

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JIM JOSEPH, Z”L

Reflections & Memories
from his Son
Joshua Joseph



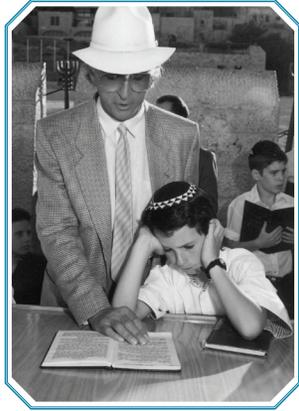
Joshua and Jim

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*“Educate the Jewish child . . . I want him
to be as strong as he can be, as smart as
he can be, and as successful as he can be.
I want a successful Jewish child here,
and the way I do it is by educating them.
Why do I want them to be successful?
So they can support the Jewish people
in the future.”*

MY FATHER, 2003



*Jim and Joshua at the
Western Wall, 1988*

Most people never saw my father without his fedora and dark aviators. Initially the fedora was for religious reasons, bridging the all-important gap between orthodoxy and secularism, but it also became a sort of trademark, and along with the sunglasses, emphasized the mysterious persona he enjoyed projecting.

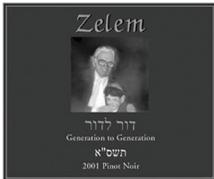
But around the house he generally just wore a baseball hat. His daily cap towards the end of his life was a custom made khaki hat that had the word “Zelem” emblazoned across the front—an ode to the town in Austria in which he was born on September 5, 1935. It was the town his parents fled when he was just three years old, and then the name he bestowed on his Napa Valley home, where again he was not able to stay for more than a couple of years.

FROM EUROPE TO THE UNITED STATES My grandparents fled Zelem, a town with a rich Jewish history and famous yeshiva, when the Nazis invaded Austria in 1938 and repealed the citizenship of all Jews. With three young children at their side—Sigmund, Ernst, and Renata—they took only what they could carry and left their lives, and most of their family, behind.

Two generations later, my grandfather would reenact that escape annually at our Passover Seder. He would take the *afikomen* in a small white sack, throw it over his shoulder, and walk around the table. “Just as from Egypt, this is how we left,” he would say.

My father was raised in the shadow of the Holocaust, a catastrophe deeply felt but rarely discussed at the time. The majority of his aunts, uncles, and cousins who stayed in Europe, arguing “this will pass,” were killed by the Nazis. But his parents eventually embraced their new lives in the United States, quickly learning English and, with a history of winemaking and sales, established a liquor store in

Los Angeles—behind which the family would live for much of my father’s childhood.



The juxtaposition of death in Europe and life in America would forever impact my father’s views on Jewish survival, and drive his lifelong desire to develop Jews into leaders within this country to which our family and our people owed so much, and also needed to protect and maintain.

Even as they found a home and built their lives in the U.S., my grandparents went to great lengths to maintain the family’s strong Jewish identity, having themselves come from an Hasidic background in Europe. They especially made sure all of their children received a strong Jewish education, my grandmother even learning to drive for the sole purpose of taking the children to Hebrew school in LA. Later, prior to my father’s Bar Mitzvah, they moved to Williamsburg, New York so that my father could attend Torah Vodaas, a renowned ultra-Orthodox yeshiva.



Imparted with a rich family religious tradition and history, combined with the years in New York learning and living with the most religious Jews in the country, my father was both a very proud and very observant modern Orthodox Jew.



A SECULAR SUCCESS STORY My father received an undergraduate degree from the Wharton School of Business at University of Pennsylvania in 1957, with a major in marketing. He always

explained that he went to Penn because it was the only school with a kosher cafeteria at the time.

One of my father's favorite stories to tell us growing up was about a professor who scheduled a major test on a Jewish holiday—a story that reflects my father's values regarding secular scholarship, Judaism, and integrity. My father would not take the test on a holiday (he was adamant about never working on a yom tov or Shabbat), and the professor allowed him to take the test the following week. But before he took the test, fellow students told him the questions that would be on the test. "I could have aced it," he would explain, but instead he went to the professor and confessed, not feeling right about receiving a special benefit, especially one arising from his Jewish practices. The professor let him skip the test, and gave him an 'A'.

It was after college that my father changed his name, reflective of the ongoing challenge of balancing his strong identity and tradition with his belief that we as Jews were no longer able to stay isolated from the society around us. Sigmund Lipschutz, Hebrew name Shimon ben Yosef (always known as "Shimmy" within the family), became Jim Joseph. By "Americanizing" his Hebrew name, my father was also able to create an intergenerational tribute to his father, my grandfather.

My father was a real estate developer, primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area, and found success for his company, Interland, through a combination of strong real estate fundamentals, a conservative approach, and integrity. He was a perfectionist on the development side and a natural with numbers on the finance side. He generally only developed one project at a time, opting for quality over quantity, and obsessed over every detail.



But most importantly, as he told me and taught me many times, he stood by his word, even if it meant money lost. He was a firm believer that treating people right was the only way to do business, as it was integrity that made others willing, and even wanting, to do business with him again. Relationships and reputation were paramount.



JEWISH VALUES AND AMERICAN IDEALS For him, these business ethics were a natural, even inherent, extension of religious ethics. Embracing the concept of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*, he believed that being Jewish meant as much in the secular and business worlds as it did in a synagogue, and that orthodoxy without good character and earning a livelihood were a dangerous proposition if Jews were to continue to thrive in the U.S.

Thus, the U.S. allowed our family a place to prosper while maintaining its Jewish core. As we saw for ourselves when we returned to Zelem, Austria in 1999, the days of Jews there were long gone—the only remnant being a pile of tombstones next to where the cows fed in the Jewish cemetery.

“Zelem” truly embodied the arc of my father’s life. The original Zelem was a center of learning and a strong Jewish community, where Jews had long been given religious and political autonomy. His new Zelem home, finished in 2001 in the town of Saint Helena, represented the opportunity the U.S. afforded to our family, and thereby the Jewish people. But in the U.S., freedom and autonomy weren’t given by a benevolent ruler, but rather built into the ethos of a nation, and ensured by its citizens.

At his new Zelem in the Napa Valley, he had a small vineyard to commemorate the winemaking past that his parents left behind in Austria. Before he passed away unexpectedly in 2003, he shared a couple hundred new bottles of the first vintage of Zelem wine with family and friends.

THE FOUNDATION AS HIS LASTING GIFT The lessons from the Zelem of his birth were never forgotten. Those lessons deeply informed the mission and vision he built into the the Foundation, which he founded in 1987, but did not take its current form until after his death in 2003. My father was a believer in American exceptionalism, a proud patriot, and believed that Jews had a vital role in maintaining the greater society that provided for our family. He believed that Jews could not simply live in self-governed ghettos any longer, that Jews needed to be leaders in the secular world while maintaining their proud and vibrant Jewish identity. American Jews had a vital role to play in perpetuating the liberties presented to them in this new world.

For all of this, he believed, American Jews needed to be educated. It was education, both secular and religious, that could lead to the attainment of his goal of the successful and proudly identified American Jew. 🌸





JIM JOSEPH, Z"l

PHOTO CREDITS

- page 4 Jim's wine label, Zelem, named after the village in Austria where his parents lived and where he was born
- page 5 (*left to right*) Mildred Weisel; Joshua's grandmother Margaret Lipschutz; Jim Joseph; Joshua's aunt Rena Slomovic; Joshua's grandfather Joseph Lipschutz; Mrs. Martin Weisel on the occasion of Rena and her husband donating a Torah to Congregation Sinai in San Jose, CA
- page 6 (*left to right*) Jim with his children Dvora Joseph Davey; Joshua; Rachel Joseph
- page 7 (*left to right*) Three generations at a Passover Seder—Joseph; Joshua; Jim
- page 8 (*left to right*) Margaret; Rena; Jim
Dvora and Jim
- page 9 Joseph; Jim; Rachel
Dvora and Jim
- page 11 (*left to right*) Jim; Joshua's mother Diana Margulies; Rena; Joseph; Margaret; Joshua's uncle Henry Shimansky and aunt Linda Jonas; Joshua's aunt Marian Lipschutz and uncle Bobby (Ernst) Lipschutz
Joshua; Jim; Joshua's cousin Michael Shimansky
Jim and Joshua relaxing on Rena's patio

