Rabbi Lewis commented that in the spirit of the verse in Mishlei, Dayan Gershon Lopian ztl. was the Rov of the Yeshurun from 1976 to 2006 and had been a powerful effect not only in his lifetime but from generation to generation. Rabbi Lewis: "The evening was to be a source of inspiration and a celebration of the Dayan’s life. He expounded on the Malbim, who explains that the mere memory of a tzedik brings down brochoe into the world, his actions having a powerful effect not only in his lifetime but from generation to generation."

There were three main speakers at the event: Rabbi Malcolm Herman, Associate National Director of Seed UK, Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft of the Federation’s Nishmas Yisroel and a talmd of Dayan Lopian ztl, and Dayan Yaakov Yisroel Lichtenstein, Rosh Beis Din of the Federation. Each of the three speakers focused on a different middah of Dayan Lopian, but the overarching theme was of his chayim, his acute empathy for his kehilla and indeed Jewish people across the UK and the globe, and the enormous legacy he has left for us.

Rabbi Herman began, referring to the Dayan as a magnet in whose presence it was impossible to feel despondent. He spoke about the concept of being moset lo’el im amen, an ability to carry the burden of others to the extent that their tears, or indeed their simcha, become your own. The Dayan embodied this middah, he said, because he felt such a deep sense of privilege in his life; irrespective of physical pain, he felt so fulfilled. Rabbi Herman urged those in attendance to ask themselves constantly whether they felt ‘entitled or privileged’ – in this way they would be able to pay tribute to the memory of Dayan Lopian.

Following Rabbi Herman, Rabbi Dovid Tugendhaft welcomed the previous and current Presidents of the Federation, Mr Arnold Cohen, Mr Alan Finlay and Mr Andrew Cohen. His drusho focused on the concept of the Aon Halodesh and the Avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. At first glance, many elements of these seem to be contradictory to ha totalement – the keruvim are graven images, the belt of the Kohanim contained sha’atnez, and preparing korbonos on Shabbos is surely profaning it. However, all these concepts come to teach us that the only thing we need concern ourselves about is fulfilling the will of Hashem; regardless of whether something looks tref or kosher, the only thing set in stone is the actual ha totalement. Dayan Lopian, who was able to passen innumerous shalos thanks to his mastery of ha totalement and his great mesorah, was a confident voice of the Ratzon Hashem and we miss it dearly.

Finally, Dayan Lichtenstein spoke of the general rule that when 12 months have passed since the petirah of a loved one, we begin to forget. Dayan Lopian however, was an exception to this generality; it is impossible to grasp that an entire year has passed and he’s not with us. Dayan Lichtenstein expounded on the strong relationship between a Rebbe and his talmd, explaining that the bonds between them can be even more profound than those between a parent and child. Dayan Lopian was much more than a Rov to his community – he was his father, and loved each of his congregants as his own child. Dayan Lopian’s presence radiated both love and respect – two emotions that don’t often go hand in hand to the extent that they did with him. His most important legacy, in addition to changing the face of the Edgware kehilla, was to bring sholom between people. He was an Ish Sholom, and it is our duty as a kehilla to continue to promote this.

The evening concluded with the recital of Tehillim and an akhavot by Reb Sholom Kramer.

It was his greatest pride to be able bring up children who would learn Torah and attend yeshivos, well before this had become the norm, and despite having never attended a yeshiva for any significant period himself. He was employed as a teacher in a Jewish school, but when he explained to his pupils that their intended visit to see something associated with a non-Jewish festival one year was inappropriate for Jewish children, he was summarily removed from his position for his ‘extremism!’

He decided to embark on what would ultimately be a successful career in trading leather goods, but the most important activity of his day was his evening learning sessions. For many years he attended the in depth gemoris shuirim of Rabbi Gedalia Rabinowitz, and subsequently his son Rav Lipa, who remarked that R’ Yisroel was a Yied whose life was in fact devoted completely to learning Torah, and it was for parnossah activities that he had to squeeze in the time! He also attended shuirim from Rav Herschel Goldstein as well as joining the Daf Yomi shuir of Rabbi Simcha Bamberger.

In his early 60s he chose to retire and fulfil his dream of living in Eretz Yisroel, where he organised rebbes and chasunim, and in his Shiras Shabbes overcoming great obstacles in his adherence to Yiddishkeit. He attended shiurim from Rabbi Herschel Goldstein for a short time, but shortly after the outbreak of war he was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man. A bureaucratic slip spared him from being shipped off to Canada for the duration of the war, and ultimately saved his life – the boat carrying the group of internees was tragically sunk en route by a German torpedo. He managed to attend Schneider’s Yeshiva for a short time, but shortly after the outbreak of war he was interned as an enemy alien on the Isle of Man. A bureaucratic slip spared him from being shipped off to Canada for the duration of the war, and ultimately saved his life – the boat carrying the group of internees was tragically sunk en route by a German torpedo.

Moving to Manchester after the war he married the daughter of R’ Ovadia Karov, a learned Bnei Akiva chossid originally from Galicia. He chose to join the Machzikei Hadass kehilla in spite of his own German Ashkenazic background, feeling that his family would benefit from the Chassidishe varmeket.

Mr. Yisroel (Gustav) Trepp 1917-2014

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