

רוח חיים



JOIN US AS WE REMEMBER
AND CELEBRATE THE
LEGACY OF

**Rabbi Dr. Chaim
Feuerman z'l**

Tributes and Dessert
Reception

Monday, November 6

7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Sky Cafe, Belfer Hall

Wilf Campus

Yeshiva University

Announcing
The Dr. Feuerman
Jewish Education Fund

It was with deep sadness that we mourn the passing of Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman, z"l. The book of Proverbs tells us, "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life" (13:14). Dr. Feuerman was incomparably wise and his teachings poured forth upon generations of students. His deep commitment to his students, as evidenced by the meticulous, personal attention he gave them, created everlasting bonds for which he will be sorely missed. His scholarship, his devotion, and his warm and caring demeanor left an indelible impression upon all who had the privilege of learning from him.

As a dedicated servant of the Jewish community his presence will be profoundly missed. But as a teacher of teachers, Dr. Feuerman's legacy will only continue to blossom. May his soul be bound in the bonds of eternal life, and may his memory be a blessing to his loved ones, his students, and the entire Yeshiva University community.

Dr. Ari Berman
President
Yeshiva University

Yeshiva University joins the Jewish education community in mourning the passing of Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman, The Golda Koschitzky Professor of Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, where he served on the faculty for more than 28 years.

With more than four decades of wide-ranging experience at the helm of Jewish day schools, Rabbi Feuerman created innovative curricula and taught countless educators, supervised hundreds of student teachers, and influenced the lives of Jewish educators and students across the country and overseas.

As a day school principal, and a teacher of teachers, his wisdom and gentle guidance touched many a student and educator. He was uniformly beloved and the epitome of an educator, open to learning from everyone, and viewing all of life as a teachable moment. He was a paragon of *derech eretz*, and in his gentle way, made everyone who had the privilege of knowing or working with him feel that he understood they were *b'tzelem Elokim*. He will be forever remembered by the hundreds of educators who convey his message and methods in their classrooms.

May his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Rona Milch Novick, PhD

Dean

Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration

Yeshiva University

I was very close to Rabbi Feuerman. He gave me my first job in Jewish education as a *Rebbe* in YCQ. After a few years, he helped me get another job in educational administration. He was an educator par excellence and a *mentsch* as well.

Yehi Zichro Baruch !!

Rabbi Refoel Auman

So sad, he was my favorite teacher 18 years ago. So kind and gentle yet sharp and deep. I have all of my papers and remember what he said like it was yesterday. So strange that he was *nifter* that very night. Strange really because I was profoundly moved by our class that night for some reason. I actually cried as I drove home over the bridge in gratitude to know such a unique person and to have learned from him. *Baruch Dayan Emes.*

Malka Arons

Rabbi Feuerman was the first person to sit in on my classes for an extended period of time through the Rabbi Soloveitchik Institute here at Maimonides, and he was the first to alert me to the value of real professional development. I am forever grateful for the time he put in to pre- and post- observations conferences over the phone from NY!

Stephanie Samuels

Maimonides School, Massachussets

Very sad to hear. A loss of a great mentor educator.

Chaya R. Gorsetman, Ed. D.

Stern College for Women

Yeshiva University

I have the fondest memories of him, having served on a dissertation committee or two with students under his supervision. Condolences.

Richard K Caputo, PhD
Professor of Social Policy & Research
Wurzweiler School of Social Work - Yeshiva University - Wilf Campus

Baruch Dayan Haemet. I am so sorry for your loss, for all of our loss.

I'm Rachel Eisenberger, I was teaching in JFS, Staten Island for many years under the guidance and loving care of Rabbi Feuerman. I always looked forward to his reading with a smile and gentle way of guiding us teachers as well as his love for his students. We formed a friendship, the Rabbi attended my children's weddings.

May he be a *Melitz Yashar* for all of you and for all of Israel.

With loving memories and gratitude for his help and guidance.

Rachel Eisenberger

Baruch Dayan Ha'Emes! He was an amazing teacher with fountains of knowledge and perspectives.

Netanel Rosenzweig

Oh my goodness. I am so so sorry to hear the news. I can't believe that we had the honor of being with Dr. Feuerman during his last hours. I wish we had recorded everything he said. But I remember his patience, intentionality, and passion. And of course he smiled throughout the night. He focused on the students and was intent on people getting to know each other and share their experiences. Like Malka said, his teaching over the past 18 years has evolved and is very student focused with an obvious care for each of his students. Such a special man. I will really miss having him as a teacher. Wow. I can't believe it.

Blima Zelinger

I am standing in the old city and it is hard for me to believe the news I read.

I remember Rabbi Feuerman as first my *Rosh Yeshiva* in JFS. I was young so I do not remember much except that he was a team member with Mr Fischman and he worked with my father *a"h*.

I had a second tasting in Azrieli as a Professor. He taught me so many lessons in pedagogy that I use till today.

He was soft-mannered but fiery and passionate. He made smart and incisive comments on all of my work.

I only have the warmest memories and wish the family the full *nechama* as Rav Feuerman made an impact on me and the many students *bh* that I have.

Ari Cutler

Rabbi Feuerman was my professor and a world class mentor to educators. He supervised my student teaching at DRS. He taught me so much that I still use routinely. May his *neshama* be bound up in the bond of life.

Micah Greenland

Very very sad. I will miss him. I enjoyed my year doctoral internship with him. Along with his deep sense of Judaism, Jewish education and commitment to students, he had an incredible sense of humor too! He will continue to be a *Bracha*/blessing.

Ellen Cohn

I adored him and have unending gratitude for the 17 years of friendship, wisdom, and guidance that he provided me and my family. He was quite simply one of the greatest men I've ever known. I hope that somehow the *levaya* will be recorded so students like me can learn from him one last time...

Gidon Shoshan

As has been written, his warmth, wit, effective pedagogical methodology (Marzano!) and more earned him respect and admiration from thousands of students ...*Baruch Dayan Emes*.

Yaakov Lason

I can hear his voice now saying exactly that. That's just what he would say in a measured, calm tone. What a master educator and *mensch*.

Shira Winkler Ashendorf

As a RIETS alumnus, I extend my *nechama* to all of you on the passing of your dear and beloved Rabbi Feuerman, of blessed memory.

May the many visits and calls and emails and other forms of outreach to you lift and console at this difficult and emotional time.

Elan Adler

An especially helpful snippet I learned from Rabbi Feuerman *ob"m*: He said, "When you can't fight them, join them." When students are really wrapped up in something and can't focus, join them in their concern for a few minutes. Then, when they're satisfied, you can begin. For example, when it starts snowing during school, say, "Everyone to the window, and watch the snow for 3 minutes!" I've done this on a few occasions, and always think of him when I do.

Sari Margolis

I am so sorry to hear of Rabbi Feuerman's passing. He was a special man and a master educator of educators.

I applied to WDS back in 1990, fresh out of school. Rabbi Feuerman took me under his wing, mentored me, supported me, encouraged me, and most importantly, believed in me. I felt like I was getting private lessons in education! His approach to classroom management and lesson planning have become the foundation upon which I continue to build my pedagogic approach. I have been teaching ever since; first as a 5th grade *morah* in WDS, then as a high school teacher of Judaics in Cleveland. I eventually became the department chair for *Tanach* and had many opportunities to teach teachers as well. I tried to be as good a teacher and mentor as he was for my student teachers. Our family made *aliya* 5 years ago, and I am teaching here as well.

What was so striking about Rabbi Feuerman's approach, was his ever present belief in my ability to succeed. He never made me feel small or unqualified. On the contrary, he gave me the tools I needed to succeed and he followed up in the classroom. His door was always open to me and no question was ever dismissed as unimportant. Although I was very conscious at the time of my amazing good fortune, as the years pass, I never cease to marvel at how lucky I was. I really believe that *Hashem* was watching over me when Rabbi Feuerman offered me that job on the

condition that I train with him. There is no question that that experience was transformative for me on a professional level, but also on a personal one; one who is treated with respect, treats others respectfully, one who is nurtured, goes on to nurture others.

I would bump into him occasionally over the years, and he was always quick with a smile and warm greeting. He was always interested in what I was up to and wrote me many letters of recommendation over the years. Rabbi Feuerman, from the first day I met him, always "had my back".

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים.

May his memory be a blessing.

With respect and gratitude,

Dara Unterberg

I remember first meeting your father ז"ל when I was a graduate student more than 30 years ago. He graced the class with his smile, his dancing eyes, and his wisdom. I remember saying to myself that this was someone I wanted to learn from. Every encounter I ever had with him was delightful and intriguing, and there were many such encounters as we've been in touch on and off ever since. One particular course which I still remember focused on teaching creative thinking, and the ideas which flowed forth highlighted each week. My classmates shared similar experiences, and your father's legacy remains with us.

יהי זכרו ברוך

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

בכבוד רב ואבל גדול

Zvi Grumet

BS"D

It has been over ten years since I have been a student in Dr. Feuerman's class, but he is one of those individuals that you don't soon forget. I took him for four courses, I believe, during my graduate studies at Azrieli in the years 2003-2005. I was, at the time, a novice teacher teaching Middle School Social Studies. Dr. Feuerman gave me the skills and knowledge in his courses to feel more confident the next day in front of my students. Whenever I would report back to him on how a certain technique he had suggested worked in the classroom, the pride in his voice was evident. He made me feel like I knew what I was doing and I was already a great teacher (even though I really had a lot to work on). All of his assignments showed what a master educator he

was; from keeping logs in class in order that we should be engaged in the learning, to his assignments. There was no busy work, everything we had to do was purposeful. He even took an interest in the personal lives of his students. When I got engaged, (and somebody informed him), he had all of the boys in the class sing "*od yishoma*" for me.

I owe so much of my educational tools and expertise to him. It was a pleasure to be his student and I looked forward to his classes. I was so saddened to hear of his passing, יהי זכרו ברוך.

Bracha (Bienenfeld) Sendic

Rabbi Dr Feuerman was by far my favorite teacher in Azrieli. While I took his class, I was living in Queens and had the opportunity to drive with him in the evening. I loved those rides!

My favorite thing he taught me, that I literally use every single day in the classroom, was his theory about illustrations to the text. He felt that kids related more to amateur, on the spot, drawings made to illustrate the text. If it is too fancy or not unfolded before their eyes, it isn't as relatable. Every day when I draw my stick figures Chumash people or animals or scenes, and my students laugh and enjoy, that is all in his merit. When the *pesukim* become alive through my very basic drawings and my students see it happening as if it's on TV, that's because of him.

He was an incredible educator and I'm blessed to have had the opportunity to be his student.

Hamakom yinachem etchem btoch shaeri tzion vyerushalayim.

In gratitude,

Ilana Rauzman

Today we mourn the loss of a friend who made an indelible impact on my life as a professional and a person. But more than that we celebrate the life of a larger-than-life personality, a person whose love and care for others shone through in every word that he spoke.

I remember coming to class a few minutes late, something I knew Rabbi Dr. Feuerman didn't take lightly because it was important to respect every moment in life and every second of someone else's time, and I realized upon entering class that I forgot my dinner. Seeing my nervous and tired face he asked me what was wrong. I said "do you think it would be possible for me to quickly run and get my dinner?" His response was so natural, calm, and clear. Without missing a beat he said "Don't run. Walk like a *mensch*."

Many will miss his bright smile, his witty sense of humor, and his timeless teachings. But many many more will continue to have their lives positively impacted by his life's work.

Baruch Dayan Haemet to Rabbi Dr. Feuerman- my teacher, my mentor, and friend.

Yoni and Rachel Fein

Rabbi Feuerman had incalculable influence on me as a teacher. His reputation was stellar among my peers, without parallel, and never did anyone have a bad word to say about him. His abundance of wisdom, his exceptional clarity, sharpness, and organization, his zest and passion for teaching, his dignity, and that sparkle in his eye formed an enchanting combination that made anyone who ever spent any significant time with him his student forever. Yet his lessons were never about him but about us. Like a maestro he conducted while we all developed our own unique manners and ways of learning, understanding, and teaching.

I was his student in Azrieli in 1995, and I have been a teacher since 1998. Years after he taught me how to teach I had the opportunity to interview him for an audio podcast I did for the Lookstein center in Israel. You can listen to the almost 40 minute interview at this address: <https://www.lookstein.org/professional-dev/classroom-teaching-mark-smilowitz-interview-dr-chaim-feuerman/>. I believe this interview captures many aspects of Rabbi Feuerman's wisdom and personality, and it is a better tribute to him than anything I can write. As I listen to it again I am transfixed. Suddenly, teaching feels like a joy and not a burden, and I feel like a new teacher again full of enthusiasm to implement the ideas and methods Rabbi Feuerman taught us.

While all who were touched by him - and there are so many! - are saddened by his passing, my heart especially goes out to his family for their loss. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

Mark Smilowitz
Beit Shemesh

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman *z"l* was an educator's educator. Unlike some professors of education, he actually had a distinguished career as a school principal before becoming a teacher and mentor to future educators at YU's Azrieli Graduate School of Education. I first met Rabbi Feuerman *z"l* in Montreal in 1969 when he was the principal of the Hebrew Academy. In 1976 when I was appointed principal of the Hebrew Youth Academy, (later the Kushner Hebrew

Academy) he graciously served as a mentor to me through Torah Umesorah. He spent countless hours with me at the school and offered many insights and suggestions that I successfully adopted. He was always patient and encouraging since I was a neophyte principal. Throughout the years our paths crossed often. I am permanently indebted to him for his selfless devotion and passion to the cause of Jewish education which he shared with me.

Rabbi Dr. Wallace Greene

I studied Educational Methodology & Didactics with Rabbi Dr. Feuerman, in the Spring of 2005, if I recall correctly. Though I also took courses with him as part of the Doctoral program, it is the Didactics course that I remember best. As a *Gemara* teacher, his clear, explicit, and well-reasoned guide as to how to make a successful *Chavruta* session is something that still sticks with me and which still informs my teaching to this day. And there are numerous teachers in our school who were not so lucky to learn from Dr. Feuerman who don't follow the same best practice, and I have been able to pass his wisdom to them as well.

I also was always struck with the kindness and positive attitude that Dr. Feuerman directed towards all of his students - even the ones like myself that might come to class a few minutes late or leave a few minutes early to catch a *maariv minyan* :-).

Yehi Zichro Baruch

Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Jaffe MA'06; EdD '15

Director, Tanach Department, Maimonides School, Middle and Upper Schools

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman was one of my mentors and I am very confident that I would not be in my position today without his encouragement and guidance. I was fortunate to have Rabbi Feuerman for two classes when I was working on my Master's degree. My student teaching in Dallas was under his auspices in connection with my principal. Rabbi Feuerman flew out to Dallas for my first and last class and the other work was completed in between with my principal. I remember well that when he asked me what I wanted to work on I said "everything." He smiled knowingly in the way he always did and explained that we would work together on a process of improvement focusing on one specific aspect of my teaching but through learning that process I would be able to apply it to any area of my teaching. In my own sixth year as principal I have told this story to many new teachers. This was an example of Rabbi Feuerman's wisdom dispensed kindly as it always was.

A few years later when I had been teaching for a few years, our relatively young Judaic faculty were trying to revamp the curriculum without having a head of Judaics. It was a weighty undertaking and we brought in Rabbi Feuerman for a full week in the summer to guide our discussions and process. As usual, Rabbi Feuerman did not disappoint, carefully pushing us towards asking the right questions and spending time on the process in order to get to the right destination. He deftly dealt with those who doubted the process as well as those who were fully invested. He visited over the school year a number of times as we benefitted from professional development under his guidance. As a former student I had the privilege of driving Rabbi Feuerman to and from his hotel and even taking him and his wife to dinner on one occasion. I had learned in Rabbi Feuerman's classroom that you could learn at least as much from watching him as from listening to him. I learned that this was just as true of his consulting and professional development as it was of his Azrieli classroom.

As I moved into my first principalship and on to my second, Rabbi Feuerman was a source of insight and encouragement. He was a listening ear and also put me in touch with others in the field who had passed through challenges similar to the ones I was currently facing. I recently began to write more for educational journals both Jewish and general. Just a year ago I proudly shared with him that I had an article published in a journal. Rabbi Feuerman took the time to write a truly touching and beautiful comment on the online page here,

http://www.kappanonline.org/being-2/*

I can hear very clearly Rabbi Feuerman's voice on the other end of the line when I would call. "It must be my friend, Moshe Grebenau." I always enjoyed speaking to him and taking in the thoughtful and measured responses to my questions. I mourn Rabbi Feuerman as a personal role model and mentor but as a Jewish community we must also mourn Rabbi Feuerman as a loss to the Jewish Day School movement as a whole. He shaped and guided a generation of teachers and he will be missed.

Y'hei Zichro Buruch.

Rabbi Maury Grebenau

*Dear Maury,

Thank you for sharing this most worthwhile article with me. I am so proud that it was published in the prestigious Phi Delta Kappan, one of my favorite professional publications.

As you know, I teach graduate school and one of the most popular topics, especially for the doctoral students, is leadership. Everyone wants to be a leader and the volume of published research on leadership is many times that of followership, about which apparently very few

people want to know. By contrast I inform my doctoral students that one of the great lacks in my preparation for leadership (as you know I was a strong and successful school leader for more decades than I'd care to remember) was that no one taught me how to follow, how to be a second in command. Not knowing how to follow paradoxically rendered my successful leadership somewhat less effective than it could have been. Only in my senior years (I am now 87 and still going strong) did I learn how to follow and having mastered that skill has earned me much greater personal and professional fulfillment. Your article is one which I wish I had read and heeded when I was much younger. It could have spared me much anguish and boosted my success as a leader.

The article is especially gratifying to me when I bear in mind that you were one of my star graduate students and coachee in your student teaching days.

Rabbi Chaim Feuerman, Ed. D.

*Professor of Education, Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration
Yeshiva University, New York, NY
Former Chair, Mendheim Student Teaching and Administrative Internship Program*

“Wherever you find His greatness, there you will find His humility”

The challenge in capturing Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman in words is depicting the majesty and humility he evinced, the grandeur and simplicity with which he taught, and the power and warmth he radiated. It is always difficult to articulate a dialectic, but when it is embodied within a person it must be experienced to be appreciated.

In this respect he was a true *tzelem Elokim*, a human representation of the Divine. The Torah requires us to emulate the just and kind ways of the Almighty. Rabbi Dr. Feuerman was a manifestation of this nobility, selflessness, and just plain decency.

My first encounter with *mori v'rabi*, as I called him, was as a not-so-young, but inexperienced administrator. I reached out to him when he did not know me and asked if I could spend a day with him. As with anyone who made a request of him, he agreed. That began a 30-year relationship. I was privileged from that moment to have Rabbi as a guide, professor, mentor, psychologist (that one I actually did not ask for), and, dare I say, friend.

He was always there for you whether he knew you or not. In a recent summer I asked him if I could make an appointment for him to review a draft of something I wrote. He said he could see me after Shabbos at 10:30 p.m. A friend of mine told me that many years ago he was going

through some personal difficulties and someone suggested he call Rabbi Feuerman. He did not know him at the time. He called and 24 hours later was in his living room.

He was at once a *rav* and a *talmid chacham*, a scholar and a master teacher, a broad thinker and a simple articulator. He held everyone to the highest expectations because of his great respect for them. It took no words, just a silent glance with his legendary twinkle, to send you back to the drawing board. He demanded brevity, clarity, and precision in your communication, which is how he communicated. Yet, everything he said was couched in *derech erez* (courtesy) and *kavod ha'briyos* (respect for people's dignity); when he asked the class a question, he said, "I *invite* you to respond."

He taught lofty concepts with practicality and broke down the complexities and intricacies of teaching into practical steps: teaching to objectives, wait time, checking for understanding, cooperative learning, and neocortical activities, i.e., thinking(!). In his classes you learned by doing, even marking your own final – with a rubric, of course.

He had a profound respect for students and insisted that, without it, it was impossible to be an impactful person or institution. An equation that he taught hung for years in my office: Rules – Respect = Rebellion. Classrooms have to be active and dynamic because "Kids love to do two things, talk, and move, and we bring them to school and say, 'Sit down and be quiet!'"

As a mentor, he was the one to whom to turn when you could find no solution. He was unsparing and unflinching and always right. I once called him about an issue I was having with a novice teacher. When I finished my long soliloquy, he diagnosed the problem over the phone – and in just one sentence (pretty much as usual). I had a successful follow-up meeting with the teacher and, at the end, she said, "You should have been a psychologist." I just smiled.

As a *talmid chacham* first, he embodied Torah and Torah values; learning and *lomdus* were apparent in him, and the love and reverence for his *rebbe*, Rav Hutner *zt"l*, were evident and he quoted him often.

As a human being, he faced challenges and adversity repeatedly and emerged stronger and greater. An accident that hospitalized him almost interminably and changed his life did not deter him. He was a lifelong learner who not only mastered new topics but new fields, as recently as a few years ago

His affection and love for his family, especially for his beloved wife *a"h*, were paramount. The devotion and tenderness he displayed for her was special to behold.

Mi yitein t'muraso? – Who can replace a towering figure? He was old-school and new-school – timeless values and cutting-edge technology. He was a gentleman and a scholar.

We will miss you, *mori v'rabi*. Don't stop smiling.

Rabbi Elimelech Gottlieb

Earlier today (Wednesday), I heard the devastating news about the passing of a giant in Jewish education, Rabbi Dr. Chaim Feuerman z"l. Rabbi Feuerman was a master educator, yeshiva day school principal and stalwart at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education at Yeshiva University for many, many years. He was my teacher, my mentor, my friend. He had a profound influence on me in the formative years of my educational career. Since his passing was so close to Rosh Hashanah, there was little if any shiva to process this great loss...

In the spirit of *Hakarat Hatov* (acknowledging the good), recognizing Rabbi Feuerman's profound influence on me and so many others, I am sharing three lessons that he taught me that have stuck with me over the years.

I. The Importance of "Wait Time"

Rabbi Feuerman affectionately used to refer to McTighe's Bookmark, lessons from educational leader Jay McTighe. I have found two items on this bookmark to be especially useful in my teaching practices, Wait Time I and Wait Time II.

Wait Time I is a teaching strategy where, after posing a question, the teacher hesitates for 3-5 seconds before calling on someone. This sounds so simple but it can be transformative in the classroom. Let me explain.

Usually, a teacher calls on the first couple of students to raise their hands. These students are not necessarily the smartest students in class. They are the fastest. Students who take longer to process, rarely have a voice in the typical classroom.

I can relate to such students since that was the type of student that I was growing up. I was always a good student. I did well on tests and took meticulous notes. Other students would seek me out before exams both for my notes and as a study partner. I excelled on essay questions. Sometimes teachers even mentioned my essay answers to others as an example of a well formulated response.

During class, though, I was silent. Even when called on, I would often fumble, not knowing how to respond when put on the spot. A learning partner described me as taking a long time to warm up mentally, but once I started I could think deeply.

This was not rewarded in the typical classroom setting. The teacher called on the students who were the quickest to answer. Class had to move and the teacher rarely waited to encourage responses from more students.

Wait Time changes this dynamic. Everyone receives the time they need to process and answer the teacher's questions.

As a follow-up to Wait Time I, Rabbi Feuerman also spoke of Wait Time II. This is a teaching strategy in following up on a student's question. After the student responds, the teacher pauses, waiting another 3-5 seconds and looking reflective. This will encourage all the students in the class to reflect as well and will demonstrate to the student who answered that you value their thinking.

Rabbi Feuerman not only talked about the value of Wait Time. He lived it. He was tremendously patient and meticulous in the classroom. He would pose his questions and wait until everyone had a response. He would pause after a student's response, stroke his beard for a few long moments, and then ask others in the class to reflect on what the student had said before posing his own thoughts.

In my teaching practices, I have tried to utilize technology to further Wait Time for my students, some of whom need even more than 3-5 seconds to process. I started with email exchanges with my students where I would compose a weekly question and elicit their responses. On this written forum, some students who were very quiet in class took the opportunity to shine. Later, I created online discussion forums for my students to demonstrate sophisticated higher-order thinking. This was inspired by my lessons from Rabbi Feuerman.

II. Respecting the Contact Function

Another lesson that Rabbi Feuerman taught me that has had a profound influence on my teaching career is what he called, "respect the contact function." Respecting the contact function is a term from psychoanalysis that involves waiting for the other person to initiate a contact and then responding appropriately to this contact. Using this method, one balances the patient's need for gratification through the analyst's response with the need to create some level of patient frustration. It is through this frustration that the patient achieves growth.

As I was eager to advance in the field of Jewish education, Rabbi Feuerman always advised me to respect the contact function. He said that the best path in many situations is what he called affirmative inaction. If the teacher is negotiating a new position with a principal, she should wait for the principal to come to her after the initial conversation. This gives the principal the time and space to craft a position that fits into the needs of the school. This also creates a certain level of frustration on the part of the principal so that when the principal comes to the teacher with an offer it would be a better one. Respecting the contact function does not guarantee that the ultimate outcome will be to the teacher's liking. However, it gives the teacher a stronger position for creating a consensus when the circumstances allow for it.

Respecting the contact function is very similar to Stephen Covey's Habit 5 in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood." This habit means that one should first listen carefully to the other person's position before attempting any response.

This idea is also stated by our rabbis in *Mishnah Avot* (chapter 5, *mishnah* 7) where it says:

חָכָם אֵינוֹ מְדַבֵּר בְּפָנָי מִי שֶׁהוּא גָדוֹל מִמֶּנּוּ בְּחָכְמָה וּבְמִנְיָן, וְאֵינוֹ נִכְנָס לְתוֹךְ דְּבָרֵי חֲבֵרוֹ, וְאֵינוֹ נִבְהַל לְהַשִּׁיב

The wise man does not speak before one who is greater in wisdom or number, he does not interrupt his friend's conversation, and he does not rush to answer. The advice is that one should allow the other to initiate the conversation, listen to everything that she has to say, and analyze her words carefully before responding.

Rabbi Feuerman did not just speak about this habit. He lived it. He would rarely initiate a conversation, first taking the time to carefully listen and reflect. This way he gave us the chance to think carefully through our own responses rather than telling us what to think.

III. Giving Students a "Crutch"

I learned one more lesson from Rabbi Feuerman, that sometimes you should give your students a "crutch." This was during a conversation about an app to assist in learning *Gemara*, *Gemara Berura*. I introduced Rabbi Feuerman to *Gemara Berura* which provides a suite of tools including keywords, color-coding, and flowcharting to help students mark up the text based on its function in the Talmudic discussion, what is called in the yeshiva world the "*shakla ve-tarya of the sugya*". A teacher challenged the efficacy of this method, claiming that it would be a "crutch" for the student.

Rabbi Feuerman paused and thought for a moment, as he was wont to do and his eyes twinkled. He then reflected that after he had been in a car accident he had needed to use a crutch to help

walk again independently. Students sometimes also need a “crutch” as well to help them successfully learn on their own. This was a profound illustration of the value of scaffolding and differentiated instruction.

I am forever indebted to Rabbi Feuerman for giving me the time, the space, and sometimes the “crutch” to help me achieve growth as a Jewish educator. Besides the many classes and conversations that I had with him, Rabbi Feuerman was also my doctoral advisor for the dissertation that I began many years ago until life got in the way. Hopefully someday I will return to it and dedicate it to Rabbi Feuerman, the patient, humble giant of Jewish education.

Rabbi Tzvi Pittinsky
Director of Educational Technology at The Frisch School

There is a trope throughout the Talmud, where a rabbi struggles to see his teacher. When he gets there, he hears something that perhaps seems entirely mundane. Yet the student finds it so significant and inspirational that he states, “אילמלא לא באתי אלא לשמוע דבר זה - דיי”, if I could only come to hear this one thing, it would have been enough for me.

I thought about this quote Tuesday Night Erev Rosh Hashana. I had some difficulty getting into R Dr. Feuerman’s online class. The internet was unstable and kept dropping, and I eventually had to run to YU with my computer in order to hear Dr. Feuerman’s online group discussion. I had chimed into the discussion with a question as to how come a student could be perfectly behaved and responsive in one teacher’s class, while being entirely belligerent and disruptive in another.

This led to a lively discussion about different factors, such as the classroom, or the time of day, or the style of teaching that might not agree with a particular student. Finally, one student in the class, who was an experienced teacher in her own right suggested an idea. Sometimes, the student incorrectly perceives a teacher as expressing hatred or indifference or disdain towards themselves. When they don’t realize that the teacher has their best interests at heart, and instead think they are being cruel, the student will return that perceived cruelty with their own.

At this, Dr. Feuerman politely asked to intrude, as he did every time he had a comment to offer in his own class. How does one know that the student perceived things incorrectly. Perhaps, the teacher was actually being insensitive, and they only thought they were being nice. He then explained some ideas from psychology that illustrate we often delude ourselves, and he remarked that he is never sure of his own actual thoughts.

He illustrated this with a personal anecdote. When he first became a principal, he always had a smile on his face. He thought he was being genuine and sincerely happy, and he mentioned that his mother had always instructed him to greet people with a smile. But the teachers under him did not perceive it that way. “Who is that smarmy new principal,” they thought. “What is his angle? What’s behind that smile. Is he waiting for us to fail?” He said that to this day, he wasn’t sure if he was being genuinely open and friendly, as the rest of us in the chat had no doubt he was being, or was there really a part of him that was looking forward to laying down the law and changing up the place. Perhaps, it is the same way with classroom troublemakers. They are accurately perceiving an attitude of conflict, even if the teacher is not aware of it.

It didn’t matter at all to Dr. Feuerman that his anecdote was about jaded and experienced teachers skeptical of a new boss, while the initial discussion was about young children. Whether one is a scared first grader, a troubled teenager, a grad student, a teacher serving under him, a family member, or a colleague, every person is entitled to their perceptions just the same, and every person’s perceptions need to be acknowledged. For who but God knows with certainty that they are not in the wrong, and the other really speaks the truth?

I was so impressed with his kindness and his thoughtfulness at the time, that when I was reviewing the lecture and discussion later that night, I had said if I had only known Dr. Feuerman for those ten minutes in that class that he explained his understanding of himself, then my time in his classes was well-spent. I did not know then that at moment, those words took on a sad prophetic literalness, for it would indeed be impossible to spend any more time with Dr. Feuerman. After teaching that class and dutifully posting a request on CANVAS to review and reflect on the class and prepare for the next, he finished the year and his mission in life that very night.

It says in Avot, “Who is wise — the one who learns from every person,” and it quotes the verse “מכל מלמדיי, השכלתי”, “I have gained insight from all my teachers,” but most people fail to do this. When an opportunity comes to take note of someone else, we think “I am clearly right, and they have no idea what is going on. Why should I listen to them?” Not Dr. Feuerman. He lived this principle. Everyone commands attention, and who are you to disregard them? He was quick to cite the newest paper, to stay abreast of the newest technologies in teaching, to hear from any student who would speak up.

Dr. Feuerman would often cite the proverb “תן לַחֲכָם וַיִּחְכְּמוּ עִוֵּד,” which he would explain as “Give wisdom to the wise person and (s)he will add to it.” If there was a student he didn’t consider worthy of receiving wisdom, I don’t know anyone in Azrieli who knew of such a person, and yet somehow, his faith was rewarded every time. (S)he always managed to add something wise, and he would be there to note it.

יהי זכרו ברוך!

If I only merited to learn this much, it would suffice for me.

Elon Weintraub

Rabbi Feuerman had a profound impact on my life as well as so many others. I will always think of him as my principal, my *rebbe* and my teacher. His methods were so different and made him who he was. I remember that rather than sitting in an office, he had a desk set up in the middle of the hall of [Westchester Day School](#) so students could talk to him. He was instrumental in helping me find my love of *tefilah* and *chazzanus*. When I was a newly minted chazzan, fresh off my bar mitzvah, I was thrown off by the complicated davening of the *Aseret yemei teshuva* and *Tzom Gedaliah*. Rabbi Feuerman saw me in the hall in between classes from his desk and asked me to come speak to him and spent the next hour going over *halachos* of *tefillah* with me. It was better than any class and the information I use to this day. When [Torah Day School Of Seattle](#) was starting out, I was dropping my kids off one day and saw him in the halls. He had been flown in as a consultant and I had no idea. It was just like seeing him in the halls of WDS. I felt like I was kid again. Often times his name comes up in Jewish Geography and he is only ever spoken about in glowing terms. Rabbi I will miss you. You have made such a beautiful impact on so many generations of students and teachers. *BDH*

Ari Hoffman

Seattle WA

WDS Class of 95

I am so glad that Azrieli is paying tribute to Rabbi Feuerman, an amazing teacher of teachers and a personal mentor. I am saddened by our loss of such a great man. I will not be in the NY area and will not be able to attend.

Maury Grebenau

Over a period of many decades, I had the *zechut* to receive wise counsel from my *Rebbi*, Rabbi Chaim Feuerman, Ed.D. Rabbi Feuerman had a unique and powerful way of listening and knowing how to advise without saying too many words. Sometimes just a nod or even silence sufficed. He expressed his ideas in Torah, teaching, running a school, teaching graduate school and interpersonal matters in a measured way, in spite of his vast erudition in all these areas.

Rabbi Feuerman's presence in my life, and in the lives of countless others was powerfully and constantly felt. On my way to his *levaya*, advice from him that I had set up as an "automatic reminder" popped up on my iPhone screen. Even after he was physically in the *Olam Hamet*, I received a message from him!

One time I said to Rabbi Feuerman: In summer camp one time I asked a lifeguard: I understand that "WSI", which stands for "Water Safety Instructor" is someone who teaches people how to be lifeguards; but who teaches the instructors? The answer that I was once told was "WSII", the "Water Safety Instructor's Instructor". I told this to Rabbi Feuerman and added: "Now I understand what you do"; you are the WSII for teachers, professors and principals. He smiled in appreciation. The week that I write this is *Parashat Noach*; in the *Teiva*, *Noach* saved and preserved the world. Likewise, Rabbi Feuerman, was a lifeguard and lifeline to so many! As a *rebbi*, professor, advisor and sage Rabbi Feuerman was unparalleled. He was a *rebbi's rebbi*, a professor's professor and a principal's principal. He is sorely missed by countless *talmidim*, colleagues, family, and all of *Klal Yisrael*.

It is hard to adequately express my personal appreciation to Rabbi Feuerman. He has been there for me throughout the most difficult and challenging situations, as well as through the many positive and exciting moments in my life. Whether I approached him in my role as a teacher, principal, professor, or—most importantly--as a *talmid* seeking counsel--my *Rebbi* was there for me. Cautioning, gently nudging, and showing his warm and infectious smile at just the right moments. Intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, Rabbi Feuerman was always there with me. Indeed, he is still with me, in the innermost chambers of my *neshama*.

תנצב"ה

With everlasting respect and appreciation,

Rabbi Shmuel Klammer, Ed.D.

Head of School, Shulamith School of Brooklyn

Adjunct Professor, Touro Graduate School for Jewish Studies

I had the privilege of having Rabbi Feuerman z'l as my supervisor for my fieldwork placement in Azrieli. I very much looked forward to him sitting in on my classes in MTA and being able to discuss it over tilapia at Grandma's for lunch. I loved listening to his insight and wisdom and to this day I integrate much of his teachings into my daily life. I especially loved listening to his Rav Hutner z'l stories, two of which I have repeated many times since hearing them from him. Both of the following stories I believe personify what Rabbi Feuerman z'l stood for as well.

1. He was leaving Rav Hutner's office together with the rosh yeshiva and on their way out, Rav Hutner lifted his cane and was trying persistently to turn off the light switch (which was a more complicated one) with the end of his cane. After Rabbi Feuerman put out his hand to turn off the switch himself, Rav Hutner prevents him from doing so and says "everyone needs their toys".

Rabbi Feuerman used this story to teach how students need to have healthy outlets.

2. There was a known anti-Semite that was speaking in front of a large auditorium in the city and some yeshiva boys at the time went to protest this speaker (I believe they let pigeons out in the auditorium). A picture of one of the boys protesting made it to one of the local papers and RavHutner pointed to one of the boys that looked particularly rambunctious and said to Rabbi Feuerman, " find out who this boy is; I want him in my yeshiva".

Rabbi Feuerman used this story to show how all skills that students have can be sublimated for something positive and constructive.

Rabbi Feuerman will be terribly missed by many. I feel lucky to have had a relationship with him and will IYH continue to integrate his teachings into my life.

Chesky Gewirtz

“Thank you for making this event. I am happy we have a way to honor Rabbi Feuerman as he meant so much to so many of us, his students.”

Nava Kaniel

If you grasped many, you did not grasp anything; if you grasped few, you grasped something."

- Yoma 80.

Rabbi Feuerman quoted this often.

Master goals one at a time. Whether it's the classroom's TLW or our Life Passion. Rabbi Feuerman LIVED this principle, and thanks to him I experience this truth more & more each day.

Joseph E. Harary

It was with very heavy heart I received the news of my beloved teacher's passing. I have been in Israel for the past 27 years and have been in contact with Rabbi Feuerman during the entire time. I knew something was wrong when he did not respond to the email I sent him Erev Rosh Hashana.

I had the honor and privilege of being his student for many years.

A true great educator has been lost. A MENTCH of the highest order.

Both my wife and I will miss him dearly.

We wish we could attend the memorial service but we will be in Israel.

May your gathering be an Aliya for his Neshama.

Avraham Shapiro

I was heartbroken to hear about the untimely passing of Rabbi Feuerman. He was a mentor to me and I carry with me many of the lessons that he taught both in and out of the classroom. I remember 10 years ago, how he traveled to Chicago despite his physical difficulties, to meet and observe me during my student teaching. He was definitely a role model and an inspiration during those first days of teaching. We will miss him dearly. I am so sorry that I will not be able to attend the ceremony. However, our thoughts will be with his family and the entire Azrieli family. May his neshama continue to have an Aliyah and may he be a melitz yosher in shamayim.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Hartstein

I was saddened to learn about the passing of Rabbi Feuerman. He was one of my favorite teachers during my time at YU, and I learned so many crucial life lessons even beyond the classroom just by observing his interactions with his students. As he used to say, the best way to imprint values and good conduct is to be role model, and that he was. If I was on NY I would come of course to the remembrance event, but I live in Israel these days, so unfortunately it is not so feasible.

I hope our generation can produce once again, people with his commitment to Torah and Mitzvot, and his special talent for teaching and engaging people to try and be better than they think they can be.

Please pass on my sincere condolences to his family, and YU community.

Kind regards,

Daniel Brill



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