



In Loving Memory Of Avi Levine
August 7, 1976 (11 Av) – December 20, 1991 (14 Teves)
By Dr. Yitzchok Levine

Note: This obituary appeared in The Jewish Press on February 14, 1992. It is being republished now to commemorate the 20th yahrzeit of Avraham Chaim Shimshon HaLevi Levine, a”h.

It is difficult enough to write an obituary about any departed loved one; all the more so for a father about his own 15-year-old son whose short life ended so suddenly. There are no words that can make up for such a tragic loss. Nonetheless, to let Avi’s death go by without writing something would not be appropriate.

Avraham Chaim Shimshon *HaLevi* was horn on Friday evening of *Shabbos Parshas Nachamu*. He was hit by a car and died Friday evening of *Shabbos Parshas Vayechi*. He was returning to his dorm room at the Hebrew Academy Mesivtha High School of Cleveland, Ohio, after attending an *Oneg Shabbos* for the yeshiva’s dormitory students.

To say that we were all stunned by the news of Avi’s death is an understatement. It is still difficult at believe it on some level. There was not only an outpouring of grief from friends in the New York area, but those who knew Avi in Cleveland were also distraught.

Even though Avi had been enrolled in the Mesivtha in Cleveland for only a few short months, he had, in his unique way, forged deep bonds with everyone he met there. As his rebbe’s wife wrote me, “Your son was special to us and we will mourn his loss.... We will miss him.”

Those who attended Avi’s *levaya* told me that it was like that of an *Odom Godol*. Many could not get in, and the streets nearby were jammed with the overflow. My gentile co-workers who attended could not believe the community support. They had never seen so many people of all ages come together on such an occasion. It was a true *Kiddush Hashem*.

What was it that impelled so many, many people to attend the *levaya* and come to be *menachem ovel*? One neighbor told me he had never seen such a *shiva*. He observed people coming day and night, nonstop.

When someone asked if we had trouble with the *minyanim*, he was told, “Yes, we don’t have enough room

for all the people.” Certainly a major factor in this has to be Avi and how people felt about him. In his short lifetime of 15 years he had made more friends than many make in a full lifetime. What was surprising to us, his immediate family, was how deeply all of those people felt about him. We never realized fully what a precious gem we had in our midst.

I have tried to understand what it was that caused people to relate so positively to Avi. It is hard to put his qualities into words without sounding trite. However, one thing stands out every time I look at a picture of Avi. He is always smiling his warm, genuine, beguiling smile. And, as I think back, he was almost always happy. One of his rebbes described him as “true *Oneg Shabbos*.” (Recall that he was born and died on Shabbos.) I think it is this positive approach he had to the world that endeared him to so many.

All of those who knew Avi cannot get over his loss. The fact that his rebbes and teachers told us he was learning well and accomplishing in his secular studies indicates the great potential that will never be realized. As his rebbe had said to me about a month before his untimely death, “Your son is a good boy.” What more could his family have asked? We will always miss him so very, very much.

(Dr. Yitzchok Levine writes the popular Glimpses Into American Jewish History column, which appears the first week of each month in The Jewish Press.)