

+ TO RABBI BROOKS +

(On Becoming Rabbi Emeritus)

I have fond memories of that distant day
When first I clasped your hand and met your eye;
The twinkle and the impish smile,, the wit
And wisdom charmed me then, and let me know
In truth that here indeed I'd found a friend.
I wanted to explore the heritage of Israel,
The lore of language and the rich inheritance
Of truth, the fire of the Prophets and the studied
Ponderings of the sages. You gave me not only
An instructor in the grammar and the syntax
Of that ancient tongue, but a crefully inscribed
Tanakh that I have treasured through the years,
As I have made my way through Torah, Nevi'im
And Ketuvim.

I think you would have been at home with Rashi
In his yeshiva in the heart of France,
Or with Maimonides as he guided the perplexed
Through times difficult and painful. You would
Have surely delighted with the playful rivalry
Of wise Hillel and humane Shammai as they
Wrestled with the intricacies of halakah
And halakot in that far distant age when wisdom
Was the chief pursuit of those who had inherited
The legacy of Moses.

You wear your wisdom gently and it is softened
By a wit that sparkles playfully, as if you read
From some angelic score the music of man's days,
And bore a secret deep within your soul
That bursts its bonds at times and sheds its
Brightness all about.

I wish you well, dear friend, Rabbi Emeritus, indeed!
Teacher and Mentor. As now the evening of your days
Approaches, may you drink the vintaged wine
Stored up for you and know the joys of one
Who has drunk wisely and well, and now,
In the cool evening of your life, like Adam,
May you walk with God, and meanwhile
Grace us with your company and conversation
And give us cheer for our own little while.

Father Clifford Stevens