

ראש השנה לאילנות

TU B'SHEVAT

In the earlier years, the Rebbe would not hold a Farbrengen in honor of Tu B'Shevat unless it fell out on a Shabbos.

These Shabbos Farbrengens were in keeping with the Rebbe's custom of Farbrenging on the Shabbos following Yud Shevat, and for the most part they were based on that theme; the Rebbe would discuss ideas relating to *Hiskashrus*, and so on.

Still, the Rebbe always made mention of the significance of the day insofar as it is Tu B'Shevat, and the Rebbe drew lessons in our everyday *Avodas Hashem* from this topic. (These years include: 5716, 5722, 5723, and 5726).

5731 marked the first year that the Rebbe Farbrenged on Tu B'Shevat although it fell out to during the week. From then on, this continued almost every year without exception. In fact, the last Farbrengen that the Rebbe held during the week (until today) was on Tu B'Shevat, 5748. (After

the Rebbetzin's passing on Chof Beis Shevat, the Rebbe no longer held weekday Farbrengens at all).

In fact, that first Tu B'Shevat was also the start of a new practice by the Rebbe throughout the year as well. Until then, the Rebbe farbrenged only on several weekdays throughout the year, like Vov Tishrei, Yud Tes Kislev, Yud Shevat and other days. Tu B'Shevat 5731 was the first of many newly-instituted surprise Farbrengens on random dates. These would generally take place when the Rebbe returned from the Ohel and davened *Mincha*.

On that day of Tu B'Shevat 5731, the Rebbe notified Rabbi Hodakov about a Farbrengen just after the Rebbe's return from the Ohel, before *Mincha*.

With such short notice before this unexpected incident, at the beginning of the Farbrengen the crowd was relatively small, but towards the end the Shul filled up with Chassidim who received word in

the meantime.

The entire Farbrengen lasted for less than an hour. Immediately upon entry into the Shul, the Rebbe instructed the Chassidim to sing the *Niggun Hachona*, which was followed by the *Ma'amor "Arba'h Roshei Shonim"* (subsequently *Mugah* in 5751).

Then, the Rebbe launched a new initiative.

The Rebbe announced that the time has come to conquer the world through *Limud HaTorah*. In this *Sicha*, the Rebbe essentially laid the groundwork for what would later become known as "*Mivtza Torah*" – one of the famous ten *Mivtzoim*.

In brief but distinct words, the Rebbe demanded that each and every individual increase in their Torah study according to their ability, and even more than their ability. The Rebbe also requested that this message be relayed to all locations the world-over, making specific mention of our brethren behind the Iron Curtain,





One of novelties instituted by the Rebbe in our generation was the marking and celebration of the low-tone Yom Tov of “Tu B’Shevat”. Often times the Rebbe would hold a Farbrengen especially in honor of this day, drawing upon the lessons we can derive from its various aspects in our *Avodas Hashem*. In connection with Tu B’Shevat, we bring here a small selection of some of those occurrences in Beis Chayeinu on this day as it was celebrated with the Rebbe.

where the message was to be relayed as well albeit in an appropriate and harmless manner.

In a letter to a friend of his in Eretz Yisroel dated Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5731, a Bochur who was present at the Farbrengen writes:

“I assume you have already heard [a recording of] the last Farbrengen, or at least have read a transcription, where the Rebbe demanded that we all increase in our Torah learning. Thus, immediately following the Farbrengen we began to studying very diligently (“*Horreven*”) and there was absolutely no spare time to write any letters...”

Making an unprecedented statement since the Nesius, the Rebbe revealed a heavenly account that occurred with regard to this Farbrengen and the special call for extra learning that was sent out during its course.

Two weeks later on 30 Shevat, in a *Yechidus* with Reb Simcha Bunim Alter,

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brother of the Gerrer Rebbe -- who subsequently succeeded him to become the Gerrer Rebbe himself -- the Rebbe revealed the following:

“On Tu B’Shevat, I was at the Ohel of my father-in-law and I was instructed to farbreng. ‘What can I speak with a group of *Yidden* about?’ I thought to myself. Well, I spoke about increasing in *Limud HaTorah*. As it turns out, this was truly clear *Hashgocha Protis*, for just a few days later the US Government attempted to pass a law drafting all the Yeshivah students to the army [joining the fight in the Vietnam War]. The initiative of extra Torah study served as a preemptive relief, annulling this possible decree from the start!”

The Rebbe made similar remarks publicly as well a few months later, during the Shabbos HaGadol Farbrengen that year.

REMINDER IN 5732

It should be noted that the following year on Tu B’Shevat, 5732, the Rebbe again



held a Farbrengen during which the Rebbe again made mention of the previous year's special instruction. "One of the reasons for this Farbrengen", the Rebbe explained, "is to remind everyone of what was spoken last year; about conquering the world through Torah study."

LATE-NIGHT VISIT AT MACHON CHANA, 5734

On Tu B'Shevat, 5734, the Rebbe farbrenged once more. In addition to the *Ma'amor*, the Rebbe also continued what the Rebbe had begun to discuss at the Yud

Following this *Sicha*, the Rebbe requested that the one who signed the contract of the sale come forward, and Reb Avrohom Parshan approached. After the Rebbe handed him Le'chaim, the Rebbe told R' Zalman Lubkowsky to say Le'chaim as well, giving him *Mashke* and *Mezonos* and instructing him to give some of it to his wife as well.

A few days later, following the Farbrengen on Tu B'Shevat, the Rebbe personally visited the new institution. The following is from the *Yoman* penned by a Bochur in 770 at the time:

rov Le'Yaakov" (from the *Mezritcher Maggid*).

The Rebbe then handed Rabbi Hecht 500 dollars as his personal contribution towards the down-payment, and then turned to the two women who were very instrumental in establishing the institution and wished them "Mazal Tov!" He then gave them 400 dollars and instructed that they each place two dollars in the *Pushka*, and give two dollars to each of the students so that they may do the same.

"TANKISTIN" - 5735

"I have a very special affection towards the institutions named after my mother..."



Shevat Farbrengen just a few days earlier: *Mivtza Mezuza*.

In Shevat of 5734, the Machon Chana Women's Institute of Crown Heights was founded. During the Farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, Yud Shevat, the Rebbe spoke about the special qualities of the Jewish woman, concluding with the following: "I have a very special affection towards the institutions named after my mother (Beis Chana, Gan Chana, Pardes Chana, an so on), and being that yesterday a new building was purchased, *Yehi Ratson* that it be an everlasting edifice, to be brought to Eretz Yisrael with the coming of Moshiach. Let us hope that in this building a good education will be granted to the students changing them all for the better, raising girls that will be able to assist in the bringing of Moshiach!"

Following the Farbrengen, Rabbi J.J. Hecht entered the Rebbe's room and the Rebbe spoke with him about Machon Chana. After the Rebbe searched for the set of keys he had received and being unable to find it, Rabbi Hecht offered his own set to the Rebbe, but the Rebbe was unwilling to accept it and continued searching for his own. Finally, the Rebbe agreed to take the keys from him, saying that he was giving them back to him as a gift, so that he can open the door to the building.

Then the Rebbe was driven along with him to the newly founded institution. Upon arrival, the Rebbe went about inspecting each room on all three floors of the building and then asked Rabbi Hecht to be led to the library. The Rebbe left a *Tzedoka Pushka* there, as well as a *Siddur*, a *Tanya*, a *Sefer "Keser Shem Tov"* (from the Baal Shem Tov), and a "*Maggid Dvo-*

Tu B'Shevat, 5735, the Rebbe discussed a very heated topic at the Farbrengen again, though the Rebbe had already spoken about it on Yud Shevat and on the Shabbos that followed. There was a *Misnagdish Rav* who was publicizing disgraceful things about the Rebbe's *Mivtzoim* in a newspaper, *R"L*. The Rebbe condemned his actions in the strongest possible terms and encouraged all the Bochurim and Chassidim who participate *Mivtzoim*, and also warned against having any contact with this individual.

At the end of the Farbrengen, the Rebbe distributed dollars to all those present specifically through the "*Tankistin*", as he had done on Yud Shevat as well. This became a common practice at almost all weekday Farbrengens.

Farbrengens were held in honor of Tu B'Shevat in many of the following years as well. In 5739, the Rebbe explained the

reason for instituting this new custom in the first place. Being that the darkness of *Galus* has reached unprecedented proportions, the Rebbe explained, it's only just to respond to it with an added dose of illumination.

At this point the Rebbe delved into a lengthy and painful description of the extent of the darkness of *Galus*. As the Rebbe wept profusely, the Rebbe quoted the famous *Moshol* brought in Chassidus of a father who hides himself from his son in order to arouse his son's desire to see and appreciate him. But after a while of searching with no success, the son eventually gives up hope and ceases searching for his father altogether.

Galus is a time when Hashem hides Himself from His children, with the intent being that they should search after Him. But as the *Galus* endures for longer and longer, the Jewish people become so absorbed into the mundane world that they no longer search for their Father in heaven, and that's when the true bitterness of *Galus* surfaces!

Then the Rebbe's voice was choked with heavy tears as the Rebbe began to say, "But can the Jewish people be to blame at all? After all, how long can they be expected to continue on searching? They searched on Sunday, on Monday on Tuesday..." The Rebbe was literally stopping mid each and every sentence and crying bitterly. Eventually the Rebbe laid his head upon his hands and just cried for a while.

"This is why we most hold a Farbrengen for Tu B'Shevat," the Rebbe explained. "We must increase in all matters of *Or*, and especially in *Simcha*, thereby dispelling the negative effects of the dark *Galus*".

WHY NO FRUIT?

Another interesting point from this Farbrengen:

The Rebbe complained that the "*Vaad Hamisader*", who was in charge of preparing all the necessary arrangements for the Farbrengen, hadn't brought any fruit for the crowd to eat.

"Last year, the Vaad took care that there should be at least *some* fruit at the Tu B'Shevat Farbrengen (never mind there was hardly enough fruit to satiate a *Minyan*, but at least there was something)."

But it seems that the next year, in 5740, this instruction was again neglected, for the Rebbe complained once more about the lack of fruit on the table.

Finally, in 5741, the Vaad indeed made sure to bring lots and lots of fruit to the Farbrengen, so the Rebbe handed some over to Rabbi J.J. Hecht at the end of the Farbrengen to distribute at a children's rally that was to take place the next day.

From then on, a large bowl of fruit was always much in evidence on the Rebbe's table before the Tu B'Shevat Farbrengens.

INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE

As mentioned earlier, the last time the Rebbe farbrenged during the week was on Tu B'Shevat, 5748.

Yud Shevat in 5748 fell out on a Friday, so the Farbrengen in commemoration of the Frierdiker Rebbe's Yahrzeit was held on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 11 Shevat. During the Farbrengen, the Rebbe again spoke about the above-mentioned topics, adding that the most efficient way of finding guidance is by studying the Torah of the (Frierdiker) Rebbe diligently, and in-depth.

On Tu B'Shevat again, the Rebbe reiterated these words, prefacing that the (Frierdiker) Rebbe provided us with all the guidance that we need throughout his

"They searched on Sunday, on Monday on Tuesday..."

In the *Sichos* during that period, the Rebbe continually made mention of several unusual expressions and statements. It was apparent from the Rebbe's words that he wished to minimize the reliance that the Chassidim had on the direct answers that they were accustomed to receive from him, and that they should each attempt to find the proper means to settle their doubts and difficulties when they arise, based on what the Torah teaches. Specifically, one is to refer all medical issues and concerns of health to doctors, all Halachic matters to a Rav, concerns of spiritual growth to one's (Asei l'cho) Rav, and so on. The Rebbe also mentioned that all requests for Brochos, without exception, should be delivered directly to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe. Therefore, there is no reason each one to wait for a personal response, as the Brocha is given regardless.

lifetime, and he continues to do so even more today, after his passing. One can find answers to all difficulties by studying Chassidus, and when in doubt one should consult his Rav.

PLEASURE IN TORAH AND MITZVOS

In many of the *Sichos* (and *Ma'amorim*) of Tu B'Shevat, the Rebbe stressed that the lesson we can take from this Yom Tov is one we see clearly in the nature of fruit. As opposed to bread (made from grain) which is a basic staple of life and a necessary component to healthy life, fruits are eaten for the mere pleasure of the one eating them.

This implies that we must carry out our *Avodas Hashem* not simply with dry acts, but we must learn to take pleasure in it as well and enjoy every moment!