

## Book Review: *You Made My Life!*

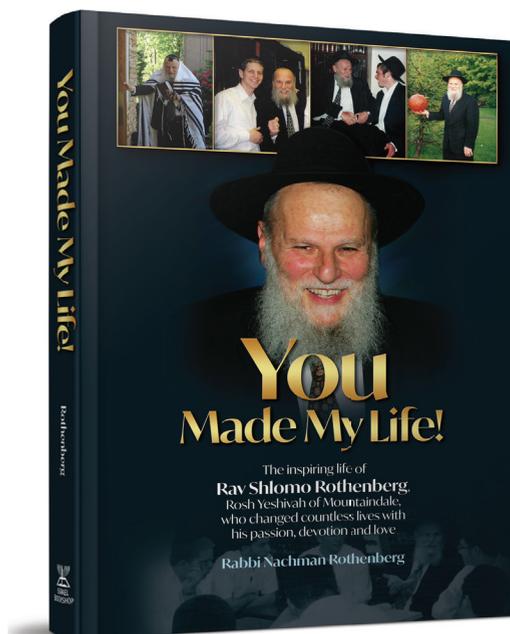
MIRI ROTH

Rav Shlomo Rothenberg was the ultimate life-builder. He devoted his life to making others' lives, giving them *chiyus*: truly creating people. Whether he was in the *beis medrash*, on the basketball court, in a wedding hall or a pool hall, Rav Shlomo stayed true to his mission of making people's lives.

Rav Shlomo loved every Jew, because he saw greatness within each one. Every encounter with Rav Shlomo was life-giving; life-changing. Whether you were a small child, a kid at risk, or even a big *Rosh Yeshivah*, Rav Shlomo treated you with the same dignity, concern, devotion and love. With his sparkling eyes, overflowing *ahavas Yisrael*, passionate and positive personality — and of course his trademark bear hug — Rav Shlomo won over the hearts of thousands. He knew the right words that would inspire you to realize the greatness that was deep within your *neshamah*.

Formerly known as Stevie, Rav Shlomo grew up in the 1940s in a traditional home. He was a talented teenager who surely could have lived the American dream. A star basketball player for his high-school team, Stevie was instrumental in bringing his team to the championships, which were played to the roar of cheering crowds at Madison Square Garden. He excelled in baseball as well, and competed against some of the most famous athletes of the time, including Yankee manager Joe Torre. Stevie was awarded a scholarship to Long Island University, which would have taken him on the path to become a successful professional athlete.

So what stopped him in his tracks? It was, in



fact, his spiritual thirst for the truth. Upon meeting his lifelong *Rebbi*, the esteemed Harav Yehuda Davis, *zt"l*, Stevie/Shlomo had the strength of mind to make a total turnaround and develop into the unbelievable Torah personality that he became.

Rav Davis was an outstanding *Gadol* who was one of the most influential builders of Torah in America. He was an American who went to learn in Slabodka and convinced some fifty of his American friends, such as Harav Nosson Wachtfogel and

Harav Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, to come along with him. In 1960 he founded the first *kiruv* yeshivah of its kind in America. He took American college boys who knew nothing about learning Torah and transformed them into complete *bnei Torah* and leaders of today's generation.

Rav Shlomo didn't feel a need to hide his past. On the contrary, he used his past as a tool to be *mekarev* so many *Yiddische neshamos*. He utilized his astonishing talent for playing basketball to "wow" his *talmidim* and onlookers and give them the feeling that a Torah life is indeed the most enjoyable life to lead.

The unbelievably deep connection that existed between Rav Shlomo and Rav Yehuda Davis was displayed in a most amazing way. Rav Shlomo, who was Rabbi Davis's *talmid muvhak* and the one to fill his place as *Rosh Yeshivah* of the Mountaindale yeshivah, passed away on the exact day of his dear *Rebbi's* *yahrtzeit*.

This rich biography of the inspirational life of Rav Shlomo Rothenberg also includes many unpublished stories about, *zecher tzaddikim livra-chah*, the Chofetz Chaim, the Rogatchover Gaon, Harav Elchonon Wasserman, Harav Issac Sher, Harav Moshe Feinstein, Harav Aharon Kotler, Harav Avigdor Miller, Harav Nosson Wachtfogel, Harav Mordechai Gifter, Harav Shmuel Berenbaum and Harav Yosef Rosenblum, who was Rabbi Davis's son-in-law and Harav Shlomo's *mechutan*.

Rav Shlomo was truly a one-of-a-kind person. A dedicated, caring father... a loving *Rosh Yeshivah*... and an exceptionally loyal friend to countless people, each of whom truly feels that Rav Shlomo "made my life!"

## Jewish Heritage Congressional Tribute to Honor Abe Foxman

THE FRIEDLANDER GROUP

The Annual Congressional Tribute event marking May as Jewish American Heritage Month will take place on Friday, May 21, virtually. The tribute event will feature an impressive roster of U.S. Senators and House members, government officials, diplomats and national Jewish leaders. The virtual event will be hosted by the National Museum of American Jewish History and coordinated by The Friedlander Group. It will air Friday, May 21 at 12 p.m. ET on the Jewish American Heritage Month on their website.

The Jewish American Heritage Month celebration honors prominent Jews whose contributions to American society are deserving of recognition.

### The Importance of Marking Jewish American Heritage Month

Jewish Americans have made indelible contributions to all aspects of American life — the arts, science and medicine, law, civil rights and education. Their stories are all of our stories: they represent what this country makes possible and how wonderful this nation can be when all of its citizens have the opportunity to achieve.

This year's Jewish American Heritage Month's theme is about taking care of one another and supporting communities other than our own. It is



inspired by the Sage Hillel's quote: "If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" in the context of what we have experienced as a nation this past year during the pandemic and in rightfully increasing conversations about racial injustice.

The annual event will honor Abe Foxman. Abe Foxman is a Holocaust survivor and now retired longtime director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Abe Foxman, as a Holocaust survivor and as an authoritative voice on the subject of anti-Semitism, is in a unique position to deliver a

message to the American people via a Congressional venue as America grapples with horrific antisemitic incidents that thus far have been unprecedented in American history.

It is a widely acknowledged that Abe Foxman personifies and follows the path of Jews who helped shape the United States into the great country it is today. It has always been the Jewish American Heritage Month celebration series' mission and goal to recognize exemplary American Jews who embody patriotism, coupled with timeless Jewish values, that have allowed the Jewish community to thrive in these United States.

The annual celebration first began in 1980 as a week in April dedicated to American Jewry, and in 2006, President Bush, at the request of Congress, dedicated the month of May to American Jewry.

President Joe Biden, in this year's proclamation, highlights, "The Jewish American experience is a story of faith, fortitude, and progress. It is a quintessential American experience — one that is connected to key tenets of American identity, including our Nation's commitment to freedom of religion and conscience. This month, we honor Jewish Americans — past and present — who have inextricably woven their experience and their accomplishments into the fabric of our national identity."