

--over and over again about the stories-- I don't know which stories, but the new stories, the old stories. I tried to capture some of these stories in the two volumes that I put together on the Jewish tradition. But he was a great raconteur, a great storyteller.

How would my father respond to a situation whenever I have to face a business decision or an ethical decision? And since leaving the world of academia into the world of real estate, I have confronted with many, many difficult ethical decisions. And I've not always made the right decision, I think.

But my father had a certain-- I'm not sure my father made the right decision always, either, businesswise. But he was a very honest, and direct, and ethical person. And he had this way of making everybody feel comfortable.

Any time that you came to his house, or at a party, or wherever, he was always in a wonderful mood. He never let the memories of the past bog him down. And sometimes, they got us through. I don't know.

After interviewing him and after seeing this film, you will probably wonder how he was able to do it himself. He was more alive than anybody I ever knew who had not gone through the Shoah. And those are the memories that I remember most, is his jokes and his life force that passes on to us, and to Mrs. Adela, and to my brother Shloime, and to my mother's mother, and to-- and then to Yehuda, who has been such a wonderful companion to my mother and to his family.

Mr. Lautner.

Yeah, and to Yehuda, et cetera. So I will introduce this-- this is not supposed to be a sad occasion because my father would not want it to be a maudlin, sad occasion. So maybe, I'll take a--

A break.

--a break. Let me take a break for a few minutes.

Kept in your heart for a long time. Come up and say it, really. It's about time someone heard. I'd like it first from my mother to say a few words.

[NON-ENGLISH], everybody. Dear friends, [NON-ENGLISH], I like to-- my children came to give honors to their father, who-- 10 years-- he died 10 years ago, and they came-- this occasion. And the Bible says, [HEBREW]. Honor your father and mother.

Why do you say first the father and then the mother? Because the children are close to the mother always. And the father is always not home. So that's why they mention first the father, then the mother. Now, I hope my children will keep up their Yahrzeit for their father and mother [INAUDIBLE] or before, whatever.

What else should I tell you? Now, I can tell you one thing-- Congregation Agudas Beth Jehudah is a special, special here in Milwaukee. It's like one family. We have a special dream, the rebbetzin Leah Twerski. And we have a princess and a prince, have the Michel Twerski and Feige Twerski.

And all the soldiers, they're working together like one family. And we hope to stay. And the soldiers, they are real soldiers. Whatever Rabbi Michel says, and Feige, and the rebbetzin, they are doing very well. I want to tell you another story, a legend.

There was a king. He had a lot of children. On the old age, when he got sick, old and sick, he call his children and said, children, go out and bring some branches. Everyone should bring a branch from a tree. So the bring the branches and put them together. And he says, break it. He said to oldest son, break it. He tried to break, couldn't he do this.

So he take apart-- they took apart the branches. And he gave individual, and easier to break. You see. When we Jews,

we stay together-- congregations or families, then nobody can break us. And we hope to-- we should always stay together and come for simchas. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

OK. Now just my brother, Shlomo, and then Bella, and that's it. No, that's enough.

I think it's appropriate to sing because my father would always sing. This is-- see, if you knew my father, you wouldn't believe he went through any of this. Because his whole life, he was b'simcha. Everything he did was b'simcha. And he used to say-- there used to be some Jews who came to America, and they used to say, [YIDDISH]-- it's hard to be a Jew.

Well, the children of those Jews who kvetched, you don't see those children anymore. Those children are not in the shuls. They're not involved in Jewish affairs because if it's a problem for the parents, and the parents used to kvetch about being Jewish, the children left.

My father would say, [YIDDISH], that it's always good to be a Jew. And you should be-- he always used to sing. Everything he did was that he was very happy that he was able to be alive, he was able to have children, and to have naches. I should rather.

[SINGING IN HEBREW]

I'll shorten it further. A little bit-- we came here-- my older brother, Jack, and my sister, and myself-- to do-- to come for both the koved of my father-- zichrono livracha-- for his 10th Yahrzeit, and also to the honor of my mother and to her wonderful husband, Reb Yehuda, Zayde Yehuda to my children, that these are-- that I think that are-- what our father left us was a very important message about what do you do with your life and the type of life that a person builds.

We were brought up greener. We were [NON-ENGLISH]. We came here-- some of our cousins are here tonight. And my father couldn't speak English. And he was, perhaps to some of them, uncivilized. And he didn't have good-- and he came to America, and he brought something very unique to the whole family. And all our cousins-- because I didn't have zaydes and-- but I had cousins, a lot of cousins.

And we used to get together. And my father would always be the center. My father would tell stories. And he would tell [NON-ENGLISH]. In everything, he would be-- he would always look to be able to make people happy.

My father had a chance, in 1936, to leave. He didn't have to stay. My father saw the writing on the wall. His brothers left, Uncle Maurice left in 1921. Uncle Boris left in 1936.

So why did my father stay? The reason my father stayed-- and he explained to me-- we sat in the sukkah once, Hoshanah Rabbah, in 1976. And I don't know if my sister knows this story, but she wasn't married yet. And he says, [YIDDISH]. He says, bocherim yeshiva, you have to sign a shidduch for your sister. All right?

And he says, I'll tell you, what did I do from 1930 till 1940? You know why I stayed? That just-- I took-- I stayed to take care of my parents and also to make shidduchim for my sisters. And he went around, he raised money, he made [? nadens, ?] he found-- he went to this city and that city in order to find a bocher in order to be able to marry off his sisters. That's what he said. He stayed for chesed.

During the war years, his gevurah was an expression of-- also of his kindness. After the war, my brother was born in RÃ³wne in 1944. In RÃ³wne-- you couldn't live in the city of RÃ³wne unless you had a authorization. And there were people, refugees, that did not have authorization. My father, I think, my mother, how many people stayed in their house?

It was 10 in one room.

10 in one room. There was a Sefer that my father came after the war with two Sefer Torahs on back. He left RÃ³wne. Because the Sefer as a gratitude for letting him live in his house-- and he had 10 people living in his house. How big

was the house?

It was--

Two rooms or three rooms?

Was one room only?

The whole room-- the whole house was one room in R³wne. And that means my father had anything, he shared it with 10 people. And when he came to Milwaukee, if anybody knew my house, it was a very interesting place. We had Michel Achim stayed in my house. And we had bums.

We had different-- matters where you stayed. If you were a rabbi, you stayed on the first floor. If you were a bum, apparently, you stayed in the Basement We had different-- but it was-- but my father would get up early in the morning to do a favor for somebody. He would run in fire and water to do a chesed for somebody.

And everything-- we didn't miss anything. We didn't have too much. And we didn't-- but we didn't-- I said-- did I have a bicycle? I don't think I had a bicycle. But I didn't even know that I missed a bicycle, just didn't know that I missed it. All right?

And the-- whatever we had, there was a tremendous amount of love. And that type of-- how to be able to give and how to give our lives, I think, has been passed down to us and children. And we hope to be able to pass it on to our children also.

Oh, my god.

[APPLAUSE]

There are two-- first, I want to thank everyone for coming this evening and making it so special to commemorate the Yahrzeit of my father. Those of you who knew him or those of you who now get a taste of what he was like, this is very specially-- this is a very special evening.

There are two middos that we learned from the personalities in the Torah. One is chesed, and one is gevurah. Chesed is loving kindness that we learn especially from Abraham Avinu. And the other is gevurah, which is strength, physical strength, but also strength of character and integrity.

And those are two characteristics that my father passed on to us. One was his strength of character, his integrity. We see what he lived through, how difficult it was for him to make a living when he came, and had to change jobs many times because he wouldn't work on Shabbos. And no matter what, he had tremendous integrity and strength of character.

And the other, that my brother Shlomo alluded to, was the tremendous chesed we saw examples in our house of [HEBREW] and always making everyone feel good and feel comfortable. And these are things, caring about other people and integrity, that are important lessons that we learned. And it was important having living examples of that in our-- growing up in our family, from my mother and my father.

And though this is-- on one hand, it's sad to remember, not having my father around anymore, this is also an evening of simcha. We're in the month of Adar. And we say, [HEBREW].

And it's apropos that this should be in this month because Adar is a month of simcha, Purim, and also, it characterized perfectly my father, who did everything simcha. No matter what he went through, no matter what stories he told us about the war, it was always with a certain excitement and a certain joy. And he just loved life and loved everything so much.

And my father told me that many times, that he said, you know, Bella, I was never better than anyone that I should

survive, never better than any of my brothers and sisters that I should live and they should not. He said, but I realized that I survived for one reason only, and that's to pass on Torah and Yiddishkeit to my children.

And I strive-- and I think you all know that my brothers and I were all zoykhe to have a son a year after my father died. And all of us named this son Yisroel after my father. And I hope that we are zoykhe to pass on to our Yisroels and to all of our other children the chesed, and the integrity, and the gevurah, and the simcha of doing mitzvahs that our father taught us to our own children.

Thank you very much for coming. And I also wanted to thank them. And I've done this in my mind many times and never-- you have good intentions, but unless you do them, it doesn't really count-- the many people and the kindness that people showed when my father was ill and and to my mother afterwards-- and how I always wanted to thank you so much for it.

[APPLAUSE]

What am I preparing special--

Oh, no problem. Don't worry. They wanted to speak.

I am all [YIDDISH]. That's it. I have nothing else. This man has done it. He probably should be in bed, I guess.

This is not going well. I'll leave my coat. I forgive for the informality or the formality of the [INAUDIBLE] children. First of all, it's really a remarkable sight to be able to do this in the way in which we're doing this. I can't envision another circumstance in which this kind of celebration could be done in the way in which it is being done, without a great deal of discomfort.

Sitting here in the room are Tante Faige and her husband, Yehuda. And we're talking about part of a very intense and very significant part of Tante Faygeh's life, namely, her first husband. It's not only a testimony to Reb Yehuda, but it is also a great testimony to the relationships that both Reb Yehuda and Tante Faige had before they met one another.

They were longstanding relationships, 40 years and better, of integrity, and decency, and caring, and loving. And precisely because Srulik Porter. Was the kind of person that he was, there was able to be this cosmic match, which brought together, for the third portion of both of their lives, for the remaining 40 years that we wish them both, these two people who are able, without any sense of discomfort or guilt, to be kind to one another, caring, loving, sensitive companions.

It is a beautiful sight to behold, the two of them together, whenever they are walking to shul or whenever they're together at some event. And that's because their respective companions and mates before they met one another enjoyed a relationship that was very special. It was real. It was authentic. And it was something that allowed for loving and caring to continue.

So I want to begin my remarks by wishing Tante Faige and the very wonderful companion in life, her husband, Reb Yehuda, 40 years-- 20 more years-- 40 more years of good health and of caring for one another, companionship, and happiness, and naches, and strength, and all of the things that we so sincerely would like for people who have graced our community and have blessed us with such very wonderful gifts.

Amen.

The children have described Srulik. And I dare say that there's very little that one can say that can improve upon the picture and the description that they've already so wonderfully done. But I think that there are certain debts of gratitude that need to be set.

Srulik was part of a new phase in Jewish American history with the immigration of the survivors of the Holocaust, who brought a whole new energy system with them-- sometimes, very positive, sometimes, very negative. The American

Jewish scene in the late '40s and in the early '50s struggled to integrate these new energies.

We were clearly not capable of overcoming the awesome shattering, searing memory, which virtually everybody brought along with them with the little baggage that they carried when they came here. At the same time, they were all heroic. They all sought to create and to build. Unfortunately, few were as successful as was Srulik Porter.

The children have identified chesed and gevurah amongst the ingredients of his success. And I'm confident that those are the magic of the chemistry that was so important. He was not only the center of interest when he threw a party for the relatives, he was the center of interest when he came in the morning to the davening or in the evening to the davening. He was capable of delighting our minyan to stories, to jokes, to lectures.

He not infrequently lectured me about everything that I was doing wrong. He was-- he really was not at all embarrassed to do so. And I must tell you that to be criticized by Srulik was something that I was able to receive much, much better than I had been able to react to the majority of the criticism to which I am regularly subjected. And he did it with a great deal of sincerity. And he really cared. And there's absolutely no way-- in no way in which someone can deny the efficacy or the power of criticism delivered in that mode.

In the mid '60s, the American Jewish scene began a new transition. That transition carried us into this Renaissance in which young people who were totally estranged or who came from less traditional backgrounds suddenly found their way back to the synagogue. They came in to shul and they were total strangers.

The Orthodox service has very little orchestration. Some people are standing and some people are sitting. And some people are ahead and some people are far behind. And some people are conversing. And some people are dreaming. There's all kinds of things that occur during an Orthodox, but it is certainly not the paragon of order and the kind of structure that one is wont to find elsewhere.

Shlomo said that Mr. Porter spoke a broken English. That's true. Shlomo described him as a person who might have been viewed by others as something less than sophisticated. Maybe that's true. I certainly don't know many people who reacted that way.

But the remarkable thing is that all of those new people who came in, who wandered into shul, and sat down, and trembled a little bit, and said to themselves, what am I doing here, I don't know what's happening suddenly found themselves surrounded by a very strong hand. Mr. Porter would walk up, he would embrace them, he would give them a warm sholem aleichem.

And his warmth would immediately suffuse this person. He immediately felt at home. He would take the Siddur, which they were holding upside down, and he would point out what they're doing. And he would sit with the person until such time as they really felt comfortable. And he did this time after time, Shabbos after Shabbos. Nobody asked him. And nobody sought him out. That was his being an ambassador of the [INAUDIBLE]. He was an emissary of remarkable goodwill.

And because of that warmth, if you ask today many of the young people who have traveled very, very far from their point of departure what made their journey through Yiddishkeit such a success, they will go back to their earliest memories, and they will talk about this character called Srulik Porter, who immediately surrounded them in a cocoon of warmth and helped them become a member of the congregational family.

And the thing that transmitted itself was not his piety and not many of the other things that we were talking about in and of themselves. What transmitted itself was the fact that everything he did was magic. There was no put-on. This was not somebody who was wearing a uniform. This was something that flowed from the very essence of his being.

He was genuinely religious. He was genuinely a happy, life-affirmative person. He was authentically a strong person. He was genuinely a very warm and embracing person all of these things were as natural as the sun coming up. And it was an undeniable power that few could fail to react to in the most positive way.

So many of our what is today called baalei teshuva, those who have made the trip, who have returned to Yiddishkeit, are-- trace their Yiddishkeit, trace their growth to the appearance-- the unexpected appearance of someone who would probably be the least probable person to do hero work.

Today, we have organizations of those people who are engaged in trying to attract young families and young singles back to their traditional roots. And we spend days and days trying to find ways of becoming more effective. And it's a very exciting thing to behold.

If Mr. Porter would appear at one of those conventions, I suspect that he would have very little to say because what he did was not a product of having gone to the university and learned the skill, it was a product of every fiber of his being. And he would get up and he would make baalei teshuvos of everybody who was trying to make baalei teshuvos.

And he would teach them a lesson, a lesson that we are all Talmidim of his, that we are most effective when we are real, that we can best touch people religiously when we care about them physically, and emotionally, and every other which way. So one of the pioneers of Milwaukee's movement is Srulik Porter, the man whose memory we treasure tonight. And it is a memory that continues to warm every heart of anybody who knew him.

He lives in every corner, nook, and crevice of this shul. I don't know of many people whose visage is etched so indelibly and so brightly into my mind. I see him just as though he were right there. I see him with his little song. I see him with his joke, and with his stories, and his editorial comments, and his caring.

And I believe that presence will live on in the portals of this shul and in the many memories of everyone who was privileged to know him as a person, who, amongst all of the people that we've known throughout our lifetimes, was an authentic, genuine, real person that we could respect without reservation. And for that reason, this Yahrzeit is a very just tribute. We salute the memory of Srulik Porter. And we are grateful for all that he has given us, a gift that continues to give.

One time-- when I became frum, I stopped shaking hands with women. I wouldn't shake. So there are some people here that still don't understand that I don't shake hands with them.

That's me.

[? Tillah-- ?] 27 years, I've been telling her, I don't shake hands.

It's me and my little Shloimele. I don't know.

So one time, I think I was in the drugstore, sitting in your father's drugstore. And he had a goyishe partner. He was also a pharmacist. He had a part-- another pharmacist there?

He had there another pharmacist.

Had another pharmacist there. He had another pharmacist there. And we met him another place. And he says-- and I'm walking with my father with him. And his wife-- and he's saying hello. His wife is there. And I didn't know what to do exactly.

So my father says, let me explain. My son does not shake hands with women. He is a very holy man. He sometimes doesn't even touch his wife. And he diffused the whole situation.

And we did this once in Fish Creek. We went to a beach. And we finally found this little beach in Fish Creek where I could go swimming. And it was 10 feet of sand. And I went back to change. My father stayed there. He turned around. All of a sudden, there was a lady laying on the beach.

He went up to the lady, says, from all the beaches in Wisconsin, you had to pick this beach. You can swim anyplace. But my son, he can't swim anyplace. You see, he needs a little private beach. And he says, but-- and the woman get

dressed, and she went to another beach.

Thank you so much for coming here.

Listen to me.

I know what I'm doing. I wasn't thrown on a boat.

I doubt it.

[SINGING IN HEBREW]

Yeah, take-- Sheila, take with this one.

Show me how. Just press this one. It's already forwarded, just take it. We'll take it, we'll take it.

[SINGING IN HEBREW]

Just a minute. I don't even know where I'm looking.

[SINGING IN HEBREW]

You press this blue button.

Oh, Sheila, you get in on the picture.

Well, first, let's see with my father. Then I should get-- Oh, all right.

No, you come in.

You're supposed to look right here.

He's going. He's running.

OK, hold on. Get ready, hold on. OK. All right. Hold on, wait a minute. Make two rows here. Here.

Cheers, Mauricio.

Sing, sing, sing.

[SINGING IN HEBREW]

Very good.

Thank you. That's all?

Right on time.