

Israel Law Review

Vol. 28

Winter 1994

No. 1

LEO GUZIK — IN MEMORIAM

The death on August 27, 1994, at the age of 90, of Leo Guzik, deprived the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and its Faculty of Law of one of their most devoted supporters and benefactors. Having been active with the American Friends of the Hebrew University since his graduation from law school, he served for more than twenty years on the University's Board of Governors, and after his retirement he was made an Honorary Member of the Board. He never failed to attend any of the Board's annual sessions in Jerusalem, and took an active and most helpful part in its deliberations. He endowed the Leo Guzik Scholarship Fund at the Faculty of Law, and donated to its library a major part of his outstanding collection of books on ancient and comparative law and on legal philosophy.

My acquaintance with Guzik dates back to 1951, when as a young Attorney-General I consulted with him and his law partner Maurice Boukstein on the legal representation of the State of Israel in the United States. For many years thereafter, our law officers in Israel and abroad enjoyed his gratuitous legal advice; and many a case in American courts, in which Israeli interests were involved, found in him a brilliant advocate. After retiring from forensic practice, he served as counsel with one of the big New York law firms. However much he liked to write opinions, I daresay that he was never quite so enthused as with the challenges and tensions of the courtroom, and the drafting of pleadings.

He was a life-long Zionist and took a lively interest in everything that happened in or about Israel. He would write to political leaders and academical authorities long letters of laudation or of criticism, whatever the occasion appeared to him to demand; and he was always ready and willing to lend his hand and his purse to a deserving Israeli cause.

Guzik was unique in that he combined masterly professional skill and expertise with scholarly inclinations and faculties. The son of an

orthodox rabbi, he had early acquired a sound knowledge of the sources of Judaism, and throughout his (secular) life he retained his interest in biblical and talmudic law. A man of restless intellectual curiosity, he soon extended his interest to ancient law in general, and thence to general legal history; and it was as a legal historian that he found himself delving into the philosophy of law.

His time-consuming legal practice left him no time for scholarly writing: wonder enough that he always found time for scholarly reading. I often marvelled at his familiarity with so many variegated (and voluminous) works of literature, ancient and modern, from different legal systems and in many languages — and could only envy him his absorptive capacities. He made it his rule not to borrow books from libraries, but to buy them (often ordering them from abroad) — and in this way built himself a library which is well nigh unequalled among legal practitioners (excepting perhaps Mr. Naftali Lipschutz in Haifa). In later years, he took an ever increasing interest in archaeology and anthropology, which made for further expansions of his library. And when, in his early eighties, he took up residence in Florida, he made a selection of a few hundred books to take along with him - those which were so close to his heart that he could not bear to live separated from them.

It was during this last decade of his life that he wrote a book. Puzzled by the New Testament prohibition of divorce, attributed to Jesus, he undertook a thorough research into possible sources or parallels of this striking innovation, and combed through all traces of divorce laws and customs in antiquity. The result is a valuable and original contribution both to legal history and to Judaistic scholarship. Death overtook him when he prepared the book for delivery to his publishers: it is to be hoped that it will now be published posthumously.

Guzik made many good friends at the Hebrew University, foremost among them Abe Harman and Bernard Cherrick. I feel privileged to count myself not only with his personal friends, but also with the elect few who during a lifetime benefitted from his learning and his wisdom.

Haim H. Cohn