



A Rebbe For Everyman

By Harav Yitzchak Reuven Rubin

It takes a lot of talent and practice. I am referring to pushing shopping trollies in a straight line! Most have experienced how sometimes pushing these metal cages can be tricky; they have what seems to be a mind of their own, swerving from one side to another with scarce regard for your needs. Such are the trials and tribulations of modern life; it sort of comes with the shopping experience.

Spare a thought therefore for those whose job it is to line up a large number of these trollies and maneuver them from the car park to the shelters designed as safe havens for them as they await their next “victims”. These brave souls are called “shopping trolley jockeys”, and it certainly takes some understanding of the psyche of these metal monsters to rally them into one long line and bend them to your will.

***“Long may we be blessed with his infectious love
for Klal Yisroel and his radiant manner of
connecting with others”***

Last week I was getting out of my car at just such a shopping centre and from the corner of my eye I saw one of these brave souls doing his thing. Suddenly he called out “Hello Rebbe Kupetz, how are you?” Now I am used to such random greetings. There is obviously something about my demeanor that reminds some of my dear friend Rav Moshe Kupetz. Indeed, being mistaken for him is something with which I have learned to live. I am truly humbled that anyone could confuse me for this giant of the spirit, I only feel bad in the realization that some may approach him mistaking him for my good self!

One thing I have learned over the years is that Rabbi Kupetz reaches Yidden far beyond the borders of North Manchester. I have been stopped in shops and car parks far from the small area of Salford by Yidden who insist my name is Kupetz and go on to quote shiurim and Torah wisdom heard years ago. These sweet Jews are not always your “run of the mill” heimishe Yidden. They represent a multifarious cross section of Klal Yisroel. Reb Moshe Kupetz is a veritable Talmid Chochom for everyman: approachable, understanding and truly compassionate. I only hope I am not embarrassing him too much with this small appreciation of how much he means to so many.

I lived far from North Manchester for a quarter century, and in that lonely outpost I was kept spiritually strengthened by my regular weekly get together with Reb Moshe. Every problem found a sympathetic ear, every shailoh an insightful answer. One thing is abundantly clear: whatever the case, Rav Moshe’s heart is always filled with unbounded love for Klal Yisroel.

People often ask: who do Rabbis go to with *their* questions? In my case it is Rav Kupetz. When I moved north to Prestwich it was Rav Moshe’s wisdom that helped me find my feet and learn to navigate the waters of my new community. He has often had first glance of articles I have written and his wise advice has brought clarity to my often chaotic endeavors.

Interestingly, I am not the only one in this situation. Rav Moshe is the address for a large number of “best friends” who count on his sage advice and support regularly. I say “best friend” because everyone who is blessed to know Rav Kupetz truly sees him as such. No matter what, he is there for others. His calls and his visits leave one uplifted, thankful in the knowledge that this American-born Rav wears his unique gift of spreading Torah light and joy with such a caring touch.

When I saw he is being honored by the Whitfield Kollel I understood without hearing that this too was a chessed Reb Moshe was doing. True to his Polisher Chasidic roots, he has never sought the limelight. The Kollel leadership feel it will help them in their vital fundraising efforts, so, well, Reb Moshe can never say no. And so, his picture shines out of the papers and advertisements in local shops. However, nothing comes close to showing the magnitude of thanks we all owe him and his Rebbetzin for all they are doing for the entire community. This is the man who as son in law of the tzaddik, the Rosh Yeshiva of Manchester ztl could have very well rested on the laurels of that position and sailed on by. Instead, he goes around shaking the pushka at the first minyan of Machzikei Hadas with a smile and a good word. After over half a century, he still gives heartwarming shiurim to many and finds time to continue teaching in the Seminary. These young ladies are blessed in that they are learning Torah hashkofo from one of our greatest lights, whose Torah learning has spanned generations.

This honour is really something long in coming. Rav Moshe is a generator of Kiddush Hashem in what can often be a dark world. He has touched everyone, from the shopping trolley jockey, who incidentally asked me when Shabbos comes in because he never works on Shabbos, thanks in no small way to Rabbi Kupetz, through to Gedolei Harabbonim at the

highest level of Torah leadership. Everyone feels better being in Rav Moshe's company, and yes, he is truly everyone's best friend.

I can only offer my personal thanks; he has lifted me up when I was down and given advice when I needed it most. Being a Rav is a lonely position, and having the zechus of Rav Kupetz's friendship makes it seem that no matter what, one can continue to build and hope for greater things to come.

Let me share a small snapshot of who Reb Moshe is. Sadly he was called to America recently for his only brother's funeral. The two were very close; his brother, Rav Pesach ztl was a Maggid Shiur in the Bobover Yeshiva. In fact both Bobover Rebbes attended the shiva and shared that each had been a talmid of Rav Pesach Kupetz. Imagine, these two brothers, great talmidei chachomim, born way back in America to parents married in New York City. The shiva was visited by hordes of Yidden who were touched by this sweet, original neshoma. Reb Moshe came home and soon my phone was ringing. His vibrant voice boomed out: he had regards from a mutual friend who I haven't seen in decades. That is Rav Moshe Kupetz, wanting to share some positive news despite his own personal sorrow.

This is the measure of the Yid; honoring him is the least we can do.

Long may we be blessed with his infectious love for Klal Yisroel and his radiant manner of connecting with others. May he and his Rebbetzin see nachas from all his loved ones and may we be found worthy of sharing in the glow of his presence for many years to come.



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