she did not sing her own praises from the roof tops, or have them announced by publicity agents, yet her reputation and good works preceded her, and I knew her thru them.

In the office of the synagogue in which she worshipped, I was introduced to her parents. Browsing through some old year-books, I met her father, that venerable man with the tall yarmalke and well-trimmed beard, who as one of the founders ~~and~~ of Cong. Kehillath Jeshurun and one of its earliest presidents must have <sup>had</sup> a considerable influence on the character and personality and Jewishness of his beloved daughter. She indeed came from the aristocracy of Traditional Judaism, and she brought credit ~~to~~ that heritage. There I also met her children. I met her son who is an active worker in the field of Jewish education, helping advance the Religious School which his grandparents helped found and his parents helped develop. All I can say from <sup>my knowledge</sup> her reputation as daughter, wife, mother and grandmother, ~~all I can say is~~, "What a woman she must have been"!

When we get down to the brass tacks of the study of persons and personalities, we might say that there are two types of people who respond to Life and its changing conditions in totally different ways. There are people who are like willows in the fields, who, when the Sun smiles upon the Earth, stand proud and erect, and are the picture of good health and self-confidence. The soft warm rays of the sun inspire them with courage and cheerfulness. Yet no one would look to a willow or tall grass for shelter or comfort. For as soon as the first rain-clouds gather and the winds blow across the <sup>plains</sup>, the willows bow their heads

in servile obedience to the cruel elements. When the clouds <sup>begin to</sup> gather and squeeze out their first drops of rain upon the fields, the willows have lost their ~~charm~~, they wave gloomily and fearfully before the impending storm. And even after the winds have blown and the tempest has spent itself, they lie beaten across the fields, no longer erect and proud, but low and humbled, reflecting the signs of havoc. How many people we know are just like that. Have things go their way - and they are all charm, ~~then~~ good-natured and oozing with sweetness and confidence. But as soon as the first mean winds blow across their lives, their pride is crushed, their resistance crumbles, they lose interest in every one else, throw up their hands in desperation and surrender, blaming Fate instead of their own weakness. Such people are not the kind to whom you look for guidance and encouragement. They are not dependable, not the sort who would be characterized by the word "Mother".

But there are people who are like the Cedars of Lebanon; trees whose roots strike deep, who are towers of strength and princely majesty. You find a person who like this tree is a picture of serenity, mellows into old age gracefully and charmingly, yet remaining the same source of security as when young. It is the sort of tree which stands erect and proud and confident and inspiring through all sorts of weather. It is the kind of tree under whose branches you find shade and shelter even when violent storms erupt all about you. Near that tree you feel safe and happy, for she is stable and trustworthy during all vicissitudes and despite all mishaps.

Mary Bernard, May she rest in Peace, was that type of person. She was the archetype of "mother", the kind of mother who is always beside her children, <sup>calming</sup> ~~claiming~~ them in their moments of fear, encouraging them and ever inspiring them.

Writes King Solomon of his ideal woman, <sup>are</sup> "Strength and majesty ~~were~~ her clothing; and she laugheth to the last day". How well does this characterize Mary Bernard! A woman with loyalty to the traditions of Israel and faith in the G-d of Israel, a woman who attended services in the synagogue regularly and religiously, it might well be said of her that "strength and majesty are her clothing; she laugheth to the last day". Her personality was not weak like the willows, but strong like the cedars; not servile but majestic. And she laughed to the last day. Certainly she did. Through <sup>and for ten</sup> ~~affection~~,

and then the lack of it, her character remained firm, her spirit strong. Even while she was a grandmother, then a great grandmother, even unto the fourth generation, until her very last day, she smiled with life and loved it. She was ever the same source of courage and inspiration. She was too busy ~~too~~ <sup>too busy with life to think much of death</sup> with the good to have much regard for evil. All through her life she typified what George Meredith meant when he wrote:

"You must love the light so well, "That no darkness will seem fell".

Naturally she laughed good-naturedly to the last day. How many more Jewish women can you find in the last few years, who were born <sup>in America</sup> about the time she was, who developed the same spirit that she did? She grew into girlhood and adolescence and young womanhood at a time when America was regarded as the barren desert of Jewish culture, at a time when it was fashionable to scoff at a young girl or woman remaining true to her Jewish inheritance, at a time when America was written off as a lost case in the battle for the survival of Judaism, when only pessimism and a sour face greeted any attempts to implant Jewish values in American soil. Yet she quietly went on smiling at all that pessimism and proved by good example that the world was wrong. In a culturally hostile environment, she "laugheth to the last day", for "strength and majesty are her clothing". Indeed, she "loved the light so well that no darkness did seem fell".

Women of this sort are rare in our generation. By example she was a powerful ~~ex~~ argument for the heritage she bequeathed to us - decency and courageous Jewish values. Her grandchildren have had the privilege of knowing this rare type of "ayshess chayil". Don't allow her to become a wasted lesson. Make her teachings living and effective by keeping her memory as - - your conscience.

With her passing, ~~her~~ <sup>friend</sup> family has lost an able and steady guide, the congregation a loyal and devoted ~~member~~, and her children a dear and loving mother. In the words of

Isaiah which we will read this Sabbath, —

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עֵתָּה

"Be consoled, my people, be consoled sayeth your G-d"

4. Audience rise- read "ana hashem" p. 323-4

5. Adler El Mole

6. Week of Shiva observed home of Mr. Jack Sömmers , 1120 Park Ave. 8:15AM, 7:30 PM