

# Rabbi Dr David Sherman Z"L

A tribute by Rabbi David Hoffman

When Rabbi David Sherman came to Cape Town 57 years ago, he was already an experienced and savvy Zionist leader, who had worked closely with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver. In appreciation for his good work, he was selected by Dr. Chaim Weizmann (later to become Israel's first President) to serve as Director of Community Relations for an 'American Jewish Conference', which aimed to promote greater Jewish unity and organizational effectiveness for the rapidly expanding and pluralistic American Jewish scene.

Having befriended Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler when both were students at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and leaders of its 'Hebrew Speaking Club', he discovered that a pioneering challenge awaited him in Cape Town and he took it. How fit he was for the position was soon vindicated when, under his leadership, and that of his rebbetzin, Bertha, the initially small congregation grew to thousands of souls.

It did not take him long to earn the respect of the Zionists within the community, and thereafter, every major religious leader in Cape Town - men like the Most Rev. Dean Ted King, Father Roger Hickley, Imam Rashied Omar and Rabbis Duschinsky, Rosen and Steinhorn sought his friendship, counsel and collaboration.

Rabbi Sherman's discreet, yet courageous stand for human rights during

the apartheid era saw him and his family speaking at protest meetings and receiving threats, as the Green Point Temple's Major Hall doubled as a centre for African culture, literacy and poverty alleviation projects. Together with Rabbi David Rosen and Dean King he was a founder of the Interfaith Forum, Cape Town's premier interfaith body, and he served as its chairman until just six months ago.

But above all, Rabbi David and Bertha Sherman were moral exemplars to all Cape Town, with a warm and loving family home open to young and old, rich and poor, black and white, Jew and gentile alike.

There are those who are saying that the passing of Rabbi Sherman is the end of an era. They are wrong: it is the beginning of a legacy. Not for nothing did Gerald Kleinman refer to Rabbi Sherman in one breath with the late Ian Sacks as two 'tzaddikim' in our Cape Jewish community.

On Tuesday, 11 June, 6pm at Temple Israel, Green Point, Shloshim will be marked and for all Capetonians the meaning of Rabbi Dr David Sherman's life more deeply acknowledged.

Although the sun of this spiritual giant has set, the spectacular brilliance of his life's beautiful, Cape sunset after-glow will continue to warm our hearts, brighten our lives and illumine our paths. *Zaycher Tzaddik Livracha*, the memory of Rabbi Dr David Sherman is a blessing ... forever.