

Rav Shimon Schwab זצ"ל



Rav Shimon Schwab was born on 7 Teves, 5669 (1918), to Leopold and Hanna Schwab, *ehrlliche* Yidden with great *yiras Shamayim*. Shimon was schooled in the Hirsch Realschule then studied under Rav Shlomo Breuer, leader of the Frankfurt *kehillah*. Afterward, he learned in Yeshivas Telshe and in Yeshivas Mir, one of the first German *bachurim* to go to Lithuanian yeshivos.

In 1933, Rav Schwab became rav of Ichenhausen, in Southern Germany. The Nazis came to power then, so Rav

Schwab and his family left Germany in 1936 for Baltimore, where Rav Schwab served as rav of Shearith Israel, a large traditional German-Jewish shul. Shortly after Rav Schwab was hired, he was pressured to give full membership to non-*shomrei Shabbos* (most of the congregants), but he refused. Over 100 people left for a breakaway shul and Rav Schwab was left with only 11 members — but he wouldn't back down! Shearith Israel grew under his leadership — it is still strong and vibrant today, while the

breakaway shul closed down long ago.

In 1958, Rav Schwab was invited to be assistant rav to Rav Yosef Breuer, leader of K'hal Adath Jeshurun (KAJ) of Washington Heights, the largest German-Jewish *kehillah* in America. After Rav Breuer's passing, Rav Schwab became KAJ's main rav and *av beis din*. He led his *kehillah* with warmth and integrity, and his phone rang constantly with *sh'eilos*.

Rav Schwab was *niftar* on Purim Katan, 14 Adar I, 5755 (1995).

Did You Know?

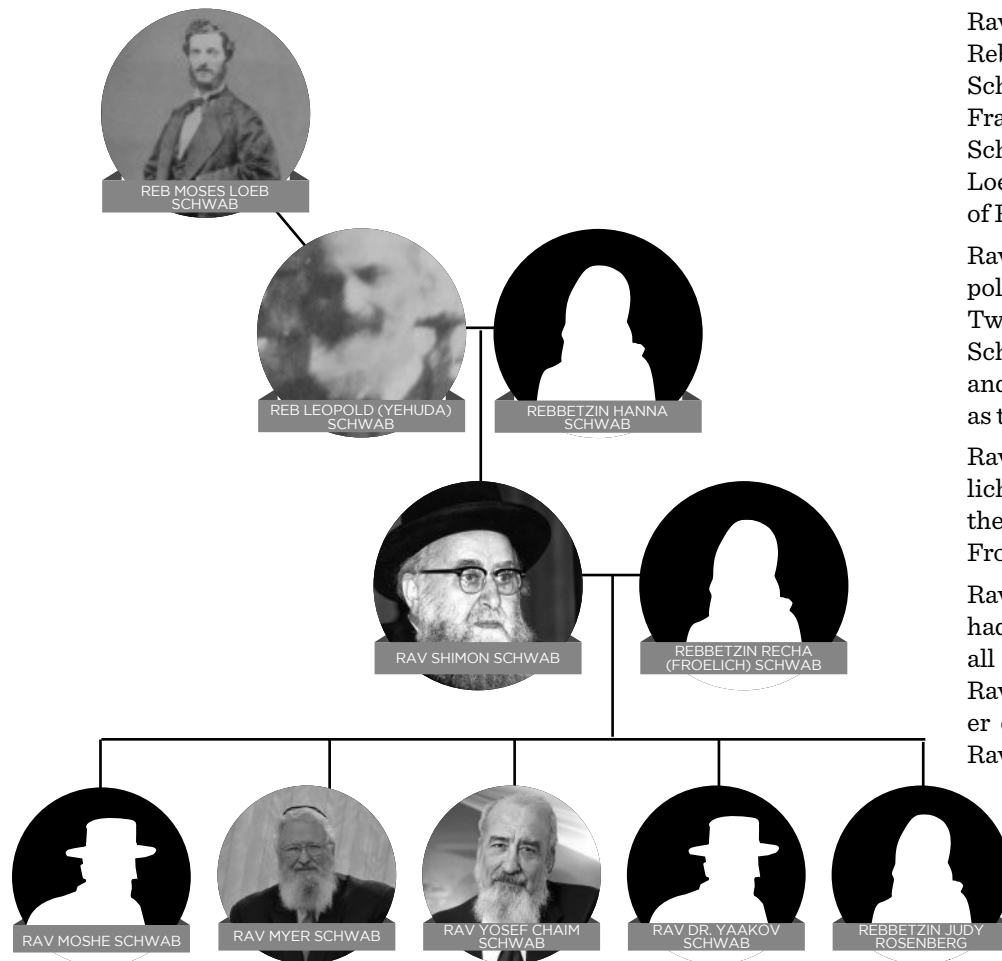
Rav Schwab was known as the “*Ish Ha'emes*,” the man of truth and integrity. He never refrained from saying the *emes*, even if it was unpopular. Rav Shach once said of him, “Rav Schwab belongs to no one. He isn't afraid to speak the truth.”

The IRS once sent an agent to review Rav Schwab's taxes because they didn't think he could be giving so much *tzedakah* on his low income. When the IRS agent saw how carefully Rav Schwab documented all sources of income, even the smallest cash gift, he declared he'd never met anyone that honest!

Rav Schwab was under suspicion by the Nazi government for a few months because of a false accusation that he had spoken against Hitler. During that time, Rav Schwab slept in his clothes - never in pajamas. He was afraid the Nazis would arrest him in the middle of the night and hang him publicly, and he was determined to be dressed with dignity as befitting a rav.

Rav Schwab would stress that he was only an average child; he wasn't a genius. He became who he was through his tremendous *hasmadah* and desire to grow.

Family Tree



Rav Shimon Schwab was the son of Reb Leopold (Yehuda) and Hanna Schwab, prominent members of the Frankfurt Jewish community. Rav Schwab's grandfather, Reb Moses Loeb Schwab, was a *talmid muvhak* of Rav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch.

Rav Shimon was the oldest of Leopold and Hanna Schwab's five sons. Two of his brothers were Rav Moshe Schwab, *mashgiach* of Gateshead, and Rav Mordechai Schwab, known as the "Tzaddik of Monsey."

Rav Shimon married Recha Froelich from Gelsenkirchen, Germany, the daughter of Abraham and Gutel Froelich.

Rav Shimon and Rebbetzin Recha had five children. Their four sons all became *talmidei chachamim*: Rav Moshe of Brooklyn, compiler of many of his father's *sefarim*; Rav Myer, head of Bais Yaakov of Denver; Rav Yosef Chaim of Monsey, a well-known *maggid shiur*; and Rav Dr. Yaakov, a prominent therapist in Monsey. Their daughter, Rebbetzin Judy, married Rav Yaakov Rosenberg, founder of Machon Shlomo, a yeshivah for *ba'alei teshuvah*.

SOME OF RAV SCHWAB'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS:



Rav Schwab served as rav of Shearith Israel of Baltimore for over 20 years and became one of the leading rabbanim in Baltimore. He helped found the Bais Yaakov of Baltimore, started and supervised the Baltimore *chevra kaddisha*, and insisted on upgrading *kashrus* standards there.

As assistant rav and then chief rav of KAJ, Rav Schwab helped establish its *mesivta*, Bais Yaakov, *beis midrash* and *kollel*. During all his years in KAJ, he never asked for a raise. Instead, when he became older and Rav Zecharia Gelley became assistant rav, Rav Schwab went to the Board and asked them to *lower* his salary, as he would be doing less. They refused.



Rav Schwab wrote many *sefarim*. Two of the most well-known are *Ma'ayan Beis Hasho'eivah*, a commentary on Chumash, and *Iyun Tefillah (Rav Schwab on Prayer)*, an in-depth explanation of the siddur that has elevated the *tefillos* of many.



When Rav Schwab first came to America, he only knew basic English. He taught himself English so well that he became one of the English-speaking Torah community's most powerful speakers. He inspired many with his speeches at numerous Agudah conventions and other events.



RAV SHIMON SCHWAB was known for his meticulous adherence to all areas of halachah. He was careful to follow the *Shulchan Aruch*, down to the small-

est detail.

Rav Schwab would say *Kiddush Levanah* as soon as he saw the new moon in the sky, in accordance with the *Shulchan Aruch*. Once, during the winter, Rav Schwab was being driven somewhere by his son, Rav Myer. They were on the highway when Rav Schwab asked him to stop and pull over. He had just seen a clear new moon and wanted to say *Kiddush Levanah*. Rav Myer didn't want to pull over on the dark, icy highway. He asked his father to wait until they got home, but Rav Schwab insisted that he pull over immediately. He reminded his son that the *Shulchan Aruch* states that anyone who is careful to recite *Kiddush Levanah* right away will not die that month.

Rav Myer pulled over and both men

got out in the freezing cold, said *Kiddush Levanah* on the side of the highway, then went back into the car. Rav Myer continued driving.

Suddenly, the car skidded on ice and swerved out of control. It spun across the highway for a few terrifying moments, until it was stopped by a tollbooth. Miraculously, both Rav Schwab and his son were unharmed!

Rav Schwab's scrupulous observance of halachah was only matched by his steadfast *bitachon* and gratitude to Hashem for everything he had. During the last few years

of his life, Rav Schwab was unable to walk and had to use a wheelchair, yet he never complained. His grandson Nosson Schwab once asked, "Opa, how can you be so happy and calm when you can't even walk?"

Rav Schwab answered, "Imagine that a rich man lent you a million dollars for 70 years and then asked for only a hundred dollars back. Would you be angry at him? Of course not! He gave you an incredible gift for so long, and he's only asking for a small part back! My feet were a gift from Hashem and He had the right to take them back when He wanted. He has given me so much else!"

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Try This!

When something goes wrong, it's hard to remember the good. Yet we can imagine, like Rav Schwab did, that Hashem has given us a million dollars – and only took a little bit back! Make a list of all the *brachos* in your life – your parents, your family, your health – and thank Hashem for everything!

RAV SHIMON SCHWAB'S DVAR TORAH *The Power of Sacrifice*

In *Megillas Esther*, the *pasuk* states (2:20), *Esther followed Mordechai's directions, just as when she was brought up by him*. This demonstrates that Mordechai was generally the one who gave instructions; Esther was the one who followed.

Later in the *Megillah* (4:16-17), we see this switched around. [*Esther said,*] "Go and gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days... Then I will go to the king, even though it's against the law [of the land]. And if I will get killed for it, then that is how it will be." [*Then,*] Mordechai left and did everything Esther instructed him to do. Here, Esther is giving orders and Mordechai is doing everything she says. Why did Mordechai follow Esther's directions here when he was usually the one who said what should be done?

Without being called to the king, going in to see him was against the law and even punishable with death (unless the king stuck out his golden *sharvit*, scepter). Still, Esther made the decision to go to the king to try and save the Jews. She knew she might be killed, but she had *mesirus nefesh* to do what she was supposed to do.

With this choice, Esther achieved a very high level in *avodas Hashem*. She became so great that even Mordechai, who was one of the Sanhedrin, had to follow her instructions. This is why here, the *pasuk* specifically tells us that Mordechai followed what Esther said: to show us the incredible *koach* of *mesirus nefesh*.

(*Ma'ayan Beis Hasho'eivah, Megillas Esther* 4:16, p. 473)