

By Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein

Psalm 24

Who may ascend the mountain of the eternal One?
Who may stand in God's holy place?
Those with clean hands and a pure heart.
Who do not speak with malice nor swear deceitfully.
They shall receive blessings from the Eternal One
And just reward from God, their deliverer.

Psalm 1

Happy the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked,
Or taken the path of sinners,
Or joined the company of the insolent.
Rather, taken delight in the teaching of the Eternal One
And studied God's teaching day and night.
He is like a tree planted besides streams of water
Which yields it fruit in due season,
Whose foliage never fades,
And whatever it produces thrives.

Martin Buber recorded that before Rabbi Shelomo Hayyim died he said to his son: *"You are not to think that your father was a tzaddik, or a rebbe or a "good Jew". But all the same I haven't been a hypocrite, I did try to be a good Jew."* Harry Martin Jacobi was never a hypocrite but ever a good Jew. From his *Bar Mitzvah...* one of the last in the *Friedenstempel* in Berlin in 1938 through his flight to Amsterdam, where as a teenager having witnessed the approaching horrors of the Nazi era, we could have forgiven him losing his faith. But not Harry. The miracle of his second escape to Britain on the last boat out of Holland might have strengthened his faith. But soon in the hurly-burley of survival in a strange land, becoming a car mechanic in Manchester, he remained a Jew and through his eventual service in the British army, a Jew. And afterwards, back in Holland he was soon representing the Liberal community as a representative back in London at a WUPJ conference in 1949 and hearing Rabbi Dr Leo Baeck give the Presidential address was so inspired that instead of becoming a baker back in Holland, decided he would become a rabbi. And he became the most wonderful congregational rabbi.

Harry was a Jewish Jew. He believed deeply in God and the Jewish people. He believed and performed Jewish ritual in his personal life and in the synagogue. He prayed daily prayers, he benschted, davvened, sang *zemirot*. He was indeed not a good Jew but an exemplary Jew. This was so in many aspects. Despite his early education, thrown into frightening chaos by the Nazis, despite his impoverished state once embarking on the rabbinic journey, despite being on his own in a new country, he studied and learned and ended up with a First Class degree in Hebrew, German and Dutch, studied of course at an English university in English. And the Rabbinic studies. And as I witnessed at many a Rabbinic Conference or Kallah, Harry could out quote many a younger rabbi who fancied their scholarship. It was no easy life... Lily Montagu had sent

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him to Aberdeen of all places as a lay minister. I suppose if you survived that trial you could later serve any congregation. And he so successfully did. First in Southgate, then Wembley and back to the continent to Zurich before retiring. Well... never retiring. Serving congregations all over the country and in Dublin. Wherever a rabbi was needed... Harry was there. A *gitte yid* with a *gitte neshama*.

Having settled in the Liberal Jewish movement in this country, was he German, Dutch or British? Typical of Harry he chose as a pen-pal, a girl, from way beyond these shores – India - Rose Solomon of the Jewish Religious Union, the Liberal congregation in Bombay. And so in 1957 they were married in the North London Progressive Synagogue. Two good Jews bringing up a good, no, exemplary Jewish family. All three children, Richard, Margaret and David deeply committed to the Judaism and active in the Jewish community. Margaret and Richard becoming rabbis and David actively involved in all things Jewish. And David's tragic illness and death and that of Rose - a trial of Harry's faith and resolution. But Harry did not waver, did not lose his faith or will to live or will to serve the Jewish community. In fact he seemed to find new vigour especially in the spheres of Holocaust education and the plight of refugees.

I said that Harry ended up twice fleeing to strange lands and so he knew all too well the heart of the stranger. And increasingly he acted on this experience and in his latter years became deeply involved in the plight of refugees and especially the children for he had been a child refugee twice fleeing for his life. And in his last decade, working with other refugee *kinder* like Lord Dubs, Harry got urgently involved to fight the cause of the refugee children, speaking on their behalf, visiting the camps, lobbying and kvetching to try to see justice being done.

I leave you to say if Harry was a *tzaddik* but he sure was a good Jew. And though he faithfully and energetically served the Progressive Jewish community and though he was a committed Liberal Jew, Harry was at home in all sectors of the community. Self-confidence, but through knowledge. He could hold his own at an orthodox *tisch*. He could *davven* with the best of them. He could sing *El Maleh Rachamin* at the Cenotaph as the only rabbi alive who had been on active service in Her Majesty's Forces. He could chair the Leo Baeck B'nei Brith Lodge, he was involved in Council of Christians and Jews and Association of Jewish Refugees... and I'm sure many of you could add many others to the list. One of Harry's last deeds was to persuade me to take his place as a President of Jewish Child's Day and so far I have only been to one Trustees meeting, but the love and admiration there for Harry was amazing. And unlike other Honorary Presidents Harry attended every meeting, and his greatest pleasure was to sit next to his childhood friend Eva Schoss at the fundraising dinner in November. Harry was everywhere... go to a public lecture, to a special service in another synagogue Harry was there. Go to a conference be it in Birmingham or Prague or Jerusalem and Harry was there. Go to a funeral or a *shiva* and Harry was there because he was a good Jew and knew his obligations as such... a good Jew and a *mensch* with first class honours. Even the Queen recognised this, making him a Member of the British Empire. Empire... should have been beyond that for Harry was a member of worldwide humanity.

Worldwide but including Israel. A committed and active Zionist. Leading, with Rev Herbert Ritcher, early Liberal Jewish tours to Israel at a time when our Movement was ambivalent to

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Zionism. I would have loved to be on the tour Harry led soon after the Six Day War. I believe there were 120 on that tour, all anxious to see the places long denied to Jews. Yet Harry was no blind follower for he too, as time went on, could question certain aspects of the Israeli Government just as he was vocal in the inequalities and injustices in this country.

And Harry's reward, in heaven I'm sure, but certainly in this world. Since his death the response all round has been an outpouring of respect and affection. Already too many to name expressing their love for Harry. Let me just mention two from different stages in his life; each one stands for many more. Bobby Marks who was his best man and life-long friend. And Jane Greenfield who devoted herself to his welfare these last years. And his actual reward was in, after losing most of his family in the *Shoah*, raising his own family that do him honour. The late David z"l who was so talented and enthusiastic for all things Jewish. His son & daughter - Margaret and Richard - who have taken up his mantle as devoted congregational rabbis, Movement workers and social justice activists. Their spouses - David & Lyn - who are supportive of these values. Grandchildren - Yoni and Tali, Josh, Hannah and Abigail, and two precious great grandchildren - Zac & Harry. And Rose's family - Benji, Katie & Ruth still with us. Harry's cousin Annelies in Holland... and above all the love and support of his dear Rose, may her memory - like that of Harry's - be for a blessing.

Harry could quote *Pirket Avot* at the drop of a *kippah*. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai said: "*there are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of Royalty.*" Rabbi Harry Jacobi qualified to wear all three: a scholar devoted to the study and performance of *mitzvot*, a congregational rabbi par excellence, and recipient of honour from many places. Three crowns... *V'keter sheyn tov oleh al gabayhem*... but the crown of a good name excels them all. How supremely true is this of the name of the man born 93 years ago as Heinz Hirschberg... but who we were privileged to know as Harry Jacobi.