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B'S'D'

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET

SPECIAL EDITION - RAV PAM ZT"L

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Rav Avrohom Yaakov HaCohein Pam ZT"L

From: Yated-Usa yated-usa@ttec.com Sent: Thursday, August 23, 2001 To: Yated Subscribers Subject: Yated USA Columns

RAV AVROHOM YAAKOV HACOHEIN PAM ZT"L

By RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETSKY

Rav Pam. The very mention of his name evokes an image of majestic presence, of an aura that enveloped one and all with a mixture of love and awe and then love again. Who can ever forget his vast wisdom, his awe inspiring gentleness and the unending patience that so successfully served as his vehicles for transmitting his message of unwavering commitment to Torah and Klal Yisroel. His constant words of Mussar and chizuk gave us renewed strength to perform as we know we should, "because" they came from a heart that Rav Pam couldn't help but wear on his sleeve; "because" the soft-spoken humility with which they were said somehow highlighted the roaring strength from where they emanated; "because" they were "durch'gevaikt" saturated with love. "Tocho rotzof ahava."

We all know that any and every attempt to capture this giant's greatness in an article will fail to do him justice.

How do you capture the essence of an elderly man, stricken with a devastating and ultimately fatal disease, who insists on attending a fund-raising event, having to be brought by ambulance and stretcher? With every last ounce of his failing strength he dressed in bigdei Shabbos and left his home for the sake of ten thousand children he had never seen with his eyes but had touched with his heart and soul.

How do you write believable stories of a man who would cry bitter tears when hearing the plight of individuals in need? How does one convey the essence of a person whose mesiras nefesh for Torah transcended the constraints of his aged and stricken body, a man whose ruchniyus extended light years beyond his gashmiyus?

No one who was privileged to meet him will ever forget the warm smile that sparkled for every yid, strong or weak, rich or poor, observant or searching to find the correct derech. Ashrei Ayin Ruasah Zos.

Rav Pam asked that no hespedim be delivered at the levaya. How can one write even the briefest history of this Gadol HaDor without every word being filled with the praise he so desperately shunned?

The premise of this undertaking is based on the tradition established by Rav Chaim Berlin when he overruled an identical request made by Rav Itzel Peterburger in his last will and testament. Rav Berlin relied on the distinction the posuk makes between "hesped" (relating the niftar's praises) and "b'chi" (crying for our own loss). The Mishna in Avos often uses the phrase: "hu haya omer" (he used to say). Mefarshim understand this not as being a record of an often repeated verbal statement but as a message, a lesson that the Tanna taught by his very essence, "Mitten gantzen zich", with every fiber of his being.

Klal Yisroel weeps because it no longer has this Gadol baTorah to teach us by his example-"kulo omer kavod." Our words, our "b'chi" is merely an attempt to gather morsels of "seudas havra'ah", a small fraction of those "hu haya omer's" so that those lessons of Rav Pam will never be

forgotten.

In the words of the Novominsker Rebbe at the Shuvu Dinner held in Rav Pam's honor, this past February,

"Chessed v'emes nifgashu; tzedek v'sholom nashaku. The fusion of truth and unbounded chesed, of clear vision and Ahavas Hasholom, have made the Rosh Yeshiva to all of us a paradigm of an ish Tzadik whose heart ticks only with the rhythm of the sacred midos contained in the mitzvah of V' halachta b'drachav".

His unending concern for Jewish children and their right to receive a true Torah chinuch, his fiery forcefulness against any perversion of emes, his meticulous approach to time and its use, his empowering B'nai Torah to realize both their potential and their responsibilities will remain ingrained in the spirit of an orphaned community.

Roots of Holiness

Rav Avraham Yaakov HaCohen Pam was born in Tamuz 5673 (1913) in the city of Vidz, Lithuania.

His father Rav Meir, was a Gaon in Torah whose entire life evolved around limud HaTorah.

Rav Pam often told his talmidim-and especially his grandson R' Meir, who is named after his great-grandfather, that Rav Meir never stopped learning in order to go to sleep. He would concentrate on either a Ketzos or Reb Akiva Eiger until finally dozing off to the strains of their svaros, often waking up in the middle of the night to find the seforim still lying open beside him.

Rav Meir Pam was renown for his fiery pilpul chavirim, and the Torah friendships he forged that impacted his life and that of his talmidim.

As a bochur Rav Meir learned in Yeshivas Slabodka. He was a prominent member of the chabura and his hasmada was legendary. One story that Rav Pam told was how Shabbos in Slobodka saw a twenty four hour hasmada vigil. The Yeshiva was divided in to two halves to ensure a continuous 'kol Torah' in the Bais Medrash. The first group would learn until the middle of the night, eating the Seuda upon their return to their stanza at midnight. The second group resumed where the first had left off, beginning to learn at midnight and extending their limud until well into the Shabbos day.

Rav Meir was in the first chaburah, a fact he often impressed upon his young son. He told of when the Rav of Vidz once came to visit him in Slobodka and wept with compassion when he joined Rav Meir for the midnight Shabbos Seudah and saw that it was merely a bowl of beans. It was this message of mesiras nefesh that was so deeply absorbed by his son, the future Manhig Hador.

Later, Rav Meir learned in Telshe and in the Chofetz Chaim's Kollel Kodshim together with Rav Elchonon Wasserman, and Rav Yosef Kahaneman, the Ponovezer Rav. Rav Kahaneman later served as Rav of Vidz and established a yeshiva there. He invited Rav Meir Pam to serve as a Rosh Yeshiva together with Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer.

Rav Meir was married to Rachel Leah, the daughter of Rav Shimon Dov Analek, the Shedlitzer Rav and a Talmid muvhak of Rav Eizel Charif. Born in 1848, Rav Shimon Dov was of dark complexion and, as a young man, his beloved rebbe, would affectionately call him, the Shvartze Iluy.

Rav Shimon Dov was also the father-in-law of the Rav of Nadajin, Rav Laizer, a son of Rav Naftali Amsterdam. He was the mechaber of the Sefer Orach Mishpat, among other numerous seforim that were lost in the Warsaw Ghetto's destruction.

Rav Pam's zaide, Rav Shimon Dov, served as the Rav of Tiktin and later in the Chassidic community of Shedlitz. Rav Shimon was of Lithuanian origin, and though his minhagim differed from those of his kehilla, he made every effort to afford kovod to the members of the kehilla and their customs.

Rav Pam's tremendous respect for all Yidden and Minhagim were surely ingrained from the extreme sensitivity and pure midos of his

forebears. Once during a Friday shmuez on Parshas Vaierah, Rav Pam expounded on Moshe Rabbeinu saying, "It is not proper for us to offer the god of the Egyptians before their eyes-will they not stone us?" (Shmos 8:21-22). Rav Pam asked, "Was Moshe afraid that the Mitzriyim would harm the Yidden? This occurred after four makkos where the Yad Hashem had clearly and decisively ruled out any such concerns. Surely Moshe did not fear them!"

Rav Pam quoted the Chasam Sofer as saying, "True the Mitzriyim would be powerless, but their pain in wanting to stop the Yidden and their inability to do so, would bring additional, unwarranted pain upon the Mitzriyim, perhaps even more distress than Hashem had planned for them, at this point."

He cited his zaide's custom in Shedlitz, explaining that though Rav Shimon Dov himself ate gebrochts, on Pesach, he made sure to eat it in private so as not to offend those who didn't. Rav Pam contrasted that humble approach to that of a previous Rav in that town, who felt that gebrochts had no halachic basis and was a totally unnecessary stringency that detracted from the joy of Yom Tov. That Rav would put his knaidlach in the windows to show one and all that the Rav ate gebrochts.

He cited another example of his zaide's tremendous appreciation and esteem towards the feelings of another Yid's minhag.

One Pesach a man came to Ray Shimon Dov with a little package. It was wrapped in layers of paper. The man removed one layer, and then another and a third. Finally, the man got to the problem. He took out a piece of dampened matzo. "What is the problem?" asked the Rav. 'Rebbe,' replied the man in distress, the matzo fell in the hot soup and I want to know if now the bowl, the spoon and the soup have become treif?"

Rav Shimon Dov looked at him and said, "My friend, only Chometz is forbidden on Pesach even in minute amounts, but matzo is not. You do not have to kasher the bowl and spoon."

Rav Pam noted the gentleness of this answer and how easy it would have been to respond otherwise in ways that could have been hurtful

Another potent force in molding Rav Pam's fervent hashkafa was that of his mother, Rebbetzin Rachel Leah. A melumedes extraordinaire, she was proficient in the entire Tanach and infused the words of the Shoftim and Nevi'im into her every sentence. Her mussar was quotes from Mishlei and her words of consolation were those of Yirmiyahu and Yeshayahu. In fact, Rav Pam would often turn to those Divrei Nevi'im for a source of chizuk in times of despair.

The Pam family had a set of Tanach with the commentary of the Malbim in their home in Europe. It was a rare and precious item and young Reb Avraham Yaakov seized the opportunity to learn Tanach and Malbim at every opportunity, soon mastering large portions of Tanach and eventually becoming fluent in its sacred entirety.

Talmidim related that every year he would complete all of Tanach in time for the Yahrtzeit of his mother, a tribute to the love she instilled in him for the divrei haNevi'im.

The Rebbitzin was a pillar of chesed who constantly set aside money for the impoverished. Once a man came crying to her that his father-in-law had duped him, refusing to fulfill the terms of the large dowry he had promised. She comforted him by explaining that the promise was not based upon any amount he possessed but rather on the great value his father-in-law had appraised him to be worth. Thus, it was not a matter of withholding funds but simply a case of being unable to afford to pay the full value!

She would relate stories of gedolei yisroel to guide her children along a path of midos tovos, teaching them about emes, (truthfulness), self-control and conquering their Yetzer Harah.

Rav Pam would often relate a famous story that his mother told him as a child. Rav Mord'cha of Slonim had received as a gift a beautiful piece of material spun and woven in Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Mord'cha sent it to a tailor to cut out a neck-hole so as to turn

the holy cloth into a talis kattan.

Unfortunately, the cloth had been folded twice over before the tailor cut the hole, creating two holes instead of one.

The humiliated tailor presented his irreparable blunder to Rav Mord'cha with dejection. Initially Rav Mord'cha was distraught, but he immediately regained his composure and exclaimed, "Two holes are wonderful! One is for the neck, and the other is to test Reb Mord'cha to see if he is easy to anger."

Untainted Youth

As a young man, Rav Pam already embodied remarkable grace with impeccably fine character and tremendous Yiras Shamayim. He told a Talmid, that at age five and a half his father took him to daven mincha in shul. After Mincha the Rav of the shul spoke for several minutes on the severity of speaking Lashon Harah.

"I don't know, if I spoke Lashon Harah before that time," said Rav Pam, "but I am sure that since hearing those words, I could not allow myself to speak Lashon Harah!"

His father, decided that it would be best to send him to the city of Rakaczik, where young Avraham Yaakov learned in Yeshiva Ketana Eitz Chaim for a year and a half.

In fact, when he was a mere lad of nine and-a-half Rav Viner of Rakaczik wrote him an approbation to help him gain entry into a Yeshiva, citing: "This young man is destined to become a Gadol B'Yisrael".

Arriving at the Yeshiva, the Rosh Yeshiva, was surprised to see this frail youngster ready to separate himself from his family and live the impoverished life of a European Yeshiva bochur.

One of the Yeshiva's melamdin went so far as to ask if he brought along his crib. Young Avraham Yaakov was not fazed. Following the derech that his father paved, he too, showed remarkable mesiras nefesh, sleeping in the Bais Medrash. Sometimes, he would later recall, it was so cold that he would fall asleep next to the oven, only to wake up with blisters on his arms from leaning against the unprotected oven walls.

At the age 10 and-a-half the young Avraham Yaakov traveled to Kovno to learn in a small chaburah led by a bochur from the Slabodka Yeshiva who had been forced due to an illness to leave the Yeshiva. Each day he would cross the bridge from Kovno to Slobodka to learn with the bochur. The bochur had agreed to learn with the younger charges, on his own terms, and thus at a young age Reb Avraham Yaakov was thrust into the complex sugyos of Ailu Treifus. This may have sparked a life-long love for the sugyos in Chulin, the Chailek Hatorah, that Rav Pam would eventually be renown for mastering and imparting to scores of Talmidim.

Rav Pam's stay in Slobodka, basking in the glow of the great gedolim whose presence illuminated the shtetl, though short, had a tremendous impact on his life.

During his stay in Slobodka, he would eat each Shabbos meal by one of the distinguished yungeleit of the Kovno Kollel, a brilliant Talmid Chacham who would soon become the Rav of Tzitivyan, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky. He would eat on Shabbos by the Kamenetzky's who had three young children of their own. Despite their abject poverty, Rav Yaakov and his Rebbitzin would invite three bochorim to join them for their se'udah.

Little did Rav Pam know that Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky would become his mentor years later, on foreign soil, after the devastation of European Jewry.

Journey to America

After World War I the Communists had begun their systematic dismantling of any semblance of Torah life. Their influence pervaded the communities of Poland and Lithuania and White Russia, and their officers and henchmen subjugated the Rabbanim to a life of harassment and cruelty. Rav Meir was forced to wander from town to town, and live a life of galus. In 1927 when Rav Meir Pam had the opportunity to come

to America, he decided to make the journey. Later after establishing himself on those foreign shores he sent funds for the family to join him

The trip was arduous. The family had to stop in Hamburg due to illness, and it was nearly two years from the onset of the journey until they finally arrived at their destination in the Brownsville section of New York. There Rav Meir was the Rav of Bais Medrash HaGadol and a maggid shiur in Mesivta Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin.

Torah Voda'ath

Young Avraham Yaakov applied to learn in Mesivta Torah Voda'ath where he grew in Torah and formed a close bond with Rav Dovid Leibowitz, the Rosh Yeshiva. In fact, when Rav Dovid left Mesivta Torah Voda'ath, Rav Pam thought he should join him, but Rav Leibowitz advised him to stay as he saw with prescient clarity that Rav Pam would have a bright future in Torah Voda 'ath.

In 1942, within a year of Rav Dovid's untimely passing, Rav Pam wrote an appreciation in the Agudah journal, Orthodox Youth.

"Rav Dovid's shiur was not a lecture, but rather an impassioned plea for a proposed solution to the complexities he found. He would take a single thought and toy with it for an hour analyzing it, dramatizing it, expanding it, at the risk of distortion, reexamining it again and again, at the risk of tedium-ever fearful that the point was not yet fully appreciated, ever straining to enhance the beauty of the concept. He was particularly fond of Midrashim relating to personality traits(middos).

To be a lamdan-was an ideal he constantly glorified. To acquire a Torah outlook-was the greatest of achievements. To be a maven (connoisseur) of Talmud-was a source of justifiable pride. To be a marbitz Torah (a teacher of Torah) was the crowning achievement of a talmid Chacham."

In pursuit of greatness

In High School Rav Pam excelled in every subject that he was assigned. His genius for languages had him understanding and mastering English in no time, and his ability to communicate in this foreign tongue to perfection helped him to be mashpia on thousands of Jews in our time who would never master Yiddish. He made an effort not to retain an accent as everything he set out to do was with a goal of perfection.

He felt that B'nai Torah carry a responsibility to speak clearly and correctly and failure to do so in the public eye, would be tantamount to a Talmid Chacham who walks around with a stain "rvav" on his clothing.

His grandson remarked, that even in his last days, when a young grandchild said, "Zaidy, there is oranges in the refrigerator," Rav Pam smiled softly and corrected him, "No my child, there are oranges in the refrigerator."

A prominent Rav, told of how, as a young Talmid in the Mesivta, he would daven for the Amud. His davening though passable, was riddled with pronunciation miscues. Rav Pam called him over to correct one of them.

The boy mustered enough courage to admit, "If I am saying this word incorrectly, perhaps I am pronouncing others incorrectly as well."

Rav Pam sat with him and reviewed the proper pronunciation of the entire davening,

As a medakdek, everything he approached was with cheshbon. It did not make a difference if it was an extra word or an extra minute.

During his final illness, no longer able to make it to the Yeshiva for davening, a minyan would assemble in his home. Once, the chazzan made a mistake and without consulting with Rav Pam-who was very weak at the time-others erroneously instructed the chazzan to repeat the entire chazaras hashatz. That night Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz who had been present at the minyan, received a call from Rav Pam. "I cannot allow an erroneous psak to go out from my house," the Rosh Yeshiva declared with emotion. "Please call everyone who was there, in my name, to ensure that they know what the proper halacha is".

His reverence for time was paramount. He often quoted Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelovitz, "We are building Torah in America! How can we

afford to waste a minute!"

Rav Pam built an everlasting keshet with his Rabbeim and the Gedolei Torah with whom he came in contact, especially with Rav Dovid Leibowitz and later with Rav Leib Mallin, Rosh Yeshiva of Bais HaTalmud, who said of the young prodigy, "He would be considered great even in an earlier generation!"

In 1934, at age 21 Rav Pam had basically finished the program afforded for talmidim at Torah Voda'ath, but he did not stop his quest for growth in Torah. At the time only Rav Gedaliah Schorr had semicha from amongst the bochurim. Rav Pam set out to learn for semicha together with a few others. Rav Pam learned alone, hours on end without the slightest interruption. He mastered Yoreh Deah and Kidushin, Hilchos Toen V'nitan and Dayanim. On occasion he would confer with others, but in the main part, he learned alone, a trait he would follow throughout his life.

He received three separate semichos; one was from Rav Moshe Binyamin Tomashov, the Rav of Brownsville and the author of Teshuvos Mabit and Taharas Mayim .

He also received semicha from Rav Dovid Kantrowitz, the author of Tzilusa D'shmaata, and by Rav Graubert the Rav of Toronto who preceded Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky in that city. Rav Graubert was visiting in the United States at the time and Rav Pam spent a few days with him for the bechuna.

There were many options in Rav Pam's life, as a brilliant man fluent in languages, proficient in math, and articulate, he could have chosen many other paths. He was offered positions in Rabbanus across America. Once, with a far-away look in his eyes he confided to a close talmid: " My life was comprised of many crossroads, I am forever grateful to the Ribono shel Olam for having steered me onto the path filled with ameilus baTorah."

In the year 1939 Rav Pam was appointed a Maggid shiur in Torah Voda'ath. It was difficult to motivate young American boys in those days, but Rav Pam excelled in motivating them. Once a student was found studying mathematics during shiur. He explained to his Rebbe that he was afraid that he was going to fail a test. Rav Pam assured him that if he would learn with diligence, then he himself would help him after class with his mathematics!

Of course, as serious as Rav Pam was, he always brought his soft sense of humor with him to the classroom.

Back in the 1960s When Rav Pam was teaching Mesechta Sukkah, there was a boy who slept the entire year during class. Quite often his friends would ask, "should we wake him Rebbe?" Rav Pam, who obviously felt that the boy was not ready to take learning seriously, told them to let him sleep. He would continue the shiur without him.

The next year Rav Pam was given the same exact class to teach, on the next grade level. That year the class was learning Shabbos. And when the sleepy student put his head down, after a few days, Rav Pam motioned for another student to awaken him.

After class someone asked why he had changed strategies from last year to this. Rav Pam did not reveal why he felt the bochur should be pushed this year in contrast to last, but he did offer a witticism.

"Last year we learned Sukkah. Everyone knows it is a mitzvah to sleep in a Sukkah. About Shabbos chazal tell us, shaina B'Shabbos Taanug, Sleep on Shabbos is pleasurable. I could not deny him a mitzvah, but a little pleasure I can deny him!"

Rav Pam cherished teaching. He once commented to his dear Talmid Rav Yisrael Reisman, "when I got the shstelleh teaching, I was mispalel that I should be able to teach for sixty years!"

When Rav Reisman asked why only sixty, Rav Pam smiled. "Is sixty bad?" he asked.

While a rebbe, Rav Pam did nothing but learn the sugyos he was teaching his Talmidim. He commented to some students that he had desired to learn Daf haYomi, but decided against it as he would rather

spend that time on the sugyos he was teaching in shiur.

One exception however was when, during the war years, Rav Aharon Kotler was living in Manhattan. He had not yet established the Lakewood Yeshiva and was giving shiurim to a chaburah of young men in a hotel room. Rav Pam attended those shiurim as he would not forego the opportunity to hear the Torah of such a great Gaon. He was not only influenced by the deep shiurim, which he transcribed almost verbatim, but he was forever affected by Rav Aharon's unwavering hislahvus and fiery demeanor.

Rav Pam forged a close keshet with Rav Moshe Shisgal, (the son-in-law of Rav Moshe Feinstein). During that period and later in life, Rav Pam would literally shudder in reverence when talking about his Rebbe/Chaver, Rav Shisgal, a Gaon who was niftar young.

He recalled sitting by Rav Aharon's shiur and whispering something ever so softly to Rav Shisgal. With super human perception and the uncanny ability to hear a Torah whisper at the other end of the room, Rav Aharon responded to the comment with fervor and passion.

At that time Rav Aharon was in the middle of his ceaseless efforts on behalf of Va'ad Hatzalah. Often the shiur would be interrupted, in emergency fashion. A decision had to be immediately made regarding issues of life and death! Rav Aharon would weigh the various sides of the weighty question and after exhaustive thought would make a decision.

Immediately after rendering the psak, he returned to the shiur, continuing from the very point from where he had left off without any sign of having stopped to weigh such grave matters.

This powerful "hiskashrus L'Torah" among other incidents, influenced Rav Pam deeply. He often told of the amazing story of his own father, Rav Meir. Taken to the hospital for a serious operation, he began discussing a question of a Tosfos in Sukkah. Rav Avraham Yaakov repeated an answer offered by the Oruch L'Nair. Rav Meir shook his head, in disapproval as if to say that Tosfos' question remains steadfast. They were interrupted by the admissions process to the hospital.

For a few days his father suffered in great pain and the doctors decided to forego the operation as it would be too dangerous. Instead they performed a different, difficult procedure.

As soon as he was able to talk his first words were, "who was it you quoted in the Taxi?" He went on to argue on the logic of the Aruch L' Nair's reasoning.

"This was the true bond to Torah we all should desire to seek!"

The popularity of Rav Pam's shiurim eventually led to his being elevated to become Maggid Shiur for the third year Bais Medrash. Reb Gedaliah Weinberger, a close talmid, relates how his clarity and hasbarah were remarkable. He was able to sum up the most complicated concepts into the fewest words necessary to explain it. No more no less.

His Talmidim were truly like children. Rav Moshe Francis, Rosh Kollel of the Chicago Community Kollel, tells that he was once talking to Rav Pam at a wedding when someone came by and asked, "Is this your son?"

Rav Pam did not hesitate. "K'ben," he responded, "like a son."

In later years, Rav Pam gave shiurim to alumni; in the summer twice a week and once a week in the winter.

He began a Chumash shiur every Friday packed with his fiery hashkafa, imparted with gentle mussar. With mesholim, insight and divrei Torah from the early Gaonim, Rav Pam imparted hashkafa to a generation of B' nai Torah who carry the torch of his leadership today.

Many have asked: What is it about Torah Voda'ath talmidim that makes them feel a sense of achrayus, not only to their alma mater but to every Mosad HaTorah?

The leadership of Torah Voda'ath planted the seeds of so many other mosdos. Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz founded Torah Umesorah, Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky founded Be'er HaGolah, Rav Pam founded Shuvu.

The talmidim of Torah Voda'ath followed their mentors role in supporting the various outgrowths of their cherished institution.

Gedaliah Weinberger, who serves on the board of numerous mosdos, explained: "It was imbued in the atmosphere of our Yeshiva that our achrayos (responsibility) transcends the walls of our Bais Medrash and assumes our involvement in the growth of Torah on a far greater level."

In 1980 with the passing of Rav Sholom Ber Rivkin, Rav Pam began giving shiurim in Yoreh Deah, preparing Talmidim for semicha.

With the passing of Rav Eliyahu Chazan, Rav Pam was appointed Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Mesivta Torah Voda'ath, the position he held until the end of his life.

Partner in Life

In 1943 Rav Pam married Sarah Balmuth. Though Rav Pam often expressed his gratitude for having chosen the right path in life, there was one choice that he forever emphasized to his Talmidim, in a manner exceeding any other. He always expressed great gratitude to Hashem Yisborach for having merited a Rebbetzen who tended to his every need, enabling him to pursue a life filled with Avodas Hashem and Limud HaTorah.

The Rebbetzen put order to the thousands of requests for appointments, advice and letters of approbation. Rav Pam constantly expressed his gratitude for her ever-present care and concern, not only for the physical amenities of his daily life but for enabling him to grow in ruchniyus as well.

The Rosh Yeshiva's emphasis on the importance of mutual respect in marriage found expression in his gentle reminders to talmidim to celebrate their wedding anniversaries every year without fail.

When Yosi Heber, a talmid of Rav Pam became a chosson, one of the first to be called with the good news was the Rosh Yeshiva who immediately asked if a date had been set for the wedding. Yosi replied that the date indeed had been set for August 22nd. "Why, that's my anniversary date!" exclaimed the Rosh Yeshiva, "it will be easy to remember!"

Not one to forget an important date or miss an opportunity, Rabbi Heber made it his practice to send out an anniversary card to Rav Pam and his Rebbetzin every year thereafter. As the years went on he made a point of sharing his nachas with the Pams and included a picture of the children as each addition to his family arrived. This year, the card was sent out a bit early. At the shiva the Rebbetzin called over Rabbi Yosi Heber to tell him something. "I wanted to tell you to know that I mentioned to Rav Pam on Tuesday that I received your anniversary card. I took it to the hospital and read it to the Rosh Yeshiva and he reacted to it. It was the last time he reacted to anything!"

A small, inconsequential thing like an anniversary when used correctly can become another solid brick in the foundation of a marriage and the development of future generations. Another aspect of the Rosh Yeshiva's ability to take the small and commonplace things in life and elevate them to being the tools of greatness.

Well after midnight this past Thursday night, after the devastating news of the Rosh Yeshiva's passing reached the world, some of Rav Pam's closest talmidim made their way to the house to join the Rebbetzin and offer whatever solace they could. Upon entering the house they were shocked to discover the Rebbetzin at work on her ironing board. To their astonished look she responded, "I am simply ironing Rabbi Pams talis and kittel for the kevura tomorrow. I know its late at night but this is my last chance to be mechabed him".

Ameilus in Midos: The Quintessential Anav

Rav Pam worked tirelessly not only to instill lomdus in his talmidim, but to imbue them with hashkafas haTorah and midos tovos. Often his brilliant shmussen would overshadow his wonderful shiurim and greatness in lomdus.

He stressed the concept of p'sharah, compromise, as an integral part of halacha. He decried the very thought that people would prefer the all

or nothing approach of secular courts.

He was fiercely opposed to frivolity. In his sefer Atara L' Melech, Rav Pam chastises those who use Purim as an opportunity to skewer Divrei Chazal for their personal amusement.

Rav Pam never put on the traditional frock (kapote) of a Rosh Yeshiva and always wore a simple brim-down hat and not a Hamburg or up-brim hat as most Roshei Yeshiva wear.

Rav Pam would leave his hat in the public cloak-room of Mesivta Torah Vodaas. Once he innocently took his hat, not realizing someone had mistakenly balanced their coffee mug on its back brim.

The mug came flying down from the shelf, shattering in a cacophony of ceramic shards. Immediately Rav Pam went to get a broom and shovel. He insisted on sweeping up the mess by himself. Then he went to the local hardware store to get a replacement mug. He could not find the exact matching color and so he wrote a note. In his meticulously crafted expression and perfect lettering, he attached the following note to the mug.

"I was negligent in my actions and I shattered your mug. I have bought this one to replace it. I hope that you forgive me. In the event that this replacement does not suffice, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange compensation.

The note was signed simply, Avraham Pam.

(Author's note: The note from Rav Pam, was cherished by the mug owner, much more than the replaced mug. It is framed and hangs on his wall!)

Rav Pam did not sit in the traditional seat of the Rosh HaYeshiva in the front of the Bais HaMedrash, instead he preferred to sit with his Talmidim in the middle of the study hall. He showed tremendous respect to the other Roshei Yeshiva in Torah Vodaas. In fact, upon the appointment of additional Roshei Yeshiva at Torah Vodaas, he even deferred his years-old minhag of being the makri (one who delegates the sequence of the shofar sounds) for Rosh Hashana.

When he would sit together with the Rabbeim in the staff room of the Mesivta, he would remain very quiet. He did not impose his opinions in learning upon his colleagues and did not interrupt their conversations with his ideas.

He was wont to relate the famous story of the Beis HaLevi who had attended a gathering of prestigious Rabbanim.

The Bais HaLevi put forth a question that his brilliant son Reb Chaim had asked. The ensuing debate of the great rabbanim was lively as each offered his own solution. The only one who remained quiet was Rav Yitzchok Blaser, known as Reb Itzel Peterburger.

The Bais HaLevi was a bit surprised, as Reb Itzel's reputation was one of great genius. Eventually The Bais HaLevi repeated his son's solution to the problem.

After the meeting finished and the Bais Halevi returned home he got hold of a copy of the Pri Yitzchok, the sefer written by none other than Reb Itzel. In it, in black and white was the question proposed, the answers offered and refuted, along with the very same conclusion that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik had reached.

Rav Pam had learned for himself and taught others that you never lose by keeping quiet.

Of course that viewpoint only applied to personal honor; when it came to chilul Hashem, the desecration of Hashem's name there was never a moment of silence!

Thirty years ago Rav Pam and his Rebbitzen made their only visit to Eretz Yisrael together. They stayed in Yerushalayim, but when Rav Pam visited B'nai Berak, Ponvez Yeshiva was holding its annual Yarchei Kallah. Rav Pam saw this opportunity to sit and learn in virtual anonymity, and decided to stay in the Yeshiva setting.

They moved into the dorm specially set up for the Yarchei Kallah families, and for two weeks Rav Pam sat and learned. After two weeks, he had attended a Simcha in the Ponovez Dining Room, when he saw

some people whispering. Suddenly a distinguished man approached Rav Pam. "Torah Vodaas Rosh Yeshiva, please sit up front on the head table."

The next morning, realizing that his identity was compromised, he and his wife returned immediately to Yerushalayim.

Leadership

Rav Pam would lead the charge of Gedolei Yisraoel who decried, improper business practices or fraudulent dealings with government agencies. He did not differentiate between stealing on an individual, institutional, or governmental level. It was all prohibited and he let it be known, emphatically and insistently.

Often he repeated the story of the man who approached Rav Yisrael Salanter, telling him that he had decided to leave his job as a shochet, due to the tremendous responsibility it bore.

And what do you plan to do?" asked Rav Yisrael.

"Oh," said the man offhandedly, "I plan to go into business."

Rav Yisrael immediately launched an enumeration of the myriad halachos concerning business including the complicated laws concerning ribis and ona'as devorim. A yerei shomayim should realize that dealing in business involves constant risk of transgression.

He would deride those who felt that they could just rely on their gut feelings for their p'sakim.

He used to tell the story of the man who had always gone to a Rav for his questions, until one day he felt that his experiences had trained him accordingly. A few months went by when the Rav met him.

"I haven't seen you in a while," said the Rav

"Oh, I needn't come to you any more. I learned to pasken myself," said the man.

"Can I hear an example?" asked the Rav.

"Oh just the other night my gentile maid poured some of her non-kosher food in my pot and began cooking with it."

"And what did you do?"

The man beamed. "Why, nothing of course. Everyone knows that Tous Akum is mutar!"

Rav Pam would cry the words of Yeshaya HaNavi, "Oy li ki nidmaisi! Woe is to me that I fantasize!" we fantasize about our true level, when in all honesty we have so much to truly achieve!

Though he was often the featured speaker at conventions of Agudath Israel and other important venues with the ears of a People focused on his every word, when he left the podium, he was as always the humble giant and master of simplicity.

A talmid recalls how he was in a car with Rav Pam along with a bochur of his own age, who was also named Avraham. His stop came first and upon leaving the car he turned and in a greeting intended solely for his peer, he exclaimed, "Good night Avraham."

Rav Pam, unfazed at being addressed so informally and not realizing that the message was intended for the other bachur, simply smiled and returned the farewell. "Good Night to you too."

To many who knew him, he was called the Chofetz Chaim of America. Years after the sobriquet was coined, it reached Rav Pam's ears. He shuddered and was quite upset.

"How can anyone even utter my name in the same breath as the Chafetz Chaim!?" He complained in disbelief. "Does anyone have an inkling of the greatness of the Chofetz Chaim. I tremble upon the mention of his name. How dare anyone use that expression for me."

Agudath Yisroel

When Rav Shneur Kotler was diagnosed with his final illness, my zaide Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, called Rav Pam and asked him to become a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah. Though Rav Pam, refused, Rav Yaakov, did not accept the refusal and Rav Pam had simply no choice.

That November, Rav Shneur called him to attend the Agudah Convention and Rav Pam immediately acquiesced. The Rebbitzen was

quite surprised at the immediate change of attitude.

Why did you agree to go, she asked when you normally refuse.

"And what will happen," responded Rav Pam, "shall I encumber Rav Yaakov to call me? I decided to immediately say yes to Rav Shneur's invitation, so as not to be matriach the Rosh Yeshiva."

Rav Yaakov viewed Rav Pam as the leader who would be the man of sholom. He asked him to serve on Batei Dinim dealing with Klal issues. He knew that his sense of yosher and mishpat would work hand in hand with sholom.

Rav Yaakov forged an extremely close relationship with him. He often referred to him as the Kohain Gadol.

Rav Yitzchok Knobel relates that when he was in Toronto, there was a young man who had a serious life decision question that he wanted to present to Rav Yaakov. As the avreich, was not conversant in Yiddish he asked Rabbi Knobel, a grandson through marriage to present the issue to the Rosh yeshiva. Rav Yaakov, however, did not want to hear the question nor discuss the sensitive issue unless he was able to hear it directly from the person involved.

Rav Yaakov, turned to Rav Knobel and said, "Rav Pam is currently in Toronto. Tell him to speak to Rav Pam. And if he is still worried, I want you to tell him, that if I would have a personal problem, I, myself would go to Rav Pam!"

The family wanted that Rav Pam should set himself aside one day in which he would have Menucha from all those who would deluge him with their problems. They suggested that on that day he would see absolutely no one. No exceptions. Rav Pam could not accept such a proposal.

"Let's say there is someone who needs me on that day and can't see me any other day?" he conjectured.

Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zweibel, the respected Agudah leader, recalls how as senior member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah every other member would show reverence to the words of Rav Pam.

He was makpid that the Agudah concentrate on programs that would truly reach out and teach the community. He would dismiss any other attempt at public relations for orthodoxy. That was only media hype in his eyes. "Our tafkid is to promote chinuch yaldei yisroel", was an oft repeated motto. Indeed, he would always speak at Agudah conventions about chinuch and the importance of teaching our children to live a life of Torah values.

Shuvu

In 1990 when the flood gates of the Soviet Union burst open, Klal Yisroel was faced with the prospect of hundreds of thousands of souls pouring into potential oblivion. Rav Avrohom Yosef Leizeron of Chinuch Atzmai recalls years later that he was present at the Agudas Yisroel convention that year and was among those who spoke to the Rosh Yeshiva of the potential disaster facing the children. At that year's keynote session Rav Pam made an impassioned plea to begin a network of schools in Eretz Yisroel for the children of these Russian immigrants. That Motzoei Shabbos he convened a meeting of the wealthy and influential participants at that years convention.

On the way to the meeting he met a talmid, who he would call a partner and a friend, Reb Avraham Biderman. He brought him along to the meeting. It was at that meeting, that Shuvu was born, and then and there Rav Pam appointed Avraham Biderman as chairman.

It would be superfluous to tell any reader of this paper how Rav Pam, lived and breathed Shuvu. It became his focus and his nachas over the course of the last decade of his life.

Baalei Batim, ready to donate five or ten thousand dollars to Shuvu, would increase their contributions tenfold after hearing Rav Pam's impassioned pleas.

He would often quote Rav Levi Yitzchok of Barditchov. If I have a Ran in Nedarim, what do I need Gan Eden for?

"The pleasure of bringing so many children back to Torah was Rav

Pam's Gan Eden. He would quote the Imrei Emes, who said that he had an answer ready for when he would be asked by the Heavenly tribunal, "What merit have you to enter Gan Eden?" The Imrei Emes said he would reply, "My share in the founding of Agudath Yisrael."

Rav Pam, in the effort to impress upon his listeners the importance of supporting their work, would proudly declare that the establishment of Shuvu was his ticket to Gan Eden.

He would often cajole Baalei Batim to give tzedoka with mesiras nefesh. He once told Rabbi Sidney Glenner of Chicago that the nisayon of the last dor was b'chol nafsh'cha- giving up ones life. The nisayon of this dor is b'chol m'odecha- giving up one's money for the causes of Torah.

Hashkafa and Halacha

Every nuance of the Shulchan Aruch was important to the Rosh Yeshiva. The words of the Mishna Berurah were forever engraved in his mind and he did not take a step without the clarity of halacha illuminating his derech hayashar. Even on the Yomim Noraim, he refused to take the Kibud of p 'sicha- of opening the Aron HaKodesh, if someone was still davening the shemoneh esrai near the aisle he would have to cross.

Learning Torah was the most prominent force in his hashkafa. When ever bochurim would have doubts whether to attend a certain, important function or miss the event in exchange for another few hours in Yeshiva, he would smile and tell them: "Az mir lernt, hut m'nit charata. Learning never brings regret!"

There were a few expressions that bothered Rav Pam. He did not like when people would talk about the "Amahliger yohrin", the good-old-days, when everything was so pure.

He felt that we must do our best to improve our generation without deriding it. And, if someone felt that it was once better, he did not want them lamenting the fact, rather he wanted to see them act in a way that would raise the level of this generation.

He had tremendous hakpadah on speech. Each year on Parshas Noach he would discuss how the Torah used extra words so as not to say "tamei". He asked the bochurim to refrain from the vernacular that infiltrated the Yeshiva world from the street. He felt it was unbecoming for them to express themselves in a less than articulate manner and once told the boys that they should remove "whatchamacallit" from their vocabularies.

A close talmid approached him after the Shmeuss. "What is wrong with 'whatchamacallit'?" he asked

"It shows you are not thinking." he replied.

A fellow patient who was undergoing chemotherapy was together with Rav Pam. The fellow mentioned that he felt lousy. After he left Rav Pam commented to a companion, "I feel the same way, only I would have expressed it differently."

Mishtatef B'tza'ar

Rav Yosef Zev Chesir of Montreal related a message that Rav Pam once conveyed at a Chinuch Atzmai parlor meeting in Montreal.

Chazal tell us that when Hashem remembered Sora with the gift of a child, "Many barren woman were also remembered that day."

Rav Pam asked a simple question. Sora needed a child. Yitzchak had to be the progenitor of Klal Yisrael. But why did Hashem grant the gift of fertility to the hordes of barren women, who were not even adherents to our faith?

Rav Pam quoted the Sfas Emes with a powerful message. "The Tzadik cannot be b'simcha when the world is in Tzaar."

Of course that evening, Rav Pam related the message to the need to support the struggling Torah schools of Chinuch Atzmai, but it was a message he lived and breathed in his own life as well.

As a young man Rav Pam was traveling home on the New Lots Avenue train line when he spotted a five dollar bill lying face down. Surely a clear case of "Haray Ailo Shelo" Rav Pam knew that he was

entitled to keep the bill.

He mentioned the find to his wife, who responded, "perhaps we can purchase a special treat with the new-found money.

Rav Pam hesitated. I cannot. How can we enjoy something special when there is someone out there who is broken-hearted?

Rav Moshe Francis Rosh Kolllel of Chicago's Community Kollel, remembers how an impoverished man came to Rav Pam toward the end of a seder in the Bais Medrash of Torah Vodaas. He closed his Gemarah, and told his talmid, "this is a mitzvah that will not be performed by anyone else here. Therefore, I must be m'vatel Torah."

He excused himself and took the man home for a meal.

A man once came to Rav Pam in desperate straits. He asked the Rosh Yeshiva to contact certain philanthropists on his behalf. Rav Pam responded that he had just called them all for other charities. He was unable to help the man. He gave him what he could from his own money and the man left.

Less than a half hour later the man realized he had left something in Rav Pam's study. When he came back he found Rav Pam crying over his inability to help the poor man.

Honesty

It was a late wedding and Rav Pam, who did not have a driver, was one of the last to leave on a blustery winter night. As no one had stayed to offer him a ride, he shared a taxi with a bochur who later shared this story.

The cab driver started to drive away from the hall when Rav Pam noticed that the man had not turned up the meter flag. The ride would therefore not be recorded into the travel log. Assuming that it was an oversight, the Rosh Yeshiva mentioned that the meter is not running.

"My boss," he exclaimed, "he's a Ganev! I should make a lot more than he offers me. It's okay to moonlight once in a while even if I am on his time! Anyway, what's the difference to you. The fare is twelve bucks. Do you mind if I keep all of it?"

Rav Pam was adamant. It's not honest. "Listen," said the driver. "It's my way or the highway. I saw you shivering on this freezing night. I stopped. I picked you up and I'm takin' you home. Let me just do my thing. What does it bother you if I make some spare cash."

Rav Pam sighed. "I'll tell you what. Run the meter. I will pay you double. Give your boss what is coming to him and keep the same amount for yourself."

The driver agreed. At the end of the trip the meter showed \$12.00. Rav Pam paid him \$24.00, and gave him a tip of \$2.00."

Mordechai Mehlman, Executive Director of Shuvu, once was signing a check with a pen that caught Rav Pam's eye. It was a roller ball and very easy on Rav Pam's ailing hands. He offered the pen to Rav Pam who refused to accept it without paying for it.

"Later," said Mordechai.

The next time Rav Pam met him the first words out of his mouth were, "We must make a cheshbon."

Every Child

an Entire World

Rabbi Simcha Lefkowitz, Associate Dean of Yeshiva of South Shore, related that a few years ago, the Yeshiva had to dismiss a particular student for an action that clearly defied the Yeshiva's standards and policies.

Pressure from baalei batim and others could not influence the hanhalla, which had thought long and hard about before rendering their decision.

The young boy had heard his Rabbeim, Rabbi Leib Wolf, and Rabbi Yehuda Horowitz, constantly talk about the greatness of their rebbe, Rav Pam. And so, on the slight chance that Rav Pam would hear his story, the young man called the Rosh Yeshiva who instructed him to come to Mesivta Torah Voda'ath an hour before mincha.

The boy was brought before the Rosh Yeshiva, where frankly and

openly, he told him what he had done and the ramifications of his actions. Rav Pam chided him strongly about his indiscretion and left him thoroughly chagrined.

Then they broke for Mincha.

After Mincha Rav Pam changed his demeanor. "I see that you are truly an ehrlicher bochur, and you will start anew." The boy, by now repentant and unable to speak, nodded his head profusely and Rav Pam agreed to help.

The next day, Rabbi Lefkowitz was sitting in his office when the phone rang.

The soft voice on the other end of the line said. "This is Avraham Pam." The Rosh Yeshiva went on to ask that the bochur be returned to the Yeshiva despite the ramifications the hanhalla anticipated. "It is on my achrayus."

Rabbi Lefkowitz needed no cajoling. After all, he mused, it is not often that a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah calls on behalf of a bochur he has only met once in his life!

The postscript is vintage Rav Pam. The student went on to become one of the biggest masmidim in the Yeshiva, won the valedictory award for Limudei Kodesh, and has been an outstanding student in one of the most prestigious Yeshivas in Eretz Yisrael since he graduated the South Shore Mesivta - Ateres Yaakov, two summers ago.

Planning

For Retirement

Rav Pam had a study filled with seforim on the second floor of his home. He had planned, that after he would retire from teaching in Torah Voda'ath he would be able to slip away quietly and learn, uninterrupted, for the rest of his life. Though he did learn every spare moment, no one can say that it was uninterrupted. People from all walks of life would come to him with an array of problems ranging from broken marriages to broken hearts. He took in prestigious philanthropists as well as simple folk. He did not judge them by their looks or their pocketbooks, he only saw what their pained neshamos had to say.

Despite Rav Pam's world prominence, he did not think that anyone knew who he was.

He once called the prestigious philanthropist, Reb Moshe Reichman on behalf of a certain tzedaka.

The secretary answered. She asked who is calling, to which the Rosh Yeshiva replied, "Abraham Pam."

"Does he know you?"

Rav Pam, thought for a moment and then said, "Tell him that he sometimes prays in the synagogue of Rabbi David Pam. I am Rabbi Pam's father."

There was nothing more dear to him than the Torah of talmidim. Rav Yitzchok Godtiner, of Mesivta Torah Vodaas tells how he would often have pressing Yeshiva business to discuss with the Rosh Yeshiva; matters of crucial policy needing a clear course of action. If Rav Pam was speaking to a boy in learning, it just had to wait.

There was once a child that was unable to advance to the next grade level as his skills were way below that of his anticipated grade level. There was no way the menahel would allow the boy advance into first grade. The frantic mother called Rav Pam, who in turn called the menahel. "If a tutor would bring him up to grade level over the summer would you allow him to enter the first grade?" As soon as the menahel agreed, Rav Pam arranged for a student of the Mesivta spend a summer learning with the child, for which Rav Pam paid from his own pocket.

It was a Thursday afternoon when a few of the administration's members were quietly discussing about a trip to a Bais Avel in Highland Park, New Jersey. Rav Pam was in the office when he heard the name Landesman. He turned pale.

"Naomi Landesman iz avek?" he asked incredulously. The staff members could not believe how Rav Pam knew her.

"I was with her in her illness for seven years. I davened every day for

her welfare, and when I became sick she was a source of inspiration for me. She gave me tremendous chizuk. Where are they sitting Shiva."

The office staff explained that tomorrow was the last day of shiva and that it was an hour's trip from Flatbush to New Jersey. Perhaps it would be best, suggested someone if the Rosh Yeshiva were to just call or write.

Rav Pam did not continue to insist on visiting, instead he took the name address and phone number. That evening a Taxi pulled up in front of the Landesman home. The Rosh Yeshiva and his Rebbitzen had come personally to be Menachem Avel.

Rav Yitzchok Godtiner invited the Rosh Yeshiva to be m'sader kidushin at his wedding. Rav Pam asked, "Is it possible that there is anyone in your family or your kallah's family who would want to give the kibud to someone else?"

The chosson thought and remembered that his prospective father-in-law had mentioned something about the Mattesdorfer Rav.

In that case, said Rav Pam. Please give it to the Mattesdorfer. I will come as a friend.

Indeed he would mention his Talmidim as friends, In his last drasha on behalf of Shuvu, he refers to his trusted Talmid, Reb Avraham Biderman as a dear friend.

Kabalas Yissurim

Reb Avraham Biderman, Co-Chairman of Shuvu, who had been a right hand to the Rosh Yeshiva for many years, recounted the day that Rav Pam left the Yeshiva on his way to the first surgery.

As they were leaving the building to go into the car, Rav Pam turned to him and said, "Avraham, think, perhaps of a special z'chus that will help me pull through the operation." Stunned he stammered, "How can I tell Rebbe a z'chus that he does not have." Suddenly Rav Pam backtracked and turned back into the building.

He turned to the maintenance man who was washing the floor and wished him a "good morning." Then he turned to Avraham and continued toward the taxi.

After the operation Rav Pam, returned to learn in his upstairs study. It was one afternoon when his grandson came in and serenely informed him that the pathology results had come in and that the news was not good.

Rav Pam looked up from his Gemora, nodded his head and went back to the Gemara as if nothing had occurred.

Even when his close talmid, Rabbi Yisroel Reisman would have a look of despair, Rav Pam would comfort him.

"This is what the Ribono Shel Olam wants. This is the way it has to be."

In the hospital, and through the difficult days, he maintained a quiet dignity. Doctor Robert Schulman, the primary care physician to whom the Pam family is forever grateful, notes that his family developed a personal kesher with the Rosh Yeshiva. He did not relate to him as just a patient, it was Rav Pam who was concerned with all aspects of the Schulman's life. In the week's before his petirah, Rav Pam asked about Doctor Schulman's oldest son, Ari and then proceeded to give him a bracha to get engaged. The next girl he saw, just a few days later, became his kallah.

Chinuch

Rav Pam would often stress the importance of proper chinuch. Many problems stem from the way people act when being brought up. If children would learn to treat each other with respect from the very foundation of their education, many of the terrible outgrowths of their behavior would never have to be addressed.

He shared the pain of Agunos, and pointed out that most often it is inherent character flaws and insensitivity to others that turn divorce into endless battles that scar parents and children for life. True, people are not always compatible and sometimes a marriage must be ended. But there is no reason for the bitter animosity that leads to a path of destruction.

In his sefer Atarah L'Melech he speaks against those who use Purim as an excuse to make fun of others when they could be spending their creativity on niggunim and celebrations that glorify Shem Shamayim!

There was no such thing as joy and dancing for the sake of frivolity.

He would often see a Talmid, Shabsi Parnes, a master musician who plays at weddings and tell him, "Remember to have in mind that you are fulfilling the Mitzvah of bringing joy to a chassan and kallah."

MUSSAR

Rav Pam was makpid on putting mitzvos in perspective. He would give an example of a boy who tells his mother that he cannot help with the chores on Erev Yom Tov because he has to go to the Mikvah.

"Does that make sense? Asked the Rosh Yeshiva. Mikvah today is at best a drabanan, Could it in any way ever displace the most important mitzvah of kibud av v'aim?"

Rav Pam, a Kohen, could not visit hospitals due to the issues of dead bodies in the hospital. However, when Rav Pam was in the hospital, he made every effort to visit patients who were on his floor. When he heard that the daughter of Rav Meir Hershkowitz, Rebbitzen Yehudis Garelik A"H, was ill he made a special effort to go to together with his Rebbitzen to the wing of the hospital where she was.

Rav Pam's efforts in his final public appearance surpasses any human capacity.

It took him literally two hours to dress and come to greet the gathered, all for the sake of the future of the children of Shuvu.

Though many will remember, his strong demeanor, his light gait and uplifting spirit before the terrible illness, no one will ever forget his indefatigable mesiras nefesh throughout the last years of his life. His determination and zeal for harbatzas Torah, in spite of his waning strength will give us chizuk for endless generations. His mussar will resound for all of us to walk in his ways, a true example of the ultimate walking b'derech haTorah, walking in His ways.

The tragic news emanated from the hospital room in Brooklyn, packed with Talmidim and family members and reverberated throughout the Olam HaTorah throughout that night. Rav Pam had returned his soul to his Creator.

Tens of thousands traveled to Yeshiva Torah Vodaas to be melavah this gadol and Manhig.

As per his request, there were no hespedim, only Tehillim and divrei hakaras hatov spoken by his oldest son, Rav Aharon.

The kevarah took place in Mount Judah cemetery, in the Chelka of Yeshivas Rabbi Chaim Berlin.

In addition to a legacy of leadership, of Ahavas Yisrael, of thousands of Talmidim of Yeshiva and Mesivta Torah Vodaas, and thousands of children of the Shuvu and scores of other schools, Rav Pam leaves behind a prestigious family, children and grandchildren, all Talmidei Chachamim and Marbitzey Torah.

His oldest son Rav Aharon is married to Devorah Belsky and is a Maggid Shiur at Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, New York.

His son Rav Dovid is married to Malky Friedman of Detroit. He is the Rav of Kehilla Zichron Schneur in Toronto, Canada His son Rav Osher, married to Bina Shnur, is a rebbe in the Lakewood Cheder.

May his memory be a blessing and may he be mailitz yosher to a broken nation.

http://www.thejewishpress.com/news_article.asp?article=286

RAV AVROHOM PAM, ZT"L (1913-2001) Posted 8/22/01

By Rabbi Gershon Tannenbaum with Rabbi Yaakov Klass

At 12:30 a.m. on Friday, August 17 - 28 Av, erev Shabbos Re'eh - the world of Torah scholarship suffered an incalculable loss as Rabbi Avrohom Yaakov Pam (known the world over as "Rav Pam"), rosh hayeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, passed away.

Rav Pam was niftar at Maimonides Medical Center in Boro Park. At

the time of his passing, Rav Pam was surrounded by almost five minyanim of his family and students. Tens of thousands of mourners escorted the rosh hayeshiva to his resting place Friday afternoon.

Rav Pam was born in 1913 to Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil Pam, zt"l (d. 1969) and Rebbetzin Rochel Leah nee Anulik Pam, a"n. Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil studied at the great yeshivas of Slabodka, Telz and Radin. In Radin, Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil was a fellow in the Kodshim Kollel headed by Rabbi Yisroel Mayer Kagan, zt"l (1838-1933), author of the Chofetz Chaim.

Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil was the son-in-law of Rabbi Shimon Dov Ber Anulik, zt"l (1847-1907), author of Orach Mishpat and Imrei Rasha"n. Rabbi Anulik served, in succession, as Rav of Shaki, Tiktin and Shedlitz. The Shedlitz Rav was renowned as a great scholar.

Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil was appointed as Rav of the city of Kamai, and later of the city of Salak, both in Lithuania. In 1925, Rabbi Mayer Zanzvil came to America and was elected as Rav of the Beis Medrash Hagadol of Brownsville, Brooklyn, as well as rosh yeshiva at Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin.

Rabbi Avrohom Pam was enrolled in the great yeshiva in Slabodka at the age of nine. When his father first brought the young and short Avrohom through the doors of the yeshiva, he was asked where his crib was. A senior rosh yeshiva overheard the prickly discussion and interjected that the young boy was nevertheless destined to become a gadol and a great rosh yeshiva. While studying at Yeshiva Ateres Zvi in Kovna, the young Avrohom ate Shabbos meals at the home of Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky, zt"l (1890-1986).

Rav Pam, once discussing his studies at yeshivos in Europe, noted that his meals were provided by householders in the respective communities. He was most appreciative for the one meal eaten at a different home daily, for other than that meal he went hungry.

Early in 1928, at the age of 14, Rav Pam was brought to the United States by his father and was enrolled in Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, the home citadel of Torah scholarship in America. There, he became a devoted disciple of Rabbi Dovid Lebowitz, zt"l (1900-1942), Selotchniker Rav who was then serving as Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. Rabbi Lebowitz left Torah Vodaath and established Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in 1933, however advising his dedicated student to remain in Torah Vodaath for there was his future.

As Yeshiva Torah Vodaath had not yet, at that time, a structured program of learning for senior students, the young Rav Pam studied on his own. He intensely pursued studies in tractate Chullin and Yorah Deah. In 1937, at the young age of 24, Rav Pam was appointed as a rosh mesivta.

Rav Pam had developed a close friendship with Rabbi Elya Moshe Shisgal, zt"l (son-in-law of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt"l), who was also to become a rosh yeshiva at Torah Vodaath but, sadly, died young. Rav Pam would visibly tremble whenever mentioning Rabbi Shisgal's name. Rabbi Sholom Klass, zt"l (1916-2000), Founder and Editor of The Jewish Press, was proud to have studied with Rav Pam at Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. Rabbi Klass always referred to Rav Pam with awe.

When Rabbi Aaron Kotler, zt"l (1892-1962), later Rosh Yeshiva Beth Medrash Gevoha, first arrived in the United States in the early 1940's, he gave a shiur in Seder Zeraim to a very select few. Rav Pam was amongst the privileged participants of that shiur. Rabbi Kotler was often interrupted during the presentation of his shiur by emergency phone calls from the Vaad Hatzoloh that was endeavoring to save lives during the Holocaust. Hanging up the phone after a life and death issue, Rabbi Kotler would return to the shiur as though he never left it. Once during an emergency phone call, Rav Pam whispered a Talmudic insight to Rabbi Shisgal. The whisper was well below and out of listening range of Rabbi Kotler. However, Rabbi Kotler, when resuming his shiur, surprisingly inquired as to Rav Pam's remarks. Rabbi Kotler seemed to have his ears tuned to the special frequency of Torah scholarship.

Rav Pam married his life's partner, Rebbetzin Sarah, in 1943. She was the daughter of Chaim Aryeh Balmuth, z"l. The Rebbetzin made possible Rav Pam's undisturbed concentration in Torah studies. Her sacrifices throughout the years were recognized by Rav Pam who continuously thanked her, praised her and gloried in her. Rav Pam was proud to wear a sweater that the Rebbetzin knitted for him and he sought opportunities to wear it.

In 1971, Rav Pam, together with his Rebbetzin, visited Israel. While staying in Jerusalem, Rav Pam learned that there was a Yarchei Kallah in Bnei Brak. So, almost in a moments notice, Rav Pam and the Rebbetzin relocated to Bnei Brak. On the morning of the last day of the Yarchei Kallah, one of the roshei yeshiva there approached Rav Pam and apologized for not realizing earlier that such an eminent rosh yeshiva was amongst them and asked that Rav Pam honor them by being seated on the dais. Again, almost on a moment's notice, Rav Pam and the Rebbetzin relocated to Jerusalem so that Rav Pam could avoid the well deserved honor.

While living in East New York, Rav Pam was an intimate of Rabbi Leib Malin, zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Beis Hatalmud. Rav Pam would always defer to his colleagues and rarely speak before everyone else had an opportunity to speak. He once related that Rabbi Itzel Petesburger, zt"l, was at a meeting of renowned Rabbis when the author of Beis Halevy posed a query developed by his then young son. When no one present was able to satisfactorily answer the query, the Beis Halevy shared his son's solution to the challenge. The Beis Halevy was mystified by Rabbi Itzel's silence. He then went and checked sefer Pri Yitzchok (Rabbi Itzel's sefer), wherein he found two solutions to the query, one of which was exactly that of the Beis Halevy's son. It appears that Rav Pam always aspired to emulate Rabbi Itzel.

The succession of Roshei Yeshiva that have participated in Torah Voddath's leadership is a golden chain of tradition: Rabbi Dovid Lebowitz, zt"l (1900-1942), Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zt"l (1886-1948), Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, zt"l (d.1944), Rabbi Reuven Grozovsky, zt"l (1896-1956), Rabbi Moshe Dov Ber Rivkin, zt"l, Rabbi Aaron Yeshaya Shapiro, zt"l, Rabbi Uri Meir Kahanow, zt"l, Rabbi Shmuel Kushelevitz, zt"l (d. 1963), Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l (1890-1986), Rabbi Gedalia Schorr (1910-1979), Rabbi Elya Chazan, zt"l, Rabbi Reuven Fain, zt"l, and Rabbi Simcha Sheps, zt"l, all of whom were preeminent roshei yeshiva whose names reverberate when mentioned.

They were the predecessors to and colleagues of Rav Pam, who served as Rosh Hayeshiva as well as the senior Member of the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah. Rabbi Eluzer Kahanow, Rabbi Yosef Savitsky, Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Rabbi Nossan Elya Gertzulin, Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, and Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Sekula are amongst the princely names of the current Roshei Yeshiva.

Upon the passing of Rabbi Rivkin, Rav Pam was appointed to give the Yoreh Deah shiur. When Rabbi Schorr died in 1979, a Hanhala administration was arranged with Rav Pam, Rabbi Sekula, Rabbi Chazan and Rabbi Wolfson. Rabbi Chazan, sadly, passed away shortly thereafter and Rav Pam was appointed as Rosh Hayeshiva. Rav Pam was also appointed as the guiding light of Torah Umesorah, Be'er Hagolah, Shuvu, and many other Torah organizations.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller, zt"l (1909-2001), in one of his tapes, indicated that today's Godol Hador, Rav Pam, is to be found on East 7th Street in Kensington.

Though totally dedicated to his students at Torah Vodaath, Rav Pam was predisposed to help every worthwhile organization that sought his help and participation. Most recently, though very weak, he insisted that he be brought by ambulance to a Shuvu function, an organization that he held very dear. His home served as headquarters for innumerable organizations and charitable efforts. His name was a crown for all who earned his involvement.

In 1993, sefer Atarah Lemelech, a compilation of the Rosh Yeshiva's shmuesen (discourses) was published. In his introduction, Rav Pam profusely thanks Rabbi Matisyahu Blum, Rabbi Yitzchok Gottdiener, and Rabbi Mordechai Menachem Avigdor, for their selfless efforts in achieving the publication of the sefer.

Also in 1993, a campaign was launched to write a new sefer Torah honoring the Rosh Yeshiva. A year and a half later, the Torah scroll was ready. An elaborate Hachnosas Sefer Torah was arranged wherein the entire community would be able to participate. Rabbi Shmuel Glassman, dedicated student of the Rosh Yeshiva, together with others, organized a spectacular parade and memorable ceremonies. A huge tent was erected at the home of Abraham Biderman for the Sunday event. Mayor Rudy Giuliani visited the tent the evening before. Buses were mobilized to move the crowd from Boro Park to Flatbush. All the sifrei Torah of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath as well as of Yeshiva Torah Temimah were brought out to receive the new sefer Torah. The event was exceptionally beautiful. All who participated will never forget it. Nor will they ever forget what Rav Pam said in his address.

After the new sefer Torah was ceremoniously brought into the Yeshiva and placed into the Aron Hakodesh, the Rosh Yeshiva stood up and faced the huge assembly that squeezed into the Beis Medrash. Rav Pam held one arm out to indicate the vast number of people present and said "my little heart cannot absorb so many people with such enormous feelings."

His efforts were not limited to Torah scholarship alone but also included almost every communal challenge and undertaking. When Rabbi Shlomo Helbrans was charged with kidnapping in the Shai Fema case, I was asked to serve as chairman, together with Kalmen Yonason Stern of Skver, Rabbi Juda Dick, Esq., Rabbi Noach Steinberg, Esq., Shia Brach, Moshe Shneibalg, Yitzchok Tenenbaum, Rabbi Feival Halberstam, and others, on the legal defense committee. In addition to the absurd kidnaping charges, Rabbi Helbrans also faced possible deportation. I spoke to Rav Pam after Shacharis soon thereafter concerning the case, waiting for the dozen or so other supplicants before me. Rav Pam, in his tiny office, indicated the direction needed and necessary minor compromises for resolving the case in the best possible manner under the unfavorable circumstances.

The well known experienced criminal defense attorneys, however, had different ideas. Kalmen Yonason Stern and I resigned from the legal committee, which ultimately dissolved. The case went to full trial where Rabbi Helbrans was found guilty and sentenced to a term of four to eight years. Upon appeal, the sentence was reduced to two to four years. Rabbi Helbrans was released after serving the minimum sentence but was consequentially deported.

Had the case proceeded according to the instructions of Rav Pam, the disastrous outcome could have been avoided. It is plain to me that the Rosh Yeshiva's insight was piercing. He had more understanding in his pinky than all the high priced criminal defense attorneys involved. Not having been trained as an attorney and never having defended any criminal cases, the Rosh Yeshiva's insight could only have been divine.

On the last day of Chanukah 1999, the Yeshiva conducted its regular Chanukah seudah. Rav Pam spoke to an enthralled audience for approximately one hour in thankfulness for his enduring a serious illness that had taken him away from the Yeshiva for an extended period. The Rosh Yeshiva then resumed his regular Yoreh Deah shiurim.

In the Spring of 2000, Yeshiva Torah Vodaath celebrated a Chag Hasmicha with a large group of worthy students being ordained by the Rosh Yeshiva. The Yeshiva's dinner that year was devoted to honoring those students that achieved such great heights. It was the Yeshiva's most distinguished and exalted dinner to date.

The following year, the Rosh Yeshiva invited all of its Magidei Daf Yomi students to his home to congratulate them and to announce that the Yeshiva will honor them at its forthcoming annual dinner. The dinner

was undoubtedly the Yeshiva's most distinguished and exalted to date. Sadly, we will not have the Rosh Yeshiva at the next annual dinner.

In September, 2000, I was privileged to discuss the New York Cancer Project with Rav Pam. It is a 20 year Cancer research survey being conducted in the New York City metropolitan area which has the potential to help develop cures for many forms of cancer. Maimonides Medical Center is conducting the surveys in Brooklyn. Jews of eastern European extraction, in particular, may be helped by the information that the survey might develop. Rav Pam grasped fully the implications of the project and encouraged Yeshiva Torah Vodaath's eight grade to write essays on the project's theme. The Beth Din of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, Igud Horabbonim, then issued a proclamation encouraging participation in the cancer survey. The proclamation posters were placed throughout the Boro Park and Flatbush communities eliciting a remarkable response.

Rav Pam was involved in every aspect of his student's needs. He worked on shidduchim and livelihoods for every student that was in need of a match or a position. In the past few years, the Rosh Yeshiva's home became a busier place and his health became increasingly fragile. Family and friends encouraged a respite. They counseled the Rosh Yeshiva to set aside at least one day a week when he would not receive visitors or accept telephone calls. The Rosh Yeshiva demurred, saying what if some one would need him that day.

Just a few short months ago, the phone rang in Rav Pam's home. A lady was frantically calling seeking help, she was having difficulty in preparing Shabbos for her large family. She needed help. The Rosh Yeshiva immediately organized his grandchildren to attend to the lady and ensure that their Shabbos was complete. Calls would reach the Rosh Yeshiva seeking help in placing children into yeshivas. In response, he devoted his time to coordinating funding and achieving admission and tuition for the needy children.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, the noted orator, quotes a story from Rabbi Yaakov Salomon of Brooklyn about Rav Pam. An elderly man known to Rav Pam took ill and had to be hospitalized. Being a Kohen, Rav Pam would not visit hospitals out of fear of violating the prohibition of a Kohen being in the same building as a dead person. Instead he wrote the man a letter wishing him a refuah shleima, a speedy recovery. It was a short letter that took the Rosh Yeshiva just a few minutes to write. The man could not believe that a simple person like himself merited a letter from the renown Rosh Yeshiva. He made copies and kept the original letter under his pillow, proudly showing it to all his visitors. A few months later, the man passed away. One of the speakers in his eulogy noted that the deceased obviously was an important personage because Rav Pam himself, the Godol Hador, took the time to write him a get-well letter.

Later that week, Rav Pam, being a Kohen and having not been able to attend the funeral, heard what was said and that the deceased treasured the letter. Rav Pam then said, "This whole incident is frightening to me. Consider what a person can accomplish in just a few moments. It took me just two minutes to write that letter, yet in the hospital it gave the recipient such cheer and comfort. Furthermore, at the funeral it gave his family and friends consolation. Do we realize what can be accomplished in just two minutes? How often do all of us have two minutes of free time? If we don't make the most of those periods, they pass by in emptiness. What frightens me is that Hashem can take this letter and say to me, 'You did something so wonderful in such a short amount of time. What are you doing with all the other two-minute spans of free time that you have?'"

The Rosh Yeshiva's association with Torah Vodaath lasted almost 75 years. During all those years Rav Pam always sat in the middle of the Beis Medrash. He never repositioned himself to the front of the Beis Medrash, whereas other roshei yeshiva are seated. In his last years, the Rosh Yeshiva used a regular household shopping cart for support as he

walked the two blocks from his modest home to the Yeshiva.

Rav Pam was hospitalized for the past few months with declining health. He was released on Tu B' Av, a most auspicious day. The Rosh Yeshiva felt that there must have been a higher purpose in his release. He called an indigent man, known to him personally, and gave him \$1,800 from a tzedakah fund and kissed his hand for the opportunity. The gentleman immediately paid off several months of past due rent, thus avoiding eviction.

On his final return to Maimonides Hospital, every consideration and courtesy was extended to make the Rosh Yeshiva's stay as comfortable as possible. Medical personnel and staff generally wore yarmulkas when attending to Rav Pam. The hospital administration also provided continuous refreshments for the family and visitors.

As the Rosh Yeshiva's condition declined, a noticeable hush was felt throughout the hospital. Friday morning at 12:30 a.m., the Rosh Yeshiva's gentle soul was embraced by Heaven. A stillness blanketed the entire hospital. More than 50 people were present, including family members and devoted disciples, amongst them Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Abraham Biderman, Chaim H. Leshkowitz, and Rabbi Chaim Elazar Friedman, Tenker Rav. Mayer Fleischman, Noson Friedman, Yossie Handler, and Shlomo Neuman of the Bikur Cholim of Boro Park Chevra Kadisha were present. Mechel Handler and Yitzy Stern of Hatzola were also there. Douglas Jablon and Dr. Marcel Biberfeld, Maimonides Vice Presidents, were also present.

Arrangements were immediately made. Assistant Chief Joseph Fox Commanding Officer Patrol Borough Brooklyn South, Officer Eugene Stevens of Community Affairs, Lt. Brudy, and Rabbi Isaac M. of Kapitchnitz, Police Chaplain, PA-NYNJ Police, ensured that dignity would be preserved as Hatzolah moved the Rosh Yeshiva through the front door entrance. On the way out, characteristically, the Rebbeitzin stopped to wish a speedy recovery to someone who was going into surgery.

Within moments of the Rosh Yeshiva's passing, the bitter news was transmitted throughout the world. Former and present students of all ages immediately left the Catskills, Montreal, Toronto, Lakewood, Baltimore, etc., to be present at the Rosh Yeshiva's last visit to the Yeshiva. The funeral was scheduled for 11:30 a.m., leaving little time for travel.

Friday morning at 9:00 a.m., the Yeshiva Torah Vodaath Beis Medrash was full. Men were still trying to push themselves in. The warm weather outside and the huge number of men inside the Beis Medrash created a sweltering situation. Hatzolah stationed emergency crews throughout the Beis Medrash and along East 9th Street. Bottles of water were distributed.

At 11:30 a.m., East 9th Street was jammed with people from Cortelyou Road to Ditmas Avenue and beyond. Huge public address equipment was strategically placed so that all would be able to hear what was transpiring inside the Beis Medrash. The New York City Police Department stationed its forces throughout the immediate area with police observers on roof tops. Mayor Rudy Giuliani with his security personnel and staff were present, standing respectfully. Other political statesmen were there as well.

Leading Roshei Yeshiva, Rabbis and Chassidische Rebbes from the New York City metropolitan area waited. Moments later, the aron was brought into the Beis Medrash and the thousands of people fell silent. Rabbi Yaakov Aaron Prosky, a Torah Vodaath Kollel member and Rosh Yeshiva who also serves as the Yeshiva's Baal Koreh, led the assembled in reciting seven chapters of Tehillim.

Rabbi Aaron Pam, the Rosh Yeshiva's oldest son, cried bitterly. He thanked all those who attended to his father. He thanked Hatzolah. He said his devout father had strictly forbidden any eulogies, and had repeated the admonition for more than 20 years. He said that his father helped many meritorious organizations and many people. He was

confident that people will honor the Rosh Yeshiva's wishes and continue to support the organizations. However, he cried, who will help the individuals that his father helped.

Everyone rose as Rabbi Manis Mandel, Rosh Yeshiva of Brooklyn and Torah Vodaath's Shaliach Tzibbur on Yomin Nora'im, intoned the Kel Moleh. Then the bier was carried out slowly, the crowds having to make way. Slowly, the funeral procession reached Ditmas Avenue and Ocean Parkway, where a hearse was waiting. A caravan of buses and cars formed and were directed by police on its way to Mount Judah Cemetery. At every intersection, police cars were positioned so that the procession would move uninterrupted.

Arriving at the cemetery, police directed cars to parking areas so that no snarls or back-ups would be created. The crowd proceeded directly to the just opened grave. Rav Pam was interred alongside his father and mother on Emmanuel Avenue at the corner of Washington Avenue in the cemetery. At grave side, Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, Rosh Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, recited the mourner's Kaddish. The sons, being Kohanim, did not enter the cemetery but stood waiting at its gate. As the crowd departed the cemetery, the traditional lines were formed to console the mourners. The sons then davened Mincha and recited Kaddish for the father who served all Children of Israel.

He is survived by his Rebbeitzin of 58 years and three sons: Rabbi Aaron of Yeshiva Drachei Torah in Far Rockaway; Rabbi Dovid of Kahal Zicron Shneur in Toronto; and Rabbi Usher of the Lakewood Cheder.

May our memory of him serve to guide us. Our loss is colossal

From: Yated-Usa[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com] Subject: Columns II, 08/23/01

REFLECTIONS ON QUIET GREATNESS

By RABBI NOSSON SCHERMAN

About ten years ago a highly regarded family was sitting shivah. One of those sitting was an elderly Reform rabbi, who had been estranged from his siblings. Rav Pam ZT"L entered the room to be menachem aveil-and the Reform rabbi, who had probably never seen the Rosh Yeshivah, shuddered. "That is a holy man!" he said almost inaudibly.

How did he know, this man to whom Torah and mitzvos were not a constant presence? How did he recognize the "holiness" of a total stranger? Surely it was not his physical appearance. Rav Pam was as unpretentious as a human being can be. He never donned the garb of a rosh yeshivah; indeed, those of us who were his talmidim more than half a century ago know that he never changed his simple style of dress. In the Bais Medrosh of Torah Vodaath, he continued to sit in the middle of the room, not at the mizrach where he belonged.

Until only a several months ago, Rav Pam's powerful spirit still overcame illness and frailty to come to Torah Vodaath every day to deliver his shiur, and participate in the admibnistartion of the yeshivah, and be available to the many outsiders who came to him for counsel or a berachah. He always refused offers of rides to the yeshivah-when would ever impose on someone?-and instead walked the few blocks leaning on a shopping cart for support. One day, when he was ready to go home, it was raining. A talmid wanted to drive him home, but he gently refused. As he walked down the street, a talmid walked behind him holding an umbrella to protect him from the rain. The rosh yeshivah didn't notice his protector until they got to the corner, whereupon he said that a few drops of rain would not hurt him. The talmid responded, "But the Rebbe's hat will be ruined!"

Rav Pam smiled and said, "The hat is old. The Jew is old. Better go back to the Bais Medrosh and learn."

For many years, people who knew him said he was "the Chofetz Chaim of America." There was universal agreement that the description

was apt-universal except for one vehement dissenter. A dinner chairman once introduced him that way-and it was one of the very few times when he was visibly annoyed. Agitated, Rav Pam stood at the microphone and said, "I protest the affront to the honor of the Chofetz Chaim!"

The Chasam Sofer was once was riding in a carriage with his rebbe, Rabbi Nosson Adler, when the horses reared in fright. They were on the verge of being attacked by a wild bear, and the driver could not control them. Rabbi Adler looked out the window and the bear saw him and ran back into the woods. The Chasam Sofer asked for an explanation, and Rabbi Adler replied, "Hashem made man in His image and, as our Sages tell us, at the beginning of Creation even wild animals were afraid of man's G-dly nature. It seems that I still have some of that tzelem Elokim, so the bear was afraid to harm us."

Those who knew Rav Pam are not surprised that someone estranged from Torah could look at him and see holiness. By the standards of this century, his tzelem Elokim shone through. It shone through in every way. He was a tzaddik in his love of learning, in his performance of mitzvos, in his unending striving for self-improvement, in his tefillah, in the simplicity of his home and his abhorrence of luxury, in his enduring gratitude for the most trivial favor. For over thirty-five years, he and the Rebbetzin baked shemurah matzah with the group of which this writer is a member. We would have been overjoyed to bake his matzos without troubling him to come, but as long as he was able he would come to the baking and insist on helping along.

One his younger colleagues asked him why he attended so many weddings, when it had become a physical ordeal for him to do so. "You have come to thousands of weddings; it is enough!" Rav Pam answered, "To me there are thousands of weddings, but for the chassan it's the only one."

That sort of sensitivity and regard for a talmid or for anyone else was typical-it was more than typical, it was part of his essence. He said of his mother that she never spoke lashon hara, not because she studied Shemiras Halashon or participated in machsom l'feh groups. "She never saw anything bad in anyone else, so there was never a temptation to speak lashon hara."

Was Rav Pam naive? Hardly. He could tell sham from sincerity and he was not timid about speaking out against wrong. But it was never a matter of personalities; only of issues. He was never involved in a machlokes as a disputant. That is why he had no enemies, ever. An institution was once riven by a dispute that threatened to tear it apart, concerning a disputed appointment to its administration. Other roshai yeshivah had their reasons not to become involved. It was agreed by the leaders of the institution that a delegation would visit Rav Pam and abide by his decision. They came. He listened. He said, "I cannot dictate to you how to run your yeshivah, but if a similar appointment had been suggested for Torah Vodaath, I would have opposed it."

A distinguished mechanech once sent ArtScroll a collection of reminiscences about growing up in East New York. One of the essays told about talmidei chachamim who used to come to his father's mom and pop grocery store to discuss Torah with his father. One of the regular visitors was "Reb Meir Pam, whose son is the Rosh Yeshivah of Torah Vodaath." I thought Rav Pam would enjoy the story and sent him a copy. A few weeks later I met him. He said, "How could the writer suggest that my father's yichus was that his son says a shiur in Torah Vodaath?" Rav Pam did not refer to himself as the "rosh yeshivah," only as someone who says a shiur. Then he told a simple anecdote to illustrate his father's love and knowledge of Shass.

He had a simple and keen sense of right and wrong. He would urge his talmidim and followers to avoid extravagant lifestyles and celebrations. Others stressed that such lavishness was wrong. Rav Pam put it in different terms. What other things can you do with the money?, he would ask. Anyone who saw the humble furnishings of his home knew that he lived the way he spoke. Those who knew him well

marveled at how he and the rebbeztin deprived themselves of pleasures others take for granted because the money was needed for tzedakah causes.

Torah Vodaath was his life, without question. He spent over seventy years there, sixty-one as a maggid shiur. He was completely devoted to the Yeshivah, and his devotion was reciprocated by his adoring talmidim-and they remained talmidim for a lifetime. He became Rosh Yeshivah not by choice, and certainly not by ambition, but because the yeshivah felt that he was the only one for the position, and he felt he had no right to decline.

Not only his shiurim, but also his regular shmeussen on the parashah were formative. It has long been an article of faith in Torah Vodaath that those who attended his shmeussen had fewer shalom bayis problems than others. In his shmeussen he emphasized the need to consider the feelings of others, and, since his talmidim were in or near the "shidduch" stage of their lives, he spoke of what to look for in a mate and how important it is to honor a mate. That was always the topic of his famous annual shmues on Chayei Sarah, at which he would often teach the Rabbeinu Bachya, which discusses the subject.

The last decade of his life was consumed by his truly superhuman efforts for Shuvu, the organization he founded to bring Torah education to Jewish children in Israel, who had immigrated from the Former Soviet Union. He said that we in the free world have a special obligation to the children of Communism. "We owe it to them, because they suffered a terrible galus for our sake." But there was more. With uncommon prescience, he said many years ago that the future of Eretz Yisrael is in the hands of the new Russian olim. How right he was! Their votes have been the margin of victory in the last three Israeli elections.

But his motives transcended politics. In his passionate love of Torah he was dedicated to bring Torah to those who had been deprived of it. How could we, be our inaction, deprive Hashem's children of the most precious gift He had ever given His people?

When he founded Shuvu at an Agudah Convention in 1990, most people thought it was an impossible dream. He never accepted that proposition. always he insisted, "It is beyadeinu! It is in our hands to change the face of Eretz Yisrael." He was probably the only living human being who thought that in ten years Shuvu would enroll over 10,000 students, and that this would be only a beginning. It is truly beyadeinu!

The last two public appearances of his life, when he was in declining health, were for the benefit of Torah chinuch for children from the FSU. A few months ago he attended and addressed a parlor meeting for Nechomas Yisrael, the magnificent "impossible" organization that funds tuitions for several thousand such children in America.

His last appearance was for his beloved Shuvu. He came in a hospital bed, accompanied by his physician and a group of Hatzoloh volunteers. He came. He spoke. He conquered the physical in an awesome display of the power of Torah spirit over the limitations of the flesh.

Everyone who was present had to agree, "That is a holy man!"

That holy spirit still hovers over us, and will remain as long as we let it. Rav Pam's legacy is incredibly rich, incredibly challenging, incredibly inspiring. Can we live up to it? It is beyadeinu.