



Max M. Kampelman Papers

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

AS READ

REMARKS

BY

MAX M. KAMPELMAN

AT THE

ISAAC FRANCK MEMORIAL SERVICE

Adas Israel Congregation
Washington, D.C.

September 10, 1985

It is said that the life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living. We are assembled together this afternoon to celebrate the life of Isaac Franck. We do so by permitting each of us to reach back into our own memories of Isaac and Pearl and how they have inter-related with us over the years. No two memories are likely to be the same, for Isaac's life and activities and interests were varied. There is, however, I am convinced, a common thread; and that common thread was Isaac's deeply held religious convictions. It is out of this root that he developed a sense of community responsibility and a commitment to learning.

Isaac was a good Jew by any reasonable definition of that term. Yet, as a good Jew he chose to spend the last years of his life teaching and studying at Catholic University and at the Jesuit's Georgetown University, interrelating with the profundity of theologians whose training and heritage was from the Christian and Moslem traditions. The sense of excitement one could see in talking to Isaac during this period clearly revealed his joy at this intellectual stimulation as

he reached for an understanding of the oneness of the human spirit. In this exciting set of experiences Isaac came to understand the validity of the Jewish teaching that learning is one of the highest forms of worship.

The most significant contribution of the ancient Hebrew tribes was in their pronouncement that there was only one God. If there is only one God, then we are all of us his children and, thus, brothers and sisters to one another. Here is the essence of human brotherhood, the guiding principle of true religious conviction, and the fundamental premise of political democracy.

Isaac understood that if there was any reason for the descendants of those ancient Hebrew tribes to continue stubbornly to survive through centuries of upheaval, dislocation and tragedy, that survival can only be justified in the judgment of history by a continued commitment to that principle of human brotherhood and community.

This brings us to Isaac's passionate interest in the valuable philosophical contributions of Maimonides. Isaac Franck spent a great deal of his productive life studying, understanding and explaining Maimonides. The results of his work are widely published and greatly respected. It brought him great personal satisfaction.

It is not strange that this illustrious historic figure of the twelfth century, Maimonides, the Rambam, known as perhaps the single most powerful influence on Jewish law, philosophy and thought of the medieval period, should have attracted the deep interest of Isaac. Isaac knew that it was more than the scholarship of Maimonides that

led to his impact. It was also the role that Maimonides played as a community leader, too frequently unappreciated, that brought him the wisdom and perspective that made him an outstanding historic figure.

All of us as we look back on Isaac's life -- and I first met Isaac and Pearl when Maggie and I came to Washington in 1949 and he was serving as head of the Jewish Community Council -- know of the immense and indispensable contribution Isaac made toward forging in this Nation's Capital a unifying sense of responsibility out of our diversified Jewish community. Isaac appreciated the Maimonides teaching that we each have the duty to fulfill our community responsibilities as part of our religious life.

Maimonides was sensitive to the need to harmonize his religious convictions with his intellectual integrity. Isaac too, felt that need. Maimonides insisted that one could remain anchored in rationality and at the same time be loyal to his God of the Torah. He struggled to purge the tendency toward grandiose myths in the Jewish community, even though he understood that oppressed communities look for miracles. It was not necessary, he said, for God to be surrounded by fantasies in order to be the object of religious conviction. He, therefore, worked to neutralize the appeal of charismatic messianic pretenders. Here, of course, Maimonides made a profound contribution to the development of democratic thought. This had a great impact on Isaac's life and behavior.

Isaac was committed to the belief that the essence of Judaism was a commitment to universal religious truths; that moral standards are not the exclusive province of theology, that a commitment to

religion required a sense of community responsibility; that the realization of a full and satisfying community life required the political realization of the religious aspirations of human brotherhood -- the commitment of democracy.

These were the strong roots of Isaac's belief structure and they defined the dimensions of his valuable contribution to our community.

I close with this message for Pearl, Walter and Phyllis, as I read from the poet:

"We give him back to Thee, dear God,

who gave him to us.

Yet as Thou didst not lose him in giving,

So we have not lost him by his return.

For life is eternal and love is immortal

And death is only a horizon

And a horizon is nothing save a limit of our sight."

ISAAC FRANCK, 1909-1985

The death of Dr. Isaac Franck deprives Washington Jewry of one of its wisest men. For a quarter of a century, he directed the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington with a firm hand.

Franck was a pioneer in the field of community relations, bringing to this profession a rich grounding in Jewish history and philosophy as well as a profound faith that Jews must be found on the side of justice.

He fought the good battles. In the 1950s, the Jewish community was at the forefront of the struggle to integrate Washington's schools and public facilities—and behind the scenes was his guiding hand. In the 1960s, he became a mediator within the interreligious community for racial harmony and justice in strife-torn Washington. He worked to halt white flight.

He had friends in different segments of Washington life. Politicians would come to him for guidance on issues that had little to do with the Jewish community, knowing that he would be objective and trustworthy. Police chiefs would come to him with questions of what is the right thing to do. It was only natural that late in his career, he would come to advise physicians and patients in bio-medical ethics.

Isaac Franck mobilized Washington Jewry's support of Israel when Zionism was still controversial in the Jewish community. For years, he served as the conduit for the *samizdat* publications from renaissance Soviet Jewry. The Board of Jewish Education began as a committee of the Jewish Community Council.

Franck was gracious. He was available to his successors for counsel and guidance, but he never intruded. Once he relinquished the mantle of Jewish leadership, he allowed others to take his place, but he never abandoned the struggle for justice and communal harmony, or his love of learning and of the Jewish people which were the marks of his life.

AARON GOLDMAN

*Former President, Jewish Community Council
of Greater Washington*

ALBERT E. ARENT

*Former President, Jewish Community Council
of Greater Washington*

TOM BEAUCHAMPS

*Senior Research Scholar,
Kennedy Institute of Ethics,
Georgetown University*

JUDE DOUGHERTY

*Dean, School of Philosophy,
The Catholic University of America*

HON. JOHN B. DUNCAN

*Former Commissioner,
District of Columbia*

AMBASSADOR MAX M. KAMPELMAN

*Head of U.S. Delegation to the
Nuclear and Space Negotiations*

JACQUELINE K. LEVINE

*Chair, National Jewish Community Relations
Advisory Council*

NATHAN A. PELCOVITS

*Former President, Board of Jewish
Education of Greater Washington*

EDMUND D. PELLEGRINO, M.D.

*Director, Kennedy Institute of Ethics,
Georgetown University*

SEYMOUR D. WOLF

*Former President, Jewish Community Council
of Greater Washington*

RABBI ALFRED JOSPE

*Former International Director,
B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations*

זכר צדיק לברך

ISAAC FRANCK



1909 - 1985

A GATHERING OF FRIENDS

September 10, 1985

Adas Israel Synagogue
Washington, D.C.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
OF GREATER WASHINGTON**

**SUITE 920 • 1522 K Street, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005**

BENEFICIARY OF THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL FEDERATION OF GREATER WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR STEPHEN
THAT AM

9/10

AARON GOLDMAN

1725 K STREET N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

August 23, 1985

MEMORANDUM

To: Participants, Isaac Franck Memorial Gathering

Confirmation:


Gathering will be held in the Gewirz Auditorium (Porter Street Entrance) Adas Israel Congregation, Connecticut Avenue & Porter Street, N.W., Tuesday, September 10, 1985 at 4:30 p.m. Parking available in the adjacent lot.

Participants are requested to be in their seats (reserved) by 4:25 p.m.

We are planning a one hour gathering. Since there are eleven of us who will be "remembering" Isaac, each of us should limit himself/herself to five minutes.

The order of speaking will be as follows: Aaron Goldman, Albert E. Arent, Tom Beauchamps, Jude Dougherty, John B. Duncan, Max M. Kampelman, Jacqueline Levine, Nathan A. Pelcovits, Edmund Pellegrino, Seymour D. Wolf, Rabbi Alfred Jospe. There will be no introduction of speakers except as identified in the printed program; when a speaker finishes, the next in order will follow.

Pearl and Isaac's children, Walter and Phyllis, are grateful for your participation - as am I.


Aaron Goldman