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"A Celebration of the Life of Edward M. M. Warburg." 21 June
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A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF
EDWARD M. M. WARBURG

at 1109 Fifth Avenue

The Jewish Museum

June 21, 1993

by

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

2 Samuel 3:38 "Know ye not there is a prince fallen in Israel? King David's lament over Abner, who served him well. EMMW was indeed a prince, - honored, adored and respected by thousands.

Today we have gathered to celebrate the life of Eddie (a.k.a. Peeper) Warburg, noble son of a noble family, ^{The family of Felix Warburg + Jacob Schill} as close to an aristocracy as American Jewry produced.

The verb - "to celebrate" - has four definitions.

1. To praise or honor publicly.
2. To commemorate with ceremony or festivity.
3. To proclaim or extol.
4. To solemnize with reverence, as a religious ceremony.

^{this evening}
We are enacting all four, for we are publicly praising, festively drinking,
and religiously revering his memory.

Others know him in the field of art - possessing his own gallery in the squash court on the fifth floor of this very house when a younger man; his teaching at Bryn Mawr; his role in the founding of the Museum of Modern Art and the American Ballet Theatre. He told me about these things, and I read about them in "Patron Saints."

But I knew him best in the Jewish social service world his father created. His father had laid a certain mantle on him, in a letter written on Edward's 21st birthday. Felix wrote: "Avoid self-pitying always, but pity others with all the noblesse oblige that ^{your} station requires...remain a gentlemen...and you will make people happy by your company, your sympathy, your understanding. The world is full of beauty and some kindly people - find them and be as happy and as lucky as has been, so far, your Old Devoted Father"

And his mother strengthened this sense of obligation through two acts of her own: one day in the mid-1930's, when Frieda was upset by news of Hitler's progress, she told Eddie that he was the only one of her 5 children who had been "made in Germany". This may have given him his special compassion for German and European Jewry. The second influence came, after his father's death, when his mother was parcelling out to the children the various projects which had consumed Felix's interests, and assigned the JDC to Eddie. That became the obligation of his entire life, which he assumed and executed *magnificently*.

~~magnificently.~~

Because of what was happening in Germany, he decided to enlist. Not wanting to use family position, and determined to be tested on his merits alone, he joined the army as a private.

"Here at last was a chance for anonymity, a chance to get lost in the crowd, to demonstrate, at least to myself, just what, if anything, I had on the ball. I wanted to be free from the advantages and disadvantages of inheritance and publicity, and from the flattery of those who courted favor".

He landed in Normandy as a captain, and six weeks after D-Day he was in Paris at the district headquarters of the JDC. Learning that 10,000 Jews were starving in Paris, and the soup kitchens were desperate for supplies, Warburg arranged for (army) food to be delivered immediately - and within a day established contact with JDC office in New York to start the flow of money for relief of refugees.

He honestly cared about people in trouble. He worried about them, and watched every detail together with Moses Leavitt, the executive director.

Not a Zionist - in sense of living there himself - but yes a believer in a homeland for those who needed and wanted. *He was happy in Israel - framping around - visiting new immigrants, etc*
His Judaism or Jewishness ^{was linked to} not religion.

Not in theological or ritual sense - probably did not believe in God, *although I'm not sure.*
But in peoplehood sense - i.e. Kaplan. ^{Mordechai}

He considered himself in the role of a civil servant, caring for the Jewish people - protecting and defending them.

Devoted - I knew him 25 years, when he was president of JDC and chairman of UJA.

Charming, gracious and diplomatic - I saw him in operation in Germany, France, Switzerland with government leaders.

Tell stories about JDC and UJA. *He hated speech making
He was shy about soliciting money*

Son David said: Stress Humility and Humanity.

Elegant - in dealings with lay leaders, pros, and contributors.

Sense of humor - always tried to ease a sticky situation with a joke.

Final Bible passage: Psalm 15 - known as "God's Gentleman" - description of the Hebraic ideal of human character - last line -

Kaddish ~~"The man who acts thus shall never be shaken".~~

4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honoureth them that fear the LORD;
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;

5 He that putteth not out his money on interest,
Nor taketh a bribe against the innocent. *The man who acts thus*
~~He that doeth these things shall~~ *shall never be moved. Shaken.*

4. *a vile person is despised.* He judges a man by his true character and, if morally defective, does not allow other considerations to weigh in his estimate of him. He reserves his respect for them that reverence God. 'What a revolution would be created in any society by the carrying out of such principles!' (D.). Is not the chaotic state of the world due fundamentally to the fact that 'vile persons,' who had seized power, were *not* despised?

fear the LORD. Show reverence for Him by conformity to His will. Such *fear* is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Ps. cxi. 10; Prov. ix. 10), i.e. ethics, and to possess it is the distinguishing feature of men who lead a life of integrity. To *honour* them is consequently an indication of a good moral character, because like are attracted to like.

sweareth to his own hurt. The sanctity of the plighted word, even when it proves disadvantageous, is stressed in Jewish ethics. See the note on 'Vows

4 נְבוֹהָ אֲבֵעִינֵי נִמְאָם
וְאֶת־יִרְאֵי יְהוָה יִכְבֵּד
נִשְׁבַּע לְדָרַע וְלֹא יִמַר:
5 כִּסְפוֹ לֹא־נָתַן בְּנִשְׁךָ
וְשָׁחַד עַל־נֶפֶשׁ לֹא־לָקַח
עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִמוֹט לְעוֹלָם:

and Vowing in the Light of Judaism' in the Chief Rabbi's Commentary on Numbers (one-vol. ed, p. 730).

5. *money on interest.* Cf. Lev. xxv. 36f; Deut. xxiii. 20f, and the Chief Rabbi's Commentary on the latter reference.

bribe. The corruption of justice by bribery is severely condemned in the Bible (cf. Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. xvi. 19, xxvii. 25). Nothing demarcates the concept of human society, as depicted throughout the Scriptures, from the realities of the contemporary world as does the unswerving insistence upon the corruptive power of a bribe. A healthy corporate body is only possible where the impartial rule of justice is complete and absolute; and the practice of bribery is a cancer which inevitably destroys its strength and stability.

shall never be moved. Qualified to be a 'guest of God,' he benefits from His protection and successfully withstands the attacks of the wicked.

Practical application of Golden Rule -
Thou shalt love My neighbor as myself

- 1 A Psalm of David.
LORD, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell upon Thy holy mountain?
- 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart;
- 3 That hath no slander upon his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his fellow,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour;

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד
יְהוָה מִי־יָנוּחַ בְּאֹהֶלֶךָ
מִי־יִשְׁכֵּן בְּהַר קִדְשֶׁךָ:
2 הוֹלֵךְ תְּמִים וּפְעַל צְדָק
וְדִבֵּר אֱמֶת בְּלִבּוֹ:
3 לֹא־דָגַל וְעַל־לִשְׁנוֹ
לֹא־עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה
וְחִרְפָּה לֹא־נִשְׂא עַל־קַרְבּוֹ:

GOD'S GUEST

NEXT to XXIII this is the most popular chapter of the Psalter. It is commonly known as 'God's Gentleman,' and is descriptive of the Hebraic ideal of human character. 'The poetic questions convey the notion which we to-day should briefly designate "the idealism of life." Holiness and the image of the "mountain of the Lord" imply man's elevation above the low places of life, the upward soaring of the soul from the vulgar and commonplace to the nobility and purity of moral views and conduct' (M. Lazarus). The qualifications for entry into the Divine Presence are purely ethical and within the compass of all human beings. The Talmud remarked that the 613 commandments of the Pentateuch are summarized in this Psalm, meaning that their moral purpose is here crystallized.

1. *tabernacle.* lit. 'tent.' Although the parallel *Thy holy mountain* suggests the temporary Sanctuary in Jerusalem before the construction of the Temple, it is preferable to understand both these terms metaphorically. The worshipper did not 'sojourn' or 'dwell' in the Holy Place. The meaning is: who is qualified to have access to Thy Presence and enjoy communion with Thee?

2. *walketh uprightly.* The same word occurs in God's exhortation to Abraham: *walk before Me and be thou whole-hearted* (Gen. xvii. 1)—perfect, without moral blemish.

righteousness. An all-embracing term for honest, straightforward dealing, the ethically right.

truth in his heart. Unlike those with a *double heart* (xii. 3). Inward sincerity is demanded.

3. *slander.* A vice strongly denounced in Jewish teaching. 'Whoever speaks slander is as though he denied the fundamental principle (the existence of God). The Holy One, blessed be He, says of him, "I and he cannot dwell together in the world"' (Talmud).

evil to his fellow. Wrongs him in a transaction.

taketh up a reproach. Seeks to discredit him by spreading information against him. All the details mentioned in the verse illustrate the practical application of the Golden Rule, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Lev. xix. 18).

Familiengefühl had become the crowd's most powerful religion. It was why family holidays and anniversaries had become far more important than the Sabbath or the Jewish holy days. For the Seligmans, at one point, there were 243 days out of every calendar year that marked a family anniversary of some sort, and nearly every one of these was given some sort of observance. Lives revolved around family days. Had not young Felix and Frieda Warburg chosen a family birthday—Frederick's—to move into their new house at 1109 Fifth Avenue? It was *Familiengefühl* that warmed Margaret Seligman Lewisohn's debut party, held at the Warburgs' house. Congreve, the Warburgs' steward-butler, had, as his somewhat unusual hobby, been raising chickens from an incubator in the Warburg basement. It was probably the only chicken hatchery on upper Fifth Avenue, and no one in the family was entirely sure whether it was a good idea. But when Congreve incorporated his project into the family debut, everyone forgave him. He designed a centerpiece for the party consisting of three-day-old baby chicks "coming out" of a brooder, with a low white picket fence all around it. The chicks chirped all through the party.

Since the family was still the business, a little *Geschäftengefühl* mixed with the *Familiengefühl* was not inappropriate. And, on the eve of his daughter's marriage, Felix Warburg could write to his son Gerald to say:

Carola's wedding presents are coming in, and as she reports to me, business is good. Do not get too fat, because the house will be crowded on the 27th, for with 280 people who insist on seeing Carola married, and about 900 who will come afterward to shake her poor hand off, there will not be any rugs left in the house, and anything that is eatable, drinkable or smokable will disappear very fast. Dr. Magnes will officiate and I am quite sure he will say the right thing at the right time.

For Jacob Schiff's sixtieth birthday, a huge family party had been held at 1109. A stage and screen were erected in the second-floor music room, and at the height of the evening the lights dimmed and Gerald Warburg, dressed as Mercury, appeared from behind a curtain and pointed dramatically to an enormous photograph of the Rock of Gibraltar that appeared on the screen. The lights dimmed once more and, with a thunderous roll of drums from offstage, a photograph of the twenty-two-story Kuhn, Loeb building was superimposed upon the Rock.

But perhaps the gathering with the most *Familiengefühl* of all was Frieda Schiff Warburg's own sixtieth-birthday party, planned as a surprise for her by the children and grandchildren. Her sons Frederick and Edward devised a skit which showed that religion *was* the family. It was their version of the Seder ceremony, reinterpreting the Exodus from Egypt. But Egypt, in the Warburg version, was southern Germany, and the Lost Tribes of Israel—Solomon Loeb and his brothers—were given a Baedeker but managed to get themselves even more lost; instead of turning right at the Nile, they turned left and found themselves in Cincinnati. There, Frederick declared, the family's business was "buying feathers from the Indians and selling them at football games." Next, Edward gave an illustrated lecture on Frieda's life, using slides of various works of art to represent its various phases: a hectic cubist painting to show her frame of mind after her morning telephone calls; a plump Lachaise sculpture to show her girth before visiting Elizabeth Arden's Maine Chance Farm, and a Pavlova figure by Malvina Hoffman to show the "new" Frieda Schiff, after Arden. As a finale, her sons delivered a poem they had written for the occasion. It asked a long series of questions about who did what in the Warburg family, and the chanted answer, at the end of each stanza, was: "The boys, the boys."