

Rabbi Emanuel Gettinger, ז"ל

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Rabbi Emanuel Gettinger, ז"ל, long-time Rav of the Young Israel of the West Side and president of the historic Ezras Torah *tzedakah* organization, was *niftar* on 15 Adar, Shushan Purim, in Chicago, where he resided since suffering a severe stroke.

Rabbi Gettinger was renowned for his phenomenal breadth and depth in Torah as well as in science, mathematics, and many other fields of secular knowledge. Rabbi Gettinger's scholarship and *Rabbanus* were marked by their independence and uncompromising search and defense of truth. He left an indelible impression on generations of students and *mis-pallelim*.

Born in 1925 to Ahron and Sarah Gettinger, as a young man he attended Yeshivas Rabbeinu Chaim Berlin and was one of the very few boys in Brownsville at the time to receive a formal Torah education. His father, a Stuchiner Chassid, was a member of the famous Reyim Ha'ahuvim shul in Brownsville, where the family lived. Rabbi Gettinger would often speak of the colorful characters that he recalled from the *shtiebel* of his youth.

In Chaim Berlin, where Rabbi Gettinger studied for many years, he quickly gained a reputation as one of the yeshiva's most brilliant and dedicated students. He enjoyed an especially close bond with his *rebbe*, Hagaon Harav Yitzchok Hutner, ז"ל.

It was Harav Hutner who dissuaded his young *talmid* from using his analytical powers to become a physicist and to focus on delving into the world of *Shas* and *poskim*.

In 1951 Rabbi Gettinger married Rochel Riff, daughter of Rabbi Naphtali Riff, a great-grandson of the Netziv, who served as Rav in Camden, New Jersey, and led the Ezras Torah organization. Much of the *niftar's* "old-world" approach to the Rabbinate was gleaned from his revered father-in-law.

Following Rabbi Riff's passing in 1976, his trusted son-in-law became tremendously involved in the legendary organization, and was eventually appointed as its president. So great was Rabbi

Gettinger's dedication to the organization's mission of supporting the poor of Eretz Yisrael that he once borrowed \$300,000 from the bank to cover a lack of funds.

He possessed tremendous love for Eretz Yisrael and had a special affection and admiration for those who merit to live there.

Rabbi Gettinger followed a unique path in his approach to learning. In his absolute dedication to truth, he attempted to plumb the depths of *Tanach* and *Shas* in a search for the fullest understanding of *pshat*, the simple meaning of texts, uncomplicated by more *pilpulistic* readings. It could be said that his originality was born of a loyalty to simplicity.

In his yearly *Shabbos Shuvah* and *Shabbos Hagadol* addresses, he dazzled his listeners, including many *talmidei chachamim* who especially relished the events.

Some of Rabbi Gettinger's accomplishments in scholarship are preserved in his magnum opus, *Menach Yoma*. Not completed until late in his life, it is the culmination of decades of toil that the *niftar* invested in dealing with the various opinions surrounding *bein hashmashos*, the period of twilight. It is a monument not only to Rabbi Gettinger's novel thinking, but also to his thorough understanding of astronomy and other relevant areas of natural science.

In addition to his written legacy, Rabbi Gettinger leaves behind a rich living legacy in the dozens of lives that he influenced, particularly among the cadre of students, mostly from nearby Columbia University, that flocked to him in the 1960's and '70's. These young intellectuals, many of whom went on to become top-level academics, doctors, and professionals of all sorts, were drawn by Rabbi Gettinger's full understanding of the modern world anchored in his uncompromising dedication to Torah law and values.

For many, their encounter with Rabbi Gettinger was life-changing. In the words of one of the group's members, "He took young professionals who kept Torah and *mitzvos* as part of their lives and made Torah the focus of their lives."

Having received his halachic mentoring from Harav Eliyahu Henkin, ז"ל, Rabbi



Gettinger was a master of *psak halachah* and was a popular address for a wide range of queries. He set himself apart, not only by his encyclopedic knowledge and

clarity, but for his ability to work with the questioner in finding a way to practically adapt his response into their lives, especially when he had a stringent approach.

The *niftar's* vast scientific knowledge also gave him unique insight into many halachic issues, and he was known as an expert on the international dateline.

Whether in the role of *posek*, teacher or advisor, Rabbi Gettinger was beloved for his ability to really listen to people and understand the issues they were presenting.

Since its founding in 1953 until his recent retirement, Rabbi Gettinger served as the Rav of the Young Israel of the West Side. Alongside his warm and caring personality

and famous sense of humor, he set an uncompromising standard for respect of *halachah*, the *beis haknesses*, and the position of the *Rabbanus* itself. In his unwavering loyalty to *mesorah*, he was unbending on what he perceived as innovations that were outside the purview of Torah.

He is survived by, *ybl"e*, his wife, Rebbetzin Rochel Gettinger; his three children, Harav Refoel Moshe Gettinger, *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshiva Medrash Chaim in Lakewood, NJ; Harav Yisrael Gettinger, Rav of Cong. Bnei Torah of Indianapolis; and Mrs. Sarah Ungar of Chicago; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Yehi zichro baruch.

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