

Queens Jewish Center Dedicates The Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt Sanctuary

Rabbi Grunblatt memorialized by family and devotees
as his memory becomes permanently established in his beloved sanctuary



President Gedalyah Shatz Speaking 12-14-14



Rabbi Akiva Grunblatt and David Grunblatt, Rabbi Grunblatt's sons, beside Dedication Plaque

By David Schneider

On Sunday, December 14, the Queens Jewish Center dedicated the Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt Sanctuary and announced an annual scholar-in-residence in his memory.

From 1967 until his passing on November 23, 2013, Rabbi Grunblatt *zt"l* served the Queens Jewish Center. He was also instrumental in diminishing the size of the public housing project in Forest Hills in the late 1970s.

Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1927, he learned at the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in London during World War II. Arriving in New York in 1944, he received *smicha* from Yeshiva Torah Vodaath in 1949 and graduated magna cum laude with a baccalaureate degree in political science from City College of New York. He was a professor at Yeshiva University and at Touro College.

"Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt was a *talmid chacham*, cultured, an educated writer, a cantor, and a modest individual with a sense of humor," recalled Gedalyah Shatz, president of the Queens Jewish Center.

"It's here in this sanctuary that we heard his keen insight; he sharpened our minds and broadened our horizons."

The current Rabbi of the Queens Jewish Center, Simcha Hopkovitz, said, "These are the days before we celebrate Chanukah, which means dedication, when we remember one person, Matisyahu, 'who rose up when our values were in danger' and 'rekindled the House of Worship in Jerusalem.'"

"Because of one man, we celebrate Chanukah." Rabbi Grunblatt "taught



David Grunblatt, Rabbi Grunblatt's son, Reading Dedication

and led, inspired and instructed, always with caring...we dedicate this sanctuary."

Rabbi Akiva Grunblatt, son of the late Rabbi and a Rosh HaYeshiva of the Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva in Kew Gardens Hills, was the keynote speaker.

The *shul* and his father "were beloved and inseparable in their lifetime and now even in his passing they will not be separated."

"My father, with his sincerity, his scholarship, and his mastery of all of Torah – it was more than this, it was his personable demeanor that influenced people."

David Grunblatt, Esq., another son, said, "People could see how genuine he was, how much he loved you. He wanted to do what is best for you.

"He didn't tell you what you wanted to hear. He was relentless with the truth. It wasn't a personal agenda; it was because he loved you."

Rabbi Hillel Tendler, a son-in-law,

said the sanctuary is a place where Rabbi Grunblatt's influence was most felt. "Thousands upon thousands heard his broad thinking and deep love of every Jew.

"This holy *shul*, enclosed by these holy walls, holds so much of his Torah and his *davening* of the *N'ilah* on Yom Kippur that would pierce the heavens."

Rabbi Dov Osina, a son-in-law, said Rabbi Grunblatt was "a husband, father, grandfather, but most of all a true *chaver* (friend)."

Rabbi Osina mentioned how Yaakov struggled with an angel but blessed Yaakov, changing his name to Yisrael because "he struggled with G-d and mankind and won." "With his (Yaakov's) struggle, he became a leader of Israel. Judaism is not an escape from the world but an engagement with the world.

"To serve G-d and man: We come out ahead by looking at the Rabbi Joseph Grunblatts of this world – those who

engage with this world and come out on top.

"He respected the honor of every *Yid*: young or old, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. He respected all: *Litvish* or *chasidish*, a Religious Zionist *yarmulke* or a Modern Orthodox *yarmulke*, or no *yarmulke* at all."

He was "quiet, unassuming, always calm, and always thoughtful. He treated everyone with love." "To do what is righteous in the eyes of Hashem: that was his motto."

Dr. Zev Tendler, a grandson, does not remember Rabbi Grunblatt "for his vast scholarship, or learning, or influence, or how he brought the greatness of the European Torah academies to America, although he did." Dr. Tendler remembers his grandfather at the Shabbos table with jokes and songs. "Listening to his *N'ilah* (on Yom Kippur) was like listening to a private conversation between an *eved* (servant) and his master."

Yaakov Merling, another grandson, said, "Carry on his legacy, his driving force to change the world for the better with that love and sincerity that he had for everyone."

Long-time congregant of the Queens Jewish Center, Larry Raubvogel, remembered Rabbi Grunblatt "also as such a 'regular guy.' He loved sports, baseball, opera, the old Yiddish shows. He was up-to-date, not only on news stories but with the feature stories in the papers. He knew old, classic TV shows. He had a TV."

To close the program, A *Keil Malei Rachamim* memorial prayer was sung in memory of Rabbi Grunblatt by Cantor Aryeh Rendel of the Queens Jewish Center.