

**MY MACHBERES**  
 NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE YESHIVISH  
 AND CHASIDISHE WORLD  
**RABBI GERSHON TANNENBAUM**  
 RAV, CONG. BNAI ISRAEL



**Moses I. Feuerstein (1916-2009),  
 Former OU President**

The OU reported that Moshe Yitzchak Feuerstein, *z"l*, was *niftar* at the age of 93 on Sunday evening, 29 Shevat, February 22, 2009. The *levayah* was at the Young Israel of Brookline, Mass. and *kevurah* was on Har Menuchos. Moshe Yitzchak is survived by his wife of 66 years, Shirley, their four children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Feuerstein became chairman of the board of his synagogue, as well as president of two major national Jewish organizations – the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (the OU), and Torah U'Mesorah. He was also the founder and first editor of Yeshiva Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchanan's (YU's) student newspaper The Commentator. He served distinguishably as president of the OU from 1954-1966.

**The Feuerstein Family -  
 American Jewish History**

His family, third generation American, was prominent in Torah, industry, and community leadership. He left an indelible imprint on the OU and Torah Jewry as a whole. A true leader, in every sense of the word, he was at the forefront of Jewish education and support of Israel. His accomplishments are legend. He was a celebrated leader of the Brookline community.



Verpleleter Yeshiva dormitory diagram with the name Henry Feuerstein

**'The Mensch of Malden Mills'**

His brother Aaron Feuerstein catapulted to national fame and made a *Kiddush Hashem* in 1995 when Malden Mills, their textile manufacturing plant, burned down. The fire was the largest Massachusetts had seen for more than a century. No one was killed, but the town was devastated. Malden Mills was one of the few large employers in a town that was already in desperate financial straits.

Aaron, then 70, decided not only to use his 400 million dollar insurance reimbursement to rebuild the factory, but also to continue paying the salaries and medical insurance of the 3,000 then-suddenly-unemployed workers while the factory was being rebuilt. In recognition of that admirable and noble decision, President Bill Clinton had Aaron, the "Mensch of Malden Mills," stand alongside him at the 1996 State of the Union Presidential Address to the joint session of Congress.

Moshe and Aaron's father was Samuel Feuerstein, *z"l* (1894-1983), who was founder of Torah U'Mesorah and honorary OU board member. He was the son of Henry Feuerstein, *z"l* (1864-1923), who emigrated to the United States in the 1890s from Hungary and established Malden Mills in 1906. Like his eminent father, Samuel was a world-renowned Torah philanthropist. The enormous contribution to Torah and Jewish causes by the Feuerstein family continues to this very day.

**Feuerstein Hungarian  
 Yeshiva Philanthropy**

In the mid 1930s, my (this writer's) great-uncle, Rabbi Yosef Usher Pollack, *Hy"d* (1888-1944), Verpleleter Rav and author of *Shearis Yosef Usher*, saw his yeshiva grow beyond the means and resources of his small community. In the 1931 census, the city of Verpelet officially numbered 131 Jewish souls, with many living immediately outside its city limits. The yeshiva at that time had almost 100 students from other cities near and far. The students were boarded ("*essen teg*") among the city's families.

Needles to say, each household had many students sitting at their tables and eating their meals every day of the week, not only on Shabbos. Livelihoods were always difficult in Verpelet, but at that time the economy literally was evaporating, espe-



Verpleleter Rav, *z"l*

cially for Jews. A decision was made, that the yeshiva must have a dormitory to house its students and a central kitchen to feed them.

Almost miraculously, in 1935, the Verpleleter Rav received an enthusiastic commitment from Samuel Feuerstein of far-away Massachusetts to fund the building of the dormitory in rural Verpelet, Hungary. Perhaps, Samuel's father, Henry Feuerstein, was born and grew up in the immediate area. Samuel, born in America, however, extracted an agreement from the Verpleleter Rav that the dormitory would be built to exact architectural specifications, without any deviation, whatsoever.

Presumably, Samuel feared that the Verpleleter Rav would use some of the money to feed the hungry. Samuel provided the architectural plans and the corresponding necessary funding. The Verpleleter yeshiva dormitory was dedicated as Beis Naftali in the memory of Henry (Naftali) Feuerstein, *z"l*.

The laying of the cornerstone ceremony took place with the participation of scores of leading area chief rabbis, as well as hundreds of former Verpleleter yeshiva students, and thousands of Jews from cities in the immediate area.

Notable amongst attendees was Rabbi Moshe Sofer, *Hy"d*, (d. 1944), Erlauer Rosh Beth Din and author of *Yad Moshe*; son of Rabbi Shimon Sofer, *Hy"d* (1850-1944), Erlauer Rav and author of *Hisorrirus Teshuvah*; son of Rabbi Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, *z"l* (1815-1872), Pressburger Rav and author of *Ksav Sofer*; son of Rabbi Moshe Sofer, *z"l* (1762-1839) revered Pressburger Rav and author of *Chasam Sofer*.

Rabbi Yochanon Sofer, today's Erlauer Rebbe in Jerusalem, is a son of the *Yad Moshe*, and was a *chavrusah* (study partner) of my father, Moshe Yaakov Tannenbaum, *z"l* (1921-1980), at the Verpleleter

Yeshiva. In the picture of the Verpleleter Yeshiva and its students, my father is on the third row from the bottom, sixth from the left. The Erlauer Rebbe is on the same line, ninth from the left.

My father was always proud to relate that the dormitory, notable for a village in Hungary in the 1930s, had showers, sinks, and toilets in each room and that the boys also had an intercom. At that time, Verpelet did not yet have running water. Every bucket had to be brought to a pump and carried back. The architectural plans that were provided by Samuel Feuerstein had showers, sinks, and toilets in each room.

The Verpleleter Rav honored the commitment to build to architectural specifications and, indeed, every room did have showers, sinks, and toilets. Though, without running tap water, the showers, sinks, and toilets did not serve as such. However, my father always related with a big smile, the empty unused water pipes served perfectly to convey sound.

Hence, whenever yeshiva students wanted to send messages, they spoke into a sink and voices reverberated throughout the dormitory building, effectively an intercom system that was used daily by yeshiva students.

**Verpelet In The Holocaust**

The yeshiva remained a bastion of Torah learning for its hundreds of students until 1942, when the yeshiva was closed by governmental anti-Semitic decree. Many of the students were conscripted into forced labor battalions.

Sadly, in May of 1944, the Jewish community of Verpelet, together with the Verpleleter Rav and Rebbeztin, were deported and murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz on 21 Sivan, 1944. The Verpleleter Rebbeztin, my great-aunt, was Rebbeztin Solva Pollack nee Tannenbaum, daughter of Rabbi Moshe Tannenbaum, *z"l* (1850-1916), Verpleleter Rav.

**The Spirit Of Verpelet Today**

Today, Beis Medrash Shearis Yosef Usher in Har Nof, Jerusalem, is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Yosef Usher Pollack, *Hy"d* (1888-1944) Verplelet-

er Rav and author of *Shearis Yosef Usher*. The *beis medrash* thrives with *tefillos* and *shiurim* and has hundreds of high school age students studying Torah there throughout the day. Rabbi Yosef Asher Neuman, Verpleleter Rav in *Yerushalayim*, heads the *beis medrash*. Rabbi Yosef Asher is the son of Rabbi Shraga Neuman, *z"l*, founder of the *beis medrash* and student of the Verpleleter Yeshiva.

In addition, Williamsburg has a Verpleleter *beis medrash* at 83 Penn Street. Though decades and a generation away from the Verpelet area in the 1930s, the Feuerstein family's formidable Torah philanthropy extended all away around the world and had a profound effect that resonates until this very day.

**Keresturer Shabbos In Hungary**

The nondescript rural city of Kerestur, Hungary, was the home of Rabbi Yeshaya Steiner, *z"l* (1852-1925), beloved Keresturer Rebbe. He was disciple of Rabbi Zvi Hersh Friedman, *z"l* (1790-1874), author of *Ach Pri Tevuah* and founding Liska Rebbe, as well as of Rabbi Chaim Halbertam, *z"l* (1797-1876), Sanzer Rebbe and author of *Divrei Chaim*. Reb Shayeleh Keresturer, as he was affectionately renown, had an overpowering love for his fellow Jews. He was regarded as a people's Rebbe. He always made sure that plenty of food would be at his *tisch* and that no one would go hungry.



Rebbe Shayeleh Keresturer, *z"l*

On Rosh Hashanah, when other Rebbes were in deep meditation and contemplation in preparation of the sounding of the shofar, Reb Yeshaye personally sliced and served kokosh cake and other sweets to his Chassidim.

Somehow he always set exactly enough chairs for guests at his Shabbos table. One winter Shabbos night, guests looked at each other and wondered why one seat remained empty. Late into the meal, a straggler showed up. Obvious to everyone there, the latecomer had gone through some ordeal. Reb Yeshaye enthusiastically welcomed the straggler and told him that he prayed intensely to assure that he survive the dangerous encounter.

Local Gentiles also came to Reb Yeshaye for advice, counsel, and blessing. They were warmly received and found that their requests, too, were answered. His home, during all the years that Jews did not live in Kerestur, was maintained and respected.

The *yahrzeit*, 3 Iyar, this year is on Monday, April 27. Shabbos *Parshas Tazria-Metzora* precedes it. A large group of descendants of Reb Yeshaye as well as Chassidim have organized a visit to the home and gravesite. The home had come into the possession of a non-Jew and was purchased by a Jewish group in 2004. Then, too, a group visit was successfully organized.

This year will mark the third time that the group will be there for a Shabbos. The home itself has always been considered by Chassidim to be imbued with holiness. The gravesite is in the cemetery at the top of a steep hill. In order to provide access for cars and buses, descendants had a wide road paved. The gravesite is intact since Gentiles, too, venerate the memory of the Jewish holy man.

The group will conduct all *tefillos*, *tisch*, as well as *melaveh malkah* at home, just as Reb Yeshaye did. Reb Shayeleh's son and successor, Rabbi Avrohom Steiner, *z"l* (1843-1927), Keresturer Rebbe, reigned for only two years. Reb Avremeleh is buried in the *Ohel*, alongside his holy father.

Once, when Reb Avremeleh was traveling to the city of Weitzen, the car ran out of gas. Reb Avremeleh had no money with him, nor did the driver. As they sat there, suddenly a childless chassid came and asked the Rebbe to bless him, specifically that he should have a child. The Rebbe smiled and told him that if he would pay for the benzine (gas), that he would be blessed with a "*ben-ziehn*" (a son in Hebrew and in Yiddish). The chassid filled the car's tank with premium benzine and, within a year, he was blessed with a son, just as the Rebbe had promised!



Verpleleter Yeshiva