

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
LAWRENCE V. BERMAN
(1929 – 1988)

After a two-year struggle with cancer in which his courage and dignity were a source of admiration and solace to his friends, Lawrence Berman succumbed on October 7th at the age of fifty-nine. Characteristically, he worked until the end, retained his optimism and sense of humor, gained pleasure from art, music and the family so dear to him, and even managed in his very last days of life to bring to completion a massive Hebrew edition of a commentary by Averroes on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Larry was born to Orthodox Jewish parents in Cincinnati in 1929, attended public high school there, and then went on to acquire Hebrew textual skills at the Chaim Berlin yeshiva in Brooklyn and the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago. In 1951 he received his B.A. from the University of Chicago with honors in philosophy, and, after service in the U.S. Marine Corps, took his M.A. at Brandeis in 1954, studied for a year at the Sorbonne, and completed his Ph.D. at Hebrew University in 1960. After teaching at the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, he came to Stanford in 1967—the first faculty member to be appointed in a post-Biblical field of Jewish Studies. Larry remained here for the rest of his career, serving as a visiting professor at the Hebrew University in 1977-78, a visiting professor at the University of Paris VIII in 1985, where his lectures in French were greatly admired, and as Director of the Stanford Program in Paris in 1986.

All who knew and studied with Larry learned at once that his intellectual passion centered on the great medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides, and focused more broadly on the inter-related dialogues with Aristotle undertaken by Jewish and Islamic philosophers in the middle ages. His publications were prolific, comprising nearly seventy books, articles and reviews. They earned him a worldwide reputation. Most of this research involved editing, translating and interpreting medieval text in Arabic, Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew, particularly those dealing with Aristotle's *Ethics*. One recent piece, for example, concerned the master-disciple relationship among Ibn Bajjah, Averroes, Maimonides and Al-Farabi; another analyzed a logical treatise composed by Ibn Al-Tayyib; a third translated Al-Farabi's treatise, "on Religion, Jurisprudence, and Political Science." What is more, Larry devoted a great deal of time over the past two decades to the use of the computer to generate concordances and indices to the texts in his corpus. Aided by a three-year grant from the NEH, he worked with the staff at CIT to develop a foreign text system with the capability of processing Hebrew. At the time of his death, his concordance for the English edition of Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*—the most sophisticated employment yet of the technology—was well under way. He had also begun work on the vexed issue of Maimonides' masks in the *Guide for the Perplexed*. He had, in sum, entered into the major projects of his scholarly career. But, as Larry wrote concerning the great scholar Harry A. Wolfson, "time cut him short."

Larry's attachment to the medieval scholars whom he studied was more than intellectual. He traveled widely in the Middle East in pursuit of their traces. At one point, he discovered a precious library in Morocco, only to see it destroyed by fire while he was trying to raise the funds needed for its purchase. With his wife and children in Spain, he happily walked the Cordoba streets named for Maimonides, Averroes and Judah Halevi. Larry lived and breathed

philosophy. His colleagues had the distinct impression that it also sustained him during the long bout with disease.

A demanding teacher, Larry achieved popularity with undergraduates only in the early 'eighties. His courses suddenly became packed, to his own delight as well as that of his colleagues. Some of this popularity was undoubtedly due to Larry's enthusiasm for comparative studies in what he liked to call "the religions of Abraham"—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Larry was a comparativist to his core, ever irritated at provinciality or chauvinism. He went so far as to call the Middle East by a non-Eurocentric locution, Southwest Asia. The inception of the Jewish Studies program two years ago also brought Larry a group of devoted graduate students able to pore over his texts in the original.

Larry left us in the prime of life, with his vast store of knowledge and understanding; his delightful exuberance, optimism, and humor; his love of family, music and art; his many unfinished contributions to scholarship; and his example of how to live as a "mensch," a person of goodness and kindness. For all of these, he will be deeply missed.

Larry is survived by his wife Hanna and their children, Ariela and Michael; by his daughters Hephzibah and Jennifer; and by two grandchildren.

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