

O.M.Stroud 26th November 1984

My Friends,

On my right there is a plaque fixed to the wall. It commemorates Rev. Dr. Joseph Strauss's ministry. At the end there is a proverb which reads as follows: "He who makes men righteous shall shine in the stars for ever and ever." When a great man dies a star falls from the heavens and everyone will say "Look!" This mystical allusion fits this sad day well. A light which has shone for 87 years has gone out peacefully and the world will be that much darker without it. What was this bright light which was Oswald Michael Stroud? We who are left behind must step back and on this unexpectedly beautiful day reflect at the magnitude of what has been.

In the latter part of the last century there was an exodus of Jews from the mainland of Europe. Many settled in Bradford and a young doctor of philosophy was invited to come from Germany to become the first minister of this Synagogue. Rev. Dr. Joseph Strauss of blessed memory began his ministry here in 1873 and sadly died just before reaching his 50 years of being a rabbi. He and his devoted wife Alice, whom I remember well, were proud to have a family of whom Ossie was the youngest but, if comparisons may be made at all, turned out to be the greatest. Times for a minister were not affluent, but Ossie set to, having served in the first world war, studied at the technical college, teamed up with a fellow student Wyn Riley, formed the firm Stroud, Riley, and met and married lovely Claire, all by the time he was 23. The business prospered and became a household word in the world of textiles with ramifications in two other continents until today, as Stroud, Riley, Drummond it is the giant standing, by a fortunate quirk of fate, not 100 yards from this Synagogue. All this was achieved not by material help from home, but by sheer hard work, not a little determination and that great gift from God - charm, which Ossie had in abundance. But even hard work, determination and charm by themselves are not enough. For he had the ability to make the right decisions in the right place and at the right time. Instead of pushing his point of view by blatant force he was able with the help of his ever present smile to persuade others that his opinion would be the one to carry the day. His quiet efficiency earned him positions at the top of many organisations with which he became associated. The diversity of these organisations is astonishing even for a man of brilliance. The Freemason Lodge, Shalom Lodge, National Health Service, National Savings Movement, Rotary, Multiple Sclerosis Society, yes and the Hereford Herd Book Society, for he was a spare time farmer, Zionist societies - the modern colloquial terminology is, I believe, you name it and he was not only a member but its head.

This star Ossie had many loves and I would like to read you some words which the departed wrote a year or two ago. " I have loved my fellowmen and women in every walk of life. I thank God for this blessing and go to my Eternal Rest in peace and contentment." Of the many loves he would show the greatest to the particular group he was with at a particular time. Without doubt one of his

deepest was for his God and this Synagogue which he helped to sustain after his father's death for very many years when there was no minister. But that calibre of men who founded the Synagogue and who produced a Mayor and a Lord Mayor of this great city, and if two can be called a tradition, then this is a tradition which the Jewish community as a whole has carried on to this very day with two more Jewish Lord Mayors, these good men carried on the good work, but who are all gone now. Their names are still seen on name-plates of firms in the centre of Bradford called "Little Germany." On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish year, it falls to the lot of the most respected member of the community to read, in the afternoon when due to the fasting some worshippers may be a little weary, to read the Book of Jonah. Ossie read this story, familiar but always new when he read it, with devotion and dignity, but also with great warmth, which made it the highlight of the long service. In keeping with his faith in God, which was immovable, he headed a committee in 1939 which paved the path for 30 Jewish boys to escape from the German tyranny and be housed in a hostel for the duration of the war and for a few years <sup>afterwards,</sup> partly due to the family who were the wardens but partly also due to Ossie's influence this house became a warm home and many of the boys have kept in touch.

The inscription on this altar-cover which faces you reads: " Etz chajim hi lamachasikim bo." It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, meaning the holy Torah, the five books of Moses. Ossie grasped the Torah firmly.

I mentioned just now Ossie's immovable faith in God. If I were to try and think myself into Ossie's philosophy I would suggest to you that, leaving aside for the moment the infinite sadness of his passing, he would positively have looked forward to meeting, at last, his beloved God and Maker face to face in order to worship Him in His very presence and perhaps ask Him to provide answers and explanations to all the unanswered queries which he, in common with all of us who are God-fearing, have.

You know that he was elevated to the bench as a magistrate in Bradford and was awarded the insignia of the OBE by the Queen.

I mentioned that Ossie had many loves. The one which transcended all was his love for his beloved Claire, for Roy, Josephine and Ruth, for their grandchildren, whose names are enshrined for ever on one of Claire's bracelets, and for their great-grandchildren.. Here is a large family, but quantity is worthless without quality. This family is harmonious, loving and caring. All its members have achieved what they set out to do, inspired by the shining example of the head of the family. His family was his life and so it should have been. If one can speak of a reward for being a God-fearing and a loving family man then his reward was that he and Claire were allowed to celebrate their diamond wedding in good health a few short years ago.

On this day I would like to remember also Ossie's two sisters Lucy and Nell who both died within the last 12 months well in their nineties.

I would like to end on an optimistic note, again, in mystical fashion. A note was found on the body of <sup>the American</sup> Jewish soldier Colonel David Marcus who created the Army of the State of Israel. He called it "The Ship" and this is what he wrote:

With the death of Ossie a little bit of each one of us has died with him. A star has indeed fallen out of the sky, but lo and behold as I watched it fall I thought I saw that it met on its path earthwards the soul of Ossie Stroud ascending on its way to heaven and God.