

## **Eulogy delivered for Rabbi Rackman by Rabbi Bennett M. Rackman**

My father was a leader! He was encouraged by his father, Rabbi David Rackman, to lead. Dad studied with his father, who had studied in Sloboka – in the Mussar Movement. Zaidy had learned with Reb Boruch Dov Leibowitz. He received smicha from such gedolim as the Ridvaz and Rabbi Issur Zalman Meltzer. Zaidy spent his life learning. And, my father consulted with Zaidy who supported dad in all that he did.

My father learned in Yeshivas Rabbenu Yitzchak Elchonon under Rabbi Shlomo Polachek, the Meitscher Ilui who had studied in Volozhin. Rabbi Dov Revel invited him to come to America in 1922. My father also followed in the derech of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. Dad followed in the path of these gedolim. Dad became a “leader” of four generations.

His whole life he was involved in learning, and my father always sought to demonstrate the supremacy of Torah and halacha. At the age of sixteen and a half, he was the valedictorian of his class and the editor-in-chief of the Elchanite Yearbook. He wrote two essays: one on the Rambam (at an age when most people still struggle to understand Rashi) and the other entitled “Religious Freedom” dealing with the Maccabees.

In Far Rockaway, my father had a daily chavrusa with Rabbi Sam Genauer. They studied Talmud together six or seven days each week. It continued even when dad moved to Fifth Avenue Synagogue and Rabbi Genauer moved to Riverdale. (Rena Genauer commented to me a few months ago when I met her at JFK Airport, that she knew she was late for school when Rabbi Rackman rang the doorbell promptly at 8:00 a.m. each and every morning). Other rabbis might disagree with dad, but no one could every question his ability to cite halachic sources and precedence for his point of view.

In Far Rockaway, for twenty-one years, my father gave two shiurim each week in Gemara. Dad also met with the youth on Friday nights or Shabbos afternoon. From these Mizrachi Hatzair groups, I think many, many young men and women married and raised frum, observant families. Also, many, perhaps hundreds, eventually made aliyah. My parents joined them in 1977, making aliyah, when dad became President of Bar-Ilan. As President and later Chancellor, dad continued to teach and influence youth. That was his whole life.

Dad always searched the halacha to find the moral and ethical imperative and message, using the Ha’amek Davar and the Torah Temimah. He wrote almost a thousand columns in the *Jewish Week*, broadening his audience and enlarging his following.

Dad, together with mom, they were a perfect couple – the Rabbi and Rebbetzin role models. Whether in Far Rockaway, Fifth Avenue, or Bar-Ilan. They personified the Torah U’Madah, Torah Im Derech Eretz ideal. And, I speak now for my brothers and our wives, as well as our children. Love, caring, and respect personified our home.

I want to especially acknowledge my brother Joseph's total commitment and dedication to our father. While Michael and I were involved with dad, it was Joseph who took on the day to day responsibilities that enabled our father to live his last years in dignity.

The story is told and has been printed in some Jewish publications regarding dad's decision to leave his successful law practice in 1946 and enter the Rabbinate, after having served as a Chaplain in the D.P. (Displaced Persons) Camps in Germany and Europe. I would like to close with that anecdote.

My father had decided to leave the full-time law practice and make the part-time Rabbinate, full-time. The senior partner in the firm spent two hours trying to convince dad that he could become a very successful lawyer. But, dad refused and became the Rabbi at Shaaray Tefilah. The lawyer conceded and said that he would do the same if he could. My father asked: Why? The reply: "When history is being made and you can be a part of it you shouldn't miss it." Dad was a "leader" and made his impact on our history for four generations, from 1927 until 2008. Dad fulfilled that lawyer-friend's prophesy.