

THE ISH HA'EMES: The Man of Unimpeachable Integrity RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB

זכר צדיק לברכה



Frankfurt, 1915: A six-year-old boy is sent by his mother to the store to buy groceries. With the change he buys himself some chocolate, which he eats on the way. When he arrives home, his mother asks him for the change. "Here it is," the boy answers.

"But where is the rest?" his mother asks.

"I must have lost it," the boy replies. But his mother notices a chocolate wrapper in his pocket.

"Oh," she says, with a look that he will remember for the rest of his life, "you didn't tell the *emes*."

Later that day his father comes home. He does not hit him or send him to his room. "What is this I hear that you didn't tell the *emes*? Your punishment will be that tonight, Friday night, I will not *bentsch* you. No, I won't *bentsch* you tonight." The young boy never forgot that lesson.

As the subject of this appreciation loathed even the merest whiff of exaggeration, I have attempted to avoid embellishment, which is unnecessary in any case. In keeping with the statement of Chazal (*Yerushalmi, Eruvin* 2:5) that one does not erect monuments for righteous men, as their words are their memorial, the thoughts and *divrei Torah* contained herein are all, unless otherwise indicated, Rav Schwab's own. To facilitate reading, we have often dispensed with quotation marks.

Radin, 1930: The young Frankfurt boy, now a Mirrer Yeshiva *bachur*, comes to visit the *Chofetz Chaim*. When the elderly sage is told that he is "a Frankfurter *bachur*," he takes his hand in his own and caresses it gently. "A yeshiva *bachur*! How fortunate! So many are drowning today. Only through Torah can one survive. How fortunate that you are learning!"

Marienbad, 1934: The Mirrer yeshiva *bachur*, by now a *Rav* in Germany, pays a visit to the saintly Gerrer *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* tells him,

"Remember, *Yungerman!* One must be very careful to safeguard the honor of Rav Hirsch, the *tzaddik* of Frankfurt, for he was a living *mussar sefer*."

Washington Heights, 1994: In the last winter of his life, the young Frankfurt lad, now *Rav* of the largest German Jewish *Kehilla* in the world and a leader of Torah Jewry, calls in a wealthy benefactor of the *kehilla*. "I don't have much time left on this world," he said, "and I will be going to *Gehinom*. The Yeshiva's deficit is close to a million dollars and most of it is in the unpaid salaries of its *melamdin*. I am *Rav* of the *kehilla* that teaches *Torah im Derech Eretz*. Where is the *derech eretz* if we haven't paid our teachers for months? It will not be long before I will be called to give a *din vecheshbon* for my actions and I will be going to *Gehinom* for this. I'm begging you. Please take me out of *Gehinom*."

Rabbi Klugman grew up in Washington Heights, where he enjoyed a close relationship with Rabbi Schwab. He currently lives in Jerusalem where he is a *maggid shiur* in a *yeshiva gedola*. He is a frequent contributor to these pages, most recently with "The Hebron Disaster—A Torah Perspective," April '94. His biography on Rabbi S.R. Hirsch is soon to be released by ArtScroll.

The man is shaken. After giving the matter some thought, he agrees to cover the entire deficit in teachers' salaries, in weekly installments to be completed before the yeshiva's annual dinner. The last payment is made on the Friday before the dinner. The Yeshiva's dinner is on Sunday night.

The following evening, Rabbi Schwab passed away.

Who was this man who lived a life of such adherence to honesty and integrity? What is this potent combination of the ideals of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, architect of Torah Orthodoxy in the Western world, and the intense commitment to *limud haTorah* that is the legacy of the great Lithuanian *yeshivos*? What can we learn from his life to enable us to make this heady blend the reality of authentic Torah life in America? Specifically, what example did he set for the American *ben Torah*, whether engaged in full-time Torah study or as a working man?

I. GEOGRAPHY OF A LIFE

Boyhood in Frankfurt-am-Main

Shimon Schwab was born in Frankfurt on 7 Teves, 5569 (1908), to an old German-Jewish family. In the 1850's, his great-grandfather moved from a small Bavarian village to Frankfurt, soon after Rabbi S.R. Hirsch had become rabbi, so his children could study in Rav Hirsch's *Realschule*. Like his father and grandfather, Shimon Schwab studied in the *Realschule*, which went only until the ninth grade. There he received his only formal secular education.

His parents, Leopold and Chana (Erlanger) Schwab, were *erliche*, respected *baalebattim*, who were active in the life of the Frankfurt *Kehilla*. They produced five sons, each of them a man of note in his own right. Three of them were world famous—in addition to Reb Shimon, there was Reb Mordechai, renowned as a *tzaddik*, and Reb Moshe, *Mashgiach* of the Gateshead Yeshiva. (See JO, May '94, and April '81.)

What explains their success in



Rabbi Shimon Schwab (right) with parents and brothers in Frankfurt, 1931

child-rearing? The Schwab brothers were fond of telling of the *seder* night when their father asked his children which of the four sons they would like to be. Most of them answered "the *chacham*," as could be expected; young Mordechai responded that he would like to be the "*tam*." The father then addressed his children in a stern voice: "If any of my sons becomes a *rosho*, even if only deviating from a single *din* or a *minhag*, I say to him 'li, velo lo, I will have nothing to do with him.' I love my children more than anything in the world, but I love the *Ribborio Shel Olam* even more." His father's *yiras Shamayim*, Rabbi Schwab said decades later, chilled his bones.

He grew up in Frankfurt as a normal child, with no hint of the greatness he would attain. He often stressed that many *gedolim* were not accomplished *talmidei chachamim* at age thirteen or geniuses in their youth. Many who were *amei ha'aretz* at that age, later became Torah leaders. This awareness, he felt, should be an encouragement to many lads who are nothing special at their bar mitzva, yet have the potential to become great *talmidei chachamim* and Torah leaders.

After completing the *Realschule*, Shimon learned for two years under the Frankfurter Rav and *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Breuer, son-in-law of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch. There he absorbed the joys of *yegias haTorah*, the delight of intense effort in trying to ascertain the correct *pshat*, and an absolute commitment to finding the *emes* in the *dvar Hashem*. This strong commitment of Reb Shlomo Breuer to unadulterated

Despite his poverty, he auctioned off in 1943 his only possession of value, a *sefer Torah* that he had brought with him from Germany, and gave the proceeds of \$2,000—a substantial sum at the time—to the Vaad Hatzalah for saving Jewish lives in Europe.

emes as the guiding light of his life obtained in communal matters as well as in Torah study. For the rest of his life, Rabbi Schwab always saw himself, in his words, as "*talmid talmido*" of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch—his disciple's pupil—and, indeed, he was suffused with Rav Hirsch's spirit.

In 1926, the *Ponevezher Rav*, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman visited Frankfurt and delivered a *shiur* in Rav Breuer's yeshiva. The young Frankfurter boy was entranced both by the *shiur* and by the *derech halimud*. He wanted more. The *Ponevezher Rav* suggested Telshe, with its emphasis on *seder* and its approach to education, as most appropriate.

Shimon Schwab was among the first German *bachurim* in his time to study in a Lithuanian yeshiva, and a

considerable number followed his lead. But many who had left Germany to study in the East ceased to appreciate their *Mesores Avos*, the hallowed traditions of *minhag Ashkenaz*, when they beheld the sublime grandeur and tasted the intoxicating sweetness of the *blatt Gemora*. Rabbi Schwab clung to every detail of his *mesora*, the continuation of close to two millennia of Torah life in Germany, channeled into the post-ghetto world by Rabbi S.R. Hirsch and his colleagues.

A Yeshiva Bachur in Lithuania

During the three years he spent in Telshe, he was awed by the regal dignity, the iron will, the sublime mind, and the singing *neshama* (as he described it) of the Telzer Rav, Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch. In Telshe he learned about *malchus haTorah*, seeing the *Rosh Yeshiva* as a *nesi Elokim*. Whereas his relationship with the Telzer Rav was a mixture of awe and fear, for his *Rebbi*, Reb Avrohom Yitzchok Bloch, there was only the adoring enthusi-

Noting a lack of the spirit of the Lithuanian yeshiva in German Jewry, Rabbi Schwab attempted to establish a yeshiva there, but the local Nazis closed it on the day it opened.

asm of a seventeen-year-old yeshiva *bachur* for the *Rebbi's* sweet personality. In Telshe, he also learned a life-long lesson: the meaning of "*shteigen*"— steady, sustained growth in Torah, *yiras Shamayim* and character development.

Rabbi Schwab spent six weeks in the summer of 1929 teaching in Montreux, Switzerland. There, he also served as the personal attendant of Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. Those weeks of intimate daily contact with the *gadol hador* left an indelible

imprint on him. Reb Chaim Ozer suggested that he go to study in the Mirrer Yeshiva in Poland, whose *mashgiach*, Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz, would be the perfect mentor for the Frankfurter *bachur*.

So in Elul, 1929, he went to the Mir, where he developed an unusually close relationship with Reb Yeruchem. There too he was a trendsetter for the many German *bachurim* who followed. Several years later, Reb Yeruchem delivered a regular *Chumash Shiur* exclusively for these "*oislanders*," as they were called. Reb Yeruchem's *Daas Torah* on *Chumash* contains much from those *shiurim*. Reb Shimon stayed in the Mir for two years, and received *semicha* from the *Rosh Yeshiva*, Reb Lazer Yudel Finkel, as well as from Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski.

His visit to the Chofetz Chaim in 1930 is part of the public consciousness. Although he spent no more than a weekend in Radin—from Friday morning to Sunday morning—*Klal Yisroel* has learned more from those few days than from many who spent years in Radin. (See JO, Jan. 1984.)

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A Rav in Germany

In 1931, Rabbi Schwab was appointed assistant to Rabbi Yonah Merzbach of Darmstadt, who later joined Rabbi Yechiel Schlesinger to found Yeshiva Kol Torah in Jerusalem. The same year, he married Recha Froelich of Gelsenkirchen, who was his devoted and cheerful companion for life, and with whom he had five children. Two years later he was appointed District Rabbi of Ichenhausen in Bavaria. Noting a lack of the spirit of the

Lithuanian yeshiva in German Jewry, he attempted to establish a yeshiva there, but the local Nazis closed it on the day it opened.

He was under constant pressure from the local Gestapo. As the situation deteriorated, he began to sleep at night with his clothes on. He later explained that one of his acquaintances who had been outspoken in his criticism of the regime was taken away in the middle of the night and was found the next morning hanging. Should the same fate await him, he wanted to meet it fully clothed, as befits a

rabbi. Matters in Germany reached a point where it was only a matter of time before his arrest, and he decided to seek a rabbinical position overseas.

Refugee Rabbi in Baltimore

Upon the suggestion of Rabbi Leo Jung, a leading Orthodox rabbi in New York, he was accepted as the rabbi of the German Jewish Shearith Israel Congregation of Baltimore. He arrived in the U.S. with his family on 10 Teves, 1936.

Soon after his arrival, he was faced with his first crisis. He insisted that the by-laws of the congregation, which conferred voting rights only on *Shomrei Shabbos*, be upheld. As a result, two hundred members, the overwhelming majority of the membership, who considered themselves Orthodox but were unable to resist the pressure to work on *Shabbos*, left the *shul* and established their own congregation. *Shearith Israel* was left with a skeleton of a congregation of barely two dozen members, sometimes without a *minyan* during the week, and almost no wherewithal to cover his salary. He was forced to borrow and scrape to make ends meet; there were times when he did not receive his salary for months. It was not the only time in his life when he was willing to sacrifice position and livelihood for principle. It was, in fact, one of the Hirschian tenets upon which he was weaned: "Learn how to withstand animosity and to weather unpopularity, and to carry on the struggle to uphold *Hashem's* ideals." Despite his poverty, in 1943 he auctioned off his only possession of value, a *sefer Torah* that he had brought with him from Germany, and gave the proceeds of \$2,000—a substantial sum at the time—to the Vaad Hatzalah for saving Jewish lives in Europe. He was active in securing affidavits to facilitate the entry of Jewish refugees into the United States, and the Schwab home in Baltimore became a way station for many poor, newly-arrived refugees from the European inferno.

Baltimore of those years was hardly a spiritual oasis.

The *kashrus* situation was a mess. Rabbi Schwab told of the time, soon af-

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ter he had arrived in Baltimore, when he received a request to provide a hashgacha for chickens. When he informed the owner that he would visit his plant, the man replied, "That's OK, Rabbi, we'll bring the check to you."

The Rebbetzin was one of only a handful of women in the city who covered her hair. Even Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, headed by the illustrious Rabbi Chaim Samson, had almost no shomer Shabbos students. One of the Schwab boys had only one shomer Shabbos friend. He pleaded with his mother not to give him sandwiches for lunch in school because the boys laughed at him when he washed his hands before eating.

Before the establishment of the Bais Yaakov, Rabbi Schwab would gather the few shomer Shabbos girls in his home for a weekly shiur. "Ess passt nisht," he was told by a local rabbi, "for a rav to teach girls." Rabbi Schwab replied that the Gemora says that a chassid shoteh, a pious idiot, is one who refuses to save a woman who is drowning because she is a woman. "I don't want to be a chassid shoteh." Together with a few local baalebattim, he founded the Bais Yaakov of Baltimore, despite the derision of local rabbis who considered the undertaking a waste of time, effort, and especially resources. "Why," one Orthodox rabbi asked him, "are you bothering with these insignificant mitzvos?" This "insignificant mitzva" is today the largest such institution outside the New York area.

The Frankfurt Kehilla in New York

In 1958, Rabbi Schwab's Rebbi from Frankfurt, Rabbi Joseph Breuer, when seventy-five-years old, decided that K'hal Adath Jeshurun of Washington Heights needed a vigorous presence on the rabbinate, and he invited his talmid to serve alongside him. It is testimony to the greatness of these two men that for the next twenty-three years they served the kehilla side by side with hardly an uncomfortable moment. Although many of the kehilla institutions were in place when he arrived, he was instrumental in founding the Mesivta and the Bais Yaakov High



Rabbi Schwab with Rabbi Y. Breuer

School, the Beis Hamidrash and the world-renowned Rika Breuer Teacher's Seminary. It was during these years in Washington Heights that Rabbi Schwab's leadership and influence in the affairs of American Torah Jewry reached their peak.

II. THE EMBODIMENT OF MALACHI'S PROPHECY

A Kingdom of Priests

The Jewish People, the Rav never tired of declaring, must be a Mamleches Kohanim Vegoy Kadosh, a nation of priests and a holy nation. A kohein, he explained,

is one who by word and example spreads the knowledge of the Almighty. The kohein imperative of the Jew, which he epitomized, was the constant theme in his life.

Living in Golus America, a Malchus shel Chessed, only strengthened this obligation. Every form of Chillul Hashem, he taught, lowers the awareness of the Divine presence in this world. If the perpetrator is a supposedly observant Jew—or worse, a so-called Torah scholar—then the offense is even greater. The Chillul Hashem strengthens the hand of the non-observer, gives ammunition to the scoffers, and fosters yet more rejection of religion; and it is responsible, directly or indirectly, for the increase of frivolity, heresy and licentiousness in the world. How can one who cheated his neighbor or defrauded the government, he asked, have the audacity to stand in front of the congregation and recite Kaddish, a prayer for sanctifying G-d's Name in the world? There can be no white-washing, no condoning, and no apologizing on behalf of the desecra-

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tors. It must be made clear that he who besmirches the Divine Name has defected from our ranks and joined our opponents. And the more prominent a person is, the more scrupulous and painstaking he must be in his business dealings to avoid even the slightest hint of a *Chillul Hashem*. When the *Rav* was asked to assist in efforts to secure the release of a "religious" Jew who was incarcerated for fraud, he refused. "Help him be released? He's a *rodeif of Klal Yisrael*. Because of him, *frumme Yidden* will suffer. Let him sit!"

Traveling once with his son on the subway, the boy found fifty cents on the floor in front of the change booth, which he intended to pocket, thinking that there was no obligation to return it. "Give it to the attendant," his father insisted, "and I will stick my beard in his window so that he sees that religious Jews do not want other people's money."

The prophet Malachi, speaking of the End of Days, described the attributes of the *kohein*, and these qualities are perhaps the most accurate description of Rabbi Schwab, his life and his teachings: "*Toras emes haysa befihu, ve'avla lo nimtza bi'sfasav; beShalom vemishor halach itti, verabbim heishiv me'avon*. The teaching of truth was in his mouth and no injustice was found on his lips; in peace and in straightforwardness he walked with Me and he turned many away from sin."

MALACHI 2, 6-7

"*Toras Emes...*"¹

He viewed his mission in life as being a *marbitz Torah*, giving *shiurim* to those of all ages and backgrounds in his *kehilla*—men, women and children. He had a



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How can one who cheated his neighbor or defrauded the government, he asked, have the audacity to stand in front of the congregation and recite *Kaddish*, a prayer for sanctifying G-d's Name in the world?

unique approach to *Aggada* and shared with his *talmidim* and congregants countless original insights into *Chazal*. A lengthy series of *shiurim* on the *Siddur Tefilla* presenting invaluable insights were recorded for posterity. Many of his *chiddushim* on *Chumash* and *Midrash* were recently published in his magnum opus, *Maayan Bais Hashoeva* (Mesorah Publications, New York, 1994). Some of his public addresses of the last decade, and many essays of the last half century have been published in three volumes of his collected works (CIS Publishers).

He exhorted his followers to learn "with an inner glow and persistence, with ardor and singleminded passion, with noble joy and a serene spirit," and he put great effort into inspiring the youth of his *kehilla* to continue on in advanced *yeshivos*. The thousands of *bnai Torah* at his funeral and the overwhelming majority of *bnai Torah* at a *hesped* in his memory in Jerusalem—children and grandchildren of his congregants—are eloquent testimony to his success in this realm.

Besides serving for many years as the *Av Beis Din* of the justly respected *Beis Din* of K'hal Adath Jeshurun, and the *Beis Din* of Torah Umesorah, he was frequently called upon to decide crucial *dinei Torah* dealing with major Torah institutions.

Rabbi Schwab was not a bridge between two worlds, between East and West—bridges are not for living

¹from the prophecy of Malachi, as are subsequent headings.

on. He was rather the embodiment of the *Eilu v'Eilu Divrei Elokim Chaim* ("These and those are the words of the living G-d") of two sacred traditions. He embodied in one person two diverse Torah cultures: the glorious Frankfurt tradition of Rabbi Hirsch, with its emphasis on adherence to the *emes* and insistence on putting the stamp of Torah on every area of public and private endeavor... combined with unwavering devotion to intense Torah study, which was the hallmark of the great *yeshivos* of Lithuania. On the one hand, he absorbed the Chofetz Chaim's caress; on the other, he observed the admonishment of the *alter Gerrer Rebbe* who characterized Rabbi Hirsch as "*a lebedike mussar sefer*." That combination was the reason why he was the inspiration and source of guidance to so many in the Torah community of America.

Rabbi Schwab was convinced that *Torah im Derech Eretz* offers a vision of Judaism "in a way that can be accepted... by the five-and-a-half-million uncommitted Jews in the vast spiritual wasteland that is today's America, in a language they can understand."

He exemplified the "*Torah im Derech Eretz-ben Torah*." *Torah im Derech Eretz* means "the subjugation and control of all mundane affairs by the royal sovereignty of the Torah." It is the call to take the Torah out into the world in order to sanctify the Divine Name on earth by our every action. It demands the Torah's conquest of life and not its flight from life. The *Torah im Derech Eretz-ben Torah* is well aware of what happens in the world that surrounds him, "for he is constantly called upon to apply the yardstick of *halacha* and the searchlight of *hashkafa* to the realities that confront him." He also knows that *Torah im Derech Eretz* cannot be separated from Rav Hirsch's *Austritt* (secession) principle, which requires absolute separation from institutionalized heresy or any view of Judaism based on anything other than Torah. Without *Austritt*, *Torah im Derech Eretz* is merely a cover for a convenient lifestyle, and a rejection of its essence, which is the total domination by Torah of all of life.

Torah im Derech Eretz means hon-

esty and integrity in the business world and in the professions. It means seeing G-d in the wonders of Creation, in the magnificence of nature, in the breathtaking discoveries of science and in the grandeur of plant and animal life. It means an awareness of the fact that everything in the physical world is a manifestation of the *Shechina*.

Rabbi Schwab himself attended neither high-school nor college; knowledge of the world and the wonders of Creation were self-taught. On nature walks with his children, he would tell them the names and nature of the flora and fauna. But the greatest revelation of G-d is the Torah, and without that, man will not know what to do with the awareness of His existence. Whereas nature shows the wonders of the Creator, Torah reveals, as it were, the Creator Himself.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski once put it all in perspective. While taking a walk in Switzerland, young Shimon Schwab pointed out the awesome Divine beauty of the Alps. "S'iz shain," Reb Chaim Ozer agreed, "ober a Yid mit a bord iz noch shenner." It would seem to this writer that the message was clear. One can perceive the Divine in nature as it performs G-d's will instinctively. That, however, can never match the beauty of the Jew who performs the Divine imperative in free-willed volition.

"Torah of Truth"

Early in life, his father taught him the importance of not only speaking the truth, but of living the truth. This writer recalls visiting the *Rav* as a young boy on the last day of *Pesach*, when the *Rav* told the following story.

"As a young boy around the age of *Bar Mitzva*, I decided to stand for the entire *tefillon* on the night and day of *Yom Kippur*, a custom cited in the *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 619). My father, who was not one to ignore things like that, made no comment. On *Motza'ei Yom Kippur*, one of my younger brothers did something that was not to my liking, and I let him have it physically. My father slapped my face. I thought that you had perhaps attained the *madreiga*

of observing even a custom brought as *yesh omdim* (some stand) in the *Shulchan Aruch*," he said. "But your behavior immediately following *Yom Kippur* indicates that you reached no such level at all, and were just showing off. For that you got the *potsch*."

His insistence on *emes* extended to things which usually go unnoticed. His stationery said... אב"ד "Head of the *Beis Din* of the *Kehilla Adath Jeshurun*." When Rabbi Gelley joined the rabbinate, Rabbi Schwab began to cross out the words אב"ד on the stationery, even though he was still the *Rav* of the *Kehilla*, since he no longer sat on *dinei Torah*.

His first exposure to the insistence on *emes* in public life was from his revered *Rebbi*, the *Frankfurter Rav*, Rabbi Shlomo Breuer, who followed in the footsteps of his father-in-law, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch. Reb Shlomo Breuer refused to recognize any Jewish community not absolutely governed by Torah, firmly opposed cooperation between Jewish communities and organizations based on Torah



with those opposed to it. "He hated the untruth," Rabbi Schwab wrote of his *Rebbi*, "but he despised even more the easy compromise between *emes* and *shekker*, the political double talk, which in the name of unity would relegate the Torah Nation to a modest niche, to a mere 'branch' within the superstructure of a nondescript 'Jewish People.'"

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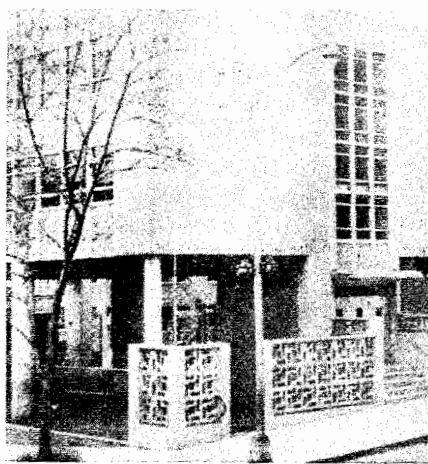
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**The Kehilla as
an Instrument of Truth**

The *kehilla*, Rabbi Schwab taught, is a microcosm of *Klal Yisroel* and as such

"is not beholden to any non-Torah authority, not associated with any board, federation, council, roof organization—local, national, or international—that is not absolutely and exclusively identified with the Law of Torah. The true *kehilla* will not subscribe to or encourage any Jewish orientation or philosophy which is not based on the truth of the Torah."

This was not mere talk. The *kehilla* that he headed suffered great financial difficulty for its principled stand in this matter. Yeshiva Rabbi S.R. Hirsch is one of very few in the New York area that has refused on principle to accept funding from the Federation's Board of Jewish Education, even from special "funds" that only used the Federation as a conduit. It was unthinkable to take money from an organization created for Jewish purposes, yet not based on allegiance to Torah as the supreme authority in Jewish life. The *Raw* was



Yeshiva Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, N.Y.C.

also certain that a yeshiva that derives part of its income from such sources cannot fulfill its potential in producing *talmidei chachamin*. He once told this writer that he was convinced that the *yeshivos* in *Eretz Yisroel* would be able to produce many more *gedolei Torah* if they were not constrained to rely on Israeli government funding for their existence. (See *Bava Metzia* 85b.)

Surely tolerance is important. Judaism has different *shittos* and phi-

losophies. Chassidim, Litvaks, Sephardim—all must live together in peace and harmony, and can and should work together as components of one grand symphony. But all must be within the parameters of *emes*. This commitment to *emes* in organizational life was expressed in his allegiance to Agudath Israel of America, as well as in the fact that an overwhelming proportion of his congregants are members of the Agudah.

Commitment to *emes* means that there can be no tolerance for the statement that two and two are five. If the one making such an absurd statement never learned arithmetic, we can be tolerant of him, but not of his views. One must distinguish between Reform and Conservative rabbis and leaders, who are *meisitim umeidichim* (indoctrinators of non-truth), and their adherents, who are *tinokos shenishbu* (innocent victims), to whom we must reach out.

The insistence of the absolute standard of *emes* in public life is impossible unless it is the outgrowth of unshakable honesty in one's private affairs. And it is not enough, he never

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tired of saying, to be *leshem Shamayim*. One must constantly make sure that one's *leshem Shamayim* is *leshem Shamayim*. *Kana'us* (zealousness) must be driven by the purest of motives. And it must be without anger or invective. The *kanai* must always bear in mind that those whom he criticizes are fellow Jews, whom he must rebuke with love. Only the one who leads others astray must be hated.

Revision, For the Sake of Truth

His adherence to *emes* was such that he was willing to revise long held views, even if that meant a reassessment of publicly stated positions. His views on the relevance of *Torah im Derech Eretz* are a case in point. With the rise of Nazism in the 1930's, Rabbi Schwab was convinced that *Torah im Derech Eretz* as expounded by Rabbi S.R. Hirsch was no longer relevant, not as an educational program and certainly not as a *Weltanschauung*. The barbarity of the Nazi beast (even before World War II), the virulent anti-Semitism in Germany, and the total failure of the ideals of enlightened humanism and Western culture to change the essential nature of gentile society led him to conclude that the only path for the Torah-observant German Jew was to return to the "Torah Only" approach, and to shun Western culture and the world at large as much as possible. Rabbi Hirsch's *Torah im Derech Eretz* ideal, he averred, was only a *hora'as sha'ah*, a temporary measure for a temporary situation. In 1934, he aired these views in a slim volume entitled *Heimkehr ins Judentum* (Homecoming into Judaism), which caused a sensation in German Orthodoxy.

But after coming to America, he concluded that the realities of the ghetto and the *shuttl* where one could spend all one's life in the local *beis hamidrash*, with its total dissociation from the rest of society, was a way of life that had also been consumed in the flames of the Holocaust. The realities of life in the United States and other Western countries, where the Jew traveled in non-Jewish circles and could not live totally apart from the society around him, were not es-

entially different from the situation in the Western Europe of Rabbi Hirsch. Furthermore, a careful study of all of Rabbi Hirsch's writings led him to the inevitable conclusion that he had never meant *Torah im Derech Eretz* as a *hora'as sha'ah* at all. It was not a compromise, a *kula*, or a *hetter*. Although Rav Hirsch did not insist that it was for everyone, he certainly did not see it as time bound. Rabbi Schwab then publicly retracted his earlier insistence on "Torah Only" as

"Ess passt nisht," he was told by a local rabbi, "for a rav to teach girls." Rabbi Schwab replied that the Gemora says that a *chassid shoteh*, a pious idiot, is one who refuses to save a woman who is drowning because she is a woman. "I don't want to be a *chassid shoteh*."

the sole way of life for the Torah Jew in Western society. (Rabbi Schwab always viewed the situation in *Eretz Yisroel* as essentially unique, but that is beyond the purview of this article.) To that end he published in 1966 a booklet entitled *These and Those (Eilu v'Eilu)*, wherein he set forth the arguments and counter-arguments for both positions, with the conclusion, as the title indicates, that both, in their proper time and place, are legitimate ways of life for the Torah Jew in Western society.

There is an old Ashkenazi custom to call out "Emes" in the Aleynu prayer recited during the Chazaras Hashatz of Mussaf on the Yomim Noraim. He retained this custom even in America where others had ceased to observe it. His last words to a disciple were, "Re-

Pesach Seder with the Rav

A Personal Vignette

The year was 1969. My wife and I and four children were living in Washington Heights with no other family in the community except for a single sister. Rabbi Schwab called, inviting us to the Seder at his home.

We made arrangements for babysitting, and three children, my wife, sister, and I joined the Rav with great excitement.

The Seder, with us and two other guests, was geared for the children — ages 5, 4 and 3. Each paragraph was explained clearly, with Rabbi Schwab's melodious voice making every description and event vividly real.... He put the *matzah* on his shoulder and reenacted *yetzias Mitzrayim*. He asked the children questions, and every answer earned a candy, nut or chocolate — a *minhag* that we follow to this very day. The atmosphere was warm and vibrant and the Rav asked the children what they would like for *afikomen* presents. The girls requested crayons and coloring books, and my son wanted a *Hagadda*.

The presents came within the week after Pesach, with the velvet *Hagadda* beautifully inscribed ... as a remembrance of that Seder, which will last forever.

Dr. Yehuda Sorscher

Dr. Sorscher, a dentist by profession, currently lives in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn.

member, you must always tell the emes. I have many failings," he continued, "but one thing I never did was channa (flatter) people."

"...Was in His Mouth"

He taught himself to speak and write eloquent, polished English, for that was the medium to reach the hearts and minds of American Jewry. Even the best of speakers sometimes have an off day, but of him it was said that he never spoke less than perfectly. He was always inspiring, stimulating, never

humdrum. At the *Siyumei Hashas* of the *Daf Yomi*, at Agudath Israel and Torah Umesorah conventions, his carefully crafted addresses set the tone and inspired the audience. He could admonish and suggest areas in need of improvement without alienating his listeners. Why? Because he respected his audiences and never took them for granted. Because of that respect, he was always well prepared. His listeners knew that whatever he said derived from a sense of heartfelt concern. And he spoke of nothing to which he himself did not adhere.

He viewed his ability to influence others in a totally different way. He felt that it was because he was a *dachil rabbanan*, one who feared the Sages. The *Gemora* says that such a person will either become a *tzurva m'rabbanan*, a sage in his own right, or, if incapable of that, will be listened to as if he were a sage. He put himself in the latter category.

His son once found his father standing and talking on the telephone, at a



Rabbi Schwab at graduation ceremony at Ner Israel, with Rabbi Ruderman (center) and Rabbi H. Neuberger (left), circa 1950.

time when he suffered terrible arthritis in his knees, which made it excruciatingly painful to stand. When asked why he was standing, he explained that he was talking to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. "But you're not obligated to, if it's only on the phone," his son protested. "Surely, I have no *chiyuv* to stand," the Rav replied, "but how can I sit when talking to Reb Moshe?"

His influence was not limited to

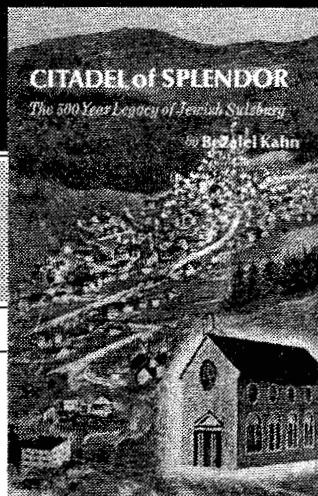
the spoken word. His articles and his *seforim* influenced many. In addition, he was a poet. At the request of Rabbi Breuer he authored a *Kirna* (lamentation) in memory of the Six Million. This eloquent and moving elegy for the *kedoshim* is now recited on *Tisha B'Av* in congregations throughout the world.

"Injustice Was Not on His Lips"

He was scrupulous to a fault in financial matters. He hated even a suggestion of crooked dealings. "I don't want to be a *bedi'eved* Yid," he would say, "I want to be a *lechat'chila* Yid." He often wondered why people who were so stringent in regard to a *yeish omrim* (alternative opinion) in *Orach Chaim* and *Yoreh De'ah* (ritual *halacha*) simply ignore the *yeish omrim* in *Choshen Mishpat* that prohibits *gezel akum*: His tax form was exact, recording even gifts from friends. He was once called in by IRS for an audit, as they could not believe that a man with such modest income could give so much charity. He sent an accountant, a member of the *kehilla*, to represent him. At the conclusion, the IRS agent declared that never, in all his years as an auditor, had he met anyone who was so forthright and meticulous in reporting income and in documenting all contributions. He followed that with a letter to Rabbi Schwab saying that the latter's scrupulous honesty "had restored my faith in humanity."

Someone once undertook to publish the writings of a certain Torah luminary of a previous generation. Knowing that the editor of the work was having difficulty raising the necessary funds to cover the publication costs, the Rav called him on his own initiative and offered him a loan of \$10,000 to cover the initial costs. Several weeks later, he notified the editor that since the publisher of the work had been sending him books from time to time, he was afraid that those complimentary books might be construed as *ribbis* (interest). He thus decided to give the entire sum, which constituted a good portion of his life savings, as a gift, so that there would be no hint of a *she'eila*, even though

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halachically there was no problem whatsoever.

Kashrus, he always stressed, refers not only to food but to money as well.

"While those who resort to cheating, trickery, dishonesty and fraud may at times have the outward appearance of being G-d-fearing Jews, they are, in fact, irreligious. They may well be strict in their observance of certain mitzvos, but in their business dealings they reveal that they are *kofrim* (infidels) in regard to Hashgacha pratis, Divine Providence. Since they certainly do not believe that G-d wants them to take what is not rightfully theirs, they are conducting their business as though He does not exist." Glatt yosher, as Rabbi Breuer once wrote, is no less important than glatt kosher.

He was the ultimate *sonet betza*. He refused to accept compensation for any rabbinic function, including weddings, funerals, *dinei Torah* and *Kashrus* supervision. "Rabbi," he was often asked, "what do I owe you?"

"Owe me? This is not a business. It is my responsibility to *Klal Yisroel*." He refused to accept money even for *mehiras chometz*. He did not, however, wish to hurt the income of other rabbis, so he established a *tzeddaka* fund to which anyone who insisted on paying for *mehiras chometz* could contribute.

In his six decades as a Rav, he never once asked for a raise. When, in his advanced years, the kehilla engaged Rabbi Zechariah Gelley to serve alongside him, he requested the Board of Trustees to reduce his own salary since he would have less responsibilities. They replied that, as it was, his salary was so low that it constituted no more than a retirement wage.

**"In Peace and
Straightforwardness He Walked
With Me"**

He was princely in his relations with others. He treated young and old with warmth, and greeted everyone *b'seiver panim yafos*, the hallmark of all the Schwab brothers. His smile warmed as it shone; his sparkling eyes and his shining countenance put his visitors at ease, no matter what their station in life.

"*Ha'emes vehashalom ehavuu*," the prophet says. Both peace and truth are important, but one must always bear in mind that peace is a virtue when dealing with one's personal affairs, where one must bend and give in for the sake of peace. Judaism, however, is not one's to compromise. In matters touching upon Torah issues, it must be *emes* first and then *shalom*. Peace, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch often said, is the child of truth; not the reverse.

He personified the imperative of the prophet Micha to be a *hatzne'a leches in Elokecha*, to walk humbly with G-d. Although requested at various times to serve on the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* of Agudath Israel, he refused, saying that he was not worthy of being a member of this august body.

The *tzenius* referred to by the prophet Micha means not only humility, but more importantly, a lack of ostentation. He despised conspicuous consumption. He pleaded incessantly for *tzenius* and simplicity in *simchas*, in manner of dress, and comportment, in lifestyles and vacations.

Tzenius, lack of ostentation, is no less important in spiritual matters. How does one walk with *Hashem* inconspicuously? For a person who truly walks with G-d, being in the public eye is no reason to manifest one's devoutness. *Le'olam yehei adam yerei Shamayim beseiser wagaluy*. One must always fear G-d, in private and in public. The question is obvious: One who does not fear G-d in private does not fear G-d at all. What does it mean to fear G-d in private? *Hatzne'a leches*, the Rav explained, requires that one's *yiras*

Shamayim be something one has no need to show off. True *yiras Shamayim* is between you and G-d, and the more *yiras Shamayim* one has, the less should others be aware of it. The *Gemora* tells us that the *Isha Hashunamis* (Shunamite woman) knew that Elisha the Prophet was a holy man because flies did not disturb him, among other private indications. Couldn't she tell that he was a *kadosh* by just looking at him and watching his behavior? The answer is that true *kedusha*, true *yiras Shamayim* is not readily apparent to the casual observer. One sees nothing extraordinary on the externals of the true *tzaddik*. He learned this, he said, from the Chofetz Chaim. If one was *zocheh*, one could see the *Shechina* on his visage, but otherwise, he looked like a plain man dressed in the clothes of a simple laborer, with an ordinary cap pulled low over his forehead. The greater the *gadol*, the more simple the comportment. Real *kedusha* is within; as soon as it becomes manifested outwardly, it is diminished.

The Rav personified this in his daily life and in his davening, which was without noise or fuss. From his early youth, when no one watched or cared, the first *pesukim* of *Krias Shema* took him an inordinate amount of time to recite. Only his family knew that he began davening at home, much before he came to *shul*, and when the congregation was at *Borchu*, he was already holding by the second *beracha* of *Krias Shema*. In his later years, or when illness prevented him from davening with a *miryan* in *shul*, his *tefillos* at home were wrenching in their intensity—but

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With Bostoner Rebbe at Agudath Israel Convention, 1990

never when anyone was watching.

For years he would buy two *esrogim* for Succos. The exquisite one, for which he spent a large sum of money, he kept at home. He took the simpler one to *shul*. The *hiddur mitzva* was pure, with no element of public display. *Kavana* in *mitzvos* was not limited to the more glamorous ones. One must have no less *kavana* in one's daily *benching*, he used to say, than one has when eating the first *k'zayis* of *matzah* on Pesach.

One who walks with G-d feels that he is always in the Divine presence. Rabbi Schwab's regal bearing reflected that. He was his children's best friend, yet his son testified that until his father was 83 years old and in the hospital, he never saw him in bed. He spared himself little time for rest, citing Rav Hirsch on the verse, "*Vayikatz Yaakov mishnaso: Ehr hat sich ge'ekelt fun sein shluf*—He was revolted by his sleep." Yet for all his busy schedule and his dignified demeanor, he always had time for his children. His *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* table were occasions of sheer delight.

When one walks with G-d, it is insufficient merely to start the journey with his Creator. Every step of the way must reflect that reality. The prophet Isaiah criticized the Jewish People, "*Vatehi yirasam osei mitzvas anashim melumada*—they did their *mitzvos* as if by rote." Rabbi Schwab explained that not only one's *mitzva* performance, but even one's *yiras Shamayim* can become mechanical. Even a person's *kanaus* and path in life must be under constant scrutiny so that it not become stale.

Walking with *Hashem* means constant awareness of His presence. He always stressed that the prime neces-

sity of the Jew was *emuna peshuta*, an uncomplicated awareness of G-d's closeness and *Hashgacha pratis*. *Emuna* (which Rav Hirsch relates to *omein*, nurse) is the feeling of security and well-being one must have, sensing the protective and caring presence of G-d—as a nursing child feels in his mother's arms. In this manner Rabbi Schwab lived for eighty-six years, and when the time came for him to leave this world, it was in the same calm and trusting manner.

On *Rosh Chodesh Adar I*, 5755, he was hospitalized after a heart attack. On the eve of *Purim Kattan*, he suffered another severe attack. Now that his teachers were paid, he could leave the world. His family gathered around his bed and he calmly recited *Vidduy*, *Shema Yisroel*, *Boruch Shem*, and the seven-fold *Hashem Hu HaElokim*. With the seventh *Hashem Hu HaElokim*, he returned his soul to his Maker, moving on to the *Olam Hoemes* as he lived, declaring "*Hashem Hu HaElokim*," the fundamental truth of the universe. ■



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