

Moreinu Horav Avrohom Yaakov HaKohen Pam zt"l

5673/1913 – 5761/2001

With Torah Vodaath from 1939-2001

Rav Avrohom Yaakov HaKohen Pam zt"l was born in Vidz, Lithuania, in 1913. His father, Rav Meir zt"l, was a talmid in the Chofetz Chaim's Kollel in Radin, where he learned b'chavrusa for an Elul *zman* with Rav Elchonon Wasserman zt"l, hy"d. His mother was a daughter of the Shedlitzer Rav zt"l. As a young bochur, Rav Pam learned in a Yeshiva in Slabodka, where he developed a close relationship with Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l.

In 1927, the family immigrated to America, where Rav Meir said shiurim in Mesivta Yeshiva Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin. His son, the young budding talmid chacham, was one of the first talmidim in the fledgling Mesivta Torah Vodaath, where he became close to his Rebbe, Rav Dovid Lebovitz zt"l. Although Reb Dovid left Yeshiva Torah Vodaath to establish his own Yeshiva, he advised his star talmid to remain where he was in Torah Vodaath, predicting a bright future for him.

His hasmada and love for learning did not go unnoticed, and in 1937, he was appointed to say a shiur in the Mesivta. At that time, he expressed that his request from the Ribono Shel Olam was to be able to teach Torah for sixty years. In those days, this was far from the norm in America, yet his greatest aspiration was to be able to spread Torah to his talmidim through his shiurim and shmuezin. Rav Pam actually exceeded his original goal by teaching Torah for sixty-two years.

For the last twenty-five years of his life, Rav Pam said the shiur in Yoreh Deah, and he conferred semicha on the talmidim who met the requirements. Despite this lofty position, he continued in his modest ways; he did not don the customary clothing of a Rosh Yeshiva, and continued sitting in his usual seat, which was located towards the back of the Bais Medrash. Yet even with the humble trappings, his leadership was felt by the entire Yeshiva community.

His shmuezin, where he imparted pure Torah hashkafa and lifetime guidance for his talmidim, became one of the mainstays of his legacy. In these lectures, he stressed the purity of middos, and the importance of a Ben Torah conducting himself in the loftiest manner. Indeed, his talmidim are recognizable by their special interaction with everyone they come in contact with. These lessons were collected and printed in 1993 in a sefer called *Atara L'Melech*.

In 1943, he married Sarah Balmuth, the daughter of Reb Chaim Leib, a former member of the Kollel in Raisha. Rebbetzin Pam a"h was devoted wholeheartedly to her husband's learning and teaching Torah, and took care of all the household duties so as to leave him free to pursue those goals. In his later years, Rebbetzin Pam carefully guarded his health so that he should be able to continue his Avodas HaKodesh.

In 1979, after the passing of Rav Gedalya Schorr zt"l, Rav Pam began to take a primary role in leading the Yeshiva. Within a short time, his influence spread far beyond the walls of the Bais Medrash, where his sincerity and modesty impacted all who came in contact with him. In 1982, at the urging of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l, he joined the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudas Yisroel of America. From that point on, Rav Pam began devoting much time and energy to klal endeavors. He was appointed the *Nasi* of Chinuch

Atzmai, was a prominent member of the Va'ad Roshei Yeshivos of Torah Umesorah. His advice and council were sought far and wide.

In 1990, at the Agudas Yisroel Convention, Rav Pam spoke movingly about the tens of thousands of children from the former Soviet Union living in Eretz Yisroel who were not being educated in the ways of the Torah. While declaring that the future course of the country will depend on the direction these youth take, Rav Pam raised a clarion call for the launching of Shuvu, a movement dedicated to establishing Yeshivos and Bais Yaakovs throughout Eretz Yisroel to educate these children. In just a short time, thousands of Russian youngsters were studying pure Torah under the auspices of Shuvu. Rav Pam strained himself to the point of mesiras nefesh to carry this organization, and was granted the zchus of seeing it blossom beyond all expectations. Upon his petirah, the organization was renamed Shuvu-Chazon Avrohom in his memory.

During the last few years of his life, despite weakness from illness, he still maintained his schedule of saying shiurim, shmuezen, and dispensing advice to the public, as well as private individuals. He was niftar on 28 Menachem Av, 5761 (2001). His legacy of talmidim, teachings and accomplishments for Klal Yisroel live on in the minds and hearts of our nation.