

RABBI LEVI A. OLAN

RABBI OF TEMPLE EMANU-EL, DALLAS, TEXAS, 1949-1970

Levi Arthur Olan was born March 22, 1903, in Cherkassy, Ukraine. He and his parents, Max and Bessie Leshinsky Olan, immigrated to the United States seeking to escape anti-Jewish violence, settling in Rochester, New York. Levi Olan attended the University of Rochester, Hebrew Union College, and the University of Cincinnati (B.A., 1925).

After being ordained in 1929 at Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Olan served Temple Emanu-El in Worcester, Massachusetts for twenty years, guiding the congregation through the Great Depression and World War II. From 1949 until his retirement in 1970, Levi Olan led Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas. His ministry in Dallas included a long-running series of radio broadcasts, *The Temple Emanu-El Program*.

For more than two decades, Rabbi Olan served as lecturer in Judaism at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, working out of an office at Bridwell Library. To honor Rabbi Olan's great love of books, friends, family members, and colleagues established the Levi A. Olan Collection of Fine Books at Bridwell Library in 1963. That same year Texas Governor John Connally appointed Olan to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas, a position he held until 1969.

As a theologian, Rabbi Olan was respected and prolific. His publications included *On the Nature of Man* (1948); *Rethinking the Liberal Faith* (1949); *Judaism and Modern Theology* (1956); *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Hebraic Spirit* (1956); *Judaism and Immortality* (1971); and *Prophetic Faith and the Secular Age* (1982). Olan served as president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis from 1967 to 1969.

An outspoken civil rights activist, Rabbi Olan has been called "The Conscience of the City [of Dallas]." In recognition of his many accomplishments, he received honorary degrees from Hebrew Union College, Southern Methodist University, and Austin College in Sherman, Texas. SMU's 1968 citation reads:

Distinguished religious leader, educator, humanitarian, he has extended the honored role of rabbi (Teacher) beyond the bounds of his congregation to include the whole Southwest region. As an eloquent preacher and lecturer, he has communicated the best of the Jewish heritage to a wide audience with great integrity and compassion. As a university regent and dedicated public servant, he has upheld the human cause in many crises and has won for himself our admiration and true affection. It is this rare combination of talent and devotion that we delight to recognize this day with the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.

Levi Olan married Sarita Messer on June 9, 1931, and the couple had three children (Elizabeth Hirsch, Frances Olan, and David Olan) and four grandchildren. Rabbi Olan died in Dallas October 17, 1984, at the age of 81.

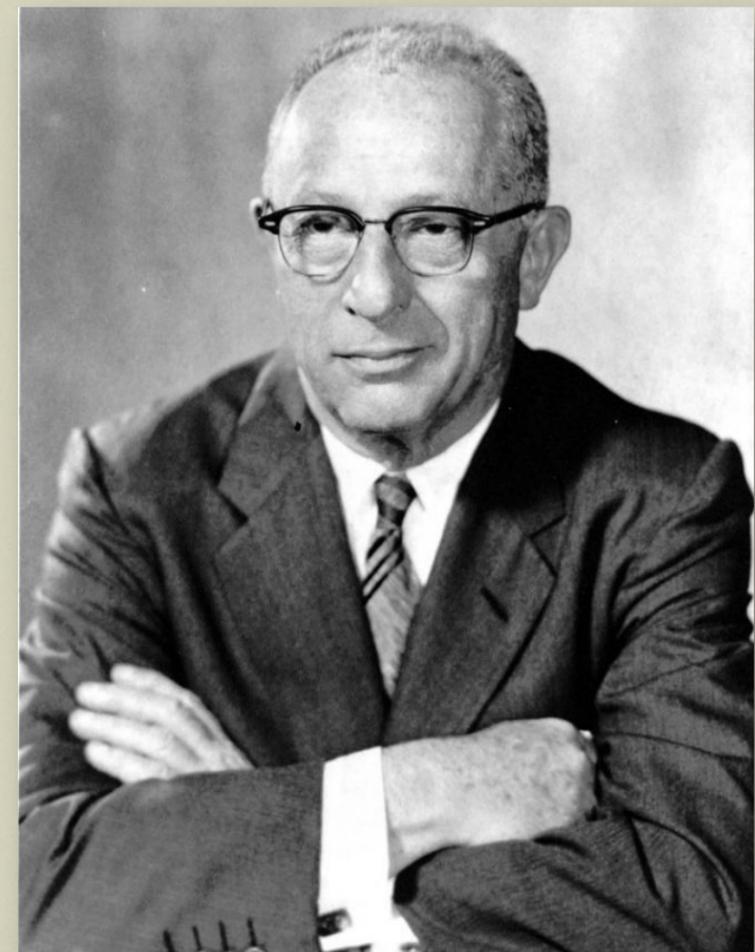


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RABBI LEVI A. OLAN

DIGITAL COLLECTION CELEBRATION



ELIZABETH PERKINS PROTHRO HALL
PERKINS SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY
DALLAS, TEXAS
MAY 5, 2013

PROGRAM

Welcome

William B. Lawrence, Dean
Perkins School of Theology

Digital Collection Demonstration

Timothy Binkley
Bridwell Library Archivist

Presentation of Archival Discs

Roberta Schaafsma
Director of Bridwell Library and
J. S. Bridwell Endowed Librarian

Introduction of Rabbi David Stern

William B. Lawrence, Dean
Perkins School of Theology

Remarks

Rabbi David Stern
Temple Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas
The Legacy of Rabbi Levi A. Olan

Reception

Swalwell-Connor Refectory

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Elizabeth Olan Hirsch and the family of Rabbi Levi A. Olan

Dorothy M. and Henry S. Jacobus
Temple Emanu-El Archives, Dallas, Texas

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center
of the American Jewish Archives
Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio

Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology
Southern Methodist University

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The Digital Collection on Rabbi Levi A. Olan may now be accessed at
<http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/all/bridwell/olan>