

FINKELSTEIN,
DR. Louis

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Louis Finkelstein, 96, Leader of Conservative Jews

By ARI L. GOLDMAN

Dr. Louis Finkelstein, chancellor emeritus of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the dominant leader of Conservative Judaism in the 20th century, died yesterday at his home in Manhattan. He was 96 years old.

Dr. Finkelstein died after a long bout with Parkinson's disease, a spokesman for the seminary said.

Dr. Finkelstein, a prolific scholar, was the head of the seminary, the intellectual center of Conservative Judaism, from 1940 to 1972. It was a period of extraordinary growth within the movement, as thousands of Jews living in America's cities moved to the suburbs and joined and built Conservative synagogues.

In the postwar period, the Conservative movement emerged as the branch of Judaism with the largest number of synagogues and members. It steers a middle course between the two other movements, Reform and Orthodox, believing in being both faithful to Jewish tradition and adapting it to modern realities.

Seminary Flourished

During the years of Dr. Finkelstein's leadership, the seminary flourished, growing from a small rabbinical school and teacher training program to a major university of Judaism. Dr. Finkelstein also established the seminary's Cantor's Institute, the Seminary College of Jewish Music and a West Coast branch of the seminary that later became the University of Judaism.

Interfaith dialogue was among his major priorities. He established the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, which brought together Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish scholars for theological discussions. In 1986, the name of the institute was changed to the Finkelstein Institute in his honor.

Dr. Finkelstein's contacts went well beyond the religious community. He was an intimate of leading political and judicial figures and in 1957, invited Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court to spend a Sabbath at the seminary in the study of



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Dr. Louis Finkelstein

the Talmud, the Jewish library of law and custom.

Dr. Finkelstein served as the official Jewish representative to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's commission on peace, and in 1963 President John F. Kennedy sent him to Rome as part of an American delegation to the installation of Pope Paul VI. He also offered a prayer at the second inauguration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Dedicated Scholar

Even at his busiest, Dr. Finkelstein left time for scholarship. Friends said he rose every morning at 4 A.M. to study and write until he went to synagogue at 7 A.M. He was the author or editor of more than 100 books, both scholarly and popular.

His major scholarly pursuits were works on the Pharisees, a Jewish sect in second temple times from which modern Jewish tradition developed, and the Sifra, the oldest rabbinic commentary on the book of Leviticus, which was completed in Palestine in the fifth century.

Among his other works were "New Light from the Prophets," published in

1969, and "The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion," a three-volume work last published in 1971.

He was born into a rabbinic family in Cincinnati on June 14, 1895. He moved with his parents to Brooklyn as a youngster and graduated from the City College of New York in 1915. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1918 and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary the following year. He joined the seminary faculty in 1920 as an instructor in Talmud and went on to serve as an associate professor and professor of theology. He later became provost, president, chancellor and chancellor emeritus.

Even in his retirement he continued writing, working at the dining room table of his Riverside Drive apartment to complete several annotated volumes of the Sifra. When he became frail in his later years and had trouble walking to the synagogue, his former students turned his home into a synagogue on Saturday mornings, assembling the quorum of 10 needed for prayer.

Tolerant of Lapses

Dr. Finkelstein was exacting in his daily religious practice but was tolerant of others' lapses. "Judaism is very demanding," he said in an interview on his 90th birthday. "It demands of its people what other religions demand of those in religious orders. But because it demands so much, it never gets 100 percent. The fact that it gets any is remarkable."

"A rabbi today has his work cut out for him, but he should not despair if people do not do as much as they should," he said. "Every parent has that with children. God is merciful."

Dr. Finkelstein is survived by three children, Hadassah Davis of Providence, R.I., Rabbi Ezra Michael Finkelstein of Queens and Emunah Katzenstein of Jerusalem; 10 grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be 12:30 P.M. Sunday at the Jewish Theological Seminary, 3080 Broadway, at 122d Street.

OBITUARIES
Noah J. Finkelstein

NEW YORK — Word has been received here of the death last month of Noah J. Finkelstein, a former principal of Finkelstein & Sons, Woonsocket, R.I.-based manufacturer of rainwear and outerwear. Finkelstein, 80, died July 28 at his home in Woonsocket.

Finkelstein and his three brothers took over the family firm after their father Jacob's death in 1933 and, in the years that followed, established it as an innovative producer of men's rainwear, outerwear and sports-

wear. The company was one of the first in New England to integrate automation into its production systems.

A past president of the National Outerwear and Sportswear Association, as Noah Finkelstein served, retiring two years ago, when the firm was sold.

He is survived by his widow, the former Sadye Kibrik; two daughters, Ruth Ignatoff and Beth Fisch; a brother, Elliot; three sisters, Gertrude Adamoff, Thelma Miller and Sara, and eight grandchildren.

DAILY NEWS RECORD
 8/5/84

Finkelstein
 Noah

... D.C., to a comm... inflation. Also, president of the National and Sportswear Associa-...

Finkelstein was a member of the B'nai Israel Congregation and a corporator of The Woonsocket Hospital.

In 1955, the Woonsocket Lodge of B'nai B'rith honored Mr. Finkelstein at a testimonial, citing him for "dynamic leadership."

He was a member of the New...

... company em-... workers, and... free times to find... vast operations. In... moved into a four-... at 128 Singleton St.,

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... officiated at... Mrs. West-... grandchil-...

... Rabbi Sam... officiated at... graveside service... held yesterday in the B'nai Israel Cemetery, Mendon Road. He was assisted by Cantor Philip Macktaz.

Shiva will be private.

Funeral arrangements were under the direction of the Holt Funeral Home, 510 South Main St., and the Chevra Kaddisha.