

Rav Nochum Muschel, z'l "A GIANT OF AN EDUCATOR" On His Yahrzeit 18 Tammuz Part I

by Yisroel Safran

In the course of our lives, we are zoche to meet some special individuals who set an example of dedication to the klal. One such person was the late beloved Rav Nachum Muschel, z'l, whom we were fortunate to have as a good neighbor for over four decades. In his quiet but determined way, he impacted his students. He and his staff of exceptionally caring mechanchim were able to 'turn on' many young minds



Beloved Talmid of Rav Gustman

to a life of Torah and mitzvos and the beauty of the Jewish home and the love of Eretz Yisrael.

Understanding who Rav Muschel's rebbe gives us an insight into what drove Rav Muschel to accomplish so much in his lifetime. His rebbe, Rav Yisroel Zev Gustman, z'l was a brilliant yeshiva student. He was the youngest dayan on Vilna's beis din -- and its sole survivor. He was the partisan that fought Nazis with guns - and with his bare hands. He was the eminent Rosh Yeshiva, beloved by his students - and by many of the twentieth century's greatest gedolim. Rav Gustman was his mesader kiddushin at his marriage to Sara Beinhorn in 1952. Some of the lessons that Rav Muschel learned from his rebbe, were to 'see the depths and potential of each talmid and accept them regardless of affiliation or head covering'.¹

¹ FOOTNOTE #1: As one who knew Rav Gustman wrote: "He never noticed what yarmulka you wore or what political party you were affiliated with... if you were there to learn Torah, then you were on his team; what you wore on your head was as important to Rav Gustman as how many sugars you took in your coffee.....he treated all of us the same."

Early Life

Rav Muschel was born in Tarnow, Galicia, Poland and when the war broke out in 1939, he and his parents and two brothers were taken by Russian secret police and interned in northern Siberia for three years. Footnote #2. They spent the war years in central Russia; then returned to Poland and in a DP camp in Germany. In 1949 the family came to the United States and settled in Brooklyn, where, in 1952 he received smicha from Rav Gustman at Yeshivas Netzach Yisroel. Rav Muschel went on to lead Young Israel of Prospect Park before moving to Monsey in 1956, where he remained for the rest of his life. In 1956 he earned his master's in education from Yeshiva University and was appointed principal of the newly formed Hebrew Institute of Rockland, now known as ASHAR.

"My philosophy of education? I love children."

In an interview many years ago in response to a pointed question, Rav Muschel replied: "My philosophy of education? I love children." Rav Aaron Fink, former associate principal said "The school is Rabbi Muschel and Rabbi Muschel is the school. You cannot say one without the other. Our priorities, directions, challenges, whatever the school has assumed, can be attributed to his dynamic personality."

ASHAR principal Rabbi Ari Jacobson called Rav Muschel «the heart and soul of our community, not just the founder.»

An Educator Par Excellence:

Rabbi Muschel was very demanding of his staff of educators. He would always point out the need to be firm but loving with the precious pupils. "What you are conveying to them will serve as a guide for them throughout their lives". i.e. These are not your pupils, treat them like they are



1952 Wedding of Rav Nochum Muschel: L-R Reb Meyer Muschel (father of the chasson); HaGaon, Rav Yisroel Zev Gustman, Mesader Kiddushin; the Chosson, Rav Nochum Muschel, zichronam livracha.

your own children. He built a school that today is one of the foremost in Jewish education.

Saying to parents "I want your children to have a Jewish education," there were times that he fought with the school's tuition committee and the board to take in students -paying little or no tuition- raising the money himself or threatening to pay from his own pocket. How many families were changed completely by these precious 'neshamos' that would come home to insist that their parents take them to shul and conduct a shabbos or yom tov seuda? Any monies Rabbi Muschel collected for presiding over weddings, funerals or mechiras chometz would go to Ashar.

Creating an appropriate general studies program for a yeshiva is a formidable task. Rav Muschel was very proud of the high caliber curriculum and was constantly working to maintain an excellent program. He was especially interested in employing professional teachers 'with a heart' who were careful to impart the appropriate material on the standards needed for the young religious students.

There was time for other endeavors: 12 years teaching teachers at Yeshiva University; consulting to the Board of Jewish Education in New York City; and publishing teacher guides, workbooks and articles. As Rabbi Muschel shared "We keep issues before youngsters address realities. Our style is to build high character from within-give our youngsters the ability and moral strength from within so as not to depend solely on the world." He went on to say "There are demands of children and parents, and I try to be very careful and considerate." He understood that a lot of people weren't shomer Shabbos at that time, but knew that by giving them a solid education they would be, in time. He would say "Mah shelo yaseh hasechel, yaseh hazman" - what the cleverness does not accomplish, time will do.

Cherished Memories

"Cherished memories mingle with gratitude and tears -the loss is so great- his absence so profound- but his essence, his inspiration, his teachings, his guidance, his lessons, his love . . . Everlasting!" according to Mrs. Judy Geller. "It was my privilege to work with Rabbi Muschel ¹ as his secretary for many years. In this unique relationship I was consistently enveloped by his Torah scholarship, by his wisdom, by his keen insight, by his impact on all those with whom he came in contact." Rabbi Muschel's legacy is encompassed in the word 'educator', which was his passion and



indeed his crowning glory. He taught and reached the hearts and minds of youngsters as well as adults. He was a teacher's teacher. His impact on Jewish education and Jewish generations is immeasurable. As for me, my heart is full and my soul enriched by Rabbi Nachum Muschel ¹, my inspiring teacher, my caring guide, my loyal confidant, and my irreplaceable loving friend."

Retirement

Upon his retirement, he urged his successors to be a proponent of adapting to advances in technology and continue building and growth as the premier educational institution.

Rabbi Muschel and his wife Sara had four sons, one of whom passed away in 1995. At the most emotional time in his life he still had his Tehillim in his hands, repeating every word in a loud, clear voice. Rabbi Muschel's emunah and bitachon allowed him to channel his energies in a positive direction, establishing the Joseph N. Muschel Memorial Foundation in 1996 and dedicating an ambulance to the Israeli settlement of Hashmonaim in the West Bank in 2003. The author was in Israel the following year for Succos and attended the dedication ceremony. ²

² A few years ago the author was at the wedding of a niece, when one of the relatives mentioned that she lives in Hashmonaim. Turns out she is a volunteer driver of the Muschel ambulance. They chose a fitting memorial for their son, a doctor that was a

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SHAKEN/STIR digitally validates the hand-off of phone calls passing through the complex web of networks, allowing the phone company of the consumer receiving the call to verify that a call is from the person making it.

Robocalls are phone calls that use automated dialing machines to play a pre-recorded message. According to the Federal Trade Commission, 99 percent of robocalls are illegitimate or fraudulent. Illegal robocalls are made by companies or individuals trying to scam the person on the other end of the phone. Many times, these calls are placed using "caller id spoofing." Individuals that resort to "caller id spoofing" use advanced technology to mimic the caller id of a legitimate entity such as a government agency, credit card company, a bank, or even a next door neighbor. Under the "Truth in Caller ID Act of 2009," robocalls are illegal if used for the purpose of defrauding or otherwise causing harm. However, despite the fact that many of these calls clearly violate the law, it is difficult if not impossible to catch the perpetrators, many of whom are overseas or hiding behind fake numbers.

The National "Do-Not-Call" Registry, managed by the FTC, was implemented in 2003 after the Do-Not-Call Implementation Act of 2003. The registry is designed to give people a choice about whether they would like to receive telemarketing calls at home. It was created to limit the number of telemarketing calls and robocalls made to U.S. households. In order to register, one may log onto the "Do-Not-Call" website and their phone number will be permanently placed in the registry.

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The Later Years

When Rav Muschel's wife, Sara, was ill, and later after she passed away, one of the neighbors would send over a challah or a kugel on erev Shabbos. When her teenage sons heard that Rav Muschel was a talmid of the Gaon Rav Yisroel Gustman, zt'l, her boys would beg her to be the messengers, so they could engage Rav Muschel in regaling them with stories and lessons from his rebbe, Rav Gustman.

Jerry Hoffnung recalls: "I had the z'chus of accompanying Rav Muschel to shul in the last few years before his petira. He was blessed by Hakadosh Baruch Hu with a brilliant mind, to the very end of his life. Every walk into and out of shul was a lesson in Chazal, rain, snow, wind, warm or cold weather, a helping hand under his arm, opening a door... any seemingly mundane occurrence, he would transform into a beautiful

giver- always helping others. And then she said "You have no idea how much that ambulance is used and appreciated by the Hashmonaim community. We are saving lives all the time. The people who gave that ambulance should be blessed."

SUFFERN

Yeshiva Ohr Reuven Celebrates End of Year With Annual Siyum Hashana

Yeshiva Ohr Reuven's Annual Siyum Hashana took place on Tuesday night, June 26. The invigorating and inspirational evening included the seudah, music, dancing, divrei chizuk, and seforim awarded to the mesaymin. All fathers, brothers, and alumni of the yeshiva were invited to come to be a part of the simcha. There was an ezras nashim for mothers to attend as well. The evening included talmidim from both the mesivta and the yeshiva ketana.

Free Basic Computer Classes Offered for Seniors

Supervisor Michael Specht and the Ramapo Town Board offered free computer classes to seniors. The classes took place over the course of four sessions on Tuesday, June 18, June 25, July 2 and July 9 at the Town of Ramapo Senior Center on Haverstraw Road in Suffern. The classes on acquiring basic computer skills provided a foundation for managing computers, smartphones, tablets, and computing devices better.

After completing the training, the participants were able to understand how information is stored on computers, smartphones, cloud and other computing devices, manage smartphones and iCloud storage. After the classes, participants were also better able to manage pictures and videos stored in smartphones and computers, and understand the memory or storage capacity of a smartphone, tablet or computer. The classes were offered free of charge to all seniors in Ramapo.

Statement From Rockland County Legislator Harriet Cornell On The Exclusion Of The Citizenship Question On The 2020 Census



"We have learned that the U.S. Departments of Justice and Commerce have issued written statements indicating that there will be no question about citizenship status on the 2020 Census, according to numerous news reports.

"As I have pointed out, it is vital that we do all we can to ensure an accurate count because an undercount will shift federal funding away from states and communities with the greatest actual need to states with less need - money for everything from educational programs to crime victims' assistance to social services.

"Even under the best of circumstances, many people are fearful of answering census questions; they just don't trust how the information may be used. Including a question about the status of a person's citizenship would only feed into this fear and discourage even more people from filling out the census form.

"The exclusion of such a question from the 2020 Census will help with the effort to ensure an accurate count of the number of people living in our country, regardless of citizenship status, in line with the requirements of the



Constitution and the 14th Amendment, which states that the government needs to count 'the whole number of persons in each state.'

"At the same time, the immense publicity this attempt has generated will create new and significant challenges. There will be those who will simply not answer the form nor make themselves available to census workers out of concern that any information they provide will be used to harm them in some way, including separating them from their families. We will need to work even harder to reach out to all people and all communities so that we count every person because every person counts."

d'var Torah. Tanach and Chazal were always on the tip of his tongue. He once told me that each time he would daven Shmoneh Esrei, he would concentrate on a new Machshova, making every Tefillah unique and special. Imagine how many Shmoneh Esrei's he was zoche to daven and the knowledge and creativity it took to accomplish this."

"He would tell me to be 'matzliach' and to have 'hatzlocha'. "Do you know the difference?" he rhetorically asked, with a quizzical glint in his eyes. "You should be a 'matzliach' - bring 'hatzlocha' to others- and 'you' should have your own 'hatzlocha' as well."

'A Better Human Being'

"In later years, when Rav Muschel was ill and could not attend shul on a daily basis, he would daven at home" one of his sons reported: "He would daven with such kavana and sing as much as he could- almost like he was transported back to his youth at the Sanzer Shteebel in his native Tarnow in Galitzia."

When asked how he wished to be remembered "The man helped me see things I did not know were there. The man helped

me have feelings that make me a better human being. If the children can say that, I have had a measure of success."

The Sun Sets

The funeral at ASHAR was an outpouring of love for a long time pillar of the Monsey community as hundreds of family, friends and students turned out to pay their respects. Rabbi Muschel was recalled as a masterful maspid, a tremendous baal chesed whose door was always open to anyone in need, not just in the prime of his life but until his very last days.

Most of us have heard the famous story about Reb Nachum Ish Gamzu, who always said -'Gam Zu L'Tova'-everything that Hashem does, is for the good." So too Rav Nachum Muschel carried the torch of his namesake, Rav Nachum- seeing the good and potential of each child. What an inspiring legacy. Yehi Zichro Baruch!

May his memory be a blessing for his family and all of Klal Yisroel.

Author's note: This article is the first of 2- being presented in honor of the 4th

yahrzeit of Rav Nachum Muschel, z'l on 18 Tammuz. Some of the material and comments in this article are gleaned from personal interviews & research and from local news media. The author wishes to thank the Muschel family and the many staff and former students for their assistance with this tribute. Yehi Zichro Baruch!



Four great-grandsons named 'Nachum Muschel' with their fathers at a family simcha

Rav Nachum Muschel, z'l- "A GIANT OF AN EDUCATOR"

On His Yahrzeit, 18 Tammuz- PART II

by Yisroel Safrin

Tributes from Parents, Friends, Talmidim



At the graduation of his grandson

The legacy of Rav Muschel continues as we learn of the impact he had on children and adults—owing to the many warm feelings and tributes that poured in upon learning of the feature about our beloved neighbor. This is part 2 – devoted to beautiful tributes.

An Educator Par Excellence:

Rabbi Simcha Sterzer relates: "Rabbi Muschel's goal was that students should graduate from ASHAR with a love of Torah values and to excel in all academic subjects to the best of each individual student's ability. He considered the Yeshiva as an extension of himself. Being principal meant devoting himself to the students and teachers. He, in turn, expected that his teachers perform to their very maximum ability. He continuously oversaw the progress of each individual student's performance on their tests. Every teacher was required to present a weekly plan book and comments would be made by him how to better present the material. In order to assist the teachers, he would at times give his own model lesson. His devotion to the school the students and the teachers were unequalled." (Rabbi Simcha Sterzer taught at Ashar for 32 years)

Mrs. Bella Kohn recalls: "The stories of Rav Muschel have to be told. They are an inspiration to today's youth. I recall Rav Muschel en-

couraging a father to give his children a Jewish education. "What am I doing? My yeshiva kids are going to shul on shabbos and I am not with them?" He walked home and became a shomer shabbos. This retired educator relates "how the whole house was turned over because Rav Muschel never preached -never admonished the parents- never pressured them or told them what to do". (Mrs. Bella Kohn taught at Ashar for over 40 years)

Cherished Memories

From: Dr. Leon Schwartz, "When my wife, Esther took ill, Rabbi & Mrs. Muschel were my 'rock' to help and advise me. After she passed away, they insisted I get remarried and they held my hand - even interviewed and screened my current wife, who is a doll.

From: Aharon Angstreich: "Rav Muschel took the time and interest to discuss how I was doing as a new teacher- a challenging period for me. His Torah and pedagogical genius; his devotion- his advice and consistency, his suggestions – all of which I use til this day". (Aharon Angstreich taught at Ashar in 1973-1974)

A Powerful Force

From: Aron Schwartz: "Rabbi Muschel was a powerful force that shaped the Monsey community for decades, providing students with an unmatched curriculum in both Jewish and secular studies. We learned not just how to be Jews, but productive members of society. We learned to love and appreciate Israel and how to embrace a culture. We learned that college and yeshiva can coexist. We learned never to stop asking questions. Rabbi Muschel was big on always challenging ourselves to become better. ASHAR didn't just lose a dean; Jewish education lost a leader." (Aron Schwartz is a 2003 graduate of Ashar)

From: Shai Held: "My father died when I was 12 years old and my mother was not a well person. Every other Friday for the year after my father died, Rav Muschel would take me out of class and bring me to his office, and ask if there was anything I wanted to talk about. I remember how much it meant that he worked to make me understand that he was there for me. I loved him because I was just a little kid with no one to take care of me, and he saw that, and he saw me. (Shai Held is a 1985 graduate of Ashar)

A Giant in Jewish Education

Rabbi Ronnie Greenwald, z'l, a community activist said in an interview after Rav Muschel's *petira*, that Rabbi Mus-

chel was considered a "giant in Jewish education" and modernized the educational system. Rabbi Muschel represented the founding generation of Monsey's Jewish community, and was one of the original *mechanchim* in America." Rabbi Greenwald recalled attending 30 Torah U'Mesorah educational conventions with Rabbi Muschel. "He knew all the kids in his school and he knew how to reach them. He represented Modern Orthodoxy in a very respectful and very educated way. He believed in progressive education and the latest modern techniques. He was a respected *mechanech*." Rabbi Muschel served as a judge numerous times in the National Bible Contest, held in New York, and once as judge at the International Bible Contest in Israel. "

A number of educators and parents remarked "Walk the school corridors with Rav Muschel and see the benevolent schoolmaster. Patting heads, squeezing shoulders, looking into classrooms, chatting with teachers, he is beloved by one and all".



Speaking at an event

Memories of Rav Muschel, z'l

From Eileen & Jeffrey Pollack: "Make for yourself a Rav, and acquire for yourself a friend....." This pasuk from Pirkei Avos brings us back to a very special time in our lives. We first met Rabbi Nachum Muschel, z'l, when it was time to enroll our very young children in a yeshiva- and the rest, as they say, "is history". Rabbi Muschel was a very complex individual. There was so much to learn about him, and from him. Every experience in his life, both the positive and the negative, helped mold him into the extraordinary Jewish educator and extremely sensitive and compassionate human being that he was.

As a *Menahel*, he was second to none. Long before the years of "special-ed", Rabbi Muschel insisted that his teaching staff accommodate the needs of every student, even if that child could not successfully function in a conventional classroom situation."

Sharing the Nachas

"Although the rabbi was certainly a strong administrator, there was also the sensitive side to him that was protective and appreciative of each of his students. When our daughter

was in 4th grade, she was summoned to the Rabbi's office. She was trembling, as she didn't know why she was in "trouble"... To be called in to the Principal's office was something that even for children with tougher skin than she, might be cause for apprehension. But Rabbi Muschel greeted her at the door... "Chanel, I am so proud of you", he said. Our daughter had written an essay entitled, "The Person I Most Admire" and in it she had described the love and respect she felt for her grandmother. Her English teacher had sent the essay to the Rabbi for him to read. And the Rabbi wanted our daughter to know that he was planning to mail the essay to her grandmother because he knew that this would make her grandma so proud and happy.

Rabbi Muschel always expressed his gratitude to parents with a telephone call, as well as with a beautiful personal letter. Rabbi Muschel was there to listen to every parent, and took every concern (and criticism) expressed, very seriously. He listened, not just with his ears, but with his heart. And he always followed up and closely monitored each situation. He was generous with his time; and he gave his full attention. True, Rabbi Muschel demanded a lot from his students. But he demanded even more from himself. Our children remember their years at ASHAR with respect and admiration for the outstanding *menahel* Rabbi Muschel was. "

Our Teacher, Our Leader, Our Friend



The Muschel children continue the legacy: Little Nachum Muschel (a great-grandchild) sits on the new ambicycle donated to United Hatzalah in Jerusalem by Moshe & Esther Muschel in loving memory of Rav Nachum & Mrs. Sara Muschel in June 2019.

"Fast forward....we have been recycled. We are now ASHAR grandparents. All of our

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FAITH AMID THE FLAMES

The Story of Reb Yosef Friedenson The Kiddush Hashem He Witnessed and Created



By Rabbi Yosef C. Golding

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Mesorah

WARSAW IN FLAMES:

WE ARRIVED AT OUR NEW HOST, REB YOSEF ELIA KUTNER, three days before Rosh Hashanah. This time, he greeted us with a broad smile, with warmth and grace. In previous visits, he rarely smiled. Now, in the true fashion of a pious and chassidic Jew, he welcomed us into his home as homeless refugees, and filled our hearts with a little bit of joy, despite what was happening outside.

On Wednesday, Erev Rosh Hashanah, the foreboding feeling of war was everywhere. Food was



Several Kedoshiim killed in Warsaw during German bombardments.



Warsaw buildings destroyed by the Nazis yms"l.

scarce and Jewish mothers were worried about what they would serve their families for Yom Tov. However, the sky was clear, and Jews being Jews, we all began preparing to welcome in the New Year.

In the morning hours there were several air-raid alarms, and we heard light bombardment of the Polish positions at the perimeter of Warsaw. But as soon as the sirens stopped, the streets filled with holy Yidden, rushing to the mikvaos before Yom Tov, with Yiddische housewives frantically searching to buy food to brighten up the Yom Tov table, and family members running to extend New Year wishes to friends and family.

And that's when the German devils struck. Suddenly, the skies over Warsaw were darkened by the approach of many squadrons of German planes, and the relative lull was shattered by their deadly bombardment, with almost all of the bombing on the streets inhabited by the Jews. Within moments, the famed Franziskaner, Muranska, and Nalewki Streets were engulfed in an inferno of fire and smoke. I am sure that this attack was intentionally timed to coincide with the onset of Rosh Hashanah, as this was the first extensive air attack on the capital, and it was limited, mostly, to the Jewish neighborhoods.

The full extent of the damage only became evident after Yom Tov. A number of large buildings on Franziskaner Street were completely destroyed. Tens of Jews were killed, a number of them buried in the ruins of their buildings or in the "air shelters" that had collapsed. Sev-

eral hundred Jewish families were now homeless, having lost everything but their lives. They were forced to eat their Yom Tov meals in the houses of strangers who gathered them into their homes and treated them like their very own family. As there was barely enough food for their own families, this was a true effort of mesiras nefesh on the part of those who still had a roof over their heads. That Rosh Hashanah evening, many "burned-out" Jews joined us at Reb Yosef Elia's table, and slept in whatever living space was available.

DURING THE ASERES YEMEI TESHUVAH, THE CITY WAS turned into a fire-spewing hell. The Germans fortified their positions around the city, and bombarded the city with heavy artillery from all sides. When the danger was solely from airplanes, we felt we could protect ourselves by heeding the air-raid sirens and running into air shelters. Now, however, with the addition of heavy artillery, there was nowhere to run. Shells could explode at any time, without warning. We were in constant fear. On one hand, we were afraid to venture outside, but inside, an incoming shell could kill several people; a true life-threatening dilemma.

It was then that I began to recognize the greatness of our host, Reb Yosef Elia Kutner. Although he was half-starved, as it was dangerous to venture outside to try and find some food, he immersed himself in his learning all day, non-stop.

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Rockland grandchildren have attended, or are still attending the yeshiva, although at a different address. We were all students of Rabbi Muschel. He shared his wisdom and his *saychel* with everyone, by his own good example."

"*Asay l'chah Rav, u'knay l'chah chaver*" It has been an honor and a privilege to be part of the ASHAR family with such an extraordinary Rabbi as our teacher, our leader and our friend. We pray that everything Rabbi Muschel z"l stood for, will always serve as an inspiration to ASHAR students and to all

talmidim, and that his memory will forever be for a Blessing.

Author's note: This article is a continuation of the first article that appeared in the previous Monsey Mevasser issue of July 11, 2019. It is being presented in honor of the 4th yearzeit of Rav Nochum Muschel, z"l on 18 Tammuz. Some of the material and comments in this article are gleaned from personal interviews & research and from local news media. The author wishes to thank the Muschel family and the many staff and former students for their assistance with this tribute. *Yehi Zichro Baruch!*