

NOTED IN SORROW

Rabbi Krupnick

773 274 6559

We join *Klal Yisroel* in mourning the loss of Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik זצ"ל, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivas Brisk in Chicago and of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan in New York. A profound *talmid chacham* of extraordinary *hasmada*, he was widely admired for his vast love of Torah and unyielding fealty to principle.

Reb Aharon was born to Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik (son of Reb Chaim, of Brisk) and his Rebbetzin Pesha (nee Feinstein, daughter of Reb Elya Pruzhiner) in Choslovitz, Lithuania, in 1917. When only five years old, he was tested by Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski זצ"ל on his knowledge of Rambam's *Shalshelos HaMesora* (Chain of Tradition). At ten, he was writing original *Chiddushei Torah*.

When the Communists took over Choslovitz in 1919, the Soloveitchiks escaped to Warsaw. As Reb Moshe preceded his family to the United States in 1928, to serve as *Rosh Hayeshiva* in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan, he engaged Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner זצ"ל to teach his young son in Poland. (Reb Aharon used to say that he was Rabbi Hutner's first – and youngest – *talmid*.)

Before leaving to America in 1930, Reb Aharon visited his uncle, the Brisker Rav זצ"ל, Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, and repeated his bar mitzva *drasha* (his own *chiddush*) to him. The Rav told him that his own father, Reb Chaim, had expounded the same idea in Volozhin (subsequently published in his *sefer*).

Ever his father's *talmid*, Reb Aharon ultimately received *semicha* from him. While he earned a law degree as a possible means for livelihood, he never put it to use, for he dedicated the rest of his life exclusively to learning and teaching Torah. In 1948, he became a *maggid shiur* in Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin, under the leadership of Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner. The profundity of his *shiurim*

broadened the horizons of his *talmidim*, and kindled within them a driving aspiration to advance in Torah knowledge.

His total immersion in Torah thought was legendary. Since Reb Aharon lived in Washington Heights (to be in close proximity to his aging mother), he took the subway to Mesivta Chaim Berlin in Brownsville, Brooklyn, more than once riding past his stop, and back again, oblivious to the stations passing by the train window.

When his brother Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik זצ"ל, *Rosh Hayeshiva* of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan, became ill in 1960, Reb Aharon "substituted" for him until 1966, resuming *shiurim* after his brother's final illness, until his own *petira*.

In 1966, Reb Aharon was invited to serve as *Rosh Hayeshiva* in Beis Midrash LaTorah, in Skokie, Illinois. The "Traditional" movement that then had dominated Chicago had done away with *mechitzos* and introduced microphones in many Orthodox *shuls*. (The movement is almost extinct today – thanks, largely, to Reb Aharon.) Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל had advised Reb Aharon that his contemplated move might not be in his personal interest, but would benefit *Klal Yisroel* by challenging these tides. Reb Aharon fought the battles of Torah on the front lines, even when it led to confrontations with lay leaders with opposing ideas.

He continued to divide his time between Chicago and New York, even later in life when – due to a debilitating illness – he suffered unceasing pain, and had difficulty walking. He tenaciously maintained his schedule, flying twice weekly between *shiurim*.

Reb Aharon clearly differentiated between *halacha* stringencies that were personal *hanhagos* and those that were causes for public remonstrance and activity. Besides the issues surrounding

"Traditional Judaism," the latter included matters such as *eruvim* and *yashan*, where his influence contributed to wider observance. He broke away from the Bais

Midrash LeTorah in Skokie on an issue of principle, and established Yeshivas Brisk, now led by his sons, R' Moshe and R' Eliyahu.

In the Brisker tradition, Reb Aharon did not look at *chessed* as something he did, but as integral to his existence. One would merely mention a specific need to him – not intending that Reb Aharon take action – and Reb Aharon would pick up a

telephone and take care of the matter.

Since the mid-70's, Reb Aharon endured draining *yesurim* (suffering): he suffered a devastating fire, a debilitating stroke, institutional financial woes, and the tragic death of a grandchild, among other challenges. His countenance bespoke the majestic *emuna* that sustained him through all his trials – *emuna* that inspired awe and admiration, and imparted *emuna* to its beholders.

Reb Aharon had a special partnership with his late Rebbetzin, the former Ella Shurin זרה, daughter of Rabbi Moshe Shurin, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Ritava, Lithuania. During the early years of their marriage, his salary was meager and sporadic. Positions in other fields were available, but his sole, consuming interest was Torah, with his wife's full cooperation. Her primary goal was to ascertain that he not be distracted from learning. An inspiring *mechaneches* (pedagogue) in her own right, she maintained their home to always be open to *talmidim* and others who turned to them for help.

Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik זצ"ל passed away on 18 Tishrei 5762, leaving behind an indelible imprint on the thousands he influenced with his singular genius, extraordinary love of Torah, unwavering adherence to principle, and unswerving loyalty to his *talmidim*.

תמונה



We acknowledge Rabbi Boruch Kelman (*musmach* of Yeshivas Brisk, Chicago) and Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer for their contributions to this tribute.