באיל תערוג

From the hespedim at the levaya of Harav Yitzchok Reuven Rubin, Rav of Aish Kodesh, Manchester

Dayan Berger

It says in תהלים: באיל תערוג על אפיקי מים, כן נפשי תערוג אליך אלקים. Like a deer thirsting for water in the desert, the Jewish נשמה longs for the השפעה of the עולם של רבונו.

There are two kinds of deer. One has been taught by its parents and knows the way to the water, so it heads straight there. The other has had no such teaching. It is just as thirsty, but it stumbles about, looking under one stone and then under the root of a tree, and never finds the water. In our דור there are many, many Jewish נשמות who long for the water but cannot find the way. They need an expert hand: someone who can speak to them, influence them and guide them onto the right path.

R' Yitzchok, והלך לפניך צדקך. Hundreds, if not thousands, of נשמות that you influenced, from South Manchester, from Bowdon, and through the articles you wrote week after week, are here today to testify, and they accompany you.

When he came to South Manchester, a Gerer חסיד in that shul brought a smile to everyone's lips. South Manchester was the left wing of the left wing of Anglo-Jewry. Yet he made a מהפכה there, because he spoke the language of the heart, and the language of the heart knows no barriers. He spoke and wrote from the heart.

He was זוכה to serve צדיקים in America: the Bobover Rav זצ"ל, R' Shlomo, and later R' Naftali, whose right hand he was. He could take the מדות of those צדיקים and distil them into diamonds, not simply telling stories but conveying their essence, in a way that others could not. Even the present Bobover Rebbe, שליט"א, was fascinated to read what he wrote for the Bobover יארצייט.

He leaves a massive void: in the קהילה, an almost irreplaceable one; in the family, as father, zeide and great-great-zeide. He was an example to live by. However hot the day, he wore his woollen טלית קטן, week after week, ציצית כהלכה.

And I will be honest: he leaves a void for me too. Every Friday morning we had a standing telephone call, a שמועס, a וואטס on the סדרה. Here in Manchester everyone is beloved, but a היימישער, clever Galitzianer איד like him we did not have. He was unique, and I will truly miss him.

והלך לפניך צדקך, כבוד ה' יאספך. May you come to a מנוחה נכונה, and be מתפלל in the עולם האמת for your family, for the קהילה and for כלל ישראל, that we be זוכה to אמן. ביאת משיח צדקנו, במהרה בימינו.

"We Do Things the Rubin Way"

The הספד of his son Rabbi Moshe Rubin Rov of Giffnock Shul Glasgow

Tati, you were an incredible story. How does a third-generation American become a חבר of the Bobover Rav? How does a boy from Kew Gardens Hills, as a young בחור, help R' Naftulche set the שבת table on a Friday night while singing שלום עליכם? How does he come to be called "a חסידישע יונגערמאנטשיק" by the לב שמחה, and become the שליח of the American גדולים to represent the Jews of New York?

People said you were a Gerer חסיד, and it is true that you did not take a step without first asking the Rebbe שליט"א, as you had asked the בית ישראל and the לב שמחה before him. But you also remained a Bobover חסיד: your smile, your אהבת ישראל, your פקחות, your תפלה, your dancing were all Bobov. And in חינוך you became a Piaseczner חסיד. You were a pioneer, the first to open a ישיבה in New York for בחורים with special needs, in the late 1970s, when the phrase was hardly understood. When you saw the same need in Manchester, you opened a ישיבה here too, and transformed lives. There are parents and grandparents today who are wonderful people because of your חינוך.

Every good איד and every good ווארט fired you up and became part of you. Only two weeks ago, in your delirium, you shared a ווארט from the Alexander Rebbe. You were a חידוש, and you always shared a חידוש.

A life of transformations

You were the only one wearing a גארטל at Yeshiva University, where they suggested you go elsewhere because you were too extreme for them. So you went to Ner Yisroel in Baltimore, where you שטייגט as a Litvishe בחור with a חסידישע fire. Then came Bobov Yeshiva in Bat Yam. We have all marvelled at the picture of you as a Bobover בחור, with the velvet kapote, the long פאות and the black socks. The Rav considered you a Ropshitzer אייניקל. You looked רביש, a look that stayed with you to the very end.

Then there is the picture of you and Mami, עליה השלום, going into the יחוד room: a sixteen-year-old girl and an American boy in the שטריימל the Bobover Rav bought for you. You looked like royalty, and together you built a royal home. Every Friday night was more a טיש than a סעודה, from שלום עליכם to the רבישער קידוש. You raised Chani and me to feel that we were רבישע קינדער. Whenever we walked with you, and I am sure all those who drove you and walked with you on שבת would agree, we felt we were accompanying a Rebbe.

Next came the move from Bobov to Ger, from the שטריימל and white socks to the spodik, and to Chatzor HaGlilit. People could not understand it. But you always said, "We do things the Reuven way," and for you that meant פנימיות. It was the Kotzk in Ger that drew you. Not that חיצוניות did not matter: Mami never let you leave the house without your hat, and you were uncomfortable seeing me in a T-shirt on holiday. But real חסידישקייט was the פנימיות. All your thousands of articles, your ספרים and your דרשות were about striving for אמת and not living a superficial life. When you told the stories of the Bobover צדיקים, it was never just a nice story. It was about bringing out the פנימיות.

Then came the biggest transformation of all: Manchester. From the spodik on שבת to canonicals, grey striped trousers and a black hat. How did a larger-than-life חסידישער Rebbe with an American accent and sense of humour succeed in an Anglo-Jewish shul? You turned South Manchester from a shul that did not welcome students into a home for them. There was the famous Rabbi Rubin סעודה שלישית: ידיד נפש, מזמור לדוד, and the challah throwing. Each challah was thrown with love, and each had a target:

the נשמה of every student. Within twenty-four hours of retiring, you were back in your old לבוש. South Manchester did not transform you; you transformed South Manchester.

You always joked that you were colour-blind, and how true that was. שומר שבת or not, שומר תורה ומצוות or not, made no difference to you. You saw only the נשמה of the איד.

Aish Kodesh

The final transformation came in these last ten years or so, when, with Chani and Itzik, you built this קהילה, Aish Kodesh, this beautiful בית מדרש. Once again you were blind to divisions. Your motto was כל דצריך ייתי ויפסח: if you need love, a shoulder, an ear, or a בית מדרש where no one judges you, Aish Kodesh is your place.

To the Aish Kodesh קהילה: thank you for your incredible support and kindness, especially in these last traumatic weeks. He loved every one of you. His last years and his תפלות were all for you. Your problems were his problems and your שמחות were his שמחות. Years ago he debated with Chief Rabbi Sacks how long a rabbi should stay in one community. The Chief Rabbi thought ten years at most. My father disagreed: a Rav is not just a rabbi, but a Rebbe, the spiritual father and mother of the קהילה.

Chani and Itzik, thank you for your devotion, especially since Mami was נפטרה. Itzik, you gave up your home and served Tati with such כבוד and love, staying with him through the nights of these last weeks. Chani, you did not hesitate to give your house for Tati's needs. To the אייניקלעך: whenever Zeide asked how you were, he did not mean a headache or a cold. He wanted to know how your Yiddishkeit was, your מדות, whether you were truly בשמחה. Tati, Hadassa and I gained so much from your encouragement. Being a Rav, even in Glasgow, can be lonely, and you always gave us the right guidance, through what you said and how you lived: remember that you serve בלל ישראל, and always look at the ישראל in the person.

In his last days, confused and dependent on the nurses, he said to each of them, "G-d bless you." One evening he worried that he had not treated a nurse properly and said, "I must do תשובה. I must remember to make a קידוש השם." Tati, you were one great קידוש השם.

When the Bobover Rav first met you, at twelve or thirteen, at a טיש on חול המועד in Brownsville, he said he did not want you as his חסיד. He wanted you as his חבר. Bobover Rav, your חבר is coming home. Please, among the מלאכים, open the gates for your friend.

Tati, my Rebbe, we will try to remember that we are royalty, children of the אויבערשטער. We take your last words to heart, to make a קידוש השם that will make you proud, and we will always sing your favourite song: נחת א ס'איז גוט, ס'איז אוי. As your only son, on behalf of the family, I ask מחילה. Please be a מליץ יושר for us. We have a legacy to pass on, and we will endeavour to do so.

The Only Person in the World

On behalf of the קהילה

Our Rav, whom many of you know I called Zeide: you were not only the Rav of our shul, nor only a father, grandfather, counsellor or friend. You were so much more.

Everyone who walked into the shul was greeted with genuine warmth. When a stranger came in, you noticed, went straight over and said שלום עליכם, asking who they were and where they were from, just to make them feel at home. Standing in front of you, we each felt like the only person in the world.

No שאלה was too small, no question too unimportant, no topic off limits. You did not just פסקן the שאלה. You thought about the person asking, their circumstances and their abilities, and paskened accordingly. You were always there to listen, to guide, to heal and to give clarity, with endless patience. Where others saw limitations, you saw potential, each person's unique talent and purpose. You believed in us when we struggled to believe in ourselves, and your עבודת ה' and יראת שמים rubbed off on every one of us.

On behalf of all of us, we ask your מחילה, if we ever failed to give you proper כבוד or fell short in any way. Though you are no longer with us physically, the אהבת ישראל, the warmth and the guidance you gave us will stay with us forever. May you be a מליץ יושר for your wonderful family and for our whole קהילה.