

Harav Yehudah Aryeh Treger, zt"l

A tribute for the *sheloshim*

The Antwerp community was greatly saddened a month ago by the news of the *petirah* of Harav Yehudah Aryeh Treger, zt"l. The Torah world has lost an outstanding *talmid chacham* who represented a living link with the postwar *Gedolei Yisrael* who lived in Eretz Yisrael.

Harav Treger was fondly known in Antwerp as "the *Rosh Yeshivah*." He led *Yeshivas Etz Chaim*, Wilrijk, with distinction for more than half a century, influencing generations of *bachurim*.

Rav Yehudah Aryeh Treger was born in 1934 in the Polish town of Lenchna. His father, Reb Avrohom Treger, z"l, was closely connected to the great Chassidic courts of Kotzk, Ishbitz and Amshinov. His son Yehudah Aryeh learned at the feet of many Litvish *Gedolei Torah*, but he was able to draw closer to him the hearts of every *bachur* from every background.

In 1935 his parents moved to Eretz Yisrael, settling in Yerushalayim, thus escaping the destruction that soon engulfed Europe. Yehudah Aryeh learned in the Etz Chaim Cheder and later in the famous Etz Chaim Yeshivah, from the Baal Gidulei Shmuel and the Baal Darkei Dovid, zt"l, among other great *talmidei chachamim*.

While still a *bachur*, he acquired a reputation as an outstanding *maspid* who was able to plumb the depths of a *sugya* with outstanding clarity. Yehudah Aryeh absorbed every drop of Torah that he received from his *rebbeim* with an unquenchable thirst. In 1946, he was invited by Harav Aharon Kotler to join the small group of exceptional *bachurim* who formed the initial *shiur* of Lakewood Yeshivah that Rav Aharon had just established in America. Although his parents consented, there was no opportunity for their son to travel, and he remained in Yerushalayim.

In 1953, he joined Slabodka Yeshivah in Bnei Brak and became a *talmid* of Harav Mordechai Shulman, zt"l. In addition to the actual words of Torah that he received from his *rebbeim*, Rav Yehudah Aryeh had the ability to absorb their deeper *derech halimud*, which he was later able to transmit in his *shiurim* to the *talmidim*. At the age of 18, he had already mastered many *Masechtos*, and knew by heart 800 *blatt* of *Gemara*. He was also particularly close to the Chazon Ish, zt"l, and in later years he vividly described the greatness that was contained in the clarity of the learning of the Chazon Ish, as well as many of his *piskei halachah*.

In 1957, when he was 23, he attracted the attention of *Gadol Hador* Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, who chose him as a son-in-law. Harav Shlomo Zalman had a special affection for Rav Yehudah Aryeh. Even after the couple left Yerushalayim, Rav Yehudah Aryeh consulted and corresponded regularly with his father-in-law.

In 1962, when he was only 28, he received an invitation from the Antwerp *Mara d'Asra* Harav Chaim Kreiswirth, zt"l, to become *Rosh Yeshivah* in the local *Yeshivas Etz Chaim*. The yeshivah, situated in the nearby town of Wilrijk, was privileged to be led by Harav Yehudah Aryeh for about 50 years. His skill at expressing a complicated subject with clarity to all the *bachurim* was combined with exceptional *middos* and a finely tuned sense of *bein adam l'chaveiro*. On one occasion while he was still in Yerushalayim, a *bachur* from *chutz laAretz* was staying in his apartment for Pesach. On the second night, the *bachur* was given a separate table where he could make his second *Seder*. Rav Yehudah Aryeh realized that his guest would feel lonely, so he sat and spoke with him the entire evening.

During Rav Treger's tenure, the yeshivah gained a high reputation around the world, and the number of *bachurim* increased greatly. With the help of his distinguished *Rebbetzin, tlch"t*, he dedicated all his strength to the yeshivah and to learning Torah. For many years, they lived on the yeshivah premises. As Wilrijk is in the suburbs of Antwerp, they had few Jewish neighbours, but the *Rosh Yeshivah* was happy to be near the *bachurim* in order to care for them.

In his later years, they moved to Antwerp proper, where the *Rosh Yeshivah* continued unabated to be *marbitz Torah*. He regularly gave a popular *shiur* for local *baalei batim*, along with many other *shiurim* and *drashos*. Many people came to him for his sage advice. Indeed, Harav Chaim Kreiswirth greatly valued his opinion and often discussed communal matters with him. On one occasion, Reb Yankele of Pshevorsk, zy"a, commented that he admired the ability of Rav Yehudah Aryeh to appeal to every type of Yid, whether Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Litvish or Chassidish. They were all united together under the influence of the learning of the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

On many occasions, the *Rosh Yeshivah* bemoaned the fact that much of our authentic *masores hadoros* had been lost and destroyed in World War II. As a result of this, he felt that there was a lack of *achdus* among *Klal Yisrael*. However, as long as the *Rosh Yeshivah* was alive, he was himself a link with the previous generations, faithfully providing a living example of their ways.

In the last year of his life, he contracted a painful and incapacitating illness. In order to receive the best treatment, he moved with his *Rebbetzin* to the house of his son-in-law, Rav Reiss, in Lakewood. He was greatly venerated by the *Roshei Yeshivah* and *talmidei chachamim* there. Despite the

difficult treatment that he was receiving, the *Rosh Yeshivah* continued learning Torah with all his strength. In a poignant fulfillment of the invitation of Rav Aharon Kotler so many years before, he was even able to transmit a previously unknown *shiur* of Rav Aharon.

Rav Yehudah Aryeh was *niftar* on Monday after Pesach, and the *levayah* took place in front of Beth Medrash Govoha. Before the *aron* left for Eretz Yisrael, *hespedim* were delivered by Harav Aryeh Malkiel Kotler, *Rosh Yeshivah* Beth Medrash Govoha; Harav Yaakov Perlow, Novominsker Rebbe and a *mechutan* of the *niftar*; Rav Yitzchok Reiss, son-in-law; and Dr. M. J. Zelefsky, who had treated him during his illness.

In Yerushalayim, the *maspidim* included his two brothers-in-law, Rav Shmuel and Rav Avrohom Auerbach, and two of his sons, Rav Shimon and Rav Yitzchok Treger. Harav Aharon Schiff, Antwerp *Mara d'Asra*, was *maspid* the great loss of a true *baal achrayus* who undertook responsibility for the *kehillah* and the responsibility of transmitting Torah to *Klal Yisrael*. Harav Tuvia Weiss, *Gaavad Badatz*, and Harav Eliyahu Sternbuch, *Raavad Badatz*, were both *maspid* with their own personal recollections of the *niftar* from the time that they were *Dayanim* in Antwerp.

Harav Treger leaves behind his *eishes chayil*, who supported him and enabled him to achieve all that he did. His two sons and six daughters — Mrs. T. Lorencz, Mrs. C. Grylak, Mrs. A. Rosengarten, Mrs. R. Schreiber, Mrs. N. Reichenbach and Mrs. T. Reiss — are all themselves or are married to distinguished *talmidei chachamim* and *klei kodesh*. All his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren are following in the path that he showed them.

Yehi zichro baruch!

New Sefer Torah Dedicated to Nishmas Yisroel

Hundreds of people thronged the streets of Hendon on Sunday to join the *simchah* of the Winegarten family, who commissioned the writing of a *sefer Torah* in honor of the fourth *yahrtzeit* of their husband, father and grandfather, Mr. Shlomo Winegarten, zt"l. The Federation's Beis Hamedrash Nishmas Yisroel in Hendon was chosen by the family as the destination of the new *sefer Torah*, as Reb Shlomo was vice president of the Federation at the time of his *petirah* in 2011 and the family has a strong connection to the organisation. Indeed, his father, Mr. Moshe Winegarten, zt"l, was the founder of the organisation's first constituent synagogue after the end of World War II, establishing the Shomrei Hadath shul in Hampstead in 1946 (now led by Rabbi Moshe Mayerfeld).

The *kesivos ha'osios* was held at the home of Mr. Winegarten's daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Avromi Rosenfield. Many *chashuve Rabbanim* were invited to write letters, including the *Dayanim* of the Federation Beis Din, Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Lichtenstein and Dayan Moshe Elzas; Rav Chaim Isser Feldman; Rav Dovid Halpern and Rabbi Yeshaya Schlezinger.

Following the writing of the final letters, the procession made its way down Brent Street to Nishmas Yisroel,



(L to R) Mr. Alex Rosenfield, Rabbi Yeshaya Schlesinger, Dayan Yisroel Yaakov Lichtenstein and Mr. Avromi Rosenfield at the *kesivos ha'osios* of the new *sefer Torah* dedicated *l'ilui nishmas* Reb Shlomo Winegarten.

accompanied by lively music, flaming torches and flag-waving children.

Speaking before the event, Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft, Rav of Nishmas Yisroel, said, "We are thrilled that Family Winegarten has chosen us to host this new *sefer Torah*, *l'ilui nishmas*

Reb Shlomo. He was a *chashuve Yid* who worked tirelessly for the *tzibbur* and it is a great honor for us to be connected to his legacy through this *sefer Torah*."

The strong *kesher* between the Winegarten family and the Federation continues unabated, with Mr.

Winegarten's youngest child, Mr. Moshe Winegarten, currently holding the position of trustee of the organisation.

Recalling his father's tireless work for the *kehillah* (Mr. Winegarten was also president of the London Board of Shechita and founder of Shechita U.K.), he said, "When my father became vice president of the Federation five years ago he wanted to restore the organisation to its position as a bastion of *heimishe* Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy in the U.K. Nishmas Yisroel embodies those traits and as one of the newest Federation *shuls*, a symbol of the recent growth and vision of the organisation, it is a very fitting home for a *sefer Torah* dedicated in his memory."

Rabbi Avi Lazarus, CEO of the Federation, added, "There was a wonderful atmosphere of *achdus* and *simchah*, with Federation members from Edgware and Golders Green also attending the event alongside the Nishmas *kehillah*, to celebrate the new *sefer Torah* and to honor a man who did so much — not only for the Federation, but for the entire *tzibbur*."

Following the procession Rabbi Tugendhaft welcomed the new *sefer Torah* to his *shul* with *hakafos* and *Tehillim*. The day concluded with a festive *seudah* for close family and friends.