

Rav Chaim Grozovsky

A beloved *einikel* of Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, who had merited to spend years in his holy glow, Rav Chaim Grozovsky came to Boro Park following the war that claimed so much of that glorious Torah world. Generations of Boro Park residents who grew up in the small shul came to know a *gadol b'Torah*, a *ba'al mussar* who related to every person, and a true vestige of a bygone era who served as a bridge to the Torah world of yore.

Kamenitz

Rav Yosef Rosenbloom, zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Shaarei Yosher in Boro Park, related emotionally following the *petirah* of Rav Chaim Grozovsky: "He was such a rare breed; having had a father like Rav Reuven, a mother who was the daughter of Rav Baruch Ber—and the zechus to spend his formative years in the glow of his saintly grandfather."

Rav Chaim was born in 1926 in the city of Vilna, where the Yeshiva Knesses Beis Yitzchok had moved following the upheaval of WWI. The following year, the family moved—along with the yeshiva and its revered leader—to Kamenitz, Poland, where the yeshiva would exist until the outbreak of WWII.

Life in Kamenitz was idyllic, despite the tremendous poverty with which the Grozovsky's lived. Rav Reuven was a pillar of the yeshiva, and his family lived in the apartment above the zeide, Rav Baruch Ber. Young Chaim learned in the local cheder up until his bar mitzvah—the year that the Nazis came into the town. After a short period, they handed the town over to the Russians, and the Grozovsky's were once again on the move, returning to the big city of Vilna.

There, Chaim joined the Baranovicher yeshiva, which had by then relocated to Vilna, hearing shiurim from Rav Elchonon Wasserman, zt"l, *Hy"d*. While his son Chaim was toiling and growing in Torah in Vilna, Rav Reuven had moved the Kamenitzer Yeshiva to the town of Rasein in 1940, following the *petirah* of Rav Baruch Ber shortly before that. We find letters that he sent to Rabbonim in America, imploring them to send support for the yeshiva which was struggling financially.

In the yeshivos of America

In 1941, Rav Reuven, along with his family and a group of Kamenitzer talmidim, escaped to the United States, landing on the West Coast. Soon they made their way to New York, settling in Williamsburg, where Rav Reuven became a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. In Williamsburg, the Grozovsky's lived in the same apartment building as Rav Shlomo Heiman, zt"l, and Rav Chaim entered the yeshiva where he heard shiurim from Rav Shlomo. He would recall this influence for all his life. Following the *petirah* of Rav Shlomo, he heard the legendary shiurim from his father.

With the establishment of Beis Medrash Elyon in Monsey, Rav Chaim was among the elite bachurim who comprised the chaburah there. His father would divide his time between Torah Vodaas and Beis Medrash Elyon, arriving in Monsey for the weekends where he delivered fiery shiurim there on Fridays and Sundays.

After a few years, he went to join the nascent Beis Medrash Gavoah in Lakewood where he would become a prize talmid of Rav Aharon Kotler, zt"l. Aside from his great *hasmodob* in learning in

Lakewood, and hearing Rav Aharon's legendary shiurim, he became close to the Rosh Yeshiva and would accompany him on missions out of town. He would often serve as a messenger between his father and Rav Aharon as the two worked together on a variety of initiatives, including Vaad Hatzoloh and postwar relief. In Lakewood, Rav Chaim was known to have an exceptional mastery of the rishonim and achronim.

He married Rebbetzin Faiga, the daughter of Rav Chaim Shraga Lichtenstein of the Williamsburg, and he continued learning in Lakewood with great diligence.

Decades of Harbotzas Torah

After nine years in Lakewood, he was asked by his father to join the Kamenitzer Kollel on the Lower East Side. This was an institution where a select group of *yungeleit* toiled in learning, and Rav Reuven carried the responsibility of leading the kollel and supporting the yungeleit. Soon it was sold, and it partnered with Mesivta of Boro Park, the high school of Yeshiva Toras Emes. Rav Chaim served as a maggid shiur here for a number of years, until he opened his own yeshiva.

Talmidim relate that his shiurim were given over with a great fire, following in the *derech* of his illustrious rebbeim, and of his venerated father and grandfather. Rav Shmuel Berenbaum, the Mirer Rosh Yeshiva, would later say that "Rav Chaim dedicated his entire life to the Torah of his father and grandfather."

At a later time, he founded the Yeshiva and Beis Medrash Beis Reuven Kamenitz in Boro Park, drawing a chashuve crowd of *mispa'elim* and *lomdim*. Twice a year he would hold an asifas zikoron, on the yohrtzeit of his father and of his grandfather, commemorating the legacies that lived on in his mind. These gatherings would bring together many Kamenitzer alumni, as well as talmidim of Rav Reuven.

Anyone who frequented the shul will recall the tremendous *sever ponim yofos* with which he would greet each person. He always had a good word for everyone. He was also a fiery orator, and utilizing his incredible memory—recalling details of 50 years earlier with crystal clarity—he would repeat stories of his holy forbears to espouse deep *mussar*. Well into his 70's, he maintained three daily *sedorim* with great *hasmodoh* until his petirah in 1999.

Rav Chaim was zoche to leave behind a family of talmidei chachomim and marbitzei Torah, a credit to the holy legacy that he perpetuated.