

This week many of us are mourning the loss of Rabbi Max Tickin, a beloved teacher, scholar and activist. He is one of the few people that I can truly call a Jewish sage. I was fortunate to know him as a friend, mentor, and huge supporter over the years.

I met Max some 43 years ago when he moved to Washington, where he took the position of Assistant National Hillel Director. He and his dear wife Esther joined the Fabrangen Havurah about the same time I was leaving for Israel. Upon my return some eight months later, after the Yom Kippur War, Max was one of the first people I sought. I asked him if he would send me to serve Jewish students in a remote place in the country. He deployed me for a year to Des Moines, Iowa! Perfect!

Back in the day, Max was close with such luminaries as Abraham Heschel, Will Herberg and Herschel Matt, all of blessed memory. Max was among the founders of Breira and the New Jewish Agenda, two progressive Jewish organizations created to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and issues here. His voice strengthened my voice.

In the nineties, Max joined me and Sue Roemer, z'l, and others to create Maalot, a seminary for training new cantors and Judaists, and to teach laypeople in havurot and Jewish communities how to serve and inspire a new generation. A professor of Judaic studies at George Washington University, he was a gifted teacher who brought great depth and wisdom to our program and to all who learned from him. For decades, he inspired the members of Kehila Chadasha, becoming our favorite guest lecturer on Sunday mornings.

Max encouraged me, more than once, to get Semicha, rabbinic ordination. After I eventually received Semicha in Boulder from Max's friend Reb Zalman Schachter-Shlomi, it was Max's signature on the document and the signatures of community members that made it "kosher." I will always be grateful to Max for his encouragement.

This past year, Max played an important role in three programs sponsored by Am Kolel: A year ago, it was the Martin Buber Symposium commemorating the 50th Yahrzeit of Buber, whom Max knew personally and whose philosophy he lived. Four months ago, Max and I led a program of Yiddish singing and poetry at 6th and I. Max instigated and kicked off the 100th Yahrzeit Commemoration of Sholem Aleikhem at the Avalon Theater just two months ago, at the age of nearly 94.

To be in Max's presence was to be in the presence of a loving sage. As a sage and as a wise friend and ally he will be sorely missed. May his soul rest in peace. May his guidance continue to be with us. ---
Reb David Shneyer