

# 'An Extraordinary Scholar'

DAVID SACHS  
*Editorial Assistant*

**P**rof. Daniel J. Elazar, despite being afflicted with polio as a young man, launched his astonishing dual-faceted academic career in Detroit.

An alumnus of Central High School and Wayne University, one of his first academic pursuits was rebuilding the library collection at the United Hebrew Schools, where his late father Albert was superintendent and his late mother Nellie taught.

Prof. Elazar, 65, died Dec. 2 of lymphoma in his Jerusalem home.

Through struggle and perseverance, he overcame the effects of his illness to become a preeminent scholar in his two areas of interest: Jewish communal life and Western-style government.

He was retained by many Jewish agencies to research the history and functioning of Jewish communities and organizations.

On the political front, he advised the governments of Israel, the United States, Cyprus and post-apartheid South Africa on federalism, the theory behind free republics. In 1986, President Reagan named him to the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

Prof. Elazar held prominent academic chairs in his two different disciplines in the United States and Israel and built

think tanks in both countries. He authored or edited scores of books on both topics.

"He was an amazing guy," said Mandell L. "Bill" Berman of Franklin, board member of one of Prof. Elazar's think tanks, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, a research source utilized by many Jewish organizations. "He had one of the best minds I've ever seen."

Prof. Elazar was born in Minneapolis and came to Detroit with his family in 1948 at the age of 13. He left six years later to earn a master's and doctorate in political science at the University of Chicago.

His academic interest in both federalism and Judaism was manifested early in Detroit. Younger brother David Elazar remembers the 15-year-old Daniel writing a book for him explaining the Civil War and the saving of the American federal system in terms the eight-year-old could understand.

An Orthodox Jew of Sephardic heritage, Prof. Elazar also dedicated himself to aiding the Jewish community. His work in setting up the library at the

United Hebrew Schools, eventually located in the Esther Berman building at Schaefer and Seven Mile, led to the book *A Classification System for Libraries of Judaica*, co-authored with his brother David, that remains the standard for Jewish librarians.

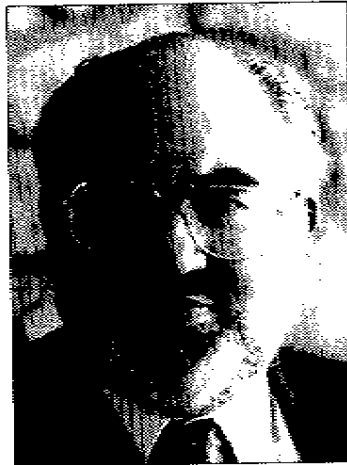
He went on to become a professor of political science both at Temple University in Philadelphia and at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Prof. Elazar established and served as president of the Jerusalem Center think tank, which also had offices in Philadelphia, to research Jewish political studies. His 1976 book, *Community and Polity*, is regarded as the classic in-depth study of

the American Jewish community.

He also founded the Center for the Study of Federalism at Temple University, whose research has assisted governments worldwide.

Although his two areas of expertise appear divergent, Prof. Elazar was said to have believed that they were really closely related. He felt that the Jewish tradition of governmental leaders respecting the covenant between God and the Jewish people gave rise to the



*Daniel J. Elazar*

theory of republican federalism, in which power emanates from people upward.

"Dan saw a kind of Jewish imprint on Western politics and all the places where Western politics became the most humane and freedom-seeking and self-governing," said Prof. Alan Mittleman, a fellow at the Jewish think tank in Philadelphia.

Armand Lauffer, a social work professor at the University of Michigan, who worked with Prof. Elazar on research projects, said, "Dan was an extraordinary scholar who had an enormous influence on a lot of people. He made his insights accessible and available to both academics and Jewish leaders, and Jewish communal service worldwide as well as to political leaders in Israel."

Prof. Elazar was wheelchair-bound for the last decade, due to post-polio syndrome, but did not slow down. David Elazar credits hard work for his brother's success in overcoming the disease as a young man and later in life.

"He had a strong determination and a lot of help from his family," said David Elazar. "His wife, Harriet, was always devoted and helpful not only in his disabilities but in all his work."

In addition to his wife, Prof. Elazar is survived by his children, Naomi, Yonatan and Gideon; three grandchildren; and brother and sister-in-law David and Ruth Elazar. □