

Tribute to Edward L. Greenstein

8:00 pm, Monday, February 12, 1996

Diane M. Sharon

I believe that my personal experiences with Ed, as my teacher, academic advisor, and dissertation reader, illustrate Ed's generous and exacting approach with all his graduate students.

When I first met Dr. Greenstein, he was still "Eddie" to his friends, and that's what I first learned to call him. He was my husband's friend, and a member of Minyan M'at, our weekly worship group. You could say I married into the relationship. Ed danced at our wedding, and greeted me warmly every shabbat. He was so friendly and down-to-earth that he was the one I approached for advice when my husband suggested I "take a course" after I left my corporate job to spend more time with my twin daughters. I've been asking Ed for advice ever since.

In addition to focusing on the ancient Near East and on contemporary literary theory, Ed also insists that we mine the Rabbinic sources for insights into the biblical text. One of his favorite Rabbinic commentators is Bechor Shor, whose commentary in any Miqraot Gedolot, or Rabbinic Bible, is not on the page with biblical text as are Rashi and Rambam and Onkelos. Bechor Shor appears in the "back of the book," where few students, even of Rabbinics, bother to look. Ed teaches us that the Rabbis read the text as a whole unit much as do contemporary literary critics, and that the Rabbinic commentators "anticipate" many of the insights trumpeted as "new" and "original" by contemporary scholars.

Ed always makes time for his students. He is always passing articles along to us, pointing out funding or employment opportunities, reviewing drafts of our articles, writing references for us, listening to us kvetch. Now we must make do with the dreaded e-mail!

But I don't want to give the wrong impression. **I** don't always **TAKE** Ed's generous advice. One of Ed's most amazing characteristics is that he continues to be open and giving with me even when I have gone my own way. However, he will never let me forget that I didn't do it HIS way. "You can do it my way," he has told me more than once, "or you can do it wrong."

I will miss calling on Ed for advice any time, any day, and having him be available then or soon after.

I will miss entering his office, and finding him working intensely on some project, peering through a magnifying glass at transparencies of Ugaritic tablets, or writing reviews or recommendations.

I will miss his sharing of whatever he's doing that moment, saying, "Here, look at this," and adding comments on why THIS reading, THIS insight, THIS article is so significant.

I will miss the deluge of books, references, sources, that he dredges up with intimidating speed and thoroughness from his encyclopedic memory and bulging file cabinets.

Ed honors his own professors, especially Moshe Held and H.L. Ginsberg, in his work and in his teaching. Ed has taught his students to emulate their methods and to value their insights. Ed has also taught us by example to honor our teachers as he honors his.

Among the many contributions they have made to civilization, the Sumerians recorded the first words for "Professor," and "Mentor." As the Sumerians used to say, for me Ed is an UMMIA, an expert Professor, and an AB-BA E₂ DUB-BA-A, a "School Father." For all of his students, Ed is a paradigm for advisor, mentor, scholar.