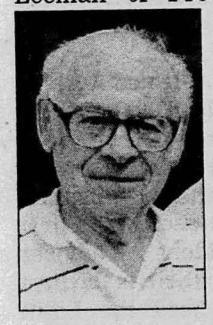
Leeman, Rabbi Saul
4/5/17

Rabbi Saul Leeman, 100

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Rabbi Saul Leeman of Providence, died on April 5.



He had been the longtime leader of the Cranston Jewish Center, later serving as rabbi at Temple Shalom in Medford, Mass. Always striving to share his love for Jewish scholarship, Leeman introduced Bible contests in all Rhode Island Hebrew schools and adult learning programs in the state's many synagogues.

He taught Judaica courses at Providence College and advanced Hebrew language at Brown University. He served two terms as president of the Rhode Island Board of Rabbis. His extensive pastoral activities included regular visits and engagement with mentally disabled residents of the former Ladd School in Exeter. In his retirement, he participated in Temple Emanu-El's adult education program.

Leeman had been married for 68 years to the late Dr. Elsie Leeman, a teacher of Greek and Latin, and later head of the English department, at Classical High School in Providence. He is survived by his children and their spouses, Deborah and Peter Robbins; Joel and Sara; and David and Ramona. His son Michael predeceased him. Seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren also survive him. He was brother to the late Rabbi Albert Leeman and the late Edith Kling.

Leeman was an avid player of handball, a game he learned in his youth in Brooklyn and continued to pursue for decades in Providence. As a gymnast, he participated in beach pyramids in his college years, and long thereafter would perform handstands, including, notably, on the back of a camel in the Sinai Desert. Leeman attended Yeshiva Etz Hayim in Borough Park, New York, where his lifelong love for Hebrew was instilled. He was a graduate of Brooklyn College and Yeshiva University's Teachers Institute. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he later earned a doctorate in Bible studies. He delighted in his role as a member of the translating committee of the Hebrew Bible (*Kethubim*) for the Jewish Publication Society.

Leeman participated in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965, and was actively involved in promoting understanding and cooperation with non-Jewish faith communities in Rhode Island. Before coming to Providence, Leeman helped found the Israel Community Center of Levittown, Long Island, a community of homes offered to World War II veterans. He had almost total recall not only of important Jewish texts, but of scores of anecdotes, a combination that made him a stimulating teacher and companion throughout his long life.

Donations in Rabbi Leeman's memory may be made to Temple Emanu-El, 99 Taft Ave., Providence 02906, or to Congregation Sha'arei Tefilla, 450 Elmgrove Ave., Providence 02906.