

## My Tribute to Rabbi Jay Miller z”l – Avi Weinstien

I arrived at Rechov Ha’Or 2 Jerusalem which was directly behind the Central Bus Station in Romema in August of 1971 now known to me as Elul Zman. I was twenty-eight years old, had completed three years of law school, and had worked as a lawyer in Philadelphia for two years. During the preceding year I was enrolled in the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College which required all students to participate in an advanced degree program at nearby Temple University in which I was enrolled in a Masters program for Comparative Religions. This background is relevant in light of my reaction to the most dynamic, demanding and intellectually charged teacher I had ever encountered, Rabbi Jay Miller z”l. After a few weeks of experiencing his teaching us Mishna, I distinctly remember writing to my life long childhood friend the following:” In all my adult education I have never experienced such an intellectually challenging and enriching experience than what I am experiencing now.” Significance? Impact? I say proudly but with profound respect to the input of Rabbi Miller, that thirty-eight years later I am learning with that same friend over Skype (he in Philadelphia area and I in Israel) at least two hours a day four days a week Meschet Makkot. This fact I consciously connect back to that first experience with Rabbi Miller.

While in Israel I met Esther, my wife to be. We married in the US in 1975 living in Kew Gardens for 5 years and Teaneck New Jersey for 5 years. Rabbi Miller had returned from Israel and was living in Washington Heights. During those years Esther and I invited Rabbi Miller over for Shabbat on several occasions which I believe he truly enjoyed. He saw our family grow with two children and at the time I reminded him as my Rebbe he has made a unique contribution to these children who are growing up within a traditional Jewish environment. He waived his hand as if to pooh pooh the frivolous compliment.

We made Aliyah to Israel in July 1986, and as circumstances would have it, I traveled back to the US about once a year at which time I would try to call Rabbi Miller and usually met him for lunch in New York City. At each conversation I told him the status of our family and how the kids were growing in their education through elementary, high school and onto Yeshivot Hesder. I advised him of the fact that they were learning Torah and enjoyed it and that result was in some way truly related to our relationship of Rebbe and Talmid. He sort of looked at me in a cynical way each time not able to fully accept the truth of that observation.

About a week before Rabbi Miller passed away, I was speaking to Yehuda Graber on Skype and of course the issue of Rabbi Miller’s condition and circumstances came up. Since I had not yet spoken to him after he returned from the hospital, I immediately suggested that I conference call him so that we might speak to him together. He answered the phone and it was clear he was glad we called. He was tired but we talked for a while. During one part of the conversation I told him that my sons were now approaching 31 and 33 years old and they both have families and children and are teaching Gemara and Tanach at a high school in Bet Shemesh. He said “and yes since I taught you Torah they are like my grandchildren and I get some of the zchut for what they are doing?” I answered “yes”. Immediately Yehuda added “yes in fact that’s true, that’s how I

and all your students feel, and you should know this.” Rabbi Miller was silent for a moment. Then he said he was tired and had to hang up. I would like to think that in that moment of silence after listening to Yehuda say so forcefully what his Talmidim think of him, he understood and accepted with pride and comforting satisfaction the exceptional role he had played in their lives and the lives of their family and children. Yhi zichro baruch.