



SIMCHA SHEL MITZVA

In this Likkut, the Friediker Rebbe, recalls how the shemurah wheat, for the shmura matza, was harvested by the chassidim of his grandfather and father more than one hundred years ago:

The wheat for the *shemurah matzah* was taken from the fields of Reb Zalman Shcherbiner, whose homestead was in Shcherbina, a two hour journey from Lubavitch. The journey to Shcherbina, and the events surrounding it, made a deep impression upon me, and are engraved in my childhood memories.

Reb Zalman had a meticulous system for choosing the field with the highest quality wheat, and for choosing the day and hour of the harvest. The conditions for the harvest were: a clear and bright day on which the sun shone in its full intensity, and that no rain had fallen in

the previous three days. The set hours for harvesting the *shemurah* were from noon to two o'clock or two-thirty in the afternoon.

When the time for harvest approached, Reb Zalman would come to Lubavitch to make the arrangements. For in addition to Reb Zalman, his family, and the Jewish families who lived on Reb Zalman's land, several of the *zitzers* (yungerleit who were devoted to learning) of Lubavitch, as well as those visiting Lubavitch at the time, would work at harvesting and threshing the wheat. Since the exact day on which the above conditions would be met could not be known in advance, Reb Zalman would come with several wagons to take the people who would be doing the harvesting to Shcherbina, so that they should be

ready to begin work at the proper time. At times, they would wait a week or more for the perfect conditions to harvest the *shemurah*.

For Reb Zalman, the *shemurah* harvest was a cause for threefold joy. First of all, he would be cutting wheat for the *shemurah matzah* for the Rebbe. Secondly, he would have guests from Lubavitch in his home for several days, something which he especially loved and for which he had a special talent. But most of all, the Rebbe himself would be attending the cutting of the wheat, and this was something that would infuse Reb Zalman with a year-long vitality and joy.

From the day that Reb Zalman left Lubavitch with the harvesters until that clear, bright day on which the *shemurah*

was cut, the talk of the town was of the weather. People looked constantly at the sky; they felt the wind to see if it was dry or if it contained the slightest moisture. Every person would offer their opinion; dozens of predictions were heard about the next day's weather. Each day we awaited the arrival of the special messenger from Shcherbina who would tell us that the harvest would be on that day.

The Day Arrives

The cutting and the threshing of the wheat were done with great joy, coupled with a seriousness that was profoundly displayed upon the countenance of the workers. All were belted with their *gartlen* and wore hats over their *yarmulkes*. The work went swiftly in the burning heat, as if the harvesters were experienced farmers.

Sickle in hand, the elderly Reb Zalman, with his broad, regal beard and face shining with joy, was swift and nimble as a lad. One could see the joy literally lifting him off his feet. His shoes and

white socks floated above the ground like the feet of Naphtali on a divine mission, as can only be with a true servant of Hashem whose very heels are permeated with a profound pleasure of the mind and the inner will of the heart to serve Him.

Some of the chassidim would cut the wheat, while others sang niggunim which poured forth with a sublime sweetness and carried across the countryside.

An aura of holiness enveloped the entire area. The wives and children of the local families stood by and watched, dressed in their Shabbat clothes, their faces reflecting the specialty of the occasion.

When the cutting and threshing of the wheat were concluded, Reb Zalman and a number of others would go to bathe. Upon his return, Reb Zalman, who would be wearing his Shabbat clothes, would lead *Minchah*, which he would sing with a Simchat Torah nig-

gun. *Tachanun* was not said. Following the prayers, all would join him in a joyous dance, during which Reb Zalman [although well advanced in years] would suddenly leap into the air and perform three backward-and-forward somersaults.

All would then proceed to the tables set up in the orchard, where a festive dairy meal was laid out for the *farbrengen*. At the meal, the Rebbe would say a *maamar* and *farbreng* for several hours. After the Rebbe had retired to the room which had been prepared for him, the assembled would continue to *farbreng* all night long.

In the morning, following Shachris, we would return to Lubavitch. Reb Zalman and his crew would arrive in Lubavitch that evening, bringing with them the sack of *shemurah* grain, which would be hung in a special room for safekeeping.

(*Likkutei Dibburim Vol. 1 page 224*)

