



RABBI AHARON ADLER

Rav, Ohel Nechama
Faculty, OU Israel

Torah Tidbits is honored to feature a guest piece from our esteemed OU Israel faculty member, Rabbi Aharon Adler. In the context of two recently published books dedicated to the thought of HaRav Isadore Twersky zt”l, Rabbi Adler shares with us a glimpse of a unique Torah personality who was both a professor at Harvard and a Chassidic Rebbe.

Two Luminaries in One Giant

In a talk delivered to his students at Alon Shevut’s Yeshivat Har Etzion in 1973, the Rosh Yeshiva, HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt”l sharply deplored superficiality in Torah studies. Using military jargon, R’ Lichtenstein yelled out: “One must *conquer* a Sugya (Talmudic discourse). Torah cannot be acquired with ‘vertlich’ (a Yiddish word connoting condensed and brief thoughts)”. Upon which his colleague Rosh Yeshiva, HaRav Yehuda Amital, retorted: “But *marketing* Torah can be accomplished with such ‘vertlich!’”

This interchange between these two

giant luminaries serving jointly at the helm of Yeshivat Har Etzion for over forty years immediately brings to mind two distinct sides of one outstanding personality. A rare breed, indeed, Rabbi Prof. Yitzhak (Isadore) Twersky zt”l certainly personified being simultaneously a “conqueror” of Torah truths to hungry academicians at Harvard University, as well a “marketer” of Torah ideas to his flock in his Boston *Shteibel/Bet Midrash* as the Talner Rebbe. In a word, R’ Twersky was essentially two luminaries in one giant.

In recent months, two very different types of books have appeared both designed to preserve the Torah wealth and wisdom of R’ Twersky. One could never have imagined that the author of the first book was also the author

of the second book. The first book, *K’Ma’ayan Hamitgaber*, (ed. R’ Prof. Carmi Horowitz), is an anthology (in Hebrew) of thirty-one scholarly articles dealing with medieval intellectual Jewish history (Maimonides



LaBriut, RBS Specialty Health Center, is recruiting **Medical and Dental specialists** to provide the residents of Ramat Beit Shemesh, Beit Shemesh, and all of central Israel with the very best medical and dental specialty care available. With the anticipated opening of our multi-specialty center this fall, medical and dental providers are invited to use our beautiful and professional offices for consulting and treating private and/or kupot cholim patients during single or multiple sessions (morning, afternoon, evening), or on a full-time basis.

We invite Israel board certified specialists in the following specialties (adult and pediatric) to consider this wonderful opportunity.

MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

- Cardiology
- Pulmonology
- Gastroenterology
- Dermatology
- Otolaryngology
- Urology
- Orthopedics
- Neurology
- Endocrinology
- Rheumatology
- Ophthalmology
- Surgery
- Psychiatry
- Podiatry
- Psychology, Physiotherapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Chiropractic, Counseling

DENTAL SPECIALISTS

- Endodontist
- Periodontist
- Oral Surgeon
- Oral facial pain / TMJ

Be part of the
LaBriut family
of Medical and Dental
professionals!

For more information, email us at labriuthealthcenter@gmail.com

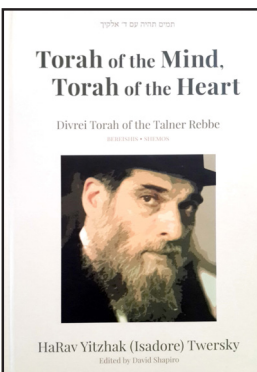
in particular), written by the Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature & Philosophy at Boston's prestigious Harvard University. The second book, *Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart*, (ed. R' David Shapiro), is a reconstruction of the Torah thoughts as presented by the Talner Rebbe at his weekly Seudah Shlishit (third Shabbat meal). These two editors – devout students of R' Twersky – have pointed out that in each respective book one absorbs and senses the flavor of the “other” R' Twersky as well.

For those academically inclined and possessing serious scholarly knowledge of medieval Jewish history, *K'Ma'ayan Hamitgaber* is an absolute gem. Supplementing R' Twersky's 1962 pioneering work, *Rabad of Posquieres: A*

Twelfth Century Talmudist, and his 1980 *magnum opus*, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, (Hebrew translation, 1992), this complementary over 700-page masterpiece has bridged the decades of R' Twersky's scholarly activities from 1962-1997. The editor, R' Horowitz, introduces the book with a synopsis of all thirty-one essays found in the book. The reader is then treated to an in-depth analysis of R' Twersky's biography and literary activities. It becomes apparent that R' Twersky not only integrated his academic presentations with deep messages in morality and spirituality, but he internalized this seeming contradictory duality into his wholesome personal life. R' Twersky's Talner Rebbe side silently hovered over his Harvard persona.

Much time and focused attention is required to plow through these thirty-one essays. My personal favorites, for a variety of reasons, are the sixth chapter (published posthumously) dealing with Maimondes' unique position throughout Jewish history, and the final chapter, R' Twersky's towering eulogy (published in 1996) for his father-in-law, the Rov, (HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"l). R' Carmi Horowitz deserves much acclaim for his outstanding contribution to the world of intellectual Jewish history in general, and to R' Twersky's eternal legacy in particular.

Yet, R' Twersky was not content with educating and guiding only the brightest of Harvard's students. He regarded his spiritual/Torah mission as appropriate for the general audiences as well. As the functioning Talner Rebbe (succeeding his saintly father, R' Meshulam Zusha zt"l), Boston's Talner *Bet Midrash* provided the appropriate venue to promulgate deep ideas to the masses delivered in regulated and measured doses. Traditionally, great Hassidic leaders utilized the Seudah Shlishit moments on Shabbat late afternoons to disseminate their teachings to their flock. R' Twersky, in his Talner Rebbe role, was no different. However, his brief talks on these occasions were markedly and qualitatively different from any other known Hassidic



Rebbe. Not to be forgotten, he was also the Harvard professor speaking! R' David Shapiro did us all a tremendous service by reconstructing these Seudah Shlishit weekly talks in Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart – *Divrei Torah of the Talner Rebbe*.

The way to acquire knowledge of something is to take time and contemplate it silently

The book's title says it all. The Torah taught by R' Twersky emanated from two symbiotic wellsprings of knowledge and experiences. The intellect and the spirit must necessarily go hand-in-hand. This fusion existed in his wife's family – the Soloveitchiks. In a 1954 letter, R' Twersky's father-in-law, the Rov, wrote that: "a touch of Hassidut is hidden in me"! In 1991, the Rov's younger brother, R' Ahron published, Logic of the Heart; Logic of the Mind – a book title strikingly similar to R' Shapiro's book title on the Talner Rebbe.

Unlike the classical "vertlich" delivered by Hassidic masters which were usually brief, relatively superficial, and occasionally witty, the Talner Rebbe, while brief due to time constraints at Seudah Shlishit, always capsulized very sophisticated and philosophical points relating to ethics and morality issues, Halakhic challenges, and spiritual values. Subjects touched upon by R' Twersky included the challenges of avoiding routinization in our religious

life, the need to develop sensitivity to God's role in our daily encounters, the centrality of sanctity (*Kedusha*) along with one's responsibility to generate it in society. He also stressed that commandments are to be performed with awareness, joy, and enthusiasm. Furthermore, the wide range of sources, utilized by R' Twersky, is absolutely mind-boggling. The entire corpus of rabbinic literature is drawn upon to augment his thoughts. R' Twersky is completely at home with all the Hassidic masters, along with the philosophical giants of all the ages. One can sense the Harvard professor hovering over the Talner Rebbe's "*Tisch*" at *Seudah Shlishit*.

I don't believe that today's America is capable any longer of duplicating such a person!

A particular Talner Rebbe favorite of mine is found in *Chayei Soroh*. In Bereishis 24:21, we find Abraham's servant wondering whether or not he had been successful in locating an appropriate match for Isaac. The Torah states: "The man was astonished by her [Rebecca]; he remained silent, to know whether God had granted him success or not." Eliezer, the servant, was stunned; he remained silent and contemplative. R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi (founder of Habad movement) noted that the cantillation note above the word "silent" ("maharish") causes the Torah reader to

pause momentarily before continuing to read the next word, "to know" ("lada'at"). The idea thereby conveyed is that the way to acquire knowledge of something is to take time and contemplate it silently. R' Twersky then applies this thought to the Ethics of the Fathers (Ch.3), "the boundaries protecting wisdom is silence".

We are, indeed, indebted to R' Shapiro who worked laboriously to re-create the talks in a way for the reader to "hear" R' Twersky's actual delivery. The book, however, remains incomplete (covering only the sections of Bereishis and Shemos), as we anxiously await the completion of the entire set of Torah.

I once questioned, HaRav Amital zt"l if Israel could have ever produced a fusion of outstanding Torah scholarship coupled with such academic depth as personified by Rabbi Prof. Twersky. His response was: "I don't believe that today's America is capable any longer of duplicating such a person!"

The Rov was once approached by an individual soliciting his opinion on the dangers of engaging in Torah study as an academic discipline. The Rov responded that flying in an airplane is also dangerous, and yet people do fly! Years later, this same individual met up again with the Rov and informed him that "the plane crashed"!

In the case of the Rabbi Yitzhak (the Talner Rebbe) / Professor Isadore (of Harvard University) Twersky zt"l, the plane never crashed, and continues to fly forever! ■