

Dedication, Rabbi Dr. Sheldon Epstein, z”l

By: BERNARD FRYSHMAN

I was teaching physics at Brooklyn College in 1962, and one of my students proved to be a pleasant, extremely bright, *frum* young man, Sheldon Epstein. At the end of the term, we parted.

Sometime in the 1990s, when I was serving as executive director of the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools, I found I needed another academician to participate in site visits to *yeshivos* seeking accreditation. Someone mentioned a Dr. Epstein, a professor of information science at Seton Hall, and a telephone call later, Sender Epstein and I connected once again. Only this time it was not professor to student. It was more as equals, with him more equal than I.

He was not just a professor, but also a *talmid chacham* of the highest caliber. Every conversation between us began and ended with a Torah interaction. He loved to learn. He loved to interact on *inyanim* of Torah. He had a special innate ability to track down insights to numerical and structural issues in Torah and Talmud. He was quite proud of the papers he had published, which brought not just an understanding of difficult issues in Torah but brought *kevod Shamayim* as well, because many of them were published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals.

I should add, perhaps, that once Sender and I reestablished our relationship, I could see that he would become a major asset to the yeshivah world. Before long, I asked him to serve as associate director of AARTS. It was a wise decision, because there were projects he undertook which proved to be invaluable. The way he organized and presented certain quantitative data helped AARTS in its renewal of recognition with the US Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation. I doubt that anyone else could have produced such an analysis that both reflected well on *yeshivos* and impressed the outside world.

There was always a pleasantness, a willingness to help, knowing full well that what he was doing was not just a job, but an *avodah* for AARTS and for the furtherance of Torah.

I remember well the effort he put into helping a small yeshivah near his home become accredited. Nothing was too hard, nothing was too

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time-consuming or too taxing to advise the yeshivah on how to meet standards.

We did not always agree. Interestingly, one of the topics we discussed frequently was the wisdom of *Hakirah* (on whose board he served) publishing controversial articles. The debate always ended with a chuckle, warm and pleasant.

His willingness to help was beyond the unusual. He undertook travel and meetings under the most difficult physical circumstances, always going that extra mile, always with a good word, a Torah thought, a smile. And always with a sense of modesty which hid his massive knowledge of Torah. His last words to me were, "Bernie, call me if you need me." If only I could. ❧