



ODE TO A TRUE FRIEND

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

The phone rang and the number showing on the screen told me it was bad news. Rabbi Avrohom Kupitz is a wonderful Yied, one who does so much for the community that I can't begin to list organisations he helps on a regular bases. I always enjoy a lively shmooz with him but this time I knew it was not to share anything trivial. My dearest chaver, Harav Moshe Kupitz, Avrom's father has been critically ill, and after battling a dreaded disease for over three years, the early morning call could only mean that my life mentor had been taken from us. I spoke for only a second, I was on shocked auto pilot. He sobbed, I cried and that was enough. What we all dreaded had come to pass and my crushed heart was frozen.

I need to speak of this loss but can't yet focus on the syllables needed to express the loss for our entire community. I have often written about Rav Sholom Moshe Kupetz Ztl, of his love for Torah, his empathy and care for others, and so much more. My daughter, Chani Schreibhand wrote for the 'Uplift' magazine her first impressions, they describe that which only a child can understand when a parent loses a close friend. Allow me to share some of her words:

'My father always says Hashem sent him to Manchester knowing that Rav Moshe Kupetz Ztl would help him with all the nisyonos that would come his way. Come they did, from the very beginning of my parents moving to Manchester to take on the job of Rabbonus in South Manchester Synagogue, it was a total test to their entire way of life.

The Manchester Rosh Yeshiva Ztl, and his son in law Rav Moshe where there every step of the way with encouragement and kindness. In Reb



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Moshe's case there was always a quip to cheer up my parents, especially my father.

As the years passed, their friendship became much closer with my father looking up to Reb Moshe as a big brother.'

Yes, he was like the brother I never had, but in truth, it was much more. With Reb Moshe I felt safe and secure, no matter what, I knew he would be there for me and give me strength. The Gadlus that was Reb Moshe was that I am certain there are numerous others who felt the same way, that he was their rock in the stormy passage of life, and he would always be there for them. Some thirty five years ago my family and I washed up in South Manchester with the challenge of becoming the Rabbi of a large and complicated congregation. We had no idea what it was to live in an Anglo "orthodox" community with all its strange ideas of what Torah life was. I knew no one, not a single hiemisha Yied was there for us, or even reached out to explain what it was I was facing. Not one....

And then, suddenly, out of nowhere, a larger than life master of kindness showed up. Not only was he a hiemisha Rav, but nuch an American that spoke real English. Immediately he became my friend in all senses of the word, and changed my life for the better. HaRav Moshe Kupetz Ztl, was a charismatic wonder worker who healed so many and did so much for the Klall, all of which was done with selfless disregard to his own position. The gemorah in Brochas tells us:

'Four things need encouragement: Torah study, good deeds, prayer and employment.... As it is written, let us be strong and strengthen one another for the sake of our nation and for the cities of Hashem.'

The greatest chizuk is having a friend who learns with you, listens to you, feels empathy and is ready to get involved in your challenges. Rav Moshe was that unique friend, no, actually it was much more, he made me want to be a better Yied, a more caring Rav. He was a Rabbi's Rabbi, a mentor, and for this particular Rabbi, he was a beacon of light in a world often obscured with clouds. I felt validated just by being close to this solid talmid chocham who did so much for all Klall Yisroel.

Reshit Shiurai Hatorah was an act of bravery, something only a loving Yied like Reb Moshe Kupetz would undertake. The task of leaving the safety of the Yeshiva and reaching out to thousands who had never met a Ben Torah is not to be minimised, it is all consuming. His impact beyond the borders of the 'Hiemisha' world are the stuff of legend, and his input is felt till this day. I have had numerous calls from former students of Manchester University who were blessed in basking in the warmth of Reb Moshe's Torah light and are mourning over this wonderful Rabbi who helped them find their way onto the Torah path whilst studying here in Manchester. The constant Kiddush Hashem he created in so many ways, made it possible for me, then a newcomer living in his shadow, to do things never thought possible.

One of the personal foundations that kept me going was a weekly chavrusa with Rav Moshe. Every Wednesday I would travel from the South and visit his home. We learnt together for about thirty years, and hardly ever opened a sefer. It was true 'Oral Torah,' in which Rav Moshe would share my challenges, hear my woes, and gently guide my hand further. When Rav Moshe took ill three years ago our schedule changed. I would visit him every day at twelve thirty. We shared a few words, depending on his health, we could discuss a vort or two. This went on till Covid 19 arrived, from then on it turned into a telephone call. Those short daily calls meant so much to me, they lifted my heart just hearing his positive voice, dripping with betochon.

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Let me bring you more from my daughter's article:

"Everyday my father would place his most important call. 'Hi Moshe how are you?'

Rav Moshe would answer 'Boruch Hashem Marvelous! and you?'

I was living at my father's house, and many times I asked him, 'you hardly say anything, and yet you call?' Not only did he call but if he didn't call at 12:30 then Reb Moshe would send him a message 'you're late,' or 'are you ok?'

In all this time he rarely said anything besides Boruch Hashem with the addictive Marvelous! and then my father would make a joke and they would say 'see you tomorrow.'

To me this was the true meaning of the word 'UPLIFT' which is the name of our magazine. It's not to call with expectations of what the other person needs from you, it's to call with the understanding that it's your job as a friend to let the person who needs the uplifting dictate the conversation. You may want them to say actually I feel horrible, but you always need to respect the space that the other person sets.

Believe me my Father knew exactly what that Boruch Hashem meant, he knew when Moshe was feeling terrible, he would sometimes put down the phone and say "Moshe's having a hard day" whilst to me he sounded just like the day before. Moshe knew how my father was feeling as well, and often showered him with his sweet brochos."

There will be no more calls, 12:30 will now miss a beat in my heart every day.

Rav Moshe was loved by so many, there will be many who will speak of his shiurim, his laughter and his chesed, more than these pages can depict. That was part of the greatness of Rav Sholom Moshe Ben Rav Avrohom Ztl, the larger than life American Tzadik that we all felt were his closest friends, the one you could count on. We are all mourners, all hurting.

His Rebbetzin of 58 years, the daughter of the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva Ztl, is certainly devastated. (Reb Moshe was nifter on the day of their wedding anniversary) She was his support team in all his activities, caring for him with total devotion especially so in these last difficult years. To her, they were one, but I know their illustrious children will comfort her and they will all give one another the chizuk to carry on.

Thank you Rav Moshe, you were this Rabbi's closest and dearest friend, I thank Der Eibishter for allowing me the zechus to know you, and hope I was worthy of all your kindness.

Yehi zichro Boruch.

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