

# Rabbi Zvi (Herschel) Schachter

## Rosh Yeshiva, Halachic Authority: One of the Greatest and Most Influential Halachic Authorities in the United States

“The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw that tzaddikim – righteous people – are few in number, and so he planted them in every generation”. This did not mean that they were scattered, but rather that each and every generation would possess a tzaddik and a leader that reflects that generation, with the ability to improve and elevate it.

Torah luminary Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt”l* arrived in the United States during the period between the two world wars. A descendant of a Torah dynasty - the grandson of Rabbi Chaim Brisker *zt”l* and descendent of Rabbi Chaim Volzhiner *zt”l*, who created the world’s first yeshiva as we know it today - Rabbi Soloveitchik was an outstanding genius who changed the Torah-Yeshiva discourse and whose theoretical teachings are still being deciphered by the greatest minds, a hundred years after his passing.

Though young in years, Rabbi Soloveitchik arrived in the United States equipped with a PhD, a broad education in the sciences and above all, a profound knowledge of all subjects of the Torah. During this time America was welcoming waves of Jews from Europe who were fleeing for their lives to the land of infinite opportunities. They left their traditions and the observance of the mitzvoth behind them; it was now money that talked, and the round-the-clock race to make more. Their children gaining a higher education in order to make a decent living, was the one important factor.



That was when Rabbi Soloveitchik emerged onto the scene, a man who would change the face of America. American Jewry acknowledged his accomplishments – a PhD, his clear and eloquent English – and that he, for all his greatness, thought that the Torah and its mitzvot were more important than any of those. “For me, your words are better than copious gold and silver.”

Rabbi Soloveitchik didn't wage a war against academic study; on the contrary. The Rabbi saw no contradiction between general education and Torah study and believed that learned Torah scholars can work for a living.

During that time, the Rabbi was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, which combines Torah with academic studies. Thousands of his students prospered – Jews who spent most of the day earning a living in their professions but remained great scholars who set aside time for Torah learning and who were punctilious in the observance of the mitzvot, however difficult; resembling thousands of modern Orthodox rabbis and rabbinical judges throughout America espousing Torah and Judaism. Rabbi Soloveitchik's endeavors – in establishing an entire generation of God-fearing and complete Jews who sanctify God's name in every aspect of their lives, and in saving tens and tens of thousands from assimilation were great indeed.

From a young age, Rabbi Zvi (Herschel) Schachter stood out among Rabbi Soloveitchik's students, with an amazingly retentive memory who thirstily drank in the great Rabbi's words in halacha, analysis, study, thought and agadah and who drew from his Rabbi's teachings and passed them on to others. As such, he was appointed Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University alongside his great teacher. Rabbi Schachter was completely humbled by Rabbi Soloveitchik and compiled the great rabbi's teachings in many books.