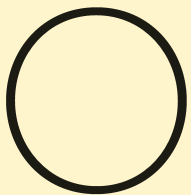
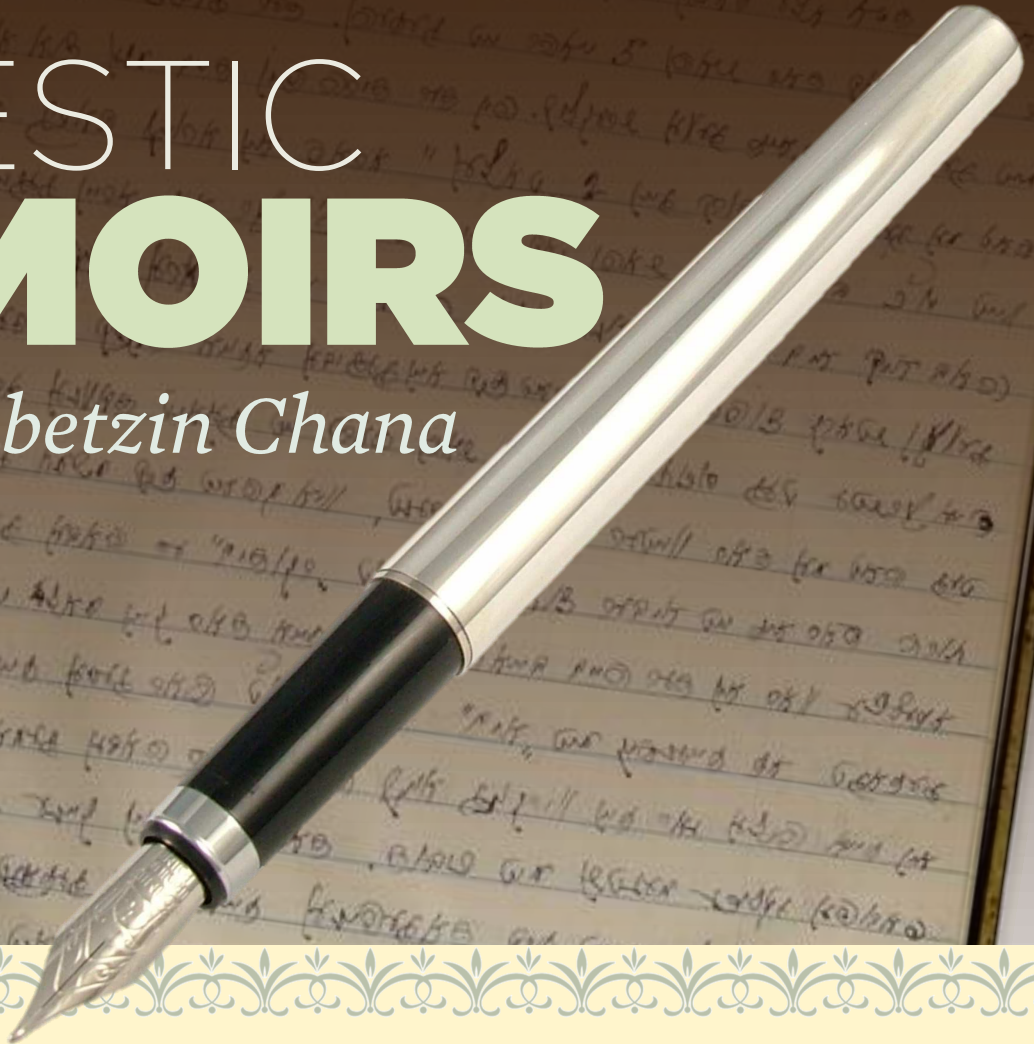


יִזְכְּרוּנוּ עִלְיָה

MAJESTIC MEMOIRS

of Rebbetzin Chana



ver the past year, Kehos has been publishing weekly booklets containing the memoirs of Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson, the mother of our Rebbe.

The diaries contain a wealth of information, describing never-before known accounts and facts of the life and times of her esteemed husband, Reb Levi Yitzchak זי"ע, as well as unprecedented insight into the Rebbe's childhood years. The vivid descriptions are written with a special touch of feeling and bear a sense of real-life, unique to the

capability of the Rebbetzin as an extraordinarily brilliant writer.

When did the Rebbetzin actually pen these notes? Why did she see it necessary to do so in the first place? What took so many years for the memoirs to finally be properly published?

In honor of the Rebbetzin Chana's Yohrtzeit on **Vov Tishrei**, we present just a small selection of the newly published memoirs, prefaced by an overview about the composition and publishing of this true treasure.

HISTORY

A short while after reaching the shores of the United States, the Rebbetzin began to write her memoirs. Transcribed in Yiddish, these accounts fill two entire notebooks. The first notebook, written between the years 5708-5709, contains the life story, imprisonment and ultimate passing of her esteemed and illustrious husband Reb Levi Yitzchak Schneersohn. The second notebook, written between the years 5710-5723, is of a more personal nature and contains various stories, anecdotes and feelings which were weighing on her mind at the time.

At one point the Rebbetzin presented the first part to one of her close acquaintances for typing and editing. Afterwards, these pages were examined by the Rebbetzin. She made some small corrections in her handwriting.

The Rebbetzin also sent a copy to her sister in law, Mrs. Rachel Schneersohn (wife of Reb Sholom Shlomo, brother of Reb Levik). This copy was seen by a handful of Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel, including Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin (who noted that it was "written with brilliance and precision"), Reb Ahron Yaakov Diskin, and Reb Chanoch Glitzenstien.

As it seems, these memoirs reached the Rebbe only after the passing of his mother, the author. A folder was found in the Rebbe's house containing these writings in its typed form. Written upon the folder appears, in the handwriting of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka "Memoirs - mother in law, Chana Meirovna Schneersohn".

INITIAL PUBLISHING

In the year 5724, a writer by the name of Reb Nissen Gordon published a series of articles in Chabad Women's Organization's periodical "Di Yiddishe Heim", on the history and life of the Rebbe. Within these articles are pieces from the Rebbetzin's diaries, combined with some additional accounts he had heard from her first-hand.

Later, in the year 5737, Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Gottlieb published a series called "Toldos Levi Yitzchak" making use of these writings as well. (It should be noted that the contents of the book was examined by the Rebbe before publishing).

In 5743, the first part of the memoirs was printed in a book titled "A Mother in Israel" ("Eim Beyisroel"). Finally they were in a proper, orderly manner. Translated from the original Yiddish into Hebrew and English, they appeared according to the sequence of events.

In the "Tzaddik Lamelech" series, printed in 5753, it was published again, but this time in the original Yiddish, as well as in the original order in which it was written.

The handwritten pages of the first notebook disappeared after the Rebbetzin's passing on 6 Tishrei, 5725. It was only in 5752 that they were finally brought to the Rebbe.

In 5771 the original pages of the second notebook were found and brought to Rabbi Chaim Shaul Bruk, director of 'Vaad Hanochos B'Lahak'. This notebook had also disappeared after the Rebbetzin's passing and had not been seen ever since. The notebook was subsequently passed on to 'Agudas Chasidei Chabad'.

On 6 Tishrei, 5772, Kehos began printing the memoirs weekly under the name "Reshimos Zichronos", spanning thirty nine booklets, the last of them coming out in time for 20 Menachem-Av, the Yohtzeit of Reb Levik.

These booklets appeared in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Russian and French with footnotes offering some background information. Many corrections were made from the mistakes that appeared in previous editions as well. These will eventually be published in a book together with additional letters by the Rebbetzin, as well as many related documents which shed light on these accounts.

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The Rebbetzin opens with the following words: "I am not a writer, nor the daughter of a writer. My desire is only to record some memories of my husband o. b. m. from the last years of his life."

Despite the modesty of the above statement, these narratives make up a veritable treasure of testimony shedding light on the life of Reb Levik and the Rebbetzin. Upon reading it, one becomes aware of the many hardships they faced, starting from the arrest and imprisonment of Reb Levik in the year 5699, and up until his *Histalkus* in 5704. Within these accounts, their strength of spirit and self-sacrifice, even in the most difficult of circumstances, are apparent.

The Rebbetzin writes of the days when Reb Levik served as Rav of Yekatrineslav, describing at length the manner in which he led the city's Jewish community. She speaks of his great and lofty personality, coupled with a vast knowledge in both the revealed and hidden aspects of the Torah.

The Rebbetzin also reveals many facts and stories concerning the Rebbe's childhood. In her words, already as a very young child, the Rebbe impressed all those who saw him with his unique wisdom and capabilities. Here the Rebbetzin shares the immense pride she derived from the Rebbe's global activities and from witnessing the boundless love and admiration of the Chassidim toward him.

The memoirs are permeated with an intense feeling of loneliness brought about by the loss of her husband, as well as a desire to perpetuate his memory by - among other things - publishing his writings which were left behind the iron curtain.

With all these losses and sorrows notwithstanding, she is comforted by the tremendous joy she receives from her great and noble son, the Rebbe, whose precious daily visits infuse her with new life.

The Story of REB LEVI YITZCHOK

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THE FESTIVE MONTH OF TISHREI WITH THE RAV

[The following story is recorded in the Rebbetzin's memoirs – Part 26, describing the celebration of Yom Kippur and Simchas Torah in Yekatrinoslav during the difficult years of the communist regime, before Reb Levik was arrested]:

EARLY MORNING MINYAN, AND BACK FOR NE'ILAH

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur fell on weekdays when the congregants were required to report for work. My husband arranged an early “first minyan” which completed its services by 8:00 a.m., after which its participants went straight to work.

On Yom Kippur, however, they didn't go home after work but returned to *shul* in time for *Ne'ilah*. For this service the *shul* was overcrowded, with many forced to stand outside. Everyone was exhausted from the fast and from having walked long distances. The physical strain was in addition to the spiritual agony from their awareness of the exalted day on which they had had to work, besides the heartbreakingly emotional prayers of the *chazzanim*—all this was indescribable.

The congregants expressed heartfelt thanks to my husband for making it possible for them to participate in congregational prayers on the High Holidays, despite the early hour.

Copious tears poured down my husband's face as they spoke to him about this. Deriving intense satisfaction from their spiritual inspiration, he would comment with joy, “Oh, how special Jews are!”

We were afraid to discuss such subjects very much. But my husband was pleased to have accomplished all this.

BREAKING THE FAST

When my husband would return home after Yom Kippur, he couldn't easily settle back into the everyday mundane existence. After coming home quite late in the evening, he drank only a glass of tea. Then he remained sitting, still garbed in his *kittel* and the *gartel* of his great-great-grandfather, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, to lead a *farbrengen* until two or three o'clock in the morning.

This was his regular custom on the evening after Yom Kippur, both when Jewish life had been less constricted and later when Judaism could be practiced almost solely within the confines of one's own home.

Some of our friends were aware of my husband's custom, and they would eat a quick evening meal with their families before coming to our home. My husband would deliver a Chasidic discourse on subjects connected with the Yom Kippur prayers. In later years he spoke about the great qualities of Jews, their self-sacrifice to observe Judaism, and how they expressed their love towards other Jews in that difficult era.

Ten or fifteen people always attended this *farbrengen*, which included dancing as enthusiastic as on *Simchat Torah*.

SIMCHAT TORAH

Our spacious apartment had been confiscated by the authorities in 1929. The small official community that still existed in our city at the time built us an apartment of three small rooms in a privately owned property, because we were not permitted to reside anywhere else.

Notwithstanding our small apartment, any Jew in the entire city who wished to rejoice on *Yom Tov* came to our home. After dark, young people would stealthily arrive as well. Due to the cramped conditions and the fact that none of our visitors wanted anyone else to know he was visiting the *Rav*, they all tried to hide from everyone else. They used to visit in small

groups, and my husband spent time with each person separately so that, during the time they spent with him, they were able to forget which country they lived in and under whose regime.

The above-mentioned *chazzanim* were also present. As a result of the holiday prayers and the *farbrengens*, the performer's attitude had changed from his original ulterior motive of earning money to a gen-



uine heartfelt expression, which impacted and stirred all the congregants. He declared that his positive transformation was thanks solely to the *Rav*.

DANCING WHILE WEeping

Following the *chazzanim*'s departure, I received a letter from them. After thanking me for various things, they wrote: “This is the first time in our lives we have witnessed such a phenomenon like the Rabbi of Yekatrinoslav, who, even as he rejoiced on *Yom Tov* with such extraordinarily joyous dancing, was weeping with such

His strength of character and determination; in the good times and the bad

indescribable tears. Yet the tears impelled him to dance even more energetically!"

THE VERY STONES WERE DANCING

[The following story is recorded in the Rebbeztzin's memoirs – Part 12, describing the celebration of Simchas Torah in exile in Chi'ili in the year 5703]:

Simchat Torah: We didn't yet have



a Torah in our possession. Our guest who ate his *Yom Tov* meals with us had found work as a night-watchman and had to spend his nights in the fields guarding the produce, so now he could come only during the day. Thus, only I was present with my husband in our room at night.

The time of *hakafot* arrived. It is most difficult for an ordinary person like me to describe my husband's emotional experience, as was evident on his face. He started reciting the customary verses preceding the actual *hakafot*—*Ata horaeta ladaat ki Hashem Hu haElokim, ein od*

mil'vado—using the same tune he used back at home [in Dnepropetrovsk], when he celebrated *hakafot* in *shul* together with many hundreds of Jews. The following night, he used to celebrate *hakafot* in our home with several dozen of those close to him. Whether at *shul* or at our home, it was not just [his] dancing—it seemed like the very paving stones danced along to his joy.

Here, too, he enveloped himself with such joy. He recited every verse, and after every circuit he sang and danced, alone, to the melody known in our hometown as “the Rav’s melody.” He circled around in the narrow space in our room between his bed and the table, reciting the verses of the *hakafot*:

“...Pure and upright One, please save us... Benevolent One and bestower of goodness, answer us on the day we call.”

He wanted this to be pure joy, and his deep emotion was manifest in the words he recited:

“He who knows thoughts, please save us... He who is garbed in righteousness, answer us on the day we call.”

This was a most difficult experience for me to endure. Sitting on a wooden stool in the corner, I observed the immensity and intensity of my husband's love of the Torah as he danced away all the seven *hakafot*.

Following *hakafot* on *Simchat Torah* morning, he recited *Sissu v'simchu b'simchat Torah* [“Rejoice and exult in the joy of the Torah...”] with similar enthusiasm.

[The following story is recorded in the Rebbeztzin's memoirs – Part 34, describing the Rebbe Levik's reaction to the news of his Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab's Histalkus on Beis Nissan, 5680]:

THE PASSING OF THE REBBE RASHAB ON BEIS NISSAN, 5680

This day always reminds me of memories of something or other. It's already 32

years, I believe, since the passing of the Rebbe, Rabbi Shalom DovBer of Lubavitch, of blessed memory.

I remember when the news arrived. Generally, contact by mail or railway was very poor. Nevertheless, in this instance, we learned about it that same day.

I have no words to describe the impact of this news. It felt as if our whole life had stopped. That's how it was in our home, and for those who were close to us, and particularly among members of the Lubavitch community. My husband, of blessed memory, wept aloud, something he almost never did.

“Even as he rejoiced on *Yom Tov* with such extraordinarily joyous dancing, was weeping with such indescribable tears...”

All those mentioned here found out immediately—I don't remember how. Right away, more than twenty of them came to our home and brokenheartedly sat *shivah*, weeping intensely.

I recall how an engineer named Y. L. Koren, came in. He was a freethinker and thoroughly irreligious. Nevertheless, seeing how everyone, young and old, together with my husband—whom he described as having an exceptionally stalwart character—were all so brokenhearted, he wept with them together.

He told me that although he was such a total freethinker, nevertheless, when he learned that the personage who held such a sacred position among Jews, and to whom his followers were so devotedly attached, had passed away, he felt compelled to weep with them together, feeling their same sense of loss. Even when he left our home, he couldn't calm down and cried hysterically in the street.

REFLECTIONS

on the **REBBE**

THE REBBE'S PURE CHILDHOOD

[The following stories are recorded in the Rebbetzin's memoirs – Part 33, describing the Rebbe's years as a young child, and a beautiful account of the day of his Bar Mitzvah]:

...It's already twelve years since then and almost four years that I'm living here.

Praise and thanks to G-d, and to my son Mendel, long may he live, that I have reached this point. Not for nothing is hon-

all, quite simply very beautiful, with long blond locks, which I stored away on leaving home [to join my husband] in 1940. They were lost, together with all our other possessions, [during the upheavals of World War II].

When I walked with my son in the street, people would notice him and stop to gaze at him.

"DALOI SAMADERZHAVIA!"

around at home calling out [in Russian] "*Daloi Samaderzhavia!*" ("An end to the autocracy!") He had heard people mouthing this slogan, and seemed to understand that Jews, too, were suffering as a result. I remember how my father, of blessed memory, was fearful that he might be overheard, and told him to stop saying it.

Subsequently, he started his studies in *cheder* [Torah school], which continued

When I walked with my son in the street, people would notice him and stop to gaze at him.



oring one's parents rewarded with long life. As recompense for the way my son relates to me and makes my life so much easier, may G-d grant him long life and happy years, with good health and success, and may he never experience anything negative. *Amen.*

To state that my son is saintly and pure is no exaggeration.

I recall the years when he grew up, from early childhood onwards: When he turned two, he was able to ask the "Four Questions", although his mode of speech was like a child of that age.

When he turned three, he was, first of

During the 1905 pogroms in Russia, we were among a group of women and children who hid in a pharmacy. It was dangerous for us to be discovered. Other children of his age or even older were crying and making noise. But he controlled himself to the extent that not only didn't he cause any problems but also influenced other children to be quiet.

The people there, and the pharmacist, who kept on coming in to check on us, spoke about my son with amazement. He was just three years old at the time.

Before the pogrom, my son would walk



until we commissioned special teachers to teach him at home. What a pleasure that was!

There was something special about him. At every turn, we seemed to find reason to take pride in him. Not that he desired to be noticed. On the contrary, he always tried to avoid that. But his personality just evoked respect.

THE REBBE'S BAR-MITZVAH

I believe he remembers what he spoke about at his Bar-Mitzvah. He gave two speeches, I think, one on a subject of the

His childhood; remarkable Kibud Eim; and his unparalleled sense of leadership and inspiration

“revealed Torah” [Talmud-Halacha] and the other on a subject of the “concealed Torah” [Chasidut-Kabbalah].

A large number of guests were present, as we had many good friends. Additionally, it was at that time that the Chasidim triumphed in securing acceptance of a candidate of their own—my husband—as *Rav* of the city. Consequently, many guests attended even without an invita-

tion. father—my husband—urged the boy to promise him something, but the Bar-mitzvah boy wasn’t so ready to make that promise.

It was evident on the faces of those coming out of the room—old or young, Torah-observant or non-observant—that they had been weeping. There was an atmosphere that I simply cannot describe. It took many hours before our son gave his

and with success. All the *bar-mitzvahs* of our sons were celebrated by us in a fine manner. But my older son’s was something special, extraordinary, on a highly sublime level. It was our family’s first personal celebration.

My husband, of blessed memory, was held in high regard. This was despite the initial “birth pangs” of his rabbinic position due to opposition by non-Chasidim and Zionists against Lubavitch, which they



It took many hours before our son gave his father the positive response he asked of him.

Everyone then joined together in spirited dancing, their faces still showing signs of their previous weeping, but now combined with intense joy.

tion.

The celebration was on Shabbat, and the *farbrengen* continued until after *Havdalah*.

I wasn’t present in the room where our son delivered his talks. But everyone was indescribably overwhelmed by them. I recall how the above-mentioned engineer, Sergei Paley—who possessed a sharp mind and was very Torah-learned—came over to me and said, “This is the first time in my life that I hear such scholarship from a boy of his age.”

At that point, the Bar-Mitzvah boy’s

father the positive response he asked of him.

Everyone then joined together in spirited dancing, their faces still showing signs of their previous weeping, but now combined with intense joy. They were all transported to a different world.

[The following is an additional recounting of the Rebbe’s Bar Mitzvah as recorded in the Rebbetzin’s memoirs, Part 39]:

This week was the *bar-mitzvah* celebration of a friend’s son. It reminded me of the *bar-mitzvah* of my older son, long may he live in good health

considered him to personify and which is why they didn’t want to accept his appointment. But now it was already seven years that we had lived in the city, and our supporters were proud of my husband’s accomplishments, while those opposing had often expressed their remorse. Now both sides had an opportunity to express their feelings.

For our good friends, it was a genuine celebration, expressed in a delightfully friendly closeness which had a delectable feeling, as I remind myself now.

It was held on a Shabbat, and many guests attended. At that time we had a



large home, and all its rooms were packed. Because it was so crowded, there was a constant interchange of guests, with some leaving while new ones came to take their place. I had many female guests, and there were also many young people. All these groups included guests from all sorts of background.

I don't remember exactly when it started, probably around 12:00 noon, after the conclusion of prayers at *shul*. The men sat in the large hall, while we women were in the large dining room. Of course, the tables were beautifully set with abundant

amazed by the great character of such a young boy, that he was so guarded and cautious about giving his reply.

I don't know the details of what actually happened there, but around 6:00-7:00 p.m.—I remember it wasn't so light any more—the weeping faces I had previously seen became very happy. Now from inside we heard the sound of such joyous dancing and singing, and the joy became so intense that it affected those outside, too. One sensed that the enthusiastic rejoicing held some deep significance, and that both

still took with him lots of work to do at home.

Since childhood, he has always spent his time in constant study. I don't remember him ever wasting time.

Thank G-d, I derive a great deal of *nachas* from him.

He is a truly great personage, with a pure soul. He does much for my sake, which I consider to be a privilege, after all the tribulations I have experienced...

...My son—long may he live—has just left my apartment. This gives me life for the

To state that my son is saintly and pure is no exaggeration.



food, for both the men and the women.

Around 3:00-4:00 p.m. we saw some of the male guests, both old and young, emerging with weeping faces. I tried looking inside the main hall to discover the reason for their tears, but it was so crowded in there that I couldn't see through all the heads.

When I asked those who had been inside, they told me that the father—my husband—had requested our son (long may he live) to promise him something. I wasn't inside, so I don't know the actual course of events. But our son's reply, apparently, wasn't immediate. Everyone was

the nature of the request and the one who gave his reply would remain memorable for a long time.

"MY SON, MAY HE LIVE AND BE WELL..."

[The following thoughts are recorded in the Rebbetzin's memoirs – Parts 35-36, describing the great Nachas she was privileged to derive from the Rebbe and the new life she felt with his visit to her home each day]:

...Just now, my son—long may he live, and may he be well and successful—left my apartment. He is very fatigued, yet he

24 hours until tomorrow's visit, G-d willing.

THE PLEASURE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE REBBE'S *FARBRENGEN*

I am happy with the fact that I have not written lately, because I also haven't been in the best of health. Now, thank G-d, I feel much better.

I don't want to let pass the opportunity to record the pleasure I enjoyed last night listening to my son, *shlita*, speaking to an audience of many hundreds of people. I am not the expert to appraise the scholar-



ship of the subjects on which he spoke, but the portion I did understand made a deep impression upon me with its rich content.

Of course, I didn't stay until the end, which would be too difficult for me.

I was delighted to see such a large number of young people attending and how great was their interest in all the activities of my son, *shlita*. I observed how they look upon him with such a love that is indescribable. It was apparent from the way they were hurrying, by subway, by car, in

drance, in physical and emotional tranquility.

[Part 38]

"FOR THE SAKE OF MY SON, *SHLITA*..."

It's already been several days that I feel a desire to write something, but I've been delaying it.

I wanted, and no doubt ought, for the sake of my son, *shlita*, to write words that are not so "depressing," but what should I do when I don't yet feel that way.

It's now nine years since my arrival here [in New York]. Thank G-d for my

better for you than ten sons." "Some individuals can acquire their [portion in the] World to Come in a single hour." My son acquires it with the ten minutes that he comes in to visit me every day.

"IT'S WHAT KEEPS ME GOING"

It's already twelve years that I'm on my own. Thank G-d for the good that I have. What I grasp on to is my son, *shlita*.

"MY GREATEST PLEASURE IS WHEN MY SON LEADS A *FARBRENGEN*..."

Thank G-d, it's already the 11th of Tishrei,



I observed how they look upon him with such a love that is indescribable. It was apparent from the way they were hurrying, by subway, by car, in groups, each trying to get ahead of the other in order to get a better place...

groups, each trying to get ahead of the other in order to get a better place so that they should be able to see and hear as much as possible.

They were from all types of background—non-Chasidim, Chasidim, Polish Chasidim, *Litvish*, old and young, non-religious and Orthodox. The same was true for the women. Everyone tried to find a place where they could not only hear but also see.

May G-d grant my son good health and success to be able to accomplish his work, to achieve what he desires without hin-

son, who has been accomplishing so much in recent years. He possesses outstandingly great abilities, intellectual brilliance and erudition, in addition to the greatness and holiness of his soul, and the fact that whatever he does is born of absolute truth. The world at large recognizes this and appreciates it.

The young people are so devoted to him; they love him and relate to him as to a G-dly person.

I see all this, understand it and appreciate it.

My son, may he be well, can say "I am

after Yom Kippur, during which everything passed appropriately.

My son led everything so sublimely, which was a pleasure for me to witness. Now *Sukkot* is coming.

The purpose of my writing this time is as follows: This period is a time of prayer, so I ask that I should feel well under the conditions I need, for I don't have the ability to improve them.

My greatest pleasure is to listen and watch as my son leads a *farbrengen*. It's a pleasure for me to hear his voice, and I find the content, as much as I understand it, to be very interesting.