

Moreinu Horav Shlomo Heiman zt"l
5652/1892 – 5705/1945
With Torah Vodaath from 1935-1945

Rav Shlomo Heiman zt"l was born in Poritz, a town in the district of Minsk, Belarus, during the late 1870's, to his father, Rav Michel. Little is known about his youth, but at a young age, he was amongst the elite talmidim to join the Yeshiva of Rav Baruch Ber Lebowitz zt"l in Halusk. Rav Shlomo was chosen by Rav Baruch Ber to help review the shiur before it was delivered to the other talmidim. In a letter written to Rav Shlomo after he left to America, Rav Baruch Ber writes, "All the birth pangs that my mother suffered during my birth were worthwhile in order that I should be able to establish a talmid of your caliber."

During the First World War, Rav Shlomo married Rebbetzin Chaya Feiga Rudensky. Immediately after his marriage, he served as a Magid Shiur in Kremenchug, but was forced to flee due to the raging battles in the area. When he arrived in Smilowitz, he acquiesced to the request of the Chafetz Chaim that he teach a group of talmidim stationed there. In 1923, he was invited by Rav Elchonon Wasserman to say shiurim in Baranowitz. In the summer of 1927, Rav Chaim Ozer Grozensky, the Rav of Vilna, appointed him Rosh Yeshiva of the famed Rameilis Yeshiva in Vilna. During Rav Shlomo's tenure in Vilna, he developed a close relationship with the Rav.

In 1935, Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz asked Rav Chaim Ozer to send a great European Rosh Yeshiva to stand at the helm of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. Rav Chaim Ozer felt that Rav Shlomo was the best suited for the position, and Rav Shlomo traveled to New York to assume this position.

One of the more famous episodes of his devotion to his talmidim during that era occurred one snowy winter morning, when a heavy storm blanketed the city, making the streets nearly impassable. Despite the nearly empty classroom, Rav Shlomo delivered his shiur with fiery vigor, as he was accustomed to. When his talmid, Rav Moshe Samuels asked to him why he strained himself so much, being that there were only a few boys present, Rav Shlomo replied, "Do you think I am teaching just you? I am teaching your talmidim, and their talmidim, too!!" [Rav Samuels later taught in the Mesivta for many decades.]

Rav Reuvein Grozovsky, in his eulogy for Rav Shlomo, said that Rav Shlomo had a '*vagshal*' (hanging scale) in his mind, where he was able to weigh each and every Torah thought and judge its accuracy. This thought process, along with his dedication to his Talmidim, helped him develop, during the decade that he was in Torah Vodaath, many of the future Roshei Yeshiva who would eventually lead the post-World War II Torah world. Some of these include Rav Elya Svei, Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky, Rav Eliyahu Moshe Shisgal, Rav Yosef Levitan, Rav Elazar Kahane, Rav Don Ungarisher, Rav Simcha Shustel and others. Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz of Ponovez was a talmid from Rameilis.

Rav Shlomo taught his talmidim to weigh each piece of information for its logic and truth. He would delve into the words of the Rashba, expressing what can be learned from each word. He spent a great deal of time probing the words of Rav Akiva Eiger, saying that understanding his words is the proper path to understanding Torah.

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During his final illness, Rav Shlomo asked his students who were tending to his needs to set up two chairs for eminent guests who had come to visit; Rav Akiva Eiger zt"l and Rav Chaim Ozer Grozensky zt"l.

[This is in line with the Gemara in Bava Metziah (62b), where Rava declared, “When the time of my passing comes, Rav Osheya will greet me, since I explained the Mishnayos according to his words.” In the same manner, the two great luminaries with whom Rav Shlomo spent his time in learning and teaching came to escort him from this world.]

Although Rav Shlomo did not leave any biological children, his legacy lives on in the wealth of Torah that he taught his talmidim, and that they in turn taught and teach their talmidim.