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by Nusi Samuel

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The following is a stream of thoughts and impressions on the loss of our Rav Sheftel, zt"l, which is still so fresh and real. Harav Sheftel Meir ben Harav Naftali Halevy Neuberger was a Legend of a man, a Lion for all of *klal Yisrael*, and a Leader for his yeshiva, Yeshivas Ner Yisroel of world renown. I was privileged to call myself a *talmid* of his for close to 24 years, during which time he made an indelible and everlasting impression on me along with thousands upon thousands of *talmidim* around the world.

I was first *zocheh* to meet R' Sheftel at the young and impressionable age of 13, when I entered Ner Yisroel. Physically, he was a towering, handsome, and regal figure. He walked into any room and filled it with his grand presence. His very whisper filled the space, yet with all of his grandeur and Torah-true *shlutz*, he was the warmest of human beings. His love of and warmth toward every *talmid* was part-and-parcel of his essence. The successes of his *talmidim* were his successes, and he wore them as a symbol of pride on his sleeve.



To give you a glimpse into the greatness of R' Sheftel, let me tell you about Shabbos *Zachor*, the Shabbos before Purim, which is known as "Shabbos Rav Sheftel" to every Ner Yisroel *talmid* around the world. And that world spans the globe, from Tehran to South Africa, from Europe to South America, and of course, all across the United States, where his *talmidim* live and contribute to their communities.

*On Shabbos Zachor, Rav Sheftel
would daven with the entire
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hearts of his talmidim, especially
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brought a thousand talmidim to
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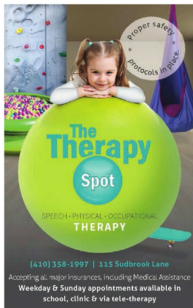
On *Shabbos Zachor*, Rav Sheftel would daven with the entire *mechina* of Ner Yisroel. His beautiful, one-of-a-kind, booming voice still resonates in the hearts of his *talmidim*, especially on the *Yamim Nora'im*, when he brought a thousand *talmidim* to tears with his heart-wrenching rendition of *Unesaneh Tokef*. He wasn't a *chazzan* rather a *baal tefilla*. When he davened with great emotion, the words came alive, and you felt the *tefilla*. I cannot listen to any significant *tefilla* throughout the year without "hearing" R' Sheftel's version as the "platinum" standard bearer.

For the whole *mechina*, Rav Sheftel was the highlight of *Shabbos Zachor*. He would daven and eat, say *divrei Torah*, and sing *zemiros* with the high school *bachurim*. He would then have a beautiful *oneg Shabbos*, and on *matza'ei Shabbos*, there was a special *melava malka* with singing and *leibedik* dancing until the late hours of the night. He would pull every *bachur* into the circle and dance in his unique elegant style with each *bachur*, making that *bachur* feel like a million dollars. He truly loved being with his *talmidim*, and they felt that genuine love and warmth.

As the Philadelphia Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Shmuel Kamenetzky, said at the *levaya*, R' Sheftel was an individual whose essence and existence was for the greater community, for the Yeshiva, and for *Klal Yisrael*. He worked on behalf of the *klal*, always, and at every opportunity.



Growing up with titans of Torah and *avoda*, his uncle, Harav



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HaRav Sheftel Neuberger, z"l

Ruderman, z"l, and his father, Harav Naftali Neuberger, z"l, meant that doing, working, and living for others, with absolutely no personal benefit, was imbedded in his DNA. Harav Beryl Weisbord, *mashgiach ruchani* of Ner Yisroel, said it succinctly: "R' Sheftel had tremendous *kishron*, *hasmada*, and *Toradik seichel hayashar*, and he used all of his talents on behalf of the *khal*. There was no limit; every minute of the day he strived to help others and constantly thought how to benefit the *khal*. These very sentiments were echoed by Harav Malkiel Kotler, the Lakewood Rosh Yeshiva, who cited from *Meichtav Chazon Ish* that only a person with no *atzmuyus* whatsoever could be the one bearing the financial burdens of the Yeshiva, and that Harav Sheftel was just such a person.

Rav Sheftel was a beloved *magid shiur* and loved teaching Torah to his *taalmidim*, but when the time came to assist his father in his *askanus*, he gave up teaching for the sake of the *khal*, and did what needed to be done. R' Sheftel was a consummate people person. He had such charisma and stature, but it was not pride that he exuded but, rather, *Slahodka*-inspired, *Torahdik* nobility. He always had the correct insight into a meeting, knew exactly what to say, had just the right *shetel* Torah. He could talk to a young *bachur* as easily as to a United States president, senator, diplomat, politician, or ambassador, always finding the right words to put people at ease and do what needed to be done, on behalf of the *khal*.

I remember being present as a young *bachur* at a luncheon that was arranged by Rav Sheftel on behalf of some cause. Barbara Mikulski, the United States senator representing Maryland, was in attendance as were some other *rabbanim*. There was an awkward steele silence permeating the atmosphere, until R' Sheftel entered the Executive Dining Room of the Yeshiva and greeted her with his booming, jovial, yet dignified, "Good afternoon, Senator." Her demeanor immediately changed, and the meeting went on successfully.



R' Sheftel epitomized *chain*; he had such a zest for life, such spirit. He was a powerhouse of a Yid on behalf of the *khal*, a man on a mission. He had such strength that his *petira* was a shock to all who were privileged to know him. As the Rosh Hayeshiva of Ner Yisroel, Harav Ahron Feldman, so eloquently stated at the *levaya*, "*Eich nafli giborim* (how the mighty have fallen)"; he was "amazed that such a *gibor* could be overcome by death. R' Sheftel was such a warrior for the Yeshiva, the community of Baltimore, and *khal* Yisroel that it is shocking to realize that he is no longer with us.

One can ask from whence does one person get such strength, devotion, and commitment? For R' Sheftel, it was clear he derived his *ko'ach* from the *khal*: It was the people who gave him *ko'ach*. R' Sheftel's son, Harav Boruch Neuberger, told the thousands of *taalmidim* watching and listening to the *levaya* around the world, that 11 weeks before R' Sheftel's *petira*, right before he was hospitalized, when he was so weak, in what would be his

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HaRav Sheftel Neuberger, z"l

last trip before he reached *Shamayim*, he insisted on traveling to New York to a meeting on behalf of the Yeshiva. Although it was clear that he was in tremendous agony, he was elated, jubilant, to be able to use his last strength and efforts on this earth for the sake of Torah and the *khal*.

He had such charisma and stature, but it was not pride that he exuded but, rather, Slabodka-inspired, Torahdik nobility. He always had the correct insight into a meeting, knew exactly what to say, had just the right shtikel Torah.

The Yeshiva was about to undertake the monumental task of having its first ever online fundraiser. Unfortunately just as we were about to begin, the news of R' Sheftel's *petira* was confirmed. The Yeshiva's *talmidim* and dedicated alumni were devastated, and as a tribute to their beloved *nasi* and *menahel*, *baal tefilla*, *rebbe*, and inspiration, they surpassed the goal and raised 3.5 million dollars in 36 hours.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that, starting under the auspices of R' Naftali Neuberger and under the direct helm and through the tireless efforts of Rav Sheftel, Ner Yisroel changed the face of Iranian Jewry forever. The Neuberger family traveled to Iran back before the Shah was overthrown and planted the seeds for Torahdik Persian communities around the world. Hundreds of Persian *bachurim* were taken into the Yeshiva regardless of their inability to pay tuition; they were given clothing and food, but more importantly, they were given a home after going through such harrowing experiences. Almost every Persian *kehilla's rav*, on both on the West and East Coasts, learned and got *semicha* from the Yeshiva. I was at the *shiva* yesterday, when a message from a kollel in Tehran, Iran was read aloud. The Rav in Tehran was conveying to his *kehilla* all that R' Sheftel had done for their community and how heartbroken he was at his *petira*.

There are countless stories of such devotion and care for his *talmidim*. R' Sheftel danced at his *talmidim's simchos* as at his own *simchos* and cried at their *tsa'ar* and loss as at his own, because his *talmidim* were his children, He embodied the spirit of the Yeshiva. He was a true inspiration and *tzadik*, a Lion, a Leader, a Legend.

May he continue from on high to be a *meilitz goshen* for his *chashuve* family, his beloved Yeshiva, and his people. ♦

A version of this article appeared in the Flatbush Jewish Journal.



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See page 10



Rabbi Sheftel Meir Neuberger, who devoted his life to Ner Israel, dies at 77

By Jesse Berman

Faculty and students at Ner Israel Rabbinical College are in mourning, remembering the life of the school's president, Rabbi Sheftel Meir Neuberger, who died on Feb. 9.

Neuberger had been diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer nearly two

years ago, according to his son, Rabbi Boruch Neuberger, vice president of Ner Israel.

Rabbi Boruch Neuberger described his father as "an extremely energetic, full-of-life person, who tackled and confronted every issue in his life with vigor and energy."

Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger was elected to his position as Ner Israel's president in October of 2005, his son said, following in the footsteps of his own father and Ner Israel's previous president, Rabbi Herman Neuberger.

Ner Israel was Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger's "lifelong mission," his son said. Rabbi

**"THE SPIRIT AND ENERGY THAT
RUNS THROUGH THE HALLS
AND THE VEINS OF THE STUDENT
BODY WERE VERY MUCH A PART
OF HIS LEGACY."**

— RABBI BORUCH NEUBERGER

Sheftel Neuberger was born into the Ner Israel family and spent the majority of his life there. He began at Ner Israel as a 16-year-old student. According to Rabbi Leonard Oberstein, Ner Israel's director of planning, Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger would later, as a teacher and highly regarded scholar, give a daily Talmud class at the school. He eventually transitioned into an administrative role in order to help his father, Oberstein said.

"The spirit and energy that runs through the halls and the veins of the student body were very much a part of his legacy and what he infused the institution with," Rabbi Boruch Neuberger said.

In addition to being at Ner Israel as a student, teacher and administrator, Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger served as a cantor at Ner Israel during High Holidays.

If "you talk to any student who's been a student in Ner Israel in the last 50 years, his memorable energy and passion that he put into the service from the High Holidays is something that resonates with students [and] alumni all across the world," Rabbi Boruch Neuberger said.

Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger was a "dynamic leader who was a presence in any room he entered," Oberstein said. "He had a talented musical voice and often led prayers on High

Holidays and such, which many students recall even years after they'd left."

Rabbi Boruch Neuberger remembered his father as exhibiting extreme positivity, finding healthy ways to push his children to strive for excellence. His father was a proud Orthodox Jew who cultivated relationships across the spectrum of Jewish Baltimore and with various elected officials, according to Rabbi Boruch Neuberger.

"He never allowed the [cancer] diagnosis to get him down or to get in his way of functioning in any which way," Rabbi Boruch Neuberger said. "And he persevered with a smile on his face and with the same vigor and energy that he had before. That would be to us the most remarkable piece of the last 18, 20 months of his life."

Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger is survived by his wife Judith Neuberger; children Rabbi Yosef Neuberger, Rabbi Boruch Neuberger, Devora Krakower, Laya Basch, Rabbi Chaim Shimon, Feige Schwebel and Rabbi Shlomo Dovid Neuberger; brothers Isaac Neuberger, Rabbi Shraga Neuberger, Yaakov Neuberger and Rabbi Ezra Neuberger; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents Rabbi Herman and Judith Neuberger. jberman@midatlanticmedia.com

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Larger Than Life

(Photos & Videos)



"It was obvious even through the eyes of an 11 year old boy in camp that he was a great leader."

Rav Sheftel Neuberger z"l was a study in contrasts.

He was a born leader who spent his life following in the footsteps of others. He was always in the spotlight, but never needed to be the center of attention. His life revolved around his learning but he could converse effortlessly about the stock market or travel. He devoted himself to serving both Ner Yisroel and Klal Yisroel, but was still deeply involved in the lives of every member of his family.

In short, he was Rav Sheftel, doing the impossible, and making it look easy, day after day after day.

GROWING UP NEUBERGER

It wouldn't be totally accurate to say that Rav Sheftel grew up in Baltimore or Pikesville or even the state of Maryland. The son of Rabbi Herman Naftoli and Judith Neuberger and the nephew of the Rosh HaYeshiva z"l Rav Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, Rav Sheftel grew up in Ner Yisroel seeing his uncle wearing the mantle of yeshiva's *ruchniyus*, while his father handled the *gashmius* side of its operations. Raised in that environment, Rav Sheftel had the ability to absorb the *gadlus ha'adom* of Slobodka through the Rosh Yeshiva, *yiras shomayim* through his close relationship with Rav Dovid Kronglass, the sharp clarity of Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg and the *geshmak* in learning of Rabbi Yaakov Kulefsky, inculcating those *midos* into the core of his being.

In addition to being known for his self-confidence and intelligence, Rav Sheftel was a serious *talmid chochom* who was very much aware of everything that was going on in the world around him, traits he shared with his four younger brothers. That was par for the course in the family home, where Shabbos meals included a potpourri of guests from various locations and all walks of life, and Rabbi Herman Neuberger taught his sons by example about their *achrayus* to assist others 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Even as a *bochur*, Rav Sheftel was already known for both his *hasmada* and his magnetic personality. Agudath Israel of America's Executive Vice President Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel remembered Rav Sheftel as an older camper in Camp Munk and leader of the opposing color war team, *Arzei Levanon*.

"He led the grand march and the grand sing and we lost color war because of him," mused Rabbi Zwiebel. "It was obvious even through the eyes of an 11 year old boy in camp that he was a great leader."

Ner Yisroel executive director Jerry Kadden was 17 when he first arrived at the yeshiva and met Rav Sheftel.

"He was just six months older but way ahead of me - I was in eleventh grade and he was already in *beis medrash*," noted Kadden. "He had charisma and a way of welcoming everyone who came to the yeshiva."

As a *ben bayis* in the very *leibidic* Neuberger home, Kadden was treated like family, a relationship that continued into adulthood.

As the yeshiva's needs grew, Rav Sheftel became a *magid shiur* in Ner Yisroel while Kadden worked hand in hand with the senior Rabbi Neuberger building the yeshiva's Mount Wilson Lane campus, transforming 50 acres of corn fields into a full-fledged yeshiva, complete with dormitories and staff housing. But Rav Sheftel's life took a turn in a different direction in 1988 when Ner Yisroel made a national dinner in New York City one year after Rav Ruderman's *petira*. Rabbi Herman Neuberger needed help organizing the massive event and even as Rav Sheftel stepped in as vice president of the yeshiva, he always kept one foot firmly planted in the *beis medrash*.



Photo Credit: Greenport Photography/Ner Yisroel Archives



"He was a real *talmid chochom* and he always had an idea of Torah at his fingertips, something he loved to communicate," said Dr. Yoel Jakobovits, who still has an inscribed *Mesilas Yesharim* given to him in 1964 by his then-counselor, Rav Sheftel, in Camp Munk. "He would walk around the *beis medrash* with great excitement saying, 'look at this *peirush*, look what I found.' He loved sharing those moments with others."

Kadden recalled how even 25 years later after becoming his father's right hand man, Rav Sheftel still kept up with his former *talmidim* and used his role as an administrator to build even more relationships.

"He saw everyone as a *talmid* and would run to their *chasanas* and their *simchas* which more often than not weren't in

Baltimore," said Kadden. "One time he came back from a trip to California on the red eye and you could see how tired he was when he came into davening. At one point, his phone went off and he went into the hall to answer it and told me that he had to run to New York because a *talmid* had lost his father. I told him he needed to get some sleep but he couldn't rest knowing that he had a *talmid* who needed *chizuk*, insisting that he would get some sleep on the train."

Working closely with his father gave Rav Sheftel a rare perspective on *tzarhei tzibur*, politics and life. Those running for office in Maryland knew that a visit to Rabbi Herman Neuberger's office was an essential part of their campaign. Rav Sheftel became an integral part of the process, whether it was government concerns, public affairs, yeshiva business, community matters or personal issues and both father and son were held in high esteem by elected officials at the federal, state and local levels.

BALTIMORE AND BEYOND

When Rabbi Herman Neuberger passed away in 2005, Rav Sheftel stepped in to fill the void without trying to be someone he wasn't, putting his own spin on the skills he had learned from his father and imbuing them with his personal style. When it came to raising money for Ner Yisroel, Rav Sheftel would describe himself not as a fundraiser but as a "friend-raiser," appreciating that building relationships was crucial to bringing in donations to benefit the yeshiva. It was something that came easily to Rav Sheftel who sincerely cared for people, no matter who they were, where they came from or how old they were.

"He had a *gutzkeit* about him," explained Kadden. "When people would call, whatever the circumstances, he would make time to listen because they needed someone to talk to. You didn't have to have money, power or connections - you just had to be a human being. If someone had a *tzara*, Rav Sheftel was a listening ear."

"He was truly *meirav im habriyos*," added Dr. Jakobovits. "He treated everyone as if their personal interests were in his crosshairs whether you were a junior, a senior or a kid. When my daughter would call his house to speak to his daughter and he picked up the phone, he would have a whole *schmooze* with her, asking how school was going, who her teacher was and where she was going to camp."

Rav Sheftel worked closely with other Torah institutions and Beth Medrash Govoha president Rabbi Aaron Kotler would call him to discuss certain scenarios, often finding that Ner Yisroel was dealing with similar issues. And then there were times when Rabbi Kotler would pick up his phone to find Rav Sheftel on the other end saying, "I hear you have this going on ... how can I help?"

"It is very rare to see someone of that stature, and in that position, have such an understanding of every person and every situation and have such solid judgment of how to deal with difficult situations," observed Rabbi Kotler. "Because he had that understanding, he could do anything, any time, and everyone felt they could relate to him. He had the ability to solve things and a supreme confidence married to his incredible humility."



Having worked closely with Rabbi Herman Neuberger and Rav Shefiel, Agudath Israel of America's vice president for government affairs and Washington director and counsel Rabbi Abba Cohen saw both father and son taking a personal interest in Ner Yisroel and the Jewish community at large. Rabbi Cohen, an alumnus of the yeshiva, recalled Rav Shefiel's ability to see not just the forest, but also the trees.

"Shefiel was always thinking and always thinking ahead," remarked Rabbi Cohen. "He anticipated problems, issues and concerns, particularly when they affected *limud* Torah in our yeshivas and Bais Yaakovs. He never stopped thinking about the condition of Klal Yisroel and how it would be affected by government actions as well as societal norms."

Rav Shefiel's gift of being able to create a rapport with everyone he met made him an extremely effective advocate at all levels of government.

"He wasn't bashful in Washington and I don't think he was bashful ever," reflected Rabbi Cohen. "He would go to Washington for a purpose and to convey the community's interests. Even coming in in his *homburg* and *kapota*, his wide range of knowledge and ability to speak to every person about their interests made them feel comfortable."



Rabbi Ariel Sadwin is yet another Ner Yisroel alumnus who went on to a career in public service, manning what he describes as "the home ship" as the director of Agudath Israel of America's Maryland office. Agudah meetings with elected officials were held in Rav Shefiel's office, a logical choice given his position as Baltimore's most influential rabbinic leader and Ner Yisroel's status as the most prominent Jewish communal institution in the state.

"The Neuberger persona and their position of local leadership had tremendous influence," said Rabbi Sadwin. "Whenever we would reach out to someone who was running for public office we would ask them, 'Have you met with Rav Shefiel yet? Have you been to the Ner Yisroel campus yet?'"

It was Rav Shefiel's support that helped Governor Larry Hogan, a Republican, win Maryland, a true-blue state. Governor Hogan was a real estate developer when he first set his eye on Annapolis and he had been advised to visit Ner Yisroel to understand the yeshiva's true impact on the community.

"We had a great meeting with him and we established a terrific rapport," said Rabbi Sadwin. "He followed up with a meeting with local rabbonim and school heads and when he walked out a champion on the night of his victory, he thanked the Jewish community of Baltimore County for their support."

With Ner Yisroel attracting *ratmidim* from all across the United States and beyond, its influences were felt far outside Pikesville. Harbor Group International CEO and chairman Jordan Slone recalled the close ties between his hometown of Norfolk and the yeshiva, and when time came to rebuild the city's aging shul, he reached out 233 miles to the north for assistance.

"We needed a lot of money for a capital campaign and were having a parlor meeting for large donors," said Slone. "There were people who didn't think we would be able to raise the amount we needed and we brought in Rav Shefiel to be the keynote speaker. He spoke about how Hashem makes miracles happen, but only after you do your *hishmadus*, and explained that if you try to get there yourself, Hashem will give you that little extra push to make it happen."





The campaign was a success, something that Slone believes firmly was due to Rav Sheftel's inspiring words, and since then the Norfolk community has grown tremendously. Over time the two men grew closer and would call each other often for advice in their respective fields of expertise. Not that long ago, when Rav Sheftel made what would be his final fundraising trip, it was to Harbor Group's New York offices.

"He came with his son Rav Boruch and we had lunch and talked," said Slone. "Several of his former *talmidim* work in my office and it gave him such pleasure to see them there."

A TRUE SHALIACH TZIBUR

Rav Sheftel radiated warmth wherever he went and The Associated president Marc Terrill has fond memories of both meetings and shared meals over the course of a relationship that spanned nearly 20 years.

"When we met it was as if I was reuniting with a cherished wise uncle," said Terrill. "I always found him to be caring, genuine and astute and he had great compassion and empathy. It was a pleasure when I would reunite with him, and I particularly enjoyed when we would break bread in the executive dining room of Ner Israel and have a *kibitz* and a laugh."

But it wasn't only Rav Sheftel's personality that made him memorable. His seemingly towering presence filled Ner Yisroel and Slone recalled honoring Rav Sheftel with the final *bracha* under the *chupa* at all four of his children's weddings.

"At the first wedding, they put a microphone in front of Rav Sheftel, but he pushed it away saying, 'I don't need that and you'll see why soon,'" said Slone. "He gave such a *bracha* - it was really unbelievable."

When Simchas Torah came, Rav Sheftel lit up the yeshiva and Rabbi Yissocher Frand, who came to the yeshiva at age 15, would make it a point to go back to Ner Yisroel for Simchas Torah instead of spending the final days of yom tov at home with his family.

"Rav Sheftel really made Simchas Torah from the time he was a *bochur* almost until the end," noted Rabbi Frand. "He picked the *niggunim* and that was how he was throughout his life. Whenever it came to anything - what to do and how to do it - everyone turned to him."

"He had an excitement about him," added Dr. Jakobovits. "There was nothing about him that was laid back or on low gear and he drew you along. If we made a *sheva brachos* in the house, we knew the best thing was to get Rav Sheftel to join. His singing, his warmth, his stories - you didn't need a band. You just plugged him in and off he went."



As Purim drew near excitement would be at an annual high in Ner Yisroel's mechina, with the Shabbos of Parshas Zachor each year dubbed "Shabbos Sheftel." Instituted over 30 years ago, it was an opportunity for the high schoolers to gain a healthy perspective of what a Ner Yisroel Purim was all about, given over by the man who was the true *ruach* of the yeshiva.

"He davened all the *tefilas* and spent the whole Shabbos with the mechina," explained Kadden. "They looked forward to it the whole year which speaks to his *leiblichkeit*, his warmth and the respect and admiration that everyone had for him."

Rav Sheftel's ability to inspire from the *amud* created a veritable army of *baalei tefila*, carrying his legendary *misach* far and wide. He would

happily knock out a tape for an aspiring *shaliach tzibur*, his *musach* eventually digitized and uploaded to the Ner Yisroel website where it was readily available to all. His *tefilos* on the *yomim noraim* were nothing short of awe inspiring, with hundreds singing along with him in the yeshiva *beis medrash*. Discussions would eventually ensue later in the day about minor modifications that Rav Shefiel might have made in a davening where even the smallest nuances were eagerly anticipated.

Talmidim who moved on to other yeshivas continued to hear Rav Shefiel's davening in their hearts, no matter where they were.

"When we went off to the Mir as *bochurim* and heard a different *musach* on the *yomim noraim*, all of us in my *chevra* sang Rav Shefiel's *musach* in our seats," said Rabbi Sadwin, one of countless Ner Yisroel alumni who is now a *baal tefila* à la Rav Shefiel. "We all came back to our *diera* and asked each other, 'Did you do this *kneytch*, that *kneytch*?'"



INDELIBLE IMPRESSIONS



Speaking at the *Ievyza*, Rav Shraga Neuberger said that among the hundreds of phone calls and letter that his family had already received, there were many from former Ner Yisroel *talmidim* who were now *baalei tefila* and continue to keep Rav Shefiel's power and emotion in mind as they stand at the *amid* even 30 and 40 years later. Yet despite his commanding presence, both in his davening and in his day to day life, Rav Shefiel's presence was never overwhelming.

"Many people said that when my brother came into a place, he filled the room and made space for everybody else at the same time," said Rav Shraga Neuberger.

That sensitivity and concern for others was something that permeated Rav Shefiel's very existence. When COVID became a reality last spring and the yeshiva had to close its doors and transition to remote operations, the question of whether or not parents should continue paying tuition arose. While Rav Shefiel was able to confidently say that tuition was warranted and appropriate since *shiurim* were continuing and *rabbeim* were devoting possibly even more hours to their students than normal, the notion that parents were also paying room and board bothered him. Yes, the yeshiva was still maintaining a skeleton crew and, yes, much of the food had already been purchased, but despite those expenditures, how could Ner Yisroel charge parents to feed and put up their sons who were now living at home?

"Rav Shefiel said that we had to return that money, even though it left us holding the bag," said Kadden. "People were sick, had expenses and Rav Shefiel understood that they were going through difficult economic times. He decided to refund room and board for every student, acknowledging that while it would be a strain for the yeshiva, it was the right thing to do."

Months later, Ner Yisroel was repaid for its loss. When the second round of PPP loans came through, applicants were required to show a 25 percent loss sustained during any quarter of the year. At first, the fourth quarter of the year seemed like a logical choice since the yeshiva had been unable to run its annual end of year fundraiser, but the differential in revenue didn't meet the required threshold. Instead, it was the second quarter of the year, when the yeshiva decided to reimburse parents for room and board, that made Ner Yisroel eligible for the new funding.

"It was beautiful to see that with Rav Shefiel's leadership and *ehrllichkeit*, it was as if Hakadosh Baruch Hu smiled at him and the

yeshiva and gave them the ability to qualify for the second round of funding, repaying them for what they had lost," said Rabbi Zwiebel.

Much like the home he grew up in, Rav Sheftel's house was filled with visitors. Even with seven children of their own, the Neuberger's frequently had guests staying over in their three bedroom Yeshiva Lane apartment, sometimes for weeks at a time.

"We didn't feel put out at all," remembered Rav Sheftel's son, Rav Boruch Neuberger. "This was what we did. This was normal for us."

Friday night saw more visitors converging on Rav Sheftel's home as *bochurim* came for an *oneg Shabbos*, with Rebbetzin Judith Neuberger stepping up as her husband's partner each week in more ways than one.

"Three quarters of the *bochurim* would end up in the dining room with my father, while the rest were in the kitchen with my mother who had a lot of influence on them," noted Rav Boruch. "My mother was actively supportive of my father's efforts and a full partner in the myriad *chasadim* that they were both involved in."



But above all, Rav Sheftel was larger than life, a multi-faceted diamond whose presence illuminated the world in countless ways.

"One of the reasons that people don't leave Baltimore or Yeshiva Lane is the *ruach* with which Rav Sheftel energized this special little world of ours," observed Dr. Jakobovits. "As a person, everything that I think about him could be described as 'very.' Whatever characteristic you can think of, when it came to Rav Sheftel you have to add the word 'very' because that was who he was. He was the ultimate people person and those qualities permeated Yeshiva Lane. We all feel bereft of something special."

Even as Ner Yisroel faces an incomprehensible Purim, there is no doubt that Rav Sheftel's legacy is one that will live on, woven deeply in the fabric of the yeshiva, in the hearts of generations of *talmidim* and in shuls worldwide as *baalei tefila* share his *Shoshanas Yaakov*, his *Tefilas Geshem* and his iconic *Hineni*.

"Just to daven a regular Shacharis, Mincha, Maariv with him lifted the spirits, his voice loud enough to be heard throughout the *beis medrash* without being overwhelming," said Dr. Jakobovits. "He would always say his davening showed the success of the *tzibur* and believed that while he was the wick, the *tzibur* was the fuel that made their *tefilos* soar. But above all, he wasn't just a voice - he was a person who truly inspired and there was nothing that was too much for him to do for someone else."



As much as Rav Sheftel was a very public persona, Rav Boruch Neuberger recalled several traits that may have been less known.

"My father was the greatest *farginer* I ever knew," said Rav Boruch Neuberger. "He rejoiced in someone's *chidush haTorah* as much as his own and in the 15 years that I worked with him, I never got on a plane or a train with him where the first thing that came out of his briefcase wasn't a Gemara. It never happened."





