

## Words of Tribute

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I knew Rabbi Jung in several capacities: as his associate in the rabbinate of The Jewish Center for 18 years; as a congregant here for the past 11 years; as President of Yeshiva University where he served as both professor emeritus of Jewish ethics and as honorary trustee on our Board. But I speak this evening not in any official capacity, but primarily as an American Jew in the latter half of the twentieth century who is concerned with the future of Torah and the State of Israel and the Jewish people, and who had the opportunity to see him labor on their behalf and leave them far better, healthier, and more secure than he found them because of his passage through life.

Rabbi Jung always struck me as a remarkably serene man. His serenity was more than the typical unflappability of the Englishman; Rabbi Jung was an Englishman, an American, a German, an Hungarian—a truly international man. It issued from far deeper resources than a mere cultural bias. Its origin was in the sense of wholeness, of *temimut*, that comes from profound faith and inner conviction.

*Emunah*, Jewish religious experience, comes in two antithetical forms, both equally authentic. One is that of a stormy scene of massive spiritual conflicts, of tormented wrangling with doubt and struggling with loneliness, leaving one filled with pain and anguish and *angst*. The other form of religious experience involves a serene center of spiritual tranquility—irenic, pacific, and happy—reinforced by the faith and trust in the Almighty.

Despite the fact that Rabbi Jung had the capacity to struggle for his principles—and he proved successful when he had to engage in such contention—his essential personality was of the second type, that which is described in the divine command to Abraham, והתהלך לפני ה' חמים, “walk before Me and you will be whole.” He was whole, a complete personality, unperturbed by dissonance and oppositions. His gift for reconciling opposites, or at least for abiding their coexistence without visible tension, was part of his educational background. He was a man of wide culture, one in whom Cambridge University and the Pressburg Yeshiva encountered each other comfortably and respectfully.

This spiritual composure and inner quietude characterized his thinking as well as his feeling. Indeed, it was the basis for what, I believe, was his essential theological concern, his Jewish *weltanschauung*.

Rabbi Jung passed away on Hanukkah. Permit me, therefore, to analyze his fundamental intellectual orientation on the basis of the great symbol of Hanukkah, that of the *menorah*, the candelabrum in the Tabernacle.

In a rather strange passage, the Rabbis tell us that Moses had some difficulty with the divine instruction to construct the *menorah*. משה נחקש במעשה המנורה. עד שהראה לו הקב"ה מנורה של אש. Moses was troubled by the entire matter of the *menorah* so that the Holy One had to show him a *menorah shel esh*, a candelabrum made of fire.

What did the Sages mean to teach us with this comment? What made them attribute to Moses difficulties which should not trouble even a child beginning the study of *Humash*, requiring of the Holy One to project for him a fiery image of the *menorah*?

I believe that a major problem perturbed him: the *menorah* yields mixed signals, it is the symbol of two apparently conflicting values—beauty and spirituality. The very loving attention the Torah showered on the details of the ornamentation of the *menorah*—the knobs and the flowers and the cups—is sufficient evidence of its status as a work of unblemished art. In the course of time, generations of Jews came to revere the candelabrum as a Jewish symbol of beauty.

At the same time, the pure flame of the *menorah* transformed it into the ultimate symbol of spirituality. Thus, the Prophet Zechariah, from whose work we read in the Haftarah on the Shabbat Rabbi Jung returned his soul to his Maker, sees a *menorah* in his vision and exclaims, *כי לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם ברוחי אמר ה' צבאות* – “neither by might nor by strength [shall one prevail], but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Now, these two values suggested by the *menorah*, beauty and spirit, do not at all seem compatible. Beauty is external, it speaks to appearances. Spirit is inwardness, it reflects essence, not appearance. Beauty is enchanting, spirit is enduring. Beauty thrives in revelation – the artist or performer needs an appreciative audience; spirit shuns public scrutiny and flourishes only in concealment, in the closed chambers of the heart, shy and shame-faced. Beauty seeks exposure, even unto nudity; spirit needs modesty and hiddenness. Thus, Immanuel Kant (in his third book, *The Critique of Judgment*) speaks of the conflict between ethics and esthetics. Matthew Arnold, in his *Athens and Jerusalem*, made famous his dichotomy between Greeks and Hebrews as based upon the encounter between the two incompatibles, beauty and spirit.

Yet the *menorah* implies both – and thus the difficulty experienced by the Sages and midrashically attributed by them to Moses himself. How, indeed, construct this center-piece for the Temple when it is in and of itself a contradiction? Hence, the *menorah* required the direct intervention of the Creator Himself, for no mere mortal – not even Moses – could find a way out of the dilemma on his own authority.

So God Himself, as it were, gave His blessing to the *menorah*, and by projecting it as a fiery image not only showed Moses how to build it, but conceptually confirmed it, thus denying that the two symbols were mutually exclusive and insisting that beauty and spirit were indeed compatible and worthy of coexistence. All that is needed is – a little vision, a little fire, a modicum of prophetic passion. If one's faith is fiery, if one's devotion to Torah is dynamic, if one's religious outlook has not become encrusted with routine and boredom and staleness, the two could be reconciled and the *menorah* could become a reality.

For many of us at Yeshiva University and in the camp of Centrist or Modern Orthodoxy, the problem is formulated as *Torah Umadda*, the encounter of Judaism with secular culture. While Rabbi Jung undoubtedly shared our concerns and perceptions in this matter, the central issue for him was the encounter between *yofi* and *ruah*, between beauty and spirit, between esthetics and Torah. And Torah for Rabbi Jung (as for Hermann Cohen) was essentially ethical in its context and intent. Thus, he was fond of defining holiness as morality, citing the verse, *והאלהים יקדש בדרך צדקה* – “the Holy God is sanctified through righteousness (*tzedakah*).” Now, for the sake of honesty I must say that I did not always agree with him in this emphasis. While I acknowledge that there is an ethical moment in holiness, I am not ready to give it that supremacy in the numinous or the holy.

But that was Rabbi Jung's view, and it not only is an intellectually respectable thesis, but it is morally compelling and, above all, it tells us so much about Rabbi Jung himself! He was an ethico-moral model for his generation, and he endeavored to translate his theory into practice. He felt, correctly, that most of the defections from authentic Judaism were not the result of philosophic problems or theological difficulties but something far more mundane: the revulsion at provincial manners



and vulgarisms raised to the level of tradition. Thus, he was exceedingly strict about decorum at services, because he felt that religious devotion (*kavannah*) could not flourish in an atmosphere redolent with gossip and reminiscent of a marketplace. He was furious with dirty kosher restaurants and with unkempt and unappetizing *mikvaot*. He not only failed to detect an inconsistency between religion and esthetics, between faith and dignity, but he insisted upon their critical need for each other. And to these practical tasks he brought his own inner flame—not a raging fire, but a tranquil yet unquenchable light, a *menorah shel esh*, that gave him the vision and the persistence to endow American Orthodoxy with dignity and grace and beauty.

This day, dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Jung, is located between two significant Torah readings. Yesterday we read *Parashat Beshalah*, centering on the *shirah*, the great Song of Deliverance when Israel was redeemed from Egypt. This coming Shabbat we shall read *Parashat Yitro*, which includes primarily the *aseret ha-dibrot*. The conjunction of these two Torah portions with this memorial event is remarkable. The *shirah* is the symbol of esthetics; song is part of the world of art and beauty. The *aseret ha-dibrot* are the primary source of Jewish ethics and morality as well as law. And Rabbi Jung, as we mentioned, was an eminent exemplar of this fusion of ethics and esthetics, of beauty and holiness. For him, esthetics, if genuine, had perforce to lead to ethics; and he considered ethics beautiful and filled with the grace of holiness.

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During the years of our association here at The Jewish Center, he gave me a certain amount of advice. Not all of it did I accept, either because of disposition or time restraints. I never did manage a daily walk of two miles or so around the Central Park reservoir, nor did I pull down the blinds, remove my shoes, close my eyes, and rest for half an hour every afternoon. But one piece of advice proved most helpful to me in my career, and it was a nugget of wisdom which he shared with me very early in my tenure at The Jewish Center. "Lamm," he said to me, "never expect gratitude and you will never be unhappy." If this is true universally, it is all the more true for the rabbi, who as a matter of course and profession does favors for many people. I have learned never to expect it, and to be delighted when it is offered, thus sparing myself frustration and bitterness. But the fact that he was so very right, and that he never wanted or expected it for himself, does not absolve the rest of us from the powerful moral and Jewish obligation to offer gratitude graciously and wholeheartedly—to him. Permit me to mention but a few of those who owe him an eternal debt of thanks.

**The Jewish Center** must always be grateful to his memory for presiding over its destiny, shaping its collective character, and elevating it to its preeminent position among synagogues throughout the world. He brought to this congregation an awareness of authentic faith more in his very personality than in his preaching.

I shall never forget a scene that took place in this sanctuary the first year that I was here. Rabbi Jung was speaking, and a lady well past her middle age who had been raised in The Jewish Center but moved away years before, looked at him adoringly, even worshipfully, and said to me shortly afterwards, "Rabbi Jung

reminds me of God." I confess that I was not only a bit overwhelmed by this extravagant reverence, but disturbed because I considered it blasphemous. Upon further reflection, however, I changed my mind. Indeed, this is exactly what a rabbi should strive for: to remind people that there is a God in the world, to represent to them by example what Godliness is all about. This woman was carrying out the dictum of the Sages, *יהי מורא רבך כמורא שמים*, "Let your reverence for your rabbi be like your reverence for Heaven." And Rabbi Jung filled an extremely important role in her life—as he has done for so many others at The Jewish Center and elsewhere.

**Yeshiva University** is grateful to him for having inspired several generations of students with the ethical teachings of the Torah tradition. Here, again, his living example was more effective than any literary or philosophical text. Rabbi Jung was a man of unimpeachable integrity. His honesty was self-evident, and his honor uncompromised in the course of close to a century of his distinguished life. Most important, in an age of easy morality even by those who profess faith, Rabbi Jung's religion was simply not "for sale." I remember the late Max Stern telling me, when I was contemplating accepting the call to The Center, that "Rabbi Jung does not know the color of a dollar bill." He preached that one ought not to make a religion out of business—and he himself did not make a business out of religion.

I am reminded, in this connection, of a wise interpretation by R. Barukh Halevi Epstein, author of *Torah Temimah*, recorded in his autobiography, *Mekor Barukh*. The Talmud teaches that the first question asked of every mortal upon reaching the Heavenly Court after his death is "did you conduct your business with *emunah*, faithfully (i.e., honestly)?" The interpretation of the *Torah Temimah*, however, is slightly different. He takes the word *be-emunah* not as an adverb but as a noun. Hence: did you make a business out of your *emunah*, out of your faith or religion? Anyone who knew Rabbi Jung, even superficially, knows that he has an easy task in answering that question. His many former students at Yeshiva University acknowledge their indebtedness to him as a role model of ethical integrity.

**Rabbonim Aid Society** was the creation of Rabbi Jung and Mrs. Jung. They conceived it, gave birth to it, nurtured it—and hundreds of scholarly immigrant rabbis were not only helped in their daily struggle for existence, but spared humiliation. He treated them with remarkable Jewish sensitivity. Hence he gave respect to his distinguished beneficiaries, and showed concern for their dignity when he and Mrs. Jung personally visited them in their homes. This was an act of *hesed* for which no thanks are adequate, and yet all of us join in doing just that.

**Israel and countless Israeli organizations**—from yeshivot to UJA to Bonds to Kfar Eliyahu—will miss him sorely and will be all the more devout in their thanksgiving to the Almighty for having sent them Rabbi Jung at critical times.

**Thousands of refugees** during World War II came to this country in safety because he worked indefatigably to obtain visas for them, and untold numbers of Jewish children in Iran and France and elsewhere received succor for their bodies and nourishment for their souls and minds because of his labors.

For all this, and for much more, he is deserving of our gratitude. And those who failed to express this precious sentiment during his lifetime owe it to him now and in the future—by continuing his good works towards others.

Indeed, it is especially those hapless individuals, suffering in poverty but refusing to undergo the humiliation of begging; and those institutions of genuine



substance whose value was known only to a chosen few such as Rabbi Jung and who are now organizationally orphaned—it is they who deserve continued support by those moral enough and sensitive enough to acknowledge the gratitude they owe to him and his memory.

We remember him, and always shall, as a most unusual man who inhabited our little portion of the planet and our tiny span of history with exemplary grace and fortitude of spirit. His example will always continue to inspire us. For, where others merely ate at the banquet of Judaism, he dined. He possessed an unassuming elegance and modest refinement. He had the capacity of transmuting knowledge into wisdom, etiquette into ethics, manners into morals, politeness into principle.

Perhaps we can sum up our farewell to him in the words of a famous couplet in the Shakespearean sonnet:

“Who is it who says most? Which can say more  
Than this rich praise—that you alone are you?”

הוא נפשו צורה בצורה החיים.

May his soul be bound up in the bond of immortal life.