

every  
soul  
A WORLD



# a quiet dignity

In tribute to Mr. Shabsi Reis

**M**r Shabsi Reis, zt”l, was a modest man who served his Creator with a straightforward, deceptively simple *ehrllichkeit*. A Holocaust survivor who endured Auschwitz and the decimation of his family with his faith and *simchas hachaim* intact, R’ Shabsi went on to raise generations of Torah-abiding Jews. To the end of his almost-90 years, he awoke each morning at 4:30 a.m., attended a *mishnayos shiur* at 5:00 a.m. and *davened Shachris* at 6:45 a.m. After davening, he would trek two miles to the Boro Park Rehabilitation Center to assist elderly residents with putting on their tefillin.

“When we were young and walked with him in cold weather,” recalls his daughter, “he would say, ‘Put your hand in my “toaster”’ and we would slide a little hand into his big, strong one inside his warm coat pocket. Not long ago, I was at my parents’ house for Shabbos, and even though I’m a grandmother, I slipped my hand into his ‘toaster’ as we walked to shul. He was simply ‘Abba’ or ‘Abba-Zaidy’ even to our children and grandchildren, the Abba of my youth until the end.

“My father went through the concentration camps and he’d have nightmares. My

Before this past Yom Kippur, he traveled to Lakewood to bentsh his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in a marathon gratitude session that lasted three and a half hours

Mr. Reis (far right) as a young man in Nitra Yeshiva



mother would call his name, ‘Shabsi! You’re having a bad dream!’ He’d sigh with relief, ‘Oh, thank you for waking me! They almost shot me!’ Then he would go *right back to sleep!* My mother was astounded — he’d just been in Gehinnom, wasn’t he afraid?

“I think that was his greatness,” his daughter continues. “He constantly chose to focus on the positive. Yes, it *had* been terrible, but it was over. He had survived and married and built a family and he was so grateful. And relieved. And with gratitude and relief, he *could* fall back asleep. In his older years when he had insomnia, he would count grandchildren, thanking Hashem for each of them.”

At one point, as a young teenager in Auschwitz, Reb Shabsi and his brother were sent to the “left” by Dr. Mengele, *y”sh*. Locked in the barracks, as he sat and wept, an older boy asked, “Why are you crying?”

“Don’t you know what they’ll do to us!?”

“So, why do you want to live? We can’t do mitzvos, we have to eat treif. Soon we’ll be with Hashem; it will be wonderful...”

**The boy had a point, but then Shabsi** thought of his dear father, Reb Mendel Reis. “I *know* my father is alive and I *must* escape so I can see him again!” With G-d’s help and tremendous daring, he managed to save his brother’s life as well as his own. Baruch Hashem, he *was* reunited with his father for a short time after the war. Reb Mendel only wished to live in Eretz Yisrael, but he insisted that Shabsi and his brother join Rav Michael Ber Weissmandel *ztz”l*, in America, in his reestablished Nitra Yeshivah. Shabsi was reluctant — he preferred Eretz Yisrael and could get a visa through Bnei Akiva. But young Shabsi obeyed and traveled to Nitra... and never left, davening and learning in the

Nitra beis medrash in Boro Park until he was quarantined because of Covid-19.

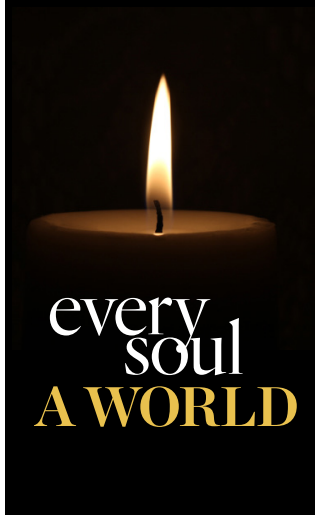
R’ Shabsi would never see his father again, though they corresponded by letter until R’ Mendel’s petirah at a relatively young age. Still, R’ Shabsi was always grateful to his father for guiding him to attend yeshiva, and credited his beautiful frum family to his father’s clear-sighted vision.

“When my father arrived in Nitra and saw the bed sheets, running water, and canned peaches in syrup,” his daughter reminisces, “he told his children, ‘I thought this is what Gan Eden is like.’ For the rest of his life, he would constantly exclaim, ‘Do you know how lucky we are? Kings never lived this way!’”

**He was principled, but soft,** and transmitted his values without confrontation. One daughter babysat for a family who had a TV. “My father never forbade me to go, but every Sunday, he



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would remark, ‘You won’t learn much Yiras Shomayim from there, you know...’ His message was clear.”

His humility defined him. At his granddaughter’s wedding, he sat down among the guests at the *kabbalas panim* until he was physically escorted to the head table. When he was offered *sandakaus* for a great-grandson, he replied, “Really, Cheskyuda, you don’t have anybody more *chashuv?*” At the bris, after accepting the honor, one of his grandchildren requested a brachah.

“Me??” “Yes, a sandak has a special power to bless.” “Okay,” he relented, “As sandak...” One by one, the line stretching across the hall, he lovingly blessed his progeny. Before this past Yom Kippur, he traveled to Lakewood to *bentsh* his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in a marathon gratitude session that lasted three and a half hours.

As Reb Shabsi would say, simply, “*This* is my *nekamah!*”<sup>🔥</sup>