

Rabbi Dovid Sharfman, Z"l

RABBI AND MRS. YAAKOV KIER

When word first spread that Rabbi Dovid Sharfman, revered *mashgiach* of Yeshiva Toras Chaim Toras Emes of Miami (YTCTE), was hospitalized shortly before Pesach, the initial reactions of shock quickly turned into a strong desire to help. Everyone desperately wanted to do something for someone who did everything for everyone.

Tehillim was recited around the clock well over 100 times. Numerous extra *sedarim* during *bein hazmanim* were learned. Daily *asifos* were arranged in his yeshivah and the North Miami Beach Community Kollel as well as a nightly women's *Tehillim* teleconference organized by Bais Yaakov of Miami. *Tzedakah* was given and numerous *shiurim* and days of learning were sponsored. A community-wide *Tinokos shel Bais Rabban Asifah* stormed the *shaarei Shamayim*.

Talmidim organized three straight nights of round-the-clock learning, and many people accepted upon themselves *kabbalos* as a *zechus*.

However, on Erev Shabbos Hagadol, the 11th of Nisan, the special *neshamah* of Rabbi Dovid Sharfman, z"l, was returned to his Maker, leaving his family, his yeshivah, the South Florida community and all of *Klal Yisrael* orphaned.

Rabbi Sharfman was born in 1962 to Rabbi Benjamin Sharfman, *sheyichyeh*, and Rebbetzin Hilda, a"n, (nee Weitzman) in Brooklyn, New York. As a *ben zekunim*, after three older sisters, young Dovid's birth was greeted with much joy.

His father was one of the original *talmidim* of Harav Dovid Leibowitz, z"l, and a well-known Rav for over 40 years. Growing up in such a family, Reb Duvie, as he was affectionately known, appreciated the importance of being *marbitz Torah* and would eagerly await his chance to spread Torah. As a young boy, his leadership abilities, brilliance, and tremendous care for all, were already apparent, earning him the respect of family, friends, and teachers.

He was well-liked and a model student in Yeshiva Toras Emes of Kamenitz in Brooklyn and an integral part of Camp Munk. His long-time classmate, and friend, Mr. Michael Schick, fondly recalls how Reb Duvie did not have a single mean bone in his body. His sisters cannot remember his parents ever needing to reprimand him.

Tragically, at the young age of 11, he lost his mother. Two of his sisters were already married 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.

Following high school, Reb Duvie learned in Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim in Yerushalayim, before advancing to its main branch then in Forest Hills, New York, where he learned for many years under the guidance of his *Rebbi*, Harav Henocho Leibowitz, z"l.

It was during this time that he, along with his long-time *chaver* and current *Rosh Yeshivah* of YTCTE, Rabbi Mordechai Palgon, joined the first group of *bachurim* in the fledgling Yeshiva Toras Chaim of Miami, strengthening the yeshivah and the community. Harav Akiva Grunblatt, *shlita*, who was *Rosh Yeshivah* then, remembers how these outstanding *bachurim* put the yeshivah on the local map, earning the respect of numerous community members.

In Queens, Rabbi Sharfman's reputation as a *baal sechel* and *baal havanah*, continued to spread. A *chaver* of his gratefully remembers the numerous times that he patiently and thoroughly explained 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 their home of Torah. At the end of his years in the Chofetz Chaim 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 earned a reputation as a caring, devoted, and well-liked *Rebbi*.

In 1996, the Sharfmans left their close-knit family and moved to North Miami Beach where Rabbi Sharfman became a high school *Rebbi* in Yeshiva Toras Chaim.

Over 20 years later, Rav Grunblatt still remembers an incident from Rabbi Sharfman's first year in Miami that illustrates his true essence. There was a boy in his class who consistently would not behave

— to the point where the administration felt that they could no longer serve this student. They convened a meeting to discuss the situation.

To everyone's surprise, Rabbi Sharfman stood up and begged the administration to give him another chance and let him stay. Rav Grunblatt was baffled. Rabbi Sharfman was defending a boy that gave him daily heartache? His job would be so much easier if this boy left.

However, Rabbi Sharfman's tremendous *mesirus nefesh*, coupled with his true love for every *talmid*, would not allow him to give up, even on this difficult student.

After a few short years, upon the advice of Rav Henocho, Rabbi Sharfman was asked to join the *beis medrash* as its *Mashgiach Ruchani* and a *Maggid Shiur*. Rav Henocho felt that a *beis medrash* needs a *Rebbi* who would dedicate his whole life to the yeshivah. It was in the Bais Medrash Zichron Ezra that Rabbi Sharfman truly shone. Under his leadership, the *beis medrash* really grew.

Simultaneously, his dedicated *eishes chayil* opened up her own speech and language pathology practice, filling a much-needed void for the local children. 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.

Rabbi Sharfman was extremely proud of the growing South Florida Jewish community yet never took any of the credit. Although his position as *Mashgiach Ruchani* was more than a full-time job, he wanted to give to the community as well, and began giving a weekly *Chumash shiur*, and a women's *Navi* class, in the young Jewish community in Aventura.

Despite one participant's frequent business travels, he would always make sure to fly back by Tuesday night to attend Rabbi Sharfman's *shiur*. Later, Rabbi Sharfman was asked to begin a Sunday morning class for the community in North Miami Beach. His *shiur* of nine years was a popular, informative, and exciting one, on a *halachah* derived from the *parashah*.

For this alone, his father-in-law,

Rabbi Moshe Kamin, stated that Rabbi Sharfman would prepare for 10 hours weekly. One participant said, "There was nobody else like him in our community. I could have sat and listened to him for hours."

Despite his busy life in the yeshivah and his involvement in the community, his family knew that they were always his first priority. Whether it meant going to parent-teacher conferences, playing baseball with his sons, or organizing family trips, Rabbi Sharfman was always involved. He knew how to talk to each child, to guide, and make each of them feel special. Family time was important to him, and he would not take any phone calls 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 discussions. He encouraged everyone to contribute, and challenged them to think. He knew how to talk to people on all levels. He loved singing *zemiros* and knew all the classics as well as new *niggunim*.

Often his children's friends would hurry to join the lively Sharfman *seudah* after their own, where he would be sure to include each guest and make everyone feel comfortable. Also obvious at each *seudah* was his tremendous respect and appreciation for his *eishes chayil*, always waiting for her to finish serving to begin eating.

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 *teshuvah*. When he realized 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*.

Rabbi Sharfman was a great *talmid chacham*. Though his position in the yeshivah may have thrust him into the spotlight, nevertheless his simplicity and normalcy masked his *gadlus*. However, if you watched his actions closely, you saw a man who was a walking *Shulchan Aruch*. He knew the *Mishnah Berurah* backwards and forwards.

When listening to his Sunday morning *Halachah shiur*, a novice, as well as a scholar, would find his command of the topic fascinating. His *shiurim* were on all four *chalakim* of the *Shulchan Aruch* and included both classic and contemporary halachic topics. This was in addition to his mastery of the *yeshi-*



vishe masechtos, meforshei Tanach and sifrei mussar. He had a relationship with many *Gedolim* and corresponded with them in learning. His loss is a loss to the entire Torah world.

Chazal say that *talmidim* are called sons. With Rabbi Sharfman this was evident. The way he embraced them, with not just a handshake, but a hug, was like a father to a child. Many *talmidim* testified that even though Rabbi Sharfman had the tough task as *Mashgiach* of reprimanding them at times, he did so with extreme sensitivity and utmost care. He would weigh each word as well as the timing of his message.

Together with his Rebbetzin, they delighted in hosting the *talmidim* and catering to their needs. One *talmid*, who grew up in South Florida years ago, commented how the Sharfman house was his home away from home. It was under Rabbi Sharfman's care that he developed into a *ben Torah*. Today, this successful *marbitz Torah* tries to pass on that same warmth to his own *talmidim*.

Another *talmid* fondly remembers his relationship with his *Rebbi*: "He took me under his wing; He pushed me to learn ... develop an appreciation for *daas Torah*. Because of his influence, I'm a better person, husband and father. My last day, *Rebbi* brought me into his office and told me he will miss a true *chaver*."

After hearing this story, another longtime *talmid*, Mr. Pinny Ackerman, so poignantly exclaimed, "That could be any one of us. We ALL had that *kesher* with him!"

One of his core *middos* was his sense of *achrayus*. Rabbi Mordechai Palgon revealed that upon becoming *Mashgiach*, Rabbi Sharfman went through the *mussar shmussen* of all the famed

mashgichim to find insights that would potentially be of help.

It was common knowledge that he would run to assist any *talmid* in need, whether it was in the middle of the night, or right before Shabbos. One *talmid*, Mr. Avrohom Eliezer Friedman, suggested that this was evidenced by the outpouring of support that his *talmidim* showed when he was sick. How could they not drop everything for Rabbi Sharfman when they knew quite well that he would do the same for them?

Another one of Rabbi Sharfman's incredible qualities was the tremendous clarity he displayed in every subject that he touched. He had the ability to deliver a *shiur* that was clear to everyone at their level, from beginning to expert. This clarity also showed itself in how he understood other things, such as events in the news, where he was able to pinpoint what was real and what was fake, to identify the underlying motivations and see through the fuss and the nonsense. He always cut straight to the core of the issue, and the truth was always paramount. He was a very truthful person who championed *emes* in every area, and wouldn't let anything pervert it.

His quest for truth extended to behavior as well. He declared that *avodas Hashem* must be real, and should not be done with an eye toward publicity. He taught that *derech erez* should be displayed across the board for everyone, not just for prominent and distinguished people. He made everyone he met feel good in the most authentic, genuine way.

Even as a *Mashgiach*, where he had to deal with *bachurim* who had gotten themselves into trouble, he approached the conversation in his unique way. A *talmid* relates that one such con-

versation actually changed his life, because he realized that all Rabbi Sharfman cared about was that he should do better. The question wasn't "How dare you?" but "How can we rectify this?" — not from the perspective of the yeshivah's reputation but out of deep concern for the *talmid*.

In fact, quite recently, while he was in the hospital undergoing painful treatments (for the illness which he incidentally kept a complete secret until his passing), he spent hours working to arrange another, suitable yeshivah for a *bachur* who had been let go.

Rabbi Sharfman was a towering figure and not simply because of his 6'4" frame. What made him most imposing was his strength of spirit to stand up for what was right and not backing down in the face of opposition. He was a man of truth. He lived what he preached, and detested anything that had even a trace of *sheker*. "He was living the *Mesillas Yesharim*," said one *talmid*.

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 *petirah*.

To his beloved *talmidim*, he was their father, their mentor and their confidant. His *ahavas haTorah* and *ahavas Yisrael*, coupled with his *ehrllichkeit* endeared him to all. He never demanded respect but earned it nonetheless.

Chaval al d'avdin v'lo mishtakchin — Woe to our loss, and let it not be forgotten.

Yehi zichro baruch.

Professional Services,
Served with Profession.
Preferred by the Professional.



- SERVICES
- » Corporation
 - » LLC
 - » LLP
 - » PLLC
 - » LLC Publishing
 - » Sole Proprietorship
 - » Partnerships
 - » Trademarks
 - » Patents
 - » Copyrights
 - » Corporate Kit
 - » Etc.

Visit us at:
www.USACORPINC.com

Call us at:
718.362.4789

Toll Free:
866.67.USACORP
(678.7226)

Fax us:
718.408.2550

Contact us via Email:
service@usacorpinc.com



Suite Values.
Suite Dreams.

PARK HOUSE HOTEL

A one-of-a-kind experience that will surpass the highest expectations of the discerning business and leisure traveler.

- Apartment Style Suites
- State-of-the-art Kitchenettes
- WiFi
- Gourmet Shabbos Meals
- Complimentary Hot Buffet Breakfast

The Park House Hotel features luxurious and spacious studios & suites at affordable prices in the heart of Brooklyn.

Please ask about our special

www.parkhouse.net

1206 - 48th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219

Ph. 718-871-8100 • Fax. 718-972-2860 • Info@Parkhouse.net