

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER'S FUNERAL

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Cleveland, Ohio

On Thursday, November 28th, 1963, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver suffered a heart attack at his residence in Shaker Heights, Ohio, while celebrating Thanksgiving Day at a noon dinner with his immediate family.

He was immediately removed to University Hospital, where he expired at 3:40 PM that same day.

I was contacted at 4:00 PM and met with Rabbi Daniel J. Silver, the Rabbi's son at the late residence. Preliminary arrangements were initiated, the time for the service was set and all the Temple board members and officers were summoned to a meeting for the following morning. A corp of some 70 ushers and hosts were drafted from among the members of the Men's Club and the Temple, and the wheels were set in motion. It was decided to limit a list of local and national dignitaries and their wives to a list of 400 for the reserved section in the Temple, the balance of the seats were to be made available to the congregation at large. Luntz Auditorium seating 700 people, and the Assembly Hall, seating 600

persons, and the class rooms were all wired for sound, in anticipation of an overflow attendance. Over four thousand people were in the confines of the Temple for the service and loud speakers were provided outside, in the event more persons could not be accommodated.

Cards of admission for the 400 persons were in the mail by Friday noon and in the hands of the recipients on Saturday.

Wires and telephone calls from all over the world started to pour in that Friday, including messages from the President of the United States, and the Premier of Israel.

Rabbi Silver was placed in a bronze sealer casket and the same was opened for the family whenever they chose to visit the funeral home.

After sundown Saturday, the casket was taken to the Temple and placed in the main sanctuary. Every two hours an honor guard of two members of the Temple spelled each other through the night until the service Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. The Sanctuary

was opened to the public that Saturday evening after 7 o'clock to allow the citizens of Cleveland to pass the casket in the event they could not attend the funeral services.

The Temple parking lot which accommodates 250 cars was reserved for the holders of admission tickets and additional parking space was provided in the adjacent lot belonging to Mt. Sinai Hospital, and two other near-by lots. Shuttle bus service was available for those forced to park in an outlying lot.

The Temple Sanctuary which seats over 2000 persons was opened to the public, with the exception of the 800 reserved seats.

Rabbi Milton Matz, Associate Rabbi of the Temple, introduced Rabbis Arthur Lelyveld of the Fairmount Temple of Cleveland, and Leon Feuer of Toledo, Ohio, a former Associate Rabbi of the Temple. After they shared in the opening prayers, Rabbi Matz introduced former Mayor of Cleveland, Governor of Ohio and present United States Senator, the Hon. Frank J. Lausche. Senator

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Thousands of mourners, including world and national leaders of the Zionist movement and national, state and local officials attended the funeral services for Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, outstanding Zionist leader who died November 28th at the age of 70. We felt the story of his funeral would be of interest to all and turned to our own Past President Leonard Labowitch who conducted the funeral, for a factual report.



Bronze sealer casket containing remains of Rabbi Silver leaving the Temple