

SPECIAL MEMORIAL ISSUE

Kehilath Jeshurun Bulletin



צדיקים במיתתם קרואים חיים
Even after death the righteous live on

SUMMER 1986



מרן הרב ר' משה זבולן
בן הרב ר' שלמה זלמן

RABBI MOSES ZEVULUN MARGOLIES

"THE RAMAZ"

1851-1936

THE FIFTIETH YAHRZEIT

7 ELUL

THURSDAY

SEPTEMBER 11, 1986

4:30 P.M.



RABBIS CALL ON PRESIDENT. Rabbi Meyer Margolis, of New York, standing with President Coolidge at a reception as rabbis from all over the world, in convention at Washington, called at the White House to pay their respects to Mr. Coolidge.

Herald Tribune Photo—Acme

50TH Yahrzeit of Rabbi Moses Zevulun Margolies
TO BE COMMEMORATED BY
CONGREGATION KEHILATH JESHURUN and RAMAZ SCHOOL

Thursday, September 11, the 7th of Elul
Memorial Program to be Held in Main Synagogue at 4:30 P.M.

Dear Members of the K.J./Ramaz Community:

On Thursday, September 11, at 4:30 in the afternoon, corresponding to the 7th day of Elul, we will gather together in the Main Synagogue in observance of the 50th yahrzeit of my great-grandfather, Rabbi Moses Zevulun Margolies, after whom the Ramaz School was named. He died on Tuesday, August 25, 1936. Approximately one year later, at the beginning of September 1937, the doors of the Ramaz School were opened for the first time. The school was founded by my father, Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, in memory of his grandfather by marriage. As you will see from the contents of this Bulletin, and as you will hear through the program on September 11, Ramaz, like KJ, is very much a mirror image of this extraordinary man.

The program on September 11 will begin with Mincha services, lead by a great great-grandson of the RaMaZ, Steven J. Schacter, class of 1968. It will continue with a presentation by Prof. Jeffrey Gurock, class of 1967 who will present a curriculum vita of the RaMaZ, an extraordinary picture of the wide-ranging influence of this great personality.

Four graduates of Ramaz — Danielle Gorlin Lassner, '55, Stephen R. Gross, '64, Mindy Lookstein Cinamon, '79 (another great great-grandchild) and Joshua Rochlin, '84 — and a senior student currently at the school — Jeffrey B. Kobrin — will give brief presentations explaining what it has meant to them to go to a school that was fashioned in the image of Rabbi Margolies.

The program will conclude with a shiur by the Rosh Kollel at Yeshiva University, Rabbi Herschel Schachter, on the subject *Torah and Toras Chesed—An Inquiry into the Purpose of Learning Torah*. We expect that the program will conclude before 6:00 o'clock.

In this special memorial issue of the Bulletin you will find material which will give you something of an idea about the impact which my great-grandfather had not alone on our community but on the wider Jewish world. A careful reading will explain why KJ and Ramaz are the kind of institutions they are and why my father, of blessed memory, was the kind of extraordinary rabbinic personality he was.

Probably the most precious part of this Bulletin is the presentation here for the first time of a chapter from my father's unfinished autobiography (entitled "God Owes Me Nothing") which describes Rabbi Margolies and the relationship that my father had with him. Read it; learn from it; laugh along with my father as he recalls the exceptional wit of this great Torah sage; and finally, weep along with me as you read some of the most poignant chapters in his life. I am grateful that the opportunity has come along which warrants the publication of this chapter at this time.

I wish I could share with you some of my own personal recollections about Rabbi Margolies. My father always told me that I was very close to him but I was only four years old when he passed away and I have no recollections of the relationship. All I can say is that as I read more and more about him I understand more and more what all of our obligations are as we work together in the American Jewish community.

Let me close with a recollection given to me just the other day by Mrs. Harry Freundlich who grew up in this community and who remembers Kol Nidre night at KJ when she was but four or five years old. Gazing at this patriarchal personality, robed in his white *kittle*, with a high white yarmulka on his head and with his flowing beard, she remembers pointing him out to her mother and saying: "Is that God there?"

What a beautiful memory about a man who practiced the highest priority of Judaism: *imitatio Dei*—trying to be as much like God as our human nature will allow. As Ramaz begins its 50th year celebration and as the congregation enters its 115th year, we can say with gratitude that what my great-grandfather left behind was a heritage to which we are faithful and to which we pledge our continued strength and resolve to learn Torah, to love all Jews and to practice acts of chesed.

I hope you will join us on the 11th.

Very cordially yours,
Haskel Lookstein

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 1936

RABBI MARGOLIES DIES OF PNEUMONIA

Dean of Orthodox Synagogue
Heads, 85, Zionist Leader
and Jewish Educator.

FOUNDER OF RELIEF GROUP

Rose From Sickbed in 1933 to
Address Meeting of Protest
Against Anti-Semitism.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

BELMAR, N. J., Aug. 25.—The Rev. Moses S. Margolies, dean of the orthodox rabbis in North America and head of the Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue of New York, died at the Carlton Hotel here shortly after 5 A. M. today. He became seriously ill of pneumonia a week ago. His age was 85.

His wife, a son, Hyman Margolies of New York, and a daughter, Mrs. Ida Newman of Newark, N. J., were at the bedside when he died.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow morning at the Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue, Eighty-fifth Street near Park Avenue, New York.

Spoke at Protest Meeting

Failing health after he reached the age of 80 did not diminish the active participation of Rabbi Moses S. Margolies in Jewish affairs. Anti-Semitism in Germany moved him so deeply that he rose from a sickbed on March 27, 1933, to address a protest mass meeting at Madison Square Garden.

Dean of the Orthodox Jewish rabbinate in this country, he brought the audience of 20,000 to its feet as he pronounced a prayer in Hebrew asking that the persecutions cease and that the hearts of the enemies of Israel be softened.

No religious or cultural activity here or abroad was foreign to the scope of Rabbi Margolies's interest. His chief objective was the establishment and expansion of institutions of Jewish learning throughout the world, and he was one of the first to recognize the necessity of combining religious and secular knowledge in these institutions.

Rabbi Margolies was born in Kroza, Russia, in April, 1851. His rabbinical training was obtained in the yeshivas of Kroza and Bialystok. At the age of 26 he became a rabbi in Sloboda, where he served until he was called to Boston in 1889 as chief rabbi of the Orthodox community there.

Came to New York in 1906

In 1906 he came to New York to fill the pulpit of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, 117 East Eighty-fifth Street, one of the largest and most influential Orthodox congregations in the country. He continued to serve as rabbi there until his death, although in recent years most of the actual duties of the post devolved on his grandson, Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, who was associate rabbi of the congregation.

For many years president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, Rabbi Margolies took a leading part in most Jewish movements. At his death he was honorary president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and of Yeshiva College, which he did much to build.

He was founder and honorary chairman of the Central Relief Committee, which was merged later into the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. He was chairman of the Rabbinical Board of New York, head of the board of education of the Uptown Talmud Torah and a director of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School and of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society.

A pioneer Zionist, he was active in the Mizrahi, the Orthodox Zionist Organization of America. He organized the supervisory system under which kosher meat was distributed in this city and, in cooperation with other Jewish leaders, he founded the Kehillah here.

Former Head of Yeshiva College

His concern with problems of Jewish education led him to seek the organization of the secular high school department of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, out of which grew Yeshiva College. He was president of the college and seminary for several years.

Many institutions in Palestine held his interest. More than 1,000 trees were planted in his honor there. A special tract, known as the Ramaz Forest, was established and friends, acting through the Jewish National Fund, contributed to the tree planting. The name was taken from the word "rabbi" in conjunction with Mr. Margolies's initials.



Associated Press Photo.

RABBI M. S. MARGOLIES

Among the institutions in Jerusalem which he served as chairman were the United Charities, the Kneseth Israel, the Diskin Orphan Asylum, the United Home for the Aged and the Rabbinical College Torah Chayim. He was also treasurer for many yeshivas in Poland and Lithuania.

Rabbi Margolies had four children by his first wife, who died in 1912. A daughter, Mrs. Etta Schlang, died in 1932, and a son, Rabbi Samuel Margolies of Cleveland, died in 1918. The surviving children are Mrs. Ida Newman of Newark and Hyman Margolies of this city. There are twelve grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 1936

400 RABBIS ATTEND MARGOLIES SERVICE

1,500 Mourners in Synagogue
as Thousands Jam Street
at His Funeral.

GRANDSON SPEAKS EULOGY

Dr. Revel of Yeshiva College
Praises Orthodox Dean's
Work for Education.

More than 1,500 mourners attended the funeral services yesterday afternoon for the Rev. Moses S. Margolies, dean of the orthodox rabbis of America, at the Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue of New York, 117 East Eighty-fifth Street. The rabbi, who had been the head of this congregation for thirty years, died Tuesday at Belmar, N. J., at the age of 85.

Long before the services the crowd began to gather in the synagogue, filling every seat and the aisles. Other thousands lined the streets. They were handled by sixteen patrolmen from the East Sixty-seventh Street station. There were 400 rabbis among the mourners, some of whom had come here from the Middle West and New England.

Shortly before 1 P. M. Rabbi Margolies's body, in a plain pine coffin, was carried to the synagogue from his home, 106 East Eighty-fifth Street, across the street, and placed before the altar. The pallbearers were rabbis and members of the board of trustees of the congregation. Robert R. Flingerth, cantor of the congregation, chanted the services.

Eulogies were delivered by the Rev. Joseph H. Lookstein, grandson of Rabbi Margolies and associate rabbi of the Kehilath Jeshurun Synagogue; Rabbi Joseph Kanowitz, president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, and Dr. Bernard Revel, dean of Yeshiva College. The latter, speaking of the late rabbi as a distinguished scholar, said:

"Rabbi Isaac and Elchanan Theological Seminary would never have been able to exist were it not for Rabbi Margolies's efforts."

GOVERNOR PRAISES RABBI

American Jewish Congress Pays
Tribute to His Work.

The American Jewish Congress, in a telegram signed by Nathan D. Perlman, acting president, sent condolences yesterday to the family of the Rev. Moses S. Margolies, saying that "the spirit of his deeds will live on in the Jewish congregation." Among other tributes were:

Governor HERBERT S. LEHMAN—I have just learned with very deep sorrow of the passing of my friend Rabbi Margolies. His useful and beautiful life will long serve as an inspiration to those who are fortunate enough to have known him. His deep learning, his unwavering faith and his nobility of spirit will always remain as an example to those of our faith and to others with whom he came into contact.

FELIX M. WARBURG—During the many years I had the privilege of working with him I learned to appreciate his splendid qualities as a peaceful, wise leader of his people. He was broadminded in his views and wise in his counsel. He will be sadly missed.

Rabbi Lookstein said that the two outstanding traits of his grandfather were his passion for learning and his tolerance.

"The former made him one of the most prolific Jewish students in the land, who no less than thirty-eight times began and completed the Talmud," he said. "The latter virtue made him one of the most liberal interpreters of Jewish law, seeking always to make the Torah the law of life for the Jew."

Rabbi Kanowitz, saying that Rabbi Margolies was the father and provider of the students and institutions in Europe and Palestine during the distressing years after the war, added:

"European and Palestine orthodox Jews have lost their father. They are now orphans."

After the orthodox services, the body, escorted by thirty cars and a motor cycle police escort, was taken to Mount Carmel Cemetery, Cypress Hills, L. I., for burial.

Among the mourners were Samuel Levy, Borough President of Manhattan; Judge Jonah J. Goldstein of the Court of General Sessions; Magistrates Samuel M. Katz and Nathan D. Perlman and many Jewish civic and business leaders.

TRIBUTES BY LEADING JEWS

Work and Personality of Rabbi
Margolies Are Praised.

Jewish leaders in the city joined yesterday in praising the work of Rabbi Moses S. Margolies. Among the tributes were:

Dr. BERNARD REVEL, President of the Faculty of Yeshiva College—Dr. Margolies was a recognized and revered leader of the American Orthodox rabbinate. He was a unique spiritual personality. Master of the entire field of Jewish lore and law, he dedicated his life to the dissemination of Jewish learning and idealism and was a great force for God and good, for selflessness and spirituality in the life of the Jewish community in this land.

Rabbi HERBERT S. GOLDSTEIN, Honorary President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America—Rabbi Margolies was above all a great authority on Jewish law, which enabled him to be a liberal interpreter of it. He was not a cloistered scholar, but a friend to all who sought his aid.

Borough President SAMUEL LEVY

—The sense of personal loss sustained through the passing of my revered rabbi and teacher is transcended by the loss to American Israel and world Jewry. Though his supreme contribution was to the cause of Jewish learning in this land and everywhere, he nevertheless gave of his spirit and leadership to every cause for the welfare of Israel. He was the uncrowned head of Orthodox Jewry.

Rabbi J. L. HOROWITZ, President of the Descendants of Rashi Association—He was the most noble man in American Jewish life and his kind cannot be duplicated.

SAMUEL D. LEIDESDORF, President of the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropic Societies of New York—New York has lost a great religious and communal leader. He was influential in the philanthropic life of the community. His counsel and guidance will be greatly missed.

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 1936

Deaths

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S., devoted husband of Ida Braz Margolies and dear father of Ida Newman, Hyman, the late Rabbi Solomon Margolies and the late Etta Schlang. Funeral services will be held in the Synagogue of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, 117 E. 85th St., today, 1 P. M.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. The members of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun stand with bowed heads and heavy hearts at the loss of their beloved and revered Rabbi, universally recognized as the Dean of the Orthodox Rabbinate of America. For thirty years he ministered in our midst, giving us bountifully of his deep learning, inspiring us by the nobility of his spirit and sustaining us by his profound understanding and unfailing sympathy. For thirty years we drank in thirst his words of guidance, seeing all the while the greater vision of Judaism and recognizing through his teaching that in our ancient faith, uncompromised and unadulterated, lies the salvation of Israel. A prince of the Torah was our guide, a scion of the sages and prophets was our leader. Our deepest tribute to him is the pledge that the ideals he implanted in us and the principles of Judaism that he represented, we shall cherish eternally. And the whole house of Israel shall bewail the irreparable loss.

Funeral services will be held today, 1 P. M., in our synagogue, 117 East 85th St. Members are requested to attend.

FREDERICK MARGARETEN,
President.

HERBERT J. ROEDER,
Acting President.
GEORGE JACOBS, Secretary.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. The Sisterhood of Kehilath Jeshurun joins with the entire Congregation and with all of Israel in mourning the death of our great Rabbi. His kindly and radiant personality made of our synagogue not only a house of worship, but also a home in which warmth and friendship reigned impressively. Funeral services will be held today, 1 P. M., in our synagogue, 117 E. 85th St. Members are requested to attend.

Mrs. JOSEPH H. LOOKSTEIN,
President.

Mrs. EDWARD BERNARD, Secretary.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. The Men's Club of Kehilath Jeshurun mourns the passing of the great and esteemed Rabbi of our congregation. His patriarchal presence and saintly personality enriched our lives and made our hearts more sensitive to the abiding truths of Israel's faith. His spirit will never depart from our memories. Funeral services will be held today, 1 P. M., in our synagogue, 117 East 85th St. Members are requested to attend.

Judge SAMUEL M. KATZ, President.

HARRY ETRA, Secretary.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. The Officers and Directors of the Home of the Daughters of Jacob, joined by our 500 old men and women, learn with great sorrow of the passing of Rabbi Morris S. Margolies, "the greatest of the generation," the Dean of all Rabbis.

He was one of the guiding lights in Judaism and a staunch defender of his faith. His heart was in the sanctuary and the joy of his life was to serve God in it. His memory will always live and be cherished in the annals of our institution.

To the bereaved family we express heartfelt sympathy and condolence. Members are requested to pay tribute by attending services at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, 117 East 85th St., today, at 1 P. M. Interment Mount Carmel Cemetery. Mrs. PETER J. SCHWEITZER, Pres.
Mr. ADOLPH LOURIE, Secretary.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. The Jewish Center, 131 West 86th St., sorrowfully announces the death of Rabbi Moses S. Margolies, Dean of the Orthodox Rabbis of America. His leadership and influence in the field of traditional Judaism, education and Jewish philanthropy during the last fifty years mark an epoch in human service the equal of which has not been approached by any individual of his time. The members of this institution join with the Jews the world over in mourning the passing of this venerable saint in Israel.

WILLIAM FEINBERG, President.

MARGOLIES—The Central Jewish Institute records with deep sorrow the death of Rabbi M. S. Margolies, one of the founders of the institute and an honorary Director for over twenty years.

A venerable tower of strength, he upheld the cause of progressive Jewish education. One of the great patriarchs of our age, he was an example to youth and a pillar of learning and piety among the righteous of Israel.

ISAAC COHEN, President.

ALFRED E. KORNFIELD, Secretary.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi Moses S. Board of Directors of the Uptown Talmud Torah records with profound sorrow the death of their beloved Director, Rabbi Moses S. Margolies. By his death the institution and the community at large have suffered a severe loss. To the bereaved members of his family may the Great Comforter send His divine consolation.

BENJAMIN BROWN, Acting President.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi M. S. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America mourns the loss of its Honorary President, dean of the American orthodox rabbinate and one of the builders of traditional Judaism in this country.

WILLIAM WEISS, President.

RABBI MAX J. WOHLGELERTER,
Executive Director.

MARGOLIES—"And there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses." Young Israel mourns with American Jewry the passing of Rabbi M. S. Margolies, the beloved dean of orthodox rabbis in America. A force of inspiration to Jewish Youth, his memory shall ever be revered. National Council of Young Israel.
JACOB O. ZABRONSKY, President.

MARGOLIES—Rabbi M. S. The Yeshiva and Yeshiva College mourn with all Israel the passing of the sage, scholar and beloved Rabbi M. S. Margolies, who was President of this institution for many years, at the time of his passing Honorary President.

HARRY ROGGEN, Vice President.

A RABBI OF THE OLD SCHOOL

by Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein

This chapter is from the unpublished autobiography of Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein entitled, God Owes Me Nothing. It appears in print here for the first time.

My grandfather Moses Zevulun Margolies was a rabbi of the old school. This is not meant as a pejorative description. By modern standards such a rabbi lacks the qualities needed for a new age and a new generation. But that is hardly the way to appraise his true worth. A rabbi of the old school may be deficient in secular education but he is extremely proficient in Jewish knowledge.

He may not know who Plato and Aristotle were but he is intimately acquainted with Rabbi Akiba and Maimonides. He may never have studied pastoral psychology but he is a superb pastor nonetheless. Instinct, common sense and eventually experience are his methods in dealing with people.

I do not want to glamorize or idealize the rabbi of the old school. I merely desire to describe them as I know them from personal contact with my own grandfather and with the illustrious colleagues who visited him from far and near. I recall the sainted first Chief Rabbi of Israel, Abraham Isaac Kook. I remember Rabbi Abraham Dov Ber Shapiro of Kavno; Reb Moshe

Mordechai Epstein of Slobodka; Reb Elchanan Wasserman of Baronowitch; Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer of Jerusalem and many others whom I was privileged to meet and to know. They were all rabbis of the old school.

How can they best be described? What was their common denominator? They were first and foremost great Talmudic giants. They were religious jurists who knew the law, expounded it and decided it. They were arbitrators, counsellors and one-man Federations of Jewish Philanthropies. Their doors were never closed; the light of their lamps burned late into the night. They were sensitive to a tear, moved by sorrow and responsive to a troubled heart. They could



Rabbi Margolies at the right head of the table at the Board of the Joint Distribution Committee in November, 1914.

administer a rebuke that would reach its target and extend a caress that could lift a wilted soul.

This, I would submit, is a candid snapshot—a snapshot, but not a full-length portrait—of a rabbi of the old school.

Such a rabbi was my grandfather, under whom I served for thirteen years. During those years of apprenticeship I learned from him how to be a rabbi. He taught me more than I could learn at the Yeshiva.

Our formal studies together included Talmud and Codes but informally I learned even more by merely observing him as he practiced the rabbinate. In that practice he was a consummate master.

There are four sections in the rabbinic codes, he used to say. They are known as the Four Parts of the Shulchan Aruch. But there is a fifth part which many overlook—common sense. Rabbis cannot afford to lack that. A rabbi simply must have *sechel*.

Actually Rabbi Margolies was my wife's grandfather but I adopted him as my own. He was the ornament of the family and became mine as well. I revered and loved him and as a demonstration of my feelings for him I established the Ramaz School as an everlasting memorial to him.

RaMaZ was an acronym of his full name, Rabbi Moses Zevulun, and it is by that acronym that he was universally known.

Rabbi Margolies was born in 1851 in the small Lithuanian city of Meretz, not far from the renowned cities of Kovna and Slobodka. He was privately educated by his uncle Reb David'l Kroszcer the Rabbi of Meretz. Subsequently he became an assistant to Rabbi Simcha Halevi Horowitz, the Rabbi of Kroszcz.

The *yichus* or pedigree of my grandfather was most distinguished. On his father's side he was the grandson of Rabbi Abraham Margolies, chief of the *Beth Din* of Telshe and of Rabbi Wolf Altschul chief of the *Beth Din* of Lutzan, who was the author of the book *Sefat Ha'Yam*. In the introduction to that book the lineage of the family is traced to Rashi the great commentator of the Bible and Talmud. On his mother's side he was the grandson of Reb Eliyahu Kroszcer who was the brother-in-law of the Gaon of Vilna.*

Rabbi Margolies was ordained by his uncle and by Rabbi Yom Tov Lippman Halpern the Rabbi

**Biographical information can be found in Who's Who in Judaism; Ha'tor, Volumes 35,37; Jubilee Vol. of Agudath Harabbonim of U.S. and Canada 1927; Ency. Religious Zionism, Vol. 3. Regrettably some data are in conflict and hard to verify.*

of Bialystok. After his ordination in the year 5636 he became the dayan of his native city and the following year he was called to the rabbinate of Sloboda where he served for twelve years.

In 1889 at the age of thirty-eight he was invited to assume the chief rabbinate of Boston. There he established a city-wide *Chevre Shas* over which he presided throughout his stay in that city.

Boston was not a happy ministry for him. True, there were some exceedingly learned men there with whom he could associate but it abounded in unsavory characters as well. The slaughter houses and the butcher shops which he had to supervise were in the hands of difficult people who caused him hardship and anguish. Public scandals were not uncommon and his gentle nature could not cope with them.

Jewish Bostonians still remember that when his oldest daughter Ida was married the food served at the wedding supper was poisoned and many of the guests became ill. This dreadful act was attributed to the butchers. The famous playwright S.N. Behrman, a nephew of Ida, reported that bizarre episode in his book *Worcester Account* in a chapter entitled "The Daughter of the Ramaz." It was even the theme of his play "The Cold Wind and the Warm" which had a short run on Broadway.



Rabbi Margolies (Front Left Center), carrying Torah from the old Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary building to its new home in Tannenbaum Hall at Yeshiva University.



The 1929 Graduating Class of Rabbis at Yeshiva University (RIETS). Seated in the Front Row are Rabbis Aranowitz, Leventhal, Revel, Shkop, Margolies and Selmanowitz.

After seventeen years in Boston Rabbi Margolies came to New York to minister to Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun which had just built a magnificent Synagogue on East 85th Street.

How did that happen? There is an interesting story connected with it. The great Rabbi Ya'akov David Willovsky of Slutzk known as the Ridbaz, was on his way to Safad, Palestine, and stopped for a short stay in America to sell his commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud. While in New York he worshipped at Kehilath Jeshurun whose rabbi at the time was Mordecai M. Kaplan.

The Slutzker Rav, as he was called, heard Dr. Kaplan preach and sensed that young Kaplan was critical of the ideas and practices of traditional Judaism. He warned the leaders of the congregation against "this young man" who would lead them religiously astray. He urged them to appoint a traditional Rav and proposed Rabbi Margolies of Boston whom he had met during his travels through the United States.

After the accustomed auditions and interviews Rabbi Margolies was "called" to what was then known, and is still referred to as, the 85th Street Synagogue. The salary he was to receive was a munificent six hundred dollars a year. Even for those days such a salary was laughable but the rebbetzin Margolies, a bright and determined lady insisted that her husband come to New York. "I will scrub floors and do my own wash but I want you in the 85th Street Synagogue."

He served as Senior Rabbi of the synagogue for thirty one years—from 1906 to his death in August 1936. They were blessed years for him. He was virtually adored by the congregants of that day most of whom were immigrant Jews from

Eastern Europe. A good many of them were learned and a substantial number were men of wealth.

The so-called English speaking rabbis who served with him were young ministers. I knew all three of them—Mordecai M. Kaplan who was later to found the Reconstructionist movement, Herbert S. Goldstein who became the president of the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America and Elias Solomon who was at the time president of the United Synagogue. They were accomplished pulpiteers and because of their age were more acceptable to the younger generation. Yet Rabbi Margolies maintained his superior position even against such talent.

His primary preoccupation was study. The *gemorah* was always on the dining room table and as a rule it was always open. He was an early riser. At five in the morning he was already at the *gemorah* and he could pore over it for hours at a stretch unless communal duties demanded his attention. He would make a *siyum* on the completion of the whole Talmud every year on the *Yahrzeit* of his mother. It meant that he covered fourteen pages of the Talmud every day.

I recall visiting him about a week before Passover one year, when he was ill. He complained to me that the many duties of the pre-Passover season kept him from his daily study routine. "So what does God do?" "He made me sick, so that I would stay home and catch up." What diligence! A man thanks God for illness to enjoy the fringe benefit of study.

He was gifted with a sharp and crisp wit. He employed it not to entertain anyone but to drive home a point and to help solve a problem. He

told me that he was once visited by Louis Marshall and Judge Otto A. Rosalsky. They wanted him to intercede with Adolph S. Ochs the publisher of *The New York Times*. It seems that a series of articles appeared in that newspaper unfavorable to the Jewish community of New York. It was felt that the prestige of Rabbi Margolies might bring some degree of retraction of those articles. The Rabbi reacted with characteristic wit. "Gentlemen," he said, "let me quote Isaiah. The Ox (Ochs) knows its purchaser."

I recall another incident. The Romance of a People conceived by the ingenious impresario Meyer Weisgal was scheduled for its final performance at the Polo Grounds in New York on a Saturday night in late August which happened to be the first Slichoth. The performance was to start at eight in the evening which at that season of the year would involve violating the Sabbath.

Weisgal came to see Rabbi Margolies in the company of Ephraim Kaplan, a well-known orthodox journalist connected with the *Jewish Morning Journal*, at that time a very important Yiddish daily. They wanted the Rabbi to grant absolution, as it were, for the "slight" Sabbath violation involved. By way of inducement Weisgal proposed that after the performance which would be past midnight the entire audience of 60,000 would recite Slichoth led by a chorus of cantors.

The Rabbi reacted immediately. "If you would ask me to absolve 60,000 Jews from saying Slichoth I could do that easily. But Sabbath is a different matter."

Weisgal continued to plead. "We consulted the great rabbis of New York. All of them advised us to speak to you. We now come to you as the court of last resort."

"Mr. Weisgal," the Rabbi responded with a twinkle in his eye, "the Rabbis misdirected you. I would have to refer you to Moses. He was the one who gave us the Sabbath."

There was no argument after that. A wise and witty observation scored an important point.

One of his rabbinic associates in the congregation was known as the "marrying and burying" rabbi. On a Sunday it was not uncommon for him to officiate at a wedding, a funeral and several tombstone unveilings, all in fairly rapid succession. He was once late for an unveiling which he was to share with Rabbi Margolies. He later apologized by explaining that on that Sunday he had four unveilings. With smiling eyes Rabbi Margolies mildly rebuked his colleague in Yiddish: "A mensch, you know, should never go on all four."

Rabbi Margolies became the acknowledged head of the New York rabbinate and the accepted Dean of the American rabbinate. Naturally there were many jealous of him and some challenged his eminence. One outstanding rabbi could not contain his envy and gave public expression to it. Once a letter arrived from abroad and the

envelope was marked Chief Rabbi of New York, U.S.A. The post office delivered the letter to him. Rabbi Margolies looked at it and smilingly said to one of his grandsons. "Can I help it if the Postmaster appointed me as Chief Rabbi?"

In appearance he looked the part. He was patriarchal looking. His long white beard framed a smooth and florid face. Every hair of his beard, white before its time, lay in place. He was extremely careful of his appearance. Frequently on Fridays when I called to accompany him to the synagogue I could see the *rebbe* on her knees polishing his shoes. He wore dark clothes, a Prince Albert coat, a white shirt with hard collar and a white bow tie.

In the synagogue with his *talis* and silver *atara* he looked angelic. It was his custom to read the Torah portion on Yom Kippur and on the first day of Shevuoth when the Ten Commandments are read. He also read the Megillah on Purim and of course the Neilah service on Yom Kippur. Whenever he performed these roles it was done to perfection.

I remember his very last appearance on Kol Nidre night when it was his custom to preach a sermon in Yiddish. His text was the last Mishna in the Tractate *Yoma*. "Thus did R. Elazar ben Azariah expound . . ." Rabbi Elazar's exposition follows. Rabbi Akiba continues in the same Mishna: "Blessed are you, O Israel." Falteringly he said, "R. Elazar was a young man, he was able to expound; R. Akiba was already old, he could only pronounce a blessing. I am no longer able to engage in a lengthy exposition. That I leave to my young grandson. I can only give you my blessing on this holy night."

I followed him in the pulpit. My eyes were wet. All I did was translate his words into English. Many of the congregants were in tears. He never entered the pulpit again. The following August he died.

Rabbi Margolies was an acknowledged authority on Jewish religious law. Rabbis from all over the country would turn to him for opinions and decisions. In his decisions he was inclined to be lenient, always favoring a liberal interpretation of the law.

When he was once complimented by rabbinic colleagues that he was fortunate in that whatever he says people follow, he responded, "that is not correct; what people will follow, I say."

He was the authority who permitted using an apartment house elevator on the Sabbath when run by a non-Jewish operator. I as a younger rabbi never took advantage of this permission until I saw him one Sabbath entering the elevator himself. I followed him into it unhesitatingly, realizing that to do otherwise would be an act of super-piety and perhaps religious arrogance.

In our day all kinds of legal fictions are employed to make the use of the apartment house elevator permissible. Halachik authorities do not

consider these ploys necessary. Some of the foremost orthodox rabbis use the elevators without hesitation as long as a non-Jew operates them. We have Rabbi Margolies to thank for this convenience.

He kosherized milk and other dairy products for Passover use under proper supervision. Before Passover I would accompany him on long trips far into the Catskills to inspect milking barns and depots and even farm houses to make sure that his instructions and regulations were observed. The theory for his action was bravely enunciated: "The more kosher products that can be provided, the more will kashruth be observed."

The philosophy has changed in our day. This is a day when the "prohibitive" rather than the "permissive" attitude prevails. Strict interpretation and strict decision of the law is the current policy. I once heard Rabbi Judah Leib Maimon of Israel inveigh against this policy. "What is not permitted," he said, "my bobe also knew. Rabbis should tell you what is permitted."

I used to make out his income tax return and as I listed his charitable deductions, I said to him: "Grandfather, I envy you many things, your Torah knowledge, your prestige, your great achievements, but above all, I envy your generosity. He turned serious for a moment and said: *'al pi din* (according to the law) such envy is not a violation of 'Thou shalt not covet.' Continue to envy that practice and one day God will bless you to be even more generous than I am."

I often wondered where he found time for the enormous quantity of communal work that he did because it seemed that he was perpetually studying. Yet his life was so organized and his time so perfectly apportioned that he was able to give himself to causes and institutions of every variety.

He was a Zionist all his life and devoted time and effort to all that pertained to Palestine. He was the American treasurer of every important Yeshiva in Europe and Palestine. His correspondence was extensive. I found exchanges of letters with Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, with Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky of Vilna, with the Chofetz Chaim of Radin and with other rabbinic "greats" of his day. His letters were written by hand and in excellent Hebrew. It was not until he reached the seventies that he engaged a secretary to help him.

When the Central Relief Committee came into being after World War I, he was one of its prime founders and leaders. When some years later that organization became part of the Joint Distribution Committee, he transferred his time and energies to the new organization. He sat at its councils with the giants of the American Jewish Community — Jacob Schiff, Felix Warburg, Cyrus Adler, Rabbi Meyer Berlin, Professor Israel Friedlander and the like. In the offices of the J.D.C., gracing one of the walls, is a large and impressive painting showing the foremost American Jewish leaders round a conference

table. Among them is Rabbi Margolies. (The picture is found in this bulletin on page 7.)

He worked with rabbis and laymen irrespective of their religious affiliation. He officiated at wedding ceremonies with Dr. Samuel Schulman of Temple Beth El and Dr. Nathan Krass of Emanuel. I attended with him the funeral service of Louis Marshall held at Temple Emanuel and he was the cynosure of all eyes, as he the Dean of Orthodox rabbis sat in his high *yarmulke* adorning his white head. The spirit of separatism now current would hardly have had him as an adherent.

He once told me that he sat on the platform at a Zionist meeting as Stephen Wise was delivering an address. Dr. Wise turned to him and then to the audience and said: "Look what Zionism can do. It can bring to the same platform a *goy* like me and a sage like Rabbi Margolies."

I recall his last public appearance. It was at Madison Square Garden, at the first rally convened by the American Jewish Congress to protest against the Hitler Nuremberg laws. He was feeble at the time. Yet he could not stay away. He had to add his voice to the collective protest of American Jewry.

His hands trembled as he read his message but his voice never wavered as he stood facing the huge audience. When he finished, twenty thousand people rose to their feet in reverence and appreciation for a beloved religious teacher of Judaism.

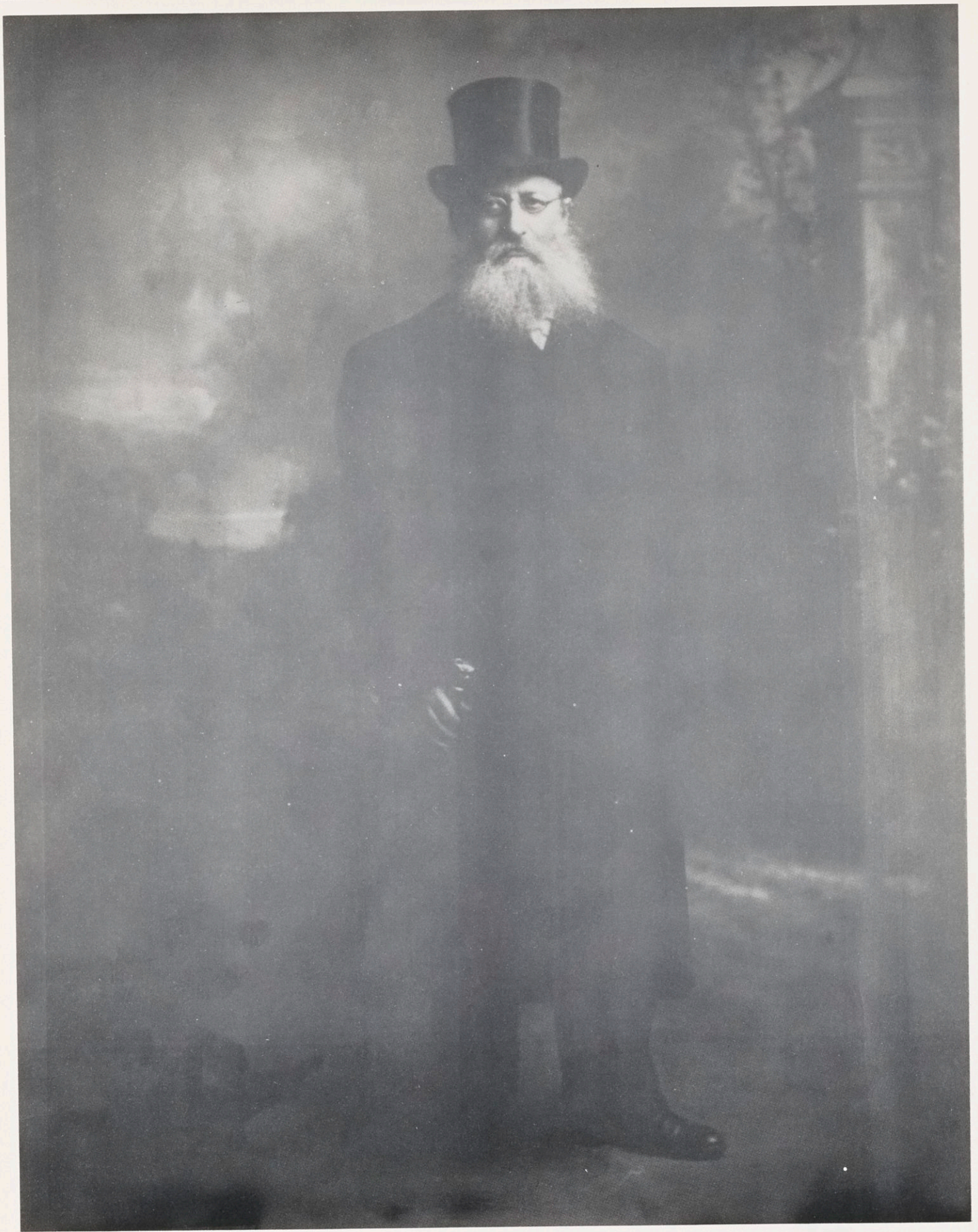
I drove home with him that night. He sat in the taxi repeating to himself the words he had spoken at Madison Square Garden. Tears were rolling from his eyes.

His last days on earth are difficult to forget. They are reminiscent of the tales about the *zadikim* of old in which fact and legend are sentimentally intertwined to form cherished folklore.

My grandfather used to spend his summers in Belmar, New Jersey at the Carlton Hotel. Day after day he sat in his appointed chair in a corner of the porch, deep in study. On the Thursday prior to the week of his passing he was at the gemarah as usual. When he finished his lesson, he closed the gemarah and kissed it. It was a kiss of farewell. He never returned to it.

On Saturday he was wheeled into the hotel synagogue. He was accustomed to receive the Shlishi aliyah at the Torah. The owner of the hotel, Morris Goldstein, noticed that the Rabbi looked unusually weak this morning. Solicitously he inquired, "Rabbi, would you want your regular aliyah this morning?" The Rabbi answered softly. "Today give me *Acharon*." It is the last section of the weekly portion. The Monday following he passed away.

This was my grandfather, a Rabbi of the old school — my model of what a rabbi should be. His signature appears on my *Smicha*. But it is also inscribed on my heart.



"A YOUNG RABBI OF THE OLD SCHOOL"

KEHILATH JESHURUN BULLETIN
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