

DR. JOSEPH KAMINETSKY

RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG
BOCA RATON SYNAGOGUE



EARLY YEARS

- Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1911 to a struggling family. He was one of 9 children, the oldest son.
- Died on Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, March 17, 1999
- He attended public school for a year, but his father desperately wanted to send him to yeshiva. In order to afford it, his father sold the family home.
- They moved from East New York to Brownsville where he attended Yeshivas R' Chaim Berlin for elementary school and Talmudical Academy on the Lower East Side for High School.



Yeshivas Chaim Berlin no Prospect Place

EARLY YEARS



Young Israel of Brownsville

- In later high school years, friends and he founded a school of Jewish studies on Shabbos afternoons. They called it AZBO, Anshei Zedek Boys Organization and ran intensive classes in Hebrew, Chumash, Nach, and Jewish history. It became a meeting place for Bnei Akiva youth group activities.
- Discovered leadership skills and honed public speaking as gave speeches at Young Israel of Brownsville.
- “Jewish life was much less polarized at the time than it is now, with people of all types accommodating each other in a rich interchange. Differences did exist, but dogmatic ideological boundaries were largely undefined and undrawn. The traditional world of yeshiva-oriented Jews crossed paths frequently with the worlds of Mizrachi, Young Israel and the nascent community of Yeshiva college.” (Memorable Encounters, pg. 23)

EARLY YEARS

- Became active in Hapoel Hamizrachi preaching a love for all Jews, love of erez Yisroel and love of Torah.
- Dr. Revel announced they were opening up a Yeshiva college and there was great excitement.
- His father was struck with Parkinson's disease and had to give up work. There were 9 children at home plus a niece and nephew whom his father had brought to America from Slonim, his hometown. They were years of Great Depression and Dr. Joe had to work hard to help the family.



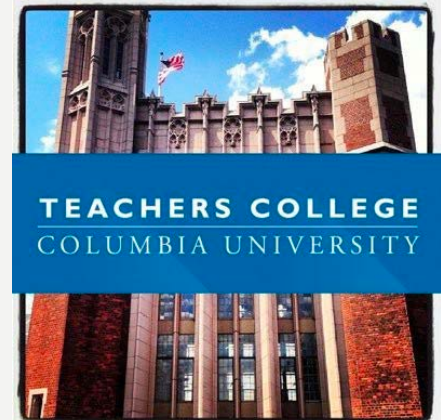
COLLEGE

- He became a member of the first class at Yeshiva College, graduating magna cum laude in 1932.
- R' Leo Jung was a teacher of Joe in college and he would walk him to the subway. Joe would share about his family struggles and R' Jung hired him to tutor his daughters.
- Upon graduating, he became the principal of the afternoon school of the Jewish Center in Manhattan and later became the assistant rabbi under R' Leo Jung. He also edited the Jewish Center Bulletin writing articles and seeing the publication through to press. Considered himself a great student of Rabbi Jung whom he credited with teaching him “how to have class.”



DOCTORATE

- In 1937 he left yeshiva to go to teachers college at Columbia University. He received his doctorate in education from Columbia Teachers College and from then on became known as Dr. Joe.
- In 1940, he got married to Selma/Shulamis
- He described he was busy helping support his family, working on Jewish education and leadership in Hapoel Hamizrachi and so he couldn't give attention to the rigorous semicha program at RIETS. He did get two private semichas.



MENTORS – R' ISAAC SHER

- In the early 1930's, while still at RIETS, he was part of a small group who gathered to study Mesillas Yesharim in R' Avigdor Miller's dorm room with R' Yaakov Yosef Herman (All for the Boss).
- They learned R' Isaac Sher, the Rosh Yeshiva of Slobodka was living in New York and they began to go weekly on Motzei Shabbos to learn with him. The group from YU included R' Nosson Wachtfogel, R' Avigdor Miller, R' Mordechai Gifter and others.
- He became close with R' Sher and even after R' Sher went back to Slobodka, he remained in touch and in correspondence.



MENTORS – RAV SOLOVEITCHIK

- Though the Rav only began giving shiur at YU after he had left, Dr. Joe described considering himself the Rav's student. He read everything the Rav wrote and listened to tapes of shiurim as much as possible. He considered the Rav his second great rabbinic influence and mentor.
- He wrote:
“Although Rav Soloveitchik was not an active member of the advisory board of Roshei Yeshiva at Torah U'Mesorah, he was respected as a peer. I remember once meeting R' Avrohom Kalmanowitz, Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir, at the RCA headquarters. When I asked where he was going, he replied, “We, the Rabbinical advisory Board of Torah U'Mesorah have an inyan, and we want to get Rav Soloveitchik's opinion.”



CAREER

- He became executive director of Manhattan Day School.
- Dr. Joe was the president of Yeshiva College Alumni Association and got involved in the search for the second president of YU after the passing of R' Revel.
- In 1946, he was recruited by R' Sender Gross and R' Bernard Goldenberg to become the educational director of Torah U'Mesorah.
- Dr. Joe was moved that R' Shraga Feivel didn't hesitate to hire a YU graduate who was the National Vice President of Hapoel HaMizrachi. "His 'bigness' moved me profoundly, and in return, motivated me to give him and Torah U'Mesorah my utmost loyalty. Although I felt sympathetic to the ideals of both the pure yeshivish and Modern Orthodox worlds, I was typed as a 'modern' by some of the Torah U'Mesorah kehillah. I shall never forget how one really great Rosh Yeshiva railed against me, exclaiming: 'We don't need the Ph.D.'s and their semicolons!'" (Memorable Encounters, pg. 75)



BACKGROUND IN AMERICA

- The day school movement began amidst a mood of prevailing gloom. Half of the world's Jews had been exterminated over a period of six years, and the great Torah centers of Europe were no more. In America, it was almost universally assumed that Torah observance and learning were relics of the past.
- The times were hardly propitious for a movement of Jewish revival. First- and second-generation Americans, just beginning to enter the mainstream of American life, derided the idea of a Jewish day school as 'undemocratic and un-American,' an affront to the ethos of the American melting pot. (Jonathan Rosenblum, Jerusalem Post March 26, 1999)
- Something started to happen in the end of the 40's. "Some will say it was the founding of the State of Israel, which restored hope and pride to aching Jewish hearts; others claim it was the emigration of Hungarian and Chassidic Jews to America. There were various forces at work, all of which brought forth a drang, a great desire, for identity with Torah and Jewish ideals and values. From there, the day school movement took off." (Memorable Encounters, page 13)



TORAH U'MESORAH

- R' Shraga Feivel founded a teacher training program called Aish Dos, Fire of Faith which was led by his students, R' Gross and R' Goldenberg.
- He recruited great lay leaders like Samuel Feurstein of Brookline who was president until his death in 1983 and others like Irving and Amos Bunim.
- He also set up a Rabbinical Administrative Board and recruited R' Aharon Kotler as the head. Also on the rabbinical group were R' Reuven Grozovsky of Torah V'Daas, R' Yaakov Kamenetsky, R' Ruderman, R' Moshe, R' Hutner, R' Elya Meir Bloch and R' Mordechai Katz of Telshe, R' Avraham Kalmanowitz of Mir, R' Dovid Lifshitz and R' Lessen of RIETS.



DIRECTOR OF TORAH U'MESORAH

- He served for two years before becoming the director of the entire organization in 1948 upon the passing of R' Shraga Feivel.



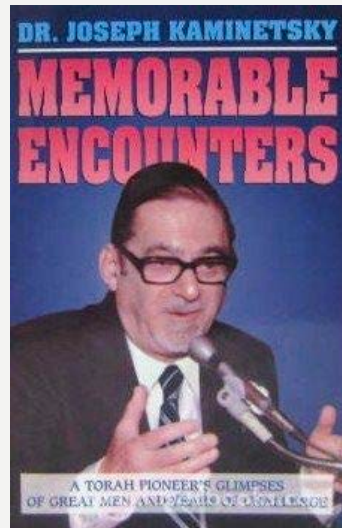
OPPOSITION

- The self-sacrifice was unbelievable. When he returned to New York from another one of his long trips away from family, he was more likely to receive brickbats than accolades from those who sat comfortably on the sidelines, while he built the future of American Judaism. They criticized him for the concessions to reality that had to be made.
- 'That's Honolulu,' became a slogan for the compromises that had to be made to bring a school into existence in farflung communities. And yet the compromises did not become engraved in stone, as if they were the preferred path, so that schools and communities continued to grow spiritually. (Jonathan Rosenblum, Jerusalem Post March 26, 1999)
- Confronted lots of resistance, opposition and push back and yet his enthusiasm, passion and commitment never waned.



GEDOLEI TORAH

- He was American born, university trained but he served these European Torah personalities loyally, and he proudly adopted their philosophies and made them his own.
- His memoirs focus on his relationship with gedolei Torah whom he respected tremendously and had a close relationship with.
- The gedolim trusted his judgement and were willing to make compromises based on his assessment such as co-ed and definition of a Torah U'Mesorah school (Torah mi'sinai)



BRIDGE BETWEEN WORLDS

- Memoirs - “Although I felt sympathetic to the ideals of both the pure yeshivish and Modern Orthodox worlds, I was typed as a "modern" by some of the Torah U’mesorah kehillah... In truth, in those early years, I did indeed find myself living ideologically in two worlds: the Modern Orthodox milieu of Yeshiva University and the more traditional yeshiva world of my early Brownsville days and of Torah Umesorah... I was criticized now and then by... religiously conservative people who objected to any hint of ideological flexibility on the day-school initiative – while at the same time, many of my former friends at Yeshiva called me a "black-hatter." Yet the Lord was good to me and enabled me to maintain a careful equilibrium between the two worlds and to work with both for the sake of Torah.”



VISIONARY

- He was a true visionary and revolutionary, personally responsible for the founding of countless day schools in America.
- For the next 35 years, he traveled the width and breadth of the US with a mission to establish Jewish day schools. He then served as the Director Emeritus for six years.
- At his funeral, R' Boruch Mordechai Eizrachi told the story that in 1973 he was with R' Moshe when Dr. Joe entered the room. Rav Moshe rose for him and commented that "this man has established Torah in America."



BUILDING JEWISH EDUCATION

- Translated his love and dreams into action, execution and change.
- He began with a dream of every city with a Jewish population of 5,000 to have a Jewish Day School. Seemed unrealistic, delusional to think it could happen. Was told by more than one leader, “When hair grows on the palm of my hand there will be a day school here.” Children won’t fit in, won’t get educated, won’t get jobs.
- At the time, there were only a handful of yeshivas and day schools in America including in NY, Baltimore and Chicago. Today there are over 600 with over 170,000 students



COLLABORATION WITH EDUCATORS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TORAH UMESORAH



DR. JOSEPH KAMINETSKY, director 132 NASSAU STREET • NEW YORK 38, N. Y. • COlrandt 7-2738

ה"ב

January 19, 1954

Mr. Sam Aboff
741 Pennington
Elizabeth, N.J.

Dear Sam:

Thank you very much for accepting both assignments, the one in Crown Heights and the one in Shulamith. I have written to both groups and they were very happy to learn of your acceptance. I am sure that they will contact you directly from here on in.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky

JKims



Sam E. Aboff

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
HEBREW DAY SCHOOLS



תורה ומסורה

5 BEEKMAN STREET • NEW YORK 38, N. Y.

COlrandt 7-8203

כ"ה

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Publications
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School Organization

October 16, 1958

Mr. Sam E. Aboff
156 Hillside Rd.
Elizabeth, N.J.

Dear Mr. Aboff:

One of our affiliates, the Hillel School of Denver, has turned to us for a representative to visit them ~~there~~ on November 23rd, 1958 to speak at their Dinner and to make a survey of their School. They have requested someone with training in psychology and have expressed a special desire to have us send you, since they are acquainted with your regular column "The Problem Clinic" in "The Jewish Parent", our PTA magazine.

We do hope that it will be possible for you to make this trip, as we feel that you are particularly suited for this assignment. We do hope that you will be able to comply with this request.

Do let us know as soon as possible that you will find it possible to accept this important field assignment.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Kind personal regards,
Sincerely yours,

Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky

JK:18

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
HEBREW DAY SCHOOLS



תורה ומסורה

5 BEEKMAN STREET • NEW YORK 38, N. Y.

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School Organization

October 15, 1958

Mr. Sam Aboff
156 Hillside Rd.
Elizabeth, N. J.

Dear Sam:

Have been in touch with Sam Adelman and the folks out in Denver. They are very anxious to have you for the Dinner on the 23rd. Of course they will pay a very fine fee. I hope that you can make it even though it means taking a day off from the school, if you can arrange that. I am sure that you would like to see your mishpecho, as well. At any rate, call me on Friday morning so that we can discuss this at some length.

Best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky

JK:LB

Nov. 23



Sam E. Aboff

כ"ה

TORAH UMESORAH

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HEBREW DAY SCHOOLS
156 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N. Y. 10010
212-989-1717

DR. JOSEPH KAMINETSKY
NATIONAL DIRECTOR

25 Kislev 5732
December 13, 1971

Mr. Sam Aboff
156 Hillside Road
Elizabeth, N. J. 07208

Dear Sam:

Although I rushed off a short informal note to you one Friday I want to put on the record, officially so to speak, our heartiest congratulations to you upon the occasion of your being appointed as the Superintendent of Schools of Elizabeth.

We have followed, with great interest, your consistent climb up the ladder in the educational system of your community and we know how many pitfalls were placed in your way. All of this makes the "prize" so much more meaningful and our pride and congratulations more intense.

May you have hatzlachah rabbah.

All the best from all of us,

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky

JK:LB

זלג
אליהו
אבוף
Sincerely yours,
[Signature]
Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky

BUILDING JEWISH EDUCATION

- Dr. Hillel Goldberg – “Dr. Kaminetsky could sell Jewish education, not just because he believed in it, understood it, or cared. He did not found scores of Jewish day schools on these qualities alone. Still less, on these qualities alone did he persuade others to give up potentially lucrative careers to found hundreds more day schools. The secret... his secret? Dr. Joseph Kaminetsky convinced you that you were building the school, you were the leader, you were the doer, you were making the sacrifice, you had the abilities, you were making the difference.”
- He spoke about the mystique of Jewish education and how if you could get the school going, others would want to be on board.
- As the Day School movement took off, the organization shifted to conferences, conventions, curriculum building and consulting.



COMPLETE PACKAGE

- Love of Torah
- Love of Gedolei Torah
- Love of all Jews
- Great oratory skills and persuasive personality.
- Connected with people from all walks of life.
- Successful fundraiser
- Great educator - planned study sessions, taught teachers, trained principals, mediated school issues.
- Life of the party. Took over the dance floor at a simcha. Patriarch of the family. Great sense of humor. Spoke straight.
- Very committed to Torah learning.



Baltimore, 1980's



FAMILY

- Daughter Nechama, married to R' Meir Steinhardt.
- R' Dovid a"h, married to Sury, was principal of Manhattan Day School for eighteen years, became national director of NCSY and then principal of Yeshiva of North Jersey.
- Judah
- Phyllis, married to Gedalya Riess
- Symie, married to R' Eliezer Liff



Shimmie and Beth Kaminetsky

RETIREMENT

- Upon retiring in 1980 at the age of 69, Dr. Joe and his wife moved to Yerushalayim.
- They lived in Sanhedria and he spent his time learning Torah.
- He was always among the first at the earliest minyan of the day, even when his health began to fail.
- In his last years he used to tell people, "I'm preparing for the final exam."



FUNERAL

- Rav Nachman Bulman called him a "bridge figure" in whose presence all differences between Jews melted away, since he could as easily talk to a Jew from Boro Park as to a Jew from Texas. "Tens of thousands owe their *neshomoh* lives to him."
- Rabbi Yisroel (Lou) Nulman said Dr. Joe was selected for the task of implementing the dream of R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz to, "Dot the American continent with Hebrew day schools." The American *roshei yeshiva* were the guiding force behind the movement, and Rabbi Kaminetsky worked with all of them. Dr. Kaminetsky used his considerable talents for *chinuch*.

