

A speech from Louisville

Good Shabbos. For past 23 years, whenever I had a question of Jewish law, or was faced with a dilemma as to how to apply a law written over 1000 years ago to a modern 21st century issue, or had a question as to what was the best way to act in a particular private or communal situation - I would pick up the phone and call my Rav, Rabbi Zelig Sharfstein, and ask for his advice and guidance and wisdom.

Rabbi Sharfstein lived in Cincinnati for over half a century and was both learned and extremely practical. He was Rabbi's Rabbi - often answering questions from other Rabbis around the world, from early in the morning until late at night. He understood the Torah and he understood human nature. He loved the Torah and he loved other people. Rabbi Sharfstein understood clearly when to bend and when to be unyielding. "A good Rabbi," he once told me, "needed to learn from Moses to be humble and caring for all, yet to be unwavering in fulfilling Torah law to its fullest measure." Rabbi Sharfstein passed away this past Monday, in close proximity to the Yartzheit of Moshe Rabeinu, and I dedicate today's sermon in his memory.

The portion of Tezaveh which we read today is the only reading in the Torah where the name of Moshe is not mentioned, from the moment he was born until his passing.

The opening words are V'atah tetzaveh - "and you shall command." The "you" refers to Moshe and G-d is telling him what to instruct the Jewish people. But the verse only says "you" - no name, no Moshe. WHY?

In honor of Shloshim 5 Adar 2, 5768