

In Memorium

A Mashgiach, a Father and a Friend A Tribute to HaRav Dovid Sharfman zt"l

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The week before Pesach is perhaps the busiest week for Jewish households across the globe as families scramble to prepare for Yom Tov. And yet, this year, in the South Florida community, as well as among many others across the globe, time seemed to stand still as hundreds upon hundreds of people stopped everything they were doing that week to beseech the *Rofeh Cholim*, the Healer of the Sick, to heal the beloved and revered *mashgiach* of Yeshiva Toras Chaim Toras Emes (YTCTE), HaRav Dovid Sharfman.

When the news first spread that Rabbi Sharfman was hospitalized, following the wedding of his son, the initial reaction of shock quickly turned into a desire to help. Everyone desperately wanted to do something for a man who did everything for everyone. *Tehillim* was said around the clock with the entire *sefer* collectively completed well over 100 times both locally and around the world. Numerous *sedarim* during *bein hazmanim* were learned in his *zechus* (merit). Daily *asifos* (gatherings) were arranged in the Yeshiva, the NMB Kollel and Bais Yaakov of Miami. Thousands of dollars were donated to various *tzedaka* organizations. Numerous *shiurim* and days of learning were sponsored. A community-wide *Tinokos Shel Bais Rabban Asifa* in the Kollel was overcrowded as the young boys added their *tefillos* to the hundreds of others storming the *shaarei shomayim*, the gates of heaven. *Talmidim*, students both past and present, organized three straight nights of round-the-clock learning.

Many of his *talmidim* recalled how Rabbi Sharfman encouraged them to make even small resolutions to enable growth, and they challenged people to accept upon themselves *kabbalos* as a *zechus* for a *refuah shelaima* for Harav Dovid Sharfman. The response was overwhelming. Many committed to increase their daily learning. A *machsom l'fi* (a commitment to guard one's speech) was quickly organized. Some courageously discarded their smartphones while others said they would refrain from looking at their phones during davening. Someone began to put on *tzitzis* regularly, and one woman even began to cover her hair. And there were many more. An observer from outside the community was so inspired that she remarked, "I don't know if it's the amazing community you live in, the connection everyone feels to

the yeshiva, or the closeness and greatness of Rabbi Sharfman, but this is *mamish* unreal, what all these hundreds of people are doing in his *zechus*...never has there ever been such an outpour[ing]...It's absolutely amazing...such a special community."

However, on Erev Shabbos Hagadol, the eleventh of *Nissan*, the special *neschama* of HaRav Dovid Sharfman zt"l was returned to his Maker, leaving his family, his yeshiva, the South Florida community and indeed all of Klal Yisroel orphaned. As we approach the *shloshim* of HaRav Baruch Dovid Aryeh zt"l Ben Rav Nosson Dovybl"t, let us explore what in fact it was about Rabbi Sharfman that caused such an unprecedented outpouring of support, and who this great man was whose loss has been felt so acutely by so many people, in so many places, of so many ages.

His Earlier Years

Rabbi Sharfman was born in 1962, to Rabbi Benjamin *sheyichyeh*, and Rebbitzin Hilda a"v (nee Weitzman) Sharfman in Brooklyn, New York. As a *ben zekunim*, born twelve years after the youngest of his three older sisters, young Dovid's birth was greeted with much joy. He was named after his two grandfathers, one a Rav and the other a shochet.

His father, Rabbi Benjamin, a well-known *rav* of over forty years, was raised in Newark, NJ, where his father served as the *shochet*. He attended public school and would go to his father's slaughterhouse every day to learn. He was subsequently accepted to Mesivta Torah Vodaas for high school. Eventually, he followed his revered rebbe, HaRav Dovid Leibowitz zt"l, when he opened his own Yeshiva, Chofetz Chaim, as one of the founding *talmidim*. He learned there for many years until receiving *semicha* and entering the *rabbanus*. His first position was the rabbi of Ridgewood, Queens. He then moved to Bensonhurst, Brooklyn serving as *rav* there for over thirty years until he retired. During his tenure, he fixed the community *mikva*, which was in disrepair, and was an active member of the Rabbinical Council of America. Now retired and living in Flatbush, he always credited his success to his late wife, Rebbitzin Hilda Sharfman, whose stability as a public school teacher enabled her husband to pursue his dream in the *rabbanus*.

Growing up in a family of *rabbanim* and *klei kodesh*, from a young age, R' Duvie, as he was affectionately known, appreciated the importance of being *marbitz Torah*, of teaching and spreading Hashem's Torah, and would eagerly await his turn to do so as well. In fact, as a young boy, R' Duvie's leadership abilities, as well as his tremendous care for each individual, was already apparent, earning him the respect of his family, his friends, and his teachers. He was well-liked by all and was a model student in Yeshiva Toras Emes of Kaminetz in Brooklyn. His long-time classmate and dear friend, Mr. Michael Schick, fondly recalls how R' Duvie did not have a single mean bone in his body. His sisters cannot recall his parents ever needing to reprimand him. He always seemed to know what the right thing was in every situation. His natural leadership skills made him a popular leader in high school, and contributed to his many successful years in Camp Munk. In addition, his brilliance was already recognized as President of the Honor Society, Arista.

Tragically, at the young age of eleven, he lost his mother. Two of his sisters were already married at the time, and his third sister married shortly after, leaving him without any mother figure in his home until his father remarried three years later. Yet, even this tragedy did not get him down. His *simchas hachaim* and positivity helped him pull through a very trying situation, and he never complained or questioned Hashem's ways. Every year, on his mother's *yartzeit* during the nine days, he would make a *siyum* in her memory in Camp Munk.

Following high school, R' Duvie learned in Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim (CC) in Yerushalayim for a year. He then advanced to its main branch then in Forest Hills and under the guidance of Rav Henach Leibowitz zt"l, R' Duvie learned and grew, preparing himself to answer his life's calling and become a teacher of Torah. It was during this time that he, along with his long-time chaver and current Rosh HaYeshiva of YTCTE, Rabbi Mordechai Palgon, joined the first group of *bachurim* to "branch" in the fledgling YTCTE of Miami to help strengthen the yeshiva and the community. HaRav Akiava Grunblatt shlita, who was the Rosh HaYeshiva there at that time, remembers how these outstanding *bachurim* really put



the yeshiva on the local map, earning the respect of numerous families who were then motivated to add their support to the still young yeshiva. One such *baal habaas* was so impressed with these boys who helped him make a *minyán* when he was sitting *shiva* that he called Rabbi Grunblatt to express his gratitude. He exclaimed that if you are producing boys like these, you must be doing something right, and I want to be involved! He subsequently made the initial introduction between Mr. and Mrs. Sam Klurman and the yeshiva, which now bears the Klurman name on their north campus as well as their elementary school. After returning to Queens, R' Sharfman's reputation as a *baal sechel* and *baal havanna*, a man of high intellect and great understanding, continued to spread. A *chaver* of his, gratefully remembers the numerous times that R' Duvie took the time to patiently and thoroughly explain what they were learning. "He was a prince: always generous, gracious and giving of his time and insight...with sterling *middos* and a healthy sense of humor."

In 1988, he married his wife Shifra (nee Kamin) who shared his dreams and aspirations. Together they began to build a home of Torah in Queens, New York. At the end of his years in kollel, he began teaching in Mesivta Chofetz Chaim of Queens and subsequently in Yeshiva Tiferes Yisroel of Brooklyn. Already at this early stage of his career in *chinuch* he began to earn a reputation as a caring and devoted *rebbe* who easily connected with his students.

Answering His Life's Calling

In 1996, the Sharfmans made the big move to North Miami Beach where Rabbi Sharfman became a high school *rebbe* in YTCTE. The Sharfmans were very family-oriented, and leaving their entire family up North to help build the South Florida community was not an easy task. However, they must have known that this was their chance to truly make a difference.

Over twenty years later, Rav Grunblatt still remembers an incident from Rabbi Sharfman's first year in Miami that perfectly illustrates Rabbi Sharfman's true essence. There was a boy in Rabbi Sharfman's class who did not behave. He made every teacher miserable, and certainly gave Rabbi Sharfman a run for his money. It came to a point where the administration felt that they could no longer service this student and convened a meeting to discuss the possibility of expelling him. Much to everyone's surprise, Rabbi Sharfman stood up and defended the boy, begging the administration to give him another chance and let him stay. Rav Grunblatt was baffled. This boy was giving Rabbi Sharfman such daily heartache, and yet here he was defending the unruly *talmid*? His job would be so much easier if this one boy left! Yet, Rabbi Sharfman's tremendous *mesiras nefesh*, coupled with his true love for every *talmid*, would not allow him to give up on this student as he worried about the boy's future at all costs!

After a few short years, upon the advice of Rav Henach, Rabbi Sharfman was asked to join the bais medrash division as its *mashgiach ruchani* and its first-level *maggid shiur*. Rav Henach felt that a bais medrash needs a *rebbe* who would give his whole life to the yeshiva, with utmost

mesiras nefesh and complete dedication. It was in the Bais Medrash Zichron Ezra that Rabbi Sharfman continued to shine. Under his leadership, the bais medrash really grew, attracting *talmidim* from far and wide. At the same time, his dedicated *Eshes Chayil* opened up her own speech and language pathology practice, filling a much-needed void for the children in the community. Her reputation as a skilled and highly caring therapist spread as people rapidly sought her expertise and guidance. Together, the Sharfmans quickly became an integral part of the growing North Miami Beach community.

As the South Florida Jewish community continued to expand, Rabbi Sharfman was extremely proud of his community. Yet, he never took any of the credit despite his tremendous involvement. Although his position as *Mashgiach Ruchani* was more than a full-time job, he felt obligated to be give to the community as well and began giving a weekly Chumash class in the young Jewish community in Aventura. One South American attendee recalled how, regardless of where his personal business travels would take him, he would always make sure to fly back by Tuesday night to attend Rabbi Sharfman's invigorating *shiur*.

After four years of this *shiur*, Rabbi Sharfman was asked to begin a Sunday morning class for the community in North Miami Beach. His Rise and Learn *shiur*, organized by Mr. Harvey Lichtman over the past nine years, was a popular well-organized, informative and exciting *shiur* on a *halacha* derived from that week's parsha. For this one *shiur*, his father-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Kamin, stated that Rabbi Sharfman would prepare for ten hours each week. One attendee, echoing the sentiments of many, said, "There was nobody else like him in our community. I could have sat and listened to him for hours."

Another facet of his involvement was a Navi *shiur* that he gave to a group of Sephardi women for several years. During this time, he would ask his daughters to confirm with their friends how to pronounce certain words in *havara sephardit* to make sure that the women in his *shiur* would understand and feel comfortable.

His Beautiful Home

Despite his busy life in the Yeshiva and his involvement in the community, his family knew that they were always his first priority. Whether it meant going to parent teacher conferences in the evening, playing ball with his sons, or organizing a family trip, Rabbi Sharfman's finger was always on the pulse of his family. He knew how to talk to each child, guide each one and make them all feel special. Family time was important to him, and he would not take any phone call during dinner and neither did the rest of the family.

The Sharfman Shabbos table was always a special place. Rabbi Sharfman would prepare for each seudah and looked forward to engaging his family and guests in lively, thought provoking, discussions. He encouraged everyone to contribute and challenged them to think. As deep as his lessons often were, he knew how to explain them to people on all levels, without ever talking down to them. He loved singing *zemiros* and knew all the classic as well as new *niggunim* (tunes). Often his children's friends would hurry to join the lively Sharfman seudah after their own had finished, and he would make sure to include each guest and make everyone, young and old, feel comfortable and welcomed. Also obvious at each seudah was his tremendous respect and appreciation for his *eshes chayil*, his partner in all his life's accomplishments, always waiting for her to finish serving before he enjoyed the festive spread. On a similar note, she always waited until he came home, however late, to serve dinner in the evening.

His Shabbos seudos were but a glimpse into his yom tov tables. *Shloshim yom kodem l'chag*, thirty days before each yom tov, the *sefarim* would begin to emerge and he would spend endless hours learning and preparing for each *chag*. In fact, he purchased a small table for Pesach to put

in his dining room just to be able to have all the necessary *sefarim* in reach as he led his seder in his inimitable style. His son-in-law, Rabbi Yaakov Skolnick, remembers Rabbi Sharfman asking him to buy a specific sefer on *Masechtas Pesach* before he led his first seder, to better prepare for the big moment. He loved yom tov and never complained about the hecticness of Pesach or the heat of the Miami *sukka*. And at the end of each *yom tov* he would encourage his family to make sure to carry the lessons learned beyond that one week and make them last.

Rabbi Sharfman often stressed to his family the importance of *derech eretz*, of treating everyone with utmost respect. He urged them not to judge others who may have been struggling and realize that we often do not know the full picture. To him this seemed natural, and he instilled this *midda* in his family by example. He had a kind word for everyone, and gave his utmost attention to everyone. When his sons-in-law would visit, he would always take the time to inquire about their learning, *chaburos*, and *hashkafos*, all with a genuine interest and a desire to know.

It was therefore no surprise that everyone gravitated towards him whether at home, at a family simcha, or on a family trip. Yet he enjoyed those events just as much. He loved preparing for chol hamoed family trips and actively participated in each activity. His great sense of humor always added an extra dimension to the fun. Even long car rides from Miami to New York turned into an adventure with Rabbi Sharfman. And after any trip, he rushed to print the pictures to relive the special experience. In fact, his children remembers that on one occasion when printing pictures, he noticed there was one of his children's good friend and made sure to print a second copy for the friend as well. His nine year old son, Avraham Mordechai, smiled when remembering all the extra nosh his father would buy him for camp to make sure that he had enough to share with all his friends. He always thought of everyone.

His family emphasized Rabbi Sharfman's great humility. He ran away from *kavod* and did his best to shun the lime-light. He would refuse offers to sit up front in shuls and kept a low profile whenever he could. When visiting his children in Minneapolis, he spoke at their kollel on the last day of *yom tov*. The *mispallelim* were amazed by the depth and breadth of his words and shocked that they did not realize what a gem they had in their midst the whole time.

He utilized each moment to its fullest. When walking home from shul on Yom Kippur, he would discuss with his family how fortunate they all were to have the opportunity to do *teshuva*. When he realized

בלבבות נשברים ונדכאים ולצערו הגדול, אנו משתתפים עם המשפחה החשובה והיקרה על ההסתלקות של האי גברא יקירא איש האשכולות מלמד להועיל מורה דרך לשיבתנו ולקהלתינו, מן התלמידים החשובים של מורנו ורבינו הרה"ג ר' אלתר חנוך הענדל לייבאוויטש זצוק"ל, ראש ישיבת רבינו ישראל מאיר הכהן (בעל חפץ חיים).

משגיח רוחני

בית מדרש זכרון עזרא | ישיבת תורת חיים תורת אמת ד'מיאמי

הרה"ג ברוך דוד אריה זצ"ל
בן הרב נתן דוב יבלה"ט שארפמאן
מי יתן תמורתו
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

With broken hearts and great anguish we join with the distinguished family in mourning the loss of

RABBI DOVID SHARFMAN ZT'L

our *Mashgiach Ruchani* and *Baal Mashpia*, a renowned *Talmid Chochom*, who molded hundreds of *talmidim* over the past 20 years through his *shiurim*, *shmuessin*, *vaadim* and personal example in our **Beis Medrash Zichron Ezra**.

He was an illustrious *talmid* of Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, Harav HaGaon R' Alter Chanoch Henach Leibowitz ztvk'l, Rosh Yeshiva Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yisroel Meir HaCohen (Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim).

His sterling character, deep concern for others and his ability to present complex Halachic and Hashkafic concepts in a straightforward and inspiring manner made him most beloved to our students, their families and the greater South Florida Torah Community.

Sunday April 30, 4 Iyar 5777 7:30 PM (Mincha 7:15)
Yeshiva Toras Chaim Toras Emes Klurman Campus
1025 NE Miami Gardens Drive, N. Miami Beach FL 33179
Maariv following the *Hespedim*
Audio Hookup: 712-775-7031 code - 399163
Video Hookup: www.ytcteam.org/live

The family, colleagues, *chaveirim* and *talmidim* of Rabbi Sharfman will be gathering to hear **Divrei Zikaron** and words of inspiration:

that while driving his daughters' carpool to school, he would often have to wait at some houses, he brought along a sefer to catch a few extra minutes of learning. Eventually, he was even able to make a *siyum* on his carpool *sefer*.

His love for learning and thirst for knowledge were endless, and no family trip would be complete without him stopping at the local *sefarim* store and making a purchase. Buying *sefarim* was the most worthwhile way to spend his money. His *sefarim* library was extensive, and yet he learned and knew every *sefer* as evidenced in his personal notes found in each one. He corresponded with Rav Mattisyahu Solomon after reading his sefer on Megilas Esther. He would talk in learning with Rav Aharon Schechter on Rav Hutner's Torah and was close to many of the Gedolei Eretz Yisroel, always ready to discuss Torah thoughts with them when given the opportunity. In fact, when his daughter visited Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, the Rav excitedly remembered his encounter with Rabbi Sharfman years before and remarked how he was such a special and important man. Rabbi Sharfman would try to give over his love of learning to young *Bar Mitzvah* boys when giving them a *sefer* as a gift. With a twinkle in his eyes, he would tell each boy that their gift came with a warranty. If they wore out the *sefer*, they could come bring it back for a replacement at any time.

Rabbi Sharfman had a tremendous love and appreciation for Eretz Yisroel which he shared with his family and students. His knowledge of its history, *mekomos kedoshim* and *kivrei tzaddikim* rivaled the most experienced of tour guides. When his family had the opportunity to visit Eretz Yisroel, he jumped at the chance to daven *kabbalas Shabbos* at the Kosel and not because it was the "thing" to do. He simply wanted to truly feel the experience of living in Eretz Yisroel, davening at the holiest of sites, and walking home through the streets of Yerushalayim. He took his children to the various *gedolim*, many with whom he shared personal relationships, to receive *brachos* and *chizuk*. These were memories he and his family cherished long after their trip concluded.

Looking back, his family fondly remembers him as the perfect son, caring brother, devoted husband and loving father of eight, who in-turn was loved and respected by all. His brothers-in-law loved him like a brother, and his in-laws viewed him as their own pride and joy. Everyone had a special relationship with him, including his extended family of nieces and nephews, each feeling their own personal

loss upon his *petira*.

Rabbi Sharfman was a unique *talmid chacham* who had the ability to be a mentor, a role model, an advisor, and a friend to so many people. But to his beloved *talmidim*, he was all that and so much more. He was their father, their confidant, and their inspiration. His *ahavas haTorah* and *ahavas Yisroel* (love for Torah and love for fellow Jews), coupled with his charisma and *ehrlecheit* (honesty/refinement) endeared him to his family, his friends, and his colleagues. He never demanded respect but earned it nonetheless. All who had the privilege to know him are now charged with the task of learning from his stellar example and spreading his ways; "*chaval al d'avdin v'lo mishtakchin*. Woe on our loss, and let it not be forgotten."

His Gadlus/Greatness in Torah

Rabbi Sharfman was a huge *talmid chacham*; while his position in the yeshiva may have thrust him into the spotlight, his simplicity and normalcy masked his erudition. However, if you watched his actions closely, you saw a man who was a walking *Shulchan Aruch*. He knew *Mishna Berurah* backwards and forwards; he possessed a clear understanding of so many areas in *halacha*. When one listened to his Sunday morning *halacha shiur*, a novice as well as a scholar would find his command of the topic fascinating. His *shiurim* were on all four *chalakim* (sections) of the *Shulchan Aruch*. His topics included both classic and contemporary *halachic* areas including topics ranging from *kiddish b'makom seudah* to cosmetic surgery, from the *kashrus* of fish to magicians and so much more. This was all on top of his mastery of the *yeshivische mesechtas*, the *meforshei Tanach* and *sifrei mussar*. Any time he gave a *shiur* people assumed that the specific topic addressed must be his area of expertise. But how could one person alone be an expert in Gemarah, Chumash, mussar, halacha, history, and so much more? His loss is a loss to the community and the entire Torah world as a whole.

His Sensitivity

Many *talmidim* testified that even though Rabbi Sharfman had the tough task as *mashgiach* of reprimanding those who were not living up to the yeshiva standards, he did so with extreme sensitivity. He would weigh the words he would use with each *talmid* as well as the timing of the message. Many *talmidim* said that he changed their lives when he had to reprimand them, because he did so in such a loving and caring way and always with a smile. One *talmid* said, "He simply wanted what's good for the *talmid*, nothing else." Another *talmid* concurred, saying that it

never came off as an attack but rather from a place of genuine care and concern.

One *talmid*, Rabbi Ezra Kier, still recalls an incident over ten years ago after a terrorist attack in Eretz Yisroel. Rabbi Sharfman spoke to his students about the need to have our brethren in Israel in mind during our *tefillos*. The *talmidim* later discovered a list on his shtender of the names of those injured in the terrorist attack. Rabbi Sharfman was so pained by the tragedy that he had to find out the names of the individual victims to daven for each of them.

His Warmth

Chazal say that *talmidim* are called children of their teacher. With Rabbi Sharfman this was the reality. The way he embraced each one, with not just a handshake, but a hug, was like a father connecting with a child. He would revel at the delight of hosting *talmidim* at his house, and they all felt comfortable in this welcoming environment. Together with his Rebbetzin, they would cater to the needs of these *talmidim*. Rebbetzen Sharfman, who shares his passion and commitment, always sought ways to enhance his *talmidim's* experience. Despite the hecticness of Purim, she would leave her house in the middle of the day to set up the Yeshiva's *seudah* to ensure it looked festive and inviting, buying special paper goods and centerpieces for the occasion. When they joined the *bachurim* in Yeshiva for a *Shabbos seudah*, she never came empty handed, ensuring that they always had a homemade delicacy to enjoy. Her legendary cholent and potato kugel on Purim and elaborate Chanukah *chagigos* were all part of their combined efforts to make each *talmid* feel special. One *talmid* who grew up in South Florida years ago commented that the Sharfman house was his home away from home. It was the address in the young North Miami Beach community to go to to see what a normal, Torah-true home looks like. This *talmid* declared that only under Rabbi Sharfman's care did he develop into a Ben Torah. Today, this successful *marbitz Torah* endeavours to pass on that same warmth to his own *talmidim*.

Rabbi Sharfman would do anything to express his feelings and nachas for each *talmid* and his accomplishments. He would take them out to restaurants. He would go with them to buy donuts. He would bring them little chocolates. He would even watch their late night basketball games in camp. All this was done with the wisdom of a *rebbe* and the love of a father. One *talmid* fondly remembers his relationship with his *rebbe* of six years: "If there was one *rebbe* that was the most influential...

it was Rabbi Sharfman zt"l...He took me under his wing inviting me for Shabbos week in and week out. He pushed me to learn, get a *geshmak* from halacha and develop an appreciation for daas Torah... Because of his influence, I'm a better person, husband and father. My last day in yeshiva...Rebbe brought me into his office and told me...he will miss a true *chaver*." After hearing this story, another long-time *talmid*, Mr. Pinny Ackerman, so poignantly exclaimed, "That could be any one of us. We ALL had that *kesher* with him!"

His Sense of Achrayus/Responsibility

A very central middah of Rabbi Sharfman was his sense of *achrayus*. He took on every job and task that came his way with the utmost dedication. Rabbi Mordechai Palgon revealed that Rabbi Sharfman once told him upon becoming *mashgiach* in the *bais medrash* that he went through the *mussar shmuessim* of all of the famed *mashgichim* of the *yeshivos* of yesteryear. Even though he was already empowered with the *shmuessim* and insights from his own *rebbe*, Rav Henach, nevertheless, he wanted to find a new insight that could perhaps pay dividends down the road with some *talmid*.

Anytime a *talmid* was in need, he would run to his side to assist him. It did not matter if it was in the middle of the night or right before Shabbos, Rabbi Sharfman was there for them. One *talmid*, Mr. Avrohom Eliezer Friedman, simply suggested that this was part of the underlying secret behind the outpouring of support that his *talmidim* showed when he was sick. How could they not drop everything for Rabbi Sharfman? They knew quite well that he would do the same if they were ever in need.

His Belief in Every Student

From his earliest days in Miami, as extolled earlier by Rav Grunblatt, Rabbi Sharfman had a knack for seeing the far-reaching potential in his *talmidim*. A *talmid* testified that "Rebbe had a tremendous amount of respect for each and every *talmid*...and it pulled them to want to be close. He would often say how each and every *talmid* adds a different component to the yeshiva...You were helping keep the yeshiva going!" He understood the power of Torah and how it had the ability to transform a *talmid's* life. Rabbi Sharfman remarked that he saw this *midda* in his own *rebbe*, Rav Henach. There were *talmidim* who Rav Henach kept in yeshiva even though they were not the most successful in their learning, yet their lengthened exposure in yeshiva made them into true *bnei Torah*. These *talmidim* went on

to live productive Torah lives, and many their own children developed into *metzuyanim* (outstanding Torah students). This same long-viewed perspective gave Rabbi Sharfman the ability to see that sometimes the effects of his efforts may pay dividends generations later.

His Strength of Spirit

Rabbi Sharfman was a towering figure and not simply because of his 6'4" frame, nor was it just his great Torah knowledge. What made Rabbi Sharfman most imposing was his strength of spirit to stand up for what was right and not back down in the face of opposition. *Talmidim* remembered during one of the Yeshiva's summer *zmanim* in Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Sharfman, together with some of his *talmidim*, attended one of the popular weekly *halacha* shiurim in Yerushalayim. The *maggid shiur* spoke against a certain practice of some communities based on his interpretation of *halacha*. Rabbi Sharfman stood up to defend the practice of the community. He brought significant sources to challenge this *posek's* conclusion. The *talmidim* took pride in their Rebbe's strength. Another episode found Rabbi Sharfman challenging a new presentation that was making the rounds in the frum world. The fact that the presenter was popular in all circles did not matter to Rabbi Sharfman.

His scale was pristinely set to authentic standards of Torah *halacha* and *hashkafa*. Anything that did not measure up was subject to his challenge. When he would speak, his *talmidim* recalled how sincere he was: "you felt the '*devarim hayotzim min halev*' words spoken from the heart, and they were *nichnasim el halev*' words that entered the heart." Perhaps this stemmed from his deep pursuit of *emes*. He was a man of complete truth. He lived what he preached and detested anything that had even a trace of *sheker*, dishonesty. "He was living the *Mesilas Yesharim*," said one *talmid*. "Woe to the one that stood in the way of *emes*!" recalled another. This strength of character was another dimension of this great Torah leader.

His Acts of Kindness

The Alter of Slabodka has many *shmuessim* in his sefer *Ohr Hatzafon* on the *midda* of chessed. The Alter describes that the thoughts of care and concern that a person has when performing a kind deed lift the chessed to another plateau. Rabbi Sharfman was fond of quoting the Alter, but it was his actions that brought these ideas to life.

During the *shiva*, the family received a beautiful letter from a woman in the

community. A number of years ago, she and her husband had moved to town in the middle of the summer and came with their young family to the home they were renting and found it bare. The landlord had only a few cots for the whole family. Exhausted from their travels, they did not sleep much that first night. The next morning, the husband went to *shacharis* and the first person to greet him was Rabbi Sharfman. After Rabbi Sharfman graciously introduced himself and inquired if they needed anything, the shy head of household blurted out that they could use a few mattresses. That is all he had to say. The next thing he knew Rabbi Sharfman was knocking on his door with mattresses from his own home for the family to use in the interim. The family was amazed that a stranger cared enough to introduce himself and so selflessly follow up on his introduction.

Another story that came to light describes when a *talmid chacham* who wrote seforim came to the Yeshiva to sell his wares. Rabbi Sharfman immediately went over to buy his seforim. This action was an immediate endorsement for the entire Yeshiva. Rabbi Sharfman treated the *mechaber* with much respect, so much so that the author even brought his family to the Yeshiva to experience the nachas of how much he was appreciated by Rabbi Sharfman.

His Tremendous Appreciation of Others

Despite being someone who constantly did for others, Rabbi Sharfman never felt that others owed him. In fact, he would be extremely grateful to anyone who did something for him whether big or small. Mr. Avrohom Eliezer Friedman told a story of how as bachurim, he, together with Rabbi Chesky Schwartz, built the Sharfmans a frame for their *sukkah*. Rabbi Sharfman would always go out of his way every *sukkos*, even years later, to mention how thankful he was for their handiwork. He would even joke about how his *sukkah* was so strong that it was the only one on his block to withstand a hurricane. Rabbi Meir Shnidman remarked how Rabbi Sharfman would constantly thank him for teaching his son Mishnayos; learning with his young son was no small thing for this big person, and he was forever grateful.

The Day of His Levaya

It was 1:45 AM Friday morning, the Eleventh of Nissan, April 7, as the last of the *talmidim* slowly left the sacred walls of the Bais Medrash, the *paroches* was pulled aside as the community prepared to show the proper *kavod acharon* to a man who forever changed their lives. A heavy

silence permeated the room. What was there to say? What could be said about someone who accomplished so much and influenced so many in just 55 years? Words would not be enough.

As Rabbi Hershel Welcher, Rav of Congregation Ahavas Yisroel of Kew Gardens Hills, explained at the *levaya*, Chazal say "*Ein osim nefashos latzadikim, divreihem hein hein zichronam*." We don't make memorials for *tzaddikim*, their words and actions are their memorial. And just a few short hours later, as the Bais Medrash in Miami began to fill up in preparation for the live video feed to the *levaya*, and the Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim of Queens, where the *levaya* took place, was bursting to capacity, the words of Chazal rang true, loud and clear. The hundreds upon hundreds of people at the *levaya*, as well as the many who watched and listened from afar, were testament to the profound and far-reaching impact Rabbi Sharfman zt"l had made on so many lives. No words were actually needed. HaRav Henach Lebowitz zt"l, his *rebbe muvhak*, whose *levaya* was on the same day, in the

same Bais Medrash, nine years earlier, would often quote Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l with regards to a *levaya*. Going to a *levaya* is considered a big *zechus*, a merit for all those who attend. "*Megalgalin zechus al yidei zachai*." Hashem makes *zechuyos* come about through those that are truly deserving. A large *levaya* is thus indicative of the righteousness of the *nifter*. All those that attended Rabbi Sharfman's *levaya*, as well as all those who davened, learned, gave *tzedaka*, and accepted *kabalos* the previous week, were testament to the true merits of HaRav Dovid Sharfman. The fact that so many *zechuyos* were created is proof alone of his pure and righteous ways. And therefore, no words are really needed.

Instead, each of us is tasked with the tremendous responsibility to carry on the lessons we have learned, and thereby perpetuate the rich legacy of the irreplaceable, highly respected, and much loved HaRav Dovid Sharfman zt"l. *Yehi zichro baruch*.



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