



## JEWISH GREATNESS

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Chayei-Sarah 5781

The Jewish world suffered losses of immense proportion this past week.

HaGaon HaRav Dovid Feinstein, zt'l, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim, was one of the Ziknei Gedolei Hador, the generation's leading Poseik in America. Following in the leadership position his father, HaGaon HaRav Moshe Feinstein zt'l, occupied for many years, HaRav Dovid was the address for the thorniest and most complex Halachic Shailos. He shouldered the responsibilities of Klal Yisroel, often putting the needs of the Tzibbur before his own. His passing leaves an enormous void, not merely for his Yeshiva, but for all Jews who follow the dictates of Halacha throughout life's most difficult and challenging situations.

The passing of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt'l, former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth, and perhaps our generation's most eloquent ambassador of Torah Judaism to the outside world, has been a painful blow to the tens of thousands of Jews around the world who are continually uplifted by his written and spoken words. His inspiring but straightforward formulation of Torah Hashkafa, presented with elegance and grace for seekers at all levels to understand and appreciate, was a beacon of truth to the non-Jewish world and a remarkable Kiddush Hashem.

In last week's Parsha, (Bereishis 18:1-8) in the famous story of Avraham Avinu and the three Malachim, Avraham demonstrates how the Middah of chessed, concern and lovingkindness for one's fellow, is the essence of a G-d fearing person. There were multiple, valid reasons why Avraham should not have been in a situation of helping nomadic strangers at that time and in those circumstances. Not only did he help, his zerizus (alacrity) showed how important it was to him. Avraham was brimming with enthusiasm to do whatever he could, in the best way possible for others whose only claim to fame was that they were guests. This was his expression of life's highest value – reaching out with concern and compassion for others.

Avraham was accorded great respect due to his fearlessness, his conviction and the miracles he merited to have performed on his behalf. He had thousands of admirers because he showed the real splendor of what a human being can become – to be greatly elevated by emulating Hashem's ways in his dealings with his fellow man. His service and devotion to Hashem and His mitzvos were indispensable, but what shone forth was his love and concern for all mankind.

HaRav Feinstein was known for his Gaonus (brilliance), knowledge of Halacha and for being the address for the most difficult of questions and dilemmas. He was beloved because he put others first, never wanted the limelight and truly concerned himself with the wellbeing of others. He made himself available every single day to answer every individual's Shailos. He responded to the knottiest of Shailos, because he wanted to help people. He was quiet by nature but he stepped forward because he was needed and he assumed the leadership of numerous national and community organizations and causes, because he truly cared about others. He went out of his way to help individuals, regardless of their stature and standing, because that is what a Jew does. He was renowned for being a world class Talmid Chacham. He was beloved because his Chesed and goodness was fashioned in the model of Avraham Avinu.

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seeking truth,  
constantly striving to do for others, and for that so many mourn.

Rabbi Sacks was a formidable spokesman for British Jewry and led an organization of 60 member shuls with skill, intelligence and clarity of vision. He later reached out to and became renowned for connecting to a worldwide audience that came to know him for his wit, wisdom and eloquence. He was ultimately greatly admired not so much because of his talents and accomplishments, but rather because of what he gave to others. He felt Hashem wanted us to make a difference by standing up for our principles and creating enthusiasm and appreciation for Torah and by helping others. He would spend much time with young people answering their questions with patience, devotion and love. He articulated the centrality of Chesed and

The words above are not intended to be a Hespel (eulogy) for they don't begin to scratch the surface. My intention is to draw parents' attention to the fact that it is precisely great people, those who have many reasons to be filled with themselves for their involvement in weighty matters of the world involving masses of people, who nevertheless distinguish their greatness in the help they extend to the individual, great or small. The true follower of Avraham Avinu understands that we are on this earth to emulate Hashem by helping others. On the one hand, Hashem guides great nations in affairs of state, but he also helps every single blade of grass to grow. Worrying about the smallest individual is our mission as well.

As we struggle to care for our families, ensure our children's health and wellbeing, provide shelter and schooling and try to ensure their happiness, we owe it to them to engrain life's most important lesson upon their hearts. Our leaders have shown us time and time again, our lives should be focused on helping others.

Whether our children accomplish a lot or a little scholastically, professionally or economically, if they have learned from their parents that life is about caring, giving and reaching out to others, they will live a fulfilling life. If they can be inspired to greatness in Chesed and caring through emulating those we have most recently lost, that will be the best way their followers and admirers can honor their memories.

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Best wishes for a Shabbos of comfort and caring,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann