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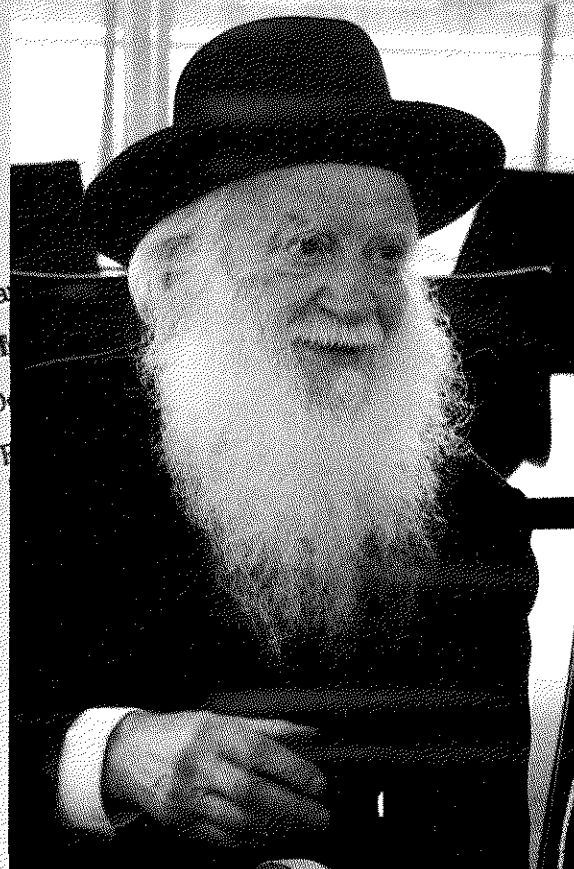
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Dear

Life

Dear

Dear



מי דאיש

careful with our speech.

He stood on a corner offering life
crowds, he responded that life is readil
money in the world—one need mere

led by the Chofetz Chaim zt"l. Thro
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ah, it is life itself. One who is mindful
family... for his friends and neighbors
happiness!

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muras Haloshon has:

a clear and concise form, both in He
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RABBI YEHUDA ZEV SEGAL, זכר צדיק לברכה:

A CHOFETZ CHAIM FOR OUR TIMES

Marking the First *Yahrzeit* of the Late Manchester *Rosh Yeshiva*—22 Shevat

AN APPARENT PARADOX

Any appreciation of the late Manchester *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Yehuda Zev Segal, זצ"ל, must begin with an apparent para-

Yonason Rosenblum, a regular contributor to JO, is the author of *Reb Yaakov*, a biography of Rabbi Kamenetsky, זצ"ל, and co-author of the recently released *Lieutenant Birbaum*, both published by ArtScroll. He is currently at work on a biography of the legendary Reb Elimelech ("Mike") Tress. Anyone wishing to be interviewed in connection with the book may contact him via *The Jewish Observer*. The author would like to thank the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this article: The *Rosh Yeshiva's* children and their spouses; his grandsons Binyomin and Ahron Ehrentreu; Yair Kruskal, Mordechai and Shimshon Moses, Michael Rothschild, Osher Sternlicht, and Menachem Weiss.

dox. Few in our generation were as scrupulous as he in their absolute devotion to Torah learning and the solitary, painstaking task of self-perfection. As a *bachur* in Mirrer Yeshiva, he was famed for never speaking in matters unrelated to learning during *seder* (learning sessions), and during the last decade of his life one of his *Yomim Nora'im* resolutions was not to spend a moment without thinking in Torah and *mussar*. Yet in the last fifteen years of his life, he frequently learned with a telephone on his *shtender* so that he could answer immediately the calls that came from around the world.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* had no interest *per se* in anything other than Torah.

He never read a newspaper. He simply assumed that if he needed to know something, someone would tell him. Yet if events were relevant to Jews anywhere in the world, he followed them closely. Asked whether he had relatives in *Eretz Yisroel* by someone struck by the intensity of his *davener* during the Gulf War, he replied in amazement, "*Klal Yisroel* is there." He had an oncologist's encyclopedic knowledge of cancer treatments gained over years of consultation with those suffering from the disease. Because it was relevant to a Jew, no detail of a course of treatment was ever forgotten.

The paradox, of course, is only apparent. For even the greatest *mitzva*

of all—the learning of Torah—must be put aside for a *mitzva* that cannot be done by another. Because those who came or called felt that no one else could offer the same consolation in times of tragedy, the same hope and *beracha* in difficult times, the same love to those alone and in need, the Manchester *Rosh Yeshiva* spent hours each day involved with the problems of individual Jews the world over. One's aspirations must be to Heaven, he used to say, just as the wings of the cherubim on the *Aron HaKodesh* were spread upwards. But at the same time, one must remember to keep his face turned towards his brothers, just as the faces of the cherubim were turned "each towards his brother."

I. THE MAKING OF A TZADDIK— A LIFE-LONG PURSUIT

Reading of the Chofetz Chaim today, sixty years after his passing, it is almost impossible to believe that such a Jew ever lived. Harder still is it to imagine that in our generation we should see another capable of expressing the Chofetz Chaim's devotion to the purity of speech and his overflowing love for his fellow Jew. And hardest of all is it to comprehend how that reflection of the Chofetz Chaim in our generation could have grown up, not in Eastern Europe, but attending the local Manchester public schools. (The *Rosh Yeshiva's* impeccable English became a tool for providing all those not comfortable in Yiddish the opportunity to talk freely to a *tzaddik* on a level hitherto inaccessible to them.) The *Rosh Yeshiva* achieved what he did solely through his single-minded determination to make himself a complete *eved Hashem*. That lofty goal was attained in small, incremental steps from his early youth to his last day. The steps to spiritual greatness which the *Rosh Yeshiva* took, at least initially, are ones of which we are all capable if our will to achieve that goal were only as strong as his.

From an early age the *Rosh Yeshiva* revealed an acute sensitivity to the spiritual aspect of life. In an uncharacteristic reference to himself, the *Rosh Yeshiva* once told a *talmid*



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about an incident that occurred when he was nine years old. He was crossing a street when suddenly a bus came barreling at him. The bus driver screeched to a halt only feet from the terrified boy. "That narrow escape made me realize that something that can be ended in a split second—our physical existence—cannot be the primary purpose for which we were created. Only our spiritual existence has ultimate meaning."

From that moment on, his entire focus was on the spiritual side of life. To young couples he had one central

piece of advice: make your home a spiritual place.¹ Do whatever you can to strengthen your spiritual aspira-

¹ With his own *Rebbeztin*, he learned half an hour of *Tanach* and *mussar* daily, and *Chumash-Rashi* on *leil Shabbos*. There was no question of their home being a spiritual place. At a time when the very concept of a *ben Torah* was unknown in England, the *Rebbeztin*, who was the daughter of a well-to-do *ba'al habayis*, insisted that she would marry only someone who would devote himself fully to learning Torah. She made the home a center of all the *chessed* activities in Manchester, and did not hesitate to take over as the cook in the *yeshiva* when the need arose, or when dozens of refugees from Germany arrived in Manchester.

tions—learn *mussar* together, study the *Chofetz Chaim* with the family at the *Shabbos* table. Invited on one of his trips to America to go see the Empire State Building, he had only one condition: If you can assure me that I will be asked in *Sharnayim*, “Did you see the Empire State Building?”

It All Begins With Hasmada

The life of the spirit begins with devotion to Torah learning. Asked once to what he attributed his success, the *Rosh Yeshiva* answered in one word: *hasmada*—diligence. As a young boy, he asked his mother not to send him in the traditional short pants to school. While his classmates frolicked at recess, he sat and learned, and he was afraid that he might accidentally touch his uncovered leg and lose the time from learning that it would take to wash his hands. Closing his *Gemora* late one night in the Mirrer Yeshiva, he noticed another *bachur* still learning. He thought to himself, “If he can keep himself awake to learn, so can I,” and returned to his studies.²

The *Rosh Yeshiva* was rarely seen without a *sefer* in his hand. His learning was not measured in minutes, but in seconds. His face glowed as he sang out the *Gemora*, and even when he was without a *chavrusa*, he patiently explained to himself aloud the step-by-step progression of the *Gemora*’s logic. So intense was his involvement in learning that he prayed in the *beracha* “*Chonein hada’as*,” that his mind be involved in learning even during sleep. To that end, he made a practice of reading some analytical work of one of the *acharonim* (later commentators) prior to going to sleep.

Neither pride nor intellectual laziness was ever allowed to get in the way of understanding. He did not hesitate to ask someone to repeat a *d’var Torah* if he was not sure he had fully understood it. If someone asked a good

question in learning, the *Rosh Yeshiva* never let him proceed immediately to the resolution, but would invariably say, “Let’s think about that. Let’s see if we can come up with a *teretz*.”

His concentration in learning was remarkable. At the end of an emotionally wrenching, twenty-five-minute telephone conversation, he could return to the same word in a long and complicated *Ritva* he had been at when he picked up the receiver.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* asked to be buried with a *luach* for *shemiras halashon* in his hand. “This is my passport for *Olam Habba*,” he said.

Care With The Mouth And The Eyes

If *hasmada* in Torah was the foundation stone of his spiritual greatness, *shemiras halashon* (purity of speech) was the ladder of his subsequent ascent towards spiritual perfection. As a young man, the *Rosh Yeshiva* thought to himself, “The *Chofetz Chaim* was the *gadol* and *tzaddik* of the previous generation. If he devoted himself to the cause of *shemiras halashon*, I too must work on this *midda*.”

In time, he came to view spreading the awareness of *shemiras halashon* as his life’s most important work. More than a quarter century ago, he began printing a *luach* (schedule) of daily study in the *Chofetz Chaim*’s halachic work on the *mitzvos* of proper speech, *Chofetz Chaim*, and his explication of the *mussar* and *hashkafa* of the *mitzvos*, *Shemiras Halashon*. It was a rare visitor who was not given a *luach* and urged to follow its course of daily study. The *Rosh Yeshiva* asked to be buried with a *luach* for *shemiras halashon* in his hand. “This is my passport for *Olam Habba*,” he said.

Whatever the problem, the *Rosh*



Rabbi Segal meeting with Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, I

Yeshiva almost always recommended, as part of his overall advice, that the person consulting him learn the works of the *Chofetz Chaim*. He invariably attributed the amazing *yeshuos* (salvations) that people experienced after receiving his *beracha* to the merit of the *Chofetz Chaim*. He was the animating force behind all the work of the *Chofetz Chaim* Foundation in America and the country-wide gatherings it organizes, as well as of the annual *Yom Iyun* for *shemiras halashon* in Jerusalem.

But before he could promote the observance of *shemiras halashon* for others, there was his own personal *avoda* with respect to this *mitzva*, an *avoda* that was lifelong. He worked on himself until the speaking of *lashon hora* was to him as abhorrent as the eating of *chazir*.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* always emphasized the pain that improper speech causes others, and sought to awaken in his listeners the capacity to empathize with a fellow Jew. Such identification with another Jew is the essence of the *mitzva* of loving one’s fellow as oneself. Thus the *Rosh Yeshiva*’s all-encompassing love for his fellow Jew—his ability to feel both their pain and their joy as his own—and his lifelong dedication to *shemiras halashon* went hand in hand, just as they did for the *Chofetz Chaim*.

That identification with another requires, at the same time, extirpating all the negative traits that create barriers between people and which underlie so much hurtful speech—

² In Mir, he had a late night *chavrusa* with Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz, זצ"ל, for a period of time, and learned *Yevamos* with Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman’s son Beinush, ז"ר, which brought him into contact with Reb Elchonon. Most importantly, he came under the sway of Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, known for his rigorous *mussar* and intense self-scrutiny.

particularly pride and envy. The *Rosh Yeshiva* recoiled from anything that might lead to pride. Honor made him physically ill. "Make yourself like dust to one and all," was a motto he lived by. When someone would confess to the *Rosh Yeshiva* that he or she envied others, he would tell them, "But what do you have from your envy? Pray that *Hashem* grant you what you are lacking, but, *chas v'shalom*, not that someone else not have it."

The *Rosh Yeshiva* was no less careful with respect to the *yeitzer hard's* other great tool: the eyes. He exer-



... with Rabbi Moshe Solovetichik, שליט"א

cised extreme care his whole life not to lose the vision of reality gained from his toil in Torah through the improper use of his eyes. Although near-sighted, he did not wear glasses when not learning or *davening*. He once missed a flight because he had not noticed that it was boarding. When he was asked why he had not checked the electronic board on which the flight schedule was listed, he replied that he had thought it was a TV. Television was anathema to him. He would not make a blessing in a room in which one was present.

The *Rosh Yeshiva's* simplicity and unfailing courtesy made women completely at ease in his presence. As a house guest, he did not hesitate to clear his own dishes. The wives of his *talmidim* were like daughters to him, and called him about everything, including bickering among the children. On the eve of one *talmid's* wedding, he said to the *kalla*, "Your

chassan is like a son to me. And that means you are like a daughter." Yet after some twenty years of close contact, he did not know what this "daughter" looked like, because—apart from his closest family—he never looked directly at a woman.³

II. THE YEARS AS ROSH YESHIVA: SHARING HIS SPIRITUAL WEALTH WITH OTHERS

In 1941, the *Rosh Yeshiva* became a *maggid shiur* in the Manchester Yeshiva in which his father, Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Segal, had been the *Rosh Yeshiva* since shortly after its founding in 1911. His new position marked the beginning of a second stage in his life—one in which his focus was on molding others, not just working on his own self-perfection. At the same time, the work on himself continued with unabated intensity. Indeed the intensity of that effort was the key to his influence on his *talmidim*.

With his father's passing in 1943, Reb Yehuda Zev was the logical choice as successor, but the trustees of the yeshiva were reluctant to ap-



... with Rabbi Shneur Kotler, זצ"ל

point him to the position. They feared that he was too "fanatical," not sufficiently open-minded, to work with the local *ba'alei battim*.

He made no effort to secure the position. To be a *rosh yeshiva*, he felt,

³The *Rosh Yeshiva* did not know what he himself looked like, for that matter. He once saw a picture of himself and asked, "Who is that Jew whose face radiates *yiras Shamayim*?"

one had to be fit for the position, and Heaven would reveal whether he was suited to be the *Rosh Yeshiva* or not. In such a situation, *hishtadlus* (human effort) is pointless. When other candidates were invited to Manchester, Reb Yehuda Zev treated them with every courtesy and honor. Not until 1950 was he appointed *Rosh Yeshiva*. He had apparently been found worthy by Heaven.

That episode from the beginning of his career as *Rosh Yeshiva* has an interesting parallel in the last decade of his life. A new yeshiva opened in Manchester, headed by one of the *Rosh Yeshiva's* most brilliant former *talmidim*. Given his position in the community, the *Rosh Yeshiva* could undoubtedly have prevented the new yeshiva from opening. But from the standpoint of *halacha* there was nothing improper in a new yeshiva, and he fiercely resisted any counsel that he oppose it.

More. He did everything in his power to help it, including assisting in fundraising. He even went to visit the new *Rosh Yeshiva* so that no one in the community would think that he felt any bitterness. He used to say that in *Hallel*, when he said "*Anna, Hashem hoshiya na*," that he had his own yeshiva in mind, and when he said "*Anna, Hashem hatzlicha na*," he had the other yeshiva in mind.

Years later, however, he confided to some close *talmidim* that the opening of the new yeshiva had been a test for him. How had he prevailed? He remembered a *vaad* (discussion session) of Rabbi Chaskell Levenstein from his days in the Mirror Yeshiva. Reb Chaskell had been discussing Rabbeinu Yona's comment in *Sha'arei Teshuva* concerning "those who hate *Hashem*." This group can include even those who are fully *shomer mitzvos*, writes Rabbeinu Yona. If someone resents it when he sees others striving in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, he is numbered among those who hate *Hashem*. "A yeshiva is a glorification of *Hashem's* name in the world," said the *Rosh Yeshiva*. "If I had done anything to prevent another yeshiva from flourishing, I would be referring to myself when I pray in *Shemoneh Esrei*, 'May Your enemies be cut off.'"

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His Role as Mashgiach

The Rosh Yeshiva was also the Mashgiach of the Yeshiva.⁴ He felt that parents had entrusted their boys to him and was as demanding with them as he was with his own sons. Those not at *davening* by "Baruch She'amar" would find their *tefillin* on the *bima*, and by "Yishtabach" they would be on the Rosh Yeshiva's *shtender*. He was no less strict about not making noise at night and disturbing others' sleep.

For all his strictness, however, no one knew better than the Rosh Yeshiva how hard it is to break a bad trait. At a gathering of yeshiva alumni, the chairman introduced the Rosh Yeshiva as guest speaker, expressing the hope that the effect of his words would last until the next year. "Halevai they should last until Maariv," the Rosh Yeshiva replied.

He never demanded that the *bachurim* be like him. To the contrary, he inveighed against wholesale resolutions beyond one's capacity. The key to spiritual growth, he taught them, is to go one step at a time. One *ernste kabbala* (serious resolution), no matter how small, that one treats as inviolable, was all that he asked.⁵ That resolution, he stressed, had to be bolstered by daily *mussar* study following the method of Rabbi Yisroel Salanter.

The Rosh Yeshiva had an aura of *kedusha* which could not be missed. Even non-religious people seeing him for the first time were invariably left speechless.

"After being in his presence," said one *talmid*, "it was impossible to remain the same person." From time to time the Rosh Yeshiva would go into one of the yeshiva dorm rooms to say a *beracha* without being heard or disturbed. One time he did so unaware that a *bachur* who was not feeling well was in the room. After hearing the Rosh Yeshiva say "Asher Yatzar," the

⁴ Many of his *shmuessen* have been adapted in English by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, published by ArtScroll/Mesorah Publishers in the two-volume *Inspiration and Insight*.

⁵ In light of the Rosh Yeshiva's insistence that a *kabbala* had to be realistic, we can fully appreciate what it meant when he took on late in life not to move either a hand or a leg without some particular *kavana* (intention).

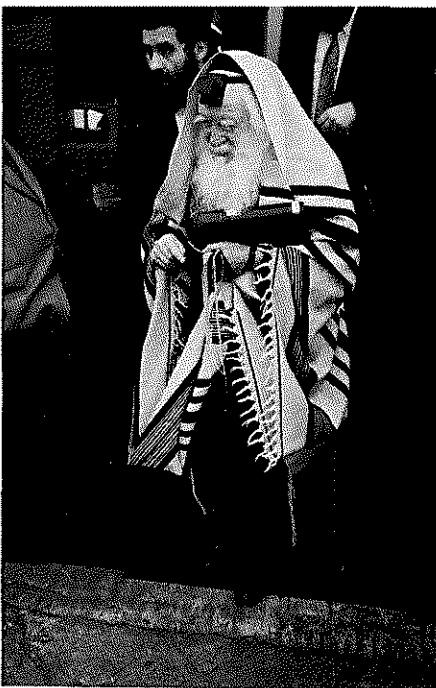
bachur thought to himself, "With such an *oved Hashem* in the world, how can I stay in bed?" and immediately returned to the *beis midrash*.

When someone would confess to the Rosh Yeshiva that he or she envied others, he would tell them, "But what do you have from your envy? Pray that Hashem grant you what you are lacking, but, *chas v'shalom*, not that someone else not have it."

All the World a Mussar Sefer

He showed the *bachurim* how the words of Torah had to be alive for them. Every day he learned *Mishnayos*, not only for the *aliyas neshama* of his teacher Rabbi Chaskell Levenstein and the Chofetz Chaim, whom he met once and whom he sought to emulate, but also for the authors of *Sha'arei Teshuva* and *Mesillas Yesharim*. The words of those works burned in him as if he had heard them from Rabbeinu Yona and *Ramchal* themselves, and he thought of himself as having sat at their feet. *Talmidim* were often amazed to find that the masterful word portrait of a *Gemora* which might take the Rosh Yeshiva half an hour to present was based on no more than two lines. Having lived through the experience the *Gemora* conveys, he shared every nuance of the episode with the boys.

The entire creation cried out to him words of *mussar*. The sight of a tree being uprooted by a bulldozer was proof that with enough strength and determination, even a bad *midda* could be corrected. Walking through



a hospital one day with some *talmidim*, the *Rosh Yeshiva* came across some Muslims prostrate on the floor for their afternoon prayers. "There is no such thing as coincidence," the *Rosh Yeshiva* told them. "There must be a lesson for us in this sight: See how these Moslems are unembarrassed to pray in a public place in this way. Yet if we have to *daven* in public we look for the most inconspicuous corner or a telephone booth. Should we be less proud than they are?"

Someone once mentioned to him that a patient in neurosurgery suddenly started singing an aria from an Italian opera. On being asked about this later, she recalled that as a young child she had been taken to an opera! Though fascinated by this information, his first question was: How can I use this? The next day he had an answer. Our *every* thought leaves an impression on our soul even though we do not feel it. When *Dovid Hamelech* prayed to *Hashem*, "From the hidden things cleanse me," it was to this indelible, but long forgotten, impression on his soul that he was referring.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* provided a constant model to the *bachurim* of what it meant to be a *bar aliya*, someone always striving to achieve yet another level of *ruchnius* (spirituality). His *mussar shmuessen*, one sensed, were not so much addressed to them, as to himself. *Talmidim* could often tell what *midda* the *Rosh Yeshiva* was

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working on by the message he pounded home week after week.

The Rosh Yeshiva always seemed open to a new approach in *avodas Hashem*. A few weeks before his *petira* (passing), one of the Rosh Yeshiva's grandsons told him of a *hiddur* (enhancement) in the *mitzva* of putting on the *tallis* in the morning. The Rosh Yeshiva immediately began practicing the new way so that he would be sure to do it properly in *davening* the next morning. That he had been putting on a *tallis* another way for sixty years was irrelevant.

He was, said the Steipler Gaon, זצ"ל, the pillar of *tefilla* in our generation. Every word was said with complete *kavana*. He used to translate the words into Yiddish as he *davened*, and he never made any *beracha* without reading it from a card or *siddur*. He was once found unconscious early in the morning. After he was revived, the person who found him wanted to see whether his memory had been impaired and asked him where he had been in the *davening* when he blacked out. The Rosh Yeshiva was able to point to the exact word at which he had fainted.

Tapes of his saying *Ahava Rabba* circulated throughout the world's *yeshivos*. "I know I don't *daven* like other people," the Rosh Yeshiva once confided to a son, "but I simply can't help myself." By the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, he was already crying at the thought of standing in the

By the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, he was already crying at the thought of standing in the presence of the King. But if there was fear, there was also joy.

presence of the King. But if there was fear, there was also joy. The Rosh Yeshiva could practically dance as well in *davening*. Carrying the *sefer Torah* and reciting "*Or zarua latzaddik...*" on *Kol Nidre* night, the fear and sense of inadequacy on his face was unmistakable. At the end of *Ne'ila* were tears of longing for the departed *Shechina*.

The *Gemora* says that the honor of one's *rebbe* takes precedence over that of one's father: a father gives one life in this world; a *rebbe* gives one life in the World to Come. The Rosh Yeshiva's *talmidim* had a visceral sense of this truth. They knew that he had transformed them into the type of Jew they would never have become without him. Like a father, the relationship with the Rosh Yeshiva was lifelong. He was in regular communication with numerous *talmidim*.

When two brothers who phoned every *Erev Shabbos* were sitting *shiva*, the Rosh Yeshiva called and said, "This week you can't call me, so I am calling you." Children of *talmidim* were treated as his own grandchildren.⁶

Above all, the Rosh Yeshiva remained concerned with the spiritual growth of his family and his *talmidim*. He and one former Manchester *bachur* committed themselves to a fixed daily schedule of *Gemora*, *Mishnayos*, *Rambam*, *Nach*, and *Mishna Berura*. And this is only one *talmid* of the many with whom the Rosh Yeshiva shared a similar *kevius* (scheduled session). One group of former *talmidim*—all of whom work—has already put out fifteen volumes of *chiddushei Torah* from their weekly *chabura* (presentation before a small discussion group). The Rosh Yeshiva would listen by phone to each *chabura* before it was given. "I'm a good business man," he used to say, referring to the learning of his former *talmidim*. "I have shares in many businesses."

⁶No matter how many people he treated as family, to his children and grandchildren he was a warm and caring father and grandfather, and this relationship was not diminished in any way by the calls made on his time or by the efforts he expended on behalf of the *Klal*. Indeed, he would urge other *askanim* (activists) not to let their *Klal* work be undertaken at the expense of their own families.

After the shattering early loss of his *Rebbetzin*, the Rosh Yeshiva had to be both father and mother to his children, only one of whom was married.

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He was, said the Steipler Gaon, זצ"ל, the pillar of tefilla in our generation.

III. FATHER TO KLAL YISROEL

In the late 1970s, the *Rosh Yeshiva* began to lessen his direct involvement in Manchester Yeshiva, and turned over the day-to-day responsibilities of *Rosh Yeshiva* to his son-in-law, Rabbi Meir Zvi Ehrentreu. Far from retiring, however, his frame of reference simply expanded. In that last decade and a half of his life, he belonged to all of *Klal Yisroel*.

The sheer number of Jews with whom he was in contact around the world was astounding. On visits to America, it was not uncommon for him to receive visitors for hours on end—sometimes for over eight hours straight. Before *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, he answered as many as a hundred callers a day. Scores of people came to Manchester, many from abroad, for the experience of seeing him and hearing him speak and *daven* on the *Yomim Nora'im*. On *Kol Nidre* night, he gave each person in *shul* a personal *beracha*, something which took four hours. And when he was done, he taught a *shiur* on the *avoda* of the day.

Even first-time phone callers described the experience of talking to him as "like being hugged on the phone." Callers did not feel at all hurried, and the *Rosh Yeshiva* insisted on hearing every detail that might be relevant. Of those who travelled from abroad for the *Rosh Yeshiva's* *levaya*, some had never met him other than by phone, and yet they too felt that they received from him the unconditional love of a parent for a child.

He instantly recognized the voices of callers and would ask them about everything they had discussed during the previous call, though that might have been months earlier. The *Rosh Yeshiva's* instant recall of them and their situation conveyed how important their concerns were to him. The *Rosh Yeshiva* once went to the hospital to visit the parents of a little boy

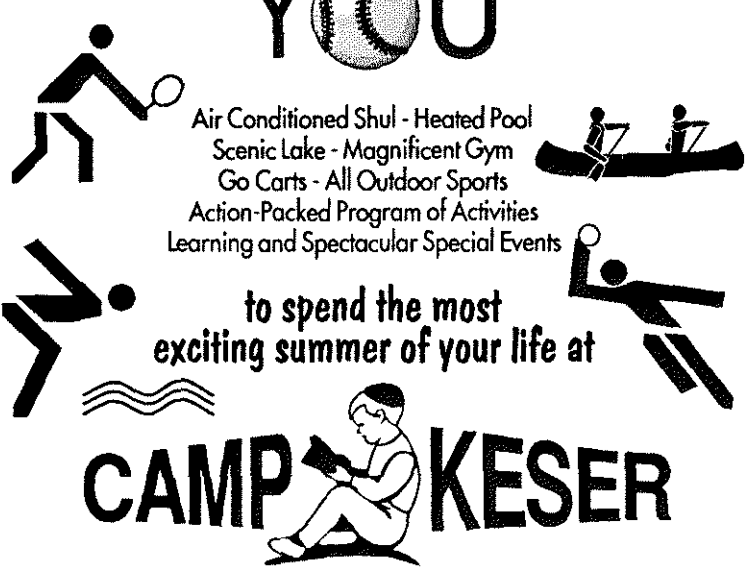
who was in a coma. The boy recovered, and nine years later, when in Manchester for a *Pirchei* convention, he visited the *Rosh Yeshiva*. When he told him his Hebrew name, the *Rosh Yeshiva* immediately asked him if he was the same little boy who had been hospitalized nine years earlier.

Feeling the Pain of His Brothers

"And Moshe grew, and he went out to his brothers and saw their suffering..." (*Shemos* 2,11) The measure of Moshe's grow-

ing up—of his *gadlus*—was his ability to personally experience the suffering of his brothers. And so it was with the *Rosh Yeshiva*. He reacted with genuine pain to the news of Jewish suffering. When he heard bad news, he would emit an involuntary groan and, clutching his heart, mutter, "Oy vei, oy vei." A father once called him to tell him that his son had been *niftar*, and the *Rosh Yeshiva* remained sobbing with him on the phone for fifteen minutes. Sometimes at the end of the day, he would go to bed totally exhausted from the weight

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of the suffering that he had made his own.

When he heard of a Jew with *tzores*, his immediate response was to see if there was something he could do to alleviate any part of that suffering. In Basel for a grandson's wedding, he heard of a young boy who was ill. Every day of his stay, the *Rosh Yeshiva* went to visit him, and let himself be photographed with the boy. Another time, the *Rosh Yeshiva* learned that a ten-year-old boy whose family had suffered a terrible tragedy was in Manchester. There was a blizzard that day in Manchester, with high snow drifts, fierce winds, and treacherous ice underfoot. Despite the conditions, the seventy-five-year-old *Rosh Yeshiva* made his way on foot to the house in which the boy was staying to speak to him and give him a blessing. The boy was not home, and the *Rosh Yeshiva* refused to let him be sent to him. Instead, he trudged back, later in the day, in the dangerous conditions, to talk to the boy.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* did not wait to be called with news of how someone was faring. He would pick up the phone himself to find out how this one's bone-marrow transplant had gone in Seattle or another's chemotherapy at Sloan Kettering. One *Erev Shabbos*, he received a call from Rockland County that a father of twelve had been in a serious accident. On *Motza'ei Shabbos*, the *Rosh Yeshiva* could not go to sleep until he knew the condition of the father. He kept describing over and over again the pain of a family eagerly awaiting their father's return for *Shabbos*, and then learning that he was lying in a hospital in critical condition. Though he had only the man's Hebrew name, which he had been given for the purpose of *davening*, he did not go to sleep until a half dozen hospitals had been called and the man located. When he heard that the man's condition had improved significantly, the *Rosh Yeshiva's simcha* could not be contained.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* had an unerring sense of precisely what to say or do to make people feel better. Once he went to visit a terminally ill man whom he had never met. In the course of the

Even first-time phone callers described the experience of talking to him as "like being hugged on the phone." Callers did not feel at all hurried, and the *Rosh Yeshiva* insisted on hearing every detail that might be relevant.

visit, he picked up a *siddur* which the man's young son had been awarded for his *davening*. He read the inscription in the *siddur* excitedly to the person who had accompanied him. Then he went over to the boy's picture on the wall, hanging where the father could see it, and said to the father, "You must be so proud of him. Is he here? Do you mind if I give him a blessing?" Before he left, he also asked the man whether he could talk to his wife for a few minutes to encourage her.

A baby was born with severe internal problems requiring immediate surgery. The surgery was scheduled for the baby's third day. On that day, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was travelling by train from Manchester in the north to Bournemouth in the south of England, via London. Arriving in the London train station, he asked to be taken immediately to the hospital so that he could give encouragement to the parents. He arrived just as the parents learned, after a full day of waiting, that the operation had been postponed to the next day. The infant's nerve-racked father went out to the hospital lobby to catch his breath just as the *Rosh Yeshiva* was coming in. After recovering from the completely unexpected shock of seeing the *Rosh Yeshiva*, the father explained to the *Rosh Yeshiva* what had happened. The *Rosh Yeshiva's* first words were just what were required to set the father at ease: "*Baruch*

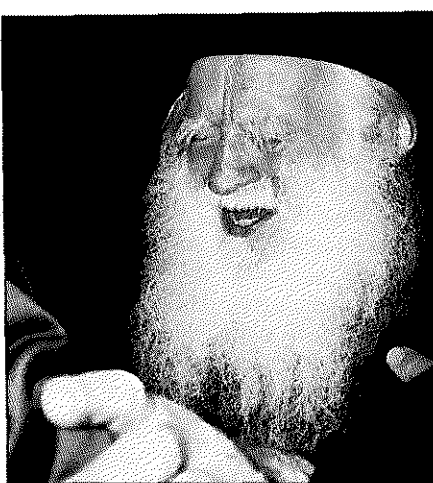
Hashem; the *Malach Raphael* [the Angel of Healing] was busy. Tomorrow will be a better day."

At the end of a very long day of receiving visitors, the last two people in line were a recently widowed young woman who had been left with several small children, and her deceased husband's sister, who was getting married the next day. The *kalla* had also lost her father. Addressing the widow first, the *Rosh Yeshiva* told her that he would like to give her children a *beracha* and asked if she could bring them the next day. Talking to the obviously nervous *kalla*, he asked her whether she would like him to come to her wedding, and he took down the address. Despite a grandchild's *Sheva Berachos* the following night, the *Rosh Yeshiva* came to the wedding at 11:00 p.m. Pandemonium broke out when he entered, as he was immediately surrounded by a throng of excited *yeshiva bachurim*. When the excitement of his arrival had abated temporarily, he asked to talk to the overjoyed *kalla* and her mother. The *kalla* kept repeating, "I knew the *Rosh Yeshiva* would come! I just knew it!"

That incident was typical of the way the *Rosh Yeshiva* made himself into a father to orphans. A young Englishman became a *ba'al teshuva* in *Eretz Yisroel*. Forced to return to England by his father's death, he found his native city lacking in any substantial religious community—an acute shortcoming for a relatively recent *ba'al teshuva* with no firm grounding in *Yiddishkeit*. Someone recommended that he discuss his situation with the Manchester *Rosh Yeshiva*. At their first meeting, the *Rosh Yeshiva* suggested that he come to live in Manchester, and told him, "You have no father. So I will become your father. And I'll take care of whatever you need."

Hashem Fulfills the Will of Tzaddikim

In his *hesped* (eulogy) for the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Mattisyahu Solomon, the *Mashgiach* of Gateshead Yeshiva, drew the connection between his powerful empathy with the suffering of other Jews and



the efficacy of his *berachos*. When Hashem sees one of His *tzaddikim* in pain, said Rabbi Solomon, He tries to remove that pain. For that reason, the intensity of pain that the *Rosh Yeshiva* felt at the suffering of other Jews was often the vehicle for their salvation. A *bachur* once told the *Rosh Yeshiva* that he had been sick, but had not told the *Rosh Yeshiva* because he did not wish to disturb him. The *Rosh Yeshiva* replied, "The more I share your *tzar* (pain), the faster you'll get better."

The thousands of Jews around the world who had personal contact with the *Rosh Yeshiva* were drawn not just by his warmth but by the feeling that his *berachos* would not go unanswered. A young *kollel* fellow whose wife had just been diagnosed as having a life-threatening disease went to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל, for a *beracha*. Reb Moshe told him, "I can't help you, but there is a *Yid* in Manchester whom it is worth asking for a *beracha*."

Though the *Rosh Yeshiva* often dismissed his blessings as just designed to bring comfort or encouragement to the one being blessed, he apparently knew better. He once told his son that he had just received a visit from a young couple who were having problems with *parnassa*. His son asked him what he had done for them. The *Rosh Yeshiva* replied, with a sense of assurance, "I gave them a *beracha*."

Many times the *Rosh Yeshiva* said he did not know himself the reason for the advice he gave. "My heart tells me," was as much as he would say, although he did admit to a "*gevaldige siyata d'Shemaya*."

A brilliant *bachur* in Gateshead

Yeshiva was critically ill with cancer and not responding to treatment. His parents went to the *Rosh Yeshiva* who told them, "If you will *makdish* (dedicate) him to learning, he will get better." The young man's parents believed that the time had come for him to start preparing to earn a livelihood, but in light of the desperate situation, agreed to the *Rosh Yeshiva's* request. Later on, when *davening*, the *Rosh Yeshiva* was overheard saying, "*Ribono Shel Olam*, I promised!"

That same day, the specialist who was handling the young man's case

broke his leg and was replaced by a less senior doctor. The second doctor recommended a completely new course of treatment, which was ultimately successful. The *bachur* has gone on to become a major *talmid chacham* and raise a large family. That story is just one of dozens like it.

A business associate of a *ba'al teshuva* whom the *Rosh Yeshiva* treated like a son was considering becoming *shomer Shabbos*, but was concerned that he could not afford the lost earnings from closing his business on *Shabbos*. The *Rosh Ye-*

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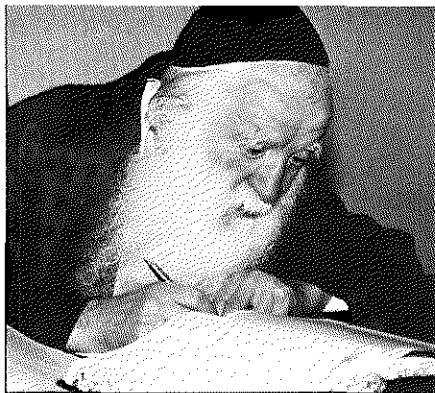
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shiva asked him what his yearly income was and assured him that he would earn the same amount the following year without keeping his business open on *Shabbos*. Early in the morning of the man's very first *Shabbos*, he was awakened by the doorbell. Standing on his doorstep was a policeman, who informed him that his premises were on fire and that he should come with him immediately. At first the man panicked. But just then, he later related, he had a vision of the *Rosh Yeshiva's* face smiling and wishing him a "*Gut Shabbos*." That vision calmed him, and he told the policeman that he could not come with him because it was *Shabbos*. It

subsequently turned out that a pile of rags in an old wooden storage shed beyond the back of the main building had ignited, causing an immense amount of smoke to spew forth, but negligible damage.

DEATH WITH A KISS

The *Rosh Yeshiva* used to pray, and ask others to pray for him, that he maintain all his faculties until his last moment. He frequently expressed the hope that the merit of helping others would protect him from ever becoming dependent on others.

During his last months, he worked with undiminished zeal; he seemed to have sensed his days were limited. In a Wednesday night *shiur* he gave, two days before his passing, he departed from the regular topic to discuss *Olam Habba*... His daughter living in America had been planning for a while to come to England to visit her father, but did not finalize arrangements. She arrived in England, with

two of her children, the day before the *Rosh Yeshiva's* *petira*.

He seemed to be spurred to complete whatever tasks he felt were left to be done. He was very active in organizing protests against grave desecrations in Jerusalem in the months immediately preceding his *petira*. And he made repeated calls to a *talmid* in Jerusalem in his final weeks to urge him to publish a letter of Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, in which Reb Elchonon writes in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that a boy and girl should not meet for a *shidduch* prior to everything having been agreed to by the parents.

His mind functioned fully until the very end. An hour before his fatal stroke, he was still meeting with visitors from abroad. His regular *Erev Shabbos* callers noticed a slight slurring of his speech, signalling the onset of the stroke, but even after one side of his body was completely paralyzed, he still could signal to his daughter to put the telephone away for *Shabbos*.

The *Rosh Yeshiva* had a lifelong dread of inconveniencing others. For many years he shared a house with his eldest daughter and son-in-law, Rabbi Ehrentreu. The *Rosh Yeshiva* had great respect for his son-in-law, and he would go out of his way not to trouble him. It was noted at the time, that had the *Rosh Yeshiva* passed away at home, his son-in-law—a *kohein*—would have had to leave the house. But just as he would have wished, he passed away in the hospital shortly after having arrived by ambulance.

The passing of every *gadol* leaves his generation orphaned. But rarely is the loss felt so personally as it was at the passing of the Manchester *Rosh Yeshiva*. As one *talmid* put it, "I telephoned the *Rosh Yeshiva* every week. Sometimes it was just to say '*Gut Shabbos*.' Invariably, the *Rosh Yeshiva* sent a *beracha* to the family. I visited him whenever I could because I knew that one day he would no longer be there. And when that happened, I knew there would never be anyone else who cared about me as deeply as he did."

It was a feeling shared by thousands around the world. ■

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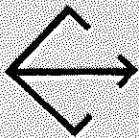
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