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## MOURNING THE LOSS OF A FRIEND: RABBI OZER GLICKMAN, Z”L

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There have been and will be many words used to describe Rav Ozer Glickman, z”l, since his sudden passing early this week. Scholar, rabbi, father, teacher, husband, investment banker, wordsmith, grandfather, risk management expert, composer, linguist, trader, conversationalist, sports fan, philosopher, ethicist, chazzan, wit, lecturer, moral guide, Renaissance man; all of these descriptions are accurate.

However, when I struggle to find the appropriate word—in my shocked, stunned, dumbfounded state—the term that comes to mind most persistently is “friend.” Reb Ozer was, first and last, a friend.

Yes, in the most basic sense, he was a friend to many—people from all walks of life immediately connected with him and were befriended by him. To me personally, he was an associate, a confidant, a colleague, a resource, a dear, cherished, treasured friend for decades. Generationally, he was a bridge between me and my father, z”l, and considered his relationship with both of us to be one seamless connection.

Just a few hours before he was tragically taken from us, he attended a rabbeim meeting at Yeshiva University, and in seven minutes of conversation before it

started, we probably covered as many topics of mutual interest. As a sad irony, these included his optimistic attitude about his health, and our plans to travel together to an upcoming simcha.

However, calling him a “friend” here means more than that—he was not only a friend to specific individuals, but he was a friend in his essence.

A friend, a chaver, perceives the value of being connected to others, of seeking out goodness in people and joining with them in amity. For Reb Ozer, among many, many other involvements, that instinct brought him ultimately to Yeshiva University, where many of his talents found expression in a number of departments. He delighted in being a friend, a colleague, to the Yeshiva faculty. The fact that he was counted among the Roshei Yeshiva, a group that included so many Torah scholars he deeply admired, was a great joy to him.

Of course, he was unique within that group. His distinctive background and profile could have set him apart and made him an outsider. In actuality, it did the opposite: it enabled him to serve as an ambassador, articulating the views he shared with his colleagues in contexts that others could not access. He eagerly embraced this role, spoke of it often, and was extremely effective in it.

He was greatly honored by his friendship with rabbinic leaders such



as Rav Hershel Schachter, whom he admired for his learning and his character, and would frequently refer to lessons he derived from those attributes. The recognition was mutual; over the years I directly heard from Rav Schachter and from his family of their appreciation of and recourse to his interpersonal abilities and their applications.

Of course, being who he was, his distinguished associations extended to realms outside the Torah world as well. He counted among his acquaintances figures such as the behavioral economists Richard Thaler and Daniel Kahneman. Readers of the works of statistician/scholar Nassim Nicholas Taleb can find quotations from “my friend Anthony Glickman, a rabbi and Talmudic scholar-turned option trader, then turned-again rabbi and Talmudic scholar (so far).” (*Antifragile*, p. 184).

He was also a “friend” in the sense of “classmate.” His life was one continuous educational experience, his world one

giant classroom and Beis Midrash. He moved from one intellectual accomplishment to another, both in Torah and in secular realms.

He adored teaching, but did so with the mindset of a supportive peer rather than an instructor. The mishnah (Avot 1:10) warns that one should “hate the rabbanut.” Commentaries explain that surprising phrase to mean that one should love rabbinic service, but hate the “rabbanut” over people that sometimes accompanies it. That describes Reb Ozer’s attitude; he would be instructive, inspirational, and pastoral, but eschew any authoritative position or demeanor.

Reb Ozer was a friend in that he truly wanted the best for those around him. To come into his orbit, whether casually or formally, briefly or over many years, was to have him proactively absorb your needs and aspirations. Registering in his class meant you acquired not only a professor, but an advocate, career counselor, agent, and personal advisor.

Speaking personally, in the past few months alone I received so many communications from him seeking to assist me in various ways, things that I never asked him for but I recognized as greatly beneficial. This past Shavuot, he volunteered to give a drasha at my shul, knowing that would be valuable to me, despite the fact that it was at least a 45 minute walk to and from his house. He did this as a favor, without any compensation. As a genuine friend, he shared of himself with no sense of competition.

As I prepared to leave for his funeral, a student I was with lamented that he had never met him. “That’s a shame,” I said. “You would have liked each other.” I realized, of course, that I could have said that to anyone.

Reb Ozer was a friend in the sense that he was always aware that he was a member of society. He was passionate and fearlessly

outspoken about the responsibilities that came with such membership.

He tirelessly spoke up on behalf of honesty, integrity, and Kiddush Hashem. He hated injustice, and among other involvements provided vital service to ORA, the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot. He would travel great distances and endure insults and personal attacks to do what he could to relieve the suffering of those involved. (“They call me when they need someone who speaks Yiddish,” he would say with a smile).

The last Shabbat of Reb Ozer’s life was Parshat Vayikra. Chazal (Vayikra Rabbah 1:15), commenting on the beginning of the parsha, express an appreciation of Moshe Rabbeinu for not being a “Talmid chacham without de’ah,” which is a apparently a terrible thing to be.

The commentaries struggle with the meaning of the word de’ah. In context, it seems to refer to derech eretz, to manners and to civil refinement. Civil discourse was in fact a passion of Reb Ozer; he never gave up believing in the possibility of nuance and respect even within intense disagreement. To be a gentleman was as important as being a scholar.

Some understand de’ah to be a sense of gratitude. Reb Ozer was constantly expressing his appreciation for the many blessings he recognized his life to include. First and foremost were his beloved wife, children, and grandchildren, and all of his family, his most cherished assets. He was vocally grateful for all the opportunities he had, primarily to live a life of learning, teaching, compassion, and service to God and humanity.

Some interpret de’ah to mean the willingness and motivation to share their learning with others. By this definition too, Reb Ozer was the consummate “*talmid chacham sheyesh*

*bo de’ah*”; he was constantly finding new venues and arenas to share his learning and to inspire. And how fitting it is that this great “friend”, with no lack of formal teaching positions, should become the outstanding educational and moral voice of social media? In this often contentious setting, he boldly but carefully elevated the environment with his thoughtful participation.

Reb Ozer was a friend, a vital member of our communal “chaburah.” The Talmud (Shabbat 105b) warns that when one of the chaburah dies, all the members of the chaburah should worry. The sudden and shocking nature of Reb Ozer’s passing certainly justifies a literal application of that statement.

But it seems in this context a homiletic interpretation is fitting too. When this singular member of the chaburah is taken from us, we all must worry: who could replace him? Who could do what he did? How sorely are we lacking, are we deficient, without him.

At Reb Ozer’s funeral, there was mournful reference to the fact that he did not have time in his life to write. This is true but not completely; at the time of his passing, he was involved in several literary endeavors. Perhaps others will be able to bring some of his writings to the public. And of course, his social media postings have been recognized as the gems they are and will continue to inspire and edify as they are preserved and shared.

But the fact is he was writing his entire life, if not on paper. He wrote for himself a fascinating and magnificent internal odyssey. And he wrote for others as well, and more so: the many multitudes from all walks of life who are more educated, more inspired, more enlightened, more morally aware, more self-confident, more comforted, more prepared to achieve their potential in the eyes of society and the eyes of G-d—all because they had the good fortune to count him as a friend.