

IN MEMORIAM
Judd L. Tallor

FORWARD

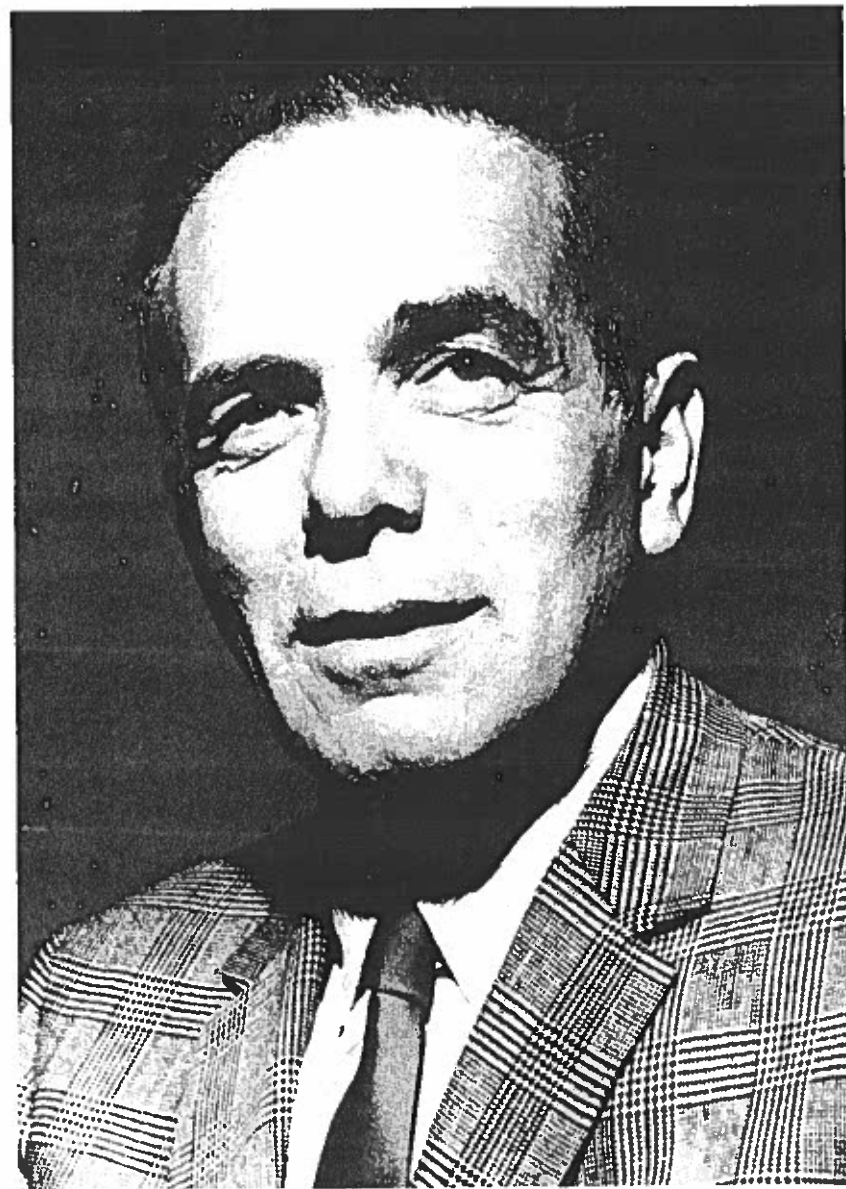
It was my privilege to have worked with Dr. Judd Teller during the last two years of his life, and to have developed a close professional and personal relationship with him.

The Institute for Jewish Policy Planning and Research, which he initiated and headed, was his final legacy to the Synagogue Council of America and to American Jewry.

A more personal legacy is the memory of an unbelievable gentleness, and a rigorous intellectual integrity, which profoundly affected all who knew him.

Yeha shalom baruch

Rabbi Henry Sreyman
Executive Vice President
Synagogue Council of America



JUDD L. TELLER
1912-1972

Judd L. Teller was Director of Program Planning and Research for the Synagogue Council of America at the time of his death on May 3, 1972.

This memorial tribute was written by Morris Laub, Director of the Joint Commission on Social Action of the United Synagogue of America and the Rabbinical Assembly of America, and delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Synagogue Council of America on June 7, 1972.

IN MEMORIAM

by

Morris Laub

Of all those present at this meeting, I am probably the one who knew Judd longest, for he and I were classmates in that remarkable school, the Bet Midrash L'Morim of the Yeshivat Isaac Elchanan, about fifty years ago. He was the youngest among us, and the brilliant group of teachers at whose feet we sat recognized him for the *iluy*, the prodigy, that he was. The Yeshiva was then located at 301 East Broadway on the lower East side. To understand Judd and to know what he was and whom he represented, it is necessary to say a word about East Broadway of half a century ago.

East Broadway was the heir of many movements in Jewry and Judaism. To it came the learned, pious Litvak of misnagdish yeshivas as well as the first of the Galizianer hassidic rebbes; the Russian social democrat, radical or revolutionary, fleeing political oppression under the Tsar and expecting to stay but a short while; the Zionist who propagandized for the Homecoming to Israel, either as a socialist, a religious Zionist like Rabbi Meyer Berlin, or just a plain unhyphenated Zionist; the Russified intellectual to whom East Broadway became East Broadwayskaya; the Polish Yiddishist who found in

its crowded book shops and stalls and on neighboring Canal Street all of the world's literature in translation, as well as original works from Warsaw, Vilna, Moscow, New York and Chicago; the shop worker in the very midst of the growth of his Jewish labor unions which centered upon the skyscraper dominating the street, the *Forward* building; the journalists of variegated stripe from extreme right to radical left of the half dozen or so Yiddish dailies and the scores of periodicals; the maskil, World War I edition, who in the *Bet Sefer Haleumi* saw in *Ivrit b'Ivrit*, Hebrew language as Hebrew culture, the solution to the Jewish problem; the Americanizing attempt of the Educational Alliance founded by German Jews to bring East European masses into the melting pot more quickly, then a popular and meaningful phrase (who would have dreamed that in a mere half century it would be shorn of all meaning and become a scornful, pejorative description of an America that never was): the Adlers and Tomashevskys and Max Gabels and Jenny Goldsteins and hundreds of other actors, choristers and stage hands (one of the strongest unions was the Yiddish Theatre ushers' union). East Broadway was a sea into which flowed rivers alien and strange. At times the sea roared because the confluence was disharmonious and at times the sea was quiet because the magic of the East Side added its own calm.

If East Broadway was the heir of Eastern Europe, Judd was the heir of East Broadway. He was a unique blend of all that was vital in Jewish life. Learning? Judd was a *talmid chacham*, at home in a page of the Talmud and relishing a *Tosafot* or a *Maharsha*. Culture? Judd was erudite in many literatures, above all in Hebrew, Yiddish and English, and creative in all three. Civilization? Judd was an unblinking observer of the world around him and an incisive analyst of history and contemporary events. It is hard to put a label on Judd. To say he was a poet, a writer and a historian is not enough; to describe him as a Labor Zionist is but to measure a part of him; to point to his devoted leadership in many Jewish organizations is to

indicate only a facet of this many-faceted man. Let me therefore not fasten any labels on him except to say that in a rare way, Judd was a complete Jew.

Most of us knew Judd as the prober and searcher for meaning in Jewish life, in microcosm and macrocosm. In the Histadrut, B'nai Brith, the Zionist organization and here in the Synagogue Council of America, he used his great talents to seek root causes, analyze, synthesize, diagnose and prognosticate. He was fearless and independent—he drew upon his vast knowledge of all of Jewish life to speak the truth, and truth was sometimes not what his conferees wanted to hear. Yet for all his organizational intrepidity, he was a shy, kind and kindly man, never stooping to acts of unfriendliness. I once asked him, when it became fashionable to denounce Nahum Goldmann, what he thought. His reply was typical: "You know that I often disagreed with him, and did not hesitate to say so when I worked with him. But I am ashamed of the way he is being treated. This is not how Jewish organizations or Jewish leaders ought to behave."

It was at the Synagogue Council office that we talked then, and I remember thinking to myself—and later had confirmed to me by Rabbi Lehrman—that here in the Synagogue Council of America, Judd was at last at home, that here he really found himself, for here he had full play for his gifts and here he could express himself best.

You know him for his books; *Scapegoat of Revolution* (1954); *The Kremlin, the Jews and the Middle East* (1957); *The Jews—a Biography of a People* (1966); *Strangers and Natives* (1968). But how many of you know him as Yud Lamed Teller, the Yiddish poet? He began writing when he was a young child and his first book of poetry, *Symbolen* (Symbols), was published when he was eighteen years old. We, his classmates, knew that he was a prodigy, a genius with words and ideas in Hebrew and Yiddish and our great teachers, Churgin and Soyer and Perlberg and Kaplan, recognized

him, encouraged him and nurtured him. Unlike many prodigies, he did not lose his gift with the advent of adulthood. At twenty-two years of age he published *Miniaturen* (Miniatures), and at twenty-eight *Lieder von der Tzeit* (Poems of the Time). He continued to write poetry until the very end, and the Israeli Yiddish quarterly *Di Goldene Keit* became his forum. Judd also wrote essays and journalistic articles in many magazines, so much in fact that it was hard to believe one man could be so productive. Besides, his young and boyish appearance belied the serious author that he was. Judd told me how on one occasion he was introduced at a lecture. The chairman said that tonight the audience would be privileged to hear from Judd Teller, the son of the famous Yiddish writer and poet, Y.L.Teller whom he, the chairman, had been reading for many years. Judd swallowed and did not disabuse the chairman of his mistake, for how could Judd deny his auctorial patrimony?

I spoke earlier of Judd as a heir. Let me close by reading a poem of his from his book *Lieder von der Tzeit*. This book appeared in 1940 and it reflects Judd's feelings about the war, Hitler, the impending doom of European Jewry—the Holocaust was on the threshold of history and it was unsensed by most except, intuitively, by sensitive men like Judd. His poems, in free verse, are bitter, sarcastic, biting, questioning. Yet they are also tender and sorrow-soaked and lyrical. In this poem called *Shtam Lied* (Ancestral Song) Judd also speaks of himself as an heir.

Following in the tradition of Jacob the Patriarch, *acharon, acharon chaviv*, placing the most beloved last, I offer the English version first and then, as an act of *hitachdut*, an identification with the spirit of Y.L.Teller, the original Yiddish.

You may be shocked by the last of the poem. Remember, it is a cry of pain from a young man, steeped in his heritage, proud of it as we know from his other poems and writings, yet wracked by the agony of his people.

ANCESTRAL SONG

I seek within me the traces of my ancestry.
Where in me is my grandmother
Who in long days
At a darkened window-pane
Babbles old-fashioned
With her God?
And my mother who weeps
Over a newspaper story
And does not bypass
An outstretched arm?

I seek within me the traces of my ancestry.
A long rough road-stretch
Of "how"
And "what"
Between grandfather and me.
Different lures
Agitate my dream
Different anxieties
Seize my thought.
But my tongue and nose have still retained
I suppose
Some taste of his
Some craving of his.

I seek within me the traces of my ancestry.
Who knows the nights of my great-grandfather's days?
Have I inherited from him
My manic bed
When moon is spotted with blood
And my own body is a trap?

I seek within me the traces of my ancestry.
The years in strange lands of my father
In panic because of cities ablaze
His wife beyond the reach of a letter.

Draw the blinds. Put out the wick.
My ancestry is a cruel legend.

Translation from Yiddish by Morris Laub.

שטאם-5 יד

איך זוך אין מיר די שפורן פון מיין שטאם.
וואו איז אין מיר מיין באבע
וואס אין די לאנגע מעג
ביי א טונקעלער שויב
פרעפלט זי אלטמאדיש
מיט איר גאט?
און די מאמע וואס וויינט
איבער א מעשה אין בלאט
און לאזט ניט דורך
אן אויסגעשטרעקטע האנט?

איך זוך אין מיר די שפורן פון מיין שטאם.
א לאנגער שווערער שליטוועג
פון „ווי“
און „וואס“
צווישן זיידן און מיר.
אנדערע רייצן
רעגן מיין חלום,
אנדערע זארגן
שפאנען מיין געדאנק.
אבער די צונג און די נאז האבן נאך אויפגעהיט
מן-הסתם
זיינעם א מעם,
זיינע א לוסם.

איך זוך אין מיר די שפורן פון מיין שטאם.
ווער ווייסט די נעכט
פון מיין עלטער-זיידנס פרומע מעג?
דיאב איך גע'ירשנ'ט פון אים
מיין וואנזיניק בעט
ווען לבנה קלעקט מיט בלוט
און דאס אייגענע לייב איז א פאסטקע?

איך זוך אין מיר די שפורן פון מיין שטאם.
די פרעמדלענדישע יארן פון מיין טאטען,
אין פאניק פון צעצונדענע שמעט
ווען דאס ווייב איז אויף יענער זייט פאסטם.

פארציט די שמארן. לעשט-אויס דעם קנויט.
מיין שטאם איז א בייזע לעגענדע.



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