

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



## GUIDED BY GREATNESS

Dear Parents,

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Metzora Shabbos HaGadol 5782*

This coming Sunday night, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, marks the 14<sup>th</sup> *Yahrzeit* of our unforgettable *Rosh Yeshiva* and *Rebbe, HaGaon HaRav Alter Chanoch Henach HaKohein Leibowitz, zt'l*, the late *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim*. He was the guiding light of our Yeshiva for a quarter century and it is upon his shoulders that much of the growth of the South Florida Torah community rests.

The primary mission that he set for himself was to develop and nurture a cadre of young *Talmidei Chachomim* who would, in turn, be the teachers and bearers of the *Mesorah* into future generations. His focus was on developing the highest levels of Torah scholarship in his *Talmidim*, involving brilliant *shurim* and very deep intellectual insights. His efforts were geared towards extremely bright young men who exerted themselves to develop the intellectual prowess to perceive minute shades of understanding in all facets of Torah knowledge and wisdom.

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What was most striking about this brilliant man was the love and affection that even those far removed from the confines of a Yeshiva study hall had for him. He could reach the hearts of the not-yet-*frum*, he could connect with elementary aged children who clearly had no understanding or appreciation of his genius and he was revered and beloved by lay leaders who forewent their previously held opinions and positions to willingly follow his guidance on the most vexing and controversial of issues.

How does a man of scholarship, steeped in the academia of the Lithuanian Yeshiva world, a man of strong ideals and deeply held principles become so beloved by the widest array of people? In a word – he cared deeply about others and concerned himself with understanding and empathizing with where they were coming from, and what mattered to them. His every encounter with a fellow human being was all about – how does the other feel right now, what are this person’s needs, how can I make a positive difference in the person’s day and life. It was never about him, his position, his honor or his needs.

“...how can I make a positive difference in the person’s day and life.”

These qualities bring to mind another great man, our late, beloved *Mashgiach Ruchani*, Rabbi Dovid Sharfman z'l, whose 5<sup>th</sup> *Yahrzeit* is the next day, 11 *Nisan*. An outstanding *talmid* of Rav Leibowitz z'l, Rabbi Sharfman also embodied many of these great attributes, providing those of us in the South Florida community with a close-up opportunity to observe greatness in Torah, *midos tovos* and empathy and concern for others, in action.

As we encounter the glorious and stressful period of pre-*Pesach* and *Pesach*, and we will be coming into contact with numerous people, both near and distant, in demanding situations, what will our focus be? Will we think only of our needs, our deadlines, our entitlement to sit down, to relax, to be left alone and to do what we want to do? Will we leave space for others, and their needs and wants? We should realize we’re entering a laboratory of *Midos* – a golden opportunity to flex our muscles of patience, sensitivity and positive thinking.

We should promise ourselves, that we will look at our children with the mindset of “what does my child need now.” It may very well be that what the child needs is to realize ‘Mommy needs to be left alone’ or ‘Aba really needs my help now,’ but looking at the situation through the child’s eyes makes all the difference. That subtle shift in mindset transforms your behavior and reactions from that of a person under stress, to one of *Chinuch* – an educator who focuses on what the child can learn from the current situation.

“Will we leave space for others, and their needs and wants?”

This is not an easy task, and no one can succeed totally. The *Rosh HaYeshiva* and *Rabbi Sharfman zt'l*’s memories should inspire us to reach for greatness and to realize that we cannot afford not to try. By merely thinking in these terms, we are already on the path to a joyous *Chag* and to building successful children.

Best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos and a *Chag Kasher V’Sameach*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann