

תורת חיים
ואהבת חסד
*Reminiscences
& Tributes*

IN HONOR OF
40 YEARS OF
RABBI BROVENDER'S
TEACHING TORAH
IN ISRAEL

BY THE STUDENTS,
COLLEAGUES & FRIENDS
OF RABBI CHAIM BROVENDER



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Reminiscences תורת חיים
Tributes ואהבת חסד
BY RABBI CHAIM BROVENDER'S
STUDENTS, COLLEAGUES & FRIENDS

Compiled by
Dr. Erica Brown, Dr. Robert Lederman
& Rabbi Jeffrey Saks

Presented at the Special Evening of Tribute to
Rabbi Chaim Brovender
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The tributes and reminiscences by Rabbi Brovender's students, colleagues and friends appear as received via the individual authors, with only the mildest of editing. No attempt was made to seek uniformity in style or transliteration, nor to bridge the common language that separates Americans and Englishmen. Titles and affiliations appear as received from authors.

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*—Rabbi Jeffrey Saks
Director, ATID*



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Les Ames**Vancouver**

Within a few hours of arriving from a Greek Island in the spring of 1972, Tuvia Kaplan and I found ourselves in Yerushalayim at Kikar Allenby outside of Rechov HaOr 2, Rabbi Chaim Brovender's first yeshiva. It was in the very early hours of Friday morning, the city was asleep, so we unrolled our sleeping bags and fell asleep until we were awoken by the Chassidim, Arabs and workers walking over and around us. Since we had no chance of getting any more sleep we made our way to the yeshiva and the first person we met was, of course, Rabbi Chaim Brovender, the Rosh Yeshiva, appropriately donned in his tallis and tefillin. Rabbi Brovender, always one quick to seize an opportunity to rescue two bedraggled travelers invited us to his home for Shabbat dinner. Like most of Rabbi Brovender's offers, it was an offer we couldn't refuse. This began a series of events that changed our lives forever.

After attending Shabbat services with Rabbi Brovender we went to the Brovender home in Kiryat ITRI (the Hebrew name plate outside the apartment said "Brubender"). There we met a very friendly and special person, Miriam Brovender, who offered us her warm hospitality and her excellent food. This was all very much welcomed by us considering that we had just spent 10 months backpacking in Europe with several months living on an isolated Greek Island. Years later, Miriam told me that she and Chaim were betting on who would stay at the yeshiva and who would leave. To this day I do not know who betted on whom so I do not know whether Miriam or Chaim won the bet but within a few weeks both of us were learning (or trying to) and living in the Yeshiva.

Rabbi Brovender did not conform to any of my stereotypes of a Rosh Yeshiva. He was apparently very knowledgeable and wise but also inscrutable. Initially, I found it difficult to sit inside all day learning because I had spent most of the previous year living so close to nature. I would spend some weekends visiting friends on kibbutzim. When I returned to the Yeshiva after a kibbutz weekend Rabbi Brovender had a heart to heart with me and said (rhetorically) "do you want to spend the rest of your life picking tomatoes?" He really understood my dilemma. I later heard from Miriam Brovender that she and Chaim had dreamed of living on a kibbutz, possibly Kibbutz Lavi. Later, they spent some Shabbatot at Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi where R. Brovender taught the kibbutzniks Talmud in exchange for a lot of meat from the kibbutz's meat plant. I think they were getting all this free meat during a period when the Rabbi, in an attempt to lose some weight, was a vegetarian. The bachurim from the Yeshiva were always happy to consume that free meat when we had the opportunity of having a Shabbat meal at the Brovenders.

As time passed Rabbi Brovender's brilliance as a scholar and a teacher became apparent – there was a method to the madness! To think that all this was happening while R. Brovender was only in his early 30s. His students were systematically led down the path of Torah study all facilitated by R. Brovender's "System". The effectiveness of the System was enhanced by Rabbi Brovender's dry wit and excellent sense of humor that was a lesson in and of itself and helped drive in the message of the passage of Talmud or the Halachik issue that we wrestled with as we were being transformed into different people but at the same time reminded to be true to ourselves. Sometimes some of the bachurim would be attracted to or become involved in certain religious practices that Rabbi Brovender, in his wisdom, considered to be too extreme or otherwise inappropriate. It was in those circumstances that Rabbi Brovender's witty and occasionally sarcastic comments would make the adjustment necessary to remedy the imbalance and bring the world order back to a harmonious state. To understand all of this was, of course, beyond the ability of most of the bachurim but R. Brovender persisted in any event.

Rabbi Chaim Brovender was also an innovator in the area of education and a creator of new forms of Torah institutions and he has continued to do so to this day. *He dared to go where no Rabbi had gone before.* This innovative spirit led to the establishment of outstanding and

renowned institutions such as Yeshivat HaMivtar, Michlelet Bruria (later Midreshet Lindenbaum), and a yeshiva high school.

In 1980 my wife, Tracy, who had been a student at the women's program of the yeshiva in 1974, moved to Yisroel. I was a young lawyer then and within a few weeks of my arrival Rabbi Brovender asked me to assist him in a real estate venture building apartments in Har Nof for the purpose of financing the operations and growth of the yeshiva's institutions and to search out opportunities for the establishment of a Torah community outside of Yerushalayim. Initially, I was a bit reluctant to accept his offer because I had planned to work toward passing the Israeli Bar. However, Rabbi Brovender convinced me that all I would be doing in such legal activities was to be serving coffee and that would be a waste of my time. So, I joined Rabbi Brovender and Mordechai (Marty) Chazon, Executive Director of Yeshivat HaMivtar and Michlelet Bruria, and Steven (Simcha) Katz of NY, and I discovered that Rabbi Brovender had many talents that I had not previously realized. He was a skilled entrepreneur, politician, businessman and manager. It was a very exciting time and a wonderful opportunity to work with Rabbi Brovender and see his genius applied to so many different activities. I often recall our nighttime car rides to Tel Aviv to meet with the Betar-nicks in a sweltering apartment to plan the development of the Torah settlement or riding through the *shtachim* with these same Betar veterans who naturally had to pack Uzis and other armaments for our protection. In the end, Efrat became the home of the Yeshiva. I was very pleased when my daughter, Danielle, chose to spend a year learning at Midreshet Lindenbaum, and had the good fortune of learning from Rabbi Tuvia Kaplan. The circle was completed.

Shabtai Atlow

Efrat

I first came to the Yeshiva during its last year in Kiryat Moshe. That year, I was in Rabbi Brovender's shiur, and to this day, I would say, I probably "know" Gittin better than any other *masechta*.

The summer after we learned Gittin, the Yeshiva was learning Makkot, and I did not have a Chavruta, so R. Brovender became my chavruta – or rather, I had a private shiur with the Rosh Yeshiva. After less than one year in Yeshiva, and I was already preparing a Rav Chaim and a K'tzot. The experience of learning with R. Brovender in such close quarters is one which I will never forget. I still remember very clearly a discussion we had about '*Palginan Dibura*' and under which circumstances it applies and under which circumstances it does not apply.

Although I still have several 'sdarim' over a day, and a two Chavrusas during the week, I have not had a learning experience ever like my 'private shiur' with Rabbi B.

Josh Backon

R. Brovender was my camp counselor (Camp Moshava, Gelatt, PA) in the summer of 1961. If he could handle us pre-Bar Mitzvah "*vilde chayas*" he deserves the highest accolades if not the Bronze Star or Purple Heart.

Yeshaya (Peter) Balog

In the academic year 1998-99 I was finishing my BA in Jewish Studies at Jews' College in London. Rav Brovender and Rav Riskin started their Bet Midrash project in London in the same year. During this academic year Rav Brovender literally moved to the North London district of Hendon, to inspire young, modern Jews to learn Torah.

I was one of the few who took this opportunity very seriously. Every afternoon, after the lectures at Jews' College, which was adjacent to the Bet Midrash, my chevruva Marc Cohen, and I were learning Masechet Pesachim with Rav Brovender. Marc knew Rav Brovender,

because he studied at HaMivtar for one year before university. For me this was the first time I encountered Talmud Torah in this way.

After my *teshuva* and quitting university in Germany, I immersed myself in Limud in a London-based, charedi yeshiva. Six months later I left because I was not intellectually satisfied. I returned to my academic studies at Jews' College. After receiving my BA I was planning to go the RIETS, or to Ner Yisrael in Baltimore. This was another reason why I was very excited to meet Rav Brovender, a Musmach of Rav Solovetchik. I discussed with Rav Brovender my future plans in the US. Instead of encouraging them he invited me to HaMivtar in Efrat.

After marrying my wife, Sarah, and receiving my BA I set off to move to *Eretz Yisroel* to study at Ohr Someach. After 2 weeks in a youth hostel, burekas and unsuccessful search for accommodation and work for my wife, we were planning to move back to London. We spent our last Shabbos with a charedi Rav in Sanhedria. We were invited by Rav Brovender for Shalosh Seudos. I told him my story and again he invited me to his yeshiva. Next morning we arrived in Efrat.

For zeman Elul I was in Rav Brovender's shiur. I felt I was "shteiging". The only problem was our financial situation. At that time we did not have any financial support at all. On one day, before the Chagim, when Rav Brovender was recruiting in the US, we packed our stuff, and were waiting for a lift to Yerushalayim. Not being able to pay the fees for the yeshiva, or for our accommodation I was forced to leave HaMivtar. Again, we were thinking to return to London. I played with the idea to arrange something at Ohr Someyach. Suddenly Rav Brovender entered the Bet Midrash. He immediately spotted me and asked in his own way: "How are you, Peter?" I confessed. He said: "I think you belong here. If I would arrange something for you would you stay?" I confirmed. We unpacked our things and stayed.

After the chagim with Rav Brovender's approval I joined the Kollel. Almost three years later I received my Semicha, and took up the position of the community rabbi of Düsseldorf. Before our departure Rav Brovender gave me "Tzeda Laderech" (in the yeshiva we were learning Maseches Megila): "First: Maalim baKodesh. You should never go backwards in your shlichut. Never descend to a previous, lower level. Second: never start an argument which you cannot win."

I firmly believe that Rav Brovender did not fail in the Bet Midrash programm in London. Our learning in London not only inspired me, or brought me to think in a more halakhic way, but changed my and my family's whole future. I would even say that the Ribono shel Olam forced me to remain near Rav Brovender, and Yeshivat HaMivtar. To God I say: "*Hodu lashem ki tov, ki leolam chasdo*", and to Rav Brovender: "Thank you for everything."

Mitchell Barak

The Funny Man With the Big Black Hat

Many years ago you set out to accomplish the impossible

A start-up, no-frills Yeshiva based on learning.

Teaching Torah was your mission and the people came

Some normal ones too.

Your wit and sarcasm were unparalleled in the Yeshiva world

Seriousness is overrated, especially in Judaism.

Turning ignoramuses into young scholars

Was your labor of love.

In fundraising you did not excel

So you merged with a Venture Rabbinist.

The Yeshiva grew as it wandered
From place to place.

The quality of the teachers was unsurpassed
Educated, learned, with differing world views.
Learning and scholarship were the main themes
Uniting all to reach new heights.

I came to you impressionable and idealistic
In the unlucky place named for the Elephant-crushed Maccabee.
It was a year of tremendous growth and achievement
Where you showed the way through example and commitment.

Now you have been decided to take a new direction
Where you will use your skills and continue.
As you look back at your years please know
That you have inspired, motivated and influenced me and countless others.

Chezi Ben-Michael

In 1990-91, I was in Rav Brovender's Gemarah shiur. For most of us in the shiur, if not all, it was a frustrating experience. Rav Brovender would assign the *sugyah* with Rashi, and then, he would select one or two *dibbur ha'matchil*'s from Tosofot to prepare. This was the pattern he used at the end of every *shiur* to define what we needed to prepare for the next *shiur*.

Of course, the next shiur would have very little to do with what he assigned us, in fact, today's shiur had very little to do with what he assigned us yesterday. Every day, he would tell us prepare some material and the shiur would focus on something else. Sometimes he would bring another book: *SeferHaYashar*, *Margoliyot HaYam*, and others. But the most frustrating thing was when he would assign one *dibbur ha'matchil* in Tosofot to prepare, and then have the shiur focus on another *dibbur ha'matchil*.

Gemarah study has been described as difficult, and it seemed to be a common goal for many of the students who were trying "learn how to learn" to view the shiur as a test or a validation of what they understood during their preparation. But how can you know if you "passed the test", or that you had accurately learned the material with your chavrutah, if the shiur does not cover what you studied?

I mentioned my frustration to someone else in the shiur, and he said that he had heard that Rav Brovender does it to demonstrate to us how broad and complex the Gemarah is, and that we are basically ignoramuses, in way over our heads. I never liked this explanation. Not that the explanation is not accurate, but I did not understand why such a point had to be made every shiur for an entire year.

There were two guys in the shiur who adopted an amusing "shitah" for preparing for Rav Brovender's shiur. When preparing for the shiur the next day, they would prepare a different *dibbur ha'matchil* than the one we were assigned. They reasoned: the material from Tosofot that we were assigned will certainly *not* be covered in the shiur, so let's see if we can get lucky and prepare something else, we have nothing to lose. And yes, there would be days when they would walk out of the shiur with big smiles on their faces. They had guessed right.

On one "in" Shabbat, Rav Brovender gave a shiur klali on the mitzvah of Talmud Torah. He set out arguing that the mitzvah of Talmud Torah has less to do with the Torah and more to do with our Talmud, our studying. Trying to demonstrate his point, he then asked for a siddur so that we could examine the *brachah* we make on Torah study. A few students started searching

their desk for their siddur, and then held it out to Rav Brovender. He seemed not to see them, causing them to hold out their siddur more excitedly. I was in the back of the yeshiva at my desk and thought that Rav Brovender would certainly take a siddur from one of the students closer to where he was standing. But no. Rav Brovender walked over to my desk and asked for my siddur. I will admit that I pray from a Tehillat HaShem siddur. I handed Rav Brovender my siddur, he found Birchot HaTorah, and then read aloud, "*asher kidishanu be'mitvotav ve'tzivanu AL DIVREI TORAH*", and then proceeded to ask with that special smile, "you now what they say, which religion is most similar to Judaism? Chabad." Rav Brovender then explained the significance of the more common Ashkenazi and Sfarad nusach, "*ve'tzivanu LA'ASOK be'Divrei be'Torah*": the act of studying the Torah is what is important.

I never like the explanation I had heard for why Rav Brovender never covered the Tosofot we had been assigned: that it was just so that we appreciate how deep and broad the Gemarah is (and how we students are not). In fact, for a period of time, I went down a shiur to be in a more "normal" shiur. Today, I prefer to think that Rav Brovender sought to teach us that "getting it right" in shiur does not have nearly as much value, as the time and effort we gave to preparing the shiur.

Thank you for you Torah, patience and wisdom that you shared with your students.

Binyomin Sheis Berke

Rabbi Brovender made learning a pleasure and exciting as a dynamic character. All *shiurim* in which I was not sleeping through were captivating, educational, and entertaining. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about false prophets in his Rambam shiur. Additionally it was also a nice honor to be a part of the exclusive group of black hatters with Rabbi Brovender.

Rahel Berkovits

Michlelet Bruria aka Brovender's

September 1989- January 1991

September 1992- June 1995

The memory is vivid.

It is *motzei* Shabbat. Two of my friends and I have just spent a warm and wonderful Shabbat at the Brovender's home. We are standing at the door saying our goodbyes when finally I get up the courage to ask Rav Brovender the question that has been bothering all of us with regards to the fact that his daughters are enrolled in the *Beit Ya'akov* school system. "But do you *actually* believe in the value of high level women's Torah leaning?" I blurt out. Rav Brovender gives me his serious stare and then breaks into an impish grim – "Believe in it? I *invented* it!" he retorts.

And for that fact I am forever so, so grateful.

On a national level, I am grateful for the intensity and plethora of high-level Torah learning that exists for women today, which would never have been if Rav Brovender, despite personal attack and opposition, did not value the ideal that all who desire and love Torah leaning should be given the skills and opportunity to do so. Throughout Jewish history there exist specific people who significantly and profoundly affected (for good and bad) women's relationship to Torah – R. Eliezer, Maimonides, the Hafetz Hayyim, the Rav and without a doubt Rav Brovender.

For that – I thank you.

And on a deeply personal level I am grateful for the four and a half years I spent in the *Michlelet Bruria Beit Midrash*, which gave me the skills, fundamentals, and knowledge to go on to become a Jewish educator.

For that – I thank you.

When there did not exist a learning program in Israel for women who were already in college, Rav Brovender arranged that there should be a program with apartments for the college women outside the usual dorms for post-high school students.

For that – I thank you.

When a bunch of us decided that we wanted to stay *shana bet*, a program was immediately created.

For that – I thank you.

And finally when after we returned to the US and graduated college but still wanted to come back to Israel and learn more, Rav Brovender created the *Bruria* scholars program.

For that – I thank you.

And when we complained that hearing him once a week for Parsha was not enough he willingly came to teach us a halakha/Gemara class.

For that – I thank you.

And when for a small group of us that still was not enough and we harassed him even more (come on everyone knows it just was not fair that he spent more time at the guy's Yeshiva!) he gave of his own free time and taught us *Humash* at his home one evening a week.

For that – I thank you.

And when we wanted to stand longer in the doorway and ask more and more questions so we could hear what Rav Brovender thought about the many issues that we were wrestling with he gave of his time and pushed us to think further and struggle more.

For that – I thank you.

From Rav Brovender I did not just get the opportunity to learn Torah on a high level but I had the honor and pleasure to learn from the ultimate pedagogue. I have never seen *anyone* who can give a one hour [parsha] *shiur* as well as he can. And I am not speaking about the content, which of course was always interesting and engaging. I am talking about the delivery.

Rav Brovender never went over time – the *shiur* always lasted exactly an hour. He was always able to pace himself properly and never had to rush things at the end. I now know from experience this is something extremely difficult to do especially when you are accepting students' questions in the middle. He always had ONE clear explicitly stated question that he was trying to answer in the *shiur*. A few times throughout the course of the hour he would repeat the question and summarize how the possible answer was progressing so that by the end the student did actually come away with a clear answer that they could repeat and internalize – no small feat as I have been to many *shiurim* that while they are happening the experience feels powerful but after it is done one sort of wonders “what exactly did s/he say?” and the Torah taught is lost. Not so of Rav Brovender's Torah. He always presented the material in away that the students could bring it back to their Shabbat table. And of course I can not speak about his delivery without mentioning the humor. The Torah became engaging because Rav Brovender is just so engaging. Any topic, it does not matter what it is, and the students are hanging on to every word because everyone has front row seats to hear a

professional stand up comedian. I so enjoyed those *shurim*, I would tape them and then listen again over the summer when I was doing my boring summer job. There is no way I can ever imitate the inborn natural talent of the delivery or the vastness of Torah knowledge but yet on some small scale whenever I plan a *shiur* I try to keep his model in mind.

Whether it is the general methodology I spoke of, or the nitty gritty of getting the *phsat* right – that I ask my students “Where *did Ravin* come from?” – Rav Brovender represents to me, and I imagine to many of his *talmidim*, the example of educator par excellence, that we are all striving to emulate.

May he go from strength to strength so that many more students can learn, grow, enjoy, laugh and hopefully eventually teach his Torah.

Rabbi Alan Berkowitz

Headmaster, Ramaz Lower School

Having spent four wonderful years in the yeshiva in Kiryat Moshe, I have many wonderful memories of my time with Rabbi Brovender. As I look back, there are three incidents that are worth recalling. (I have many other great memories, but these are unique in their obvious impact on my professional life.)

When I first started learning at Yeshivat HaMivtar I had already spent two years learning in another yeshiva and I was semi-full of *mussar*-type *divrei* Torah. In those days, there was no *mashgiach ruchani* at Yeshivat HaMivtar and it was generally accepted that the Torah we learned was to serve as our *mussar*. During my first few months, I was occasionally asked to share a *dvar* Torah at a meal and it really took me a while to understand that my *mussar*-motivated (perhaps self-righteous) style was not the norm at "Brovender's." One Friday morning, erev Shabbat Vayigash, I stopped Rabbi Brovender after his Maharal shiur and shared with him what was probably my first *pshat*-based *chidush* for a *dvar* Torah. When I finished he smiled and said something like "very nice" and started to walk away. But then he stopped, looked back at me and smiled and said "now you've got it." Those words meant the world to me. Four years later when against Rabbi Brovender's better judgment, I was leaving the Yeshiva to begin my teaching career in the US, Rabbi Brovender talked with me about teaching Torah. He said that sometimes a teacher has to be an entertainer and that's something that we have to accept. However, we should never confuse teaching with entertaining and so never combine the two. When you entertain you entertain, but when you learn, you learn.

During my third year in the Yeshiva I was invited to the Brovender's home for Friday night. That afternoon I had called Rabbi Brovender to ask him a question about the *Parsha* and so I was not surprised when he asked that question of every one at the table. I was a little embarrassed; however, when his son, then eleven years old gave a quick and simple answer that I should have considered. Rabbi Brovender immediately explained to his son that his answer was inadequate and told him why. The next morning after davening in the yeshiva, Rabbi Brovender delivered his usual *drasha*. In the middle of his talk he quoted my question with a nuance that I had not presented, but that certainly made it a great question. I was certain that he had gone out of his way to build me up and encourage me to keep learning, thinking and asking. Again, this is an experience on which I have modeled my own behavior towards my students. I'm pretty sure that Rabbi Brovender was much more comfortable when we called him "chief" than when we referred to him as the Rosh Yeshiva. He put a lot of energy into avoiding fitting the mold of Rosh Yeshiva, but to so many of us he will always be the Rebbe who most influenced our lives.

Naomi Berman

A couple of years ago, I taught two students, roommates at Midreshet Lindenbaum, whose mothers had been roommates at Bruria. As someone who was privileged to

study with Rabbi Brovender, and now to teach the “second generation” of his Bruria students, I think I am well positioned to express the tremendous debt of *hakarat ha-tov* of the thousands of women who have found their place in the world of Talmud Torah because of Rabbi Brovender’s pioneering spirit. When I invoke Rabbi Brovender’s name in the classroom (as I so often do), the students always perk up and want to know more – do I really know Rabbi Brovender personally? What is he like? – because they know that the Beit Midrash that they take for granted was a place their mothers could enter only because Rabbi Brovender invited them in.

But the *hakarat ha-tov* extends to the more personal realm because Rabbi Brovender didn’t merely create a beit midrash in which I could learn. He and Mrs. Brovender also invited me to share Shabbat with their family, to learn Torah in the study of their home, and even to accept our very humble invitation to join us for an occasional Shabbat meal or afternoon tea in our “cozy” caravan at Yeshivat HaMivtar.

But don’t get the wrong impression, Rabbi Brovender was never a fan of the “let them just smell the *cholent* and then they’ll want to be frum” variety of education. His sincere warmth and concern for each of his students never compromised the complexity of his message. He never failed to challenge us, sometimes to berate us (I remember well when one of my classmates made the mistake of removing her shoes during shiur!) and yes, often to confuse us. As he was opening the door of the traditionally male beit midrash to us, he was simultaneously admonishing us not to blindly adopt “male models,” but to seek the “female voice” in *avodat Hashem*. Many years later, I am still left pondering what the rosh yeshiva meant when he suggested that women should be more involved in the realm of prophecy...

I hope that I am successful in passing on to the new generation of Bruria “heirs” even a fraction of the combination of personal concern and intellectual complexity that Rabbi Brovender communicated to us.

Todd Berman

I was once told that Rabbi Brovender took credit for my engagement to wife. When I bewilderedly asked the bearer of this message how that was so, I was told that Rabbi Brovender said it was the way he glared at me. Perhaps. I can’t really say. However, there is no doubt that the experience of knowing Rabbi Brovender has impacted me and my religious growth in ways that still amaze me.

During my sophomore year at the joint program of Columbia and JTS, I decided to attend a yeshiva for my junior year. When I informed one of my professors, he warned me that rumor had it that at Brovender’s “they don’t answer JTS students’ questions.” Had that been the case, then perhaps my life would have gone in a radically different direction; however, after learning with Rabbi Brovender for 5 years over a period of around a decade (I can still remember Shevut Israel, Elazar, the Bank in Te’ena, and finally the “*Kiriya*”), I have discovered that the Rosh Yeshiva usually does exactly the opposite of what everyone expects.

Rabbi Brovender created a learning environment which allowed me to learn rigorously, think seriously, and laugh heartily. I remember that while interviewing with Dr. Isadore Twersky ז”ל at Harvard, the esteemed professor praised the success of Rabbi Brovender’s yeshiva and teaching methodology.

HaMivtar and Rabbi Brovender in my mind are synonyms. The yeshiva and the master teacher allowed me to grow, question, and truly feel at home. Once while spending Shabbat

in the Rosh Yeshiva's home, he began to discuss numerous former students. He knew where everyone one was and what they were doing. (And of course analyzed every personality precisely.) Mrs. Brovender appropriately complimented him on this care and concern for all his former students.

I recall speaking with a well known advocate for Agudath Israel whose brother learned with Rabbi Brovender. As we all know, that sector is not always complimentary of our yeshiva. This fellow remarked how impressed he was by Rabbi Brovender's concern and sacrifice for his students. It seems that this person's brother, the HaMivtar alumnus, had moved to northern Israel and was hospitalized with a serious illness. Rabbi Brovender immediately traveled several hours to do *bikkur cholim*. It certainly made an impression on the sick man's older brother.

Everyone these days lays claim to some monopoly on absolute truth. I was always impressed by Rabbi Brovender's critique of this position. In my youth I once recounted a story I read where a certain famous *Gadol BeTorah* mocked the "*kibud Av ve-Em*" of secular Israelis. Rabbi Brovender was unimpressed and questioned the validity of the claim. The "frum" position would have been simply to nod in agreement to the anti-secular slight. Rabbi Brovender was unmoved and remarked that traditional societies, including many secular Israelis, often demonstrate great respect for their elders. He is right. His openness for truth always moved me. I have always felt that I could discuss anything with the Rosh Yeshiva because he was willing to read everything. When Nomi and I sat in his house before our marriage my eyes fixed on a book on Persian rugs. I asked him if he didn't get bored reading all the time. His eyes looked inquisitively at me and he remarked, "no."

In the past, some members of the Orthodox community have been critical of my upbringing in the Conservative movement. I remember Rabbi Brovender criticizing these detractors saying that he had taught many students from JTS over the years and although he knew that they would probably return to that world, he felt that they were better people for encountering traditional Torah. I know he is right. I also know that many of my friends and I can attribute our success as Orthodox rabbis and teachers to Rabbi Brovender's willingness to teach us among the "everyone" he was willing to welcome in the beit midrash.

And there are so many of these former students who because of him have impacted Judaism. While serving as the Orthodox rav at Brandeis, I kept meeting HaMivtar alumni: one a principal, another head of Hillel's international department of education, yet a third a local rabbi and professor at the University and the list goes on and on. It often seems that wherever I turn there are those whose lives were changed by Rabbi Brovender.

To this day I often quote my Rosh Yeshiva. Although I was only in his *gemara shiur* for a short while, it impacted me greatly. In his *shiur* and around him in the Beit Midrash, I picked up pearls of wisdom I can pass on in his name. And all my students know what has always been for me a key Rabbi Brovenderism, "if it doesn't make sense, you're probably wrong."

I miss the days trying to learn a *daf gemara* while eavesdropping on the court of students surrounding the Rosh Yeshiva. Whether or not I owe Rabbi Brovender a debt of gratitude for my marriage, I certainly owe him thanks for all the rest.

David I. Bernstein, Ph.D.

Dean, Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies

I had the privilege of being a student at Yeshivat HaMivtar, and later working together with Rabbi Chaim Brovender for 12 years when I was director of Midreshet Lindenbaum.

I am very grateful for the learning that I had when I studied at HaMivtar almost 30 years ago, where Rabbi Brovender was not only the founder, but the guiding influence. It seems to me that he has a unique combination of being a *Talmid Chacham*, a caring individual who knows the meaning of personal *chesed*, and a sense of humor that many stand-up comedians would envy.

But he is also an independent, original thinker, in certain ways even an iconoclast. His strong educational vision included intellectual honesty, the ability to question the status quo, to laugh at oneself and one's community, and to think out of the box. (Sometimes his suggestions to me seemed so impractical that I, a pragmatist by nature, had trouble understanding them!)

It was all of the above qualities that were the necessary prerequisites for his founding of Michlelet Bruria, now Midreshet Lindenbaum. I once said to a group of Midreshet Lindenbaum students that while many people have founded yeshivot for men, it took a truly remarkable person to found the first yeshiva for women in 1976. Rabbi Brovender's role as an educator for thousands of men at HaMivtar will (unfortunately, perhaps) not be remembered as much as his pioneering role in Torah education for women.

Historians will cite his opening the primary texts of our tradition to women, especially Talmud, and creating the first women's Bet Midrash (probably in the whole world), as a tremendous innovation whose effects are still being felt – and will be felt in the future – in the Torah world.

Some may forget that living in Kiryat Mattesdorf, he initially paid a personal price for his "*chiddush*," including personal threats and having his car tires slashed. It took courage (as well as his intellectual honesty and iconoclastic streak, probably) to continue the experiment.

When I became director of Midreshet Lindenbaum in 1984, we were still the only women's Bet Midrash in Yerushalayim, though others had opened up in other parts of the world. By the time I left in 1996, there were numerous women's Torah institutions that had adopted the Bet Midrash as the heart and soul of their learning experience. Similarly, the possibility of Orthodox women studying Talmud became an accepted part of much of the Orthodox landscape.

These were his accomplishments, and they insure that his legacy will be not only the thousands of *talmidim* and *talmidot* who heard his Torah, but also many thousands of others, who – unbeknownst to them – benefited from his ideas and his work.

Rabbi Joseph Beyda
Yeshivah of Flatbush High School
Congregation Bnei Yitzhak

I met Rabbi Chaim Brovender at a time in my life when I had many questions about Torah, rabbis, and authority. His way of learning, thinking and questioning made me feel that to every question, Judaism had an approach, if not an answer, that worked. My faith and confidence in our religion and our Sages is founded upon Rabbi Brovender's unique scholarship and humor that put an eighteen-year-old at ease. For the last fifteen years, the words "Rabbi Brovender" have brought an instant smile to my face and warmth to my soul. I am forever thankful.

Rabbi Yitzchak Blau

It seems appropriate to begin with an expression of gratitude. My family's *aliyah* was successful and relatively stress free due to the fact that Noa and I came with good jobs. In my case, I was fortunate enough to have Rabbi Brovender offer me a full-time position at Yeshivat HaMivtar. Rabbi Brovender did not really believe in part time staff, as he wanted rabbeim who identified with the institution and not hired guns that come in to teach a class.

His offer enabled me to join a work environment with interesting and intelligent students and a high quality group of colleagues. For this, I thank him

As mentioned, Rabbi Brovender wanted staff that felt that the institution was theirs. This was also manifest in the yeshiva's decision-making process. In many yeshivot, the Rosh Yeshiva makes the decisions while the rabbeim are supposed to just give their shiurim. At HaMivtar, most educational issues were put to a staff vote and only occasionally did Rabbi Brovender decide matters on his own. Thus, I not only had a good job but a chance to have a say in the educational direction of the yeshiva.

Rabbi Brovender set up a more democratic environment because his successes have not led him to excessive concern for personal honor and because he truly sees the rationality of arguments for positions other than his own. We certainly disagreed on many issue over the years and I sometimes used strong language in attacking his positions. Despite my sharp tongue, I never suffered as a result and we continued to enjoy a productive and friendly work relationship. Rabbi Brovender can respect people with whom he disagrees.

There may be an irony in this last sentence. In some ways, particularly in terms of educational choices for his children, Rabbi Brovender is firmly rooted in the charedi world. Yet, in the world of ideas, he often shows greater open mindedness than most liberal and progressive Orthodox Jews. While many think that their camp has a monopoly on truth and goodness, Rabbi Brovender remains a keen critic of every camp and appreciates that those that disagree may also have a point. Though I was usually more liberal than Rabbi Brovender when discussing halakhic questions, I often found myself more conservative when it came to theological issues.

Finally I would like to mention one of Rabbi Brovender's important contributions to Jewish Education. A shiur can focus on conceptual analysis, amassing Torah information, theological discussion or even just on sheer entertainment. All of the above goals generate excitement and enthusiasm from the students. Yet, none of the above substitutes for the arduous task of learning how to read the words. At Yeshiva HaMivtar, the students heard that they also had to learn how to decipher the Tosafot or the Ibn Ezra without the benefit or translations or cheat books. I believe this too to be a significant contribution.

Mali (Adler) Brofsky

Midreshet Lindenbaum 1990-91

ATID Fellow 1996-97

As a student at Midreshet Lindenbaum (1990-91) I gained much from all my teachers, but Rabbi Brovender, as our Rosh Yeshiva, was the lynchpin of our experience. The pursuit of intensive, rigorous learning for women, particularly in *Torah she-be'al peh*, was still considered radical enough to be frequently challenged. In his typical, understated way, Rabbi Brovender, by taking us seriously, teaching us seriously, and quietly assuming that it was our right, as well as our privilege, and perhaps even our obligation, to learn Torah, gave us the assurance we needed. His stature as a *talmid chacham*, his unquestionable allegiance to *halacha* and the rigorous religious life, as well as his insistence on intelligent, critical thinking, all inspired our admiration. But even more important than the opportunity to learn from such a teacher, was the knowledge that such a person stood at the forefront of our endeavor. It enabled us to take ourselves seriously, as searching, thinking, religious beings, and for that, I, as well as scores of other women, am indebted to him.

Erica (Schoonmaker) Brown**Student, 84-86, 88****Faculty, 90-94**

Dearest Rabbi B.,

Our first “personal” encounter was in your parsha shiur in Bruria one Thursday afternoon when I was eighteen. I held up a pencil in my hand to ask a question and you blurted out, “Is that a pencil or a question?” I replied, “This is a pencil, and this is a question,” and proceeded to ask you something that I cannot remember. Our relationship started off on a tone of mutual sarcasm, and humor won the day. As it has, for most of our encounters these past few decades. I think you came to ‘Mentyl’ – our Purim shpiel about a boy who wanted to go to a girls’ yeshiva. I remember you coming to shpiel one year as a Satmer hasid, which you thought was very amusing. No one thought much of your costume, coming from your neighborhood.

For the past decades, my life as student, teacher, mother, volunteer has been affected by your presence on some level. You have visited us everywhere that we have lived – which, for the Browns, is a whole lot of places. We treasured your visits, even if you never liked any of our dogs. You were there under my chuppa, holding my first son during his brit; you and Miriam were two of the last people to leave our oldest daughter’s bat mitzvah. You had and have tremendous staying power as a teacher, and dare I say, a friend.

During each of your visits, I would watch you take out a phone book and spend hours calling former talmidim, when, no doubt, you could have spent your time learning or visiting art museums. Your students have always been a priority for you – and not just when they are in class. It shows in how much love they feel for you. A rebbe-friend is hard to come by these days. A rebbe who takes interest in the totality of who you are and in the range of your life experiences is exceptionally hard to find.

I am just as comfortable talking about politics and art with you as I am talking about learning. Let me clarify that for a moment. It is just as frustrating talking to you about politics and art as it is any other subject, since you often reduce complex issues into one- liners and then dismiss them. For some way-out reason, I feel very blessed to have found that in you. It has helped me be a better teacher; you were my role model for being your own person and an authentic person, even as you ran a yeshiva – where so often teachers don a religious mental uniform that can make people blur into one mold.

I watched very closely on your last visit as you handled a call from someone who heard you and did not know you. He wanted help on a very personal family matter. You were sensitive, compassionate and true to yourself. You let him know that you could not help – as much as you wanted to – because you did not know him or his situation and that it was not fair to give the false impression that you could. You never had out fake *brakhot* and emotional *shirayim*, although your stature would certainly allow you to do so. You are simply too honest for that.

Two quick emotional moments for me, and I am sure you’ll dread this – but then again, editors get certain privileges. I remember the Friday night after you were hurt during the Second Intifada. Hurt is not the right word. I don’t know what is. I was so horrified and worried about you that I could not stay in shul. I was crying terribly and afraid and appalled that a person so cerebral could face such physical violence. And what cheered me up was the thought that if you saw me crying you would have said, “Erica, what’s the matter with you?” When we did speak you said, “Now, the people of Efrat mistakenly think I’m their new political poster child.” Irreverent, even in the face of danger.

My second memory is teaching a class for ATID on a trip to Israel a few years ago. You showed up, and I was so embarrassed. There was no way I was going to teach in front of you, but you insisted and sat in the back. And when it was finished and the room cleared out, you

said something to me that has touched me more than any compliment I have received in my professional life. “Erica,” you said, “You’re a good teacher.” Coming from you, that meant a lot.

Rabbi B, you’re a *great* teacher. As a student in Bruria and a teacher there, I will always be indebted for the way you trained me to think, to teach, to really enjoy my students and to allow myself to laugh while doing so.

Jeffrey Buechler

Beit Shemesh

I was in the yeshiva from September '84 to March '86. Around the beginning of 1986 my yearning to stay and live in Israel was growing stronger by the day. However I felt that if I was going to live here, I needed to feel like I was really a part of the nation and a part of the society as well. One thing I felt that I strongly needed, and wanted, to do was serve in the army. So I decided that the best way to do this would be to join a *hesder* yeshiva and go in with them. There was another guy interested in doing the same, Bob Blum, so we approached Rabbi Brovender about helping us out. Needless to say, he was more than happy to do so, even more than I could have ever imagined! We decided that the best thing would be to go into the next *hesder giyus* which was coming up at the end of June. R. Brovender started to make phone calls for us in order to see if there was a yeshiva that would let us do the *giyus* with their students. Before we knew it, R. Brovender told us to meet him one afternoon at his car after shuir – he was taking us to meet Rabbi Dov Lior, Rosh Yeshivat Kiryat Arba. Well for those who knew Rabbi Brovender's car in those days realize that this was somewhat of a tall order to start with. The yeshiva was then in its first year in the Gush on Moshav Elazar, and R. Brovender's car was this extremely old, barely functioning piece of machinery that, among other things, needed water to be put into the radiator about every kilometer or so. So there we went on our way to Kiryat Arba, of course stopping on the way in the middle of who knows where to fill the radiator. When we got there, thank God, we sat down in Rabbi Lior's office with R. Brovender, and after a few friendly exchanges of greetings between R. Brovender and Rabbi Lior, Rabbi Lior opens up with a question to R. Brovender. He asks him if R. Brovender still teaches in English in his yeshiva. R. Brovender went on to answer him, and the next thing we know, the two are off on a halachik discourse about if it is permitted or not to teach Torah in English. The discourse lasted I think for about half an hour, and to make a long story short, that was the end with us and Kiryat Arba!

R. Brovender next arranged for us to meet Rabbi Druckman, Rosh Yeshivat Or Etzion, and then Member of Knesset. He arranged for us to meet him in his office in the Knesset!

So the two of us (without R. Brovender) went off very excited to our meeting with a in the Knesset building. We had a very nice meeting with Rabbi Druckman, however he felt that we should first learn another year in his yeshiva and then go in the army a year later. We thought about this option, but I was already 23 years old, and felt that I wanted to do this as soon as I could. So we thanked him very much, and reported back to R. Brovender.

R. Brovender continued his efforts on our behalf and received a similar response from Yeshivat HaGush. In the end he arranged a meeting with Rabbi Ben-Meir, the Rosh Yeshivat Shevut Yisrael in Efrat. This meeting went well, but Rabbi Ben Meir said that we would need to start learning in his yeshiva immediately. After consultation with R. Brovender, we packed our bags and he sent us on our way across the road from Elezar to Efrat, with his blessings in hand.

I proudly served in a Merkava tank unit with the yeshiva in Efrat from mid-1986 until mid-1987. After almost 20 years of *miluim* since then, I am still proudly serving (on a volunteer basis) in a Merkava tank unit. I would just like to thank R. Brovender for his dedication to the yeshiva and his students over the years. On a personal level, I would like to thank him for

all his effort in helping me fulfill a double dream – living in *Eretz Yisrael*, and helping defend it. I wish him and his family the best of health.

Yisrael Campbell Hochstein

Yeshivat HaMivtar 2004-2006

“Alright let’s go back to *daf bet*, *amud alef* and look at that Tosafot.” I believe we actually groaned, it was the last day of the *z’man* we’d been tangling with that Tosafot for months. Suddenly I remembered once sharing my frustrations with learning with Rabbi Brovender. He listened without giving the usual answers that many teachers had – “It’s hard” or “You didn’t grow up with it.” He asked if I wanted to know the secret to learning. “Yes, I did” I said pulling up a chair. “*Chazara*. Reviewing the *daf* you’ve already learned will teach you more than learning a new one” He said and then sat silently. I wasn’t even settled in my seat. He must have seen the look of concern on my face. “But don’t worry,” he finally continued with that smile of his – “nobody does it; everyone wants to learn a new *daf*.”

So here we were on the last day of the *z’man* relearning the first Tosafot we had learned at the beginning of the year. And it hit me he knew we might not do it on our own, but we couldn’t help doing it with him.

The other memory that serves as my strongest guide to what I learned from Rabbi Brovender was of my first day at HaMivtar. Before I was even a student I had come to talk to Rabbi Brovender about learning there. It was between Rosh haShana and Yom Kippur and there were only a few days of learning before the long break at Sukkot. So I asked should I come on Sunday or wait till after Sukkot. “Let me ask you a question?,” was Rabbi Brovender’s answer. “If you don’t come to the Yeshiva on Sunday will you learn Torah?” “Probably not,” I answered sheepishly. “So come in on Sunday.” Thank you Rabbi Brovender for your attitudes about learning as much as for your actual teaching.

Gershon Clymer

Pure and unabashed love for the rebbeim was what made the HaMivtar experience transformational. That love served as a bridge to love for the Torah and Mitsvot, and even Hashem, and as a foundation on which we could build ourselves as bnei Torah. Each of the rebbeim gave of his great knowledge and shared his special tools of learning, and also gave so much of himself in the process that the intellectual was also inspirational. That intimate and sacred place called Yeshivat HaMivtar was where we absorbed unforgettable lessons of the heart and mind which make us the parents and teachers we are today.

Uri Cohen

Yeshivat HaMivtar, 1994-1999

"Writing a century ago, a Russian Marxist maintained that circumstance created Napoleon: had Napoleon not existed, someone else would have filled his shoes. Well, I came to know everyone who might have been Mario [Savio] if Mario hadn't existed, and I know that only Mario could have done what he did." – Reginald E. Zelnik, "Mario Savio: The Avatar of Free Speech," *The New York Times Magazine*, 12/29/1996, p. 34.

Even without having been around in the early 1970s to know everyone else who might have been Rav Brovender, it seems to me that only Rav Brovender could have done what he did. Not only his revolutionary approach to women's learning, but his non-coercive attitude to everyone's learning, were unprecedented then and remain exceptional even now.

Yaakov S. Cohen

Reb Chaim Brovender never pushed anyone to learn
He only pushed you to push yourself to grow
Once you pushed yourself then he challenged you

He was the most modest and yet funniest Rav I have ever met
 He does not want glory, just a good piece of Torah to learn

Joshua Cypess

HaMivtar '90-'91

Rabbi, Young Israel of New Haven

Two lessons I learned from my rebbe, Rabbi Brovender, about Jewish education and being a Jewish educator:

1. A teacher teaches whether the room is full or (almost) empty; and
2. Everyone deserves the chance to learn Torah.

The first lesson – that the number of students does not effect the responsibility to teach a full lesson – comes up frequently in adult education, where the students come by choice and without tuition. Frequently, in this venue of volunteer education, I would find myself teaching to a class of as little as 1 or 2 people. Thinking about Rabbi Brovender's selfless model, I have invented a teaching motto that I'd love to ascribe to him: "one student is a *chavruta*, two students a class."

To think otherwise, to imagine that class quality depends on a sizeable crowd, reflects an attitude of teaching as ego-gratification. And it's a sign of Rav Brovender's humility that he cares about the lesson, and the people who chose to stay and learn, than he does about feeding his self-worth. His humility comes from a preternatural self-confidence which in turn is a key component of his sense of humor and his ability to allow himself to absorb and reflect Torah.

The second lesson – that everyone deserves to be taught Torah at the highest level – can be seen in Rabbi Brovender's pioneering work in education for women and in the varied student body at Yeshivat HaMivtar. This educational philosophy doubtless came from the famous programmatic debate between Rav Elazar ben Azariah and Rabban Gamliel (seen in TB Brachot 28a & TJ Brachot 4:1, 7d).

Rabban Gamliel had an ideological litmus test for those who wanted to learn. When he was deposed, his successor Rav Elazar removed the physical guards from the Beit Midrash and hundreds if not thousands of new students flocked in. The newfound freedom of the Beit Midrash led to the creation of an entire tractate (Eduyot) and nearly every unresolved question was solved on that great day (called "*bo ba'yom*" in Shas).

Rabban Brovender removed the guards from the Beit Midrash for more than one generation of men and women – creating a powerful legacy of students who were given sustenance for their hunger and thirst for God's words.

Jimmy Davis

It's a challenge to clarify and characterize what I remember most about Rav Brovender, largely because I have always found it enormously challenging to explain our interactions, relationship, and dynamic. I first heard about Rav Brovender during conversations with people who had learned from him either in Israel or during their trips to the United States. When my brother Max spent a year at HaMivtar in Rav Brovender's shiur, I was eager to find out exactly what learning from the Rebbe was like.

What are you learning? What does he teach you? What do you talk about? Invariably, Max would reply, "I'm learning, but it's hard to describe", or "It's tough for me to explain to you", or just simply, "I'm not really sure". Nevertheless, Max was indisputably learning and growing, and Rav Brovender's impact on his character, religiosity, and internal compass was readily apparent to my family and me. Further confusion prompted further curiosity, as

well. Who was Rav Brovender – what, exactly what was going on up there in the Judean foothills anyway?

Soon enough, I had the privilege of learning under Rav Brovender's guidance for three years. During that time, a number of moments stand out that help define Rav Brovender for me. When he walked into the Beit Midrash, he would greet me with a rousing "How's it going Herr Doctor?" every time he walked into the Beit Midrash. Sometimes he said it while continuing on to his *makom kavua*. When he did pause near me, a grin and mirthful eyes looking my way, he would salvo a gentle barb in my direction invariably leaving me chuckling to myself. Time taught me that these seemingly minor interactions were far more than simply idle conversation – Rav Brovender was learning about me inside and out.

For every light conversation shared, Rav Brovender was always ready to engage in more serious conversation when I approached 'the bench'. Whether a difficult Tosfot, a novel concept in Berkowitz, or Glen Gould's weirdness, Rav Brovender had inevitably read it, listened to it, or simply taught the author – and he was always ready with a response. At first, his responses were hard for me to interpret because Rav Brovender would seldom state his thoughts unequivocally on any matter. Instead, his ideas flowed in a series of ellipses and concentric circles, punctuated by a joke or two in between. As the months passed, though, I realized that for Rav Brovender, my thought process was as crucial as any specific conclusion. The Rebbe loved to kid, joke, jest, and provoke, but in doing so he also examines his students' assumptions. As I caught on, his responses (I choose the word 'responses' rather than 'answers') became less cryptic. I slowly learned how and what Rav Brovender wanted to teach in our encounters.

I would not dare attempt to reconstruct Rav Brovender's *hashkafa* on paper, but I can record what stood out when I recall his dozens of shiurim. He possesses a glowing enthusiasm for Torah U'maddah, which he practices in a way that precious few may ever approach. Whether exchanging sleep for another *blatt b'iyun*, or rising early to finish the latest academic novella, he provided an example for all of his talmidim. While Rav Brovender is perhaps the most well-read individual that I have ever met, his approach to Yahadut seemed surprisingly simple and direct. "Just learn," he tells his students repeatedly. Learning is where we find answers, we find questions, and we connect with our own roots. Indeed, his credo reflects his own tenacious commitment to *mesorah* and unflinching belief that we stand on the shoulders of the *gedolim* who came before. And finally, amidst the piles of books, yellowed pages of Gemara, and cans of Diet Coke, Rav Brovender understood that one cannot take life too seriously. Ever ready with a grin, anecdote, or amusing observation, Rav Brovender kept his talmidim coming back for more.

One year, I traveled with some other talmidim up to the Galil for a few days during Nisan. We ran into a middle-aged couple and engaged them in conversation. They made *aliyah* some thirty years previously and had started their family in Israel. When they learned that we went to HaMivtar, they revealed that they had both been Rav Brovender's students, and their children, in turn, also attended his institutions. We continued talking about HaMivtar, their experiences, and the Rebbe, when they made the following observation: "You know, when you take the people living in Jerusalem who have connections back in the United States, Rav Brovender has probably taught over half of them." Whether this assertion is true or not is less important than the sentiment: Rav Brovender's fingerprints and influence are ubiquitous in twenty-first century learning and education.

My favorite memory of Rav Brovender occurred after I returned to the United States. Rav Brovender came to Cambridge to recruit for HaMivtar and agreed to stay with me. A true man of the people, he spent two nights in my Harvard College dormitory. We spent the Shabbaton together, but Motzei Shabbat before he left for the airport, the Rebbe and I spent an hour together sitting and talking. We spoke about life, contemporaries still learning at

HaMivtar, and others who had left the Kollel to do *shlichut*. Some talmidim had done well, others were struggling to find their niche in difficult jobs. Over the course of our conversation, the Rebbe discussed his students with profound sincerity and gravity. Perhaps I just never noticed beforehand, but I suddenly realized how deeply Rav Brovender knows and cares for every one of his students. Rav Brovender sat at the front of the Beit Midrash with students scattered all over the room. Some never sat in his shiur, some turned to other Ramim for their questions. Yet, Rav Brovender spent time and effort thinking about every one of us as individuals. He knew us all and cared deeply for our growth and happiness.

Those minutes of conversation helped me clarify my own relationship with Rav Brovender. Today, when people ask me to explain what learning in his Kollel for three years was like, I still falter because the experience is still difficult to put into words. Instead, I attempt to answer the question as best as I am able by characterizing my continuing relationship with him. Despite my inability to understand many of Rav Brovender's observations, I internalize his comments and give them serious thought. I love Rav Brovender as a Rebbe and also as a grandfather-like figure. He understands his students in a way that they may not even understand themselves, much like a grandfather's wisdom to his grandchildren. Indeed, Rav Brovender is a true *Talmid Chacham* and his *haskafah* flows constantly and purely to all those privileged to learn from him. In this way, he continues to raise generations to Torah.

Noah Davis

Yeshivat HaMivtar, January-June 1992

I had the privilege of learning Chumash with Rabbi Brovender. What amazed me, in addition to his brilliant insights and dry sense of humor, is that he took the time to listen and consider each and every suggestion offered by his talmidim. Once, a student in the class offered a suggestion as to Rashi's motivations for offering the answer "*Ain Mukdam u-Me'uchar Ba-Torah*." Rabbi Brovender thought about it, exclaimed that the pupil's answer merited further study – and followed up on that answer in a future class, examining how the talmid's answer fit each time Rashi posited that answer. It was that sense of dedication to his talmidim and to what one can learn from any source that remains a lesson I've tried to remember until today.

Leo Dee

With the permission of the Rav I would like to share with you a secret of his which I think can shed some light on *Parshat Tetzave* (the week in which I am writing this) – let me explain.

A few months ago, I and my family had the *zechut* to spend a fabulous Shabbat with Rav Brovender and his wonderful Rebbetzen and family. At this Shabbat I asked a question that had troubled me since I'd arrived. How did he initially fund this Yeshiva?

In short he started a development company to sell property to Charedim in Har Nof – the profits of which he pumped into the Yeshiva. I found this startling!

The Torah teaches us to use our unique combination of *midot* to find our *tafkid* in life – in this sense, Rav Brovender is an example to us all. Among Rav Brovender's many great *midot*, the three I'd like to focus on are his abilities as an:

Exceptional *talmid chacham* and educator; Entrepreneur who is passionate about building Torah institutions; and *Anav* – who never talks about his own successes

1) Firstly, Rav Brovender as an exceptional educator. The first *posuk* of *Tetzave* states “להעלות לך תמיד”. The Gemara in Shabbat explains שתהא השלמה עולה מעליה ולא על ידי דבר אחר. The Meor ve-Shemesh explains the significance of this: A great Rav is measured by his ability to set up his students to study independently of him and not to have to keep coming back to him incessantly. Rav Brovender has trained countless hundreds of students and Rabbonim to be

self-sustaining in their Torah studies. Hence “להעלות נר תמיד” is Rav Brovender as the educator par excellence.

2) Secondly, Rav Brovender as an entrepreneur can be seen in the fire of the menorah. The Netivot Shalom gives a *mashal* of a property developer who wishes to develop a town in a forest. He starts to hack down some trees and then gets others to help him. After a week, a month, a year – there are still countless trees to chop down. Then the man has an idea – he lights a fire and within a day the ground is ready for building. The message here is that many skilled people can hack away at a project and move it slowly forwards, but what it really takes is one person with a spark of fiery passion to make the project happen – and perhaps this is the message of the menorah itself.

Rav Brovender has the unique skill-set to found Torah institutions through his fiery passion and hence his successes with this Yeshiva, Lindenbaum, Shappels and Hartman – to name but a few!

3) Finally, Rav Brovender as an *Anav* can also be seen in this first *posuk*. How so?

The Abarbanel asks the astute question – “What’s this *posuk* doing here in the first place?!”

This is the parsha of “בגדי כהונה” what is the relevance of the menorah here?

Answers the Abarbanel – the only reason the Cohanim are given these special clothes is for their duties in Kedusha, such as lighting the menorah, and not at all for self aggrandizement or pride. Hence it is only fitting that the section that describes the ornamentation of the בגדי כהונה should commence with an explanation of why the clothes are required at all. This too describes Rav Brovender who has used and continues to use his unique personal assets for the furtherance of Torah study – the lighting of his students’ menorahs, and never for his own personal aggrandizement or publicity.

And so we can see Rav Brovender’s qualities as an educator, passionate entrepreneur and *anav* echoed in the lighting of the menorah, the light of the menorah and the kedusha of the menorah.

Rav Brovender, we all hope that you will continue to light up the fire of passion for Torah learning in students for many years to come. We are sad that you are moving on but wish you הצלחה רבה in all your future endeavors.

We thank you for your inspiration, passion and commitment and the impact you have had on all of our lives.

Jason Demant

Once a year, Yeshivat HaMivtar would spend a Shabbat in Sefat, more often than not on parshat Noah. An opportunity to go for some hikes, spend Shabbat in the north and see the Rabbis in a different context and listen to their commentaries on the locations along the way. I would like to share with you a very personal moment which happened to me in Sefat and has been a source of inspiration ever since.

Rav Brovender’s Thursday evening parsha shiur had a new location that week – Ascent, overlooking the beautiful valley west of Sefat, with Har Meron in the distance.

In 1994, the subject of the shiur was the Netziv’s introduction to Bereshit. During the shiur, an idea relevant to the discussion occurred to me, regarding the Avot and their role on the earth. So, after the shiur, I mentioned my idea to the Rosh HaYeshiva. His one line response has served to inspire me ever since. It gave me a sense of empowerment, that I actually had something worthwhile to say and that perhaps one day I too would share the words of the Netziv with others. All he said to me, was, “When *you* teach it, then *that’s* what you’ll say.”

Daniel Diker

Learning with Rabbi Brovender during my three years at HaMivtar was a mind altering experience. He crystallized the Gemara for us in 4th level *shiur*, in such a way that the

learning engendered confidence and a sense of mission in us *talmidim*, even those of us with zero background.

I used to sit in the front row of the Yeshiva then which today is the upstairs Efrat supermarket (this corresponds to those three years 1991-93). During the Yom Kippur davening, Rabbi Brovender wore the Converse Chuck Taylor Canvas basketball sneakers making him the coolest Rosh Yeshiva around. I had come to Israel some months earlier with a spanking new pair of Chuck Taylor Converse high tops, so I figured that if Rav Brovender wore the Chuck Taylor's then there might be hope for me as one of his *talmidim*. Now, I was the oldest student in the Yeshiva having arrived green behind the ears at the age of 28. But Rav Brovender was not deterred. He invested in every student equally – young, less young, and less-less young alike. His Thursday night Parsha Shiur was memorable. We would always go home able to say the shiur over because the Rabbi's presentation was so clear and concise. I thank him for being such an inspiration.

David Ehrlich

Hartmans/Shappells 1974-76

As is the case with most teenage “*chozrei be-tshuva*” my initial years with Rabbi Brovender (1974-76) had their moments of confrontation. Whether it was Rabbi B’s “discoveries” about me via the yeshiva cook, or my insistence to learn Mussar *without* going back to the sources, my years at Hartmans/Shappell were difficult ones. During my second year, I lived outside of the Yeshiva, in an apartment, also not with Rabbi B’s bracha. With all that said, he never gave up on me! All in all (irregardless of a Rebbe who was *very* loud and tough on me – name unmentioned – I think back on those two years as very positive ones in my Torah growth experience.

Fast forward 15 years and I make Aliya as a newlywed with my FFB wife, Gail. When she first met Rabbi B (as most of us who love him know and have learned to “look past”) she was taken aback by his sarcasm and his clogs (*alei hem ha-shalom*). As the years passed, Gail also learned to see beyond the surface and came to know and love Rabbi B. Upon moving to Efrat and being in closer proximity we began spending more time together and *trying* to keep a weekly *chevruta*. During my year when I was an unemployed film maker and opening Gili’s Goodies I had a lot of time on my hands and spent more and more time at the Yeshiva both with Reb Chaim as well as with Jon Bailey, an amazing young Rav who finally taught me (at age 46) how to learn and enjoy Gemara. The nicest thing about living near the Yeshiva was our ability to begin a *minhag*, which will probably now end, sharing a Rosh Hashana meal with Reb Chaim, Miriam and the girls.

Obviously, a very important time in our relationship (which I think I can call at this point a friendship, in addition to the Rebbe/Talmid *kesher*) was “the *Pigua*”. I was actually waiting in the beit midrash on that morning for our weekly (or almost weekly) *parsha chevruta*. When Reb Chaim didn’t show up, I was not overly concerned as it has been known to happen. I received a phone call a short time after that Reb Chaim was attacked in a nearby Arab village and was almost killed. I immediately ran to Hadassah Ein Karem and during the next weeks, spent as much time as I could at his bedside. I learned a lot from Reb Chaim during those weeks. I was “*zoche*” to be invited to his first “*seudat hodaya*” to thank Hashem for all He did in letting us “Keep Reb Chaim”.

I guess the moment that really clinched it for me that Reb Chaim was “one of my Rebbe’s” (I have a few which each serve their own place in my life) was the day I found out my Mom *a”h* was dying. Due to many reason, I had decided not to fly back to the U.S. Reb Chaim heard this at a mutual friend's “*beit shiva*” and immediately called me to the Yeshiva. Both through his wisdom and his understanding of personalities (especially my very complex one!) he said “Ehrlich, get on that plane TONIGHT. What are you mad? If you don’t go and she passes away you will never live it down... and also think of the message you are sending to your own

children!?" I did not make it back for her death, but thanks to Reb Chaim, I know I tried and I will never be able to thank him enough for his *sicha* with me.

I sit here writing, with tears in my eyes (I went to his last Shabbat at the Yeshiva recently but was unable to stay for lunch as the tears started during *kiddush* and have not stopped since). Thank God this is not a eulogy and no reason to cry. It is a testimony of thanks to a living, breathing and great Rebbe who I can never thank enough for the role he has played in my life and the life of our family.

Michael Elzufon

I learned at Yeshivat HaMivtar for four years, from 1982 until 1986 and, having been described in one Purim *shpiel* as the perfect HaMivtar clone, feel uniquely qualified to say what the yeshiva stood for, at least in those days. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that I represent the Yeshiva, both in its strengths and its weaknesses.

I find myself distinguishing between Rabbi Brovender personally and the effect of the institution that he founded and enabled.

On a personal level, I learned a great deal from Rabbi Brovender simply by watching how he learned. The thing that sticks with me from his *shiurim* is the frequency with which, seemingly in passing, he would point out a particular technique for learning a text. For example, in learning a *midrash*, he pointed out that a good way to check your *pshat* is to look up the *pasuk* that *midrash* is darshening and see how Rashi explains it. There will be a high likelihood that Rashi is using your *midrash* to explain the *pasuk* and thus you will see how Rashi understood the *midrash*. He gave us tips like this time and again.

A more fundamental lesson was the critical importance of tradition in Torah. The yeshiva was famous for teaching students to read the Gemara without Rashi. This was in order that we would learn basic reading skills first and it was taken to the point of forbidding beginning students to so much as look in Rashi. However, this was strictly a pedagogical tactic, as we discovered in a debate that broke out in the *beit midrash* one afternoon over whether one can actually learn Gemara without Rashi. When Rabbi Brovender wandered into the fray, he shocked a number of us by answering, "Yes, but it is *asur*." He explained that no text can be understood without knowledge of the context in which it was written and we get that context for the Gemara from a tradition which Rashi is a part of. So, while it need not be Rashi necessarily, Gemara must be learned with a commentator from within that tradition. Thus far we have a practical reason to learn with a commentary. However, Rabbi Brovender took pains to make clear that there is more to it than that. Talmud Torah, he taught us, is something that must not be approached like any other intellectual endeavor. It can only be done within the parameters of the tradition. So even if one might be able to construct an alternative way of learning the Gemara or alternatives to the *Shulhan Aruch* in paskening halacha, while such things might be interesting, they would be totally meaningless to anyone who wanted to learn Torah. This was probably the most important lesson that he taught me.

However, the most profound impact that Rabbi Brovender had on my life came from the institution that he ran, Yeshivat HaMivtar. The yeshiva was far more than one man—it had a number *talmidei hachamim* who could teach beginners how to learn and who could help with the most basic questions of Torah. They helped create an environment that did not merely allow but actively encouraged inquiry for people who were just beginning to find their way. I shall always be grateful to Rabbi Brovender for providing that place.

I should mention the standard charge directed at the yeshiva: that it does not have *Hashkafah*. The use of the word *Hashkafah* as a proper noun immediately tells you something about the people who level that charge. However, beyond the somewhat foolish attack on the yeshiva for not toeing a certain party line, there was a serious criticism, that by focusing on techniques

of learning, the yeshiva failed to address other issues that should be associated with learning Torah.

The yeshiva's answer began that *Hashkafah* is not a proper noun. There is no one kosher *Hashkafah*; there are quite a few that fit within the parameters of the Torah. Moreover, the yeshiva did have a *Haskafah* of its own. It was once irreverently expressed as: Salvation is achieved through *Shas* and *Rishonim* and only through *Shas* and *Rishonim*. The more serious formulation was that Talmud Torah is not only a means to improve your *avodah*; it is also in itself an *avodah*. As a result, the yeshiva could focus on teaching the student how to learn Torah and what that meant and then leave the student to develop his *hashkofot* as he found his own particular way in Torah. This gave us the understanding that there are a number of legitimate *hashkofot*. On the one hand, it resulted in HaMivtar students going on to a wide variety of places. On the other hand, it gave us an appreciation for a great deal of the variety that exists within Torah.

Beth (Laitman) Epstein

Bruria 1977-78

Talk about being in the right place at the right time. Rabbi Twersky, *zt"l*, always said 'there are no coincidences'. Well, that speaks volumes about the good fortune I had to fall into this 'start up' yeshiva for women in the summer of '77. I had planned for months to spend a semester at Bar Ilan, only to find out days before I was leaving for Israel that Bar Ilan wouldn't accept anyone for a semester, even for money and even just to audit.

I somehow landed in the sapling that was Michlelet Bruria. I don't remember how it happened. But that it happened has totally and completely influenced every day of my life since. The gift of the love of Torah, and the appreciation of the study of Torah and its impact on daily existence is profound and priceless.

What a treat to have studied with you! Each shiur was such a 'high' of learning and it was always delivered in a fun (and funny!) engaging way. I always marveled how in the same shiur you were able to speak to and challenge students with a wide range of backgrounds, yet have each student feel like they came away with the greatest shiur. No one was bored and no one was over their head (and if they were they didn't know it!) (I especially liked the *tzionut* that came thru loud and clear when you taught *shiurim* during *miluim* in your military fatigues.)

How does one thank a person for such a happy and meaningful gift? Who has celebrated during joyous times and a source of comfort during trying times? Who has literally changed the landscape of Torah study for a generation of women? The clarity of your vision has proved itself thousands of times over in the many students that have learned and are still learning at 'Brovenders', no matter what the stationery says. That sapling has flourished and become a mature, fruitful, beautiful tree.

I also have to thank you for something much more tangible (and probably worth money!). As the fall semester neared its end, I realized that I had only begun to scratch the surface of learning. I was loving it and I needed and wanted to stay the year. As you were about to depart on a trip abroad, I asked if you might be able to phone the registrar at Rutgers and see if I might be able to get a little credit for what I was studying. You said, "Sure", and we never really talked about it again.... until I got back to Rutgers the next fall, only to discover that I had earned not just a few, but a year and a half's worth of credit (45 transfer credits!) for my year at Bruria.

Rabbi Brovender, thank you so much for everything, the big and the small, for being there at that crossroad in 1977 and setting my life on such a rich meaningful path. I can't imagine it any other way!

Doniel Faber

One time when Rav B was giving a *shiur klali* in the old Beit Midrash in the *merkaz mishari* and he was at point of strong build-up when a young Israeli boy came flying in on his bike. That alone was hilarious enough on its own but the pregnant pause waiting to hear how he was going to react was incredible. We all had funny lines in our head and everyone was trying to predict what he was going to say. In fact I can't remember what he said – it doesn't matter now – I just remember how amazed I was at the brilliance of his answer so much so that no one could have come up with such a funny response to an already funny situation

Rafi Farber**HaMivtar, Winters 2003 & 2004**

I really needed a box once, to mail something to the states. There were some clothes in a box in my caravan, but they weren't mine. I wasn't about to steal the clothes, but I was wondering if I could take the box. So I asked Rabbi Brovender. I just looked at me and said, "I know... that this question... is very important."

That's all he said. For some reason I remember that, and I remember laughing. And for some reason it made me feel that I should be a better person instead of worrying about whether I can take someone's box or not. I never took the box.

Ruchama King Feuerman

Rabbi Brovender brought excitement and tension to the classroom. If he asked a question, I'd wonder if I'd dare offer up an answer, but usually I was too busy trying to catch every phrase of his in my spiral notebook. His Torah thoughts had subtlety to them as though they were conceived *beyn hashmashos*. His delivery was paradoxical, both light and heavy, and so startling it made me actually smile as I took notes.

I was a young woman getting my first taste of intellectual pleasure in a spiritual setting. The first time I did try to answer a question or give an alternate view, I realized pretty soon that I hadn't nearly thought hard or clearly enough. But that was okay. It was an honor to have my view taken seriously by a master, even if only to point out its flaws. Rabbi Brovender made figuring out Rashi more important than getting a college degree; he showed how Rashi could be for the six or the sixty-year-old. Getting *pshat* wasn't just an intellectual exercise in decoding text. Such understandings made alterations and indentations in a person. There were ramifications. When I came to him with my spiritual doubts and kvetches, he said, among many other things, "It's written in the Zohar, if I were writing the Torah, I could've done a better job." Now how many rabbis would quote that? — and I was comforted. He modeled for me the ability to be *in velt/oist velt*, in the experience, and out of the experience often at the same time, passionately and spiritually engaged with the Torah, and yet observant, separate, looking down at a text with ironic, even sad eyes. I always liked seeing his intellectualism and Hassidic yearning at play, one chafing against the other. It was instructive for me to see how a person like Rabbi Brovender could successfully manage both aspects. *Eyn Torah k'Torat chaim*. In the past twenty years since I had the chance to sit and learn with Rabbi Brovender, I've learned how rare a person and teacher he is.

Rabbi David Fine

My Rebbe is a master teacher. My rebbe is a *Talmid Chacham*. My rebbe is a comedian. My rebbe is an advisor. My rebbe is a father figure. My rebbe is very wise. But most importantly my Rebbe is a Rebbe and that is why I love him.

Rebecca & Roger Fine

Dear Rabbi Brovender,

We don't know why we deserved it, but Somebody decided that you and Miriam would become part of our family's life. We owe our son David a deep debt of gratitude for introducing you to us. We are grateful for the Torah you teach us. We are indebted to you for befriending our son as a teacher, mentor, confidante and rebbe. We thank you for all the funny things you say that make us laugh. And most of all, we are proud to count you among our good friends.

You have been blessed by being able to look back at your life's work – to date – and see how you have touched the lives of thousands of people to their great benefit. Your name has become a brand name in Jewish education. May it continue to be so. We wish you continued success in everything you put your hand to. And we hope that you and Miriam will find nothing but the happiness that you both deserve in the many years ahead.

Rabbi Aaron Frank

HaMivtar 1992

Lower School Principal,

Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School

Rabbi Brovender had a profound influence on my life in the short time that I attended the Yeshiva. His shiur had a combination of being both challenging and welcoming at the same time. Whether it was in the area of Torah, *hashkafa*, secular knowledge or sheer wit, he could always be counted on to contribute to discussions in his own unique way.

In the years since I left the yeshiva, when I have seen the Rabbi Brovender, he has always taken a strong interest in my life, both professionally and personally with interest, openness and respect.

I have always felt blessed that he continues to see me as his *talmid* and I will forever feel blessed that he is one of my *rebbeim*. I wish him all the best in this next chapter of his life.

Martha Fredman

My first year at Bruria was the second year of the school. I began the year thinking that Israel was only a nice place to visit, and I concluded my year thinking that Israel was the only place that I would want to live. I am certain that many, many more *aliyot* to Israel are to your credit.

While at Bruria, I spent Shabbat at your home. The reality at the time (about 30 years ago) was that women were being taught *Limudei Kodesh* by men because there were very few women who were capable of teaching. At the end of Shabbat you told me that your dream in creating Bruria was to provide a learning environment for women that would produce women who could teach other women Torah. You have always been a man of vision, and your vision has been fulfilled.

It is with great gratitude and respect that Joel and I attend your tribute.

Marcus J Freed**London**

Learning with Rabbi Brovender always takes on many forms. That is what makes the experience different, unique, individual and creative. RCB is about the challenge, asking the question that sounds simple but is almost unanswerable, making an apparently relaxed observation that is incredibly astute, and 'working' an audience like the absolute professional he is.

In many ways, it's felt like Rabbi Brovender is a kind of surrogate grandfather; there to love, support and have a laugh with, but also willing to ask the difficult thing when he believes it's right. The man is an institution.

Yaakov Frohlich**Strauss Kollel '95-'98***Pure Edification – Torat RCB*

Rabbi Brovender's legend preceded him as number one choice of Rosh Yeshiva for those hailing from my hometown of Winnipeg. At first, Rabbi Brovender was an enigma to me – a witty American Rav with an uncanny ability to appeal to non-American students too. Having been tipped off as to the qualities of Yeshivat HaMivtar, sure enough I found a vibrant Beit Midrash, supportive learning environment and healthy probing approach. This was a natural by-product of Rav Brovender's personality. In his unique style, "Rabbi B" was able to develop and nourish real connections with students employing humour and compassion while inconspicuously drawing those around him to appreciation and love of Torah. His *shiurim* and *drashot* were always mentally engaging, well conceived and consistently conveyed the urgency and relevance of the Torah's call.

After a decade since having left Yeshiva, apart from his edifying *shiurim*, what remains are clear audio and visual recollections of Rav Brovender. Audio – it is the Rosh Yeshiva's voice and *niggunim* that enter my head each year during the *Yamim Noraim* and specifically *Neilah*. His davening would lead us to heights in *kavanah* and purity. Visual – the Rosh Yeshiva's *hadrat panim*, I feel, conveys the link between the old and new world characterizing much of what Rabbi Brovender represents. Rav Brovender articulates a profound understanding of eternal Torah wisdom yet at the same time he is very much at home in the modern world. In this light it can be understood as to how the Brovender home is located in Mattersdorf while Rav Brovender moves freely within more colourful neighbourhoods on the Jewish world map.

I wish Rav Brovender continued *hatzlacha* at bringing his fortunate future students and audiences closer to Torah, with wit, wisdom and joy, *tamid*.

Jenny Bayer Gamulka

It took me twenty years, from the first time I studied with Rabbi Brovender at Michlelet Bruria, until I worked with him on ATID's art initiative, to fully appreciate his tremendous impact on my life. As eighteen year-olds studying *Shir HaShirim* with Rabbi Brovender, we were introduced to the dynamic relationship between *pshat* and *drash*, text, allegory and visual imagery. Twenty years later, walking with Rabbi Brovender in the Israel Museum, I finally understood why Rabbi Brovender is one of the most innovative and authentic Jewish teachers I have ever had the privilege to study with.

Standing before the Impressionist galleries, Rabbi Brovender taught me that "learning Torah develops within us the ability to say a *pshat* about a text, but students do not generally 'say *pshat*' about the world around them." Rabbi Brovender teaches students to see the holiness inherent in God's world. He is a role model of discovering innovative pathways and journeys toward a life of Torah and ethical behavior. His writings about art are only one of these pathways. Where one person sees a still life, Rabbi Brovender sees an opportunity for

spiritual growth. He hears in the voice of the artist, both visual and musical, the awesome wonder of Divine creation.

This incredible breadth, the ability to encompass the worlds of text and image, *pshat* and *drash*, intellectual excellence and emotional power, is part of why I am privileged to call Rabbi Brovender my teacher.

Rabbi Pinchas Giller

Los Angeles

I owe everything that I have done in my subsequent life to Rabbi Brovender and his friend, Rabbi Jay Miller. I came to what was then called the Shappel Center, or Hartman College, in 1974, and the elemental guidance that I received there would stay with me throughout my life in learning. In those days, as well, the personality and methodology of Rabbi Soloveitchik, the Rav, dominated the intellectual world of Modern Orthodoxy, so that steeping into Rabbi Brovender's yeshivah was to be pulled into a grand vortex that would draw me, inevitably, to RIETS and the Rav's shiur. The sensibility of the yeshivah in its early days: edgy, intellectual, with young men of some life experience united by great personal ambition, was never to be equaled in my subsequent experience. Perhaps I was an innocent, but the dynamic tzevet of Rav Natan Kaminitzky, Rabbi Brovender, Rabbi Miller, Rabbi Gordon, Rabbi Schweiger and Rabbi Walfish was the most illustrious "line up" of educators that I have known to this day. It remains, in my mind, a time when giants walked the Earth.

Shammai Glicksman

To be honest, I'm not sure I remember too much of the text that I learned from my Rebbe, Rabbi Brovender, during my years at Yeshivat HaMivtar. It had something to do with cattle falling into pits, and how knives can become ritually unclean, and who can deliver divorce papers to whom. The details are a bit fuzzy, though, as it was a long a time ago and a lot of life has happened between then and now. But there are many lessons I learned from Rabbi Brovender, both from sitting in his shiur and from making sure that I reserved the table next to his in the Beit Midrash during my second year (one man gathers what another man spills, as they say), that I remember clearly and that have served me well.

I learned that a person is allowed to ask any question, as long as he is ready to receive any answer.

I learned that a person can respect someone's knowledge even if he doesn't always agree with where that knowledge leads him.

I learned that succeeding doesn't mean you shouldn't start over again.

I learned that it is important to have a wife who thinks straight in times of crisis.

I learned that being seen as humorous and being taken seriously are not mutually exclusive.

I learned that blessings should be viewed as such, and that everything works out in the end.

I learned how to think.

I learned how to learn.

I learned how to live.

And, for that, I will be forever grateful.

Shlomo Godick

Rechasim, Israel

Yeshivat Shapell, '72-'75 / Yeshivat HaMivtar, '80

Many years ago I was learning at the David Shapell Yeshiva when Rabbi Brovender was the Rosh Yeshiva there. I asked him a "*shaila*" about the permissibility of converting dollars to Israeli *livot* in the black market as opposed to doing it at a bank.

This was in the early seventies when the dollar was artificially pegged to a fix rate and not allowed to float to its true market value, creating a considerable differential between the official and black market rates.

I was expecting to receive a dry halachic psak from Rabbi Brovender. Instead he answered me as follows [paraphrased]: It could be that according to the dry halacha there is no *issur* involved, since "*dina d'malchusa dina*" probably doesn't apply in Eretz Yisrael. But you have to consider also the effect that getting involved in illegal activities with unsavory people will have on your *midos*. I would not recommend it.

This emphasis on looking beyond the letter of the halacha, at the negative impact of seemingly permissible actions on one's moral character and spiritual development was new to me then, but it had an everlasting influence on me.

Mordechai Goldberg

I learned in the yeshiva from 1984-1987, first in Kiryat Moshe, then in Moshav Elazar. My favorite shiur was always Rabbi Brovender's shiur on Ramban on the Torah, analyzing the different places Ramban disagrees with the Rambam. I still use many of these ideas today in shiurim that I give. I have been a rabbi on shlichut in various places, Sweden, Russia, and now Poland. I also taught in the Amalia and Hartman High Schools in Jerusalem. Rabbi Brovender is well known for his sense of humor, especially for his one-liners. One I will always remember is: "The definition of open-minded is someone who agrees with me. Everyone else is a fanatic!"

Andrew Goldman

Dear Rabbi Brovender,

Your love of learning Torah has inspired so many to love learning and living by the Torah too. You teach in a way that inspires people to learn more while bringing a smile to their face. I have enjoyed our weekly learning so much over the years, long may it continue.

Reuven Grodner

My sincere congratulations to Rabbi Chaim Brovender, one who is so deserving of the tribute of all of *Klal Yisrael* for his lifelong dedication to Torah education. On a personal note, thank you for giving me my first job upon making Aliya in 1984 by allowing me to teach in Bruriah. I am forever grateful. May Hashem grant you good health and many years to continue educating your devoted students.

Dr. Ed Goldstein

Riverdale, NY

Long before there was Rabbi Brovender there was Herbie.

I knew Rabbi Brovender while he was in elementary school. At that time he was a bright young person eagerly absorbing knowledge and the world around him. As it happened I participated in the process by teaching him to read the Torah for his bar mitzvah, which for many reasons was a pleasant experience.

There was a long gap during which I had no contact with him. During this period he became a central and effective teacher, and established institutions of his own. He next came to my attention when a cousin attending one of his schools referred to him affectionately as "Herbie". It became clear that we were talking about the same person. The following year one of our daughters attended "Brovenders" and confirmed at a Shabbat table what Rabbi Brovender's bar mitzvah sedra was. Since that time we have felt close to R. Brovender and his excellent work in shaping Jewish education. All of our children have attended Bruriah. Numerous friends and some relatives have gained from the experience. Our son-in-law Rabbi Jeff Saks works with him in expanding and exploring Jewish educational concepts at ATID.

This is an extraordinary amount of *nachas* derived from teaching someone bar mitzvah lessons. We wish Rabbi Brovender much continued success in all his future endeavors which we will continue to enjoy.

Avraham (Aaron) Grossbaum

Everyone who knows Rabbi Chaim Brovender knows that he is first and foremost an educator with a keen concern for the process of learning and teaching. I think the following story illustrates this.

In my first year at Yeshivat HaMivtar (תשל"ט), we studied Rambam Hilkhos Talmud Torah with Rabbi Brovender. While preparing for the shiur, I noticed a halakha that the Rambam proved by quoting a line from the Gemara in Mesekhet Kidushin which stated the converse of the halakha, an invalid proof according to the rules of Aristotelian logic. We know that the Rambam was a big fan of Aristotle, so how could he do this, especially when the next line in the Gemara is the contrapositive of the halakha he wanted to prove, which is a valid proof in Aristotelean logic. If you don't understand what I am talking about, don't worry. I figured out a way to demonstrate the point using Venn diagrams that would make it clear to people who had not studied Math or Logic, which I assumed included most of the class and Rabbi Brovender. I proceeded to fill the blackboard with diagrams before the shiur, and when Rabbi Brovender entered, I started to explain my *kasha* on the Rambam. Rabbi Brovender did not seem to be paying attention to my presentation. I found this quite disconcerting, but I plowed on anyway. When I finished, he said, "It's a good *kasha*. I don't have an answer."

After the shiur, one of the more advanced students clued me in: Rabbi Brovender has a Bachelors in Math and understood my question immediately. I assume he let me go through my long explanation to make sure all my fellow students understood and to give me the experience of presenting the material. I also learned from him that asking a good question is more important than finding an answer.

While many people remember Rabbi Brovender as a master of verbal riposte, he also employed his wit for the opposite purpose. One Shabbat, Rabbi Brovender was giving a *d'var* Torah after *Mussaf* to a standing-room-only crowd when one of the students leaned against the light switch, which caused the light in the room to go off. The mortified student jumped away from the wall. Rabbi Brovender assuaged his embarrassment by commenting, "We will assume that you didn't know the light switch was there and that this is a case of *mitasek* (מתעסק)." He then continued the *d'var* Torah.

Joel Guberman

Yeshivat HaMivtar 1981-83

I remember a conversation with Rabbi Brovender several years after I had been out of the yeshiva and found that learning of Gemara was not really speaking to me. Rabbi Brovender said, "You should learn *chassidus*. I mean – don't become a *chassid* but just learn the Torah of *chassidus*."

After being very involved in the mitzvah of *tekhelet* for *tzitzit*, I asked Rabbi Brovender what he thought of it. He said "when I go to the Moshav with Reb Shlomo I wear *tekheles*."

One great *vort* I heard from Rabbi Brovender that I will never forget: He asked, "Why is it that Hashem made it such that children are born from parents. After all, we all know that parents just give their children neurosis and hang-ups." He explained: It is not for the sake of the children but for the sake of the parents. By seeing that children can change and grow, parents can learn that people can change and grow."

Shragai Hacoen
(Fred Shragai Silverman)

Congratulations on 40 successful and inspiring years of *harbatzat torah b'erez ha- imahot ve-avot*. Over 45 years ago when I was entering YU and you were already in the *smicha* plan we shared a dinner at the Greasy Spoon. You told me that it was relatively easy to help a person to become *frum*, but those behaviors might slip away and leave little lasting effect, while the gift of helping a person to learn how to learn and think was a gift forever, no matter what life style was chosen. From what I have observed from your *talmidim*, and especially *talmidot* whom I have taught, your prescription seems to have been correct. I recently attended a discussion between Rav Steinsaltz and yourself where again you showed the worth of your approach in teaching and developing a young mind to think. Forty years later and your concepts seem to have kept up through your continuous re-crafting and adjustments.

Ashley Hirst

We are in many senses a "Brovender's couple". Both of us learned at Rav. Brovender's institutions, both of us consider Rav Brovender our Rav, Rav Brovender married us in London a few years ago, and a few months ago Rav Brovender spoke at the *simchat bat* for our daughter.

There are, as you'd expect, too many recollections to list. I remember meeting Rav Brovender for the first time in London at a 6th form study programme. We argued furiously (I forget what about) but at the end of it he told me I should go to yeshiva and learn something. He was right, and I did - I went to his yeshiva, who else's could I have gone to? I shared the experience that so many other students have shared, and learned for a year under the leadership of one of the true greats of modern Torah teaching. To this day, I still remember several classic *parsha shiurim* that I consider life changing. And I even find myself structuring my own thinking in the Rav Brovender-patented "question, tangential question, story, tangential story, weave it all together" format. I miss those *shiurim* terribly.

When Rav. Brovender came to London to be *mesader kiddushin* for us, he almost stole the show. Under the *chupah*, Rav Brovender was touchingly personal and appropriately profound. But I'll always remember his classic piece of advice to me as I went to the bedecken room – pointing at my mother, bride, and mother-in-law, he said "she's the one in the middle, don't mess it up."

I understand the debt I owe Rav Brovender very clearly. He led the only yeshiva I could or would have gone to, and taught Torah, a commitment to Torah, and an approach to life that I hold as an ideal to this day. I hope there are a good many more groups of *talmidim* for him to teach in the same way for years to come. Rav Brovender - thank you.

Ayalah Hirst

The most fun that I had during my year at Midreshet Lindenbaum, which will always be Brovender's to me, was preparing for Rav Brovender's *Masechet Brachot shiur*. I loved knowing that my preparation mattered to Rav Brovender. Reading the *sugiah* well would be noticed and appreciated with a wry, witty remark that meant he was encouraging to do even better next time. I guess the thing that inspired me then and still now is that I never could guess what Rav Brovender would say in response to a question, but whatever the answer, it was always a point of view that was different, enlightening, really thought through and sincere. Because of Rav Brovender I know and feel that Talmud Torah must have a place in my life and it should be a source of joy.

Marshall Huebner

I learned in Yeshivat HaMivtar from 1988-1990, and still count those two years as among the most formative of my life.

It is a remarkable thing to have been able get know – just a little – an individual with the exceedingly rare capacity to shape, teach and mold thousands of Jewish souls – each different, each unique, each with its own sets of wants and needs and gifts and abilities.

But for many decades, Rabbi Brovender has done exactly that. Both through his extraordinary personal insights, qualities and knowledge, and through having the wisdom and skills to build institutions and attract others who share, in varied ways, his ability to both pierce the soul and bathe it in warmth and humor.

I wish our Rabbi and his family the very, very best as he moves to unfold yet another chapter in his glorious Torah career.

Rabbi Michael Jablinowitz

My relationship with Rabbi Brovender and Yeshivat HaMivtar goes back close to thirty years. I arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* in February 1978, unsure of my path in life and looking to ‘find myself’. Rabbi Brovender and his yeshiva gave me that opportunity by allowing me to learn and grow at my own pace. He also encouraged me to start teaching, giving me support along the way. He always expressed confidence in me, undeservedly respectful of my abilities, and never condescending despite his years and wisdom.

When I left Yeshivat HaMivtar in the summer of 1994, I was determined to maintain my connection to Rabbi Brovender. Since then our relationship has continued to grow. He was instrumental in helping me establish my own yeshiva almost ten years ago. At a number of critical junctures in my life, he has been selflessly available with sound and reasonable advice.

I would like to mention a couple of unique characteristics of the man. Firstly, Rabbi Brovender has taught me to always strive for excellence. He expected nothing less from himself and his yeshiva. This is a model I have always attempted to emulate in life and in my own yeshiva.

But more importantly, he is a paradigm of humility. Despite his many outstanding achievements, he is truly self-effacing. He is an example of the words of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai in *Pirkei Avot*: אדם למדת תורה הרבה אל תחזיק טובה לעצמך כי לכך נוצרת. This is also a trait I attempt to follow, though falling far short of his standard. I think that I would often ask myself, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, how would Rabbi B respond in a situation like this. Having worked closely with him for many years, I have seen him in a number of tense and difficult situations, always responding calmly and with integrity. This is due to his disinterest in acknowledgment from others, focusing instead on doing the right thing.

I have much *Hakaras HaTov* to Rabbi Brovender for all he has given me, my wife, and my family. But most of all, Rabbi Brovender has given me the greatest *chesed* one can give to another person. He has taught me Torah and given me the opportunity to teach Torah to others. For this I am eternally grateful.

David Jackson

Raanana

Rabbi Brovender is a rebbe for me, not just a teacher. What does that mean? There are some teachers who inspire you when you're 18, but seem less inspiring, even in retrospect, as you grow older in a world of complexity and uncertainty. Rabbi Brovender is the opposite – he is more inspiring the longer you know him. As my questions and concerns changed, I always felt he appreciated the issues and could provide wise advice. As I discovered new books, I knew he'd have read or be reading them, too. I look back on comments he made and advice he gave, and they seem even wiser now than I realized at the time. Even the *drashot* he gave when I was 18 are still inspiring and seem in no way simplistic.

But more than anything else, he is amazingly kind, even though he tries to hide it behind his wry sense of humour. When I was in yeshiva after high school, the Brovenders invited me for *Shabbatot* and Pesach, and Rabbi Brovender would visit my parents when he was in London. After I'd graduated, he advised me about yeshivas to learn in and was always available to talk. Then there was our wedding: he was our *mesader kiddushin*. He and Mrs. B. came early so he could explain things to family members who needed help. He did this crazy dance with me, and in our wedding photos he has the biggest smile. He and Mrs B left at the very end, almost the last to go. After we moved from Yerushalayim to Riverdale, he'd drop in when he was in New York, never asking when we were coming back to Israel, never asking questions to make us feel self-conscious or guilty. When we returned to live in Israel, he called to welcome us back and calls to ask how we are.

And in all these interactions you sense that he expects nothing in return. These qualities are what make him a rebbe for me, not just a teacher.

Janice Kaplan

I still point out the yellow bench to our kids when we pass Kikar Allenby, the park/square in Old Romema. It's now a playground – it used to be grassy – but the monument is still there and, of course, the bench. Especially now, when we are involved in *shidduchim* for our own family, the *hashgacha pratis* of that day 30+ years ago never ceases to amaze me.

There I was, catching some sun outside the womens' school with my tutor, Iris Felix, when Tuvia passed by, stopping to chat with Iris, as he was her husband Stueie's *chevruta*. Jovial, teasing, new to Yiddishkeit, but steady and truthful. "Who's that?" I asked. Iris replied, "Hmm, what a good idea – I'll tell Stueie!"

Now, 31 years, 5 children and 5 grandchildren later, I am still amazed, and gratified, by the *hashgacha pratis* which allowed each of us to find the precise Yeshiva needed to further our Yiddishkeit at the time. Tuvia just could not have flowered anywhere else. Intellectual integrity, spiritually panoramic – Rabbi Brovender gave him the freedom and discipline of mind and soul to build and to keep searching and growing.

We are grateful for having been part of the Yeshiva through the years, and grateful for the part the Yeshiva played in helping to start our *Beit Ne'eman Be-Yisrael!*

Rabbi Tuvia Kaplan

We heard buses on Yom Kippur 1973 – the Yeshiva then was right above the Central Bus Station on Rechov Ha-Or. Buses on Yom Kippur were unheard of. After Musaf the one student davening with us who had done his military service (Robert Frankenburg from Vancouver) went across the street to Binyanei Ha-Uma to see what was happening. We didn't see him again that day or for several weeks. After Yom Kippur ended and we started receiving highly edited versions of what was happening, minimizing the Egyptian breakthrough on the Canal and Syrian advances in the Golan and emphasizing the efficacy of our response we were all nevertheless worried. Rabbi Brovender reassured us all in his typical humorous and self deprecating manner and said "Don't worry – everything will be fine. If they call *me* up then you have to worry!" The next morning we waited for the Rosh Yeshiva for Shacharit. When he hadn't come by 7:30 a.m. we phoned Mrs. Brovender and she told us the army had knocked on their door at midnight the previous night and called him up for duty. Rabbi Brovender told us we should worry, so we worried.

Eliot Kaye

London

Having spent a wonderful year in the Yeshiva (1993-94), I have been fortunate to remain close to Rabbi Brovender and worked with him when he came to teach in London for a year

in 1998. Despite good relationships with many rabbis, there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted Rabbi Brovender to be *mesader kiddushin* at my wedding. When I discussed this with Rabbi Brovender, I wanted him to meet Susie before the wedding weekend so, in his unique way, Rabbi Brovender invited Susie and me to fly out to spend Shabbat in Yerushalayim with Rabbi and Rebbetzin Brovender and their family. It was a fantastic Shabbat that Susie and I will always remember and meant that Rabbi Brovender's contribution to our wedding in Baltimore was even more special. Since then, we have had the *zchut* to host Rabbi and Rebbetzin Brovender on several occasions in London and we hope to be able to do so again in the future. Rabbi Brovender has been a Rav, Rebbe, father-figure and inspiration to Susie and me, as well as to thousands of *talmidim* and *talmidot* in the UK. We wish him all the very best for the future.

Rabbi Adam Kligfeld

Yeshivat HaMivtar, January-June '94

I spent a Shabbat at Rabbi Brovender's home along with fellow student Moshe Bell. After shul and dinner, we went to the *tisch* of the Belzer rebbe. It was remarkable to me that Rabbi Brovender – he enlightened intellectual, the PhD that helped change Torah study in Jerusalem by teaching Talmud to women – lived among *fabrente* Hasidim. The contrasts, and amazing complexity of Rabbi Brovender's life, persona and *neshama*, had a deep impact on me. At one point late at night, Moshe and I were perusing the titles of the books that were tightly packed on the bookshelves that lined nearly every available square foot of wall in Rabbi Brovender's house. Each book looked well-read. Tomes on ancient Semitic dialects, next to the *Kedushat Levi* by the Berditchiver, just below Spinoza, and just above a history of Hellenism, and just across from yet another *Shas*. Moshe and I were struck by just how many books were there, and just how broad the disciplines and interests were. And then we finally took one off the shelf to take a look, only to be more amazed. Why? Behind every book was another book! Each bookshelf was double-lined. In the beit midrash, and through every interaction with Rabbi Brovender, we, his students, knew of his learnedness, his breadth, his love affair with Torah in all of its manifestations. To discover his library reinforced, and amplified, all that I admired in Rabbi Brovender, one of my enduring role models for talmud Torah and learning of all kinds.

Perhaps the most wonderfully surprising aspect of Rabbi Brovender is his humor, and the unexpected moments he chooses to wield it. Over the course of that Shabbat in his home, I, at the time a relative neophyte in the world of serious halakhic inquiry, asked Rabbi Brovender about a halakhic question that had been bothering me. "Can you whistle on Shabbat?" I was expecting a profoundly involved answer, wondering whether the prohibition of *hashma'at kol* applied to whistling, knowing that *shema yitaken* would not apply as it would to musical instruments. Rabbi Brovender paused and responded in this way: "You have asked me about whistling on *Shabbes*. It's a good *shayla*. I'll respond by quoting my grandmother: '*A yid fife nit!*' 'A Jew does not whistle!' Not on *Shabbes*. Not ever! Why? It's *narishkeit!* It's a waste of time. It's *bitul Toyrah!* A Jew shouldn't be whistling. A Jew should be studying Torah." And that was the answer. No commentary. I think about it all the time... especially when I am whistling!

Rabbi Daniel Kohn

Rav, Bat Ayin

My first contact with Rabbi Brovender was as a senior at Columbia close to thirty years ago. He spoke at YU, and some friends recommended that I hear him. I had been struggling with my place and identity in Torah, especially in the context of intensive study in Biblical criticism and comparative religions. I had a deep sense of God's reality and presence, but couldn't fit together a Jewish way given all that I knew. During my previous year abroad in Israel I was engaged by Rabbis of various

chareidi institutions for kiruv and had found their ideologically rigid approach unattractive and uninteresting. After his YU lecture I went over to the Rav and described my situation.

The conversation went something like this:

"What do you do with someone who's studied biblical criticism?"

"We whip him" (pause).

"Well, what exactly are you offering me?"

"A shtender, a chair and books."

Yes it was humorous, but it was trusting. Trusting of me and of what Torah had for me. I knew he would let me find my way and that that way would grow from my personal contact with Torah and blossom from an authentic relationship with the tradition. During the two years I spent with Rabbi Brovender I experienced a man of clarity, honesty and humility and found my way in to living Torah.

Chaim Kornberg

Yeshivat HaMivtar, 1979-1987

I first met Rabbi Brovender in the summer of 1979. In the few *shiurim* I learned with him before returning to Canada, I got the message that Talmud Torah is a very serious matter, and we have to be very clear-minded and honest in our learning. I learned in a number of R. Brovender's *shiurim* in the 80's, but I especially appreciated our Friday morning *shiur* in R. Nachman's *Likkutei Moharan*. In addition to being a great preparation for Shabbat, the rabbi brought Gemara skills to the text. We followed up on all the connections and asked why this connection and not others and so on. And all this on a background of spirituality. I think that's the way R. Nachman would have wanted it learned. When I married Mindy from Brighton Beach, we and Rabbi and Mrs. Brovender even became *landsleit*. Rabbi and Mrs. Brovender have been involved in our family simchas ever since. As everyone knows, R. Brovender's influence on yeshiva learning for both men and women has been tremendous. I teach now in Yeshivat Torat Chaim, and I am honoured to say that my Gemara *shiur* has been called Brovenderian. Mindy and I very much appreciate Rabbi Brovender's and Mrs. Brovender's continued input in our lives.

Michael Laitner

I am very grateful for the precious time that I spent in HaMivtar. Rav Brovender, along with the other Rebbeim and my fellow students, broadened my horizons. I am particularly grateful to Rav Brovender for his teaching, his *chesed* and his commitment to his students, as well as to Mrs Brovender who is also so welcoming and warm, particularly at challenging times. It has been a privilege to learn from Rav Brovender, to see how Torah and *Mitzvot* can be applied throughout life in an ennobling and compelling way, bringing us closer both to God and to other Jews. Thanks to Rav Brovender for demonstrating these lessons both inside and outside of the Yeshiva, for teaching a *Torat Chayim* in such a multi-faceted way.

Dr. Bernard Lander

President, Touro College-University

Dear Rabbi Brovender,

Since I was privileged to sign your M.A. from Revel many years ago, I am gratified by your continued record of scholarship, and dedication to Torah values and your transmission of this knowledge to multitudes of students. I am proud to have been associated with you at the inception of your most distinguished career. Mazel Tov.

Rabbi Eliezer Langer

Austin, TX

Sometime in the early 70s, when I was rabbi of Beth Jacob Congregation in San Diego, Ner LaElef sponsored a weekend Shabbaton to inform and attract students to come on a pilot trip to Israel. Rabbi Chaim Brovender was the guest speaker and he literally wowed the very secular and unattached students who were in what was then a backwater community. Shabbat afternoon he started off with something like "let me tell you a famous Chassidik story... there

once was a king who had an only son..." All of a sudden, Rabbi Brovender stops and says (again approximately), "really there was no king and no only child, and as a matter of fact this is not an old Chassidik story. I just made it up right now, but if I would have told you that, you wouldn't listen to me. And now let me go on..."

I don't know the statistics and results of that Shabbaton, but I do know that the *Kiddush HaShem* made that Shabbat with the students and the community is everlasting.

Robert Lederman

I smile as I put pen to paper for this piece and consider starting with the phrase "There are no words..." I smile because I can imagine the Rabbi remarking that those who proclaim "There are no words..." are only revealing the small size of their vocabulary which is nothing to be proud of! Nevertheless, it is difficult to describe in just a few sentences, the great impact that Rabbi Brovender has had on Jewish Education.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the lessons that I have learned from Rabbi Brovender over the long while that I have had the privilege to have been a *Talmid*.

After years of formal Jewish Education in the UK and later in Israel, I found Rabbi Brovender to be a startlingly refreshing teacher of Torah. Never before had I experienced an educator who was so obsessed with "the words". Never before had I seen a *Talmid Chacham* investigating, so youthfully, the meaning of the texts and energizing a classroom of his students to want to do the same. This is part of the thrill of learning with Rabbi Brovender. He is the master teacher because he is truly the everlasting student. On reflection I would say that many of Rabbi Brovender's *shiurim* are really opportunities to experience him learning in real-time! The location of his *makom* at the back of the old *Bet Midrash* in the Efrat commercial center was not without significance. The message being conveyed was that we are all *talmidim*. Some *talmidim* have more to share. They are the *melamdin*, the *rebbe*s and the *Roshei Yeshiva*. But we must always remain *talmidim*.

In the Yeshiva, Rabbi Brovender interacted with you as you were. He took people seriously and encouraged them to take themselves and their lives seriously too. In a period in which so many other Rabbis were asking their students "What's your real name?", Rabbi Brovender was letting people be wherever it was they felt comfortable being. He was not trying to make anyone into something he thought they ought to be. He was just trying to create an environment in which one could think about being a more educated and, consequently, committed Jew. Through his comments, questions, reflections and legendary humor, he facilitates the personal growth of his *talmidim*. Rabbi Brovender teaches us to be honest both with ourselves and with others, all the time. Rabbi David Rozenson remarked one Purim, "In some other *Yeshivot*, every day you have to dress-up and pretend to be someone that you aren't. At Brovender's, you can be yourself every day and only have to dress up on Purim!"

Rabbi Brovender doesn't hide the complexities and challenges that life presents in maintaining faith in God. He never lets us forget that becoming a believing, God-fearing Jew is both a privilege and a lifelong endeavor requiring ongoing energy and fresh understanding throughout life. You never "arrive". The meaning is indeed in the journey rather than the destination. Yet his obviously deep and resonating commitment to the age-old values of *Talmud Torah*, *Limmud Torah* and *Yirat Shamayim*, are interspersed with the humor and the warmth, the smiles and the love.

At the last "in shabbat" at *Yeshivat HaMivtar*, after one of the speeches at lunch, Rabbi Brovender turned to me and said "You know, it would be great if you could read your obituary whilst you were still alive. Then you could say to yourself: Hey! maybe I should try and be like that!"

Rabbi Brovender, this volume reflects how many different people perceive you and your teachings, and is replete with messages that convey how that perception has influenced them

positively in their Jewish life. Deena and my whole family join me in praying that Hashem bless you with many more years to be able to continue to be everything you already are, and more. We're already looking forward to what's to come!

Rav Zvi Leshem (Blobstein)

Director of Overseas Programs, Nishmat

Spiritual Leader, Shirat Shlomo, Efrat

Yeshivat HaMivtar 1979-1987

Looking back after many years, it is difficult to evaluate exactly what was Rabbi Brovender's impact on my development in Torah and *chinuch*. One thing however is certain: the years at Yeshivat HaMivtar were my formative years in learning and teaching. As I had come to the Yeshiva with prior background in Gemara, I was never in Rav Brovender's main shiur. I did however, study other topics with him, primarily Chumash and *meforshim* (especially Ramban), Rambam, Maharal and Chassdiut. Some of these shiurim were special *kollel chaburot* that were conducted in a very intimate setting.

As a *baal teshuva*, the HaMivtar's relatively open environment and intellectual atmosphere made it possible for me to make the transition to yeshiva life without feeling threatened. The Yeshiva in those early days was made up mostly of highly intellectual and very accomplished *baaley teshuva*. The atmosphere was very intense and we were very dedicated to our learning. There were *bochrim* who learned until they fell asleep at their desks at 3:00 in the morning, and slept on mattresses in the *bet midrash* so as not to lose time going to and from the dorm. Others would arrive at the *bet midrash* at 6:00 a.m. Many of my fellow students went on to become distinguished *rabbanim*, *ramim* and *roshei yeshiva*. We were a tight knit group, and many of us are still friends almost 30 years later. I thrived in the analytical atmosphere, but no less from the exposure to spiritual sources taught informally, such as Maharal (lunch time) and Rebbe Nachman (Friday mornings). I remember Rav Brovender once remarking that it was strange that the Yeshiva was viewed as being so "intellectual" when much energy was devoted to "spiritual" topics as well.

I was always impressed by Rav Brovender's intellectual curiosity. It seemed to me then that he was always experimenting with something new (clogs, vegetarianism, jazz etc). It wasn't often that I made appointments with him for serious discussions, but some of the ones that we did have, such as on Biblical Criticism, were very significant to me. Where else could I have found a Rosh Yeshiva who was truly qualified to discuss this topic in depth with me?

Probably the greatest gift that Rav Brovender gave to me was teaching experience. Already in my second year I was given responsibility for small groups of beginners as well as teaching in HaMivtar's then high school Ohr Yerushalayim. Soon afterwards I began to teach at Michlelet Bruria, where Rav Brovender pioneered in Talmudic studies for women. As one who has made my career in women's Torah education, I have much to be thankful for in this area as well. I continued to teach throughout the time I spent at the Yeshiva, and while I am sure I made many mistakes, I also gained much experience, methodology and self-confidence. My love of, and ability to teach, text skills and "how to learn" was a direct result of how I was taught to learn at HaMivtar, where Rav Brovender innovated this field as well. The Sokotchover Rebbe writes in the introduction to the *Eglei Tal*, that today, when the Oral Law has been written down, the main mitzva of teaching Torah is to teach people methodology for study. That was the Yeshiva's specialty under Rav Brovender's direction, and it has greatly influenced the way I teach as well, for which I am profoundly grateful. As I look back upon the years I spent at the yeshiva I am filled with a profound sense of *hakarat hatov*. I wish to thank Rav Brovender and wish him all the best in the future!

Jacob Leven**HaMivtar Summer '05, Fall '06**

At the beginning of every shiur, Rav Brovender picks some lucky student to read that day's material. The next ninety minutes are something of a high intensity chavrusa between the student and the Rosh Yeshiva. The reader struggles to handle Rav Brovender's breakneck pace and the steady onslaught of questions with which the Rosh Yeshiva bombards him. As the least learned student in the shiur, I expected to get off not being chosen to read. I was right, until one day Rav Brovender sat down and said, "Who should we have read today Mr. Leven?" The implication was obvious. By the end of the lesson, I was sure of two things: 1) That I was glad to make it out of class alive, and 2) I learned more that day than in any other day of my life.

Rabbi Mitchell Levine

When I applied many years ago to the kollel in order to learn for *smicha*, Rabbi Brovender questioned me at the interview, "Why wouldn't I simply learn in New York? Why learn for *smicha* in Israel?" I answered, "*Ki MI-TZION teitsei Torah*". Rabbi Brovender paused, looked me over, and then asked me, "Was that a joke?" After I answered in the affirmative, the rabbi gave me a wry smile, and told me that I was accepted to the kollel, but on condition that I resolve never to attempt any more jokes.

Erez Lieberman**Harvard / MIT****HaMivtar '97-'98**

Rabbi Brovender has some of the best zingers of anyone I know. Two lines I particularly remember:

1. Once we were in his shiur and he was explaining some halacha or other; I believe that the common practice was to be machmir but R. Brovender thought this was wrong. When you live your whole life going to great trouble to do X, then you find out that it's not needed, it's just so aggravating. One of the students presses R. Brovender pretty strenuously on the issue. R. Brovender says: "Look, I can only answer your question. I can't make up for a lifetime of frustration."

That was really right, and really important for me at the time; it remains my most memorable exposure to the dichotomy between what someone is asking and all the many emotional machinations that lurk in the background. (I've used it, I confess, though never as effectively!) There are so many reasons that people have, few are bound to logic, and you can be troubled and conflicted even if the "logical" route forward is clear.

2. He's probably used this line alot; I think I saw him say it but maybe it is just a "Maaseh Rav." One time he was giving a shiur and he says, reflecting on his station: "I may not be the best Rosh Yeshivah. I may not be the best Stand-up comedian. But I am the best Stand-up-Rosh-Yeshivah you're going to find."

What a riot! Still, this humorous exercise in self-definition was revealing. In the right wing of Judaism, it's always, you've gotta be this, you've gotta be that, etc. And people take this so seriously, you can't even joke around! And here's R. Brovender, and we all admire him a lot, and then he says, 'look, maybe I'm not satisfying all those other definitions, but I'm doing my thing and that's OK.'

That's a really positive message. HaMivtar, as an institution, has always been a lot more tolerant of people finding their way, and I think that has come from the top.

For my part, my experience at HaMivtar has a lot to do with my encounters with R. Brovender, since I was in his shiur most of the year. HaMivtar was great, my first real

exposure to learning, and it developed the abiding interest in learning which remains with me still. When I came to HaMivtar, I was a pretty cynical post-high school kid who just wanted to become a billionaire as soon as possible and retire. A lot of the reasons bringing me there were anthropological: why, I wondered, would a reasonably intelligent person take part in such Byzantine religious practices?

By the time I left, I found that I'd become a person completely seduced by ideas, fundamental questions, what was going on, etc.: a seduction which has not yet departed me and has replaced many of my earlier values. Where did this come from? I think it had something to do with R. Brovender: his Talmud, his Semitics, his math, his general curiosity about the situation we humans find ourselves in. I've never asked, but I think that may be his answer to my anthropological question (at least in part): a seduction by ideas, and the beautiful interplay between them that learning and *derasha* make possible.

Today, I spend much of my time studying Genomes, these 4-letter texts which are the biological instruction set of all life. Still, on occasion, staring at a screen full of As, Cs, Gs, and Ts and thinking: "Ah! I see what happened, this is what's really going on!", I feel as though I'm back at HaMivtar, just an ignorant guy, staring at ancient, divine, incomprehensible texts, written in a different hand.

Bezalel Manekin

Jerusalem/Washington, DC

One of many memories: after my first year at "Brovender's" ('73-'74) I returned to Yale to finish my BA. When Rabbi Brovender went on his annual recruiting trip that Fall, I invited him to speak. (Rabbi Fink was then a Yale grad student.) In those early days, the "Ivy League-Brovender's" connection was in its infancy. The trip was successful; other Yalies, including Shmuel Wald, Akiva Garber, and David Sklare, ended up at the yeshiva.

I don't remember much about Rabbi Brovender's speech, but I do remember his reaction when I showed him his Yale "digs"; I had managed to get him a richly furnished apartment in one of the residential colleges. When he entered the apartment and saw the Ivy League decor, his face lit up. He walked over to the refrigerator, opened the freezer, and said, with characteristic understatement, "Breyer's ice cream. Nice touch, Bezalel." And then he added, "I think I'll stay here for a week...."

Well, he didn't, but I returned to "Brovenders" for another two years after graduating – the end of the Shappell era and the beginning of the HaMivtar era. As one of the original *minyans* of *bochurim*, I will never forget the learning in the Givat HaMivtar "villa," the street football games after lunch, and the tears we shed when Yaffa started frying onions in the kitchen next to the living room (the *beit midrash*).

What a *zekhut* to be part of the legacy of "Brovender's" – almost from the beginning!

Rabbi Menahem Meier

Rav Chaim Brovender made a monumental decision to establish his home in Israel. He proceeded to identify students searching for meaning in life through Torah study. He was and remains an endearing teacher with an incisive mind and keen understanding of people. While my wife, Tzipora, and I would love to be present at the dinner honoring our friend, Reb Chaim, circumstances make that difficult. We do, however, want to express our admiration and respect for him. The landscape of Torah study for Americans in Israel after the Six-Day War was very unlike today's. Inchoate and not institutionalized, Reb Chaim was truly a pioneer. He gave *shiurim* in different environments and began to attract students, both young men and women. His *shiurim* engaged the mind and soul, challenging both.

Reb Chaim became a magnet, drawing many young people to his Torah classes. Encouraged by his supportive wife, Miriam, he invited many students to his home for *Shabbat* and *Haggim*. Their Shabbat table became a combination *Beit Midrash-Tisch*. Their children were raised in a home that placed a premium on hospitality to young students. Reb Chaim and Miriam understand that the future lies with the young and the Shabbat table of the Brovender family would contribute significantly to the Torah values of the future Torah teachers, citizens and leaders of *Am Yisrael*.

My wife and I are thrilled that a tribute dinner was organized in honor of Rav Chaim Brovender, *shlita*. May the *Ribbono shel Olam* bestow His blessings on Miriam and Reb Chaim and their family throughout the years ahead and may his teaching of Torah usher in the ultimate redemption of *Am Yisrael*.

Daniel "Mush" Meyer

What's a Rosh Yeshiva? Rav Brovender used to give his Gemora shiur at 11:00 am. The talmidim were meant to spend the morning hours preparing for shiur. There was one lazy student who would arrive at the Beit Midrash promptly at 11:00am. Rav Brovender would arrive at HaMivtar in Efrat after already having taught at Lindenbaum in Yerushalayim, and immediately start shiur. This lazy student was perturbed that sometimes shiur was already in progress when he arrived at 11:00 am while at other times he had to "wait around" till 11:15 for shiur to start. After one shiur he had the chutzpah to ask Rav Brovender, "Doesn't shiur start at 11:00?" Rav Brovender said that's correct, and when I walk into the Beit Midrash that's when its 11:00.

On the Yeshiva Adar tiyul the yeshiva stayed overnight in Tsfat. The next morning we began on our hike from Tsfat to Meron. The tiyul was being led by the madrich of the yeshiva, a very proper Englishman. As we began to walk, a group of us towards the back deviated off the beaten track down a hill led by Rav Brovender. The Madrich sad: "Rav Brovender the path is over here!" Rav Brovender answered "I know." The madrich replied, "I am leading the tiyul and this is the path." Rav Brovender replied: "I am the Rosh Yeshiva and this is the way we are going." The yeshiva without hesitation followed Rav Brovender.

Meir Mitelman

Dear Rabbi Brovender,

I vividly remember meeting you for the first time in the summer of 1970 when I wanted to find out more about strengthening my knowledge of Judaism at "Rabbi Brovender's."

I was living on the Givat Ram campus of Hebrew University and planning to do graduate work at the university. I was interested in learning Torah part-time, but when I came to meet you, you made a strong case for me to make a full-time commitment to learning.

I had never gone to yeshiva, never lived in a yeshiva, and never studied Judaism intensively. I had more than a little anxiety about dropping out of Hebrew University and moving into a small building on Rechov HaOr 2 (especially challenging for a guy from Texas used to the wide open spaces) to immerse myself fully in rigorous, intensive Jewish learning. But your words touched a chord in me and rang true, and after lots of serious thought, I realized you were right. I made the move, and the rest is history – a wonderful, precious history continuing to the present.

What a *z'chut* to live in Yerushalayim and learn Torah with you, Rabbi Jay Miller, and so many other great teachers of Torah for one year that turned into two years (since I realized that even though the first year was very difficult, I needed to give it more time) that turned into three years (since the second year was so wonderful). There were times during the first year that it was too intense for me, and I would occasionally sneak out of the Beis Medrash to romp around Yerushalayim during the afternoon seder. But, alas, slowly, I started "getting

it," began realizing that Rabbi Miller had succeeded in "pounding our flabby brains into shape" (if not an exact quote from Rabbi Miller, close to it), and started loving the learning.

A thought: Even before "multitasking" was a word, I was doing it at Shalom Hartman College for Jewish Studies (the official name of "Rabbi Brovender's" when I arrived). For several months before Purim, I (along with some of the other guys) was not only sitting in shiur learning Torah, but also working hard on composing lyrics to original songs for the yeshiva's Purim Shpiel. The shiur was obviously an inspiration for my creative juices for one of Yerushalayim's most memorable (according to those who were present) shpiels.

Rabbi Brovender's was the right place at the right time for me. I am so deeply grateful and blessed for the extraordinary opportunity to learn Torah with you and the other teachers for three years, to meet so many great fellow students, many of whom are still among my closest friends, to explore Israel (a number of times on spectacular tiyulim with the yeshiva), to celebrate Shabbat and holidays with the chevra at the yeshiva and in your home, to be one of the writers, directors, and actors of three Purim Shpiels (if you remember, I had one of the starring roles, playing you), to become more learned in Yiddishkeit, to learn how to learn, to more deeply understand and appreciate Jewish laws, traditions, concepts, and values, to live and learn Torah in Yerushalayim, and to grow as a person and as a Jew.

All of this was an essential foundation for my journey toward becoming a Yeshiva University *musmach*, going into Hillel work, and sharing the beauty and meaning of Judaism with others.

So, Rabbi Brovender, for playing such a major role in making possible these and so many other opportunities that have so enriched my Jewish journey and my life, my heartfelt thanks, *kol hakavod*, and *y'shar kochecha*. Shep lots of *naches*! May you go *m'chayil el chayil* as a source of Torah wisdom and as an inspiration to the thousands of students and others whose lives you have profoundly touched, and may Hashem bless you and all your family with long, happy, healthy lives filled with *simcha*, *hatzlacha*, *bracha*, *sippuk nefesh*, *shalom* in your lives, and *Shalom al Yisrael*.

Moshe Morris

As I write this, I wonder what Rabbi Brovender will think of it. After all, one of the many qualities of Rabbi Brovender that has always impressed me is his honest and deep-felt disdain for aggrandizing himself. Indeed, this quality permeates his entire style of teaching, which is focused on the *growth* of the student in the broadest and deepest sense of that word. So what will Rabbi Brovender think of all of these tributes? Will he appreciate them? Will he find enjoyment in them? Or will he see them as something petty, superficial and missing the real point. After all, Rabbi Brovender has little tolerance for superficiality and anything else that takes us away from what is real and meaningful in this world. And so, I wonder...

I think the answer to my question can be found in another aspect of Rabbi Brovender's character and personality which I find just as remarkable and meaningful as is personal dislike for all things trivial. That is the fact that Rabbi Brovender is a person who opens himself up to his students. It is possible, really possible, to have an honest and meaningful relationship with Rabbi Brovender – one which moves beyond the superficiality which (as I mentioned above) Rabbi Brovender so dislikes. I have many memories of quality time spent with both Rabbi Brovender himself and his family as a whole. Whether it was recruiting with Rabbi Brovender in America, spending time at their house on Shabbas and the Chagim, introducing them to my fiancé, asking him countless numbers of questions, or simply going for a walk together after lunch, the Brovenders have opened their life to my life; they have shared their time with my time and I and my family are richer for it.

Let's not underestimate the importance of what I am saying here. I learned a tremendous amount as a student in Yeshivat HaMivtar – more than any other educational institution that I

have attended (and I've attended a number of educational institutions). Indeed, the basis for how I think, relate and investigate the world and all that is in it is shaped in great part by my 4 ½ years at Yeshivat HaMivtar. It was truly some of the most valuable and cherished time that I have spent in my life.

But equal to all that I learned formally studying as a Talmid in the Yeshiva is what I learned by spending time with the Brovenders. The wisdom, insights and ideas that I gained during that time equals (and perhaps surpasses) the time that I spent studying in the Yeshiva itself.

But this wisdom was made available to me solely because I was privileged to have a Rosh Yeshiva who saw having a relationship with us as part and parcel of the Torah that he was teaching us. It was all one package, part of the enterprise that we call Torah.

It is this idea, this fact, which I think has had the greatest impact on me, my life and my philosophy. I have come to see the world as one big relationship. Creation, Providence, Nature, Torah, Mitzvas, the Soul, my personal relationships, and everything else that exists and takes place in this life is just another means by which God reveals himself to us and allows us to relate to and interact with God. That's how I fundamentally see the world, and I see it that way because my Rebbi *acted* that way with me.

Now is not the time to discuss the philosophical ramifications of this world view, but needless to say this view has dramatically changed my life *and for the better*. It is a gift of untold value and one which I appreciate more than almost anything else that I have received in this world. And for that, my only response can be to: a) say thank you, and b) attempt to open myself up to my friends, family and students in the same way that Rabbi Brovender and his family opened themselves up to me.

With that said, let me return to my original question. What will Rabbi Brovender think of these tributes? I think he will find great value in them. Why? Because they won't essentially be written out of a sense of obligation or duty, but rather from a deep felt feeling of gratitude and love. In other words, they will be part of the relationship. They will be honest and heartfelt and therefore meaningful. And as I mentioned before, Rabbi Brovender likes things that are meaningful. In particular, he likes things that are meaningful when they come in the context of the relationships that he has worked so hard to build.

I and my family wish you and your family many more years of teaching Torah and building the unique types of relationships that can only come through teaching Torah.

Chanan Morrison

Mitzpe Yericho

I attended Yeshivat HaMivtar many years ago. I left after a month or two, but I still carry a memory that made a powerful impression on me at the time. I was in Rabbi Brovender's class – I don't remember which *massechet* we were learning – when one day Rabbi Brovender arrived wearing an army uniform. He had reserve duty for a number of days, and he was giving us one last class before heading off.

As they say, actions speak louder than words. I had just arrived in Israel, and I had not yet clarified to myself the proper path for a Jew living in Eretz Yisrael, how to balance between one's obligations to God and one's responsibilities to society. This simple act – giving a Gemara shiur while wearing an IDF uniform (somewhat ruffled, if I remember correctly) – taught me a number of important lessons. I learned that one can be a sincerely *frum* Jew and still be active in the State of Israel. I learned that religious Jews should also participate in defending their country. And I learned that participation in Israeli society does not absolve one from "*bittul* Torah."

Twenty-seven years later I'm sorry to say that I don't remember what we learned in class. But I'll always remember the *shiur* given by Rabbi Brovender – *rosh yeshivah*, Israeli citizen and IDF soldier.

Steve Moss

I was a *talmid* in the yeshiva in 1985-1990. I would like to express my gratitude to Rabbi Brovender for providing me with the opportunity to learn Torah during those years, and for helping me develop the skills that have allowed me to continue learning since then.

Avraham Norin

I first entered Rav Brovender's shiur in 1991. It was the middle of Elul after zman had already begun. He asked me my name and where I was from. When I told him Pompton Plains, NJ he explained to the class that New Jersey was one big highway with lots of little towns on the side.

During my year of yeshiva Rav Brovender traveled a lot to the U.S.S.R. I saw the tremendous amount of teaching and traveling he did for *Am Yisrael*. He didn't give us big lectures about the important work that he was doing – he just did it. (Postscript: Later in life when my wife's mother planned a family trip to St. Petersburg, I asked Rav Brovender what food can we eat in Russia. In his words "It's really un-kosher there. They eat pig for breakfast." We brought our own food.)

However us being nineteen did not understand the cosmic events that was created by Glasnost... we just knew that our Gemara teacher was absent a lot. We complained to the other Rabbaim. One day Rav Brovender came back and announced to us that the shiur today will not be in the classroom but rather we should follow him. We walked after him through the streets of Efrat until we reach a magnificent house. We follow Rav Brovender inside to the living room with a beautiful view of the Judean Hills. The Owner of the house, our hostess, smiles at us, offers us snacks and drinks. Rav Brovender then began that he wanted to give us a special message which we would not forget, and therefore he thought the change in scenery would help facilitate that goal. He then went on to proceed and... apologized. While we all looked at each other awkwardly Rav Brovender went on to explain that he was sorry we felt we were not getting what we needed out of shiur, that he tried his best and he was sorry that it didn't work out...we came out feeling very humbled. (Postscript: I used the same method of giving special shiurim in someone's house when I became a high school gemara rebbe).

After I started learning in the Talmud Department of Bar Ilan, I came back one Thursday night to hear a brilliant Elul sicha about Talmud Torah and Tshuva. After the sicha I mentioned to Rav Brovender that maybe I should drop out of the Talmud dept because it is a non-traditional approach of learning. He answered me that he thought the people there are also *yirei shamayim* and I have what to learn. I stayed in the program. (Postscript: During the sicha he compared the shofar to an alarm clock which wakes people up when it rings. Unless, he continued, "you are one of those people who lay awake in bed and only get out when the alarm clock rings." When he said this my head started spinning... I did that each morning! After this sicha, I realized how foolish it was and got out of bed right away.)

Once in the Gruss Kollel there was a day dedicated to Rav Soloveitchik and all the one year programs were invited. Rav Brovender's shiur is the only one I remember today. One of the highlights of the shiur was Rav Brovender's Rav story: He entered the Rav's house and the Rav was on a ladder fixing a light bulb. Rav Brovender was startled to see the *Gadol HaDor* on a ladder and said "Rebbe, let me help you." The Rav yelled down – if you want to help pass me the light bulb. The lesson that Rav Brovender took from this was that a *talmid chacham* can also be a regular human being. Rav Brovender emulated this message in his own life as well.

While in the hospital Rav Brovender came one day and stayed as if he had all the time in the world. Later when I was out and healthy we met at a Brit at the Maarat HaMachpela. He said that getting sick was a good time for me to see my friends "because we know how much friends are important to you" which made me feel good.

Last month I was studying Yishaya with Chezi Ben-Michael in Yeshiva. We asked him about how we should approach the subject and he explained that the yeshiva world never came up with a good way of studying Tanach (in contrast to studying Talmud). He said because Tanach is mostly the same theme over and over. I said "But Yishaya is 66 chapters long! There must be a difference between them!" So he says "So you find it!" At that moment I said in my heart to try and dedicate the book to Rav Brovender.

To end off with a quote from one of my colleagues: "Rav Brovender is not the funniest man in the world, or the biggest Rosh Yeshiva of the world... but he is the funniest Rosh Yeshiva that exists." If I can add my *perush* it would be as such: humor is universal. Humor opens up people's hearts. Roshei Yeshiva give over chochmah. Roshei Yeshiva give insights. Rav Brovender is someone who can open up your heart – and then let the wisdom and insights fall in.

Avi Katz Orlow

Campus Rabbi, St. Louis Hillel at Washington University

Both directly and indirectly, Rabbi Brovender has had a significant impact on my life. Even before I met him, my life was transformed by his students. In 1991 I spent the summer learning with Rabbis Avi Weinstein and Michael Paley on the Bronfman Youth Fellowship; I was drawn to their vision, clarity, and authenticity and I shared in their passion and pursuit of text. This led me to their Rabbi, who they quoted frequently. I had the fortune to spend what would have been my sophomore year in college at HaMivtar. Upon my return to college, I threw myself back into Jewish life on campus.

After graduating from college, I worked for YUSSR in Minsk for over a year; I remember as if it was yesterday calling Rabbi Brovender from Minsk. I asked him if it might be possible to return to learn in the Yeshiva. Without hesitation, Rabbi Brovender said that there was a bed waiting for me. After finishing that year, he invited me to stay on as a *madrich*. These three years of learning in the yeshiva were formative years in my life and the bedrock of my Jewish education.

Now in my rabbinate, I, too, find myself quoting Rabbi Brovender to my students. When I reflect back on all of the skills that I learned from Rabbi Brovender, I realize they are secondary to the most important lesson that I learned from him. Rabbi Brovender believed, taught, and modeled his faith in a person's innate potential. Rabbi Brovender's method posits that ordinary people can do extraordinary things if they have the means and the will. There is no doubt that this is something that I think about every day in my work as a Hillel Rabbi on campus.

My life has been changed by him, and I hope to continue to spread his Torah throughout my life.

Tova Osofsky

In appreciation of Rabbi Chaim Brovender, one of the best teachers I have ever learned from, who served as the mentor and exemplar of an entire generation of teachers and students. A principled individual with an amazing ability to combine brilliant analysis of Torah with sharp, engaging wit, Rabbi Brovender has changed the face of Torah learning for women while always safeguarding the *mesorah*.

Devorah Preiss-Bloom**1975-76**

When I met Rabbi Brovender for the first time in 1975, at an interview in Brooklyn, I was a feminist FFB college sophomore who had struggled with the lack of spirituality and intellectual creativity in the modern Orthodox world.

Rabbi Brovender impressed me with his friendly open attitude, but what impressed me even more was that he was wearing wooden clogs. Any Rabbi, I figured, who wears clogs must have a heightened consciousness, be open-minded and not afraid of innovation. Indeed Rabbi Brovender's respect for individuality and his dedication to the facilitation of his students' spiritual development were borne out for me in the year 1975-76 on Rechov HaOr in Romema.

When I suggested that I learn *chassidut* and not Mishna Brura, Rabbi Brovender, without being judgmental, arranged for me a wonderful one-on-one class with a teacher that was tailor-made to my needs. And, when one of the neighbors related seeing one of his female students putting on *tefillin* on the roof of the Midrasha he did not complain, coerce or condescend.

Thank you Rabbi Brovender for your wisdom, for your sense of humor and for the honor of being your student.

Yedidya Rausman

I laugh at the task before me as I sit here trying to sum up Rabbi Brovender in "words"; trying to sum up my relationship with the Rosh Yeshiva, trying to explain his methods, trying to think of that "one moment" that can put everything into perspective. I have been blessed to spend many hours in the presence of the Rosh Yeshiva and there is no one experience than can describe Rabbi Brovender. For me, every encounter is a unique experience. Every encounter yields some new *chiddush* to usurp; a never ending lesson. Amazingly, while during our interactions I am aware of the wisdom Rav Brovender imparts, often it is only after time that I truly realize the full extent of his *chochma*. His wisdom deepens with me as time moves forward. Rabbi Brovender is a bridge that allows me to understand the past Torah giants in the perspective of the present, while giving me the tools to optimistically view the future of *Yiddishkeit*. Rabbi Brovender's love for Torah is infectious. Rabbi Brovender has made the Torah come to life for me by constantly unraveling the never-ending depths of the Torah via his unique style and method of learning and teaching. As a *talmid* of his, I have acquired this approach to learning that has opened an entire new dimension of Talmud Torah and Avodat Hashem. In his presence you are always aware of his *kavod ha-Makom* and *kavod ha-briut*. My Rebbe has given me a taste of *olam ha-zeh* and the vision to eagerly yearn *olam ha-bah*. The Rosh Yeshiva constantly praises and blesses *Eretz Yisrael*; but truly the Holy Land is blessed to house his *kedusha*. This "experience" is constant and ever lasting, and I pray that many more people will have the *zechus* of being in the presence of Rabbi Brovender.

Ezra Robison**HaMivtar, 95-96**

I had the pleasure of driving Rabbi Brovender to Logan Airport on two occasions. The first time, I waited patiently for him after davening as he spoke with others while putting away his *tefillin*. As we walked out, he apologized for taking so much time, explaining that he had to speak with all of his ex-students. Then he gave me an embarrassed sidelong glance and noted "and I suppose you're one as well." I admitted that I had been in a lower shiur.

On the second occasion, I brought my 4 year old son along for the trip. When we got to the "big dig" between Boston and the Airport, my son turned quite anxious, not wanting to be in

the tunnel so long. It was very touching to watch the Rabbi engage him and distract him from his fears.

Sarah Robinson

What makes Rabbi Brovender such a fantastic teacher of Torah is the way he blends intelligence, curiosity, and always humour – certainly at his own expense sometimes, but equally, at his students, at his class of American teens and would-be Torah scholars. The British community also gets a look in; the entire Lincoln Square community was reduced to tears of helpless laughter at his account, at our son's Bar Mitzvah, of being asked to recite the Prayer for the Queen when attending a small provincial synagogue on the sunny south coast of the UK. Rabbi Brovender and Miriam also have a way of honouring long-time talmidim, as both myself and Shaul are proud to count ourselves, by raising our classification to "Family". To see Rabbi Brovender at friend's *s'machot* in different parts of the globe, many years after physically moving from the Brovenders' close proximity, is a tremendous treat. We have personally benefited from this "special relationship", especially since moving to New York where he was present both at Shaul's installation and at Avromi's Bar Mitzvah. I cannot tell you how we felt when Rabbi Brovender called to let us know he would be coming. Suddenly, we felt that our *simcha* was not reliant on who from the community could attend, and how many old friends and family members may not be able to be present. We could relax (a little), it was going to be FUN! We are so grateful to you both for affecting our lives, and those of our children, so deeply. Wishing you *nachas* always, from your family and *talmidim*.

Rabbi Shaul Robinson

Lincoln Square Synagogue

The Gemara in Shabbat tells us רבה מקמי דפתה להו לרבנן אמר מילתא דבדיחותא. Raba, before starting his *shiur* would say *milta dbdichuta* – humorous sayings – jokes, perhaps – not in order to distract from the topic of the *shiur*, but rather, as Rashi says, 'to open their hearts through *simcha*' – to make the teaching of Torah an even more profound experience.

This Gemara zeros in on what for me has always been one of the most striking paradoxes of my Rebbe, Rabbi Brovender. On the one hand, Rabbi Brovender is the most profound teacher of Torah that I have ever met, whose every *shiur* bespeaks the seriousness of the endeavor of attempting to become a *Talmid Chacham* and illustrates the necessity of relentlessly deep thinking and intellectual struggle. And yet, at the same time he is a person of the most dazzling and refreshing humor, a person who loves to laugh and make people laugh, and whose *shiurim* come alive, and, yes, open the hearts of the *talmidim*, through this dazzling combination.

I have been privileged to be a Talmid of Rabbi Brovender for nearly 20 years. As it happens, despite learning in the Yeshiva for 7 years, I was only in his Gemara *shiur* for a relatively brief period of a few months. The rich nature of the curriculum at HaMivtar meant, however, that I was able, over those years, to attend hundreds of shiurim: on Parshat Hashavua, Ramban, Machshevet Yisrael, Chassidut, and above all Rambam.

I feel blessed that Rabbi Brovender has been my Rebbe and a part of my life at almost all of the most important milestones of the last 20 years. Not only simchas that I celebrated whilst still in Yeshiva – within the past year Rabbi Brovender graciously participated in two of the most joyous occasions in my life – my installation as Senior Rabbi at Lincoln Square Synagogue and at the Bar Mitzvah of our son Avromi, just 6 months later.

In the years that Sarah and I lived in England, Rabbi Brovender was a frequent guest in our home and I had the *zechut* of driving him thousands of miles over the UK – to Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, to name but a few, in order to recruit students.

In particular I remember the trip he made not long after his recovery from the viscous attack that he suffered during the Intifada. To see and hear how a situation of the utmost violence and cruelty could be turned into a lesson in humility and gratitude to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

In January 1992, I, together with two other talmidim, spent a month in Moscow with Rabbi Brovender. At that time Rabbi Brovender was spending a number of months of the year at the Yeshiva that had been opened by Rabbi Steinsaltz. This was one of the most special periods in my life. Rabbi Brovender, as we know, is a person of formidable intelligence, who loves to teach people of exceptional intelligence, and share the depth of Torah with them. There were many such talmidim – many at the very beginning of their return to Judaism – at that Yeshiva. Again, a paradox – a foreign land, and a foreign language and culture could easily have separated the Rosh Yeshiva from those talmidim. But in that Beit Midrash in Moscow, surrounded by those talmidim, and the Gemara and Rishonim, Rabbi Brovender was truly at home.

I personally am looking forward to many opportunities to be with, celebrate with, and most importantly learn from our Rebbe for many years to come.

Daniel Rose

I have two short anecdotes that immediately spring to mind. Firstly an inspiring idea that Rav Brovender shared with me that I have taken with me every day in my professional career. Upon leaving the yeshiva to return to England with many thoughts of how I could best make an impact as an educator to Anglo-Jewry and *Am Yisrael*, Rav Brovender advised me that the greatest single impact I could make as a Jewish educator would be to take a class and teach them Torah from the beginning of the year until the end of the year. I had many grandiose ideas involving *kiruv*, community pulpit, dynamic public speaking and leadership, etc. (all the sexy jobs in Jewish education), and I wanted to know from the Rav which route he felt could make the greatest impact. I was shocked to hear that the mundane job of classroom teaching could have the greatest impact on Jewish souls and minds. I considered the idea closely and decided to pursue that direction, and have felt tremendous satisfaction with my career and contribution ever since.

The following quote I am sure you will receive many times, and perhaps more accurately quoted, but it is of course important that it finds its way into any tribute on Rav Brovender. I can testify to hearing it first hand, but it was some time ago, so I cannot claim this to be a word for word quote. "I may not be the best comedian in the world, and I may not be the best Rosh Yeshiva in the world, but I am the funniest Rosh Yeshiva in the world!"

Nathan Rosen HaMivtar 1981

Rabbi Brovender made a tremendous difference in my life by providing me the opportunity to participate in a yeshiva environment that was extremely exciting but safe. He brought together many skilled teachers and gathered a class made up of a very wide variety of students from tremendously different backgrounds who were slightly older, more worldly, highly educated and intelligent. He opened my eyes to Judaism in the most positive ways and excited me through his personal lectures and listening to him interact with other students, as well as just being around him.

Rabbi Brovender provided me the chance to really struggle with the texts in an intellectually honest and forthright manner without falling back on stock answers. To me he opened the world of Jewish sources by providing me the tools to really examine the primary sources first hand and struggle with their meaning as Jews have throughout history. Without pressuring me (which would have turned me away), Rabbi Brovender encouraged me to intensify my Jewish observance (which has continued to increase during the last 25 years ago). The path that he helped put me on has lead to a rich and full Jewish experience which I would have never been

able to achieve without the education that Rabbi Brovender and Yeshivat HaMivtar provided me.

Josh Rosenbloom

Yeshivat HaMivtar 5766

Rabbi Brovender,

Thank you for your gemara shiur, in which you taught us how we should learn for your *Nefesh HaChayim chabura*, where you taught us why we should learn for your Parshat HaShavuah shiurim, which were the highlight of my week, for your example, which made me realize that learning Torah is a life-long endeavor, and not something finished after a year in yeshiva, for your rigor, which challenged me to grow, for your sense of humor, for taking time to talk to me, for the *Shabbatot* at your house, and for many other things besides....

In sum, Rabbi Brovender, thank you for allowing me to fulfill the dictate of *Pirkei Avot* עשה לך רב.

Jeremy Rosten

London

What can I say about the man who has been the single most important influence in my life (aside from my wife and parents – although it's close...)? The only way I can express it is to simply say how much I have grown to love him over the years. He is at the same time a wonderful and loving father-figure, whose warmth and care I can feel wherever I am. He is the voice of reason in an increasingly crazy and lazy Jewish world. He is the single person that I most want to talk to about anything that a man wouldn't talk to his wife about first. He may not know it, but I think about him all the time and draw on his words and thoughts in all contexts. My friends must be thoroughly fed up of my quoting his wisdom, opinions, jokes and one-liners – I figure they need to hear it straight from someone though...

As a teacher – well, I am not an objective observer. The fit for me was perfect and when, one day in Efrat, feeling aimless and depressed, I realised in a moment of understanding that I needed a Rebbe, there was never any doubt who it would be. He understands me so well, and when he talks I really feel as though he is enunciating what I would say had I the knowledge and understanding that is his. He is what I think a *talmid chochum* is meant to be – and ultimately this is the most important thing for me. I have never really been much interested in his jokes – I always wanted the wisdom and the *chiddush*. Talk to many of Rabbi Brovender and they will talk about the jokes and stories but for me that is missing the point – the Torah that he carries and the insight that he has worked so hard for all his life is just wonderful. If I could carry on his teachings, learn and teach Torah the way he has shown me it should be learned and taught, then that would be enough for me in this life.

As a role model, I have come to notice his control in the face of irritation and provocation – not in some exaggerated angelic way but as always in a totally human and real manner, something that crucially is not beyond aspirations or emulation for his *talmidim*. He is the person I most wish to please and not fall foul of, but he has also given me the room to argue and disagree with him without fear. On another note, his belief in *Am Yisrael* has always stopped me in my tracks. When I wanted to criticise he always defended, and that has taught me how important it must be for a Jew.

As a second father he is as wonderful as my first and even looks a little like him, too! Learning Torah with him is as close to the learning from a parent as I could imagine coming and I thank him so much for that.

There are many stories – short comments really – about learning, life, people, Israel and so many other things but they will not mean anything outside of their context – not as much as they have and do to me. Just one perhaps, not because it is funny or profound but because it was an expression of exactly how I felt but couldn't put into words.

I wear a black *kippah*, switched from *Ivrit* pronunciation back to *ashkenazis* and celebrate *Yom Ha'atzmaut* with great depth of feeling. It is not an obvious combination, but for me it is clearly the way it should be. When I asked Rabbi B about changing my pronunciation back to the *ashkenazis* of my father and grandfather, he commented something like: 'Yeh, I did the same thing. When I came to Eretz Yisrael I went straight to Mercaz HaRav in my jeans and sandals. But I found that I just couldn't talk to anyone. I mean, I thought that Medinas Yisrael was an important religious event but the idea that Jewish history started in 1948 was just ridiculous, so I switched back to the pronunciation of my father.' Perfect, just perfect.

Rebbe (and it gives me so much pleasure to call you that), I can never thank you enough for all that you have given me and Lindsay and my children who know their father's Rebbe and how much he loves and respects him. You have changed my life and continue to do so all the time. If I ever make it into *Olam Haba* it will have been you who has brought me there. My dearest wish and heart's desire is to spend my days with you learning Torah from you again as I once did.

Russell Rothstein

It was ironic that I was standing on Mount Scopus, overlooking the city of Jerusalem, when a friend told me that the best place for me to “learn” was not in one of the myriad of Jerusalem *yeshivot*, but rather in Efrat at a place called Brovender's. He said, “that's the place to go if you're a thinking man – the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Brovender, has a PhD himself.”

Apparently, Rabbi Brovender's yeshiva was a place where I could immerse myself in Torah without checking my secular education at the door.

I had the privilege of spending two periods of time learning in Rav Brovender's *shiurim* at Yeshivat HaMivtar. As I started learning in the yeshiva, I heard numerous references by the other *talmidim* to the “Brovender's Method” for learning *gemara*. The yeshiva prided itself on its efforts to teach *talmidim* not just Torah, but also to “learn how to learn” so that we would come out of the yeshiva with the necessary tools to learn texts on our own after leaving the yeshiva. The Brovender's Method was understood to be the foundation of the yeshiva's “learn how to learn” philosophy. After a few months, I built up the courage to approach Rav Brovender and ask him to explain what the Brovender's Method was all about. Rav Brovender paused, smiled and gave me a pithy but enlightening reply: “Just read the words.” My initial reaction was disappointment as I was prepared for a deep pedagogical lecture. Instead I got a straight-to-the-point lesson that would be much harder to follow than the simplicity of those four words indicated. While learning in Rav Brovender's *shiur*, I saw how he constantly required us to “read the words” – understanding the choice of words, sentence structure and hierarchy (at least that's how I understood it) – in order to fully understand the meaning of the text from an *Amora* or Tosfot or Rashi. Whenever I open a *sefer* today, I recall and try to achieve the textual discipline and thoroughness that Rav Brovender instilled in us in his *shiur*.

The highlight of my week at the yeshiva was Rav Brovender's *Parshat HaShavua* shiur on Thursday evenings. The beit midrash was packed and all the *talmidim* were seated eager to hear Rav Brovender's insights into the coming week's *parsha*. His *shiurim* had the same format each week – he would cite a Rashi from the *parsha* and identify an apparent inconsistency between it and the *pshat* or between it and another Rashi. He would then, by bringing in another source (e.g. *gemara*, *mishna*, *Tanach*), demonstrate how not only is there no inconsistency, but that Rashi's explanation is much deeper than understood on the surface. I was fascinated by these *shiurim*. I enjoyed not only learning the deeper meaning of the Rashi, but even more so, seeing him systematically build the *kashia* on Rashi and then solve it. It felt, *le-havdil*, like watching a world-class mathematician raise a problem statement and then build the solution in front of one's eyes.

My wife Adena and I had the *zchut* to have Rav Brovender be the *mesader kedushin* at our wedding two years ago. I had the privilege to get to know Rav Brovender more closely as a result. He took time to get to know my wife. He took an interest in our families and our careers. It's clear that while Rav Brovender dedicates so much of his time to the yeshiva, ATID, *tzedaka* fund, and other Torah and *chessed* projects, he also makes the time to take an interest in people on a personal level. My wish is that my family and I will continue to have the privilege of learning both Torah and *gemilut chasadim* from Rav Brovender. May he continue to spread Torah and act as a spiritual, educational and personal leader to *Am Yisrael* for another forty years.

David Rozenson

Moscow, Russia

Dear Rebbi,

When Rob Lederman called me to ask whether I would write a personal letter to you, I immediately agreed but since then, to be honest, have been stuck every time I attempt at composing my thoughts. I turn to the screen, begin typing, and then erase everything I've written.

Why? I am not sure but can readily surmise that words have proven to be insufficient. Maybe the problem is that a voice of prescience tells me that anything that I can write would insufficiently express my gratitude and love for everything that you have done. Perhaps it is my fear that leaning towards hagiography would be unbecoming; you would simply laugh and say, "*nu, nu.*" Or maybe it's because I feel that this is all wrong; that I want to somehow save the memories of my years at the Yeshiva, hoping that whenever I choose to reignite those cherished years the possibility would immediately be available, and I want to deny the thought that this may not be so.

Some years ago, following the horrific episode with the Arabs who chose to almost dim the light on your life, you said something at the *Seudat Ho'da'ah* which I will never forget. You said, as you spoke over a table laden with food that was to serve as a marker of thanks to the Almighty for saving your life, that students typically come to you with many questions that you can almost always find a response to but that following this grizzly event, you are simply stuck: how does one say thank you to *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* for saving one's life? How does someone find the words to express the innermost feelings of gratitude for such a miracle? You said what you said then but I am now faced with somewhat of a similar challenge. I simply do not know how to say thank you.

But please let me try. When I came to the Yeshiva, there were two people that I grew close to. You, in your incredible manner which covers up the serious with words of humor, nurtured a desire in me to learn more. The knowledge that you wanted to convey, I think, had as much to do with being able to learn a *daf* of *Gemara* as it did with being able to turn the pages of life in the right way. In our discussions, you never forced your opinion but, if I may take a stab at trying to define it, you wanted me to learn how to approach life in a way that would ensure that careful thought is given before making a decision, that the facts are analyzed, that intellectual honesty be kept in the forefront, arm in arm, of course, with *Shvisi Hashem Lenegdi Tamid*.

My early years in Yeshiva, in that large space on the second floor of Efrat's main drag (or so it was at that time), were not easy. You knew that but you kept the pressure up. You and Miriam opened up your home to me and I spent countless *Shabbasim* with other *Talmidim* and with your beautiful family who have become as close to me as my own. You kept a watchful eye but never in a heavy-handed manner. You made jokes about life but buried deep inside them were the serious lessons that I yearned for. Somehow you also knew that Russian Jewry was a deep love of mine and you encouraged me to visit and teach in Moscow – and then berated me for spending so much time away from the books and on my frequent travels.

I want to share something with you and Miriam that I have been meaning to tell you about for the longest time – when I first came to your home and then the many times thereafter, there was one room that peaked my interest most. On my first Shabbat visit, I slept on the second floor but was curious about your basement. While you spent hours with us, you also seemed to disappear whenever possible to a room beneath the first floor. The steps leading down were adorned with pictures, then there were the bookshelves, and then, with the staircase turning, I could not see what was below.

Motzei Shabbat, you invited me to come downstairs. With a diet coke bottle in hand, I followed you. And then I met your world – shelves and shelves of books, countless *seforim*, with titles such as *The Federalist Papers*, books on art, Russian novels, tucked away behind the volumes of the Rambam, Ramban, and *perushim* on the Chumash. Alongside were pictures of your family. There was Elinash at his Bar-Mitzvah, Efrat's wedding photos, and photos of the "Brovender girls" all dressed up and smiling for the camera. Everything carefully organized and arranged, with even the papers with your notes lined neatly on your simple desk. This was your life in a room – study, love of learning, and love of family. In totality, this, I think, was and is the quiet but powerful message that you convey for the enterprise known as life.

When I met Jenny and knew that this was the person that I wanted to share my life with, you spent countless hours speaking to me, encouraging gently, and, finally, marrying us in that somewhat kitschy hall in Jerusalem where I felt, by everything that you did and everything that you are, that you are part of my family.

When I called you one early morning from a hospital phone that miraculously worked in Moscow to tell you of my son's birth, your voice expressed joy that I can only imagine a father's voice could convey. And when I asked whether you would travel to Moscow to be the *sandak*, despite all else in your life, you agreed to make the trip and rejoice with us here. I do not know how to thank you and tell you how special and meaningful this was for us.

Many years ago, you told me that both your father and mother wanted you to become something "real"; the Rabbinat was not a profession in the "*goldene medina*." Your father, despite apparently knowing the Rashi on Chumash by heart, had chosen a profession as you grew up in Brighton Beach and he wanted you to do the same. Yet you chose to lead a life that would ultimately influence thousands of students – and their families. I cannot tell you how I dream to emulate this decision, how I wish I would have learned so much more from you, your classes, and the way that you express your love for your family and your students. You once told me something that has stayed with me. When I asked whether I should consider moving to Russia with my family, you said, in that deep gravelly voice that I have unsuccessfully tried to copy on many occasions, "Rozenon, to be a successful teacher, there are three essential ingredients: you have to love to teach, you have to love the subject, and you have to love your students. This is what I consider important. Now go and think about it."

Rebbi, my apologies for not being able to say what I really want to write. But you surely understand. Thank you and thanks to your special family for everything.

Yehoshua Rubin

Rabbi Brovender once taught that you learn how to *daven* by standing next to one who you think knows how to *daven*. Standing next to Rabbi Brovender during *tefillah* on Rosh Hashanah I learned how one can let their soul soar and by doing so allow others to do the same. Thank you for being your teaching.

Bracha Rutner**Yoetzet Halacha, Riverdale Jewish Center**

My *shana bet* in Midreshet Lindenbaum, my fellow students and myself would meet every Thursday night and learn Mesillat Yesharim with Rabbi Brovender at his home. I remember all the books he had and the wonderful conversations we had. One evening we talked about forgetfulness. I was bemoaning the fact that I have a terrible memory and how frustrating it was. He told me it was really a gift from Hashem. *Shechichah* he said is a wonderful thing as it forces us to relearn things, and in doing so we remember what we learned the first time around and are also able to look at things in a new light. This has stuck with me and I have passed this advice on to colleagues, friends and students.

Hana Goldstein Saks**Bruria/Mabat '87-88****Bruria Scholar '93-96****Faculty, Midreshet Lindenbaum '94-00****ATID, Machzor 1**

Long before I ever sat in Rabbi Brovender's class, I had heard about him. There was my father's connection to him back in Brooklyn; a cousin and then my two older sisters all attended Michlelet Bruria. By the time I was ready to go learn for a year, it was almost inevitable where I would go. There is no doubt, however, that my years learning and then teaching at Midreshet Lindenbaum shaped me and my future in ways I could have only speculated about when I was 18. The world that was opened to me and others by Rabbi Brovender through that institution is something I cannot imagine my life without. Participating in ATID was a logical continuation of the process that was started back then.

But if I think about what I have absorbed most from Rabbi Brovender (the person, as opposed to "Brovender's," the institution) it has something to do with an appreciation of layers of depth. Through his personality, as much as his teaching, Rabbi Brovender taught – always implicitly and often veiled in humor ("may I teach in English? I'm much funnier in English") – that it pays to give something a closer look. A finished product – no matter how simple or simplistic it may seem – is often merely a bottom line; scratch the surface of a Rashi, a Ramban, a student, a teacher or a Rosh Yeshiva (or the front layer of his book shelf), you are bound to find layers of depth and meaning and careful thought and consideration, which are often hidden by what is ultimately presented to the world. This is an invaluable lesson for student and teacher (or for that matter, human being) alike. The addendum to this lesson – which I probably did not appreciate till years later – is that, in fact, there is no finished product or bottom line. The best ideas are those which are periodically reevaluated, the best people, perhaps, those who constantly reevaluate themselves. This, to me, is a most lasting lesson of how one is to learn, and live, Torah.

Jeffrey Saks**Talmid, Yeshivat HaMivtar (1988-89)****Menahel, Yeshivat HaMivtar (1994-96)****Director, ATID**

The great privilege of having worked and taught at Yeshivat HaMivtar, and of having partnered with Rabbi Brovender at our work in ATID, leaves me with enough anecdotes and reminiscences to fill this entire volume. However, as my most profound relationship with him was and has been as a *talmid*, I will limit myself to two vignettes bracketing my time as a student in yeshiva.

The first time I met Rabbi Brovender was as a senior in public high school, interviewing for admission to Yeshivat HaMivtar. I took a train to Manhattan to meet him in the yeshiva office for my *bechina*, and my stomach was churning the whole ride. Unaccustomed to meeting *Roshei Yeshiva*, I didn't know what to expect. Unable to read Gemara, I feared he would ask me to make a *layning*, and I would be denied admission.

The conversation was almost entirely directed to me: my background, my interests, my religious odyssey. After a while he stood up and walked out toward the reception area where the secretary sat, and I understood the interview was over. Following him out of the room, I was puzzled about not having been asked to read some Gemara – how would he know if I was suited to attend the yeshiva? I sheepishly asked, "When will I know if I've been accepted?," at which point he chortled to the secretary (in that Brovenderian way) and said, "He's cute."

The second story comes toward the very end of my year in yeshiva. Some of us were standing around the old Beit Midrash in Efrat (today's frozen food section of the *makolet*) talking about *Shanna Bet*. Rabbi Brovender interrupted us and said, "I don't get it. There is no *Shana Bet*. There is no *Shana Alef*. There's just learning. You see that guy?" he said, pointing to one of the old-timers in the kollel. "He doesn't know what year this is [in his yeshiva career]. No one remembers when he got here, and he has no plans to leave, and you see all these books on these shelves? You've got learn them all. Talmud Torah isn't summer camp."

At some point over our twenty-year association I have come to understand what Rabbi Brovender meant in these two vignettes: *Talmud Torah is not about what you know already, but who you strive to become.*

We, his *talmidim* and *talmidot*, have been fortunate to have a Rebbe who has taught us both Torah as well as the meaning of learning. It is fitting that his emphasis on Torah study as the formative component in helping a student navigate his or her own development as a thinking, religious soul should be his legacy.

Aliza Segal

As a seventeen-year-old student at the women's yeshiva affectionately known as "Brovender's," I quickly figured out that its founder's *Chumash shiurim* were the place to be. Of course, someplace in my mind and heart I was aware of the greater debt I owed. Much of what women of my generation take for granted in terms of our access to Talmud Torah, we owe to him. However, having found my way to this particular yeshiva because of the Gemara instruction for women, then only on the cusp of "mainstream," I was delighted to discover Rav Brovender's *Chumash shiur*. I believe it was technically a class in Ramban on Torah; it was functionally a lesson in the meeting place between text, insight, and common sense. He would do nothing but read the text itself, with no patience for extra-textual meanderings. Yet he would somehow weave – or perhaps he would claim, unravel – a complex fabric of words and ideas, interpretation and application. It was something I could not necessarily come to on my own, but the methodology was one to learn and emulate. Look at the text, use plain language to describe what you see, and let the complexities emerge. (And a dose of sardonic wit.)

Nearly a decade later, I again encountered Rav Brovender and his "method." This time, I was a young teacher participating in another of his visionary ventures, as a two-year ATID Fellow in the first cycle of the program. While there was text – the topic the first year was "Issues in the Teaching and Study of Bible," and, even more to the point, a Rabbi Brovender endeavor is going to involve Torah – this was a foray into ideas, into the world. But the approach was the same: look at the situation and state the obvious, which, as it turns out, is not always so obvious. Being in a room of educators and having Rabbi Brovender challenge our assumptions with yet more of his "common sense" provided an avenue for professional and personal growth that Jewish educators rarely have, the very void that ATID was founded to fill (and was, frankly, loads of fun).

Several years later, I got to work even more closely with Rav Brovender. As an ATID Senior Fellow during the 2003-2004 academic year, I was part of a team charged with exploring education reform in religious high schools. In our weekly meetings with Rabbi Brovender and

ATID senior faculty, I got to participate in the creative process that can be described as nothing but the birthing of ideas. This was not always smooth; it frequently felt as if Rav Brovender was certain about what he *didn't* want, but was not about to spell out what he *did* want. This what not, however, an exercise in “guess what he is thinking.” It was about developing a way of thinking. He would not tolerate thinking that was narrow, conventional. Anything that “everyone” knows was fodder for re-examination (if not downright ridicule – back to that sardonic wit). Thoughts deemed useful were the ones that seemed too crazy, too “out there,” to articulate. Because sometimes the plainest reading of the “text” is also the most complex. The result was a school reform proposal that, at first blush, can never be implemented; today it is being tested in several educational settings.

I have learned from Rabbi Brovender lessons in learning and thinking. However, reflecting upon my experiences with him in light of his career as a trail-blazing educator, the larger lessons are those of *doing*. Think the impossible, create the improbable, and make wonderful things happen.

Phil Schajer

With heartfelt good wishes to our rebbe, our counsel and our friend. Rabbi Brovender has been instrumental in our lives, from my time in yeshiva, to our wedding day, and more recently to allowing our children run riot through his home on our visits. Always available for advice or an answer to a question, and ever patiently listening to our plans for the longest anticipated aliya in history, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Brovender will always have a special place in our life and in our hearts.

Rabbi Menachem Schraeder

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rabbi Brovender for taking me on to the staff of Yeshivat HaMivtar, where I have taught for the past 25 years. For most of those years he further entrusted me to give a high level Gemara shiur. I would like to thank him for the confidence in me he has displayed. During those years Yeshivat HaMivtar studied portions of Masechtos Brachos, Shabbas, Psachim, Rosh Hashanah, Yoma, Sukkah, Beitsah, Taanis, Megillah, Ksubos, Gittin, Kiddushin, Baba Kama, Baba Metsia, Baba Basra, Sanhedrin, Makos, Shevuos, Horayos, and Menachos. I also had the opportunity within the Yeshiva to teach portions of Chumash and Nach for a number of years, as well as subjects of Halachah le-maaseh. There I spent quite a few chagim (though Rav Brovender would have preferred it had been more), including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Simchas Torah, and Shavuos. It is Rav Brovender's rendition of *mussaf* that is engrained in the childhood memories of my children in an unforgettable way. All this was done within the context of his "Roshyeshivahood".

On Rosh Hashanah we pray not only for ourselves and others as individuals, but for "*medinos*" as well. Collective units of people that function as a unit are subject to the annual *din* of *Yamim Noraim*. The collective of each of the great European Yeshivos continues to live on in the memories of Torah students to this very day in a very real way, this although many of them are long gone and no one is still with us to personally testify to their character and greatness.

All of us who know Yeshivat HaMivtar are well aware that our yeshiva has a personality and character of its own; a rare combination of dedication to Talmud Torah, an atmosphere of openness, and a desire to make everyone and all types feel welcome to Judaism, Torah and the Yeshiva, as well as many other positive attributes. Rabbi Brovender's own personality and dedication, both to Torah and the Yeshiva, have been central to the development of Yeshivat HaMivtar and what it is all about since its inception, the yeshiva being his own creation. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts for having brought this Yeshiva and its neshamah to this world.

Gerald Schroeder

Rabbi Brovender opened for me and for so many others the path to finding the many levels of truth tucked within the literal wording of the Torah, and doing so with his wry and dry humor. It was as if throwing pieces of sweet candy onto the Text making it a treat to attend his classes.

Lisa (Scheidlinger) Silverberg**Michlelet Bruria 1983-1984**

How does one pay tribute to the man who changed the course of my life? Coming from a traditional home with no formal learning, I embarked on a year of study at Michlelet Bruria in September 1983. The Yom Kippur davening that year at Yeshivat HaMivtar has replayed in my mind dozens of times as the *mashgiach*, Rabbi Ebner, said before *Ne'ila*, "*Rabbosai*, the gates are closing." There are some moments in a person's life that one never forgets – this was one of them.

The women of Michlelet Bruria – "Brovender's" to all of those in the know – were on a spiritual ladder climbing higher and higher as the months went by. I was privileged to have Rabbi Brovender teach me Rambam. (I still have my notes!). He infused the class with philosophy, mussar, practical advice about life and his special sense of humor. He always left us, his students, with much to ponder. Through our mutual journey, our class became very close, so close in fact, that to this day my "Brovender's" friends from 25 years ago hold a special place in my heart. We traveled the land together, and met so many inspiring people and visited many fascinating places. My subsequent *aliyah* one and a half years later was a direct result of my year at Michlelet Bruria.

It was a year of firsts: my first taste of learning Torah with the text, my first yeshiva davening on the Yomim Noraim, my first Chanukah at the Kotel, my first Purim shpiel, my first Pesach seder where I understood that the fulfillment of *sipur yitziat Mitzrayim* was more important than what was being served, my first Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut. Each and every experience left a tremendous impact on my life, forever changing the way I view myself and the world around me.

Rabbi Brovender – I am not alone in my *hakarat hatov* to you. We are here tonight –so many of your former students and faculty – to let you know how much you gave us, how your institutions changed us and how much of an impact you had on our lives. May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* bless you and your wonderful wife and family with *hatzlacha raba* and continued success in helping *Am Yisrael go M'chayil el chayil* until 120.

Avi Silverman

It has been 25 years since I entered the beit midrash in Kiryat Moshe for my post high-school "year in Israel." Your *hashpa'ah* that pivotal year bears results to this day. My first full time *chevruta*, who I studied with for Baruch Schwartz's *shiur*, Louis Sherby is still a dear friend and neighbor; the seeds to live in Israel were planted that year, and now I work full time advising *olim* on education and communities *b'artzenu HaKodesh*. Listening to Jonathan Rimberg *daven* so beautifully for the *amud* throughout the year led me to an ongoing *hakpada* and seriousness towards *tefillah* that guides me as I serve as *baal tefillah* today; the love for learning carried me through my years at YU and led me back to your beit midrash in Elazar where I met another close neighbor, David (Bob) Bloom, and first learned to study *mussar* seriously with Chanina Brinn, who continues to give me *mussar* to this day! Elazar is where I met Yaakove (Jake) Rosenthal, who studied for *smicha* with me at YU and who now, 25 years later, is my solid morning *seder chevruta* in Ramat Beit Shemesh!

And most importantly, the two years in your Beit Midrash helped me build a comfortable relationship with you that has inspired me throughout two and a half decades. It was not so

long ago that you and I sat in your kitchen brainstorming as I struggled to establish myself as an *oleh*.

May Hashem *continue* to give you *nachat* from your *talmidim*, and from your natural children and grandchildren, and may you and Mrs. Brovender enjoy *arechut yamim* together, in health, and with the pride you have earned in knowing that you have been a powerful *kli* in being *maarbitz Torah b'klal Yisrael, b'eretz Yisrael*.

Ben Simon

One Rabbi Brovender shiur on Parashat Bereishit has stuck in my mind since going on from Yeshivat HaMivtar more than all others. It was an enthusiastic *drasha* on a Ramban pertaining to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil being in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Without having re-read the Rashi and the Ramban in a while, and though when I did look for it I never found it exactly as I remembered Rabbi Brovender putting it all together, I hope I represent this idea well and correctly.

Essentially and 'essentially' is the gist of why the tree was in the middle, man lived with God in Eden. He obeyed God's laws without thinking about them. Since this placed him on a very high level of existence, God descended into the garden. In fact, the whole purpose of God's having created man was for God to dwell in his midst. Typically I can imagine Rabbi Brovender would have said 'whatever that means...' However, once man began choosing good from bad and determining his own actions using intellect, he made mistakes and thereby removed himself more and more from that level.

Ramban apparently wrote, and of course I ought to check my own words, that mankind is traveling a course along an upside-down bell curve. We as humans were at a high level, and with free choice we have the ability to ascend to that high level again or higher which is ultimately the messianic age, only we must first traverse the dip in the middle. Where we are on this graph is unknown; whether we are still on the way down, or are just now climbing back up, or nearly at the top. I found that a fascinating and comprehensive look at humanity and where the Jews fit in to this scheme.

Along the way somewhere on this curve of history God descended again and gave mankind the Torah which is aiding the way we make our choices. As safekeepers of this guidebook we Jews are indeed that light to the other nations as we are titled. This *drasha* gives purpose to one's Torah life on the largest scale there is, and it helped me tremendously to place my feet forward since hearing it from Rabbi Brovender's weekly *parsha shiur* in the old bank turned *beit medrash*, on late Wednesday nights which might have meant eight o'clock, if again I am not mistaken.

It is humbling to think about Jews as servants and guides to the greater cause of humanity. We are the chosen people to serve the other nations at God's behest, not chosen to be placed in a dominating favored position above. We are a holy people because God chose us to be, told us how to be and expects us to safeguard that holiness for humanity. This clarity in outlook places one's focus firmly to fixing this world because it, the garden, the people and the tree are the whole point. Thank you Rabbi, and all the best in your onwards and upwards progression from HaMivtar to other things. As Rabbi Pear introduced your new *shiurim* at *Shir Hadash*, 'Efrat's loss is definitely our gain.'

R. Yaakov Simon

Philadelphia, PA

I had the tremendous zchut to study with R. Brovender for two years and I can honestly say that he was a critical influence on me as a Rabbi and as an *Eved HaShem*. R. Brovender taught me how to read a Gemara, and how to plumb the depths of Chumash and Rashi. I also consulted with him many times as I was studying for *smichah* and doing a Masters Degree in

Bible. He gave invaluable advice on how to harmonize the religious and secular worlds. One aphorism that he said has always stayed with me: "A *vort* with footnotes is still just a *vort*."

Yedidya (Julian) Sinclair

When I was first a student at Yeshivat HaMivtar, I didn't "get" Rabbi Brovender. Certainly, he was a brilliant Gemara teacher, an inspiring *darshan*, and a very funny man. But I couldn't put together what appeared to be contradictory aspects of his outlook and personality; a widely-read polymath, rather skeptical of the value of secular knowledge; a passionate Zionist who lived in the Haredi neighbourhood of Mattersdorf and played classical music extremely loudly through open windows at the conclusion of Shabbat; an incisive teacher of Brisker *lomdus*, who loved Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav and was fond of the then popular song "Don't worry, be happy."

The Gemara says that it takes forty years to plumb the depths of your teacher's knowledge. Twenty years later I must be about half way there. I've been fortunate to stay in touch with Rabbi Brovender. During the time when I was a campus rabbi in the UK, he came to visit us a couple of times and offered much insight and support into the challenges we faced there. Recently we've discussed Rav Kook's thinking on Art and Imagination, together with R. Jeffrey Saks in a series for ATID. It's been very stimulating to hear Rabbi Brovender relate his passion for abstract art to his love of Torah and *halakhah*; not because of any ideological need to relate them, but because both are lived truths for him. I've come to appreciate more and more the coherence and cogency of Rabbi Brovender's outlook. Eschewing party lines and facile answers, he prefers truth, from wherever it comes, to ideology.

I owe an immense debt to Yeshivat HaMivtar. It's hard for me to imagine another place that could have kept me in yeshiva, provided me with lifelong tools for learning and a powerful, inspiring religious outlook. I realize increasingly that Rabbi Brovender's example of love of Torah combined with intellectual rigour and honesty was at the core of what I found compelling in the yeshiva.

Hana Sober

I was a student at Midreshet Lindenbaum in 89-90, and have wonderful memories of Rabbi Brovender's *parsha shiurim* – elegant, intricate, profound, and humorous. I also had the privilege of being in his *halacha shiur* – it was really the first time I studied *halacha* in any sort of depth (practically the first time I studied *halacha* at all, I definitely should have been in the beginner level) – so he gave me the basic grounding in an area I have since come to specialize in. Most importantly, I arrived at the yeshiva newly Orthodox and with no concept whatsoever of the *kavod* one gives a Rav – I was not even accustomed to addressing rabbis by their surnames. I'm quite sure I did not give Rabbi Brovender anything like the appropriate *kavod*, but as the year progressed I came to appreciate what it means to be a *talmid chacham* and a Rosh Yeshiva and I hope my behaviour eventually came to reflect the deep respect I felt for him.

I am mostly writing on behalf of my husband, Rabbi Moshe Sober, *z"l*, who taught for years at HaMivtar. I cannot really express what Moshe felt about Rabbi Brovender and about the yeshiva, which he left long before we met. But I know that Moshe had tremendous respect and admiration for Rabbi Brovender and always remained in contact with him. The unique yeshiva that Rabbi Brovender created was exactly the right place for my husband, a thinker as independent as he was brilliant, to thrive as a teacher.

The same year I was at Midreshet Lindenbaum, Moshe published a book on politics – *Beyond the Jewish State: Confessions of a Former Zionist*. The dedication reads: "To my esteemed *Rashei Yeshiva*, Rabbi Brovender and Rabbi Riskin, who continue to inspire me, even as I abandon the path that they cherish."

Moshe enjoyed a give-and-take with Rabbi Brovender on politics, and made an effort to visit the yeshiva and hear Rabbi Brovender's *drasha* on Yom HaAtzmaut.

For Moshe, "who never agreed with anyone in his life" but who always appreciated hearing others' opinions, HaMivtar was a wonderful environment. I recall hearing that he and Rabbi Brovender used to take the positions of Rambam and Ramban respectively and debate for the yeshiva – I think on the question of *korbanot*. When we were living in Har Nof, Moshe very much enjoyed Rabbi Brovender's shiur on Ramban on Chumash, and he often quoted *chiddushim* and insights he had heard from Rabbi Brovender.

After we moved to Canada, Rabbi Brovender suggested that Moshe learn with a student from HaMivtar who was returning to Toronto. Russell Levy became a chavruta, talmid, friend, and support for Moshe during his last years, and Moshe was always very grateful to Rabbi Brovender for introducing them.

Rabbi Brovender appreciated and respected Moshe – not only his gifts for learning and teaching Torah, but the breadth and independence of his thought. He gave Moshe the opportunity to transmit a *derech* in learning and thinking to students at HaMivtar, many of whom already have students of their own. Rabbi Brovender's guidance, trust, and friendship, were invaluable in enabling Moshe to become the scholar, teacher, husband, and father that he was. Thank you.

Marvin Stiefel

I had gone to Yeshiva (including College) my entire life but still had no idea how to study Talmud on my own. Rabbi Brovender showed me source materials that were never available or demonstrated to me in the *yeshivot* I had attended. The best story to illustrate this is this: It was December 1980 and I had been attending a different program from September, but decided that I should now look for a different yeshiva, and more specifically a new Rebbe who could teach me how to learn Talmud on my own. My brother, who was at the time attending Yeshivat HaMivtar, urged me to sit in on a *shiur* of Rabbi Brovender to see if it was for me. I was reluctant, but after several conversations I did finally agree to sit in on just one "sample" *shiur*. During the Talmud Shiur Rabbi Brovender suddenly turned to ask me how I thought he knew the source which he had just quoted for a statement made by Tosefot. Not knowing what to say I sort of shrugged my shoulders to say "I do not know". Rabbi Brovender turned to me and said "At the yeshiva where you are now attending, the Rabbis would tell you that they know the source for this statement of Tosefot because they are the Rebbe and they know these things. But here at our Yeshiva I will show you that you can find the source for Tosefot's statements on your own in the commentary in the back of the Talmud called the Yoffe Anayim."

I was convinced that this was the yeshiva and Rebbe that could finally teach me how to learn Talmud on my own and signed up for Yeshivat HaMivtar the next day.

Gideon Sylvester

Yehoshua ben Perachya and Nittai the Arbelite received the tradition from them. Yehoshua ben Perachya says: Provide yourself with a teacher, get yourself a friend and judge all people favourably (Avot 1:6).

Rav S.R. Hirsch's commentary: "Teacher and friend, these appellations represent the highest level on which we can cherish another human being and as a rule there are only a few whom we are able to designate as such."

Yeshivat HaMivtar was an exceptional place. A Yeshiva dedicated to serious Talmud Torah, but equally a place full of joy and good humour. A Yeshiva deeply rooted in the *masora*, but a place where one was unafraid to ask challenging questions. A Yeshiva where the learning was never compromised and yet *hesed* was all-pervasive. An institution with a clear sense of

direction whose faculty had varied and conflicting philosophies. The eclectic nature of the Yeshiva reflected the intellectual rigour, vision, courageous thinking and outstanding kindness of its founder and Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim Brovender.

As my Gemara teacher in level one, Rabbi Brovender patiently led my shiur through the early steps of learning Talmud. I still marvel at his modesty in teaching the lowest shiur in his own Yeshiva. It must have been so frustrating for him, but he never showed it. On the contrary, as we stumbled through our first efforts to make sense of the *daf*, mangling its meaning and offering implausible explanations of the text, Rabbi Brovender celebrated our efforts. Moreover, he always imbued us with the sense that we were engaged in a worthy and sacred task.

Rabbi Brovender inspired us with a love of Torah. His Torah is beautiful and ethical and humorous but always rigorous. His responses to our questions were always sophisticated, nuanced, passionate, authentic and faithful. He never offered us easy answers; instead, he challenged us with ideas, many of which continue to dominate my thinking decades afterwards.

As an institution, “Brovender’s” was always wobbly; it shifted campuses, changed names and teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. But the Torah taught there was outstanding. That is what matters, that is what will endure and that is what will no doubt, be resurrected in Rabbi Brovender’s next venture.

When I arrived at the Yeshiva, one of the older *bochrim* (Michael Elzaphon) told me that as well as being an outstanding scholar, thinker and teacher, Rabbi Brovender is an exceptionally caring person. At the time, I wondered what he meant, but since then, time after time, I have been reminded of Michael’s words, as I have been the recipient of Rabbi Brovender’s generosity.

In the run up to my sister’s wedding, my family was nervous. We were not familiar with the conventions of a religious, Israeli wedding and had no idea what to do. Rabbi Brovender sensed our anxiety; he took us by the hand and ever so sensitively guided us through every step, so that we would all feel comfortable. We have never forgotten it.

Years later, when my sister was desperately ill and the doctors informed us that they had exhausted all known medical treatments, we were desperate. We turned to Rabbi Brovender for help in changing her name. Not only did he rush over immediately to the hospital, but from then on, day after day, he and Mrs. Brovender visited us there, quietly giving us strength to pull through until, miraculously, she was cured.

When my grandmother died, Rabbi Brovender was on a trip to London. Somehow, he heard about it and although he was on a tight schedule, he was there with us at Bushey Cemetery.

Most recently, through the trauma of a divorce, Rabbi Brovender has been at my side, offering every possible form of support.

There are rabbis who make an enormous impact on the Jewish world. There are rabbis who are brilliant scholars and there are rabbis who are caring pastors. Very few rabbis combine all those qualities. Rabbi Brovender does. Through his pioneering promotion of serious women’s learning, his training of rabbis and lay people throughout the world and his personal kindness to thousands of talmidim. Rabbi Brovender is the epitome of a great Rav. He has also been my teacher and a wonderful friend to me. I feel privileged when I say that Rabbi Brovender is my Rosh Yeshiva. As Rav Hirsch says this is highest level on which one can cherish another human being

In the community that I led, and in so many more communities in Israel and across the world, there are thousands of people teaching and learning Rabbi Brovender's Torah. There is no greater tribute to a *Talmid Chacham*.

Batya (Strauss) Tarko

How can I thank Rabbi Brovender enough? I came to Israel with a real desire to learn. I was coming from a serious school where we learned the original works in the language that they were written in (Plato in Greek for instance); through circumstances too long for this letter, I decided to do the same thing with Torah.

My first experience in Israel was not that positive; my questions were not answered to my satisfaction. When I heard a Shiur from Rabbi Bravender... *Bingo!* I knew that I had found what I was looking for.

As Rabbi Brovender himself remembers it, I (and a few other young women) started "pestering" Rabbi Bravender to start a school for us on the same level as he was teaching the men. He thought that we weren't really serious and asked us to bring a fairly large sum of money (\$500) to start something. "This should get rid of them," he thought.

Well, Bruria – known as "Brovenders" to most – started in our apartment with a small group of "pesky" students who did come up with that money. Baruch Hashem I'm here (with my own children and grandchildren B"H) a few decades later, with a love and respect for Torah and Eretz Yisrael greater than when I arrived. Rabbi Brovender was instrumental in helping that love flourish and grow. In my opinion, the only way to thank Rabbi Brovender is to live and learn Torah with my family here in Yerushalayim. Here we are, and *B'ezras Hashem* here we'll stay. Thank you, thank you Rav Brovender *shlit"a*.

Daniel Vinik

Student (5760-5767)

Hachana DeRabba

When I inquire into the question of whether it's coherent to think that a Rosh Yeshiva can retire, I find that a justifiable answer perhaps might be, maybe. If the Rosh Yeshiva was merely the Head of the Yeshiva, yet the body has moved on or out, then perhaps. When however I ask myself can *the* Rosh Yeshiva retire, can Rabbeinu Chaim HaGaon, Rosh Eidat Torat Chesed Hachzarat Lishmateinu LeArtzeinu, retire?, I find myself at a loss thinking of where to begin any justified response; how can a Rosh Yeshiva retire when he's the Yeshiva's body also?

Let's start here then. The winter after the Rosh Yeshiva befell violence in our Land I was studying at YU, having spent the previous year at HaMivtar. Needless to say my experience there expanded my awareness of Jewish religious life and personality. Who couldn't become electrified by the varying presence of Rebbeim and students, interacting to create a vibrant community of creative and intelligent personalities and proclivities, stimulating honest and yet quite directed religious and moral thought, uplifting faith and commitment to realized holiness and purity all within a single organization, allowing each individual to take off into their own newly considered and hopefully developed orbit, challenging and encouraging others in the Beis Medrash – Rav Brovender's beis medresh. We were working for Torah, for *Am Yisroel*, and for humanity; at least that's my remembering of the period. Human, all-too human but loving and with perspective. Six years later, it's amazing to consider the depth of these personalities as they still reverberate in my religious and intellectual consciousness. They still visit my inner philosophical debates and spiritual crises. What would they think, and how would they react to my present confrontation? How would they consider appropriating their experience into the intensively complicated network of factors creating us and the world. Where and whence *Sinai*, *Maase Bereshit*, *Knisat HaAretz*, and alas *Churban*? 'In, and through your life of course', they answer, and that voice might be clear enough (I haven't followed it far or long enough to recognize it through and through), but for

me personally, the subtlety and richness of our Rosh Yeshiva's approach, when we ask how and why, and then with honor, patience and love allow *Emet* to overcome, readying our selves for the Divine course, far surpasses any platitude or reduction. This of course does not tell you what silent yet memorable event occurred that bright, cold winter day 5761 though. Let me try again then.

It's not often that we encounter great intellectual people who bare their souls in any public way. Maybe if one is fortunate enough to have some special relationship to such a personality –familial, youth-based, or being a student – then they gain access to the deeper recesses of humanity. However, I think it's one of the great advantages of our Holy Torah, and successfully organized religion in general, to provide us with genuinely intended, great souled products of thought, almost on display, but of course more fittingly, directing towards higher grounds. Rabbi Brovender, as we all know, and will hopefully recount and remember often, is most capable of this creative mode. Torah as Bride, Torah as Guide, and Torah as Path Home always remain with me after his lectures *BeRabbim*. For isn't that what Torah provides for – *Klaliut*, as well as *Pratiut*? All who've spoken to Rabbi Brovender privately might feel like I do, that his consideration for your authentic self – the person who you are everywhere and for all time, or to put it differently, the person who is embodied before him, was a treatment given by a Godly man, but a man harnessing his powers for your good, carrying you forth out of the confined dwelling of *Dalet Amot* into a realm of process and consequence, into society, into the world, or at least reattaching you to an important consideration. And so once again we begin....

In Northern Manhattan (Riverdale), I stood propelled amidst the stream of talmidim, friends, and family that had gathered to hear Rabbi Brovender give a personal account of his previous Yamim Noraim. Having turned so many times to the Rosh Yeshiva for wisdom, we all awaited with great anticipation and perhaps not a little anxiety for his public appraisal. But our anxieties, however well placed in regards to ourselves, were not suitable for Rav Brovender. Quickly, with swift wit and easy communication, he refocused our intentions and commandeered our intentions away from defeat and tragedy, and towards meaning and transcendence. He talked of those Israeli's he met during his recovery and taught that the reality of Israel now extends and expands our *Reiut* – our responsibility to care for all those who we encounter. This at least is what I took from the talk, and what I continue to derive from Rabbi Brovender's teaching; without any doubt, others drew on aspects all their own.

Whatever internal adjustments Rabbi Brovender's talk inspired, externally, the talk he had just given was filling the room with a vitality, intelligence, and good humor in spite of the talk's painful association. For some time I caught up with some *chaveirim* from yeshiva, reliving in the palpable sense of re-communion, and then made my way to find the Rosh Yeshiva. Having found him, deftly careening off of another conversation, I said hello. For some reason or another, after responding to the Rosh Yeshiva's kind inquiries as to my doings, I passed over remarking on the talk or making any other relevant remark, and instead proceeded to ask the Rosh Yeshiva how the *sugyah* of *Hachana DeRabba* was going (both YU and the Yeshiva were learning Beitzah *perek aleph* that *zman*). I said it almost as though I were standing in a completely different world; one where people do not have to build soul out of encountering and overcoming the challenges of human suffering and evil, but one where people live simply and inspire each other to ascend to the study-hall, and discuss the Law. Looking back on it, it seems to me that an intense naivety shone like a lost beacon amidst a vast space taken up by wind-shearing spirits called upon to lead *Yisroel* to its True destination; I had the air of wisdom that the young feign, projecting vigilance and assuming pervasive intelligence when standing before their teachers. Yet it was in earnest and with interest. Now, as unexpected as my question and my tone were in this setting, what Rabbi Brovender did next was even more unexpected, and I will never forget it. He took a second to absorb the question, and then he laughed; kindly, joyfully and with hints of thanksgiving; he laughed out of *simcha*, he laughed for a talmid, and for Talmidim all in all. With lights

shifting in the corner of his eyes, he kissed me on the head, paused and then said, "Good, *Hachana DeRabba* is hard, but good."

Lanie Klein Waldman

In response to your request for recollections from that first year of the yeshiva, these are some of the things that stand out in my memory of that year. Having grown up Orthodox and having left religion behind, I came to Israel looking for a Jewish experience. After spending some time at Hebrew U, I enrolled in a learning program called Shappell. It was very traditional and religiously conservative and didn't really speak to my needs. A friend of a friend who was learning at HaMivtar told me about Rabbi Brovender, but at that point he was teaching only men. Something seemed to have taken place at Shappell before I arrived, and the name of Rabbi Brovender was in the air but sort of hush-hush there. So I decided to ask the rabbi who was teaching us what happened with Rabbi Brovender. He proceeded to tell me that when a tree has a diseased branch you have to chop it off. I understood from this that Rabbi Brovender might have something different to offer. I decided to approach him and ask him about opening a women's learning program. Rabbi Brovender suggested that if we put together the group and find a place to house the program he'd be willing to teach and put together a program. There were four of us at Shappell who were interested, and we went out and rented a 3-room apartment on Rechov Aza. We lived in the bedrooms and the school occupied the living area. As time went on we were joined by a small number of other students. Rabbi Brovender taught us Rashi in a way which was very different than any way I'd learned it before. The method, coupled with Rabbi Brovender's wit and humor was wholly engaging and the material came alive. Among the teachers brought in to teach that year were Tamar Ross, Nachman Kahana and Malka Bina. The program was one which took us seriously and which created a very intense and committed environment among the students in the Beit Midrash. At some point we became very interested in learning Talmud, which was something no one was teaching to women in 1976. Rabbi Brovender agreed to having us learn Talmud, a move which I believe caused him to be put into *Chairem*. When asked to choose a name for the school, we debated among several possibilities. In the end we chose Bruria, named after the wife of Rabbi Meir, who was a *talmida chachama* in her own right; a name which seemed fitting to the spirit in which we were learning.

For me that year was a very important and special time. Rabbi Brovender created an atmosphere of learning in an intellectual environment, where no question couldn't be asked, even though there often are better questions than answers. But as opposed to what I had known growing up where we were discouraged from asking, the atmosphere here was of openness and intellectual curiosity. For someone coming from a university atmosphere it was refreshing to see that Judaism could offer something both challenging and meaningful. It allowed me to see learning in a different light and helped pave a path for me to return to a more observant life.

Miriam Warshaviak

During the year I spent at Midreshet Lindenbaum, I always looked forward to your Thursday afternoon *Shiur Klali* on *Parshat Hashavua*. I enjoyed your style, in part because of the exceptional way in which you conveyed immense respect for the text but at the same time were not afraid to challenge and question it. You always had something interesting to say, and your insightful and entertaining remarks were colorfully peppered with a tinge of humor and cynicism.

That said, it was only unfortunately at the tail end of the year I spent in Jerusalem – when I stayed on at Midreshet Lindenbaum for the summer program and studied *Shivat Zion* with you and a handful of other students – that I was privileged to discover the great person behind the wonderful teacher. For me, this marked the beginning of an enriching friendship and I continue to be honored to call you not only my teacher, but also my friend. From that summer on, I have valued our eclectic conversations and the opportunities to discuss everything with

you – from Torah, life, medicine and art to professional ambitions, Israel, and Russian Jewry. While we don't speak that often, I consider you and Miriam important people in my life.

Often, when you would call, you would ask the same question, "Miriam, are you still saving the Jewish people?" While implying that I should be doing something "more important" with my time, I always knew – under those jokes – that you were just giving me a hard time. You are the perfect example of someone who has and continues to dedicate his life to "saving" the Jewish people. Thank you for being wonderful teacher of Torah, a *mensch*, and a caring friend.

Jeffrey N. Wasserstein

The two anecdotes I can think of, are the following:

It was a week before Chanukah, and R. Brovender was reporting on "these miraculous new floating wicks. You put the wick through a piece of cork, and it floats in the oil. That's not what makes it miraculous," he said in his inimitable voice, "what makes it miraculous is that it's a week before Chanukah and nobody has said they are *assur* yet."

R. Brovender was on a plane, I believe to the former Soviet Union, and his seatmate introduced himself. R. Brovender said "I'm Chaim Brovender." The seatmate said "oh, as in the yeshiva?" R. Brovender responded "no, the yeshiva, as in Me."

Ben Waxman

Yeshivat Hamivtar 1988-94

Often, when I read the Tanach, in particular the Nevi'im, I am often left with a feeling of... well I have no other word than jealousy. Look at the way Am Yisrael lived back then and the way we live today. It was not simply a world of miracles as opposed to our world of dry rules, nature, and physics. It was a world in which God's presence was felt and known almost at a level of first hand knowledge. The navi brought God into the world in a very direct, clear way, about which we can only guess. Anyone who reads the stories in Shoftim and Melakhim see this point very clearly. Yet, with all the clarity, the simple, but powerful messages of reward and punishment, and yes the miracles which they were able to perform, the system of prophecy broke down completely.

How was it that such a powerful institution, simply disappeared and where does that leave us today?

Speaking about Sefer Yonah, Rabbi Brovender addressed this question back in September 1988, when I began learning at Yeshivat HaMivtar. Before Purim 2007, at the "Final Shabbat", Rabbi Brovender gave what was almost a follow up shiur on this question. I will try to sum up his words and add a few thoughts of my own.

On Yom Kippur at Mincha we read the book of Yonah. We all know that the nevi'im had a complex relationship, both with Am Yisrael and with God. The former were cajoled, punished, rewarded, helped, taught, guided in peace and led in war. With God, all of the nevi'im argued, pleaded, and worked hand in hand. That is, all of the prophets except for Yonah. Yonah, in place of giving over the message he was charged to deliver, simply ran away. How is it that a navi, a person who must have understood Torah in all its multiple dimensions better than anyone in his generation, could possibly think to run away from mission and in effect, from God?

The answer is based on the fact that prophecy has an Achilles heal, a built-in flaw which over time made the entire institution more of an impediment than an effective means for transmitting Torah to Am Yisrael. The Rambam explains that while a prophecy which promises something good will always come true, prophecies which promise a punishment,

evil times or any sort of calamity may come to happen, but it doesn't have to. The gezerah can be overturned. Why is this? Because God, being merciful, forgives His people when Am Yisrael repents. Simple as that.

So when a navi tells the people that they have to repent or else, and the people do repent and the promised punishment never comes, then what? Everyone is left with an unanswerable question: was the punishment averted because everyone repented, or was the whole thing a joke to begin with and no great calamity was ever going to happen?

Yonah understood this dilemma better than anyone. He lived towards the end of the first Temple period, and according to the Midrash, had already prophesized before he was commanded to go to Ninveh. He saw the way people were turning against the entire institution. When God told Yonah to go to Ninveh to warn them of what was coming their way, Yonah was faced with a crisis situation. On one hand, if the people of Ninveh don't repent, then the city will be destroyed. But what if they do repent? Obviously, God will forgive them and the city will survive. And when that happens, what will Am Yisrael learn from Ninveh's experience? Will they see that God is merciful, or will the people simply think that one more navi is talking about something which never would have happened anyway?

Yonah understood that the time of the prophets was coming to an end. People had outgrown, or more accurately, lost the willingness, to be servants to God on the basis of fear. They no longer took the threats seriously. Something else was needed. But what?

Ester was the one who provided the answer. When confronted with the undeniable truth of Haman's decree to wipe out Am Yisrael, Ester told Mordechai to bring the Jews together, to pray for salvation. This was the beginning of the shul, of connecting to God through communal prayer and the community, and not through the priest or the prophet. In short, this was the beginning of Diaspora Jewry, the world in which we live today.

The world of Torah today is built on heroes, those people who took Ester's message and developed the world of Torah in which we live. Every day, these heroes go to daven, keep kosher, learn Torah and build Jewish communities. They do this without having a navi around, with no clear connection to God. They do it simply because of their love for Torah and for Jewish people.

When we read the book of Yonah on Yom Kippur we are reading a tribute to these heroes, these people who through their faith in God and Torah are able to preserve the Torah, if not fully, then to the greatest extent possible. If during the time of Beit Rishon Am Yisrael was unable to keep God's commandments even when learning from a navi, today we see Jews who could do anything they want in this world, yet choose to keep Torah because of their simple faith in a God which they will never see.

Rav Brovender taught thousands of students, over a period of some 40 years. One of the most important lessons he taught was that no one was going to give us our emunah. Through our Talmud Torah, our mitzvot, our growth as human beings, our emunah can grow. But there is no navi to point the way. This is our task, to raise families, build communities, and teach Torah even if the path is unclear. May we all live up to this incredible responsibility.

Avi Weinstein ("The Original")

Efrat

I think most people will say that Rabbi Brovender's greatest contribution to modern Jewish education is women's Torah study on a very high level. This was started about 1973-74. At the time there was an issue in the *frum* community concerning woman learning Gemara. Some said they are not allowed to learn, some said that as women they can't learn, and some held the usual defense mechanism that if they learned they might embarrass the men. While

this contribution was very courageous at the time, it was not creative. At that time others were starting to come to the same conclusion even though Rabbi Brovender's institutions were always heads and shoulders above them.

In my opinion the most outstanding contribution of Rabbi Chaim Brovender was his untested belief in 1970 that intelligent Jews with academic degrees or college oriented, between the ages of plus or minus 20 years and upward, were capable of learning Gemara at a very high level in a relatively short period of time even though they have never learned (let alone heard of) a daf of Gemara. This idea was truly revolutionary. There was no halachic friction about the subject. At that time it was thought to be impossible by definition. Only men who have gone through the cheder - high school and yeshiva system could be able to master the sophisticated holy texts of the Gemara – by definition! Even though at the time there were nascent *ba'alei tshuva yeshivot* which were populated by young men who were looking for some spiritual home base, they were never expected to ever learn Gemara like a real *talmid chacham*. They were to become *ba'alei batim* and live happily ever after in their new lifestyle.

When I came to the yeshiva in August of 1971 there was no demand for any particular lifestyle. Wear a kippa while in yeshiva (which I borrowed from Rabbi Brovender), show up for davening, and attend all shiurim. That was it. Of course this was Rabbi Brovender's secret weapon which no one else in the world seemed to know. That is, an intelligent motivated person exposed to a learning regime that demanded a relationship between themselves and the text of the very highest levels of intellectual integrity will result in a genuine Jewish religious experience. It was what was later to be called the Brovender Method that was the key to the program. First and foremost learn ON THE DAF. Not Mishna then run to Rashi. Not Daf then run to Rashi. But spend the time and effort on understanding the words of the Mishna/Gemara, the relationship between each statement to the statement that preceded it and follows it, and see how each part of the text has a textual integrity that taken together as a whole does, and is intended to, convey eternal concepts and conceptions which enter the mind and fill the soul of the learner. In fact in a few short years many students who had never learned a daf in their life were learning Torah at the level of traditional advanced yeshivot. That is an accomplishment that no other Jewish educator in the entire world ever conceived of or put into practice before Rabbi Brovender did. As a result of that conception, thousands of students became formal and informal teachers to their families, friends and communities. These people remain forever thankful and immensely grateful to the creative educational genius of Rabbi Chaim Brovender.

Avi (Arlen) Weinstein Maryland

It is humbling to realize that when my Rebbe began teaching me, he was more than twenty years younger than I am today. I was one of the earlier *talmidim*, but not the original Avi Weinstein.

I began with Rabbi B in Kiryat Moshe at the American College and moved with him into Nevardok where I received *Semicha* and then taught classes back in Kiryat Moshe at Machon Lifshitz. In those days, I remember him always being around, and we students being part of a grand extended family.

His impact on my *drashot*, and my learning, have been defining for me on all levels. In my first year – 1976, he was teaching a class in Rambam, and I asked him a question: Rabbi Brovender, how can he say that?

“Weinstein!” he answered, “There are only two questions in the world. How can he say that?, and what does it mean? It’s not that the first question is wrong, but it is irrelevant until the second question has been addressed fully!” From that moment on, I have never had time for “How can he say that? because I’ve always been consumed with “What does it mean?”

For the last twenty years of teaching, I have instructed my students with this statement “*be-shem omro*” when I’m asked the same question. I am glad to bear witness that Rabbi B has not changed. I have heard that he is still an acquired taste for some, but like a good Islay malt, he is addictive for those who can appreciate masterful uniqueness.

Several months ago, he was visiting our area and it so happened that I had to give a *drasha* at the *hashkama minyan*. After I gave *drasha* I was told that Rabbi B. had picked the same Reb Nachman and said a very similar *peshat* to what I had delivered. It was a twilight zone moment. One that made me very proud. But one that probably caused him some mild consternation.

We’ve always expressed affection by trading barbs, an unconventional Rebbe-Talmid relationship, but one that always worked for me, and I hope for him. I know great things are still to come Rabbi B and I can’t wait to see what’s next.

George Weiss

1. I wanted to make sure the following was emphasized in a collection on R. Brovender's legacy: The fact that he went to school and learned Semitics and was able to negotiate this environment. and still is able to learn from a yeshiva perspective at the level of Rosh Yeshiva, and even remain in his essentially *charadi* identity is probably the thing that makes me respect him the most. As a person who is highly sensitive to the cultural struggles between the academic-Jewish and yeshiva-Jewish worlds, R. Brovender's presence in the world, and as my teacher, was quite inspiring.
2. I remember some of the best of R. Brovender's jokes:
 - A. When asked about whether the practice of asking rabbinical advice about things that are wholly secular in nature is a good idea his reply: "that's something you'll have to figure out yourself."
 - B. Rabbi, what should I do? His reply: "Apply lots of nervous energy to the situation"
 - C. Asked about being a leader in creating a school for girls to learn Gemara, his reply (during a Shabbat Zachor Q and A): "these issues are issues of public policy... and public policy means every *am haaretz* gets an opinion."

David Wachs

The most rewarding aspect of my year of studies at Yeshivat HaMivtar was my *chavruta* with Rabbi Brovender. Twice a week Rabbi Brovender would spend close to an hour with me learning Maimonides' understanding of the evolution and framework of Halacha or discussing questions currently debated by the Orthodox community. Rabbi Brovender's knowledge and insights were often truly remarkable and offered an understanding and appreciation of the texts and issues that I would almost certainly have not been able to get otherwise. I feel very fortunate to have been afforded the experience of this *chavruta*. That a very busy Rosh Yeshiva would spend his highly demanded time learning in *chavruta* with first year students is a prime example of the devotion that Rabbi Brovender shows to his *talmidim* and to the teaching of Torah. May we be privileged to receive his Torah for many years to come.

David Wolkenfeld

The large, dusty volumes of Talmud standing proudly in a bookcase set my own family's living room apart from those of my friends when I was a child. Legacies of my father's Orthodox origins, the Hebrew books in our home were an exotic reminder of another world. Did you know, David, my father once asked me, that there is an entire book here that is all about eggs? I then eagerly told my incredulous school friends, who were also predominantly from non-religious Jewish families, about the existence of a Jewish book devoted to eggs (*Massechet Beitzah*), and that this book had been a topic of my father's study. Likewise, after a trip to visit my grandmother in Boro Park, I entertained my classmates with tales of the Orthodox Jews who refrained from using electricity each and every Saturday.

In junior high school I became increasingly interested in Judaism and read every Jewish book I could find in English. The Torah commentary of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch explained the details of Jewish observance in the terms of morality, justice, and social responsibility that were familiar to me from my secular education. Sabbath observance no longer seemed like a bizarre practice, worthy of no more than a good laugh. And yet, despite my increasing Jewish knowledge, my lack of textual skills remained a barrier between me and the Jewish canon. During a family trip to London when I was fourteen years old, I watched with a mixture of pride and jealousy as my father stumped a group of students at a Hassidic yeshiva.

The students could not explain a Tosafot in Pesachim which my father remembered from his childhood (one of the students eventually asked my father if he had come to the yeshiva in search of a son-in-law). I was jealous, both of my father, for the authority with which he told the yeshiva students, you should never pass by a Tosafot without knowing it, and of the yeshiva students who were in a position to be offered such advice.

Less than one week before my fifteenth birthday my father died of a sudden heart attack. In the following year of *kaddish* and mourning, traditional Jewish liturgy became familiar. My days became framed by *minyanim* for the first time. During high school, I gradually molded my behavior to the norms of Orthodox Judaism and became an active member of one of the local Orthodox synagogues near my home. Although they no longer set me apart from my community, the volumes of Talmud on our bookcase remained closed books.

It was only when I came to Yeshivat HaMivtar that I became a literate Jew. At the start of the year, my *chevruta* and I had to look up in a Jastrow Dictionary almost every word in the *sugya*. By the end of the year, I had gained a basic literacy within the classical rabbinic canon. With that literacy came access to the full profundity of Torah study. What can compare to the experience of encountering an idea with the power to shape one's life? What can compare with the joy of discovering a troubling contradiction in the Rambam and then finding that the Kessef Mishnah had noticed the same problem four hundred years ago? What can compare to learning from intellectual role models who are also moral role models?

I am forever grateful to Rabbi Brovender for fashioning an institution, filling it with his spirit of good-will and intellectual openness, and creating a perfect second home for me that forever changed my life. After college, Rabbi Brovender offered me a space in the HaMivtar Kollel. I considered it an enormous honor to return to Hamivtar as a more mature and advanced student. The relationships I developed with my teachers that year were deeper than my relationships with those same teachers when I was 18. The high caliber faculty that Rabbi Brovender brought to HaMivtar, and his own availability to talk with me, made that year such a happy one for me and Sara. I doubt I would have chosen to continue learning for *semikhah* nor would I have chosen a career in Jewish education were it not for the thrill I felt to return to the HaMivtar *beit midrash* after a four year hiatus.

I am proud to consider myself a student of Rabbi Brovender and I look forward to many more years of enjoying his company and learning from his Torah.

Daniel Youngerwood

Apart from his wonderful *shiurim*, it was the Rav's sense of humour that endeared him to so many of us – especially the Brits. I will always remember the (apocryphal?) quote attributed to the Rav – "I may not be the best Rosh Yeshiva, nor the best stand-up comedian, but I am the best stand-up Rosh Yeshiva." His humour is a remarkable educational tool! Also, I have never been to such an incredible Parasha shiur in all my life – the incredible depth and meaning the Rav drew from one seemingly innocuous Rashi was inspiring – I hope that the Rav will continue giving *shiurim* long into the future. There are a lot of Rashis left...

Donna Zeff

I was a part-time student of Rabbi Brovender at Bruria in 1977-78 and again full-time after finishing university in 1980-81. Rabbi Brovender always seemed to get a real kick from the fact that we were both from the same 'hood of Brighton Beach, Brooklyn (before it became "Odessa Beach"!)

One of the strongest and earliest memories I have of studying with Rabbi Brovender was his unique way of expressing himself, using understated and subtle humor. One day, in his "Chumash with Rashi" class, after a long monologue about the amazing brilliance of Rashi's commentary, we came upon the description in Chumash of the spies returning from their sojourn in Eretz Israel, which states that they carried back with them bunches of grapes that were so enormous they were hung from a pole which needed to be carried by two men. After a short pause Rabbi Brovender mentioned that this less than complimentary incident has been immortalized as the symbol for the Israeli government's "Ministry of Tourism", which, if you think about it for more than a millisecond, is inappropriate, to say the least, considering what the spies had to say about the Land. Really what the symbol of the two men carrying the grapes should be emblazoned upon are New York City taxis, since most of them seem to be driven these days by ex-Israelis.

Another time, several years later, while my husband and I were still living in *Chu"l*, we attended a class of Rabbi Brovender in New York. After the class we went up to the Rabbi and began a conversation. After a few minutes Rabbi Brovender said, "Well I'm glad to see that you are living in Washington Heights." (For those who don't know, this neighborhood in New York was an old, dilapidated and dangerous community in the area of Yeshiva University.) A little surprised at this remark, we asked the Rabbi why he should think so. His answer: "It's a great place to make Aliyah from!"

It is hard to know what turns my path would have taken without the wisdom and wit of Rabbi Brovender's singular approach to learning Torah; I will always be grateful and thankful that my path crossed his so many years ago on my journey through life.

Rabbi Joel Zeff

In December of 1976 I was a sophomore at UC Berkeley and had decided to do my "Junior Year Abroad" in a yeshiva. I was looking to improve my "learning skills" and to find an atmosphere of intellectual honesty and broadness. After investigating the various options it was clear to me that I would either learn at (the "Old") Shapell's or at HaMivtar, which had just been established. It was no coincidence that Rabbi Brovender had been the founding Rosh Yeshiva of both of these institutions. Rabbi Brovender, swimming against the current, had created yeshivot in which *the Torah was allowed to speak for itself*. I ended up spending part of the year in each of these yeshivot. My experience of Rabbi Brovender's approach to Torah was a significant inspiration in my decision to change my major from "pre-med" to Hebrew Language and Literature and to become a rabbi and teacher. Some years later, when I was a congregational rabbi in Los Angeles, I saw Rabbi Brovender. I had for many years been assuming that eventually we would make aliya but I was concerned about my "employability" in Israel. I decided to consult with Rabbi Brovender and asked him if there were jobs in Israel for someone like me. He replied, in classic Rabbi Brovender style, "Joel, there are plenty of jobs... (long pause) just no salaries!" Interestingly enough, we ultimately did make aliya when I was offered the position of being a rebbe at (the "New") Shapell's, where I remained for a decade, and it is with no small amount of trepidation that I now find myself, once again, at HaMivtar, absolutely committed to maintaining the legacy of one of my spiritual heroes, Rabbi Chaim Brovender.

Rabbi Saul Zneimer**Chief Executive, United Synagogue (London)**

I felt it a great privilege to learn in the Yeshiva under your guidance (1986-90) and have many good and positive memories of those years. In learning terms, your determination to let the Torah itself speak rather than try to impute particular messages had a powerful and long

lasting impact. I learned the importance of fully engaging with the words until they open up with clarity. As far as the personal touch goes, I learned that childhood problems (we were bringing up 3 little ones at the time), and in fact all of life, is 'only a phase'. Just hold on tight meanwhile. And as far as humour is concerned, it took me a while to appreciate that an American could have such a sophisticated sense of humour, but once I got it, I really enjoyed it. And still do.

Aviva Zornberg

R. Brovender is one of the few teachers of Torah who made a real impact on me in my early years in Israel. He was my husband's Rebbe and in this way I occasionally came to hear his shiurim. They had the quality I look for, an intensity and passion and originality that not only inspired me but connected with my own emergent ideas. His was an idiosyncratic and therefore valued voice, unpredictable and therefore always exciting. More personally, too, I will always be grateful for his encouraging response to the manuscript of my first book. He spoke at my book launch, quizzically and warmly. The standing joke was my hailing from literate England, as opposed to Jewish Brooklyn. For all this, I am grateful, and I wish him and Miriam further reaches of creativity and influence.

Yitzhak Zuriel

Over the years I have had the pleasure and privilege of being your talmid, of being part of the yeshiva/Bruria faculty, and of being your friend. But always really being your talmid. Thank you for being an inspiring role model as well as a fountain of down-to-earth wisdom, a rebbe/teacher who has always held up a big torch to light many different paths in learning Torah, and who showed your talmidim how to light their own torches as well. Beth and I wish you many more productive years inspiring others and increasing Torah in the world.



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Richard M. Joel
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On behalf of the thousands of students and faculty who have learned and taught in Bruria and Lindenbaum we want to thank you for having the vision and the courage to see that things could be different.

You built a Yeshiva, albeit for women, but a Yeshiva nonetheless. You stressed intellectual rigor and honesty, letting the Torah speak for itself. You set a higher standard for women's Torah learning that impacted on Torah education in Israel and throughout the world. Literally thousands of students have been inspired by the idea that you made real. But for all that it was new, it was really the same; the same Rashi on Chumash, the same Gemara, the same Shulchan Aruch, learned in the Beit Midrash as Jews had always learned them. The study was ancient, the participants brand new.

You offered a new challenge to the teachers of these women, to take their students from the periphery and bring them into the Beit Midrash and into the ongoing dialogue of Talmud Torah. In the process you provided women teachers with the opportunity to teach Torah She'bictav and Torah She'b'al'peh in a way that was exciting and enabling. Our lives have been blessed because of your determination to provide unlimited access to the text, to engage your students in the struggle to understand and thereby appreciate Torah, to imbue your talmidot with openness to new ideas combined with unshakable commitment to Torah and Torah values.

You have our deepest appreciation, respect, and admiration for all that you have done for us, and for so many others just like us. We hope that you will continue to educate and inspire ad mea v'esrim shana.

**Rabbi Shlomo Brown, Rabbi Tuvia Kaplan, Tova Rhein
Midreshet Lindenbaum**

*On behalf of the **Bruria Class of 5744**, we pay tribute to a man of great vision. An exemplary role model who transformed the lives of the people he taught. Our year in Michlelet Bruria is engraved in us forever. It was not just a year abroad. It was so much more. You so inspired us, R. Brovender, with a new world of meaning and connection to Eretz Yisrael, that many of us decided to build our homes here. The following is a list of most of us that live in Israel just from our year!*

Lisa (Scheidlinger) Silverberg
Julie (Sagalow) Bor
Golda (Smilchensky) Doniger
Fran (Tessler) Unger
Chaya (Sharon Kozen) Tavin
Rivka (Renee Agular) Weiss
Renee (Strauss) Ben David
Debbie (Schwartz) Novick
Susan (Gittleman) Triester
Sarah Chana (Sandra Gerson) Yisrael
Jaime (Stoller) Silver
Mimi (Geffen) Meyers
Joelle (Siboni) Nadjari – w/ red Volvo
Elana (Katz) Singer
Lisa Welch

אבא היקר,

ערב גדול זה מציין ארבעים שנים של הרבצת תורה שלך,
מאורע זה מיוחד מאד עבורנו כי אנו זכינו לגדול בתוך חווייה זו.

גדלנו בבית בו אבא רכז על ספריו בכל עת לצורך הכנת שיעוריו הרבים.
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גדלנו בבית שהיה משרד הישיבה במשך כמה שנים.

זכינו וגדלנו עם כל הדברים האלה ועוד הרבה דברים שלא פירטנו.
כל הדברים הללו גידלו אותנו בהכרת ערך התורה, חשיבות התורה,
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יתן ה' שתזכה להמשיך את מפעל הרבצת התורה שלך,
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הדבר החשוב ביותר בכל יהודי באשר הוא,
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If you have any questions please contact Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, Director, at atid@atid.org or at 02-567-1719.

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