

בצרוור החיים

Memorial Book



תשפ"ד-תשפ"ה | 2024

Rabbi Jan Caryl Kaufman, *editor*
with assistance from Max Buchdahl

Introduction

בְּן שִׁבְעִים לְשָׁנָה – One who is 70 has fullness of years. (Pirke Avot 5:21)

The Psalmist teaches us, יְמֵי־שָׁנוֹתֵינוּ כָּבֵדָה שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה – the fullness of our lives is 70 years (Ps. 90:10). Our colleague, Rabbi Benjy Segal (whose wife unfortunately appears on the list of deceased spouses) in his book, *A New Psalm*, comments that this Psalm reflects on human mortality and the challenges we faced in our lives as we age. We learn in Ps. 92:15 צֹד יִגְבֹּהֶן בְּשִׁיבָה – that we can still be fruitful in old age. In our *Siddur Lev Shalem*, there is a commentary on this verse based on the writings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel which teaches that to grow older does not mean to lose time but to gain time.

This year I will turn 70 and will complete 46 years in the rabbinate, a long time for a "kid rabbi." The greatest *sipuk nefesh* for me in the rabbinate has been the *haverschaft* with my colleagues, starting from day one when I was warmly welcomed into the Washington Board of Rabbis. I inherited the Rabbinical Assembly Memorial booklet project from Rabbi Jules Harlow, whose biographical entry appears in this year's booklet. I sat at Rabbi Harlow's desk for 15 of the 19 years I worked for the RA and I learned a great deal from him. This is the 31st year I have had the *zekhut* of working on this book. Earlier on in the life of this project, several of our colleagues assisted me, and I am grateful for their meticulous work. As a result of doing the Memorial booklet, I have learned much about the richness of the lives of our colleagues who have gone to *olam haba*. It has been a privilege to honor our colleagues in this way.

In this year's book, there are 30 colleagues and eight spouses whose memories are a blessing. They range in age from 49 to 104, the largest age range since this book was begun in 1990. Their talents and accomplishments were enormous and they served in a wide array of roles around the world. Most were pulpit rabbis, others made their mark in day school education or in local, national, and international organizations. Please read their biographies

with love and care – their families would appreciate it. The legacy of these colleagues will live on through us and through those they impacted.

יהי זכרם ברוך

Rabbi Jan Caryl Kaufman

כ"ג שבט תשפ"ה

January 22, 2025

רב מתיאוו יסאק בלאס, ז"ל

הרב מיכאל יצחק בן יהודה משה ורבקה מנדל, ז"ל

Born: September 25, 1975; Vancouver, British Columbia

Died: December 30, 2024/ה'תשפ"ה (ה' הנוכה) תשפ"ה; Washington, DC

Raised in Vancouver, Camp Solomon Schechter is where Rabbi Bellas received his call to be a rabbi. He considered Rabbi Howard Siegel to be an inspiration and mentor. A graduate of the University of Judaism with a BA and BHL, Rabbi Bellas was ordained by JTS in 2004. He met his wife, Oksana, when they were first-year students at the UJ, and they were married at the end of their junior year. Their son, Yaakov, was born two years later. As a student at JTS, Yaakov was often in tow as Rabbi Bellas was the *gabbai* at the Seminary Synagogue. He knew he wanted to spend his rabbinate in Jewish education, specifically day school education. While in rabbinical school, he served as head teacher at SAJ – the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, and Rosh Chinukh at Camp Ramah Nyack. Upon ordination, he became rabbi of the Brandeis School on Long Island, where he served for four years. In 2007, he became a DSLTI (Day School Leadership Training Institute) fellow of the Avi Chai Foundation.

Rabbi Bellas and his family moved back to his hometown in 2008 and he became the school rabbi at the Vancouver Talmud Torah School. He supervised all academic activities in the Judaic Studies Department and was a member of the school's leadership team. During that time, he became a member of the JNF Young Professionals Network Leadership Committee. He held the position in Vancouver for six years before Rockville, MD beckoned.

In 2014, he was appointed Lower School Principal at The Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School of Greater Washington, a position he held until his untimely death at age 49. He knew every student's name. He would stand outside doing carpool and bus duty every day, greeting students by name to wish them a good day. After October 7, he ended the announcements each

day with "*Am Yisrael Chai*." He empowered different groups of fifth-grade students (the oldest grade in the Lower School) to help with the announcements each morning. One of his hallmarks at the day school was the *middat haḥodesh*. The *middat haḥodesh* permeates the Lower School. Teachers teach about it, students present on it, and it is discussed throughout the curriculum. When a student exhibited the *middat haḥodesh*, he would give out a *Middot Menschen* certificate to the student. Either Rabbi Bellas would see the *middah* in action or a student would be nominated by a faculty member. For 10 years, Rabbi Bellas wrote the script and song lyrics for the annual Hanukkah musical he started at the school. Rabbi Bellas was beloved by the students, who ranged in age from preschool to fifth grade. Although he was unable to attend CESJDS' 2024 Hanukkah musical, as he was on medical leave, the students created a parody of Bellas. In the broader world of Jewish education, he sat on the editorial board of *Hayideon*, the journal published by Prizmah, the association of Jewish day schools.

In an obituary in the *Washington Jewish Week*, Rabbi Adam Raskin of Congregation Har Shalom said that Rabbi Bellas "was a charismatic, immensely talented Jewish educator who cared deeply for his students, teachers, and the entire CESJDS community. He always possessed a unique kindness and sincerity, and he was so infused with a love of Torah and the Jewish people." Head of School Rabbi Mitch Malkus, who studied at JTS with Rabbi Bellas, said, "I think that if there was one thing that allowed our school to thrive under his leadership, it was that he led with kindness; he treated every single student with kindness and he knew every student's name. He made sure every student was seen and heard at school and I think that's what allowed the students to thrive."

Rabbi Bellas was a stalwart member of Congregation B'nai Shalom of Olney, serving as the *gabbai rishon* at the shul, the vice president of religious affairs on the synagogue's executive committee, chair of the religious committee, and as a member of the rabbi search committee. The spiritual leader of B'nai Shalom, Rabbi Jesse Nagelberg, said the following in the *Jewish Week* obituary: "As I mourn the passing of a friend and mentor, I join the entire

Jewish community in mourning the passing of a consummate rabbi and educator who kindled the passion for learning and excellence in countless students and teachers."

Rabbi Bellas is survived by his wife, Oksana; children, Jacob (fiancée, Rivka Magier), Maya, and Aliza Bellas; mother, Renee Switzer; and siblings, Adam (Britt Baxter) Bellas and Jennifer Wildes.

Quotations contained in the obituary of Rabbi Bellas appeared in the January 9, 2025 edition of the Washington Jewish Week, and they are reprinted here with permission.

ז"ל רבבי דאָויד ל. בלומנפֿילד

הרב אליעזר דוד בן הרב מאיר ואסתר עטע, ז"ל

Born: May 6, 1935; Newark, NJ

Died: September 16, 2024/י"ד אלול תשפ"ד; New Rochelle, NY

Born and raised in Newark, NJ, Rabbi Blumenfeld graduated from Brandeis University with a BA in Near Eastern and Jewish Studies in 1956 and was ordained from JTS in 1960. After ordination, he spent a year studying comparative religion at the Hebrew University, and upon his return, became the rabbi of B'nai Israel Temple Center in El Monte, CA in the Greater Los Angeles area. He then became a US Army chaplain in 1962, where he was stationed at Ft. Eustis in Newport News, VA. He earned the rank of captain. In 1964, he was called to the pulpit of Congregation Tifereth Israel in Glen Cove, New York (Long Island), where he served for 12 years. During that time, he received his PhD from NYU in Near Eastern languages and literature. His dissertation was entitled, *The Terminology of Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible*. While in Long Island, he chaired the Education Committee of the newly-formed Solomon Schechter School of Nassau County and was on the board of the Long Island Board of Rabbis.

In 1976, Rabbi Blumenfeld was appointed as the executive vice president of the Federation of Jewish Men's Club, succeeding Rabbi Joel Geffen. In 1982, he became the founding executive director of the New York Holocaust Commission. His monumental work at the Commission was featured in a *New York Times* article, "One Man's Mission for Six Million" (September 4, 1983). He led missions to Eastern Europe before it became popular and secured major gifts for the work of the Commission. His work there led to the founding of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in lower Manhattan. In 1989, Rabbi Blumenfeld served for a year as the executive vice president of the Eilat Foundation. His academic accomplishments earned him an appointment

as an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Hebraic Studies at Long Island University.

The year 1990 brought him to United Synagogue, where he served as director of the Department of Services to Affiliated Congregations. In that role, he initiated and was the first editor of *Torah Sparks*, a series of weekly *divrei Torah*, which reached thousands of Jews in the pews. He was also the founder of the *Imun* program of United Synagogue, which began as a training institute for lay religious leadership in smaller Jewish communities. The program later expanded to lay leaders in ritual roles in synagogues and to secular studies teachers at Jewish day schools to help enhance their synagogue skills and enable them to be part of the *tefillah* programs at their schools.

In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1986. During the same year, he received a degree in Museum Studies from New York University. Also in that year, Rabbi Blumenfeld was shot by a Palestinian terrorist while walking home from Kabbalat Shabbat in the streets of Jerusalem. His daughter Laura, a *Washington Post* columnist at the time, wrote a best-selling non-fiction book entitled *Revenge: A Story of Hope* (2002), in which her father is a central character. Following the book's publication, he was invited by many groups to speak about it.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. A. Frances Blumenfeld; children Dr. Hal (Michelle Brody) Blumenfeld and Laura (Baruch Weiss) Blumenfeld; stepchildren, Dr. Barak (Helena Smigoc) Pearlmuter and Nili (Todd Bearson) Pearlmuter; and 10 grandchildren.

ז"ל, רבני ניל ברייף

הרב נח בן חיים וביילע, ז"ל

Born: October 10, 1934; Brooklyn, NY

Died: January 27, 2024/י"ז שבט תשפ"ד; Lincolnwood, IL

Like many of our colleagues from this era, Rabbi Brief was a graduate of the Marshaliah Hebrew High School in New York. He was also a 1955 graduate of New York University with a BS and an MA earned in 1958. Rabbi Brief was ordained from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1960 and was admitted to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1974. While in rabbinical school, he married Erica Greenbaum. After ordination, he entered the US Army as a chaplain stationed in Ft. Huachuca, AZ. Upon completing his army service, he became the rabbi of Ventura County Jewish Council/Temple Beth Torah in the greater Los Angeles area, a position he held until 1971. Rabbi Brief was then elected rabbi of the Niles Township Jewish Congregation (now called Ezra-Habonim, the Niles Township Jewish Congregation), a dual-affiliated Reconstructionist/Conservative synagogue, in Skokie, IL. He served the congregation for 33 years and was named rabbi emeritus upon his retirement.

The congregation flourished under his tutelage in no small measure due to his affable, outgoing manner. He exuded warmth to all he touched and remembered everybody's name. If a congregant told the rabbi that her mother had a cold, two weeks later he would remember to ask the congregant about her mother. He was so beloved that a friend, Judith-Rae Ross, authored a biography of Rabbi Brief entitled *Neil Brief: A Rabbi; No More, No Less*. Its title came from an answer he gave to a question about what he wanted to accomplish in his career.

A defining moment of his career came with the legal fight over the 1978 Nazi March in Skokie, a community with many Holocaust survivors. Rabbi Brief tried valiantly to explain the position of the community opposed to the rally

and criticized the ACLU for defending it. He spoke out against the antisemitic graffiti spray-painted on a Holocaust monument in Skokie in 1987 and was vociferous in his opposition to a Ku Klux Klan rally held in Skokie in 2000.

The graffiti in 1987 appeared one day after Skokie dedicated a Holocaust memorial. On the following day, Rabbi Brief was part of a decision to hold a memorial service at the monument to try to understand what had happened. He even suggested leaving the graffiti on the monument, at least for a time, to allow people to think about what had been done. After the 2000 Klan rally and a counter-rally the following day, Rabbi Brief told the *Chicago Tribune*, "I almost wish I could have been at that courthouse to say to the KKK, 'Come in from the cold and stop spewing that dirt.' Skokie is not a Jew town. It is an American town."

Rabbi Brief founded and served as president of the Niles Township Clergy Association. He was also secretary for the Chicago Board of Rabbis, commissioner of the Skokie Human Services Commission, and on the rabbinic cabinets of State of Israel Bonds and the UJA. He and Erica frequently went on rabbinic missions and as soon as a participant boarded the bus, Rabbi Brief would greet the rabbi and within minutes know all about them. He would regale everyone with his knowledge of gematria and peppered his *derashot* with interesting gematria tidbits. He and Erica loved to travel and they led many trips to Israel from the synagogue. Erica sadly died in 2014 while they were on a cruise.

In recognition of his years of service, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa* in 1985, and the Jewish Theological Seminary did the same in 1996.

He is survived by his children, Dena (Jerry) Wald; David (Hazel) Brief; and Debra (Bruce) Hoffen; brother, Seymour (Elaine); 17 grandchildren and spouses; and seven great-grandchildren.

ר"ל, רב בורטון א. קוהן

הרב בנימין יצחק בן לייב הירש הכהן, ז"ל

Born: May 2, 1931; Chicago, IL

Died: May 17, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; Chicago, IL

A 1952 graduate of Roosevelt University in Chicago with a BA in History, Rabbi Cohen simultaneously studied at the College of Jewish Studies in that city. He credits his inspiration to become a rabbi first to Rabbi Benjamin Birnbaum, the rabbi at his childhood synagogue, Ner Tamid, then to his parents, who heeded Rabbi Birnbaum's advice to send him to Camp Ramah in Wisconsin for its first season. However, his most important influences were the JTS faculty at Ramah, including Sylvia Ettenberg and Rabbi Moshe Davis. They recruited dynamic teachers for that first season of Ramah, including Rabbi David Lieber, who would serve as the president of the University of Judaism (now known as the American Jewish University) and as Rabbinical Assembly president.

Rabbi Cohen was ordained in 1957 from JTS. While in rabbinical school, he married Roberta (Bobbie) Cheskis, whom he had met at camp. They were married for 57 years until her death in 2012.

In a stirring obituary about his father-in-law in the May 17, 2024 edition of *Commentary*, John Podhoretz recounts that his father, Norman Podhoretz, was a drama counselor at Ramah Wisconsin in 1949 and shared a sleeping porch with Rabbi Cohen. In the obituary, he calls his father-in-law an "unsung stand-up guy who gave far more in his life than he ever got, a man of genuine modesty and gentle spirit, who never said a bad word about anyone—and yet with his own quiet tenacity helped to build and expand a lasting and vibrant institution that has done nothing but good when it comes to helping young people make the connection to Judaism's astonishing past, its tumultuous present, and its vitally important future."

In 1960, Rabbi Cohen became the director of Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, where he had been a camper a decade earlier, and served in that position until 1974. During that time, he also earned an MA and PhD in education from the University of Chicago. In 1973, Rabbi Cohen was appointed to the education faculty at JTS, and the family settled in Woodmere, NY. When this author asked him why they moved to Woodmere (especially since Bobbie never drove), he explained that he wanted to send his children to the Brandeis School, which was a Solomon Schechter school. He and Bobbie thought it important to exemplify the approach of Conservative Judaism and to be a role model to other families in the community. Not the least important of which was that the Brandeis School enjoyed a reputation as an outstanding school. In 1974, he became the director of the National Ramah Commission, a position he held until 1989. While director of the National Ramah Commission, Rabbi Cohen continued to serve on the education faculty at JTS and became full-time in 1989, a position he held until his retirement in 2011 as associate professor emeritus of education.

Rabbi Cohen was the author of numerous articles and book chapters. He wrote one of his earliest articles with his faculty advisor at the University of Chicago, Joseph Schwab, a distinguished professor of education. The article, entitled, "Practical Logic: Problems of Ethical Decision," was published in *The American Behavioral Scientist* in 1965. He contributed to *festschriften* in honor of Rabbi Joseph Lukinsky, Rabbi Louis Newman, and Dr. Walter Ackerman. He contributed a chapter to *Women and Ritual: An Anthology*, published by the National Ramah Commission, and a chapter to *The Ramah Experience: Community and Commitment*. Rabbi Cohen was the author of *Case Studies in Jewish School Management: Applying Educational Theory to School Practice*, published by Behrman House in 1992.

He received several awards, including the Ramah Award for outstanding contributions to the Ramah camping movement, in 1997, the National Community Service Award from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a Lifetime Award for Achievement in the field of Jewish education from the Jewish Educators Assembly and Behrman House Publishers, in 1999.

He is survived by his children, Yehuda (Ellen) Cohen, Ilana Cohen, and Ayala Cohen (John) Podhoretz; grandchildren, Joe Cohen, Shayna, Shiri, and Isaac Podhoretz; and, sister, Bethaviva Cohen (Harry Silver). He was predeceased by his wife, Roberta; sisters, Toby (Sherwin, ל"ט) Litin, and Janet (Donald, ל"ט) Fischer.

רבי דונלד דייוויד קריין, ז"ל

הרב דוד בן יצחק, ז"ל

Born: February 19, 1929; Brooklyn, NY

Died: September 1, 2024/כ"ה אב תשפ"ד; River Vale, NJ

A 1951 graduate with a BA from the American International College, he was ordained by JTS in 1958. During his rabbinical school tenure, Rabbi Crain spent two years in Israel, where he pursued graduate studies at the Hebrew University and coached the swimming team. After ordination, he became the rabbi at Temple Israel in Daytona Beach, FL, followed by a position as executive director of the Chicago Council of the United Synagogue and then as rabbi of Congregation Agudas Achim in Austin, TX. In 1963, he was elected assistant rabbi at Chizuk Amuno in Baltimore, where he served until 1969. While in Baltimore, he conducted worship services in the then two branches of the synagogue, one in the suburbs and one in town (the in-town synagogue is now the thriving Beth Am Congregation).

In all of these posts, Rabbi Crain was extensively involved in youth activities. He served as co-director of Camp USY of the Southwest region of United Synagogue while in Daytona Beach. While in Chicago, he was the director of Camp USY and in the summer of 1953 organized and directed the first Camp USY in Texas. In Baltimore, he was the first rabbi to guide and grant the Girl Scouts Menorah Award in Maryland. He was the author of two cantatas, "Saga of Jerusalem" and "Ten Voices of Judaism."

His other activities in Baltimore were extensive, including serving the American Israel Society as Seaboard region representative. He was on the executive committee of the Maryland Academy of Sciences, the boards of the American Heart Association and the Baltimore City Commission on Physical Fitness, and the executive committee for religious programming of Metro-Media Radio. He was also a spiritual guide and advisor for the

planning and organizing of a synagogue in Columbia, MD, which was established as a planned city in 1967.

From 1969 to 1972, he was rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Norwalk, CT, during which he served as vice-president of the Norwalk Jewish Community Council, chair of interfaith activities of the Norwalk Clergy Association, co-chair for the Norwalk UJA campaign, and officer of the RA's Connecticut Valley region. In 1972, he accepted a position as spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Utica, NY where he also served as the chaplain of Utica State Hospital, was a board member of the Utica Jewish Community Council, the Charles T. Sitrin Home for the Aged, and the Family Services of Greater Utica. He also served several other pulpits in the northeast, including the Adath Israel Congregation in Trenton, NJ, and Beth Mordecai in Perth Amboy, NJ. While in New Jersey, Rabbi Crain studied at the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University.

In 1984, he assumed the pulpit of Temple Beth Shalom in Boca Raton, FL, a position he held until 2001 when he retired and was named rabbi emeritus. His activities in South Florida included many years of service on the boards of the Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County and the Ruth Rales Jewish Family Service. Rabbi Crain served as an adjunct professor of religion at St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Seminary for nearly 20 years. He was also a lifelong Mason. He was also a member of the South County and Greater Miami Rabbinical Associations, the National Rabbinical Cabinet of Bonds for Israel, the board of Governors of the New York Board of Rabbis, and the board of the South County Jewish Family and Children's Services. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1984.

He remained active in retirement, including with RARRA (The Rabbinical Assembly Association of Retired Rabbis), where he was president from 2003 to 2005. Throughout his career and well into retirement, he was very generous to the RA, contributing to the RA Assistance Fund from Temple

Beth Shalom and making sure RARRA gave a substantial contribution to the fund every year.

He is survived by his wife, Sandra (sister of Rabbi Stanley Schachter, ל"ז), son Daniel and his wife Joanne, and son Raphael; and granddaughters, Rachel, Olivia, and Mira Crain.

Rabbi Robert E. Fierstien, ז"ל

הרב חנוך בן ישראל יעקב הלוי וברבה, ז"ל

Born: July 24, 1948; Newark, NJ

Died: December 5, 2024/ה'תשפ"ה; Lakewood, NJ

A 1970 *summa cum laude* graduate of New York University, Rabbi Fierstien was also elected as a member of Phi Beta Kappa during his junior year. After ordination from JTS in 1975, he became spiritual leader of Temple Beth Or in Brick, NJ, from which he retired and was named rabbi emeritus in 2008. In 1986, he was awarded a DHL from JTS.

His career saw numerous accomplishments. While in rabbinical school, in 1973, he received the Sarah Solis Nathan Prize for academic achievement. In 1974, he was awarded the Lowenfeld Prize for practical rabbinics. These awards covered the span of his rabbinate. His academic areas of focus were midrash and American Jewish history.

As the centennial of the RA was approaching, in 2000, Rabbi Fierstien was commissioned by then RA president, Rabbi Gerald Zelizer, to produce a history of the RA. The publication, *A Century of Commitment*, is the only comprehensive volume on the Rabbinical Assembly. His volume of essays presents the history of the Rabbinical Assembly and its influence on the development and direction of Conservative/Masorti Judaism in America, Israel, and Latin America. Taken together, they present an important perspective on the Jewish religious experience in the twentieth century. Contributors to the volume include Professor Pamela Nadell, Herbert Rosenblum, Michael Panitz, Stanley Rabinowitz, Theodore Steinberg, Shmuel Szeinhendler, and Joel H. Meyers. In a review in *American Jewish History* (March 2000), the scholarly journal of the American Jewish Historical Society, Rabbi Jack Cohen wrote, "The Rabbinical Assembly and the contributors to this account of its 100-year history are to be congratulated for having produced a creditable piece of scholarship and an honest

presentation of the organization's accomplishments and problems since its founding."

In addition to this volume, he is also the author of *A Different Spirit: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886-1902* (JTS, 1990), as well as many scholarly articles including, "Solomon Schechter and the Zionist Movement" (*Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1975), "Sabato Morais and the Foundation of the Jewish Theological Seminary," in *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America*, and two articles in the 1999 edition of *American National Biography*, on Alexander Kohut and Joseph Jacobs. Rabbi Fierstien was also the editor, along with Rabbi Jonathan Waxman, of *Solomon Schechter in America: A Centennial Tribute*. His academic work expanded his career to university teaching in retirement. He served as an adjunct professor of Jewish Studies at Stockton University from 2008 until his passing and was co-chair of the New Jersey Historical Commission of the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders history committee.

Rabbi Fierstien was fully immersed in the broader community and in learned societies. He served two terms as president of the Shore Area Board of Rabbis, from 1984 until 1986 and 2000 until 2002, and was a member of the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Historical Association, and the Jewish Studies Committee of Monmouth College (Long Branch, NJ). He lectured in many venues on American Jewish history. Rabbi Fierstien served on the Nominations Committee of the RA from 2001 to 2003. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 2001.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; son Rabbi Jeremy (Dr. Ilana Jackson); grandsons Noah and Ami; and brother Joel.

Rabbi Robert E. Fine, ז"ל

הרב ראובן ישראל בן יצחק ודבורה, ז"ל

Born: May 6, 1944; Brooklyn, NY

Died: December 3, 2024 /ג' כסלו תשפ"ה; Denver, CO

Rabbi Robert (Bob) Fine was born in Brooklyn and grew up in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. After graduating valedictorian of his high school class, he attended Stanford University, with overseas study in Rome and Jerusalem. While studying for ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which he earned in 1973, Rabbi Fine simultaneously pursued graduate work in Greek and Latin at Columbia University. With an MPhil in Classics, he taught at Columbia, Hunter College, and Brooklyn College. He served as interim rabbi at Temple Beth El in Cedarhurst, NY, and then after three years as rabbi at the Laurelton Jewish Center in Laurelton, NY, and teaching at the Brandeis School in Lawrence, NY, Rabbi Fine assumed a full-time position in 1980 at the Fresh Meadows Jewish Center in Queens, NY.

In 1985, he became rabbi at Bet Torah in Mount Kisco, NY, a position he held for nineteen years. At that time he also served as Jewish Chaplain at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, New York State's only maximum security women's prison. In those years, he taught ancient Jewish history at the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, NY. In the twilight of his career, Rabbi Fine served as interim rabbi at Temple Beth Torah in Oakhurst, NJ, Rumson Jewish Center at Congregation B'nai Israel in Rumson, NJ, Hillcrest Jewish Center in Queens, NY, Temple Israel in Albany, NY, and Temple Beth Israel in Port Washington, NY. Retirement was "phased in," as Rabbi Fine traveled the world with his wife Helene as a "cruise rabbi." These cruises were often over the High Holidays, Hanukkah, and Passover, as he served grateful Jewish travelers who forgot to check the Jewish calendar before booking their vacations. He enjoyed his retirement in Denver as a rabbi-in-the-pews at Congregation Rodef Shalom.

Rabbi Fine served the Rabbinical Assembly as a member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards for ten years. Rabbi Fine co-wrote, with Rabbis Myron S. Geller and David J. Fine, the teshuvah "A New Context: The Halakhah of Same-Sex Relations" for the CJLS in 2006, a paper that was filed as a liberal dissenting opinion to the deliberations at that time. As chair of the Subcommittee on Liturgical Publications, he was also closely involved with the editing of *Mahzor Lev Shalem*. Rabbi Fine once remarked to his son Rabbi David Fine after attending the azkarah service at an RA Convention: "No matter where we end up in our careers, this community will memorialize us."

In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1998. A scholar-rabbi, Bob Fine was always happiest when teaching. While serving congregations he always had a weekly Talmud course, but his love was teaching prose narratives, especially the biblical David story, Agnon short stories, science fiction, or of course, Greek drama and the Homeric epics. Rabbi Fine had a gift for languages. Expert in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, he could also speak Italian and German. He remained fascinated by the Greek and Roman legacy in rabbinic Judaism. For his *sheloshim*, his family observed a siyyum of the Mishnah, as well as completing the twenty-four books of the Odyssey.

He is survived by his wife, Helene; children, Rabbi David (Alla), Josh (Julie), and Yoni (Laura); sister, Bev; and grandchildren, Ilan, Laurence, Ariel, Aria, Eden, Tamar, and Rocco.

This tribute was prepared by his son, Rabbi David Fine, of Temple Israel in Ridgewood, NJ.

רבי עמנואל ס. גולדסמיד, ז"ל

הרב מנחם מנדעל שלום בן חיים ורייזע, ז"ל

Born: August 15, 1935; New York, NY

Died: January 5, 2024/ד' תשפ"ד טבת תשפ"ד; Rockville, MD

Raised in The Bronx, Rabbi Goldsmith was raised in a strong Zionist home infused with music. His father, Hayim, immigrated to the United States from the Yishuv and his mother Rose (Post) was from the Ukraine and steeped in Yiddish culture, which inspired his future career as a Yiddish scholar. A graduate of New York City's prestigious High School of the Performing Arts, Rabbi Goldsmith attended (as did many of our colleagues) Marshaliah Hebrew High School before entering the City College of New York. He then entered rabbinical school at JTS, from which he was ordained. While at City College, Rabbi Goldsmith heard a lecture by Dr. Max Weinreich—a founder of YIVO who took refuge in America—about the Yiddish language. After a chance encounter on the subway, Rabbi Goldsmith became so enamored with Dr. Weinreich that he vowed to take all of his classes. This was the start of Rabbi Goldsmith's career as a scholar of Yiddish literature.

While at JTS, Rabbi Goldsmith studied with Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan and was mesmerized by him. He began attending services at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. Ultimately, he became a close student of Kaplan's, including working for him as editor of *The Reconstructionist Journal* and becoming a key interpreter and teacher of Kaplan's ideas. Later, Rabbi Goldsmith expanded his scholarship in religious naturalism by drawing on the work of the Protestant theologian Henry Nelson Weiman. He was particularly proud that he was accepted into the fellowship of Christian scholars at the Highlands Institute as a result of this work, and he enjoyed attending its annual conferences.

Rabbi Goldsmith met and married Kayla Merdinger during his time at JTS. After ordination, they went to Israel, where their first child, Mirele, was born. Upon their return from Israel, Rabbi Goldsmith took a position as the rabbi of Shaar Shalom Congregation in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they had two more children, Leizer and Rachel. While living in Halifax, in May 1963, Bull Connor unleashed his dogs and water cannons against peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama. A lifelong supporter of civil rights, Rabbi Goldsmith traveled to Birmingham as a representative of the Rabbinical Assembly to stand in solidarity with Black leaders of the civil rights movement. He told the *Halifax Mail-Star* that "we wanted to translate our religious beliefs and values into action...we wanted to practice what we preach about freedom, equality and human dignity." While in Birmingham, the rabbis stayed at the A. G. Gaston Motel, which was bombed just two days after they left. Rabbi Goldsmith said at the time that Dr. King was "a great religious leader, for whom I have only the greatest admiration." True to form, after the Black and Jewish leaders had exchanged songs of love and freedom, he said he "heard God [in the] songs and prayers of freedom he heard in the Black churches." He was later awarded lifetime membership in the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

After Halifax and short stints in New York and Washington, DC (where Rabbi Goldsmith and his wife taught the confirmation and post-confirmation classes at Adas Israel Congregation), the Goldsmiths moved to Brookline, MA, where he earned his PhD in Yiddish literature at Brandeis University in 1972. While a student, Rabbi Goldsmith made a living leading several congregations part-time. He loved to tell how he once held 3 rabbinic gigs simultaneously: one Reform, one Conservative, and the third Orthodox. Ultimately, he remained the rabbi of the Conservative congregation, Temple Adas-Hadrath Israel in Hyde Park, Boston, even after moving away from the Boston area. In 1990, the congregation honored him for 20 inspiring years of service.

Rabbi Goldsmith assumed an academic position at the University of Connecticut and then moved to Queens College, where he served as a Professor of Yiddish and Jewish Studies. While in Queens, he took on editing *Yiddish Literature in America 1870-2000*. This huge two-volume

anthology was a project of the Congress for Jewish Culture. He also recorded an album, "*I Love Yiddish*," on which he recites Yiddish poetry, sings, and plays the piano. This is a wonderful snapshot of his love of Yiddish language and culture.

After a divorce, Rabbi Goldsmith married Shirley Zebberman in 1982. Shortly after their marriage, and in addition to his full-time academic position at Queens College, he accepted a position as the part-time rabbi of Reconstructionist Congregation M'vakshei Derech in Scarsdale, NY, which he held until retirement. In 2009, they moved to Rockville, MD to be closer to their children and he found a religious home at Adat Shalom Congregation, where the rabbis appreciated the mini-sermons offered from his seat in the congregation. He continued to teach and lecture, attracting large crowds of Adat Shalom members and residents of Ring House, the senior living residence where he lived. Rabbi Goldsmith authored and edited many books and articles, including *Modern Yiddish Culture* and *Dynamic Judaism*. He also served on the board of directors of the Congress for Jewish Culture, the Rena Costa Center for Yiddish Studies at Bar Ilan University, and the Highland Institute for American Religious Thought. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1986.

He is survived by his children, Mirele (Rabbi Richard Marker), Leizer (Sharon Bray), Hazzan Rachel (Howard Ungar); step-children Beila Sherman, Dawn Rosen (Sam z"l), Miryawm Faerman (Hillel), Tova Sherman (Joe Lang); grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife, Shirley, who died in 2019, and her son Garry.

This biography of Rabbi Goldsmith was prepared from material written by his children.

ז"ל רבי מיכאל גרעץ
הרב מרדכי יוסף בן מרים ומאיר הלוי, ז"ל

Born: March 4, 1940; Lincoln, NE

Died: November 27, 2024/ה'תשפ"ה; Omer, Israel

Rabbi Graetz grew up in Lincoln as the only child of Marjorie and Marion Graetz. In his formative years, he had two great rabbis who served as his inspiration: his uncle Rabi Harry Jolt, and Rabbi Harold Stern, who introduced him to the great thinkers of that time.

While studying at Columbia, he met his life partner Naomi (Lebowitz), who was then in high school. They married in 1963. Before his ordination, he was the educational director of the Jewish Center of New City, New York. Rabbi Graetz was ordained by JTS in June 1967, when the Six-Day War broke out. After ordination, he and Naomi went to Israel for two years and never returned. He would often brag, "We never made aliyah; we just stayed." In 1968, they moved to Jerusalem, where he was the assistant to the editors-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. In 1973, Rabbi Graetz served in the IDF during the Yom Kippur War in the *hevra kaddisha* of the Central Command and continued to serve in the reserves until his discharge in 1991. During the Yom Kippur War, he discovered to his dismay that many young soldiers did not know anything about Judaism. This experience led to his seeking a pulpit in Israel and resulted in his moving to Omer in 1974 to serve the *kehillah*, Magen Avraham. He was a senior lecturer in Bible and Jewish culture at Kay College in Be'er Sheva, serving as its department chair.

He was among the initiators of the establishment of the Masorti Movement in Israel and served as its first CEO. He served as chairman of the Siddur Committee, which published the first Masorti *siddur* in Hebrew, *Va'Ani Tefilati*.

Rabbi Graetz was influenced by Naomi's interest in feminism and she was very much a partner in leading their community. Magen Avraham was egalitarian from its inception. They grew the community from 15 families to more than 100 and moved from praying in a small classroom to an impressive building. Rabbi Graetz founded a *b'nai mitzvah* program that was based on serious study of Jewish concepts and not just the skills of reciting the Torah and haftarah. He founded a summer camp with Jewish and cultural content for children which continues to this day. In 1999, he founded the Magen Avraham *Yula* (יום לימודים ארוך) program, which today educates more than 100 children each day at the *kehillah*.

In 2002 he started a program for *pirkhei rabbanut* (rabbinic interns) in his congregation and mentored all of the prominent younger generation of rabbis in Israel. His far-flung influence was both national and international. In 2013, he was one of the founders of the "Interfaith Initiative in the Negev," which is a forum for interfaith dialogue and tolerance in the Negev that includes Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious and educational figures.

After his retirement in 2005, he elected to stay in Omer and remain a member of the congregation he founded. He served as an interim rabbi at Ramot Tzion in Northridge, CA (2007), Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City (2009), and in Melbourne, Australia (2012). Rabbi Graetz's hobbies included running and photography and more recently golf. He began long-distance running in 1976 and completed many runs around the world, including 10 runs of the Kinneret Marathon.

One of his favorite activities was taking visitors to Tel Sheva, starting in 1975, when he performed a wedding for two archaeology students from the US who were wheeled in with wheelbarrows.

He joked that *כי מעומר תצא תורה* (from Omer shall come Torah) and it was true. Congregants and colleagues alike were drawn to his warmth, integrity,

and kindness. Omer was his family. He touched individual lives and taught generations. He was one of the more liberal members of the *Vaad Halakhah*, and often his was a minority opinion. Rabbi Graetz's love of midrash led him to share his weekly sermons on Ravnet. The five volumes of *Inquire and Explore with Wisdom*, a commentary on the Humash, are available on his website, michaelgraetz.com. His sermons were gems and enhanced with humor.

In 1987, JTS presented Rabbi Graetz with the Israel Friedlander Award on its 100th anniversary. In 1989, he was named "Person of the Year in Religion" by the Beersheba newspaper *Kol Ha'ir*. At the 1998 conference of the RA, held in Israel to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, he was honored by the Annual Campaign for his efforts to establish and cultivate traditional Judaism and the *Masorti* movement in Israel. He served twice as RA Israel president, in 1976 and in 1992.

In 2007, he received the Rabbi Simon Greenberg Award from the Ziegler Rabbinical Seminary in Los Angeles. In 2011, the Masorti Movement in Israel awarded him the "*Aseh Lecha Rav*" award in recognition of lifetime achievement. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1992. Rabbi Michael Graetz walked humbly throughout his life without any airs.

His latest endeavor was a *Siddur Eretz Yisraeli* used at Magen Avraham. The siddur, which has been assembled by Rabbi Graetz and his son, Rabbi Tzvi Graetz, reflects the ancient *nusah* that was found in the Cairo *genizah*, along with liturgical adaptations for a democratic state of Israel.

He is survived by his wife, Naomi; children, Rabbi Ariella Graetz Bartuv (Menash), Rabbi Tzvi Graetz, and Avigail Graetz (Eitan Herman); and grandchildren Itamar, Harel, Uriah, Meirav, Ayelet, Talya and Shirah.

At the end of November, Rabbi Michael Graetz passed away peacefully at Soroka Hospital, surrounded by love in the presence of his children and grandchildren.

This biography was written jointly by Rabbi Graetz's beloved life partner, Naomi, and his son, Tzvi Graetz, rabbi of Congregation Ner Tamid in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Rabbi Jules Harlow, ז"ל

הרב יוסף בן חנן ומייטע לאה, ז"ל

Born: June 28, 1931; Sioux City, IA

Died: February 12, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; ג' אדר א' תשפ"ד; New York City

No one who knew him during his childhood in Sioux City, Iowa would have predicted the trajectory of Rabbi Jules Harlow's life. Yet the groundwork was laid there by his grandfather, Sam Lipman, who brought him along when he went to study Talmud with a local rabbi on Shabbes afternoons.

He earned a BA in Philosophy from Morningside College in Sioux City in 1953 before entering rabbinical school at JTS. Dubbed "the *paytan* (liturgical poet) of the Conservative movement" by Chancellor Ismar Schorsch in his eulogy, Rabbi Harlow served as the editor of all liturgical publications of the Rabbinical Assembly from his ordination in 1959 until his retirement in 1994.

While a student at the Seminary, he published translations of several contemporary Israeli poets in *Midstream* and *Commentary* magazines and worked on *The United Synagogue Review*. Upon ordination, he was recruited by Rabbi Wolfe Kelman to be the Director of Publications of the Rabbinical Assembly. That year he married Shayna (Navah) Chasman, whom he met while a seminary student in Jerusalem and re-encountered in shul at JTS.

The first RA publication he worked on, produced under the editorship of Rabbi Gershon Hadas, was *The Weekday Prayerbook* in 1961. The first publication he edited himself for the RA was the *Selihot* booklet, published in 1964, followed by *Likutei T'filah: A Rabbi's Manual*, published in 1965. This work was the first rabbi's manual written specifically for Conservative rabbis. It included baby naming ceremonies for girls, the ketubah with the Lieberman clause, and readings for rabbis to use at funerals and other life-cycle events.

After the publication of the Seliḥot booklet and while he was working on *A Rabbi's Manual*, Rabbi Harlow began work on his magnum opus—the *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, published in 1972, which revolutionized High Holy Day worship in North America. Rabbi Harlow's maḥzor is elegant: elegant in design, elegant in layout, and elegant in its prose and poetry. His poetic translations allowed the richness and the beauty of the Hebrew language of the High Holy Day liturgy to spring to life for the modern worshipper in the pew. The maḥzor was published to great acclaim. He was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying that "one of the main purposes of the revision was to get away from prayers recited with 'ceremonial stiffness' in a mechanical manner." His many innovations included using the color purple to designate texts recited only on Shabbat, removing many of the *piyyutim* (knowing that less could be more), introducing contemporary poetry, and modernizing the martyrology service for Yom Kippur with references to contemporary tragedies, including the Shoah. Rabbi Harlow was 40 years old when his maḥzor was published.

Immediately after the publication of the maḥzor, Rabbi Harlow and the Prayerbook Committee, under the chairmanship of Rabbi Max Routtenberg and under the umbrella of the Joint Prayerbook Commission with United Synagogue, undertook the extraordinary work of creating *Siddur Sim Shalom*, published in 1985. It was a new siddur for a new age, ushered in by the religious innovations of the time. Again, the word "elegant" burgeons from the pages. In a pre-computer design age, Rabbi Harlow spent many hours at a drafting board measuring columns and point type with the designer, Betty Binns. In his introduction, Rabbi Harlow encourages worshippers to pray in the language with which they are most comfortable and to take time with the prayers so they can embrace and fully understand them. He acknowledges that some worshippers are more comfortable with prayer than others and that Jewish tradition encourages struggles with faith. In the liturgy itself, Rabbi Harlow includes some customs as practiced in Israel. The introduction to *Siddur Sim Shalom* delineates its liturgical innovations. Some were very small, like changing a vowel or a letter to make the meaning more compatible

with our understanding of the prayers. *Siddur Sim Shalom* also modified *birkot hashahar* to have an egalitarian formulation.

Rabbi Harlow also produced the quarterly journal, *Conservative Judaism*, in concert with its editors. He made sure the issues were timely and the articles were relevant, scholarly, and in mellifluous prose. He edited the proceedings of the annual RA Conventions. and oversaw other publications of the RA, such as pamphlets for rabbis on topics ranging from sexuality to berit milah to intermarriage. He felt the Conservative movement needed its own introduction to Judaism book and he piqued the interest of his colleague, Rabbi Simcha Kling, to write *Embracing Judaism* for the Rabbinical Assembly (published in 1987 and later revised by Rabbi Carl Perkins).

For several summers, Rabbi Harlow served as scholar-in-residence at various Ramah camps, including Palmer, Glen Spey, and Canada. He also served for many years in a High Holiday pulpit in Omaha. Rabbi Harlow worked on many educational materials for Behrman House Publications and "on the side," he was a translator of Shai Agnon. When Agnon was awarded a Nobel Prize, he served as Agnon's personal interpreter while Agnon toured the USA.

In 1994, Rabbi Harlow retired from the Rabbinical Assembly as director of publications but did not retire from rabbinic work. For the princely sum of \$100, Rabbi Harlow became the literary editor of *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* – a new translation of and commentary on the H̄umash. Rabbi Harlow worked with Rabbi David Lieber, the general editor, and with all the contributors to ensure stylistic consistency. It was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.

In his retirement, he worked on *Pray Tell*, Hadassah's introductory companion to the siddur, and translated Avigdor Shinan's *Megillat Ha-Shoah*, which was published with the Schechter Institutes in Israel. He also entered the pulpit rabbinate in his retirement. Rabbi Harlow succeeded his friend, Rabbi Morton Narrowe, as the visiting Chief Rabbi of Sweden upon the

latter's retirement. The Harlows spent five months each year, for four years, in Stockholm's Great Synagogue. While in Stockholm, Rabbi Harlow and Navah created a youth dialogue between Jewish and non-Jewish Swedish and Polish High School students. Rabbi Harlow and Navah were later "drafted" by Masorti Olami to serve the Bnei Anusim community in Portugal. Over a period of ten years, as volunteers, they traveled to Lisbon 41 times to teach and guide their students. During those years, they brought 17 of their students to the Masorti Beit Din in London for halachic conversion. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1984.

In addition to his professional pursuits, Rabbi Harlow was a lifelong lover of music and an accomplished jazz clarinetist. His love of poetry and the written word, so clearly expressed in his work, also extended to secular poetry and literature.

He is survived by his wife, Navah; children, David (Heather Zacker) and Dr. Ilana Harlow (Jonathan Siegel); and grandchildren, Joshua, Michael, Talia, Boaz, and Ziv Pauli.

This biography of Rabbi Harlow was prepared from material written by his family.

Rabbi Lester Hering, ז"ל

הרב אליעזר בן יצחק ראובן וחייה, ז"ל

Born: March 8, 1929; New York, NY

Died: December 14, 2024/ה'תשפ"ה; Delray Beach, FL

Rabbi Hering received his rabbinic ordination from JTS in 1954. While in rabbinical school, in 1953, he married Charlotte Potok.

After ordination, he was commissioned as a chaplain in the US Army and was stationed in Ft. Lee, VA and then served as rabbi of the Mid-Chester Jewish Center in Yonkers, NY. In 1958, he became associate to Rabbi Irving Lehrman at Temple Emanuel in Miami Beach, after which he accepted a new position as rabbi of Congregation Beth Jacob-Beth Israel in Cherry Hill, NJ, a post he served until 1989. He then moved to Delray Beach, FL to become the rabbi at Temple Emeth, where he served until 1998, when he retired and was named rabbi emeritus. After Charlotte's death in 2003, he married Doris Schudrich, widow of our colleague, Rabbi David Schudrich, ז"ל.

During his tenure in New Jersey, he taught courses to religious school teachers through the Camden County Bureau of Jewish Education. The courses included a Hebrew Ulpan, ancient and modern Jewish history, contemporary Jewish philosophy, and Bible. He also taught Hebrew Civilization at Glassboro University from 1975 to 1977 and he did a stint at the Akiba Hebrew Academy (now the Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy) teaching Jewish history and philosophy. During his sabbatical year in Israel, he served as a guest lecturer in Rabbinics and contemporary Jewish philosophy and taught at the Officer Training School of the IDF.

Rabbi Hering's communal involvements were numerous over his long rabbinic career. While in Cherry Hill, he served a term as president of the Tri-County Board of Rabbis (now Tri-County Board of Clergy) in South Jersey, was a member of the Cabinet and Executive Committee of the United Synagogue, Delaware Valley region, and was on the United Synagogue

Commission on Jewish Education Accreditation. In Florida, he served as president of the South Palm Beach County Board of Rabbis from 1991 to 1994.

Rabbi Hering served the Rabbinical Assembly in many capacities. He was president of the Philadelphia region of the RA from 1980 to 1988 and was *rav makhshir* and *posek* for the region from 1976 until 1989. In 1985, he authored "Regional *Kashrut* Supervision," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, vol. 47: pp. 111–112). He served a term on the Executive Council and was one of the founders and early presidents in 1999 of RARRA (the Rabbinical Assembly Association of Retired Rabbis). Rabbinic colleagues will always remember him speaking his mind on topics of the day at resolution sessions of RA conventions. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1980.

He is survived by his wife, Doris; his children Aviva (Paul) Schieber, Sheera (Richard) Zuckerman, Ari (Michele) Hering; and step-children Rabbi Michael (Magda) Schudrich, Brynna (Steven) Treiber, Cantor Nathaniel (Melynda) Schudrich, Alexander (Sharona) Schudrich; 16 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his brothers-in-law, Rabbis Simon and Chaim Potok.

ר"ל, רב הווארד הערש

הרב צבי בן משה, ז"ל

Born: December 15, 1937; New York City

Died: March 16, 2024/ד' אדר ב' תשפ"ד; Langhorne, PA

A 1958 graduate of Brooklyn College with a BA in British History, Rabbi Hersch was ordained first at the Academy for Higher Jewish Learning. He then entered JTS, where he was ordained in 1972. While a student, in 1960, he assumed the pulpit of a small congregation in Trenton, NJ called Sons of Israel, where he would spend his entire rabbinic career. During those years, he also served as director of Hillel at Rider College (now Rider University). In 1969, he was given life tenure at the congregation. He retired in 2007 and was named rabbi emeritus. In that year, the synagogue moved from Trenton to Newton, PA.

Rabbi Hersch's rabbinic career stretched far beyond the congregation. His activities included a term as president of the Board of Rabbis of Greater Trenton and as chair of the Principal's Council of Greater Trenton. He served on boards of numerous organizations, both Jewish and in the general community. These board memberships included the local Jewish Federation, the Trenton Hebrew Academy (now known as the Abrams Hebrew Academy), the Kingsbury Corporation – Public Housing and Urban Redevelopment for the City of Trenton, Camp Ramah in the Poconos, the Community High School of Jewish Studies, and the Soviet Jewry Task Force. He also served the Mercer County Civil Defense as a chaplain.

Rabbi Hersch was vice chair for three years of the New Jersey Statewide Committee for Public Bond issue, supporting public housing projects for New Jersey. He was very proud that the bond issue finally passed in no small measure because of Rabbi Hersch's perseverance and advocacy. He oversaw the building of two 14-story apartment buildings for senior citizens on the synagogue property. These buildings helped ensure the financial security of

the congregation for years to come. For his 36th anniversary, the congregation renamed the religious school, "The Rabbi Howard Hersch Religious School."

With all of his community involvement, his passion in the rabbinate was Jewish education. He was an early supporter and participant in CAJE, beginning with its founding as the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education.

Rabbi Hersch was honored by the State of Israel and the National Board of Jewish Federation and was the recipient of The Golden Shofar Award by Israel Bonds. He has been honored by several congressional resolutions and presidential commendations, thanking him for years of service. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1998. Many will remember him most for his fabulous sense of humor.

He is survived by his wife, Joan; children, Avra (Elie) Gordis, Seth (Renee) Hersch, Jonathan Julie) Hersch, Elicia Brand (David Leudemann), and Marni Brand (Mike Berg); sister, Judy (Marvin) Kantor; and 13 grandchildren.

ז"ל רבי דוד בן אליהו ושירקע, ז"ל

הרב דוד בן אליהו ושירקע, ז"ל

Born: August 30, 1950; Los Angeles, CA

Died: April 27, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד חול המועד פסח, תשפ"ד; Natick, MA

A 1972 graduate of Pomona College with a BA, Rabbi Klatzker earned an MA in 1976 and a PhD in 1987 from Temple University. He did graduate work at Hebrew University while in rabbinical school at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, from which he was ordained in 1978. He was admitted to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1992. He also studied pastoral psychology at the Philadelphia Psychiatric Center and Jewish Family Education at the Whizin Institute in Los Angeles. While in Philadelphia, he met and married Randy Katz, a lawyer who later earned an MA in Jewish education. He served as assistant to Rabbi Harold Kushner at Temple Israel in Natick, MA from 1983 to 1985 and finished his career as transitional rabbi at the synagogue.

After Natick, he was associate rabbi at Temple B'nai Abraham in Livingston, NJ, working with Rabbi Joachim Prinz. This was followed by a ten-year tenure at Beth Tikvah-B'nai Jeshurun in Erdenheim, PA. His accomplishments included expanding the pre-school from 50 to 140 students, promoting egalitarianism in the synagogue, intensive family education around the *b'nai mitzvah* experience, and securing substantial grant money for a consortium of synagogues. In 1998, he embarked on a 13-year career at Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody, MA, in suburban Boston. In both Philadelphia and Boston, he served the local RA regions both as an officer and on their Giyur committees. He served on the RA Convention Committee in 1994. His outreach work included extensive interfaith relations with Christians and Muslims.

He is the author of numerous academic journal articles and book chapters in such publications as *With Eyes Towards Zion – II* by Rabbi Moshe Davis, the

Catholic Historical Review, and the *Middle East Quarterly*. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 2007.

At the end of his time in Peabody, he changed career direction, studying for two years at the Interim Ministry Network (IMN), which had been training transitional clergy for 30 years. He brought the wisdom of IMN to the Rabbinical Assembly, which had already been training interim rabbis. Rabbi Klatzker preferred the term transitional rabbi. He has served as a transitional rabbi in Long Beach, CA, Commack, NY, Woodcliff Lake, NJ, Cranford, NJ, and Long Grove, IL. He took two years off from serving a congregation to take care of Randy after she fell ill with ALS in 2018. After she died in 2020, he became the transitional rabbi at Or Tzion in Scottsdale, AZ after the death of our colleague, Rabbi Micah Caplan. His last position as transitional rabbi was at Temple Israel in Natick upon the retirement of Rabbi Daniel Liben.

He is survived by his children, Micah (Jil), Judah (Leah), and Meira (Jack); and brother Dale (Jayna).

Rabbi Shlomo Levine, ז"ל

הרב שלמה בן בנימין הלוי ולאה, ז"ל

Born: March 1, 1938; Brooklyn, NY

Died: March 16, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד, אדר ב' תשפ"ד; Evanston, IL

A 1958 honors graduate with a BA from Brooklyn College in Hebrew, Rabbi Levine earned an MA in 1960 from Northwestern University in education and counseling. In the meantime, he served in an administrative position in suburban Chicago at the Niles Township Jewish Center, a synagogue to which he returned at the end of his rabbinic career. Rabbi Levine was proud to have spent his junior year of rabbinical school with his family in Jerusalem. In his senior year of rabbinical school, he obtained special permission to be the assistant to the renowned Rabbi Joachim Prinz at B'nai Abraham in Newark, NJ, and was then ordained in 1968.

His first pulpit was Rodeph Sholom in Hampton, VA, where he simultaneously earned an EdD from the College of William and Mary. During that time, he taught at Hampton University, one of the country's premier HBCUs. In 1975, Rabbi Levine assumed the pulpit of Ezra-Habonim in the West Rogers Park area of Chicago, where he served until 1990. While in Chicago, he studied psychoanalysis at the Alfred Adler Institute. In 1990, he became the rabbi of Beth El in West Palm Beach, FL. His last full-time pulpit was Heska Amuna in Knoxville, TN, where he served from 1996 to 2001. In 2001, he returned to Ezra-Habonim as its part-time rabbi. Rabbi Levine continued to substitute for rabbinic colleagues after retirement and sat on many *batei din* for conversion in the Chicago area.

He was very proud that while at Ezra-Habonim for his first tour of duty, he was able to integrate women seamlessly into full ritual participation in the synagogue without anyone blinking an eye. His rabbinate exuded outreach. For example, while at Beth El in West Palm Beach, he broadened the scope of adult education programs, establishing *havurah* groups in the synagogue

and expanding membership. He secured numerous grants for the synagogue, including for the implementation of a scholar-in-residence program and the hiring of a family life educator for the synagogue, which was ahead of his time. He initiated a college outreach program, a "flex-time" religious school program, and community-wide Kristallnacht ceremonies in many of the communities he served.

During his rabbinic career, he served as the president of the Tidewater Board of Rabbis (VA), president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, and vice president of the Solomon Schechter Day School in Chicago. He is the author of "Yours, Mine and Ours" and "The Singular Problems of the Jewish Single Parent," both published in the *United Synagogue Review*. He enjoyed stamp collecting and was an avid tennis player until ill health prevented him from doing so. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1993.

He is survived by his wife, Annabel; children, Devorah Levine (Mike Hinckley) and Joshua Levine (Rachel); step-children: Adam Strauss (Celia z"l) and Josh Strauss (Anat Geva); and grandchildren, Daniel and Jonah Hinckley, Sam and Sophie Levine, Kalman Strauss, and Avital and Toren Strauss.

ז"ל רבבי דאָויד ה. לינקאָלן

הרב דוד חיים בן אשר וצפורה, ז"ל

Born: September 16, 1937; London, England

Died: May 12, 2024/ד' אייר תשפ"ד; New York, NY

The son of distinguished Queen's Counsel Ashe Lincoln and his wife Sybil, Rabbi Lincoln spent the war years in the British countryside with his sister to avoid the blitz in London. At 18, he began his studies at the Gateshead Yeshivah in England and was ordained at Yeshivat Kol Torah in Jerusalem in 1958. In 1959, he began his studies for the bar at the Law Society School of London. In 1965, he assumed the pulpit of the Portsmouth Hebrew Congregation, a seaside city on the south coast of Great Britain, and received a certificate from the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom naming him a minister to the congregation. In that year, he married Susan Redom. When he began his search westward, he contacted the United Synagogue of America (now USCJ) assuming it was analogous to the United Synagogue in Great Britain, which is Orthodox. His affiliation with Conservative Judaism began in an inauspicious way. He continued to serve Conservative Judaism for the rest of his rabbinic career.

In 1967, he, Susan, and their daughter, Sara moved to the United States, where he served for two years as assistant rabbi at Beth Shalom in Kansas City to Rabbi Morris Margolies. In 1969, he moved to Chicago and became the rabbi of B'nai Zion Congregation. A few years later, in 1973, he assumed the pulpit of Beth Hillel in Wilmette, IL, and was admitted to the Rabbinical Assembly in that same year. After 14 years in Wilmette, he was elected senior rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City, where he remained until his retirement in 2008, at which time he was named rabbi emeritus. While at Park Avenue, he pushed for greater involvement of women in synagogue life (Park Avenue had instituted many expanded roles for women previously) and three of the five assistant rabbis under his tenure were

women, the first one being Rabbi Melissa Crespy, only a few years after he arrived.

He visited communities all over the world, even in dangerous places for a Jew – Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, and Iran. He often visited the last Jew in a remote locale. Rabbi Lincoln met with no fewer than three US presidents, four Israeli Prime Ministers, and two sitting popes. He used the prestige of his pulpit to advocate for Jewish causes in the halls of Congress and the United Nations. He retained a strong relationship with Ukrainian and Polish communities and used that relationship to further ties between these communities and the Jewish community. He was a strong Zionist, which he learned at the knees of his parents. He would visit Israel at the drop of a hat. He was a major advocate for using every resource available to advance the peace process and to engage in Palestinian and Muslim dialogue with Israelis and the wider Jewish world.

Rabbi Lincoln was extremely helpful to the Rabbinical Assembly on many occasions, helping secure donations for various liturgical publications. He served as chair of the editorial committee for the RA's *Siddur Tisha B'Av*, published in 2003, with Rabbi Jeffrey Hoffman as editor and Rabbi Gershon Schwartz also on the committee. He brought the RA funding for this work, which is the first complete prayerbook for Tisha B'Av published by the Conservative movement. It contains commentaries on the liturgy, essays on different aspects of the day, new translations of the *kinnot* with extensive explanations, contemporary readings, and even *midrashim* appropriate to study on Tisha B'Av. Rabbi Lincoln arranged for the Rabbinical Assembly to hold many meetings at Park Avenue Synagogue with wonderful hospitality.

Rabbi Lincoln was a member of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, serving two terms in the 1980s. The teshuvot he authored include "Surrogate Motherhood," "Videotaping on Shabbat," "Co-Ops for Kosher Meat," and "May an Avowed Atheist Serve as Shali'ah Tzibbur?"

He is survived by his children, Sara, Simon, and Jonathan; seven grandchildren; and sister, Roda. His wife, Susan, died in 2017.

ר"ל רודני מארינר, Rabbi Rodney Mariner,

הרב יעקב בן יצחק יוסף ושמחה שושנה, ז"ל

Born: May 29, 1941; Melbourne, Australia

Died: August 16, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; י"ב אב תשפ"ד; London, England

Rabbi Mariner was raised by his mother, an only child in a single-parent family. At the age of 15, he began work as a trainee draftsman before enrolling in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Engineering Department. However, an aptitude test showed that while he would make only an average engineer, he was very gifted in the arts. He therefore chose to read English Literature and European History at Monash University, obtaining his BA (Hons.) in 1968, together with a certificate in education, after which he taught at Sunshine Secondary School.

During this period, he attended Temple Beth Israel, where Rabbis John Levi and Hermann Sanger were a great influence on him, preparing him for the work he would later do with first and second-generation refugees and inspiring him to enter his future career. He received a five-year scholarship from the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, enabling him to take up studies for the rabbinate, which he began at Hebrew Union College and the School of Biblical Archaeology in Israel, and completed at Leo Baeck College in London. He served St. George's Settlement Synagogue in the East End of London for two years as a student rabbi and was ordained in 1976. The subject of his rabbinic thesis was the Jewish attitude to homosexuality.

As a newly ordained minister, he served for two years as assistant rabbi to Rabbi Dov Marmur at Alyth Gardens, and then for four years, from 1978 to 1982, as assistant to Rabbi Michael Leigh at Edgware and District Reform Synagogue, both large and flourishing communities in North London. Like Rabbi Leigh, he was traditionally minded and comfortable in more conservative congregations. In 1980, he became a member of the Rabbinical Assembly. During this period, Rabbi Mariner visited refuseniks in Soviet

Russia. Active in interfaith relations, he became chairman of his local branch of The Council of Christians and Jews.

In 1982, he was chosen as rabbi of Belsize Square Synagogue, where he was to spend the rest of his career. This was a ‘liberal’ community, a misnomer, since, founded by refugees from Nazi Europe, it followed the German *liberal* tradition, rather than truly belonging to the British Liberal Judaism movement. At that time, the congregation still had many elderly refugees, as well as numerous second-generation families, whom Rabbi Mariner supported with understanding, grace, and patience. His experiences with them, together with the influence of his mentors Rabbis Levi and Hermann in Melbourne, influenced Rabbi Mariner to devote a sabbatical in 1996 to Holocaust studies and to working with Jewish Care, following which he helped establish the Holocaust Survivor’s Centre.

Of particular importance to Rabbi Mariner was welcoming converts. By holding classes and social gatherings at his home, he created close, life-long bonds with his students. His sermons were deeply humane, imbued with Jewish wisdom, down-to-earth, and full of good humor.

From 1989 until his retirement, he was convener of the Bet Din of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, and subsequently of the Progressive Communities of Europe. As part of this work, he oversaw the first conversion of conversos in Barcelona in more than 500 years.

In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 2005.

He retired in 2011, having been the longest-serving rabbi of the congregation. During his almost 30-year ministry, he developed the community, strengthened its ritual observance, welcomed and embraced a new generation, revised its prayer books (which had been based on the German tradition), and guided his flock with empathy, patience, good – sometimes wicked – humor, practical wisdom, and great devotion. He continued his pastoral work for as long as his health allowed him.

He is survived by his second wife, Sue; children, Simon and Rocki; and six grandchildren.

This biography was prepared by Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, New North London Synagogue, London, England, and Sue Mariner.

ז"ל רבי James R. Michaels

הרב יעקב ראובן בן גרשון ונעהא, ז"ל

Born: September 15, 1946; Auburn, NY

Died: September 21, 2024/י"ח אלול תשפ"ד; Rockville, MD

A 1968 graduate of Cornell University with a degree in politics, he was a reporter and then senior editor at *The Cornell Daily Sun*. He also ran the Campus Chest, a charitable organization at Cornell. He was ordained at Hebrew Union College in 1974 and spent his first year after ordination on the education faculty at HUC. He began his pulpit career as an assistant to Rabbi Arnold Goodman at Adath Jeshurun Congregation in suburban Minneapolis, where he learned from Rabbi Goodman first-hand about the Rabbinical Assembly. He was admitted to the RA in 1977 and became involved in Project RA, which worked to make the organization's inner workings accessible to the broader membership. In 1977, he assumed the pulpit of Whitestone Hebrew Center in Queens, NY, where he remained until 1988.

While in New York, he became very active in the RA and in the general and Jewish communities. His activities included being a member of the panel of clergy of the Second Chance Program run by the district attorney of Queens. He was the first chair of the Network for Intergroup Harmony, a group dedicated to promoting better relations among the religious and ethnic groups of Queens. In 1985, he became a member of the executive committee and board of trustees of the World Council of Synagogues (now Masorti Olami). In 1986, he was named "chaplain of the year" by the New York Board of Rabbis, and in the following year was cited as an "unsung hero of Queens" for work promoting communal harmony. He also served on the Education Committee of the Solomon Schechter of Queens. He chaired both the 1984 and 1985 Rabbinical Assembly conventions, both of which were crucial for the vote to admit women to the RA, which was accomplished at the 1985 convention in Miami. And of course, many colleagues remember him for

establishing the annual run at RA conventions, sponsored by Behrman House, as Rabbi Michaels was an avid runner.

In 1988, his family moved to Wilkes-Barre, PA, where he became the rabbi at Temple Israel. In Wilkes-Barre, he was a member of the downtown Wilkes-Barre Clergy Association and a member of the executive committee of the Martin Luther King Committee for Social Justice. He was a founding member of Inter-Religious Encounters, an ongoing series of clergy seminars on comparative religious practices and beliefs. He was also a frequent guest columnist at Wilkes-Barre's *Times Leader*. He chaired the Budget Committee of the RA in 1988 and 1989, and in 1989 was elected to a term on the RA Executive Council. In 1993 and 1994, he chaired the RA Resolutions Committee.

In 2000, he assumed the pulpit of Congregation Beth Israel in Flint, MI. He served on the boards of the Flint Jewish Federation and Jewish Family and Community Services and continued his activities on RA committees. In 2003, he entered the last phase of his career, which he found particularly rewarding. While in Flint, he began studying clinical pastoral education and became certified in that emerging field. He was appointed director of pastoral care at the Charles E. Smith Life Communities in Rockville, MD, a continuing care community with a robust program, including a daily minyan, which houses over 1,000 residents and employs over 1,000 staff. He immersed himself in the life and death issues of the residents, patients, and their families in a way that differed from that of the pulpit. The most important role of a chaplain, he said, is to listen. He received his Doctor of Ministry in pastoral counseling from the Graduate Theological Foundation in 2006 with a specialization in bereavement counseling. He served on the faculty of that institution, focusing on pastoral care and counseling, Judaic studies, history, and liturgy. He was the author of *Flourishing in the Later Years: Jewish Perspectives on Long-Term Pastoral Care* (The Victoria Press, 2009). He also authored many articles both online and in print, including on *My Jewish Learning*. He was an early adapter of computers and the internet and began communicating and writing online before most other rabbis.

He retired in 2018 from the Charles E. Smith Life Communities and continued to put his skills and expertise to use as a chaplain at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD. In recognition of his years of service, HUC-JIR awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1999, and the Jewish Theological Seminary did the same in 2001. He was very proud that his late father, George Michaels, a Democrat who represented a Republican district in the New York State Assembly, was the deciding vote to enshrine a woman's right to abortion in New York State. Assemblyman Michaels lost the next election but knew he did what was right.

He is survived by his wife, Karen (Markowitz); children, Marnin (Tetiana), Aaron (Limor), Dania (Stuart), Aliza (Gal), Etzion (Danielle); and ten grandchildren.

ז"ל רב ירדן שמואל בן אריה ואורה, ז"ל

הרב ירדן שמואל בן אריה ואורה, ז"ל

Born: November 17, 1935; Brooklyn, NY

Died: January 6, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד טבת כ"ה; Palm Springs, CA

A 1958 graduate of Columbia University with a BS in Jewish history, Rabbi Ofseyer also earned a BRE from JTS in that year. He became a cantor/rabbi before it was popular. He continued his education at JTS, completing an MHL and earning his diploma as a ḥazzan in 1959 by completing a BSm (Sacred Music). Rabbi Ofseyer was ordained as a rabbi in 1962. Upon ordination, he became the rabbi of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (known as BEKI) in New Haven, CT, where he served until 1969. Until 1978, he was the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Springfield, MA. During his early years in the rabbinate, he became involved in the civil rights movement and marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King in Georgia. He would remain involved in interfaith work for the rest of his career. He was quoted as saying, "MLK was the conscience of America and whether one agreed with him or not, there were many people that were activated to be aware of and to be concerned about the inequality that was the universe of discourse of America."

In addition to his synagogue duties, Rabbi Ofseyer was very involved in the general public, beginning with being one of the founders of the Ezra Academy (a Solomon Schechter school) in New Haven. He also served as president of the Greater New Haven Human Relations Council and was vice chair of the New Haven Equal Opportunity Commission.

In 1978, he became the rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in Dallas, which he served for 22 years, retiring in 1999 and being named emeritus. During those years and beyond, Rabbi Ofseyer appeared on many television programs, including being a regular panelist on *American Religious Town Hall*, a nationally televised weekly program on religious and social issues. From the early years of his rabbinic career, he began teaching at local

universities, including Albert Magnus College, Mt. Holyoke College, the University of Texas at Dallas, and Southern Methodist University.

Looking for new challenges, he accepted the position of rabbi at Temple Isaiah in Palm Springs, CA, serving the congregation for seven years. Intent upon retiring and taking advantage of traveling with his wife while serving as rabbi aboard cruise ships several times a year, Rabbi Ofseyer was approached by Congregation Beth Tzedec in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, to serve as rabbi as they searched for a new spiritual leader. What was intended to be a short commitment lasted three years. Then, upon returning to his Palm Springs area home, he was approached to temporarily lead a local Reform congregation as they sought a new rabbi, remaining with them for an additional one and a half years. Retirement proved hard to achieve.

He was the author of numerous publications, many of which appeared in Conservative movement publications. In 1974, he wrote, "Toward the Equality of Jewish Women" and in 1976, "Why Not Women as Conservative Rabbis," both published in the *United Synagogue Review*. His article, "A Jew at the Buckle of the Bible Belt," appeared in the 1983 RA Proceedings. He was very proud to be a strong advocate for women to be admitted to the Rabbinical Assembly and was proud to bring the issue squarely to the table at the RA Convention in his hometown of Dallas in 1984 (the issue was tabled that year and was brought off the table the following year when women were admitted).

He served on several RA committees, including the Executive Council (1981-1984) and the Nominations and Resolutions Committee, which he chaired in 1999. Rabbi Ofseyer was a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet of JTS, the National Rabbinic Cabinet of the UJA, and a fellow at the Center for World Thanksgiving (Dallas), among a host of other organizations. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1987.

He is survived by his wife, Veda; children Jeremy (Alex) Ofseyer, Adina (Alan) Florsheim, Elana Ofseyer, and Aaron (Ann Rosenbaum) Ofseyer; and six grandchildren.

ז"ל רבבי שילדון פנעס

הרב שמואל לייב בן ראובן וענע

Born: November 25, 1950; Los Angeles, CA

Died: December 28, 2024/תשפ"ה (ד' חנוכה) כ"ז טבת; Los Angeles, CA

A 1972 graduate of UCLA with a degree in Political Science, Rabbi Pennes was ordained from JTS in 1978, having begun rabbinical school at the University of Judaism (now AJU). The year he was ordained, Rabbi Pennes along with a group of California students, petitioned Chancellor Gerson Cohen not to deliver their senior sermons in the Seminary Synagogue since the synagogue was not egalitarian and JTS would not accept women into rabbinical school. They did not succeed in this endeavor but it was a bold statement and served as a building block to move the issue of women's ordination forward in the 1980s. Rabbi Pennes' year of study in Israel during rabbinical school cemented his life-long love of Israel, and it was there he met Wendy Silberman. They married in 1980.

He served his entire career in the greater Los Angeles area, except for some interim and part-time positions. Those included Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, Pensacola, FL, and Valparaiso, IN. Upon ordination, he became the rabbi of Temple Isaiah in Newport Beach, CA. In 1980, he and Wendy started a business called The Interior Motive which, among other items, sold baby furniture. He served part-time positions in Redlands, St. Luis Obispo, Modesto, and West Covina, all in California.

In 1992, he assumed the pulpit of Temple B'nai Emet in Montebello, CA, which he held for 31 years. He also taught classes at the Milken Jewish High School in addition to adult education classes throughout the Los Angeles area and religious school beginning in 1995 at Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills. His teaching skills were in such demand that he was a guest rabbi on occasion at Sinai Akiba Academy for special programs such as Rosh Hodesh and Shabbatonim.

While at B'nai Emet, he worked as a chaplain at Trinity Care Hospice, where he saw Jewish patients at the Christian institution. In 2001, he and Rabbi Carla Howard founded a Jewish hospice project in Los Angeles. It was unbelievable that a Jewish community as large as Los Angeles had not established a Jewish hospice. There had been an aborted attempt 15 years previously but the community was not yet ready. In an article in Los Angeles' [*Jewish Journal*](#), Rabbi Pennes is quoted as saying, "It's not a sexy topic." The Skirball Hospice opened in 2002. Rabbi Pennes served as director of patient care there and at the Jewish Home for the Aged in the San Fernando Valley. Until shortly before his death, he studied on Zoom with a few colleagues in a class taught by Rabbi Elliot Dorff.

In addition to the Rabbinical Assembly, he was a member of the Southwest region of the RA, the Los Angeles Board of Rabbis, and the Rabbinic Advisory and Religious Practices committees of the Milken Community High School. He served a term on the board of the Jewish National Fund in the Los Angeles area.

He is survived by his wife, Wendy; children, Alice (Sam Coturri), Charlie, and Sophie; granddaughter, Althea; sister Sharon Mendelovitz; and nephew Aaron Mendelovitz.

ז"ל, רבי משה פומרנץ

הרב משה חיים בן החזן גדליה וטובה, ז"ל

Born: March 21, 1934; Tel Aviv, Mandatory Palestine

Died: September 9, 2024/; ה' אלול תשפ"ד; Hartsdale, NY

Born to George (Gedalya) Pomerantz, a cantor and ritual director, and Jenny (Tova) Pomerantz, Rabbi Moshe Pomerantz was an accomplished violinist and composer from a young age, studying at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and later at Julliard in New York.

He earned his BA in 1954 from Johns Hopkins University, where he studied with the renowned archaeologist, Dr. William Foxwell Albright. Rabbi Pomerantz enjoyed working with youth and served as head counselor and director of many Jewish camps and youth programs. This involvement foreshadowed the energetic work in Jewish education throughout his rabbinic career, which extended to his development of interfaith and community relations programs, including multiple radio and TV initiatives.

In 1958, he married Kay Kantor, who would become a noted Jewish educator, and upon his ordination from JTS in 1959, he assumed the pulpit of Beth Israel Community Center in Mexico City. While there, the couple was involved in establishing Congregation Bet El, the first Spanish-speaking Conservative congregation in Mexico.

In 1961, he became the Rabbi of Congregation Tifereth Israel in Lincoln, NE. While in Lincoln, he served as the Hillel counselor at the University of Nebraska while teaching Hebrew and lecturing on Judaism at Cotner College. He was proud to be selected as the Nebraska delegate to the National Religion and Race Conference.

In 1967, he became the spiritual leader of Temple Etz Chaim in Thousand Oaks, CA. In 1969, he accepted the rabbinic position at Herzl Conservative

Congregation (now Herzl Ner-Tamid) on Mercer Island, WA (suburban Seattle), where he remained until 1987. He grew the synagogue from 235 to 700 household units. While at Herzl, he and Kay were involved in the establishment of a Jewish studies department at the University of Washington, as well as the Jewish Education Council, where Kay served as executive director. They established a community teachers' institute, a high school of Jewish studies, and a citywide speakers bureau that brought numerous scholars and performers to Seattle, including Eli Wiesel and Chaim Potok. The congregation was co-owner of Camp Solomon Schechter (a Ramah-style camp), which operated as a summer camp and a year-round retreat center. Rabbi Pomerantz was deeply involved in programming and staff training at the camp and center.

In conjunction with Seattle's Jewish Family Service, Rabbi Pomerantz pioneered the Mitzvah Corps, an intensive program for volunteers who wanted to be involved in visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, and helping the needy. With the Mitzvah Corps programs, he led seminars for social workers and nursing staff to enhance their understanding of Jewish values and observance. This work led him to organize Seattle's first Jewish hospice care facility.

In 1987, he and Kay returned to the East Coast, where he became the rabbi of the Hillcrest Jewish Center. This was followed in 1990 by a 13-year tenure at the Mid-Chester Jewish Center in Yonkers, NY. At Mid-Chester, he built an adult education curriculum and hosted a weekly interfaith TV program "Your Neighbor Celebrates."

Rabbi Pomerantz retired in 2003. Following retirement, he enjoyed a summer position as rabbi of B'nai Israel in the Catskills of New York. In 2009, The Rabbi Moshe and Kay Pomerantz Prize in Congregational Education was established as an annual award for graduating students of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Rabbi Pomerantz authored numerous articles in publications including *The Jewish Spectator*, *The Seattle Times*, and *United Synagogue Review*, and his memoir *No Two the Same* contains anecdotes collected during his career.

In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1984. He left an indelible legacy on Conservative Judaism and on all whose lives he touched.

Rabbi Pomerantz is survived by his wife, Kay Kantor Pomerantz; children, Cantor Raquel Pomerantz Gershon, Cantor Alisa Pomerantz-Boro, Ari Pomerantz, and Joey Pomerantz; nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

ז"ל, רבי Samuel B. Press

הרב שלום בן מרדכי ופעסל, ז"ל

Born: June 6, 1936; Middletown, CT

Died: April 29, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד פסח תשפ"ד; Dayton, OH

Raised in Springfield, MA, Rabbi Press considered himself a student of Rabbi Isaac Klein and would quote his teachings throughout his rabbinate. In 1957, Rabbi Press earned a BA from Yeshiva College and an MHL from Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School. He was ordained at Yeshiva University in 1960. Upon ordination, he entered the United States Air Force as a chaplain, where he served as the "chief rabbi of Alaska" and was also stationed in Maine.

Rabbi Press' first pulpit was as assistant rabbi at the Agudas Achim Synagogue in Hartford, CT, an Orthodox synagogue. After two years he became the rabbi of the Oyster Bay Jewish Center on Long Island, a Conservative synagogue. He was admitted to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1967. He never missed an RA Convention and you could count on Rabbi Press to add lively comments to the Ravnet forum.

While in Oyster Bay, he served as president of the Long Island region of the Rabbinical Assembly and was a member of the board of trustees at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Long Island. During that time, he undertook postgraduate training in pastoral care and earned a certificate in guidance and pastoral counseling from the New York State Family Counselor's Institute in 1974.

Rabbi Press served in Oyster Bay until 1978 when he assumed the pulpit of Beth Abraham Synagogue in Dayton, OH, where he served until his retirement in 2002. He steered the congregation to full egalitarianism in the 1980s. When he arrived, women could only have aliyot under certain circumstances.

While in Dayton, Rabbi Press also served the Dayton Jewish Community Center, Community Hebrew School, Hillel Academy, and Jewish Family Services, and was the founder and president of the Dayton Synagogue Forum. As part of the Synagogue Forum, he organized *havurot* in the synagogue which combined with other *havurot* in Dayton for joint programming. He was revered as a Talmud teacher in Dayton, with students in his classes for decades. In the broader community, he was active in Jewish-Christian and Black-Jewish relations and served on the boards of Womanline and the Dayton Free Clinic. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1992.

He is survived by his son, Adam M. Press; and sister, Dr. Rosalyn Avigad.

ר"ל ריכרד קיט רוקלין
הרב ירחמיאל חיים בן מנדל צבי ופייגע, ז"ל

Born: December 15, 1938; Duluth, MN

Died: January 2, 2025/ה'תשפ"ה (ח' חנוכה) טבת ב' 5785; Boulder, CO

After graduating high school, Rabbi Rocklin spent two years at the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago (now the Spertus Institute) and returned to his home state to enter the University of Minnesota. He graduated with a BA in Philosophy in 1961, and while there served as president of both Hillel and his fraternity. He was ordained by JTS in 1966. While in rabbinical school, Rabbi Rocklin spent a year studying in Jerusalem, which cemented his love for Israel.

After ordination, he became spiritual leader of Sons of Israel in Nyack, NY, where he oversaw the dedication of its new building. During his tenure in Nyack, he was elected president of the Mayor's Special Advisory Council. In 1969, he served for an interim period as rabbi of Tifereth Israel Congregation in his hometown of Duluth.

In 1970, Rabbi Rocklin moved to Temple Israel in Charlotte, NC, where he served for 15 years. While in Charlotte, he studied at the University of North Carolina and earned an MA in Counseling, which he completed in 1982. During his tenure at Temple Israel, Rabbi Rocklin served as president of the Greater Carolina Association of Rabbis (sponsors of the famous Wildacres Retreat) and president of the UJA Rabbinic Council of the Southeast region.

In 1985, he became the founding rabbi of the Lake Worth Jewish Center in Palm Beach County, FL, shortly thereafter renamed Temple Beth Tikvah. He remained in that position for the remainder of his career, retiring in 2005 and being named rabbi emeritus.

According to Rabbi Howard Shub, who worked with Rabbi Rocklin as his associate at Beth Tikvah and then succeeded him, Rabbi Rocklin was the consummate in *menschlichkeit*. He was a great orator and a well-sought-after speaker. He was also a terrific teacher; his classes on a wide variety of subjects were always packed. Rabbi Shub said that "he represented the best of what a rabbi is and the best of what a rabbi should be. No one could have asked for a better rabbi to work with." Rabbi Rocklin was also very humble and modest despite his erudition and oratory skills. He was also a people person and an excellent pastor. Even in retirement, he would keep in touch with congregants, often calling those who were ill or suffered a loss. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1992.

Rabbi Rocklin was also an avid animal lover and athlete. He adored his dog Yofi and took Yofi everywhere he went (actually, he had at least four dogs named Yofi!). He donated to every animal charity he could find. Once, he ran for 2000 days straight. After retirement, Rabbi Rocklin moved to Boulder to be closer to his family. He even became the *de facto* rabbi of his building, where he conducted services, delivered lectures, and led holiday celebrations. He was well-loved there.

He wrote a book of quotes. Some of the gems include:

The best brand of medicine is a kind word;
Your most meaningful exercise is to bend down and lift up another;
Memories occur in what you do for others; what you do for yourself fades like a passing shadow;
Your ego is a great thing to lose;
God created us with two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak;
Life and death are in the hands of God. The in-between parts are up to you;
and

You may not hear your eulogy, but you'll surely write it by the way you live.

He is survived by his daughters, Avi (David), Tamar (Hans), and Shira (Mike); six grandchildren, Talia, Zach, Anna, Ben, Sam, and Jack, by his three "step" grandchildren, Danya (Liam), Laurel and Joshua and by his two "de-facto" daughters, Adina and Julia (Matt).

ז"ל רבי ג'רי רוזנברג, ז"ל

הרב ג'רישון בן בנימין, ז"ל

Born: April 1, 1938; Chicago, IL

Died: December 21, 2023/ט' טבת תשפ"ד; Chicago, IL

Rabbi Rosenberg was raised at Congregation Rodfei Zedek on the south side of Chicago. He was an early camper at Ramah Wisconsin and worked on the staff for many decades. After ordination from JTS, he began his career. In 1961, he married Renee Lifchez. He served as a chaplain in the US Army, stationed first in Ft. Benning, GA, and he then did a tour of duty in Vietnam. Rabbi Rosenberg returned to the Chicago area to become the founding rabbi at Congregation Beth Shalom, in Northbrook, where he served from 1967 to 1978. When he left Beth Shalom, many of his congregants started Congregation B'nai Israel, which he led from 1980 until 2018.

What he most enjoyed about congregational life was ministering to people in need. He volunteered in the cardiac waiting room of Northwestern Hospital to minister to families concerned about their loved ones. He also taught at Park Plaza, a Jewish assisted living community in Chicago. He was adventurous, loved to learn, and looked for any reason to go to Israel.

Rabbi Rosenberg raised money for various Jewish charities. He built shuls (including one in Alaska), led a *gemach*, and helped multiple schools.

He enjoyed seeing his friends from the early days at Camp Ramah and was thrilled when his grandchildren became third-generation campers at Ramah Wisconsin.

He is survived by his wife, Renee; children; Melissa (Richard, z"l) Drazner; Nancy (David) Given, and grandchildren, Abigail, Jeremy, and Hannah.

רבי מילטון ב. רוב, ז"ל

הרב משה דוב בן ישראל דוד ושרה לאה, ז"ל

Born: June 18, 1925; Sighet, Romania

Died: August 14, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; Cleveland, OH

After immigrating to the United States as an infant with his parents, Rabbi Rube studied at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin in New York. He graduated from Brooklyn College with a BS in Physics and was ordained in 1952 at JTS, receiving the seminary's highest award, Talmudic Scholar. He later earned a PhD from JTS as well. After ordination, he served as a civilian chaplain in Richmond, CA, and as rabbi at the Richmond Jewish Community Center. After a year in California, he became the assistant rabbi at Temple on the Heights (now B'nai Jeshurun) in Cleveland as the rabbi of the Young People's Congregation. He met his wife, Bernice, during his first stint in Cleveland, and they were married in 1954. He detoured from Cleveland for a few years, serving B'nai Abraham in Butler, PA from 1955 to 1957 and then Temple Adath Israel in Evansville, IN. He returned to Temple on the Heights in 1960 and stayed in Cleveland for the rest of his life. In 1975, he formed Congregation Bethaynu, from which he retired as rabbi emeritus in 2001.

Throughout his rabbinate, Rabbi Rube was known as an educator par excellence. In 1975, he published *The Passover Seder – A Family Affair*, making his educational expertise available widely. In the days when many rabbis were very formal on the pulpit, Rabbi Rube would always come down from the pulpit to engage the children. He was very popular as the rabbi of the Young People's Congregation, where the youth would flock to his services and stay local to him as they became adults. He was also a proficient scholar who was fluent in many languages, including ancient languages, and he was a serious athlete, the only rabbi playing on a basketball team in his day in Cleveland.

Rabbi Rube was involved in many interfaith activities and as a result, he delivered prayers and invocations for many dignitaries, including popes and US presidents. He was one of the first rabbis to become involved with AIPAC and encouraged his congregants to support Israel through that organization. He served a term as president of the Cleveland chapter of the ZOA. After Bethaynu merged with B'nai Jeshurun in 2021, he was named rabbi-in-residence at the Park Synagogue. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1977.

He is survived by his children, Teri (Curt) Hochberg, Miriam (Rafael LaTorre), Joel, and Steven (Laura) Rube; grandchildren, Sara (Scott) King, Douglas Hochberg, Jared, and Kady Rube, Jacob and Reuben Latorre and Isaac and Farrah Rube; and great-grandchildren, Zayde, Grayson, Chase, and Hayden King. His wife, Bernice, died earlier this year.

Rabbi Andrew Sacks, ז"ל

הרב אברהם מיכאל בן יצחק צבי וחיה לאה, ז"ל

Born: March 23, 1954; Philadelphia, PA

Died: June 28, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; כ"ב סיון תשפ"ד; Jerusalem, Israel

A 1975 graduate of Muhlenberg College with a bachelor's degree, Rabbi Sacks was also a graduate of the Akiba Hebrew Academy in Philadelphia (now Jack M. Barack Hebrew Academy). He was ordained from JTS in 1980 and then spent two years at the Jewish Community Center of Spray Beach on Long Beach Island, NJ. After those two years, he assumed the pulpit of Beth Am Israel in suburban Philadelphia. While in the pulpit, he was also a substitute teacher at his alma mater, Akiba, and coached its running team. There are several colleagues in the RA today who were students of Rabbi Sacks both in the classroom and on the running track, and his other students include Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro.

In 1987, he followed his passion and made aliyah. After having studied to be a *mohel* with Rabbi Morris Shoulson in the United States, he studied further in Jerusalem under the chief rabbinate and used those skills all over the world to bring Jews into the covenant. Rabbi Sacks traveled the world to serve far-flung communities, performing many *beritot* for the Abudaya community in Uganda. However, he was not permitted to practice at Hadassah Hospital because he was not Orthodox. Both the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel advocated for his request to practice at Hadassah Hospital, but Hadassah refused to go to bat for Rabbi Sacks and accused the Reform and Conservative movements of ideological bullying (*JTA Bulletin*, August 4, 1989).

Rabbi Sacks stood up fiercely for religious pluralism in Israel. Once, on an RA mission in 1996, the rabbis joined with a UJA mission where Ehud Olmert, then Mayor of Jerusalem, spoke. Rabbi Sacks made a strong comment at the gathering attacking Mayor Olmert for not showing courage

and thereby disenfranchising Conservative and Reform Jews. The lay leadership of UJA was not pleased, as the RA had been invited to join this gathering. Rabbi Sacks, however, stood his ground, maintaining that Israeli officials needed to hear strongly from the American Jewish community. He never shied away from his principles. An obituary written by Rob Charry (*JTA Bulletin*, July 2, 2024) aptly referred to Rabbi Sacks as a "rabble-rouser."

Eventually, Rabbi Sacks became the executive director of the RA's Israel region, serving Masorti for a total of 28 years. His term began in 1984 and he retired only two years ago, when illness no longer enabled him to work. He cared deeply about our colleagues, offering support to those struggling personally or professionally, as well as strengthening the lifecycle services offered by the Masorti movement. But his greatest passion was reflected in the countless hours he spent ensuring those who converted with a proper Conservative/Masorti *bet din* would be able to make aliyah under the Law of Return. He vetted every signature on every *teudat gerut*. This was no small task, especially because many of those signatories were no longer alive.

Although he was serious about his advocacy, Rabbi Sacks had a great sense of humor. Often you did not know if you were getting a straight answer from him or if he was kidding around. He was very hospitable and was always happy to feed guests and visitors, making a meal from his well-stocked refrigerator. Evenings for him began at 11 pm and went from there. In the early days of egalitarian Judaism in Israel, he regaled in taking visitors to the Leader minyan, a precursor to the partnership minyan, with its more than four-hour-long davening every *Shabbat Mevarkhim*. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 2006.

He also served as overflow rabbi in the United States in several congregations, including at Temple Beth Shalom in Manalapan, NJ, which was led by his dear friend and cousin, Rabbi Ira Rothstein, and at Beth El and Kol Shalom in the DC suburbs, synagogues headed by his childhood friend

from Solomon Schechter and Akiba, our colleague, Rabbi Jonathan Maltzman.

Always advocating for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, he put his beliefs into practice with the "adoption" of Anas, a Palestinian teenager at the time, now 38, who lives and works in Stockholm.

He is survived by his brothers, Steve, Barry, David, and Eric.

ז"ל רבי משה סמבר, ז"ל

הרב משה בן יצחק ופייגע, ז"ל

Born: January 14, 1928; Brooklyn, NY

Died: October 4, 2024/תשפ"ה (ב' ראש השנה) ; Silver Spring, MD

A 1948 honors graduate of City College of New York with a BSS in Philosophy, Rabbi Samber also earned a BHL from JTS in that same year and was ordained in 1952. While in rabbinical school and in the following year, he was director of LTF (the Leadership Training Fellowship at JTS). In 1953, he entered the US Army and was stationed in Ft. Bragg, NC and then in Seoul, Korea. After his return from the army, he resumed his position as director of LTF while teaching at the seminary's College of Jewish Studies and serving as director of Camp Ramah New England (he later also served as director of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires). Rabbi Samber served on the LTF Committee of the RA so that his expertise could be shared with colleagues and no doubt also to help raise funds to sustain this jewel in the crown program of the Conservative movement.

In 1961, he assumed the position of spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Plainfield, NJ. He remained until his retirement in 1998 when the synagogue closed and merged with Beth Israel in Scotch Plains, where he was named rabbi emeritus. He married Alisa Kornfeld, the daughter of Cantor Isaac and Ruth Kornfeld, in 1963.

In 1984, the Rabbinical Assembly appointed him to the Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy of the Jewish Welfare Board. In his letter to Rabbi Samber, the commission's director, Rabbi David Lapp, wrote that "we feel justifiably proud of the fact that so many of our members of the Commission are former chaplains." Over the years, he served the RA in many capacities, including as a member of the 1963 Convention Committee, the RA Executive Council from 1970 to 1972, and as a member of the Joint Placement

Commission during those same years. He was also the spiritual advisor to the Northern New Jersey Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs.

Rabbi Samber was a member of the Education and Constitution committees of the Association of Religious Organizations of the Plainfield area. He served on the Plainfield Human Relations Commission and chaired the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Community Council of the Plainfields. His real passion was the Hebrew language and Hebrew literature. He relished the opportunity to speak with anyone about the latest Israeli novel or classic writers like Agnon and Tchernikovsky. He was very proud that he and his grandson, Ethan, finished the study of Pirkei Avot, begun in person and then completed on Zoom during the pandemic. In his eulogy, his grandson Gil wrote: "I took US history last year, and with him having lived 96 years of it, it was always interesting to think about how he was around for a good deal of important things, as well as have him tell me about them...until very recently, he could still tell stories of his chaplain days in great detail, like his orchestrating of the massive Pesah seder for hundreds of soldiers."

In retirement, the Sambers moved to the Washington, DC suburbs to be closer to their daughter, Sharon, and Rabbi Samber became the "unofficial rabbi" of Leisure World (an over-55 community), where he led services and taught many classes. Until his last years, he also gave informal *divrei Torah* at the Traditional Egalitarian Minyan at Adas Israel Congregation, where his daughter's family are members. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1977.

He is survived by his wife, Alisa; children, Josh, Dan, and Sharon (Michael Leifman); and grandsons, Ethan and Gil Leifman.

Rabbi Erwin Schild, ז"ל

הרב ברוך אריה בן נפתלי והעטל, ז"ל

Born: March 9, 1920; Cologne, Germany

Died: January 6, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Rabbi Erwin Schild had a front-row seat for the pivotal events of the last century of Jewish history, passing away just a few months before his 104th birthday. Born in Cologne (Köln-Mühlheim) into an observant family who ran a local shoe store, he completed high school during challenging times. Afterward, he studied in yeshivah in Würzburg until the events of Kristallnacht. He recalled the men who burst into the dormitory, carrying axes and shovels and going on to destroy furniture and smashing windows and mirrors. Books and *sifrei Torah* were tossed into a bonfire outside, after which he and other students were arrested and sent to Dachau.

In an interview with the *Canadian Jewish News*, he reflected on his harrowing time there. "Dachau was daily torture, from the moment you were woken up out of the barrack." He was hungry and cold, forced to stand still for hours as the SS guards watched. "If you talked to your neighbors, they kicked you. If you fell, they kicked you again." Writing in *The Globe and Mail* in 2019, he said that his experience "ripened and forged me... That thing is naked fear – a fear I can never truly shake, born of a period of sheer terror." He made a vow: "if I should get out alive, I would never allow any future adversity to depress or defeat me." He lived his life with that attitude being foremost in his mind.

Somehow, his mother was able to obtain his release from Dachau, where his father had also been held. Rabbi Schild left Germany on the condition that he leave quickly, moving briefly to the Netherlands and then to London, where he continued his studies. Unfortunately, when Britain entered WWII a year later, non-citizen German and Austrian men were rounded up, as they were

considered security risks. A year and a half after leaving Dachau, he found himself behind barbed wire again.

After being detained for several weeks, Rabbi Schild, along with other Germans, was sent to Canada to be interred there. On July 15, 1940, the ship docked in Quebec City, after which armed soldiers sent them to a camp in Trois-Rivières. In addition to the yeshivah students, German prisoners of war were also held at the camp. They taunted the Jews until officials were convinced to separate the two groups with a barbed wire fence.

Canadian military officials refused to consider the students as refugees, and as enemy aliens, they were held in Quebec, then New Brunswick, and then again in Quebec. After a year, they were finally reclassified as internal refugees, and a year later, in February 1942, Rabbi Schild was allowed to leave the camp, finally becoming truly free. His release was aided by the efforts of the Canadian Jewish Congress and Rabbi Abraham Price of Toronto's Yeshiva Torath Chaim, where he eventually received *semikhah*. He also continued his studies at the University of Toronto, receiving his BA and an MA in Semitic Languages and Literature.

He married Laura (nee Saxe) on December 31, 1944. In 1947, Rabbi Schild assumed the pulpit of the First Roumanian Hebrew Congregation Adath Israel, the only congregation with which he would be associated. He was there for a total of 77 years. That same year was also important for him because of the UN's vote on behalf of partition for what would become the State of Israel, one of the highlights of his life. He, along with Laura, led many congregational trips to Israel, in addition to personal journeys there. For him, Israel would become a pivotal foundation for his rabbinate and his entire life.

He retired from Adath Israel in 1989 and continued as its rabbi emeritus until his passing. His initial salary was \$1500 (CDN) and he helped to grow the congregation from its initial 150 families to 1900 at its height. He also was instrumental in moving the congregation to the then 'suburbs' of Toronto

(near Bathurst and Wilson) in the late 1950s, changing its name to Adath Israel and officially becoming affiliated with the Conservative movement.

In spite of all he had endured, he became instrumental in advocating for better relations between Jews and non-Jews, especially through the efforts of the Christian Jewish Dialogue of Toronto (CJDT). He spoke out forcefully against antisemitism and for an improved understanding of the Shoah in Germany, making several trips there and sharing his experiences with Germans. He refused to turn his back on Germany in spite of his experiences there (both of his parents were killed during the Shoah) and for this work, he received the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in the year 2000. In 2001, he was awarded the Order of Canada, Canada's highest civilian honor, for his work on interfaith issues throughout the years. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1975.

On March 6, 2016, Rabbi Schild and his wife, Laura, received a unique honor, a papal blessing, for their 70th wedding anniversary in 2014. The blessing is usually given to members of the Catholic Church on the occasion of baptisms, weddings, and anniversaries and is rarely given to non-Catholics. However, given his efforts on behalf of building interfaith relationships throughout his lengthy career, this blessing was given to them at Adath Israel by the then Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto. The couple was presented with a handwritten scroll, marking the special occasion, which included a photo of Pope Francis and his seal.

During his years of retirement, he authored four books: *The World Through My Window* (1992), *The Very Narrow Bridge* (2001), *And Miles to Go Before I Sleep* (2009), and *The Crazy Angel* (2017). Each chronicled his extraordinary life, both on a personal level and in the context of world events.

His passing leaves a great void, not just for his family, but for the many whose lives he touched in his long and storied career. Never bitter over the

indignities he suffered during the Shoah and in his confinement in Canada, he was able to make important contributions in so many varied ways.

Rabbi Schild is survived by his children, Daniel Schild, Dr. Judith Weinroth (Rabbi Moshe Meirovich), and Naomi (Avraham) Weitz; 12 grandchildren and numerous great and great-great-grandchildren. His wife, Laura, died in 2017.

This biography was prepared by Rabbi David Seed, now retired from Adath Israel, who worked alongside Rabbi Schild for many years.

Rabbi Jack Shechter, ז"ל

הרב חיים יעקב בן יהודה אריה ופעשה, ז"ל

Born: June 7, 1931; Englewood, NJ

Died: October 23, 2024/תשפ"ה (הושענא רבה) כ"א תשרי (הושענא רבה); Thousand Oaks, CA

Born in New Jersey, Rabbi Shechter's family moved to Brooklyn when he was eight to be closer to his grandparents because of the illness of his father. Here he came under the influence of his *zaydeh* (grandfather), who molded Rabbi Shechter's early religious development. He studied at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin and was a 1953 graduate of Yeshiva University, where he also attended the Teachers Institute, earning a teacher's degree. He spent summers at Camp Massad and Camp Ramah, where he was in charge of the waiters. Because he was duty-bound to speak Ivrit and only Ivrit, he "devoured" the Massad dictionary. Over the course of six summers there, Rabbi Shechter made the self-discovery that he enjoyed organization and supervision – skills put to extraordinary use in his career.

After graduating from Yeshiva University, Rabbi Shechter became a "clandestine" student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, quietly enlisting a trusted friend to bring him the registration papers. He was considered a renegade for attending JTS, but its appeal was insurmountable. A special bonus of being a student there was the mentorship of Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel. Rabbi Shechter was ordained in 1957 and in that year, he married Leah – they were *reyim ahuvim* for 67 years.

He fully embraced Conservative Judaism. An incoming student who saw Rabbi Shechter all over the campus involved in everything believed that "Shechter Seminary" was named for Jack Shechter!

After a two-year stint in the US Army as a first lieutenant stationed at Ft. Chafee, AR, Rabbi Shechter served a small congregation in Warren, OH for two years, and in 1961 was named director of the New England region of the United Synagogue. He was responsible for thirty congregations and tasked

with convincing unaffiliated synagogues to join. After five years, another twenty congregations had joined. His major contribution was establishing a "Torah Corps" where rabbis, cantors, and educators would visit less well-established synagogues for a weekend to share their expertise and advise on projects and programs.

In 1966, Congregation B'nai Israel in Pittsburgh was looking for a rabbi. After several interviews, one hurdle remained: the board wanted the rabbi and Leah to join the *b'nai mitzvah* families at their receptions, but this would have required them to leave their young children at home. He could not agree to this. The board decided to withdraw their request. Family won out!

In the early years, Rabbi Shechter wrote an essay entitled "On Revitalizing a Synagogue: A Blueprint." The board approved it and agreed to finance most of it. While at B'nai Israel, he innovated programs to build community that included starting a preschool, establishing a young adult congregation for a greater role in synagogue life, and designating a youth lounge for teens to gather on weekday evenings. He established a tri-state Youth Commission and hired a director to encourage communication and interaction among the chapters and to oversee and organize conclaves and basketball leagues, and he ended up chairing the Commission himself! Rabbi Shechter prepared a Shabbat booklet to guide home celebrations that was requested by other congregations. He innovated an annual "Mother's Day Out - Always on Tuesday." The day was divided into various study classes, a mid-morning lecture by Leah, lunch, and leisure activities. The children were bussed from their school, fed lunch at the synagogue, and then transported back to school. Within congregational life, Leah served as a fine role model. She was a master teacher and lecturer every year in the Mother's Day Out program. Years later, he paid tribute to his wife by collecting and editing a book of her essays and poems entitled *A Persona Worth Knowing*.

In 1975, Rabbi Shechter chaired the international Rabbinical Assembly convention. The convention featured lunch-and-learn seminars (which continued for two decades until the convention stopped meeting at the

Concord), a *shuk* with exhibitors, opportunities for personal consultation on career matters, and professional concerts and entertainment for our colleagues. The convention featured a presentation by Elie Wiesel.

In 1981, Rabbi Shechter was awarded a PhD in Religion from the University of Pittsburgh. Leah assisted him with research and edited the final draft. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1982.

At the end of a decade of service to B'nai Israel, he was invited to come to the University of Judaism (now the American Jewish University) to become Dean of Continuing Education and Community Outreach. It was in this position that our colleagues knew him best and the Jewish world benefitted from his many talents. At the UJ, Rabbi Shechter instituted an Introduction to Judaism program for those seeking to convert, a program he supervised for many years. He also built a Conservative *mikveh*, one of the first in the world, that other Conservative institutions have replicated. He established a High Holiday sermon seminar for rabbis, attracting the best preachers in the rabbinate to teach and share their wisdom. In the spring of 1985, his department introduced a pioneering venture – a Jewish Elderhostel Program. Over the years, 20,000 people were exposed to a broad range of topics including archaeology, biblical studies, Jewish history and literature, Israel, and Jewish thought.

Rabbi Shechter retired from the UJ in 2000 after twenty-three years of service. He was appointed as Dean of the Rabbinical School at the Academy of Jewish Religion and for two years served to restructure and revise the curriculum as well as hire staff. He was a stalwart member of Temple Etz Chaim in Thousand Oaks, CA where Rabbi Richard Spiegel invited Rabbi Shechter to teach and preach.

He authored six books: *The Land of Israel: Its Theological Dimensions*, *In Search of Religiosity in Religion*, *Journey of a Rabbi Volumes I and II*, *Personal Encounters*, and *Monotheism: Unfolded in Historic Time*. During this time, he also now had time to explore his artistic side. He created many

unique pieces of Judaica from found objects which he transformed into *mezuzot*, spice boxes, candlestick sets, and other items, many of which adorn his home.

He is survived by his wife, Leah; children, Reuven (Debbie), David (Alane), and Judah (Amanda); grandchildren, Rebecca (Nissi), Rachel, Eric, Jenna, Aidan, Chana (Steven), Jeremy (Orly) and Michal; and four great-grandchildren.

This biography of Rabbi Shechter was prepared by his wife, Leah, and edited for length by the Rabbinical Assembly.

ז"ל רבי אלברט תהלר, ז"ל **הרב אהרן בן דוד אליהו וקרעסל, ז"ל**

Born: July 5, 1932; New York, NY

Died: April 18, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד; Queens, NY

After beginning his education in public school, Rabbi Thaler began attending Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva (RJJ) in the 6th grade, and he would go on to receive *semikhah* from that institution. He was working as the rabbi of The Queensboro Hill Jewish Center when he decided he wanted a more modern understanding of Judaism, and so he enrolled in the rabbinic program at JTS. He received his MHL and ordination in 1962. He continued to build Queensboro Hill into a thriving synagogue with a large Hebrew school, an active youth program, family programs, and classes.

In 1980, Rabbi Thaler assumed the pulpit at Temple Gates of Prayer (TGP), one of the leading Conservative synagogues in Queens. He remained the rabbi there for 37 years and was granted the position of rabbi emeritus in 2017. During his tenure, he had a robust adult *b'nai mitzvah* program while continuing to create other cutting-edge programs and experiences for his community. One of those was anticipating the Taglit-Birthright program through his creative use of a fund dedicated to Israel education at the synagogue. He proposed to his board that a wonderful use of this fund would be to allow any member of the synagogue to bring their children or grandchildren on a synagogue family trip to Israel for free. Once the board agreed to this, every family trip TGP took to Israel was completely full.

חנך לנער על פי דרכו גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנו

Train a young person on the way they ought to go; they will not depart from it even in old age. (משלי/Proverbs 22:6)

After taking a Ramah Family mission to Israel, Rabbi Thaler was invited in 1970 by Rabbi David Mogilner, National Ramah Director, to assume the

directorship of the newly forming Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, New York. During his first summer in Nyack, there were about 80 campers registered for the camp. Within a few years, the camper population had grown to over 600 campers and 200 staff members. Yet, what was created by Rabbi Thaler at Ramah Nyack was more than a successful day camp. It was a new model for informal Jewish education.

Prior to this, day camps had to rely on local staff to fill their ranks. This is particularly challenging for a Jewish educational day camp, as on top of the usual counselors and group leaders, an entire education staff is necessary. Since there were already living quarters on the grounds of the camp, Camp Ramah in Nyack solved this problem by having the staff live at the camp while the campers commuted each day. This enabled him to recruit a multi-talented international staff, including many rabbinical students, families, and a sizable *mishlahat* from Israel.

Yet there was another important aspect to Camp Ramah in Nyack. The staff who lived at the camp also required programming when the campers were not present. This was particularly true on Shabbat, where the staff could be inspired by beautiful Ramah *tefillot*, *zemirot*, and study. Of course, spending Shabbat afternoon "by the pool" was also a wonderful part of the experience!

As Rabbi Thaler himself wrote in *Ramah at 60*, "During my 27 years as director I felt that our work with the staff was as important, if not more important than our work with the children, for they too were 'our children.'" Thousands of children and staff were "trained" by Rabbi Thaler, and to this day their experience at Camp Ramah in Nyack remains the most significant Jewish experience of their lives.

Rabbi Thaler married his wife Shirley (who ran the Nyack summer office and was the Ramah Israel Seminar administrator for many years) in 1954. She died in 2018. Together they were incredibly proud that all three of their children became Jewish educators and married Jewish educators. Those children were our colleague Rabbi Richard Thaler, ר"ז (died in 1997), Judy, a kindergarten teacher, and Dena, a curriculum developer in Israel. They all

followed in their father's footsteps. His late son Rabbi Thaler's wife Julie also teaches kindergarten, Judy's husband is our colleague Rabbi Steven Kane, and Dena's husband, Steve Israel, is a well-known educator in Israel. Rabbi Thaler and Shirley had nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, all of whom are involved in Jewish life, with six of them (and all three great-grandchildren) citizens of Israel.

One of our goals as rabbis is to touch people's lives and somehow make a difference in their relationship with Judaism. Few have accomplished this like Rabbi Albert Thaler, whether it be as a pulpit rabbi for 63 years or as the founding director and creative influence at Camp Ramah in Nyack for 27 years. Truly, his memory is for a blessing.

This biography was prepared by Rabbi Steven and Judy (Thaler) Kane.

ז"ל, רבי Carl Wolkin

הרב יקותיאל בן פינחס ורבקה, ז"ל

Born: December 27, 1946; Philadelphia, PA

Died: February 28, 2024/ד'תשפ"ד אדר א' תשפ"ד; Northbrook, IL

Born in Philadelphia and raised in Syracuse, NY, Rabbi Wolkin graduated from Columbia University in 1968 with a BA in Classics and was ordained at JTS in 1973. Shortly after graduation, he married Judy Rosenberg. As a senior student, he began his tenure at Temple Israel of Great Neck in Great Neck, NY, and upon ordination became assistant there to Rabbi Mordecai Waxman (the RA president from 1974 to 1976). In Great Neck, he was a beloved teacher in the famed Youth House at Temple Israel, where many rabbinical students had their first teaching experiences, mentored by Rabbi Wolkin. In 1980, he was called to the pulpit of Congregation Beth Shalom in Northbrook, IL (suburban Chicago), a position he held until his retirement in 2015, when he was named rabbi emeritus.

Rabbi Wolkin was an activist on behalf of Conservative/Masorti Judaism. He saw it as his mission to increase the level of observance in his community and piloted many programs to introduce the synagogue to the joys of increasing their level of *mitzvot*. He led scores of synagogue trips to Israel, as well as missions to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The community was always highlighting and promoting Masorti institutions and priorities. Rabbi Wolkin was involved in many organizations, including Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, Solomon Schechter Jewish Day School (where Judy taught fourth grade), and the Jewish United Fund (JUF). He had a deep attachment to the Shalom Hartman Institute, where he was a member of its first class of Rabbinic Fellows. Hartman enriched his study of Torah beyond measure.

Rabbi Wolkin served the Conservative Movement and Conservative Judaism in many capacities, going back to the early years of his rabbinate when he served on several convention committees. He served on the Placement

Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly, as president of the Chicago region of the RA, and was the founder of the community *mikveh* of the Conservative Movement in Chicago. He served as its president from its inception in 1998 until 2016. As his mentor Rabbi Waxman was a founder of the World Council of Conservative Judaism (now called Masorti Olami), Rabbi Wolkin followed in those footsteps and was the treasurer of Masorti Olami in later years. In 2014, he and Judy led a trip to explore the burgeoning Masorti communities in France. In the broader Jewish community, he was president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, of the Northbrook Clergy Association, and was on the JUF board. In recognition of his years of service, the Jewish Theological Seminary awarded him a Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, in 1998.

Upon retirement, his connection to Masorti Olami led him to serve as rabbi-in-residence of St. Albans Masorti Synagogue, outside of London. In April 2016, he received the Rabbi Mordecai Simon Memorial Award from the Chicago Board of Rabbis. He led high holiday services in 2015 and 2018 at his hometown synagogue, Temple Adath Yeshurun in Syracuse, and he served as its visiting rabbi in the spring of 2019, following the death of Rabbi Paul Drazen, and again in the spring of 2022. Rabbi Wolkin was also an avid runner and he could be found on very early morning runs at RA Conventions to be back in time for *shaharit*.

He is survived by his wife, Judy; sons, Joshua (Aurelia) and David (Keeli); and brothers, Jay and Milton Zelermyer.

Rabbinic Spouses

ז"ל, Johanna Bromberg,

Widow of Rabbi Kenneth Bromberg ז"ל, Grandmother of Rabbi Caleb Brommer

חנה בת משה ותרצה, ז"ל

ז"ל, Inge Gaffney,

Wife of David Gaffney

נחמה בת שמואל ומינדעל, ז"ל

ז"ל, Paul Hamburg,

Husband of Rabbi Mimi Weisel

פּלטיאל חיים בן דניאל דוב הלוי ולאה, ז"ל

ז"ל, Ruth Margolies,

Widow of Rabbi Morris Margolies, ז"ל

רבקה בת יהושע משה והינדא, ז"ל

Miriam May, ז"ל
Wife of Rabbi Shaye Cohen
מרים בת חיים וחנה, ז"ל

Bernice Rube, ז"ל
Wife of Rabbi Milton Rube, ז"ל
ברכה בת יצחק ופייגעלע, ז"ל

Judy Segal, ז"ל
Wife of Rabbi Benjy Segal
יהודית בת דוד וחנה, ז"ל

Judith Thall
Wife of Rabbi Sheldon Thall
חיה שבה בת בן ציון, ז"ל