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Winston Spencer Churchill, 1965.

WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL

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Reflections on Greatness

The Temple

Sunday, January 31, 1965

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

One of the truly great men of the age is dead and this past week we have been television spectators at the pomp and circumstance of his canonization. Whatever judgment future historians may make of the role and the achievement of Winston Churchill, the popular mind already has raised him into the company of the immortal. Future generations of children will read his biography. The teacher will quiz: 'who was Winston Churchill?', and the child will answer, 'He was the Prime Minister who saved England during the second World War.' Churchill had an even more exalted understanding of his meeting with destiny. In 1941 during the bleakest days of the war, he said to his people: "the battle of Britain is about to begin and on the outcome of this battle rests the survival of Christian civilization."

Leaders are ordinarily credited with the blood, sweat and the tears of the entire people. Mr. Churchill, of course, did not save England single-handedly nor did he alone save Western civilization, but he gave England in those dark days, courage and a voice. He roused the determination and dogged persistence which is at the base of English character. He brought to the seat of power a rare competence and unflagging energy which sped the world on and which saved the Allies many of the ordinary follies which accompany military action.

Mr. Churchill spoke out against compromise and appeasement in the early 1930's. He was not convinced that the good need be meek. He was

not a good Christian in the sense that he did not believe that the good must always turn the other cheek. He was a disciple of preparedness. He felt that the decent and the civilized, could triumph- if they were determined, if they were strong, if they had the will and were prepared to sacrifice. During those years, those fateful years for the West, Mr. Churchill was a (Hebrew)

- a voice crying out in the wastelands. His generation had eyes that would not read the promises of Mein Kampf and ears that would not hear "Deutschland uber alles" chorused at Nurenburg.

Mr. Churchill did not come to power until 1940 while France was being overwhelmed in a six week's blitzkrieg and when England alone was in active battle against Hitler. Churchill's role was that of rallier and encourager. A BBC engineer, who monitored many of Mr. Churchill's wartime programs, said that Mr. Churchill named the two microphones that were before him on the table. On his left was that "bloodthirsty gutter-snipe Corporal Hitler" - on his right "that whimpering Jackel Mussolini." The anger spent on these microphones crossed the airwaves. Churchill's iron will transmitted itself to his people and to the West. His was the voice that never broke. As long as his voice sounded hope, England had hope.

Mr. Churchill was Joshua encouraging the hosts of Israel. (Hebrew
). Be strong.

Be of good courage, Be not dismayed. Be not affrighted for the Lord your God, he will be with you wherever thou shalt go. "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France. We shall fight on the seas and the oceans. We shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing ground. We shall fight

on the fields and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender. And even if - which I do not believe for a moment - this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving - our empire, beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet, would carry on the struggle until, in God's good time, a new world with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old." (HEBREW).

A measure of Mr. Churchill's courage and of his greatness was that he never failed to radiate this strengthening. How often, frustrated in our own lives, we gush forth in bitterness and self-pity, give vent to our anger and turn against the world. How often we break and we stumble. Mr. Churchill never broke and he never stumbled. "We shall fight" rang out to the English people and, as it was repeated again and again, it struck sparks in the British soul and they were strengthened. During the long war when the odds were so desperate, when Churchill read daily the frustrating intelligence reports that were brought to him; he never once publicly gave vent to fear or dismay. His step, his voice never quivered. Only those, who sat next to him in the broadcast studio heard Churchill's half-spoken postscript: "We shall fight. We shall fight with beer bottles. That is about all that we have to fight with." Churchill's immortality rests on his dogged determination not to knuckle under to the Nazi malignancy; but his fame - his fame rests on a broad base for he was a man of extraordinary accomplishments across an extraordinary, long and full life.

Mr. Churchill was an unusual statesman and politician. He entered the House of Parliament at the age of 25. Churchill was first appointed to cabinet rank at the age of 31. He resigned his second Prime Ministership

a full half century later. No other man in the long history of England served his country in so many posts with such distinction over so long a period. Churchill was a statesman of vision and of clear judgment. Churchill was a politician who could enter the rough and tumble of an election fray, reach out, get votes and get elected. He was more than just a Statesman - he was also a Noble Laureate in literature. In his youth Churchill had been one of the first of that new breed of roving war correspondents who went to the far corners of the world to write of the emergence of the emerging peoples and of their struggles for a place in the sun. As correspondent, as columnist, as novelist, as one of the fine historians of our day, Churchill's literary output rivals in quantity that of any professional man of letters though he was fully occupied as a statesman and politician his entire life. In style he needs take a second seat to none. Churchill's language has a majestic cadence. His writings sparkle with a sense of the dramatic. He knew how to exploit the King's English - in latter years the Queen's English - to the full range of its beauty and its subtlety. Statesman and stylist, Mr. Churchill was also a public orator without peer. It is estimated that he gave some 25,000 speeches and every one of them was written out and fully and accurately committed to memory. God had given to Mr. Churchill an unusual set of vocal chords. He added to this natural talent strict discipline and a literary craftsmanship which sculptured the English language into a finely-honed tool. He trained himself to use this God-given instrument of his to move people, to move Parliament, to move his Nation, and ultimately, to move mankind.

Statesman, stylist, speaker, Mr. Churchill was also one of the most acute and perceptive of military strategists. He was the first man

to see the possibility of the armored car- the tank. The first tank was built in his backyard. He saw to it that it was tried out on the fields on the fields of France. In 1913, as First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Churchill suggested what he believed would be the German plan of attack against France. He drew battle plans diametrically opposite to those which were reasoned out by England's most famous admirals and generals. In 1914 Kaiser Wilhelm's troops fell one day behind Mr. Churchill's uncanny predictions. He was one of the first defenders of air power and a creator of England's air force. Three days before the outbreak of the first World War, Mr. Churchill, on his own and without the authority of King or Prime Minister ordered a total mobilization of the Navy. When war broke out England's ships were at sea. Scapa Flow did not become Pearl Harbor.

Statesman, stylist, speaker, strategist - Churchill was also a Sunday painter of more than ordinary competence. He first set brush to canvas in 1915. England was at war. He was England's second ranking cabinet officer. You can imagine how much leisure he enjoyed. Yet in that one year without a lesson he developed his art to such a point that in Paris in the Fall of 1915 he was able to open a one-man show under an assumed name and I understand that the critical reception was quite agreeable to him. Churchill had a monumental vanity and the critics must have spoken quite well for Mr. Churchill to be satisfied. More could be said. He was a man of many parts. We have said enough to indicate, I believe, that he possessed that broad sweep of interest which we associate with the Renaissance man. The world was his and he wanted to be part of its each and every aspect. He shared with the Renaissance man an impatience with expertise. If an expert told him something, he would check it. There were no fields of information which were too arcane for his mind to enter

and to make judgment. There was no professional discipline in which Mr. Churchill felt he could not gain some competence. Finally, he shared with the Renaissance man that over-enthusiastic zest for life which spills over at times into a lust for life. Mr. Churchill ate too much. He drank too much. He drank inordinately. He never listened. He was a monologist. He needed to be the center of all attention. He dressed deliberately to get attention. He was not easy on his friends. I doubt that he had real friends. He was not particularly concerned with peoples' sensitivities. Churchill was not a saint but he was truly a gigantic man. There will be some who, as they rehearse his biography will carefully bleach from it all the restlessness, all of the inordinant drive which the English call "pushiness", all of that intemperate quality which was part of the man. More is the pity. We do not choose our immortals for their innocence though there is always near at hand a busy band of rather prissy moralists who go about fumigating and expurgating the lives of the immortals lest some young person be misled. Why not see men as they were? All of us need to go to school after all in the art of living as much as we go to school in the art of reading. The measure of a man's merit is not a life of unbroken rectitude, but the scale of his living, the measure of his maturity and the extent of his accomplishments. We are not called upon to mimic or to ape the great, but only to have them set for us a standard of accomplishment which can be ours. They raise our sights. We do not have to follow along their every step. As a youth Churchill was of a petulant sort. As a child he was given to temper tantrums, to kicking his tutors - he had a long succession of them. He was sassy and willful. About the only thing you can say about Churchill's youth is that it can give some aid and comfort to the distraught mother who is accompanying her angel into the principal's office.

Churchill's early life exhibits nothing more than the advantage of being born in an aristocratic society at the very top of the privileged class and some of the emotional disadvantages of being to purple born. Churchill was an undisciplined child. His parents were busy with high society and high politics. They had little time for him. He was given his head and he often lost his head. He entered Harrow as the third from the bottom scholar in a large class. When he left Harrow five years later, he had succeeded to the point where he was the rock bottom scholar in the school. Only the fact that he was the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, the eldest son of England's second or third Lord, gave the headmaster the patience to put up with the escapades, the bitter wit and the ugliness of this Peck's bad boy.

He failed the examination for Sandhurst, the West Point of England, three times running. Only his birth allowed him to take the examination that many times. When he finally graduated without distinction he received a commission in a most undistinguished regiment. Few, if any of England's senior officers wanted any part of him. He used, unabashedly, the contacts, what we would call the pull, of his family to gain a soft billet and the leave necessary to take part in all of the hi-jinks of that age's jet set. He thought nothing of running down to Ethiopia for the hunt or running out to India for a Polo Match. He and the young bucks of his day spent five months a year in England's social swirl then they went back to soldiering. Whenever a commanding officer attempted to break Churchill to the routines of the barrack his orders would be countermanded from London. You could be sure that the Chief of Staff had been invited down to Blenheim Castle for a week-end. There are some who will argue: Churchill is proof that we ought not to curb or rein in our children. Give the young monster his head and he will become another Churchill. I am afraid that all that Churchill's youth proves is that if you are born the son of a President of the United

States, you have certain advantages and people will be a little more patient with you, than if you were the son of an ordinary citizen. Let us examine this contemporary philosophy of ours. It is really nothing more than an abdication of our responsibilities as parents. But somehow, we have been led to believe that if we discipline the child, if we curb him, we will thwart his personality and we make it impossible for him to be a full blown, full-blooded man. Once our children find the tactical advantage this philosophy gives them, we will hear a goot bit from them about a concerted conspiracy by school and parent against their egos. They justify to us all manner of bad manners as freedom of expression. "We need to work out our personality." God spare them from such personalities. Churchill's youth was a wild one and Churchill's youth stood him in bad stead. He had to overcome his privileges. He had to realize that he was a dandy, a rather useless person, before he came into himself. Churchill's youth led him to make many enemies and some of these stood him later on in bad stead. As a young officer he wanted to join Lord Kitchener in the relief of General Gordon at Khartoun. Kitchener had heard of Churchill, he wanted none of the young man. He refused to enlist him in his army. Kitchener was over-ruled from London and he never forgave Churchill. Twenty years later, when Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty his pet project was an attack on the Dardanelles which he thought could break Turkey away from the Central Powers and speed the end of the war. Kitchener was then Commander-in-Chief of the Army - and his delay and fault finding doomed Churchill's project to failure. Because of its failure, Churchill, in his forties, was forced out of office before he could win any glory; before he could achieve seniority, before he could see his pet plan, which was in itself well devised, given a fair

chance. Let no one feel that the young can exhibit all manner of bad manners, step on any toes and that they will be blessed by mankind for it or are the better for it.

At the age of 25 Churchill entered the House of Parliament. His name, his family's rank, his own few moments of glory won him election. By the age of 26, Churchill had made himself so disliked by the elders of his own party, and he had made such a bad name for himself among those of his own class, that one day when he rose to speak in Parliament, there occurred a scene never before and never after duplicated. Every member of the Tory party, his own, rose noisily in his seat and left the room. Each stopped at the door and brayed like a donkey at this young man who was making such an ass of himself. Had not Winston Churchill been the son of Lord Randolph Churchill, he would have been doomed then and there to political oblivion.

Churchill was fortunate in his birth and that its advantage allowed him a looser tether than is granted to most of us, but as he himself came to realize, had he been more disciplined and gone to Oxford or Cambridge rather than Sandhurst, he might have moved more steadily in British politics and not had a career which moved by fits and starts. Without needless enemies he might have been able to end the First World War much earlier. Imagine the burden that lay on his soul.

How did the young impetuous Churchill grow up? How did he become a man? It is hard to say. Churchill seems to have matured when he began to hook his ambition to a worthwhile purpose. I think he found himself in the barren windswept hills of Northern India. Churchill was posted to India because they needed a skillful left forward on the army's polo squad. His unit was stationed 2000 miles to the South of the hill country and it was

in the hill country and there alone that military operations were taking place. After he had contributed a few goals and drunk a few toasts Churchill tired of the life of Mysore and he went up to North India to have a shot at the natives - much as he might have gone grouse hunting on the Moors. He wanted a thrill. He wanted some medals, notoriety, nothing more. But in those Indian hills, Churchill recognized the invincible military stupidity which seems to be present in every army. He was disturbed by military tactics which exposed the ordinary soldier to unnecessary danger. He began to write about military strategy. He became concerned about the fate of his nation. England's security became his Holy Grail, his religion, the purpose to which he dedicated his life and through this dedication, which was slow-growing and did not come to him full blown Churchill became a man.

I have often wondered what it is that makes a man. As a teacher I am tired of asking "What are you going to do in life?" and being answered "I don't know!" What do you want out of life?" "Happiness, maybe - I don't know." Most people - too many people - are born, live, work and die without knowing why. What gives life purpose and direction? Purpose begins in restlessness. The young Moses was restless. Others dallied about Pharoah's court. Moses walked out alone into the fields and on one of these walks he chanced to cross a sadistic slave-driver whipping his miserable charge. Later on that same young Moses, now in exile, became restless in Jethro's tent and while the others tended the sheep he walked alone into the wilderness. He walked into his thoughts. He found on his walk, alone in his restlessness, the bush that burns but is never consumed -- the destiny we head towards but never quite reach - that which gives life meaning - that which pulls us up short and makes us go on a steady, straight way. So it was

with Churchill. He was restless in the South of India and for no good reason he went North. The next year he went to the Soudan. He was restless. He wanted adventure but again he saw stupidity and again he began to think. A year and a half later he was again restless and he went out to the Boer War and again he became concerned with the way in which England's security was being managed. The restless young man became a purposeful adult. How do we move ahead in life? I have often cited to you that symbolic direction given by God to Abraham (Hebrew

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"Get you out of your homeland, get you out of your father's home, get you out from the place of your birth;" Where shall I go? (Hebrew

) "Start, I'll show you the way as we go." Begin. You will find the necessary sign posts. One job leads to another. One opportunity leads to another. Walk out on the Cleveland streets and you will suddenly find a purpose - a responsibility. An idea may come to you which will change your politics or your way of life. Certainly your composure will be broken. You will never find your future reading a book about careers by your fireside. Life is learned in the living. Life is given direction in the going. The restless see more than the stay-at-home. The restless gain the vision. It is among the restless that great men are to be found. Now many men are restless. What distinguishes the extraordinary man from the ordinary? What makes for greatness? Who knows the full prescription, but there are two salient characteristics which appear in Churchill's life: Persistence and daring - and these are surely part of the story.

Men retire at 65. Churchill first became Prime Minister of England at 66. Men who are recalled to active duty retire to their pipe and to their honors when the war is over. Churchill became Prime Minister again

at the age of 77. Churchill did not understand the eight-hour day and the five-day week. He worked all day most days for 70 years - in office and out. His literary output would rival that of any professional writer.

When he was not writing, he was speaking. When he was not speaking he was building or painting or brick-laying or at any one of the many activities which occupied his time.

At the age of 23 Churchill was a young correspondent posted to the Boer War. His second day at the front he was captured and taken to Pretoria, the capital of the Boers. He managed to escape. He escaped alone. Others stayed put. He made his way with great difficulty to a neutral port. He was much acclaimed. A ticker-type welcome awaited him in London. Here was a youngster, 23 years of age, with a nation ready to do him honor. What did he do? He went back to the war. He was not satisfied. He was not yet ready to settle into his honors. All his active life Churchill refused being raised to a Lord. His place was in the House of Commons and in active politics. His was a persistent dedication. To what? Ambition? Yes. To pet projects? Yes. Ideas cascaded from his mind. If he had failed as a politician, we would have known him as a historian. If he failed as a historian, we would have known him as a strategist. If he failed as a strategist, we probably would have found him on the moon or in some other unexpected place. Churchill was a man of daring. Far more than you or I he enjoyed the good things of life. He was quite a drinker. He spent money lavishly. As a young man of advantage, he could have settled back to a life of ordinary routine and fully expected that by middle age he would have won honor and wealth and power and position. Churchill was in the enviable position of having to gamble nothing. The family business, The Government of the English Empire was his, but he gambled. He was going to be his own master. He was going to forge his own destiny. He was

going to write his own biography and his own eulogy. He would not take the easy way but his own way. And he was aware of the possible cost. If you walk alone, if you break with tradition, if you refuse to enter your father's business; there are rough spots ahead and the road is filled with detours. Churchill lost five elections out of twenty. Eighty days after Churchill's famous "V" for Victory sign had become reality, eighty short days after the end of the war, he was turned out of office by the British electorate. He knew/he was taking. He knew that he was throwing away security. He knew that he might dissipate his wealth and dissipate his rank and dissipate his privilege. He chose to do so. So must any man who dreams of daring do. You cannot find greatness along the well-rutted highway. You must walk your own way. You must take chances. And you must be a realist. One who knows that most friends are fair-weather. One who admits that voters can be fickle. One who knows that you forgive and forget. One who knows that all the honors are empty honors unless your strength does not diminish, unless your mind does not dim, unless you can continue to stay abreast - ahead. Persistence and daring - those are the qualities of the few who break out of the shield of anonymity; of the few who make history, who twist destiny to their own ends. How grateful we must be to the few for they remind us - do they not - that we are not prisoners of fate, that our future is not written in the stars, that there are no iron laws of sociology or economics or history. We are the masters of our fate if we are prepared to fight for it. If we are prepared to sacrifice and to dare to persist.

And so we end as we began. A teacher will ask "Who was Winston Churchill?" The child will answer "Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister who saved England during the Second World War", and a wise teacher will add,

"It was Mr. Churchill and the blood and the sweat and the tears and the dedication and the will of his people that saved England." A Churchill can lead only if a nation will be lead. We can be grateful for the few, but we, who are the nation of the peace loving and the justice-seeking; we who believe in civilization, we too, must be of the daring. We too must be of the persistent. We too must be among those who will walk alone, who make their own judgments, who are willing to sacrifice privilege and convenience and comfort to the shared hopes and goals of mankind.

Amen.



" WE SHALL NOT FLAG OR FAIL, WE SHALL GO ON TO THE END, WE SHALL FIGHT IN FRANCE, WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE SEAS AND OCEANS, WE SHALL FIGHT WITH GROWING CONFIDENCE AND GROWING STRENGTH IN THE AIR. WE SHALL DEFEND OUR ISLAND, WHATEVER THE COST MAY BE, WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE BEACHES, WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE LANDING GROUNDS, WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE FIELDS AND IN THE STREETS, WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE HILLS; WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER, AND EVEN IF, WHICH I DO NOT ~~BEKKEKE~~ FOR A MOMENT BELIEVE, THIS ISLAND OR A LARGE PART OF IT WERE SUBJUGATED AND STARVING THEN OUR EMPIRE BEYOND THE SEAS, ARMED AND GUARDED BY THE BRITISH FLEET, WOULD CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE, UNTIL, IN GOD'S GOOD TIME THE NEW WORLD WITH ALL ITS POWER AND MIGHT, STEPS FORTH TO THE RESCUE AND THE LIBERATION OF THE OLD."



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One of the great men of the age has died - and we are watching what
is, in fact, his condemnation. Whatever judgement history may
make of Mr. C's ^{integrity} judgement & accomplishments, the popular mind has
ruined him before the camping of the committee, consequences of a
decide will down of him. The C & A will in case probably
follow some such pattern /
~~of a similar kind~~

Q: Who was W.C.?

A: ^{He was} The P.M. who saved England during WW II

"Support - ~~cannot~~ ^{can be found here in our literature} could be built of Britain in absence
before. It is clear that the survival of Britain is dependent on the survival of the British people
facilities are immensely needed will be blood, sweat, tears of
the unemployment of our people, and not only in Britain but in all the world
England - our Western civilization; but he gave a valiant and courageous
brave fight in 1941 England stood alone in its hour of need
against the Wehrmacht; and he brought to the end of decisions during
those critical days a new judgment and an emphatic message which
had long been needed to bring our people to the point of action
the annual meeting of World War II Committee,

which demanded military preparation and organization
policy of the United Nations in the early 1950's. But we need not forget,
the great need of our people to be reassured of our strength, with the reassurance
decisions of our people will be made. To be reassured of our strength
demands our own strength and our own strength is the only way to go

undoubtedly will be made in the future and we must be prepared for it
Thoughtful eyes will see that France was reassured in the past
will be made in the future and we must be prepared for it
of the future and we must be prepared for it
of the future and we must be prepared for it
of the future and we must be prepared for it

