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Henny Machlis' Daughters Remember their Remarkable Mother

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On my way to the Machlis shiva this morning, I felt like I was on my way to the Old City but the Kotel was gone. Yep, Henny was that holy. Like the Kotel, in this world and otherworldly at the same time.

Here are some stories Henny's two oldest daughters shared with us about their dear mother, the legendary hostess of hundreds of guests every Shabbat, who died of a brain tumor last Friday at the age of 58:

“My mother lived completely together with Hashem. Shortly before she died, she was coming back from surgery at Sloan Kettering in New York, and she brought back around 20 suitcases full of gifts and clothing for us and our children. She told us that she had dreamed she could also give \$2000 to each of her children, but then she realized that what she most wanted to give us instead was the knowledge that we can always turn to Hashem for whatever we lack, and He can provide it. And that, she told us, is infinitely more valuable than \$2000 dollars.

“My mother loved Hashem and mitzvot and Torah so much. When I was growing up, my mother was always pregnant or nursing. You can imagine that with a house full of so many small children, the house was often a mess. But when my father would come home from teaching at Bar Ilan University, my mother would tell him, ‘I’m fine! Everything’s fine! You go learn Torah!’

“For her whole life, my mother prayed three times a day. One day at the hospital she was about to have surgery, but then she realized that with everything going on she hadn’t davened yet that day. So she told my sister that if the doctor came, she should tell her that she would be back in a few minutes. And my mother went to daven shacharit, hallel, musaf and mincha! But she didn’t judge others for not davening like her. At the hospital, a sister who was taking care of her said she couldn’t daven with everything going on. And my mother said, ‘Right, you shouldn’t daven if it’s too hard for you! Don’t daven! That

was how she always was, having very high standards for herself, but never judging others for doing differently than her.

“One of my mother’s surgeons was Jewish but not observant. The day before the brain surgery my mother begged him to put on tefillin before he did the operation. And I think he did! Another time, right after very complicated brain surgery, as soon as she woke up she asked my brother to make sure her head was covered.

“My mother’s dying wish and request from all Jewish women was that, if possible, they should have many children. My mother had 14 children, 10 girls and 4 sons, and she loved children and babies so much! When she was dying one of my sisters joked with her that she still needed to have two more babies, one named Baila after her grandmother, and one named Asher after her Rebbe, Reb Usher Freund. And she laughed and laughed, she adored children!

“At the end, when she was in so much pain, she kept on saying over and over, ‘We only see the middle of the story, we didn’t see the beginning and we don’t know the ending. We can’t understand Hashem’s wisdom.

“She also the told us that she wanted to put a sign above her bed that said, ‘NO QUESTIONS HERE.’ Because she had no questions about what was happening. She had complete trust in Hashem and knew that everything was from Him.”

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