

# PROFESSOR ROBERT GORDIS:

## The Man and His Works

*With the aged is wisdom  
In length of days is understanding.  
(Job 12:12)*

This volume of the *Hebrew Annual Review* is dedicated to Professor Robert Gordis, a distinguished Hebraist and a prominent Biblical exegete. Professor Gordis was born on February 6, 1908 in New York City. The story of his life is that of a steadfast commitment to two domains: scholarship and the pulpit. He has excelled in both realms.

As a scholar, Professor Gordis proved to be gifted with a remarkable fertility. His literary output, as can be discerned in his appended list of *selected* works, is immense, constituting numerous books and an enormous number of articles published in scholarly journals around the world. His studies are indicative of a profound grasp of the intricacies of the vocabulary, grammar and syntax of Biblical Hebrew (poetry and prose) and Aramaic, and a vast knowledge of cognate languages. This, together with his exquisite love for the Hebrew Scriptures and the literary and esthetic sensitivity with which he is endowed, has enabled him to delve into the deeper meaning of Biblical passages, verses and words. Thus, for example, his studies on Biblical wisdom literature in general, and on the Book of Job, in particular, have considerably furthered our knowledge of this perennially enigmatic area of scholarship. His insights, which are in many cases trail-blazing, are articulated in a forcible and vivid manner.

Professor Gordis' academic record is exemplary. While the principal focus of his teaching career was his *alma mater*, the Jewish Theological Seminary (1931-1974), he also served on the faculties of Columbia University, Union Theological Seminary, Temple University and Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and he taught at Syracuse University, the University of Michigan and other institutions.

He has lectured throughout the United States and Canada, as well as in England, France and Israel.

Professor Gordis has never isolated himself in the insulated ivory-tower of scholarship. His life is inextricably intertwined with that of society. Rabbi Gordis is widely recognized as an outstanding religious and spiritual leader, exceptionally gifted with the ability to penetrate into the most profound issues of life and to instill into his audience a love for human values. His writings in this domain address *inter alia* ethical and moral issues of contemporary society, incorporating insightful teachings of both Judaism and Christianity. In his various capacities as president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of the Conservative rabbinate, president of the Synagogue Council of America, the over-all body representing all wings of American Judaism, chairman of numerous religious organizations and cultural agencies, Rabbi Gordis has proved to be endowed with a spirit of free enquiry, unyielding to the shackles of conformity, asserting his own individual thought. These and other characteristics enabled him to blaze new trails into fundamental issues of Jewish life and in the interpretation of various aspects of the *Halakha*.

Professor Gordis is the founder and editor of the quarterly journal *Judaism*, dedicated to Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics, now in its thirty-second year of publication. He has been serving on the Editorial Board of the *Hebrew Annual Review* since its inception in 1976. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to dedicate this issue of the *HAR* to him.

The *Hebrew Annual Review* has as its fields of interest the Bible and the Hebrew language and literature. Hence, many of Professor Gordis' colleagues, students and friends, whose fields of expertise lie elsewhere, were not invited to participate in this volume, to our regret, and no doubt to theirs. But we hope that all of those whose lives he has touched will share our pleasure in this commemoration of his outstanding career. עך מאה ועשרים

Reuben Ahroni, Editor  
*Hebrew Annual Review*

# ROBERT GORDIS:

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