



Rabbi Morris Margolies

December 25, 1921 - November 9, 2012

Rabbi, teacher, writer, counselor, orator par excellence, devoted student of all things Jewish, Rabbi Morris B. Margolies died on November 9, 2012. He was an inspiration to all who thirsted for Jewish knowledge. Judaism and the Jewish people were his driving passions, and his highest ambition was to instill those passions in others. Many of his students became rabbis themselves and innumerable others were inspired to live more fully Jewish lives owing to his influence. His lecture series at Beth Shalom Synagogue, where he served as senior rabbi for 25 years, regularly drew hundreds of listeners, and his sermons, occasionally marked by controversy but always uplifting, drew on his vast store of Jewish law, lore, history and culture. He rarely missed an opportunity to impart some nugget of Jewish wisdom, whether the subject of his talks was baseball, Shakespeare, Chaim Nachman Bialik or Johann Sebastian Bach. He officiated at thousands of weddings, funerals, bar- and bat mitzvahs, and continued to dispense healing wisdom and pastoral advice to those in crisis and distress well after his retirement from the pulpit in 1986. He was a champion of civil rights, an implacable foe of tyranny in all its forms, a lover of Eretz Yisrael and, above all, a propagator of Jewish values. He pushed for the establishment of what is now the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy and agitated for equal rights for women in the synagogue. He blended modernity with traditionalism, and insisted on viewing science as a necessary and indispensable complement of faith.

He came from a distinguished Jewish family and was a direct descendant of the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812). He descended from multiple generations of rabbis, not least of whom was his own father, Rabbi Yosef Meir Margaliyot, a spellbinding Yiddish orator and renowned Jewish educator. Rabbi Margolies was born in Jerusalem on the 25th of Kislev, the first night of Hanukkah, 1921. His mother, Malka Chasya, was a sixth-generation Israeli. He came to the United States at the age of eight, his father having emigrated amid the privations of the Great Depression and ongoing turmoil in what was then the land of Palestine. He spent his youth in the Bronx in New York and matriculated at Yeshiva University, receiving his “smicha,” or ordination, from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the foremost Talmudic sage of the modern era, in his senior year. He received his M.A. in English literature from the University of Chicago in 1946 and his Ph.D. in Jewish history, under the auspices of the eminent Jewish historian Salo

Baron, from Columbia University in 1976. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1968. He was rabbi of Hyde Park Hebrew Center in Chicago from 1943 to 1947, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, Midwest Division, from 1947 to 1949, rabbi of BMH Synagogue in Denver from 1949 to 1951 and a chaplain in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1952, serving much of that time in Korea during the Korean War. From 1952 to 1961, he was rabbi of Temple Beth El in Brooklyn, N.Y. He became senior rabbi of Beth Shalom Synagogue in Kansas City in 1961, succeeding Rabbi Gershon Hadas. He retired in 1986, whereupon he took up duties as a professor of Jewish history at the University of Kansas until 1993. He was the author of Torah-Vision, a book of sermonic essays; Ten Turning Points in Jewish History; The Jew of the Century (later reprinted as Twenty Twenty: Jewish Visionaries Through Two Thousand Years); Samuel David Luzzatto, an expanded version of his doctoral dissertation; and A Gathering of Angels: Angels in Jewish Life and Literature. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Ruth Margolies; his brother, Israel Margolies; three children, Daniel Margolies and his wife, Deborah Salkov; Jonathan Margolies and his former wife, Diane Margolies; and Malka Margolies and her husband, Walter Scott; six grandchildren, Rachel Goldberg and her husband Ari Goldberg; Max Margolies; Micah Margolies; Shoshana Margolies; Jacob Margolies; and Gavriel Scott; and three great-grandchildren, Leora, Ezra and Adina Goldberg. The family would like to thank the wonderful caregivers from Enhanced HomeCare who served Rabbi Margolies with such devotion: Brinda, Lisa, Grace and Tranique. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in Rabbi Margolies's memory be made to the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy. Funeral services will be held at 2:00pm Monday, November 12, at Kehilath Israel Synagogue, 10501 Conser, with burial to follow at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Comments



“ We have been out of the country and were so sorry to have returned to such sad news. We are thinking of you all at this time and remembering all the many memories through the years. Our love and thoughts, Michele and Harvey

Michele and Harvey Kaplan - December 01, 2012 at 08:39 AM



“ Rabbi Margolies was apart of my family my whole life. He was a teacher, advocate, mentor, counselor, Rabbi, friend and someone who cared. I and many will miss him. Condolences to he and his family. Rabbi Margolies offered the community so much. He was greatly appreciated and I will miss him. His presences will always be in my heart and memories as he had a great impact on my life of which I am grateful for. He was a great man. May he rest in peace and love and be surrounded by Gods love and wisdom. May he know that he was loved and made a great impact in this lifetime.

Barb Hoffman - November 29, 2012 at 04:04 PM



“ I heard just today of Rabbi Margolies' passing. He married us 48 years ago. I fondly think of him as one of the best teachers I ever had. He touched a lot of lives and will be missed.

Jackie Rashbaum Strauss - November 21, 2012 at 04:10 PM



“ Rabbi Margolies was a model to us, as teachers. I loved learning in his classes. My deepest condolences to the family. I am so saddened by his loss. ilana dickman.

ilana dickman - November 18, 2012 at 03:13 PM



“ Thursday afternoon 11/15/12

Having tried numerous times for a phone connection at Jonathan's home, finally left a message this morning. I have just returned from his home. I wanted so badly to visit with each of you but there was no answer to the doorbell or repeated knocking. I no longer am able to attend a shiva service in the home where the crowd forces one to stand.

Please know that I pray the recent months trauma will soon fade leaving only beautiful memories of your husband, father and my rabbi, teacher and friend. With sincere sympathy and love,
Patsy (Dunn Shanberg)

patsy dunn shanberg - November 15, 2012 at 04:46 PM



“ Mrs. Margolies & family we were so sorry to hear about Mr. Margolies passing. Our thoughts are with you & your family.

Beverly Lobb & Tracey Madsen - November 15, 2012 at 10:18 AM



“ Rabbi Margolies was instrumental in molding who I am as a Jew while in confirmation class at Beth Shalom in 1970. Even while in my teens, I was able to appreciate his Jewish knowledge and wisdom. He will be missed. Know that he made an impact on so many of us

Ellen Taylor (Cohn) - November 14, 2012 at 10:12 PM



“ Rabbi Margolies officiated at my Bar Mitzvah at the old Beth Shalom synagogue at 34th and the Paseo, and he led my confirmation class. What I remember most from those days of my youth was how smart he was and how he put the fear of God into us would-be troublemakers. I learned quite a bit from the rabbi even if I did make his job a little harder sometimes. Later as a young adult, I sought his counsel on more than one occasion, and I grew to admire and respect the depth of his wisdom, his vision, and his passion for Judaism. Ha-makom yinachem otam b'toch sh'arei av'lei Tzion v'Yerushalayim.

Ethan Goller - November 14, 2012 at 05:28 PM



“ Rabbi played a critical role in my formative years as teacher and as friend. It has always amazed me that a man of such great intellect and stature had the time and skill to build a relationship with me when I was so young. His lessons live on. May his memory be a blessing.

Michael Penzner - November 14, 2012 at 09:55 AM



“ Jon, Dan and the entire Margolies family,

Our continuing contacts with the Rabbi were through his Jewish Chronicle columns and his many lectures that we attended. The World is a far better place as a result of his many contributions. Our sympathy and prayers are with you.
Ernest and Barbara Fleischer

Ernest and Barbara Fleischer - November 14, 2012 at 09:07 AM



“ The words of those far more eloquent than we have been spoken. Simply put, we will miss his "never hold back" take on events in the world and the world will miss his activism. We were privileged to be the recipient of his teachings.

Felicia and Seymour Weiner - November 13, 2012 at 05:41 PM



“ My condolences to the entire family on the loss of a scholar and true community Rav. My first wife, Barbara Rashbaum z"l and I were the first couple for whom Rabbi Margolies was mesader kiddushin when he took up resident in Kansas City in January, 1962. Both of us remembered him with fondness and I will miss him.

Sherwin Pomerantz
Jerusalem

Sherwin Pomerantz - November 13, 2012 at 04:22 PM



“ Dear Ruth, Dan, Jonathan and Malka - Rabbi Margolies' passing seems like the end of an era. He was such an integral part of our growing up - up there on the bima Shabbos after Shabbos, a participant in every celebration and life cycle event. I particularly remember as a very young child waiting eagerly for the questions he would ask from the bima and how hard I tried to answer them...a beautiful way to encourage a love of learning from a young age! His support of the HBHA in its early years was instrumental in ensuring that I and many others got the best Jewish education available to us. Yehi Zichro Baruch.

Judy Firestone Singer - November 13, 2012 at 01:30 PM



“ Bernie and I were so sorry to hear about the passing of such an inspirational leader. I was so inspired by the Torah study I attended years ago at Beth Shalom. He was truly an exceptional Rabbi.

Sincerely,
Judy Fremerman

Judy Fremerman - November 13, 2012 at 11:05 AM



“ It is with great sadness I have learned of the loss of Rabbi Margolies. I can only think back to His and Ruth's arrival and the open arms acceptance of them and their growing family. He became a force in the community and the eminent teacher. May his teachings remain a guide to many.
Pauline Wang Hendel

Pauline Hendel - November 13, 2012 at 08:20 AM



“ My heart goes out to you, Malka and your family, for your great loss.

Carol Blank - November 13, 2012 at 07:20 AM



“ Rabbi Margolies was a teacher, friend, and mentor in care of our community. He was a model rabbi, and kind to our family. There haven't been rabbis like him since, and his intellect heart and devotion are already missed. Zikhrone livrakha.

Rabbi Robert L. Tobin - November 12, 2012 at 04:16 PM



“ Ruth and family,
Rabbi is surely at peace and time will help all of you.
He will be missed by all who learned from him and cared about him.

Marna Dolginoff

Marna Dolginoff - November 12, 2012 at 03:14 PM



“ I'm so sorry to read of the loss of this great man. I loved him and will never forget his kindness.

Lori Jones - November 12, 2012 at 03:00 PM



“ Rabbi to many Nurturer of young and old still learning Encourager and supporter Shaper of the meaning of being Jewish Good listener Wise as well as intelligent beyond belief Passionate Loving Out spoken when it wasn't popular but was right Will be missed and remembered by all who knew him, respected him, and loved him

Dr. Harriet H. Barrish - November 12, 2012 at 01:58 PM



“ We're very sorry to hear about Rabbi Margolies passing. What a wonderful life and legacy. Our hearts go out to you, Dan, and all of your family.

Kevin Collison - November 12, 2012 at 01:02 PM



“ Baruch Dayan HaEmet.

Dear Ruth, Dan, Jonathan and Malka,
Hamakom y'nachem etchem b'toch sh'ar aveilei Tzion v'Yrushalayim.

The many tributes to Rabbi Margolies, z"l, are so well deserved. He was an important role model, teaching us to be students and lovers of Torah, and exhorting us to engage in Tikkun Olam as part of our role as an Am Segulah.

I wanted to especially note, however, that he davened beautifully, which allowed us to see another way of accessing our higher selves and communicating with God in addition to study and g'milut chasadim.

May his memory always be for a blessing. Our hearts go out to you all and to your families.

Michael

Michael Small - November 12, 2012 at 12:13 PM



“ I admired Rabbi Margolies more than I can adequately express in writing. He was the first Rabbi I ever knew as I grew up in the northland with no opportunity to know in my youth Jewish residents of KC. My most fond memory was when I asked him to speak at a memorial I was organizing for the shocking death of Governor Mel Carnahan. It was a few weeks before the 2000 election and I asked Rabbi not to make partisan remarks. I thought he agreed but sure enough in his remarks he urged people to honor Mel by voting the straight Democratic ticket in November ! In thinking of Morris' passing I am reminded of the words Senator Edward Kennedy spoke about his brother Robert at his funeral, "...we wish my brother to just be remembered as a good and decent man who saw war and tried to stop it and saw suffering and tried to heal it". That was also Rabbi Margolies.

Steve Glorioso - November 12, 2012 at 09:27 AM



“ Rabbi Margolis was very kind & compassionate to me & my kids when we were going through a very difficult time in our lives. Very few people knew that he would take time to stop by our home & read to my kids, something I have never forgotten. There were many other times when he reached out to help me when others could not. I will always have fond memories of him..& the kindness he showed to me & my family. We extend our deepest condolences to the entire family.
Judy, Amy, Robin & Corey Samber

Judy Samberg - November 11, 2012 at 11:53 PM



“ HaMakom Yinachem etchem b'toch sh-ar av-lei Tzion V'Yerushalaim. May God comfort you among the mourners of Tzion and Jerusalem. Zecher Tzadik Livra-cha. May his memory be for a blessing.

SF March - November 11, 2012 at 05:46 PM



“ Dear Ruth & Family,
We were so distressed to learn of Rabbi's passing. I fondly remember all times at Beth Shalom Breakfast Club with my own Father, all his books which Dad sent to us, our visit at you home when we were in KC. But most important I remember when he married Howard & I 50 years ago.
Our memories are sweet. I know yours will be also.
Love, Leslie Vile Schultz & Howard Schultz

Leslie Vile Schultz - November 11, 2012 at 05:25 PM



“ How many rabbis can boast having post-confirmation teens willingly continue their Jewish education? Rabbi Margolies was just that person, and I have treasured memories of his brilliance and the eager students he brought together. His name is a blessing.

Pam Feingold Brooks - November 11, 2012 at 04:52 PM



“ Dearest Margolies family,

Our deepest sympathy to the entire family. He was a man that was truly loved by everyone.

With all our love.

Larry and Randi Haith - November 11, 2012 at 04:44 PM



“ What a wonderful smile he had! I can see him in his office at the synagogue with a cigar in one hand, leaning forward, a big grin on his face, completely engaging, brimming with vitality, and enjoying life. I will always have the deepest respect and fondest memories of this brilliant and influential rabbi. May his memory be a blessing always.

Allan Eisemann and family - November 11, 2012 at 04:34 PM



“ I am grateful for the life of Rabbi Margolies. Thanks to his service and to the service of others in our armed forces, my family and I have been able to lead our lives in freedom and peace.

Bob in Grandview, Missouri - November 11, 2012 at 03:29 PM



“ Rabbi Margolies was a brilliant man and a truly great teacher, to students of all ages, a rare gift. When I was a teenager, he opened my eyes to the joy of learning, as a tool to understanding the world and oneself. He welcomed every challenging question. He made history come alive by weaving together seemingly disparate facts from his vast knowledge of both science and the history of different places, cultures, and political and philosophical belief systems. He was a model to us as adults, as a person who stayed generously engaged in the lives of others, pursued justice in the community, and so long as he was able, never ceased his quest for knowledge and understanding and the desire to engage in meaningful discourse. I feel blessed to have had him in my life.

Harlene Hipsh - November 11, 2012 at 03:20 PM



“ We moved across the street from Rabbi Margolies and Ruth in 2001. My two young children found their way to Morris' library and were amazed by the all history that surrounded them. We always enjoyed sitting and listening to Rabbi Margolies tell stories of the Jewish history and faith, and never let us forget the Hebrew meaning of our names. We've never known a man of such knowledge and passion about history and religion.

Ruth and Morris, thanks for being a shining example of love and faith and growing old together and caring for each other. We will miss seeing you taking walks and always greeting us at the curb to tell us to have a great day as we drive off to school. Morris was a great man and will be missed by everyone he touched. May angels surround your soul and your memory live through us all for generations to come.

Jan Trecek and Family - November 11, 2012 at 02:25 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to the Margolies family. He was a great man and scholar and will be thought of often, his kindness and guidance will be in their hearts forever. Much love and thanks to the family.

Valerie Gaines - November 11, 2012 at 12:41 PM



“ As a faculty member of the Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy from 1970 to 2003 I remember seeing Rabbi Margolies many many times and being touched by his warmth and courtesy. He clearly was a highly respected and honored leader of the Jewish community. I am truly saddened at his passing.

Jill Schumacher - November 11, 2012 at 12:18 PM



“ Rabbi Margolies' memory will be cherished for all eternity. He taught, he inspired, he led and he cared. His influence on thousands of Jews and the greater community will continue to be felt for generations to come. Clearly he was the the greatest scholar to live among us in our lifetimes.

Gary Blumenthal - November 11, 2012 at 10:35 AM



“ Condolences to the family and the community. The Rabbis books are a living memorial to his insight and values.

Marty Cohen - November 11, 2012 at 10:22 AM



“ Dearest family of Rabbi Margolies, may you find blessings in the memories of your beloved. He was a great teacher and compassionate friend. May his gifts of knowledge, insight, and faith live on within you and those of us who's lives he touched so dearly. Jill

Jill Minkoff - November 11, 2012 at 09:40 AM



“ we have lost an extraordinary colleague and a remarkable man. no doubt, his memory will be a blessing.

rabbi michael zedek - November 11, 2012 at 07:50 AM



“ We were so saddened by the death of our teacher and Rabbi Morris B. Margolies. He was a tremendous influence on our lives. We shall never forget how he taught us, cared for us, and was with us always in good times and in bad times. This is a great loss, not only for Congregation Beth Shalom, which he served for 25 years, but for each and every one of us in our community. May his memory be a blessing just as his life was a blessing to all of us.

Morris and Eva Tulchinsky - November 10, 2012 at 10:46 PM



“ To the family of rabbi
Our thoughts are with your family we are so sorry to hear about rabbi
We are in Washington and wish we could be at his funeral the rabbi was a great man
and he will be surely missed by all of Kansas city

Betty and Lenny hershman

Leonard and Betty Hershman - November 10, 2012 at 08:59 PM



“ To the Margolies family, I am deeply saddened to learn of the passing of my former Rabbi and teacher. He was a brilliant man...very opinionated...but brilliant. I was in his confirmation class and always learned so much. I saw him in later years when he was on KCUR radio at UMKC. He will be missed by so many. My brother, Rabbi Barry Goldenberg, of blessed memory, had fond memories of the Rabbi. May his memory be for a blessing.

Annette (Goldenberg) Haynes - November 10, 2012 at 08:21 PM



“ Dan and family. My condolences to you and your family. A great man. A great life.

Walter Rosel - November 10, 2012 at 07:06 PM



“ Dear Ruth, Dan, Jonathan and Malka,
The rabbi has been a part of nearly all of my life and I considered him my rabbi, teacher and friend. He will be greatly missed by me, my family and the entire community. I don't believe I can find the words to describe the asset he was to us all. My best wishes are with you and your families as you work through your loss.
Neil Shanberg and Liz Kundin

Neil Shanberg and Liz Kundin - November 10, 2012 at 04:12 PM



“ There have been three religious leaders that have had a positive impact on me. Cantor Rothblatt, Gershon Haddas and Rabbi Margolies. I attended numerous lectures and classes over many years conducted by Rabbi Margolies and they never failed to teach me something new and uplifting. Our community has lost a great teacher. Shalom.

Ralph Hartwich - November 10, 2012 at 02:09 PM



“ Our condolences for a wonderful man....He married us 34 years ago...
We will remember him with love

Kathy and Doug Stone - November 10, 2012 at 02:08 PM



“ Dear Mrs Margolies and your family : My deepest condolences at this very difficult time. The Rabbi was always so wonderful to my family and I so appreciated him for so many reasons. May smiles return when you recall how many fabulous things that he did for so many. Much Love to you all --- Jody Granoff Weiner

Jody Weiner - November 10, 2012 at 01:46 PM



“ I am personally so saddened by the loss of Rabbi Margolies who has been a fixture in my life and Jewish Education. May the angels about whom he wrote greet him and hold him in loving peace.

Deborah Mellicker - November 10, 2012 at 01:28 PM



“ to family of Rabbi Morris Margolies, as a member of the community that your beloved served and loved. Know that we mourn his passing deeply. You have our deepest condolences as you in your own way handle the present. We are so grateful for all the time that you have shared Rabbi with us thank you"Todah Rabah".

Randal Adler - November 10, 2012 at 01:27 PM



“ To the Margolies family. I'm sorry for your loss.He. was a Great Man and Rabbi. May Rabbi Margolies memory be for a blessing.

Michele Magariel & Family - November 10, 2012 at 12:46 PM