

Exclusive Interview With Rabbi Aharon Yehoshua Pessin

By Susie Garber

On Thursday June 17, this writer had the honor of meeting with Rabbi Aharon Yehoshua Pessin, well-known speaker and author, to discuss his holy work. I had the privilege two years earlier of hearing Rabbi Pessin speak at Lenox Hill Hospital at a class given to medical staff, family, and friends as a *z'chus* for a *f'uah sh'leimah* for a wonderful friend, who has since passed away.

Rabbi Pessin lives in Israel, and he was on a speaking tour this past week. He spoke in communities in New Jersey (Passaic and Teaneck), New York (Manhattan, Far Rockaway, and several locations in Central Queens), Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), and Connecticut (Waterbury). In addition, Rabbi Pessin spoke for a podcast on the importance of connecting to *g'dolim*, their teachings, and seeking their guidance. This will be broadcast next week. Additionally, Chazaq taped a *shiur* – “Let’s Produce: The Power to Build with Our Words.” This will be available on Torah Anytime and in the Chazaq June lecture series.

His website, Torah 24-7, boasts over 20,000 *shiurim*. Most of them

are short gems. The story of this website teaches all of us a powerful lesson. Rabbi Pessin was making these short videos of *shiurim* and sending them to Israel. One day, his Web camera broke. He didn’t hear anyone complaining that there were no more *shiurim*, so he decided that maybe that was the end of them. Two and a half months later, one person called and asked for the *shiurim*. He insisted that he wanted the *shiurim* to continue, and he sent Rabbi Pessin to the store to buy a new Web camera. This one person has the merit of what followed: Because of him, Rabbi Pessin went on to deliver 20,000 *shiurim*. Rabbi Pessin pointed out, “Look how one person’s words can build worlds. All this came about with Hashem’s help because of one positive word. We all need to realize the power we possess. We each can offer positive encouragement that will build up a person’s self-esteem. *Mishlei* teaches that when a person is happy, he can overcome illness. We should accept upon ourselves to not let one day pass without giving an encouraging compliment to someone. It can be a spouse, a child, a co-worker, a neighbor, or someone on the street. We can make a difference.”



Rabbi Pessin has written 25 *s'farim* in Hebrew with English translations. They cover a variety of Torah subjects. Some examples include the following: *Midah K'neged Midah* – an encyclopedia containing more than 12,000 sources showing where we find measure for measure in the *Tanach* and in the writings of *Chazal*. It includes commentary and answers from Rav Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*. There is also a *The Measure for Measure Haggadah*, *The Measure for Measure Megillas Esther*, and *The Measure for Measure Bentcher*. He has *s'farim* on life and death

answers, as well as on many other topics. This is just a tiny sample of the wealth of incredible *s'farim* written by Rabbi Pessin.

Rabbi Pessin shared something the Chofetz Chaim once said. Putting out a *sefer* is like having a new baby. There are labor pains, complications, difficulties, but in the end: pure joy. Rabbi Pessin writes his *s'farim* in Ramat Beit Shemesh in Israel. He imparted that he is thrilled when someone learns one of his *s'farim*. It is a tremendous *z'chus*. Writing *s'farim*, teaching, and recording lectures are ways to have many students. A place like Chazaq fulfills the dictum from *Chazal* to have many students to transfer our *m'sorah*. Rabbi Pessin was “extraordinarily impressed by the scope of Chazaq’s *kiruv* community outreach.” He was gratified by the warm greeting and complete tour of the Chazaq office and facilities, given by Robbie Aboff, Rabbi Yaniv Meirov, and staff.

Rabbi Pessin also designed a unique decorative poster for schools, homes, and *sukkos*. He commissioned a famous artist and the result is breathtaking. It illustrates a *sugya* from the Gemara and it depicts *Chazal*'s teaching about dreams. What you look at during

the day causes what you see in your dreams. He has a six-foot replica of this poster hanging in his children's bedroom. Everything the Gemara mentions in *Maseches B'rachos 56-57* is depicted on this beautiful poster.

Rabbi Pessin has a close connection to Rav Chaim Kanievsky *shlita*, Rav Ephraim Greenberg *shlita*, and Rav Asher Weiss *shlita*. *Chazal* teach that we are commanded to cling to Hashem. The Gemara asks: How can you cling to Hashem? He is fire. If you cling to *talmidei chachamim* it is like clinging to Hashem. Learning Torah is the greatest *mitzvah*, and one thing greater is serving your *rebbe* because then you get two in one. You see how he applies Torah into real life. You see his good *midos*. You see how humble he is and how much one can achieve. It's unimaginable.

When asked what he hopes to accomplish in the future, Rabbi Pessin said that he *davens* for *koach* to continue to touch as many hearts as possible – to inspire and empower others. He wants to help people draw close to Hashem. He wants to convey the sweetness of Torah with his *s'farim*, teaching, and *kiruv* work.

Hashem should continue to bless Rabbi Pessin and his amazing *avadah*.

Touro Division Of Graduate Studies Celebrates Commencement Honoring 1,300 Graduates

Touro College Division of Graduate Studies (DGS) celebrated the achievements of 1,300 graduates from its six schools at the division's second virtual commencement, held Thursday, June 17.

The ceremony was a mix of celebration and optimism, combined with recollections of adversity overcome and reminders of the value of helping one another, and the world, heal.

Over 1,000 tuned in, and nearly as many comments were posted on a live chat by friends, family, and faculty – from as far away as Bangladesh and as close as Hicksville, Long Island, where a fifth-grade class joined the celebration.

Speakers included Touro leadership and the deans and top students from each of the division's graduate schools: Business, Education, Health Sciences, Jewish Studies, Technology, and Social Work. US Senator Charles Schumer delivered a congratulatory message, as well.

“Be a Healer”

In his congratulatory remarks, Touro College and University System (TCUS) President Dr. Alan Kadish,

said, “For the rest of your lives, I am certain that you will be presented with personal and professional challenges. And I am equally certain that you will draw upon the skills and experiences you gained from Touro and harness the same engines of perseverance and dedication that brought you to this moment, to make a marked difference in the lives of those around you. Everyone has an opportunity to be a healer in a world that truly needs healing. Never has that been true more than today.”

DGS Vice President Dr. Nadja Graff congratulated the graduates and urged them to accept the challenges ahead. “Be confident in the knowledge that you have the skills, dedication, and determination to make a positive impact on our global society,” she said.

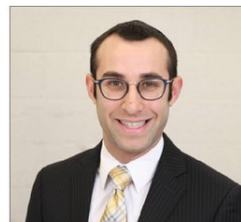
Top Students Deliver Reflections

The students thanked family, friends, and their professors for their support and kindness, and shared their thoughts about their journeys:

Miriam Kleiner, MS, Industrial Organizational Psychology, School

of Health Sciences, obtained her BS in Psychology at Lander College of Arts & Sciences and currently is Director of Investor Relations and Human Resources at Shelbourne Co, a real estate investment syndication and management company. A native of Brooklyn and 4.0 honors student at SHS, where she tutored advanced courses, Kleiner is admired for her passion for growth and helping people make positive changes in their lives. At work, she manages over 300 investors and over 20 employees. “IO is the perfect combination of the psychology world, which I love, and the business world, which is fast-paced and constantly evolving,” says Kleiner.

Ian Baum, MSW, Graduate School of Social Work, earned a BA at Touro's School for Lifelong Education and an MS in General and Special Education before pursuing social work. A 4.0 honors student, Baum was chosen by classmates to speak because of his positive attitude and commitment to help others in need. His interest in social work began as a counselor and then administrator at a treatment center for children with behavioral disorders. During



school he worked three jobs: as an administrator at Yeshiva Ketana of Long Island, a high school teacher at Mesivta Ateres Yaakov in Cedarhurst, and administrator of a behavior modification program at the Diamond Program in Far Rockaway. He also interned at Outreach House in Ridgewood, Queens, and was a UJA Graduate Fellow. “Our world, our nation, our communities and our families have experienced such pain and tragedy, with the burden so overwhelming, that to give up would be both acceptable and expected. But we did not. We lifted ourselves up and we pushed through. Because that is who we are,” he said.

Aharon Friedler, MA, Graduate School of Jewish Studies, is a Torah



scholar and a member of the faculty of the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County, where he has taught at the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels. He received *semichah* from Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg *z"l*. In his remarks, Rabbi Friedler noted that using Zoom and other remote media during the pandemic forced him and his classmates to experience what their own students experience as learners. “For many in the world, and especially for us graduate students, the world as we knew it...and the world we live in now has changed dramatically,” he said. “But while the platform for delivery has been one untested...the goal has never changed,” he said. Paraphrasing the Talmud, the goal of an educator must be to “ignite that candle in their students until the flame within their students will rise by itself.”