

A selection of the personal letters and papers of the late Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Chaim Berlin/Kolel Gur Arye, Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל, was recently published in bookform—*Pachad Yitzchok: Igaros uKesuvim*. Rabbi Yisroel Mayer Kirzner, a *talmid* of Rabbi Hutner, who spent many years in close association with him, offers his comments on these writings as they reflect on their author. . . . The style and the formal reference to Rabbi Hutner ("the Rosh Yeshiva"), totally omitting mention of his name, reflect the classical deference of a *talmid* toward his *rebbe*.

One thinks of a *gadol beYisroel* in general and Rabbi Hutner in particular in terms of being a great Torah scholar; a *tzaddik* and *adam gadol* (great and righteous individual); the leader of a particular institution; and a leader on a *Klal Yisroel* format; but it is especially as a builder of men and mentor to them and as a teacher and expounder of Torah that Rabbi Hutner emerges in his letters. We make no attempt at completing the picture with the few words that follow. Rather, it is to extend the canvas on which Rabbi Kirzner sketches his impressions that we offer several lines on Rabbi Hutner's background and activities.

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Rabbi Hutner was heir to a rich, multi-faceted tradition that he successfully embodied within himself. He was born in 1904 to a Warsaw family celebrated for its Talmudic scholarship. He spent his teen years in Slobodka where *der Alter* (Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel) had a major impact on him, not only developing his potential for greatness but—by indirection, perhaps—teaching him how to develop others to their fullest. Also significant were the years Rabbi Hutner spent in *Eretz Yisroel*—in the Slobodka Yeshiva in Chevron, and close relationship with many of the *gedolim* then living in *Eretz Yisroel*. His attachment to *Eretz Yisroel* eventually achieved fruition in the Yeshiva Pachad Yitzchok, which he founded in Jerusalem in 1975.

After studying in Berlin, Rabbi Hutner arrived in the United States with his Rebbetzin in the early Thirties. He eventually joined the Mesivta Chaim Berlin as Rosh Yeshiva, elevating the institution into a throbbing *makom Torah*, transforming street kids into genuine *talmidei chachomim*. He founded the Kolel Gur Arye to crown the Mesivta and there he molded *talmidei chachomim* into inspiring teachers and effective leaders.

The analytical depth of his Talmudic study and novellae, as represented by his *sefer Toras Hanazir*, was complemented by his command of vast areas of *Aggada* and *Machshava* (philosophical thought). Many of his *maamotrim* (discourses on philosophical and ethical themes) were eventually published in the six-volume *Pachad Yitzchok*.

Rabbi Hutner's counsel was sought in many communal matters, and he assumed an active role in the *Moetzes*

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner

זכר צדיק לברכה

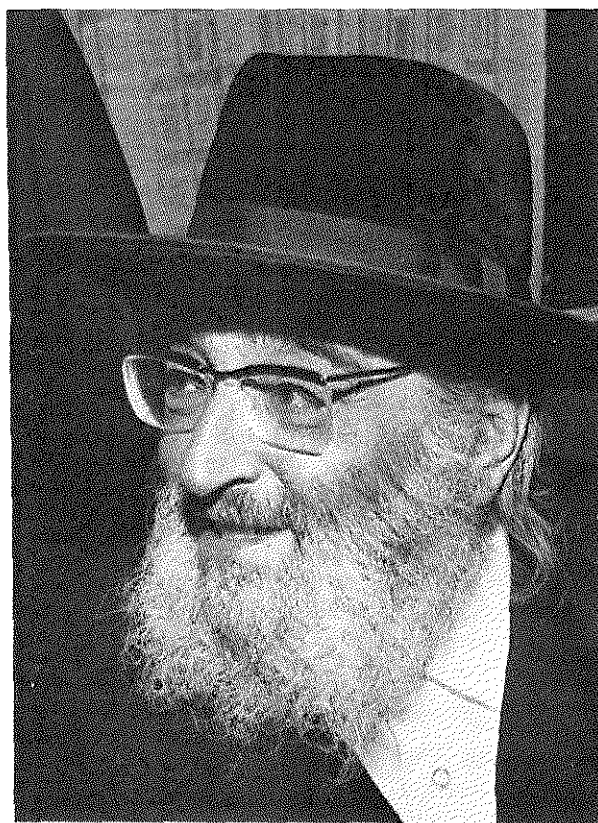


Photo: Kalman Zeines

on the occasion of
his first Yahrtzeit 20 Kislev

Gedolei HaTorah of Agudath Israel of America and in the leadership of Torah Umesorah. To truly assess Rabbi Hutner's commitment to communal affairs and *Klal Yisroel* concerns, however, one should not search for his name on letterheads or committee memberships. Rather, one need only take note of the prominent involvement of his many *talmidim* in top-level positions in yeshivos, pulpits, and communal institutions, where he directed them.

Yet the sum of these parts are not equal to the whole. In the final analysis, the greatness of a *gadol* remains elusive.

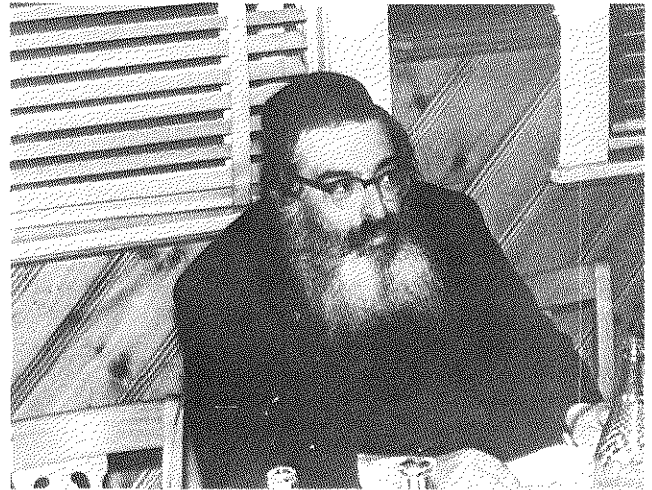
By the Writing Desk of the Master: Reflections on *Pachad Yitzchok: Igaros Ukesavim*

Unsystematic Reflections

The publication of this volume of letters and other shorter writings of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל has aroused an unusual—even an extraordinary—degree of interest in the Torah world. *Talmidim* and other *b'nei Torah* alike have displayed a keen eagerness to secure a copy of this new *Pachad Yitzchok*. And an apparently common experience has been that once one has begun to peruse it, one discovers the *sefer* to be extremely difficult to put down. Whence stems the fascination which this volume holds? What significance does it bear, for *talmidim*, for *b'nei Torah* in general, for the wider Torah public? What historical light does this collection of letters shed on the post-war renaissance of Torah in this country and elsewhere—a renaissance in which the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל played so central a role? What lessons does it hold for present and future leaders of the Torah community? What does this volume reveal about this Torah giant of our time? These are certainly legitimate questions; but definitive answers to these questions are not to be looked for in the following pages. Quite apart from other overwhelming inadequacies, this writer is—as one whose life bears the decisive and indelible imprint of close to thirty years of unmerited *chessed* extended by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל—utterly incapable of achieving the detachment presumably needed to discuss this volume exhaustively and dispassionately.

What follow, then, are no more than some unsystematic reflections induced by a first study of this volume. This study, undertaken close to the first *Yahrzeit* of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל (כי' כסלו) has proven to be an inspiring—even an exhilarating—experience. There is no doubt that one will, with Heaven's help, be led to return to this volume again and again in the years and decades to come. But the flood of memories, hopes,

dreams, regrets and resolutions, evoked by this first study at this particular date, will certainly never again be replicated. The merciless torrent of onrushing seasons and events can hardly fail to sap the vitality of these memories and dull the poignancy of these regrets. Vainly, perhaps, one seeks to salvage what one can.



"Sharp Blade ... Charming Poetry"

This volume consists of 264 letters and other writings. The unique character of this volume, as distinct from the other published volumes of the *Pachad Yitzchok* series, is spelled out in a brief, masterful introduction consisting of *divrei Torah* contributed by Rabbi Yonason David שליט"א (son-in-law of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל). The volume is divided into several sections: The first section contains letters dealing primarily with *Hilchos De'os Vechovas Halevavos* (duties of the heart and mind). (In the introduction there is a reference to a possible future volume of letters containing more general *halachic* exchanges with correspondents.) A second section con-

Yisroel Mayer Kirzner describes himself as "having had the privilege of maintaining contact with the beis hamidrash of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin-Kollel Gur Arye for many years". He is a professor of economics in New York University and author of several definitive text books on the subject.

sists of longer pieces that had already appeared in print elsewhere. A third section is comprised of letters providing encouragement, advice, or reproof to *talmidim* or others. The fourth and fifth sections consist of letters of personal or private character. Within each section, the pieces are arranged basically in chronological order, with some thirty of them bearing pre-war dates. Most of these latter pieces date back to the 'twenties or early 'thirties (and include a searing *maamar* published by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל after the '29 massacre at Hebron). The others are from the early 'fifties and later—so that a gap of some sixteen years makes the collection unavoidably incomplete.

A striking—and not necessarily superficial—feature of this volume is undoubtedly its unique writing style. In one letter (number 211) the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל expresses his admiration for his correspondent's ability to display simultaneously both the keenness of a sharp blade and the sweetness of charming poetry. This same combination is evident on every page of this volume: incisiveness and clarity clothed in an exquisite poetic prose. Each letter is a vivid reminder of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's habit of expressing himself in conversation

through the spontaneous deployment of countless expressions of *Chazal*; and these letters will surely confirm that a more elegant or eloquent vocabulary could hardly exist.

But the permanent importance of this volume does not reside, of course, in its felicitous style. This permanent importance is, at one level, no doubt to be looked for in the *divrei Torah* which make up the first and second sections. Comprising well over half the entire *sefer* these letters and writings relate directly or indirectly to the countless *maamorim* which the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל gave over a period of decades in his *beis midrash*. In these *maamorim* only a portion of which we have been fortunate enough to see in published form in the series of *Sifrei Pachad Yitzchok*—the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל gave us an approach to *Hilchos De'os Vechovas Halevavos* that has had profound influence upon generations of *talmidim* and which was central to his lifelong *avodas hachinuch*. In the *Sifrei Pachad Yitzchok*, and in the extant tapes of many unpublished *maamorim*, there is contained a body of work towering in stature, embracing a conceptual framework for understanding the Aggadic teachings of our sages ז"ל, together with a veritable wealth of applications, an enormous storehouse of sparkling insights. No one



Rabbi Hutner with רבי Moshe Feinstein and Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman שליט"א.

who has been exposed to this treasury—studded with gems culled and interpreted from the greatest figures of all time, especially, perhaps, the Ramban and Rabbeinu Yonah, the Maharal, and the Vilna Gaon—can fail to have glimpsed at least something of the grandeur of the perspective that the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל brought to *Hilchos De'os Vechovas Halevavos*.

The Uniqueness of This Perspective

It is not easy to identify the uniqueness of this perspective. Undoubtedly the qualities that distinguish this perspective for one student may be different from those that are seen as distinctive by a second student. For this writer the distinctiveness of the approach contained in the *ספרי פחד יצחק* may perhaps be briefly expressed in terms of a little parable.

Imagine a tense, three-day summit meeting of international political and military leaders, at which issues directly affecting the very fate of the world are at stake. A competent, insightful account and interpretation of these fateful seventy-two hours might fill volumes. But to provide such an account is no simple matter. An account produced by an observer not thoroughly aware of the global implications of the events to be described, or not thoroughly familiar with the historical background of the issues to be discussed, or not well-acquainted with the relevant patterns and norms of diplomatic behavior, can in no way do justice to the events of these tense three days. A competent account will cover even apparently mundane and routine events at the meeting, insofar as these may indirectly relate to the central issues at stake.

But it is not only the *preparation* of such a competent account that calls for these extraordinary qualities on the part of the narrators. Even the very *comprehension* of the narrative by listeners or readers calls for considerable familiarity with the issues being discussed at the summit meeting, with their global implications, and with the normal patterns of diplomatic procedures. To those unaware of all these matters, the most competent narrative itself must appear puzzling and pointless. For these readers, the scholar who can clarify the true import of the narrative, rendering what appeared puzzling and pointless immediately illuminating and vitally significant—such a scholar can certainly be described as unlocking a veritable treasury.

An Essential Element in the Drama of Millennia

At the hands of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל each and every *maamar Chazal* emerges simply and naturally as part of a unified account of matters and issues of awesome, cosmic significance. At this level of seriousness, there are no coincidences. Each apparent detail is shown to fit as an essential element in the larger drama unfolding across the millennia. Of course this perspective is "uplifting" in permitting us at least to glimpse the true

level of the participants in this drama as described in *Midrashei Chazal*. It is further "uplifting" in permitting us to recognize something of the stature of the historians of the drama—our sages, *Chazal*. Finally, it is "uplifting" in forcing us to recognize that the drama is as yet unfinished; that we, too, even in our own pitiful spiritual poverty, so far removed from the stature of earlier generations—have a part to play that fits directly into the larger drama. Our own learning of Torah, our own *tefilla*, our own *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* are important in absolute terms. To absorb the message of these *seforim* is to recognize the utter seriousness of every facet of our *avoda*, in the piercing voice of our *shofar* on Rosh Hashana no more than in the mirth and ridicule with which *Klal Yisroel* on Purim derisively hoots *Avoda Zora* (Idolatry) off the stage of Hashem's creation.

New Material on "Maamorim"

The present volume contains invaluable new material to add to the already published series of *Sifrei Pachad Yitzchok*. Many letters address specific difficulties that questioners had raised concerning *maamorim* (or published versions of them). As such these letters represent important footnotes to these *maamorim*, and often in-

On the Subject of a Memorial to the Martyrs of the European Destruction

... Because of the multitude of our sins, there abounds about our present epoch of "A nation of remnants from the sword" a wealth of blasphemous and defamatory talk, including outright heresy.

It is incumbent upon us to sweep out such talk from our midst.

We believe with full faith that the inner source of genocide directed against Jews, the murder and the destruction, is, in the final analysis, the principle of "... for your sake we are killed all day long, we are considered as sheep for the slaughter" [*Tehillim* 44:23].

Wherever a Jew is found, can be found testimony to Hashem. [*Yeshaya* 43. *Chazal*: "When you are My witnesses, I am the Mighty One, when you are not My witnesses, I am not, as it were, the Mighty One."]

Wherever a faithful Jewish congregation is found, there can be found Divine inspiration [*Sanhedrin* 39b]. The evil among the nations understand and feel this, and in pursuing their illusory goal to uproot every testimony to Hashem, they kill, they burn, they annihilate Jews....

clude fresh insights not made explicit in the *maamorim* as originally presented, and substantial material in *Hilchos De'os Vechovas Halevavos* not available elsewhere. In addition, the entire volume contains many short observations (or *he'aros*) that characteristically exemplify the unique approach of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל. Innumerable *yesodos* are contained in this volume. Students of this volume will no doubt differ as regards the relative degrees of impact which specific letters or writings will make upon them. Among the themes which held perhaps the greatest impact for this reader might be included: (a) The treatment (in letter 30), unparalleled in clarity and incisiveness, of the meaning and status of a *machlokes* (disputes) between scholars of the Talmud; of the meaning of *אלו דברי אלקים חיים* ("These and those are words of G-d"). Surely few will go away from this letter without a more profound—if not a revolutionized—view of the status of the statements of our *Chazal*. (b) The discussions (in letters 54, 80, 85, 86) of the significance of the *history of Knesses Yisroel*. In these discussions is expounded the transcendent character of this history, as the manifestation of the Divine Will, and its necessary parallelism to the manifestation of the Divine Will in Torah itself. (It is in the context of these

discussions that one appreciates the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's perception of the harrowing sufferings of the Jewish people over the generations and especially in our own time; see letters 63, 82.) (c) The concise clarification, in letter 54, of the role and purpose of the *maamorim* in their generality, and the manner in which they relate to the cultivation of *Yiras Shomayim* (fear of G-d). (d) The elucidation, in letter 51, of the *Rambam's* view in regard to *תחיית המתים* (resurrection of the dead). It is impossible to study these *divrei Torah* without gaining a profound feeling of deep gratitude to G-d for the illumination provided to our generation through these teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל.

Rekindling Our Memories

But the wealth of *divrei Torah* in this volume is by no means the *sole* source of the deep interest which it holds for those of us who, over the years, cherished the privilege of having our lives touched by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל. For us this volume offers two distinct opportunities: (a) The opportunity to relive, to recall, to rekindle—to revive the memories of years during which one was warmed by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's teachings, by his



Rabbi Hutner with Rabbi Gustman (l.)



At meeting with Premier Begin at home of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.



Rabbi Hutner, as dean of Yeshivas Rabbi Jacob Joseph.



At Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah session

With Rabbi A. Kotler ז"ל

On the Perils of Expounding on the Jewish History

Because of the oneness that exists between *Yisroel* and the Torah, it has been taken as well-established in our *Beis Midrash* that the annals of *Yisroel* may be improperly expounded, just as the Torah may be improperly expounded.

Indeed, any student of the Talmud knows the difference between learning a tractate that has the commentary of Rashi and learning a tractate that does not. Without Rashi, one gropes like a blind man touring the market without a guide, who is sure to stumble and certain to fall.

Consider, therefore, what must be said with regard to the chronicles of *Yisroel*, where every epoch is an entire topic unto itself, intricate and tangled. . . . And all this without the "commentary of Rashi"!

How great the danger, how numerous the obstacles and entrapments! And as we have said, stumbling and becoming entrapped in the attempt to understand an era in the history of *Yisroel* is akin to improperly expounding the Torah. *Yisroel* and the Torah are one. . . .

words of encouragement and reproof, by the vitality and *simcha* of his presence. (b) The opportunity to learn more than we ever did about our beloved Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל; to be admitted to sit by him, as it were, at his writing desk and to observe him over a period of well over half a century—from a tender age as a yeshiva *bachur* in Slabodka, until his very last years as one of the acknowledged contemporary *Gedolei Yisroel*—engaged in correspondence with old and young, with *talmidei chachomim* and with others, on matters lofty or on matters apparently mundane or personal. Let us consider the scope for each of these two kinds of opportunity.

For the rekindling of memories, while there is hardly a letter in the entire volume that fails to make its contribution, it is the contents of section III that are probably most significant. In the pages of introduction to the volume Rabbi Yonason David provides a brief but glowingly eloquent picture of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל as intensely and separately involved with so many *individuals*. If the other volumes of *Pachad Yitzchok* (and of course of the tapes the *maamorim*, where these exist) enable us to recall something of the sense of exaltation and spiritual uplift generated by the *maamorim* and *mesibos* (gatherings), to recreate in our ears the resonant tones and phrases with which the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל held us spellbound for hours while he wove his marvellous Torah-tapestries—the present volume evokes one's recollections of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל as personal mentor to hundreds upon hundreds of *b'nei Torah*. The outpouring of love in these

letters, the delicacy with which he gave the sharpest of reproofs, the passionate pleas with which he provided *chizuk* and encouragement, the lucidity and authoritativeness with which he clarified *yesodei hadas* (fundamentals of belief), the insistence on being kept informed of the most mundane details of the lives of *talmidim*, his inquiring after the welfare of a correspondent's spouse, reminds us dramatically of our own individual contacts with the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל. Who can forget the quite extraordinary interest with which he devoted himself to the personal concerns of the *talmidim* of his *beis hamidrash*? These letters bring to mind the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל being prepared again and again to spend hours on end in conversation with an individual young yeshiva *bachur*, probing, searching, healing and uplifting. They bring to mind the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל working ceaselessly with young men from a world utterly strange to Torah, inspiring them, guiding them, teaching them not only Torah but how and why to value and to love Torah. They recall for us the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל as the master craftsman engaged in fashioning—out of the crudest clay—nothing less than the noblest form of creation, the *talmid chacham*. These letters bring to mind the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל as a rock to which his *talmidim* turned with complete assurance in the midst of a seething ocean of



Words of Encouragement to a Student Lamenting Obstacles and Slumps

... A failing many of us suffer from is that when we consider the aspects of perfection of our sages, we focus on the ultimate level of their attainments. We discuss how they are complete in this or that area while omitting mention of the inner struggles that had previously raged within them. A listener would get the impression that these individuals came out of the hand of their Creator in full-blown form.

Everyone is awed at the purity of speech of the Chofetz Chaim ז"ל considering it a miraculous phenomenon. But who knows of the battles, struggles and obstacles, the slumps and regressions that the Chofetz Chaim encountered in his war with the *yetzer horah* (evil inclination)? There are many such examples, to which a discerning individual such as yourself can certainly apply the rule.

The result of this failing is that when an ambitious young man of spirit and enthusiasm meets obstacles, falls and slumps, he imagines himself as unworthy of being "planted in the house of Hashem." According to this young man's fancy, flourishing in the house of Hashem means to repose with calm spirit on "lush meadows" beside "tranquil waters" [Tehillim 23] delighting in the *yetzer hatov*, in the manner of the righteous delighting in the reflection of the *Shechina*, with crowns on their heads, gathered in Gan Eden. And at the same time, untroubled by the agitation of the *yetzer hora*, along the lines of the verse "Free among the dead" [Tehillim 88:6].

Know, however, my dear friend, that your soul is rooted not in the TRANQUILITY of the *yetzer tov*, but rather in the BATTLE of the *yetzer tov*. And your precious, warm-hearted letter "testifies as one hundred witnesses" that you are a worthy warrior in the battalion of the *yetzer tov*. The English expression, "Lose a battle and win a war"

applies. Certainly, you have stumbled and will tumble again (a self-fulfilling prophecy is not intended) and in many battles you will fall lame. I promise you, though, that after those losing campaigns you will emerge from the war with the laurels of victory upon your head and with the fresh prey quivering between your teeth. Lose battles but win wars.

The wisest of all men has said, "A just man falls seven times and rises again" [Mishlei 24:16]. Fools believe the intent of this verse is to teach us something remarkable—the just man has fallen seven times and yet he rises. But the knowledgeable are aware that the essence of the *tzaddik's* rising again is by way of his seven falls. "'And He saw all that he had made and behold, it was very good.' 'Good': that is the *yetzer tov*. 'Very good': that is the *yetzer horah*." [Bereishis Rabah 9]

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My cherished one, I clasp you to my heart, and whisper in your ear that had your letter reported on your *mitzvos* and good deeds, I would have said that I had received a good letter from you. As things stand, with your letter telling of slumps and falls and obstacles, I say that I have received a *very* good letter from you. Your spirit is storming as it aspires to greatness. I beg of you, do not portray for yourself great men as being as one with their *yetzer tov*. Picture rather their greatness in terms of an awesome war with every base and low inclination.

When you feel the turmoil of the *yetzer* within yourself, know that with that feeling you resemble great men far more than with the feeling of deep peace, which you desire. In those very areas where you feel yourself falling most frequently—particularly in those areas—do you have the greatest potential for serving as an instrument of distinction for the honor of Hashem.

conflicts, problems, and doubts. One has only to read letter 101 to relive the altogether unique *simcha* and inspiration of a *mesibas Succos* with the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל; one has only to read letter 94 to recall the articulated perspective from which he permitted or encouraged some of his *talmidim* to undertake careers for their *par-nasa* (livelihood); one has only to read letter 128 to appreciate anew the passion, the wisdom and the sensitivity that the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל employed in spurring a falter-

ing young student encountering obstacles on his way towards *gadlus*. A re-reading of the series of letters sent over the years to the alumni of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin (letters 64-70) provides a historic reminder of the milestones in the development of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's plans for Torah dissemination. One has only to read a random sampling of these letters in order to recall that the *yira*—the awe—for *k'vod haTorah* that the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל instilled into us and with which he welled up

Encouragement to an Individual

... Let me now pinpoint the moment in the recent past to which my memory returns. The time is one of the evenings of *Chol HaMoed Succos*. ... The event is the gathering for *Simchas Bais HaShoeva*. The place is a spacious *succa* full of celebrating people, on a high roof top distant and apart from the people below. ...

The interior of the *succa* is full with the melody of intimate tunes aimed at the crux of the G-dly spirit which resides in the soul. One of the songs is a wondrous blend of a majestic melody with the words of "*Achas Shoalti* (One thing I ask)." The melody flowing from the violin and the words flowing from the mouth rise together to their climax in profound emotion at the words "... That I dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life; to behold the delights of Hashem and to meditate in his sanctuary."

My glance happened to fall on the face of the individual to whom you are related—"as an individual is related to himself,"—and the face was full of tears. It was nothing new to me to see tears on your face. I have seen you thus so many times. At those occasions, however, there was no one present but the two of us, and the discussion concerned those moments of distress that came and went in your life to which I was a party.

But those tears of the *Simchas Bais HaShoeva*—those tears that dripped and flowed before the entire assemblage—were of a different category entirely. Just as it is possible to draw water from a pitcher, or from a river, or from a fountainhead, so it is possible for tears to come from a "pitcher" of the soul, or a "river" of the soul, or a fountainhead of the soul. As you are aware, *Simchas Bais HaShoeva* is only celebrated when water is drawn from a fountainhead. It was plain to see that your tears then at the *Simchas Bais HaShoeva* were drawn from the fountainhead of your soul.

And wonder of wonders! Those tears transformed the skin ["*or*" with an "*Ayin*"] of your face to the light ["*or*" with an "*Aleph*"] of your face. I have never seen so concrete an example of the grammatical rule that an "*Ayin*" and an "*Aleph*" may be interchanged!

If your memory serves you, you have certainly not forgotten that at that moment I caressed your face with my finger, before the entire assemblage. Come, I will reveal to you the intent of my caress. My desire in touching was to transform the abstract light into something concrete, something touchable by the fingers. Did I succeed in my caress? You must answer that. ...

in us so spontaneously and with so much warmth.

"Scaling the Peaks of His Greatness"

For the opportunity of using this volume to learn more about the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל, this apparent paradox between our awe of and our love for him, is surely highly relevant. It is in the nature of *Klal Yisroel*, out of its love for Torah and its standard-bearers, to consider its *Gedolim* as something like national—and therefore wholly public—resources. There is no facet of a *gadol's* life that is not the object of intense interest. תורה היא וללמוד את צריכים ("It is Torah and we must learn.") Every aspect of a *gadol's* life is the embodiment of Torah, and seems thus the legitimate focus of studious scrutiny. The corollary of this intense interest seems to be the tendency for some to believe that it is a relatively simple matter to evaluate the *gadol*. Without oneself having attained the peaks scaled by the *gadol*, it is believed entirely feasible to describe those peaks in complete detail. It is doubtful whether anyone, even those who were fortunate enough to maintain the closest of contact with the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל, would be prepared to claim such complete understanding. The heights scaled by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל were, we well knew, shrouded from us by a mist of *yiras hakavod* (awe)—at the very time that he both radiated and inspired *ahava* without bounds.

Distaste For Public Position

In a letter (number 186) the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל expresses a deep distaste for having to fill any public, official position. "Believe me," he wrote (according to a loose translation), "if it were possible for me to pursue my work in spreading Torah, ... without having to bear the seal of an official position—I would be enjoying the best of both worlds." Only after repeated attempts to avoid such public visibility, he continues, did he conclude that contemporary circumstances make this an impossibility. It is surely in fullest consistency with this revelation that we knew the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל to guard his privacy with tenacity. (In letter 198 he writes, in reference to a forthcoming visit to *Eretz Yisroel*, according to a loose translation: "... within the bounds of the possible I guard my privacy as I would a treasure precious beyond all measure.")

And if there were two things that the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל abhorred absolutely, these were surely the deployment of the modern tools of propaganda, and engaging in the slightest forms of *chanifa* (flattery). He saw propaganda as both antithetical to and unnecessary for the spread of Torah (see letter 85, p. 159). His abhorrence of *chanifa* is given expression in letter 188. Together, these passionately held beliefs and safeguards protected the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's cherished privacy. (Even his public *maamotrim* were in many years published only in a form intended for those who had heard them in his own *beis*

hamidrash. And since the publication of the first volumes of the set of *Sifrei Pachad Yitzchok*, none have been offered for sale through commercial channels. They have all been—as is the present volume—available only through the office of the Yeshiva.) We, the *talmidim* of his *beis hamidrash*, seldom permitted our *ahava* (love) to overcome our *yira* (awe) to the extent that we dared pierce the veil of that privacy. That the peaks of Torah and *avoda* scaled by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל whether in *halacha* or in *Aggada*, in *ahava* or in *yira*, were beyond our comprehension, was apparent to us in countless ways; that we might see more of his own life's goals, dreams and achievements then he chose to permit us to glimpse, never seemed even remotely possible.

"The Veil is Maintained"

רצון יראיו יעשה ("He performs the will of those who fear Him.") This volume, while revealing more than many perhaps knew, never tears aside the veil of privacy that the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל was so concerned to maintain. We are grateful for the few letters (including diary entries), eloquent in the lyrical quality of their prose, preserved from the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל's early years in Slabodka and in *Eretz Yisroel*. One notes that letters here (numbers 177, 191) confirm the authorship by the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל of the extensive and erudite glosses on the Rabbeinu Hillel on the *Sifra*, hitherto published anonymously. We are grateful for numerous additional insights gained from this volume. But in the end, the privacy of the Rosh



The Jewish Observer / December, 1981

To an Individual Embarking on a Career

... I do not need to tell you that I have never, under any circumstances, consented to a double life. ...

I recall my visit to the hospital of Dr. Wallach (Shaarei Tzeddek) in Yerushalayim when I saw him approaching the bed of a patient about to enter the operating room. Dr. Wallach asked the patient the name of his mother so he could pray for him before the operation. When I related this incident to one of the great men of Yerushalayim, he exclaimed, "How envious one must be of this Jew, who has such marvelous opportunities to serve as an instrument for the honor of Hashem!"

Tell me the truth, my dear friend: Does the doctor's reciting *Tehillim* on behalf of the well-being of a patient about to enter the operating room constitute a double life?

And you, my cherished one, Heaven forbid that you turn double vision on yourself and see yourself leading a double life. "Whoever prolongs the 'Echad' [of *Shma*] has his days and years prolonged." To the contrary, your entire life should be as one who prolongs the "Echad"—unified, and not double. ...

A multitude of points scattered, one under the other, certainly has the quality of disunity; but that same multitude of points arranged around a central point is ONE circle.

This, my friend, is your obligation: put the "Echad" at the center of your life, and do not at all concern yourself with duality. Each new "point" you acquire will but extend the circle, without disturbing its integrity.

Translation of the letters is by Eliakim Willner, a talmid of Rabbi Hutner ז"ל.

Yeshiva ז"ל is left uncompromised. The כבוד (honor) of חקור דבר (investigative search) is overwhelmed by the חסתר דבר (seclusion).

A theme repeated in this volume (letters 87, 180) is the lesson drawn from Chazal that the Torah expounded by a *gadol* during his lifetime acquires a new degree of permanency after his passing from this world. At the close of the first year after the passing of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל, as we complete our year-long shattering calculation of what we have lost, we are grateful for the great disciples of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל, left to us בחסדו יתברך to help achieve this enhanced degree of permanency. For sharing these precious letters and writings with us—and for the painstaking task of producing so outstanding an edition—the family of the Rosh Yeshiva ז"ל have surely won our profound gratitude. י