

EULOGY FOR
JEROME SCHOTTENSTEIN
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March 11, 1992

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Shalom / R. H. S. / H. S.

One of the highlights of my tenure at Yeshiva University was the opportunity to meet and befriend Jerome Schottenstein. I cherished him and I adored him. I considered him a genuinely good man in the sense that the prophet Micah described such a person: "It has been told to you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the Lord your God" (Micah 6:8). Jerry fulfilled this mandate and exemplified the "good man" in its fullest sense.

To do justly. Justice is achieved not in splendid isolation, but in the fray of events, in the hurly-burly of the market place. It requires of one that he plunge into the maelstrom of life and yet retain a sense of fairness and justice and decency and honor. That is a truly moral accomplishment of the good man.

Jerry was a great success in business. He was shrewd, he possessed insight and foresight. He had a rather deceptive demeanor: Soft in tone and deliberate in speech, one might have taken him for an unsophisticated naif. But that was the exact opposite of Jerry -- who had a quick intelligence, was able to size up a situation accurately and quickly, had a phenomenal memory, and was brilliant in judgment. And with all this, Jerry was above all a man of decency and rectitude and probity.

To love Mercy. Jerry was kind and compassionate, and he expressed these sentiments in practice. He was a leader in the Jewish and general communities. In Columbus, he was a major contributor to the United Jewish Appeal and Federation and Israel Bonds, to the Columbus Jewish Center and to his synagogues. He was a donor and leader as well to theatre and opera and to medical research.

His major achievements were in the area of Jewish education, because Jerry knew and understood well that without education Jews and Judaism have no future. Thus, he founded and was a leading light in the Torah Academy of Columbus, and in the New High School in Cleveland.

For us at Yeshiva University he was an undisguised blessing. He rallied the members of the distinguished Schottenstein family to endow our Student Center in our Washington Heights Campus. In it, he and his wife built our Jerome and Geraldine Schottenstein Theater. He has put aside funds to enable our Stern College for Women to obtain a much needed new Residence Hall. He was a distinguished member of the Board of Trustees of the University, and it was my pleasure and my honor to give him an honorary degree in 1984.

I shall never forget the look of unabashed "nachas" in his eyes when Jay told him he would accept my offer to become chairman of the Yeshiva College Board. Jerry extended his hand

to Jay, and that wordless clasp of hands between father and son spoke volumes of love and pride.

He helped other institutions of Jewish education as well: Chabad, the Orthodox Union, Ner Israel, and others. And he linked his name with that of the Talmud in a historic project of translation and interpretation of the entire Talmud. What a good man!

To walk humbly with the Lord your God. Jerry possessed genuine humility. He had a luminous character.

In his life of business, he had many competitors. But in the business of life, he had few rivals. He was respected by his employees as well as his children, and cherished by his business associates as well as his family.

I know very many unusually successful people; it goes with the territory. I know too that success begets power, and that power often corrupts.

That did not obtain with Jerome Schottenstein. He was successful, and his success indeed endowed him with power -- he was a very strong man. But his power never corrupted his character; on the contrary, it ennobled him. He never allowed success and power to go to his head; instead, they enlarged his heart. He used them to improve his family, his community, his people, his society, the world.

Despite his accomplishments, Jerry remained soft-spoken, understated, meek, gentle in prosperity and strong and hopeful in adversity. When I spoke to him yesterday morning, I noticed that for the first time during his long and terrible illness, a sense of resignation had set in when I asked him how he felt.

What the poet and biographer Carl Sandburg said of Abraham Lincoln was true of Jerome Schottenstein: He was "steel wrapped in velvet."

And this unusual quality was not just a characterological accident; it issued from his deep religious commitment: "*To walk humbly with the Lord your God.*" Jerry kept faith with the tradition of his fathers. His religion was not merely one of sentiment or casual theorizing, but expressed itself in action and in deed. He observed the Sabbath, and the Schottensteins' Shabbat together with their children and grandchildren was a happy experience which will long endure in the memory of his fortunate family. They learned from their parents that faith is not something nebulous, but something that had to be lived, and so they were able to taste the majesty and sweetness of Jewish living. Jerry, who studied at our Yeshiva University High School when he was a youngster, learned that Jewishness is not a fate to which he must resign himself, but a destiny to which he must

aspire and which inspired him. Truly, his Jewish commitments were not only emotional, but spiritual. *With the Lord your God.*

In the Torah reading this past Shabbat, the last of Jerry's life, we read of the construction of the *mishkan* or Tabernacle by Moses. The climax came when Moses took the Tablets that he had received at Sinai and placed them in the Ark. Maimonides (towards the end of his Laws of the Scrolls of the Torah) tells us that what was contained in the Tablets of stone of Moses is identical with what is contained in the *Sefer Torah* of Parchment that we possess today. Hence, the *Sefer Torah* in the Ark of a synagogue is equivalent to the Tablets in the Ark of the Tabernacle. However, one of the major commentaries on Maimonides asks: If so, why is it that the Tablets lay prone in the Ark of Moses, whereas in the Ark of the synagogue the *Sefer Torah* stands erect? A great Talmudist, the Egyptian Rabbi David Ibn Zimra, offers an insightful solution: the Tabernacle was the place where *God revealed himself to man*. Man was passive, coming only to experience the presence of God. In a synagogue, however, man comes to *reveal himself to God*; he comes with a prayer in his heart and on his lips, ready to dedicate himself to the highest ideals of Torah. When man is passive, the Tablets lie prone. When man is active, *the Torah stands for him!*

What a remarkable idea! The *Sefer Torah*, the most sacred object in Judaism, rises before a person who actively pursues its most sublime precepts. The Torah has respect for a truly "good man."

Indeed, Jerry Schottenstein lived the kind of life that made him worthy of the *Sefer Torah* standing up before him!

Jay and Jeannie, Ari and Annie, Jon and Susan and Lori -- you have lost a beloved father and guide and a cherished father-in-law. The grandchildren have lost a doting and sweet grandfather. Saul and Zelma -- a strong and wise brother.

But Geraldine, you have lost most of all -- and our hearts go out to all your family, but especially to you.

However, as the weeks become months, and the months shade into years, always remember the prophetic portion that Jerry used to recite in this place every first day of Rosh Hashannah. This *maftir* comes from the first chapter of I Samuel. Elkanah, the future father of the prophet Samuel, has two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah is blessed with many children, but Hannah is barren. She is desperately unhappy, and is disconsolate. At one point, Elkanah turns to Hannah and says to her the following touching words: "Why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart so grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Geraldine, your children and your children-in-law are good, indeed very good, to you as they were to him and he was to them. And the loss of a husband as unusual as Jerry is something very

special -- because like Elkanah and Hannah, he was as good to you as any ten loving children could be.

But please remember, Geraldine: As well as grieving over what you lost, be grateful for what you had. Jerry was as good to you as any ten men could be. Not many wives can say that and believe it.

Let that memory, that goodness, that love, sustain you and sustain the children and the entire family. "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" You had both: the love of a great and good husband and the love of wonderful children. Together, all of you will sustain your family and enhance the heritage he bequeathed to you.

The rest of us -- friends, colleagues, community -- are bereaved too. He was better to us -- as friend, as guide, as supporter, as adviser -- than any ten others.

Jerome Schottenstein, *Yaakov Meir Hayyim Hakohen*: You were a whole *minyan* of precious people!

We shall mourn you ten-fold.

And remember you for ten times as long.

And continue to love you ten times as much.

May your soul be bound up in the bond of immortal life. Because you were truly a good man.