

## Harav Yitzchok Grozalsky, *zt"l*.

1884-1975

Bronx, NY.

*In Yerushalayim of the 1970's, a zakein muflag, a vestige of the European Torah world would attract many who sought to spend time in such company. His name was Rav Yitzchok Grozalsky. The story is told that he had been married for quite a few years and hadn't blessed with children. He came to his rebbi muvhak, the Chofetz Chaim for a brocha a few times, but he demurred. He would say to him, "R' Yitzchok, du hust ales, far vos darfst du hoben kinder?" You have everything, why do you need children...*

*A while later the Chofetz Chaim sent his son-in-law, Rav Mendel Zacks to ask my father to do a favor for him. He said he'll do it if the Chofetz Chaim bentches him to have children. The Chofetz Chaim agreed and gave him a brocha.*

*Not long after that his wife bore their first child, a daughter, Miriam. He later had a second child, a son, Yaakov.*

*Of course, the Chofetz Chaim's words were difficult to understand at the time. But as he stood at the steps of the capitol, pleading for the lives of his wife and two children (who would go on to perish, *Hy"d*), the clear-eyed words of the Chofetz Chaim rang true.*

He was born to Reb Yechiel Finkel, a wholesale grain merchant in Grodno—and the young lad became known as the *iluy* of Grodno. With Grodno being a short distance from Radin, his yeshiva years were divided between his *rebbeim*, the Chofetz Chaim and Rav Shimon Shkop, *zt"l*. At the *nichum aveilim* for the Rav, an elderly Rav who was a young boy in Radin, the time, related:

*"Two shkotzim once began to beat some of the Radiner bachurim a short distance from the beis medrash. Rav Grozalsky, who was always very large in build, came out from his learning, and grabbed one of them in each of his hand, hitting their heads against the wall, and just as quickly returned to his Gemara. Needless to say, it was a while before anyone picked on the Radiner talmidim again."*

In the 1930's he was *oleh* to Eretz Yisroel, and became the *menahel* of Yeshiva Ohel Torah, led by Rav Harav Shmuel Yitchok Hilman *Z"l* in Rechavia, and later the Menahel of Heichal HaTorah in Tel Aviv, under leadership of Rav Hillel Vitkin *Z"l*. In the late 1930's, he was asked to travel to America to raise funds. As the family in Europe hadn't seen the children in a number of years, his wife and children returned there to visit—being trapped there when the war broke out. His valiant efforts to rescue them were tragically unsuccessful; they, along with Grodno's Jews perished in Auschwitz, *Hy"d*.

His home base in America for the war years was Chicago, where he took a Rabinic position. In 1945, he found out conclusively about the demise of his wife and children, and then moved to New York, where he became the Rav of a Shul in Coney Island. He then remarried, and moved with his new wife to Detroit, where he served for a short while.

The majority of his years were spent in the Bronx, however, and although he was instrumental in many organizations including Ezras Torah, Agudas Harabanim (of which he was the vice president), Agudath Israel, and Vaad Hatzolah—his true efforts were concentrated on the well-being of the Jewish community of the Bronx, where he served as the Rav of Knesseth Israel, on Creston Avenue. He was also on the head of the *vaad hachinuch* of Esther Schonfeld Bais Yaakov for many years.

He was known as a prolific speaker, and his *drashos* drew many.

Rav Grozalsky found much companionship among his friends old and new. These included *many* old Radiners; Rav Mendel Zacks, Rav Eliezer Levine (Chief Rabbi of Detroit) Rav Shmuel Walkin, Rav Mordechai Londinski. He was also close to Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Henkin, Rav Eliezer Silver, Rav Pinchos Teitz, Rav Dovid Lifshitz (Grodno), Rav Chaim Shmulevitz (Grodno).

Towards the end of his life he moved back to Eretz Yisrael and learned *b'chavrusa* with Rav Chaim Shmulevitz and with Rav Nachum Pertovitz. As we have noted, the Bronx was the center of the Jewish community during the 40's and 50's, and the Rabbanim Rav Yehuda Altusky, Rav Michel Charlop, Rav Moshe Soled (Solodownick) He learned with him *chavrusa* many years. Rav Zeitz, Rav Morduchovitz, Rav Gershon Yankelowitz, Rav Yaakov Bulka, Rav Mordechai Altein were among his companions.

Throughout his life, he always had a smile and a good word for everyone—regardless of their age or status. A boy named Zevulun Lieberman lost his father at the very young age of 16. From that moment, Rabbi Grozalsky took him under his wing, raising him like a son. Every night he would teach him, going through the entire Shas. When they finished this, they went on to learn Yoreh De'ah and Choshen Mishpat—granting him *semichah*. Rabbi Lieberman went on to become a prominent Rav in the Syrian community of Flatbush, and a *Rosh Yeshivah* of the Sephardic studies at RIETS, ordaining through this numerous Rabbanim in his own right, all thanks to the caring of a Ravi in the Bronx. Eventually, they made the *shidduch* between Rabbi and Rebbetzin Lieberman, and was the *mesader kiddushin*.

As mentioned, he spent the last portion of his life in Eretz Yisroel loving every breath in the holy land. He was sharp and erudite until the last moments of his long life—and was a frequent guest in the yeshivos, imparting Torah and wisdom to the next generations...the final chapter in a life of Torah and Rabbanus.