

# Ner Israel Rabbinical College Memorial Dinner Honors the Legacy of Rabbi Naftoli (Herman) Neuberger, *zt"l*

On Sunday May 7th, the 9th of Iyar, Ner Israel Rabbinical College hosted a memorial dinner honoring the legacy of Rabbi Naftoli (Herman) Neuberger at the New York Hilton in Manhattan. Rabbi Neuberger was *niftar* this past Succos and left a legacy that touched not only the Jewish community of Baltimore but the Jewish community world wide.

Rabbi Neuberger, a German born immigrant, arrived in this country in 1938. Shortly thereafter he came to Baltimore and joined the then fledgling Yeshiva of Ner Yisrael, headed by the late Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Halevi Ruderman *zt"l*. After a very short time, Rabbi Neuberger was asked to join the yeshiva staff as an administrator, a position he would hold for the rest of his life. Rabbi Neuberger went on not only to build one of the largest and most successful yeshivos in the world, but he became a leader to whom Jews the world over turned for advice and guidance on issues as personal as *shalom bayis* and as public as whom to vote for in an upcoming election.

I arrived at the dinner along with six other buses from the Baltimore community. While the feeling that this might be just another dinner was felt by some, it did not take long before we could see that this was to be a truly special evening.

The buses from Baltimore arrived before most of the other guests and even though I was walking amongst people that I frequently see on Shabbos or during the week, there was a different feeling in the air. Later, I was intrigued as I recognized faces and realized that these people as well had been *talmidim* of Ner Yisrael. This dinner not only was a forum to show respect and pay tribute to Rabbi Neuberger, but it brought together decades of former students from the Yeshiva, many of whom had not seen each other since their days at Ner Israel. These two themes — of celebrating and remembering Rabbi Neuberger and reconnecting with friends and with the Yeshiva at large — became more apparent as the evening continued.

Before long, the various rooms of the New York Hilton were filled with Rabbanim and lay leaders, friends, acquaintances and Yidden from across the Jewish community. As the main program of the evening commenced, the crowd seated in the beautiful ballroom faced a three-tiered dais of hundreds of Rabbanim from Baltimore, New York and as far as Eretz Yisrael. The program began with a chapter of *Tehillim* recited by Harav Moshe Mintz, a close *talmid* of Rabbi Ruderman, a colleague of Rabbi Neuberger's and a rebbi and mentor in the Yeshiva for

many years. This served to set the mood, imbuing us with the feeling that this would not be just a dinner, but rather an uplifting and moving experience.

Mr. Moshe Bane, Esq., senior vice president of the Orthodox Union and a close *talmid* of the Yeshiva, served as master of ceremonies and introduced the Rosh Hayeshiva, Hagoon Harav Aharon Feldman, *shlita*. The Rosh Hayeshiva spoke powerfully as he described not only Rabbi Neuberger's work with the Yeshiva, but also his efforts to help in the rescue of Persian Jewry, his political influence on behalf of the Jewish community and his actions for so many individuals large and small. Just as the Beis Hamikdash had windows that were wide on the inside and narrow on the outside so as to radiate its innate holiness to the rest of the world, so too Rabbi Neuberger's personal *gadlus* was able to touch so many people and effect so many lasting contributions to his Yeshiva and *Klal Yisroel*.

Next we were privileged to hear from Rabbi Beryl Weisboard, the *masgiah ruchani* of the Yeshiva. He recalled the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (1:14) which tells us, "If I am not for myself who am I, and if I am only for myself what am I, and if not now, when." He shared with us Rabbeinu Yonah's explanation:

If I will not rebuke myself to greater tasks, who will; and if I will do this alone without including the masses and their problems, what am I; and finally, if I do not work for the concerns of Heaven today and say I will have time later, then maybe there will be no time. This, said Rabbi Weisbord, not only captured the essence of Rabbi Neuberger's mission in this world, but it serves as a charge to all of us who knew him and gained so much from him.

Lastly, Rabbi Sheftel Neuberger, oldest son of Rabbi Neuberger and his successor as *menahel*, shared with us a moving message. Yitzchak Avinu redug and reconnected with the wellsprings that his father had dug before him. So too, Rabbi Neuberger told us that we were forging forward with the mission of his father, *zt"l*, and reconnecting with the wellsprings of alumni that the Yeshiva has produced over its seventy-plus years. In one of the most moving parts of the evening, Rabbi Neuberger concluded his remarks with a *siyum* on *Maseches Nedarim* and the recitation of the *Kaddish* that could not be said at his father's funeral because it took place during Succos.

The Yeshiva has always been admired for the example it set in the partnership between Rabbi Neuberger and Rabbi Ruderman

and the *roshei yeshiva* who followed him. The administrative and fundraising responsibilities assumed by Rabbi Neuberger as *menahel* allowed the *roshei yeshiva* to wholeheartedly devote themselves to their learning and the growth of their students. It was therefore truly moving to see the present *menahel*, who continues to devote so much energy to the administration of the Yeshiva, also share with us his accomplishments in Torah as well.

Our evening closed with a moving video of reflections on the life of Rabbi Neuberger. We heard from such personalities as Jerome Kadden, the executive director of the Yeshiva; Rabbi Shimshon Sherer; Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich; and Rabbi Shraga Neuberger. One of the speakers noted that Rabbi Neuberger was the type of *Gadol* that you felt that you could actually try and emulate.

I drove away from that evening feeling uplifted, proud to be a member of the Yeshiva's *kollel* and privileged to have participated in such a memorable evening. Rabbi Neuberger was truly an awe inspiring person, but yet he was indeed someone who others could picture themselves emulating in life. I know that I and the other alumni will continue to treasure the rich legacy he left us and together perpetuate his mission in the future.

## Hundreds Attend COJECO Inaugural Legislative Breakfast

The Council of Jewish Emigre Organizations (COJECO) hosted its inaugural legislative breakfast themed "Honoring Our Heritage, Living Our Dreams" on May 2, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. COJECO Executive Director Alec Brook-Krasny, considered a rising star in political circles and a leading spokesman for Russian Jewish concerns, emceed this exciting

event. Greetings were delivered by COJECO President Feliks Frenkel, who plays an important leadership role in various communal activities and is regarded as a foremost advocate regarding issues facing the Russian-speaking community.

Ambassador Arye Mekel, the consul general of Israel in New York, delivered a special message in commemoration of

Israel's Memorial Day. He also spoke of Russian Jewry's entrepreneurial spirit and enormous contributions to Israel's technology industry and that Russian Jews are emerging as leaders of the next generation. Tamir Sapir, a board member of COJECO, received the Business Leadership Award for his entrepreneurial spirit and inspirational model of success.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler was presented with the National Leadership award by COJECO board member and president of Russian American Jews for Israel, Dr. Daniel Igor Branovan, for all of his efforts of behalf of the Russian-speaking community. Congressman Nadler is working in Washington to pass a voting rights law that will guarantee assistance to immigrants without English proficiency to fully participate in the voting and political process.

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, Jr., made a special appearance and greeted those assembled in Russian and pledged to work with the community on all important issues of concern.

NYPD Commissioner Raymond Kelly was the recipient of the City Leadership Award, presented by Larry Wajnberg, publisher of *Novoye Russkoe Slovo*. He accepted the award in the name of all the men and women of the NYPD.

The Legislative Leadership Award was presented to



L-R: Sam Kislin; Alec Brook-Krasny; Ambassador Arye Mekel; Larry Wajnberg; NYPD Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly; Tamir Sapir; Feliks Frenkel; Congressman Jerrold Nadler; Congressman David Weprin

Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr., by COJECO board member Vitaly Komar, for his overall outstanding service in the New York City Council and his advocacy on behalf of the large Russian-speaking communities that COJECO represents.

City Council Finance Chair David Weprin was recognized with the Distinguished Public Service Award, presented by Dr. Vladimir Kvint, COJECO Vice President for Finance.

Kathryn Knox-Soman, director of Communications of Health Plus, greeted the attendees. Health Plus, a not-for-profit healthcare plan committed to quality healthcare of our culturally diverse communities, was the sponsor of the breakfast.

Among the dignitaries in

attendance were Sam Sutton, president of Sephardic Community Leadership; Ron Tawil, vice president of the Sephardic Community Leadership; and David Greenfield, executive director of the Sephardic Community Federation.

COJECO eases the integration of Russian-speaking Jews into American life by assisting member organizations in providing them with access to resources, grants for community development, and fostering partnerships with external agencies. COJECO also cares for those in need and strengthens Jewish identity through projects such as Jewish youth centers, community leadership training, Jewish education and missions to Israel.

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