

## JTS Commencement, May 1999

DR. ALICE SHALVI

DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS, honoris causa

Graced by an incisive mind, eloquent language and a broad vision, you have made an enormous impact on the culture of the State of Israel. Born in pre-Nazi Germany, you spent many of your early years in England where you pursued graduate studies in both English literature and social work. Your doctorate in English literature, earned at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, launched an academic career in which you have taught with great distinction both at your Israeli alma mater and at Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Never an "ivory tower" academic, you have consistently worked for the betterment of Israeli society. Among the major voluntary responsibilities you have undertaken are the principalship of Pelech, a unique progressive high school for religious girls in Jerusalem, and the chair of the Israel Women's Network, a broad-spectrum coalition and advocacy group dedicated to advancing the status of women in Israel. Through these projects you have put into action your lifelong commitment to feminism.

Your recent association with Masorti Judaism and the Schechter Institute, our Jerusalem affiliate, has enabled you to bring together many of your values and interests. You serve there as rector, continuing your activism, implementing programs, working with faculty and students alike. Your teaching there, particularly in modern midrash, enables you to turn your literary training to our sacred texts, wresting from them new meaning, evoking diverse points of view.

You have received many honors, among them the President's Award for outstanding contributions to the quality of life in Israel, the Grunzweig Prize awarded by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, and the Rothfield Education for Peace Prize. Women's League for Conservative Judaism has honored you with its Kol Hakavod Award; Hadassah, with its Women of Distinction Award; and the National Council of Jewish Women, with its Women Who Dared Award.

Yours is a vision of a vital Judaism, anchored in traditional texts and open to vibrant reinterpretation. Yours is the dream of a State of Israel, democratic, humane, egalitarian. Yours is the energy and wisdom to help bring your vision and your dream to fruition. Of you can it be truly said: "Her mouth is full of wisdom, her tongue with kindly teaching" (Proverbs 31:26).