

Greetings Received on the Occasion of Rabbi Wolf Leiter's Jubilee Year Celebration

RABBI SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, DD.

Rabbi Emeritus, Rodef Shalom Congregation

I take this opportunity to tell you how much Rabbi Leiter has meant to me in my thirty-seven years of residence in Pittsburgh. I do believe that Rabbi Leiter was the finest all-around rabbinic scholar that ever lived and worked in Pittsburgh. He has been an ornament to this community, an exemplar of that classic traditional knowledge which has maintained Judaism through the ages.

DR. RABBI LEO JUNG

"Every Inch a Prince"

The Jewish Center

"Half a century of scholastic, educational and social work in itself is a blessed achievement. Rabbi Wolf Leiter crowned it by genuine piety, a noble set of principles, the translation of the Torah's ideals into a concrete, consistent, and cheerful programme of leadership.

RABBI MENACHEM KASHER

President, Machon Torah-Shalaym Publications Jerusalem, Israel

"Rabbi Leiter is universally recognized and one of the very few great Torah authorities of our generation. Besides his vast scholarship Rabbi Leiter is a man of most noble character and highest integrity, beloved in all spheres of Jewish life."

RABBI PINCHAS M. TEITZ

President, Jewish Educational Alliance
F. Presidium Member, Union of Orthodox
Rabbis of United States and Canada
Elizabeth, New Jersey

"Rabbi Leiter is recognized throughout the Jewish world as one of the great Talmudic scholars of our generation. His brilliant works, the responsa 'Bais David,' 'Mitoroson Shel Rishonim,' and many others are considered classics of modern rabbinic literature. They have placed Rabbi Leiter in a class by himself.

RABBI DAVID S. SHAPIRO,

Chairman of the Orthodox
Rabbinates of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

It is a great privilege for me to extend greetings to my good friend, Rabbi Wolf Leiter, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday and his Jubilee Year. Already in his early years Rabbi Leiter achieved world renown as an exceptional master of Jewish Law, and his Responsa are an integral part of the Halachic Literature.

RABBI P. HIRSCHPRUNG

Chairman of the Rabbinates of Montreal, Canada

The great scholars of the past two generations have recognized and respected Rabbi Leiter as one of the authentic Torah giants of this century. . . Rabbi Leiter's prodigious Jewish learning is unique. We join the Jewish community of Pittsburgh in honoring this great man.

DR. HERMAN HAILPERIN

Rabbi Emeritus, Tree of Life Congregation

Rabbi Leiter, a distinguished scion of a distinguished family, not only inspired by example, but it is my intimate knowledge of all his mature years that he wielded a tremendous influence on younger men in the spiritual leadership of all our Jewish persuasions. During these fifty years, this noble Jewish leader has put into writing a record of genuine Jewish learning that will be significant for centuries to come."

DR. LOUIS FINKELSTEIN

Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary

"It is a joy to know that the whole community in Pittsburgh is uniting in the celebration of Rabbi Wolf Leiter's 50th year in the Rabbinates in the community. Rabbi Wolf Leiter is, of course, internationally known as one of the outstanding scholars of our time and has placed all Rabbinic scholarship greatly in his debt.

DR. JOSHUA HESCHEL

Professor, Jewish Mysticism and Philosophy Jewish Theological Seminary

"I have known Rabbi Wolf Leiter for thirty years and have always regarded him as one of the few great Rabbis of our time. His learning is both profound and prodigious, embracing nearly all fields of Jewish literature. His qualities of integrity, generosity, piety and wisdom have always evoked my high admiration. It is one of the privileges of my life to count him as a friend.

"In honoring this great man we honor God, we honor Torah, we honor Israel."

THE HONORABLE MILTON J. SHAPP

Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

"Your devotion and dedication to the field of Jewish learning and scholarship and embracing all facets of Jewish life are recognized nationally.

"As Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I respect and admire the efforts of those in our citizenry who bring honor and achievement to our State. . .



RABBI WOLF LEITER

Dean of Hebraic Law, Pittsburgh Rabbinates.

DR. YITZCHAK KISTER

Justice, The Supreme Court of Israel Jerusalem, Israel

"Rabbi Wolf Leiter is world acclaimed as a Torah scholar and I feel honored to be listed among the honorary sponsors on the occasion of his Jubilee Celebration.

"I would like to bring to your attention two of his responsa that are cited in the decisions of the Supreme Court and published in the Decisions of the Supreme Court, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 724-726."

DR. SAMUEL BELKIN

President, Yeshiva University

"It is a genuine pleasure to salute an esteemed sage in Israel, Rabbi Wolf Leiter who has served the Jewish community of Pittsburgh with devotion and dedication for the past fifty years.

"As a Torah scholar, Rabbi Leiter enjoys our respect and admiration."

DR. SAUL LIEBERMAN

Professor of Rabbinic Studies Jewish Theological Seminary

"It gave me great pleasure to hear that the Jewish Community of Pittsburgh is going to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Rabbi Leiter's Service as a Rabbi of that community.

"All Jewish scholars are greatly indebted to Rabbi Leiter for his immense contribution to Jewish learning. His learning and his personality put him in the foremost rank of our generation. 'This is the least I can say about this great Rabbi.' I consider it an honor and a privilege to be counted among the honorary sponsors of the Rabbi Wolf Leiter Jubilee Committee."

RICHARD S. SCHWEIKER

United States Senator

I wish to congratulate Rabbi Wolf Leiter, for the achievements of his long career in the field of Jewish legal scholarship and for his work as a spiritual leader of the Machiskei Hadas Congregation. His lifework has exemplified the finest scholarly tradition of the Jewish people as the "People of the Book."

HUGH SCOTT

United States Senator

My heartiest congratulations to you on your Golden Anniversary. Fifty years of service to your community is an important threshold on which to build continued religious growth and progress.

HONORARY SPONSORS OF THE

Wolf Leiter Jubilee Committee

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Herman Fineberg

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Dr. Sidney Spatz

A History Of Service

The word Rabbi is a generic term which, in English, lacks the sharper distinctions drawn in the Hebrew language. Thus, in Hebrew we speak of one who decides on questions of ritual or conduct as prescribed for Orthodox Jews as a Rav; of a rabbinic scholar recognized by other scholars as a legal authority whose decisions are binding, as a Gaon; of a scholarly genius possessing the broadest field of knowledge as a Gaon u-Boki; and so on. In English we designate them all as Rabbi. Rarely, on the other hand, can these titles be applied to any one person without indiscriminate exaggeration. Rabbi Wolf Leiter is beyond doubt an individual who may be and has been so addressed by all those honorifics by the leading Torah scholars of the past two generations. Rabbi Leiter, Chairman of the Council of Rabbis of Pittsburgh and Director of the Maimonides Institute of Jewish Studies, combines in himself the above mentioned qualities par excellence. Rabbi Leiter embodies a unique blend of Talmudic erudition and modern day scholarship. He is broadly versed in secular as well as rabbinic studies: His recall of world history is only surpassed by his more intimate knowledge of Jewish history; his eloquence as a speaker and a writer in Hebrew and English is matched by his being conversant in a dozen languages. But above all, he has achieved the distinction of being recognized as one of the greatest living authorities on Jewish legal jurisprudence of our time.

Rabbi Leiter's career as a Talmudic scholar had early beginnings. He was born in 1891 in the city of Zevalov, Austria-Hungary to Rabbi Nathan and Haya Etya Leiter, descendants of the most noted rabbinic families (Bach, Taz, Tosephot Yom Tov, Penei Yehoshua). His parents, ardent lovers of Zion, saw to it that their son's first spoken language was Hebrew, the language of the book. At the age of six he was already studying the Talmud and, at the tender age of eight, had written his first gloss (scholarly comment). At the age of twelve he completed his first work, *Dibhrey Hakhamim*, a collection of responsa (erudite replies rendering decisions on problems in Jewish law). Two other responsa written by him at the age of twelve were later published in the *Responsa Ma'aseh Yehiel*, No. 30, No. 47. His own queries on legal matters were discussed by some of the leading scholars of the day in their well known treatises. By the time Rabbi Leiter had reached the age of fourteen his reputation as a prodigy had ranged far and wide and legal questions from throughout the state of Galicia were addressed to him. In 1911, Rabbi Leiter became DAYAN (judge of legal questions) and associate Rabbi of Trembovle, Austria-Hungary.

At the outbreak of World War I Rabbi Leiter emigrated to the city of Amsterdam and shortly thereafter he was appointed Rabbi of the Eastern Jewish Community in Amsterdam. While there, he founded a Talmudic Torah School for refugee children and was director of the Dutch Relief work for war sufferers in Austria, sponsored by the Jewish communities of Netherlands. It was in Holland that Rabbi Leiter published *Die Stellung Der Frau In Talmud*. Written in German, this short scholarly monograph discussed the all-embracing question of the position of the woman in Jewish life according to the Talmud. It was Rabbi Leiter's view that there is a moral and spiritual imperative that the Jewish woman not be confined to and limited by the duties of the home alone, but should also have a broad Jewish education according to the capacities and interests of the particular woman. Professor Wensick, the eminent Dutch Orientalist of the day, characterized the work at that time as one of the most important scholarly contributions to the question of the semitic attitude towards woman. This short monograph was a prime factor giving ideological impetus to the founders of the now world famous Beth Jacob School for Girls.

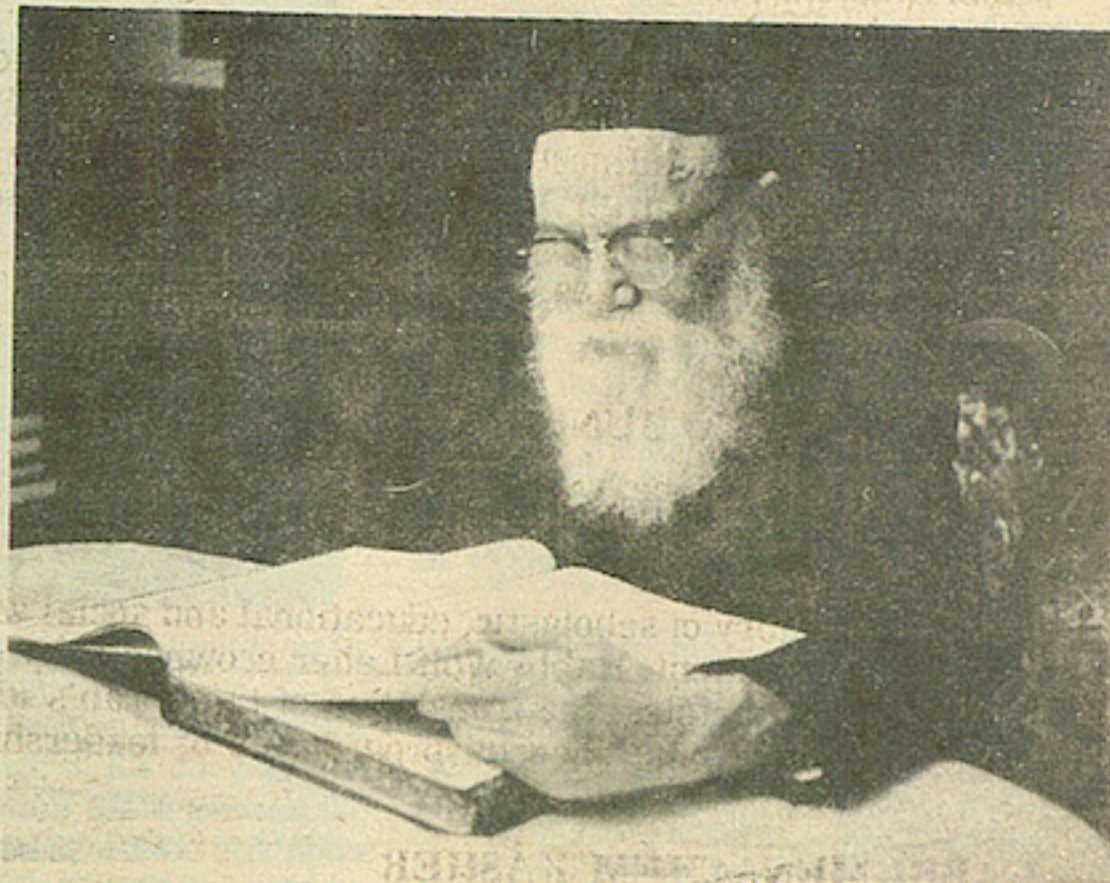
In 1920 and *Beth David* Vol. 1, a collection of Responsa by Rabbi Leiter was printed and in 1952 reissued together with Vol. 2. Over the years it has been quoted in over two hundred and fifty scholarly works and in thousands of responsa. It has served as the final word in the determination of many legal problems, as well as the basis for several decisions reached by the Israeli Supreme Court. Interestingly enough these decisions quoted by the Supreme Court were written by Rabbi Leiter at the age of 15½!! It has become a classic in the author's lifetime.

In 1920 he became a delegate to the United States on behalf of those European Rabbis displaced by the war. Shortly thereafter, he married Regina Goldberg, also a descendant of a great rabbinic family. Their marriage was blessed with four children David, Saul, Deborah, and Abba. In the same year, he accepted the pulpit of the Adath Yeshurun Congregation of Brooklyn.

In 1922, he was elected Rabbi of Congregation Machzike Hadath of Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh Rabbi Leiter became a well-known and highly respected figure. He was an active participant in the affairs of the Jewish community. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and also of the United Jewish Fund. He was a comrade of the Vaad HaPoel of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of America; honorary president of the Pittsburgh Mizrahi; and the Pittsburgh delegate to the Jewish World Congress of 1934. He served on the local Boards of the National Fund, The Jewish American Congress, The Committee to Aid Overseas Yeshivoth; and was an active member of all the aid and cultural organizations of the Pittsburgh community as well as of the national Jewish organizations throughout the country.

.. His unique accomplishments in Jewish learning and Torah scholarship have gained for him and for the city of Pittsburgh an honored and permanent place in the annals of Jewish literature and tradition. He has honored us, and in this, his Jubilee Year, we now honor and give homage to him. As Professor Heschel has so eloquently stated.

**"In Honoring This Great Man
We Honor G-D,
We Honor Torah,
We Honor Israel"**



.. Rabbi Leiter was instrumental in the Jewish community's decision to establish a kosher kitchen in the Montefiore Hospital. It was one of the first such facilities established in a large city hospital in America. For the past 35 years, Rabbi Leiter, in spirit of *Bikur Cholim* attending to the needs of the sick has supervised the kosher kitchen, giving of his time and energy and legal expertise. He also served as the Chaplain of the Western Pennsylvania Correctional System and of the city correctional system.

.. In 1941, with the aid of such communal leaders as Charles Rosenbloom, Julius Halpern, Dr. Maurice Taylor, Herman Fineberg, Dr. Solomon Freehof and Louis Caplan, Rabbi Leiter established the Maimonides Institute of Jewish Studies. Under its auspices, a whole series of important scholarly publications was issued. The first publication, the *Mitorotan Shel Rishonim*, was issued in 1946. It was from this book that extracts were taken and incorporated into a new edition of the Talmud. In having his notes printed alongside the text of the Talmud, Rabbi Leiter has acquired an honor of a singular nature. Indeed, Rabbi Leiter is the only one to be so honored in the past 130 years and joins the less than a score of prominent Rabbis who have achieved this distinction since the Talmud has been printed.

.. In the same year the *Sha'aray Teshubha*, a collection of responsa of the Geonic period with a comprehensive scholarly introduction by Rabbi Leiter, was published. In 1947, the code of Maimonides was published and included Rabbi Leiter's notes and commentary on *Hilkhot Melakhim* (laws of Kingship in Israel). In 1954, the *Responsa of Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi* in a scholarly edition with commentaries by Rabbi Leiter was published. In 1964, the Institute published the *Tzion Lenephesh Haya*, a collection of significant legal decisions of Rabbi Leiter and also some 30 legal essays of his father, Rabbi Nathan Leiter. This year permission has been given to the Weitzman Institute in Israel to place some of the material in this volume in its computer bank on Jewish legal jurisprudence.

.. Likewise, permission was granted to have reprinted in Israel the *RESPONSA OF RABBI ALFASI* and the *SHA'ARAY TESHUBHA*, edited by Rabbi Leiter.

.. In 1965, the Institute issued the *Shem Mishimon*, a Jubilee Volume honoring the memory of Rabbi M. S. Sivitz, who served as a Rabbi in the Pittsburgh Community for 48 years. It is a collection of heretofore unpublished manuscripts and letters of historic significance. It was edited by Rabbi Leiter's sons, Rabbi David and Rabbi Abba.

.. Aside from authoring many scholarly works, Rabbi Leiter has written memoirs of his experiences in Europe and the United States. This, alongside the rather large collection of his personal correspondence with the greats of Jewish scholarship and Torah of the 20th Century, undoubtedly has a significant historical value.

.. Rabbi Leiter has studied the Torah for over 75 years. His scholarly excellence and brilliance have placed him on a very exclusive plateau. Together with the most illustrious rabbinic scholars of the past two generations, he has stood as a titan astride the Talmud and all of its cognate literature. As Professor Saul Lieberman has so aptly commented, "His learning and his personality put him in the foremost rank of our generation. This is the least I can say about this great Rabbi. He has not however lived in the proverbial ivory tower, for his humanitarian qualities have manifested themselves in the everyday causes of life, and he has given of himself unstintingly in all areas of communal life.

.. Over and above his great abilities and accomplishments is his humility. He has loved the Torah an everlasting love, and has studied it for its own sake and not for the sake of personal greatness or to achieve fame in the public eye.