Rabbi Dr. Robert Samuels z"l

The legacy left by Rabbi Dr. Reuven Samuel was an exceptional blend of educational leadership, community involvement and Jewish values. Rabbi Samuel arrived in Israel with his wife Anette in the late 1950’s. At the time, he was studying to become a Reform rabbi. While studying at the Institute of Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with noted biblical scholar Professor Nechama Leibowitz, Rabbi Samuel fell in love with the scenic Israeli landscapes, cities and historic sites.

Rabbi Samuel returned to the United States to complete his rabbinic training and began to serve as a congregational rabbi, yet his passion for Israel never ceased.

In 1962 he made aliya with his young family, fulfilling his dream to live in the Land of Israel. He joined Rabbi Dr. Meir Elk, the founder and principal of the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, in laying the foundation to expand the small Leo Baeck high school from 150 students into a multidimensional complex for Jewish education.

As part of this mission, he founded the “Or Hadash” congregation in 1964, which launched the infrastructure of community life that integrates its educational system with a synagogue and a devout community, and therefore must be provided with all of their social and emotional needs – alongside the cultivation of human values of love and respect for others, and fostered relationships with Jewish communities in the United States. Rabbi Samuel introduced innovative programs in Jewish education, and established the establishment of community building culminated in 1979 with the establishment of the Jacob and Charlotte Lehrman Community Center.

In 1962, Rabbi Samuel was also a pioneering founder of Reform Judaism in Israel. He was among the founding members of the MaRaM (the Israel Council of Progressive Rabbis) in 1964, which became the basis for the Reform movement in Israel. Even after his retirement, Rabbi Samuel continued to contribute to the advancement of the community and educational and social projects. He held this position until 1998. In this capacity Rabbi Samuel introduced innovative programs in Jewish education, cultivating human values of love and respect for others, and fostered relationships with Jewish communities in the United States. Rabbi Samuel focused on community building culminated in 1979 with the establishment of the Jacob and Charlotte Lehrman Community Center.

It was during this period that Rabbi Samuel’s relationship with the University of Haifa began to develop. He audited courses at the Faculty of Education on the management of educational institutions. In 1974 he was appointed the second headmaster of the Leo Baeck Education Center and Community Center, a post he held until 1998. In this capacity Rabbi Samuel introduced innovative programs in Jewish education, cultivating human values of love and respect for others, and fostered relationships with Jewish communities in the United States. Rabbi Samuel focused on community building culminated in 1979 with the establishment of the Jacob and Charlotte Lehrman Community Center.

Rabbi Samuel was a leader of the Leo Baeck Board of Directors, and later assisted the educational youth village called “Kfar Galim,” of Haifa and greatly contributed to its educational and academic agenda. He was instrumental in bridging the Leo Baeck high school from 150 students into a multidimensional complex for Jewish education.

In 2002, Rabbi Samuel served as the Chairman of the Center for Jewish Education at the University of Haifa, the first Reform community in the Arava.

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Carmel Award of Merit

is awarded to

Rabbi Dr. Reuven Samuels

In recognition of his groundbreaking educational leadership integrating Zionist principles, community activism, democracy, and Judaism; for instilling generations of students and teachers with a strong moral foundation valuing community engagement, equality and human dignity; for his notable contributions to educational institutions and community organizations across Israel; and for his deep and longstanding friendship with the University of Haifa.

Conferred in Haifa, Israel
1 Sivan/ June 7, 2016

Prof. Alfred Tauber
Chairman of the Board of Governors

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