

FOREWORD

There was only one person capable of appropriately eulogizing Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and that was Rabbi Soloveitchik himself. In a number of *hespedim* he delivered over the course of some three decades, this master *maspid* modeled for his listeners and readers what a genuine eulogy needs to be.¹ On one occasion he explicitly and dramatically delineated the elements that a eulogy must contain: both emotional and intellectual, “clear understanding” and “emotional impression,” “honest true recognition” and “heart-warming feelings.”² Only Rabbi Soloveitchik would have been able to present in clear and concise language the central elements of his life and personality. But “the Rav” is no longer and we are left to memorialize him by ourselves as best as we can.

This towering figure of the twentieth century, this giant of emotion and intellect, left an indelible impression upon his generation: upon the tens of thousands of students who passed through his Talmud classroom at Yeshiva University; the thousands of rabbis he taught and counseled and personally nurtured for decades; the thousands of graduates of the Maimonides School in Brookline, MA that he founded; the tens of thousands of Jews from all walks of life who thronged to his public lectures and *shiurim* in New York and Boston for over fifty years; the hundreds of leaders of the various communal organizations he graced with his

¹ See Marvin Fox, “The Rav as *Maspid*,” *Tradition* 30:4 (1996):164-81. In this article, the late Dr. Fox analyzed the Rav’s *hespedim* for his uncle, R. Yizhak Zev Soloveitchik, the “Brisker Rav,” R. Hayyim Heller, R. Zev Gold, R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzenski, and his *mebutanim*, the Rabbi and Rebbitzin of Talne.

² See the beginning of Rav’s *hesped* for R. Hayyim Heller delivered in 1960. It was first printed with the title “R. Hayyim Heller ז”ל – Shmuel ha-Katan shel Doreinu,” in *Ha-Doar* 40:23 (April 21, 1961): 400-05. It was reprinted as “*Peleitat Sofreihem*,” in Pinchas Peli, ed., *BeSod haYabid ve-haYahad* (Jerusalem, 1976), 255-94 and in *Divrei Hagut veHa’arakhah* (Jerusalem, 1982), 137-62. The phrases in quotes here come from an English translation by Shalom Carmy published in Joseph Epstein, ed., *Shiurei HaRav* (NY, 1974), 7-8; reprinted (Hoboken, 1994), 47.

leadership and advice; and the countless individuals who read and were inspired by his writings and teachings.

The *hespedim* collected in this volume, edited with great care and devotion by Michael Bierman, are not designed to present an objective scholarly academic portrait of the Rav, geared to the closed circle of the scholarly elite. One will not get an objective analysis of the full depth of his scholarly contributions to the worlds of talmudic learning and modern philosophy in all their profundity, but that is not the goal of this volume. Rather, it seeks to portray the Rav to the average thoughtful layperson from the very human and personal perspectives of members of his family as well as devoted disciples. In addition to being a man of deep learning and powerful intellect, Rabbi Soloveitchik is presented here as a man of deep *chesed*, profound personal piety and impeccable integrity. These *hespedim* chronicle the impact not only of a brilliant philosopher and master pedagogue, but of a caring, thoughtful and awe-inspiring teacher and role model. We at the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute share Mr. Bierman's contention that it is very important for the world to be exposed to this human and personal side of the Rav as well.

Mr. Bierman has undertaken this task with great sensitivity and insight. He has sifted through many eulogies delivered for the Rav in the days and months after his passing and has judiciously selected those which best represent the fullness of the Rav's personality. He pursued his goal, for him a labor of love, with dogged determination, sparing no effort to present his subject in the most meaningful and honest way. As a reflection of the seriousness of this endeavor for Mr. Bierman, from the very beginning he has been in constant touch with learned students of Rabbi Soloveitchik's thought as well as with me, to ensure that he was proceeding in the most appropriate and efficacious manner. In addition, his own introduction to the volume helps the reader better appreciate the scope of Rabbi Soloveitchik's life and accomplishments.

The Rabbi Soloveitchik Institute is pleased to join with Urim Publications in making this book available to all the Rav's students and admirers and to the broader public on the occasion of his tenth *yahrtzeit*. I have no doubt that this volume will be a great contribution to contemporary Jewish life

and that the example of the Rav זצ"ל, our beloved and revered *rebbe* and mentor, will serve to challenge and inspire many of us to make our own contributions to Judaism and Jewish life today.

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Dean

The Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute

מעין זכרונות

MEMORIES OF A GIANT

EULOGIES IN MEMORY OF
RABBI DR. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK ז"ל

edited by Michael A. Bierman



The Rabbi
Joseph B. Soloveitchik
Institute

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Jerusalem • New York