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Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Meir Soloveitchik ztz"l:

The Loyal Gaon of Beit Brisk

[Eulogy delivered in the Yeshiva]

Ha-Rav Ha-Gaon Meir Soloveitchik ztz"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Brisk in Yerushalayim, has ascended on high. Ha-Rav Meir ben Ha-Griz – the "Brisker Rav" ben Reb Chaim Mi-Brisk ben Beit Ha-Levi.

In Brisk, they learn quietly, without publicity and noise. Furthermore, their Rabbis fear publishing their Chiddushim and Piskei Halachah on account of

their perfectionism. Rav Meir was therefore not famous and was certainly not known by the media. But in Torah he brought incredible blessing.

Rav Meir was born in the year 5689 in the city of Brisk. He was the youngest son of the Brisker Rav. When he was 12 years old, he succeeded in escaping the Holocaust with his father and five brothers and sisters. His mother and other siblings perished.

In his youth, he was already extremely close to his father. After learning in Talmud Torah Eitz Chaim in Yerushalayim, he learned for long hours with his father. The Brisker Rav referred to him as "My Prodigy".

He then learned in his father's Yeshiva and learned the Brisker Method of learning Torah in depth and with great toil.

The Brisker Method already began with his great grandfather, the Beit Ha-Levi. His grandfather, Reb Chaim, improved upon it. Some say that at that time of the Enlightenment, Reb Chaim saved thousands and even tens of thousands from leaving the Yeshivot through his analytic method of learning Gemara.

This method is based on understanding the underpinnings of a Sugya, its

foundations and precise definitions, thus allowing one to understand the different opinions, not just in the Sugya being discussed, but in many different Gemaras. There are various ways to arrive at the root of a Sugya. For example: "Tzvei Dinim" (two laws) – whereby a law can be shown to consist of two or more parts, only one of which might apply in a particular case. Or, alternatively: "Cheftza Ve-Gavra" – wherein a particular law applies to a person or to the object which the person is using.

Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter, one of the Roshei Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, related that when he learned Issur Ve-Heter with Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, "Suddenly, the pots and pans, the eggs and onions, disappeared from the laws of meat and milk, the salt, blood and spit disappeared from the laws of salting. The laws of Kashrut were taken out of the kitchen and removed to an ideal halachic world... constructed out of the complexes of abstract concepts".

There were great Rabbis, however, who did not fully agree with this method.

For example Ha-Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg wrote in a letter that when he was in Berlin, he once asked Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, who was greater the Vilna Gaon or Reb Chaim Mi-Brisk? He answered that regarding

understanding, Reb Chaim is greater than the Vilna Gaon. Rav Weinberg disagrees. He says that the Gra searched for the Peshat, while Reb Chaim's logic and reasoning did not always mesh with the wording of the Gemara and Rambam. Reb Chaim was in and of himself a new Rambam and not a commentator of the Rambam. Rav Weinberg said the same to Ha-Rav Moshe, Rav Soloveitchik's father (see also Shut Seridei Aish 2:144).

Ha-Rav Weinberg's words, however, are not necessarily correct. As is known, in our Yeshiva, Ha-Rav Yosef Solovetichik, son of Ha-Rav Aharon of Chicago, son of Ha-Rav Moshe, taught for many years. He would deliver a lengthy daily Gemara Shiur which lasted three to four hours, in which he explained the Gemara, Rishonim and finally the words of Reb Chaim. It then became clear to the listener that Reb Chaim's words were not an addition here or even a change, but rather were found within the words of the Sugya itself. When Lamdanim in the Yeshiva raised difficulties, Rav Yosef would answer patiently and explain things properly. This is like what people say in the name of Reb Chaim: I do not interrupt the Gemara, I learn the Gemara.

This method of learning in fact conquered the Yeshiva world. And when Ha-

Rav Yosef Soloveitchik arrived in Israel as a candidate to be the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Maran Ha-Rav Kook directed Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah to attend all of his Shiurim in order to taste the Brisker Method.

Ha-Rav Herschel Schachter writes that when he was married, Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein attended the wedding and sent him three of his books as a gift (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim Volume 1, Yoreh Deah Volume 1 and Dibrot Moshe on Baba Metzia Volume 1). Reb Moshe wrote the inscription in the Dibrot Moshe – his commentary on the Gemara, and not in Shut Igrot Moshe – his Teshuvot. The books were brought to Rav Schachter by Ha-Rav Michal Shurkin, who learned in Reb Moshe's Metivta Tiferet Yerushalayim, and attended Rav Yosef Soloveitchik's Shiurim as well. Rav Shurkin explained to him that Reb Moshe was particular to inscribe the Dibrot, because he held that Shiurim in the Dibrot were of much greater importance than the more famous and popular Teshuvot in the Igrot. Reb Moshe exerted great effort and toil on the Shiurim and spent many hours preparing them, in contrast to the Teshuvot, which came easily to him (Divrei Ha-Rav p. 207). The Dibrot Moshe however are not generally learned in Yeshivot. Some explain that

there are two reasons for this: 1. The explanations are extremely long. 2. Reb Moshe did not learn according to the Brisker Method, which is the accepted Method in Yeshivot.

There is a saying "Before the Giving of the Torah and after the Giving of the Torah", i.e. Reb Chaim of Brisk is a sort of Giving of the Torah. This is obviously an exaggeration, but the method expounded by Reb Chaim is the one used in Yeshivot today. The same is true in many Zionist Yeshivot, since Ha-Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, who served as Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion, and who was the leading student of his father-in-law, Ha-Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, planted the Brisker Method here.

This was the method of Ha-Rav Meir ztz"l. After years of learning in Kollel, he began to serve as Rosh Yeshiva of Brisk in the neighborhood Zichron Moshe in Yerushalayim, where he taught Torah to hundreds of students with pure Yirat Shamayim.

The Mishnah in Kiddushin (41a) says that it is possible to perform certain Mitzvot through an agent. But the Gemara there adds that it is greater for one to perform a Mitzvah on his own. The Magen Avraham (251:2) brought in the

Mishnah Berurah (250:3) says that this applies to all Mitzvot. This was a fundamental principle of Ha-Rav Meir Soloveitchik. He would strive to perform every Mitzvah on his own without relying on others. Even when he was elderly, he would walk each year to a spring in Yerushalayim to take "Mayim Shelanu" to bake Matzot. And the same was true for every Mitzvah and for teaching Torah.

Ha-Rav Yisachar Shlomo Teichtel writes that one needs greatness to serve as a sort of bridge which connects there and yet leads to here. For example, Yaakov Avinu transferred everything he had from one side of the river to the other (See Eim Ha-Banim Semeichah 3, 48). Only unique individuals were able to serve as a bridge to reestablish the Yeshivot from Europe in Israel. And these Yeshivot are blossoming here to an even greater extent than they did there. As a continuation of the Brisker dynasty, Ha-Rav Meir succeeded in receiving the Torah from his father, Ha-Griz, and bringing it here.

May the soul of Ha-Rav Meir ztz"l be bound up with the bonds of the living with all of the Tzadikim and Geonim.



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