

every
soul
A WORLD



The Yoka Rebbe

In Tribute to Rabbi Shlomo Tzvi Koenig ztz"l

It was during the shivah that one of the sons of the Yoka Rebbe, Rabbi Shlomo Tzvi Koenig, took a call from a *rosh kollel* who lived in Boro Park.

“I made a chasunah four weeks ago and your father called me and told me to go into a particular store to buy clothing for my whole family and it was put on his account,” says the rosh kollel.

The incident came as no surprise to the family of the Yoka Rebbe.

“We all know this story because it happened all the time,” comments Rav Avrum Yishai Koenig, the Vorka Rebbe. “My father didn’t live to save money. He lived to use money to help people, and he did that every single day.”

Coming from an esteemed rabbinical dynasty, Rabbi Koenig inherited his *lev tov* and his *chavivus* for Torah from his parents, Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya and Rebbetzin Sara Leah Koenig. Theirs was a home that revolved around Torah, *yiras Shamayim* and *chesed*, with the unparalleled reverence for mitzvos displayed by members of Europe’s *shearis hapeitah*, who knew all too well what it meant to be deprived of Yiddishkeit.

In his youth, the young Shlomo Tzvi was a member of the Satmar Talmud Torah’s first class in Williamsburg, the Rebbe himself, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, coming to the school to *farher* the *talmidim* and reward them with candy. He had a lifelong connection to the Satmar Rebbe who *bentshed* him twice before his bar mitzvah, inadvertently drifting off to sleep after placing his hands on the young Shlomo Tzvi’s head and

referring to him as “Shlomo Hamelech” as he gave him a second brachah. A *ben bayis* by the Satmar Rebbe, who often served as the tenth man at the still-small Satmar shul, he knew details about the Rebbe that few others did, including his minhag of always bringing a spoon up to his mouth when eating instead of bending down to meet the spoon, a custom learned from the Bluzhever Rebbe.

As a bochur, the Yoka Rebbe attended the Nitra Yeshiva in Mount Kisco, where his father, the previous Yoka Rebbe, was the *maggid shiur*. Each Sunday father and son would leave to the yeshivah, where they slept in the same room, returning together on Friday afternoon to spend Shabbos at

the Rebbe called him back, promising them good generations if they did the shidduch.”

Throughout his life, Rabbi Koenig would run to see *talmidei chachamim* and *gedolim* whenever he could, including the Skver Rebbe, the Skulener Rebbe, the Boyaner Rebbe, Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky and many, many others. His phone rang constantly with requests for stories from practically every *chasidus* and every yeshivah because of the close connections the Rebbe shared with their rabbanim. Together with his rebbetzin, he taught his children that there was nothing greater than helping others, and it seemed like it was always Erev Purim in the Koenig home, where

packages were constantly being assembled to uplift people and bring them joy, be it on Tu B’Shevat, Chanukah, or even just a regular Erev Shabbos.

With his warm personality and a *lichtige* smile, Rabbi Koenig was able to relate to everyone, even those just beginning their journeys in Yiddishkeit. He enjoyed finding clever ways to help people, in one instance following in the footsteps of



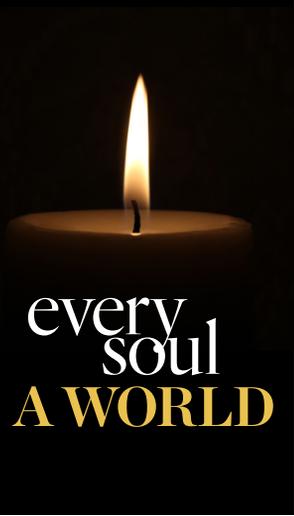
the *zeide* whose name he carried to rescue a pair of pilfered tefillin. “He saw a pair of obviously stolen tefillin being sold for a high price in a small store on Twelfth Avenue and he went in and asked to try them on, putting the *shel rosh* on his left arm and the *shel yad* on his head,” says Rav Avrum Yishai Koenig. “He asked the store owner for *tefillin* for his other arm as well and when the store owner said he didn’t have them, my father told him that they were damaged. The storekeeper sold them to my father for two dollars, thinking that they were worthless since there was no *shel yad* for the other arm. His *zeide* had done the same thing years before, back in Hungary.”

home in Williamsburg. His shidduch to his rebbetzin, Devorah *tblc’t*, was made by the Tosher Rebbe, Rav Meshulem Feish Lowy, who had a close relationship with Rav Feivel Lifshitz, rav of Toronto’s Kahal Kesser Torah.

“My mother’s family would go to Tosh for the Yamim Tovim and Shabbos and would sleep at the Rebbe’s house,” says Rav Avrum Yishai Koenig. “When the Yoka president, Rav Pinchas Pinkus called up the Tosher Rebbe and asked if he knew of a shidduch for his Rebbe’s son, the Tosher Rebbe thought of my mother. He called the Yoka Rebbe’s house and told the rebbetzin that he wasn’t going to do anything in his day until

“My father didn’t live to save money. He lived to use money to help people, and he did that every single day.”

In Tribute to Rabbi Shlomo Tzvi Koenig



every
soul
A WORLD



In addition to being the rav of the Yoka shul, the Rebbe was also the *rosh kollel* of Kollel Tal Torah Yoka for more than 25 years, one of the only *kollelim* in Boro Park not affiliated with a particular *chasidus*. Together with his rebbeztzin, he built a world of Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*, raising *doros* of *tomchei Torah*, *rabbanim*, *maggidei shiur*, and *dayanim*.

In his final months, the Yoka Rebbe said numerous things that has family members wondering now if he knew that perhaps his time in This World was coming to an end. Attending a wedding in Antwerp three months ago, he was asked by the Vagash Rav, Rabbi Avraham Moshe Kraus, when he would return again and responded, “This is the last time I am here in Antwerp.” Making a *siyum* on *Maseches Berachos* in March at the Mosdos Vorka Dinner, the Rebbe started his *drashah* by saying how every day a person lives after the age of 70 is a gift from Hashem.

The last such incident took place just one day before his *petirah* on 8 Nissan.

“The matzos had arrived and my father called my brother, Rabbi Aron Mordechai Koenig, to tell him to give out matzah for all the children for Pesach,” recalls Rabbi Avrum Yishai Koenig. “My brother suggested that we wait until he came home from the hospital, but my father insisted that it had to be given out on that day.”

The Yoka Rebbe was *niftar* just four days before his

With his warm personality and a lichtige smile, Rabbi Koenig was able to relate to everyone, even those just beginning their journeys in Yiddishkeit

72nd birthday, nearly four years to the day after his father’s passing. He was laid to rest in Floral Park, New Jersey, leaving thousands of followers devastated by their inability to accompany him on his final journey. He is survived by his rebbeztzin, Devorah, his sons and his sons-in-law Rav Chaim Meyer Streicher, *rosh hakahal* of the Yoka Shul; Rav Yisroel Meyer Koenig, *rosh beis din* Orach Mishor; Rav Yehuda Leib Koenig, *rosh kollel* Ziv Hatorah; Rav Chaim Meir Pollack; Rav Yoel Pearl; Rav Alter Chaim Meir Pollack; Rav Yakov Yoseph Koenig, *rosh kollel* Choshen Mishpat; Rav Dovid Moshe Koenig, *maggid shiur* Rachmistrivka yeshivah; Rav Yidda Eisen; Rav Aron Mordechai Koenig, *rosh kollel* Vien of Boro Park; and Rav Avrum Yishai Koenig, Vorka Rebbe, as well as his daughters, Mrs. Chaya Esther Streicher; Mrs. Faiga Rivka Pollack; Mrs. Bracha Malka Perl; Mrs. Sheva Blima Pollack; and Mrs. Miriam Yittel Eisen *Yehei zichro baruch*.[🕯]