



מה היה עם הרב

With
the

Rebbe

Throngs of Chassidim would rush through the doors of 770 on the eve of Simchas Torah. Unbridled joy fueled by the Rebbe's every nuance elevated the multitudes to boundless heights. Indelible are the impressions upon the hearts and souls of those who beheld this Yom Tov in the Rebbe's presence.

Let us take a glimpse through the eyes of a number of Chassidim who merited to enjoy Simchas Torah with the Rebbe.

The memories transcribed here have all been adapted from diaries and interviews with multiple Chassidim. Much thanks to Rabbi Yisroel N. Vogel for his assistance.

INTRODUCTION - EUPHORIC JOY

I spent Simchas Torah by the Rebbe ten times between the years 5736-5748. Needless to say, after so many years I'm left with many fond memories of unforgettable moments that I was privileged to see or, more accurately, live through and experience. I'll attempt to organize my thoughts in order to come out with a reasonable outline of what transpired in the Rebbe's court during that forty-eight hour period.

Firstly, I'd like to clarify the following: anyone who shared those experiences with me will agree that they are absolutely indescribable. The emotions and sensations which we felt simply cannot be articulated in words. Bearing that in mind, let us begin...

I'd like to begin with a few introductory words about what the atmosphere in 770 was like at the time. I'm often reminded of the Frierdiker Rebbe's Sich'a in which he describes the "Yechidus-Hakofos" of the Alter Rebbe. He quotes the words of the renowned Chossid, Reb Pinchas Reizes, who said that after partaking in these Hakofos he began to understand what it must have been like to be Oleh L'regel to the Beis Hamikdash and feel a G-dly sensation. We as Chassidim unquestionably felt the same way in regards to our Rebbe's Hakofos.

When the Rebbe entered the Shul for Hakofos, the entire crowd instantaneously united to become like one entity, "K'ish Echad, B'lev Echad," all together enjoying every moment, basking in the Rebbe's aura. The Rebbe's every move orchestrated the song and dance of the Chassidim, be it by the clapping of his hands or by others signs of encouragement that he cast out to us throughout the night.

The energy on Simchas Torah was that of another caliber. Although it is true, that throughout the year, during Farbrengens and on other occasions the Rebbe did hearten the singing, Simchas Torah however, was just at another level altogether.

Indeed, having been with the Rebbe on

Simchas Torah I can tell you with utmost certainty that *this* is the Rebbe's day. The energy was in the air; it mesmerized all of those present, and penetrated into the deepest recesses of their hearts.

To better explain myself, I'll relate the following story: I once came across a Litvishe Rosh Yeshivah in a Chabad house, who told me how on one occasion he was privileged to be present at the Rebbe's Hakofos on Simchas Torah. He was so moved by the experience that he decided to come back again on the fol-

lowing year, so that his son would have the opportunity to be there as well. His heart just didn't allow him to deprive his son of living through such an uplifting experience, and so he was compelled to come back again. You see, by the Rebbe one didn't come to *see* Hakofos, rather to live them and experience them first-hand.

Throughout the entire Yom Tov, especially on Simchas Torah and during the Hakofos themselves, we felt as if the entire world didn't exist, as if it vanished



into thin air. As if we all transcended to a dimension higher than time and space altogether.

In our “world”, all that existed were the Nigun that we were singing, along with the Rebbe’s encouragement to it. One could see on the Rebbe’s face the intensity of the joy, and specifically when he would place his eyes upon you, you were possessed by some inner strength and compelled to dance and rejoice with every last ounce of it.

Now, having completed this humble introduction, which to the best of my abilities, still cannot come close to bring out the ecstasy and joy which was felt in the air - let’s talk about some occurrences which stick out in my mind from those unforgettable days.

(Excerpt from interview with Rabbi Y. N. Vogel)

MA’ARIV

Until 5738 (the year when the Rebbe suffered a heart-attack during Hakofos), Maariv of Shmini Atzeres started approximately at 7:00, with Hakofos following at around 9:30. After 5738, efforts were made not to burden the Rebbe un-

necessarily, and it was decided to start Hakofos at 9:00.

The same was with the auctioning of the Pesukim of Ato Horeisa: until 5738, this procedure would extend for almost two and a half hours, whereas from 5739 onwards, most of the sales were done beforehand, with very few remaining to be completed at the time of Hakofos itself. During the nights, the proceeds of the auction would go toward Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim and during the day toward Merkos L’inyonei Chinuch.

Most years while awaiting the Rebbe’s arrival to Ma’ariv, the Chassidim sang the Nigun of “Ksiva Vachasima Tova” (without the words) and danced in circles. A most memorable moment was when the Rebbe reached his place and turned around towards the crowd to encourage the singing by clapping his hands. The excitement that overtook the Chassidim during that second was electrifying.

On the eves of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah the Bochorim and Anash would troop out of Crown Heights to enliven the Hakafos in other communi-

ties. The Rebbe would purposely delay the pre-Hakafos Farbrengen in order to give time for all to return from their Tahalucha.

In 5711 a small minyan for Ma’ariv was held in the Friediker Rebbe’s office, which was followed by Hakafos. Later on, the Rebbe descended to the main Shul in 770 and joined the Chassidim for the final Hakofa.

PRE-HAKOFOS FARBRENGEN

Before Hakofos there was always a Farbrengen. These were always full of excitement and very uplifting. The crowd, at least in the beginning, was not so numerous, as most of the Bochorim and Anash were on Tahalucha, and the Shul was set up accordingly. These Farbrengens were remembered as some very special moments, due to both the content and special style of the Sichos, as well as the unique manner by which the Rebbe encouraged the singing of the Chassidim. Everything was different than usual, so much more joyful.

Here are some of the most memorable occurrences that transpired during these special Farbrengens as recounted by nu-

Yaamod Adoneinu Morein V’rabeinu...!

Simchas Torah 5711 was one with mixed emotions. The passing of the Friediker Rebbe was still quite fresh, dampening the regular Yom-Tov joy. On the other hand, Chassidim desperately yearned that the Rebbe openly accept the nesius.

A small Minyan for Ma’ariv and Hakafos was held in the Friediker Rebbe’s room. Once Chassidim returned from Tahalucha the Rebbe joined them in 770 for the final Hakofa. The Rebbe instructed that everyone go on Tahalucha again the next day and therefore the Pre-Hakafos Farbrengen would be held earlier in the day in order for everyone to take part.

At the beginning of the Farbrengen the Rebbe poured Mashke to a few Chassidim from his Becher. Almost instantly, everyone began clamoring for some Mashke from the Rebbe’s Becher. The Rebbe exclaimed: “Listen

up Yidden, now you can connect to the Rebbe himself... there is no need for intermediaries... What do you want from me?” and the Rebbe broke into tears.

The next day, the Rebbe davened together with the Chassidim in the Shul on the main floor of 770. When they reached the point of Choson Bereishis Reb Alter DovBer Chaskind began reading Meireshus... and emotionally called up the Rebbe with the title - “Yaamod Adoneinu Moreinu Verabeinu...(the Rebbe’s name)”. Chassidim looked on with intense hope as the Rebbe accepted the title and arose to receive Choson Bereishis.

Following Davening the Shul broke into a excited clamor, many Chassidim wished each-other Lechaim on the milestone achieved that morning.

That afternoon, the Farbrengen took on a completely different atmosphere than the day prior. The Rebbe was in joyous spirits and poured Mashke to many of those assembled, and instructed a number of Chassidim to turn their Kapotas inside out!

merous Chassidim:

On the night of Simchas Torah in 5712 the Chassidim gathered for a Farbrengen in the Sukka which was in the the Shalash¹. The Rebbe instructed that part of the Schach over where the Rebbe was sitting should be cleared away to demonstrate that tonight was not a night of Sukkos. The Rebbe then announced that he would fulfill this as a Shliach for everyone else assembled.

In 5722 the Rebbe Farbrenged from 8:30pm until 12:00am. During the Farbrengen, the Rebbe turned to the Bochorim who had come from Eretz Yisroel and requested that they sing an “Eretz Yisroel Niggun”. Rabbi Avrohom Lider of Kfar Chabad introduced a Niggun with the words “Hoshea Es Amecha”. The Rebbe seemed very pleased with his choice and began encouraging the singing strongly.

During the Farbrengen of Shemini Atzeres 5730, the Rebbe called up-

on the representatives of the “Big Four” (referring to the four most powerful countries – USA, Great Britain, France and USSR) to come and receive a bottle of Mashke. The Rebbe then called upon one Chossid from Eretz Yisroel to receive a bottle of Mashke and Mezonos to distribute in the Ezras Noshim.

The Rebbe then went on to exclaim:

“In the U.N. when the “Big Four” come together with a proposition they then call the ambassadors from the other countries and they hold a world-wide vote. Now I have a proposal that I would like everyone gathered here to vote on.

“And the proposal is: “הוי אמת ותרותו הוי אמת וישראל אמת ואמת הוי לעולם”.

“All those who would like to vote in favor of the proposal should respond with Lechaim!”

Instantly the entire 770 replied with a resounding Lechaim Velivracha!

The Rebbe then rose in his place and began a jubilant Niggun. In midst of the

Niggun the Rebbe stopped and announced: “In the U.N. after a vote is held everyone heads to the theater. As the people here will not go to a theater and there is no time, therefore I suggest that someone should make a grand ‘Kule’ [somersault] and through that we will fulfill the ‘requirements’ of having a theater.”

Three people immediately made a “Kule” and the Rebbe was very pleased. The Rebbe ended the Farbrengen with a Brocha that the Golus end and Moshiach should arrive speedily!

In 5736, during the Farbrengen, the Rebbe asked that a Nigun containing English words (“S’fas Hamedina”) be sung. The Bochorim immediately began to sing “From 770 we’re marching out...” but the Rebbe did not show any response, so they understood that this was not what the Rebbe wanted to hear. In the meantime, the Rebbe turned to Reb Berel Zaltzman and said, “Nu! Sing a

Everyone was pushing and shouting in order to catch a better view of what was going on, so the Rebbe related a parable he had heard as a child whilst attending Cheder.



Nigun in Russian!” Reb Berel sang the Russian song “Mi Chabadniki...” while the Rebbe encouraged them on. Then the Rebbe once again requested a Nigun in English, asking “Where are the camp counselors?” The Bochorim began to sing “Just one Shabbos, just one Torah...” and the Rebbe suddenly began to encourage the singing very strongly!

The Rebbe then requested that a Nigun be sung in French, adding that although the Alter Rebbe fought the French, a Nigun should still be sung. The French Guests began to sing their National Anthem, and the Rebbe waved them on, turning all the while to his right where the French guests were situated, and paying special attention to Reb Meir Abuhasera (the Chossid to whom the Rebbe always signaled to whistle). When they finished, the Rebbe asked that a Nigun be sung in Yiddish. In response, the Chassidim sang “Zol Shoin Zein Di Geula...” and with its conclusion, the Rebbe instructed to sing a Nigun in Loshon Hakodesh, “The source of all other languages,” and they burst forth with “Mipi Keil”.

At the conclusion of the Farbrengen, Reb Mordechai Taleshevsky stood up to make announcements about the arranging of the Shul for Hakofos; as he always did after all such Farbrengens. This time however, the Rebbe instructed him to stand up on the table. When Reb Moedechai began to shout “Shaa Shtiler!” the Rebbe said “Say it three times as one does at Kol Nidrei!” He repeated the call three times, but evidently he did not understand what the Rebbe meant with Kol Nidrei, so the Rebbe explained, “Say it three times and each time, raise your tone of voice a bit,” and that’s what he did. All the while, the Rebbe was smiling very broadly. After that, the Rebbe began to sing “E Vadyemi” (without the words), and while encouraging the singing immensely, the Rebbe left the Shul.

Another episode:

In 5744, the Rebbe mentioned during the Farbrengen that with the power of Torah, every Jew has the ability to bless, and with that, the Rebbe began to chant,

“Yivorechicha Ad-noi... Yo’er Havaye... Yisa Havaye... Va’ani Avorachem”. (In a Sicha later on, the Rebbe explained why he had not concluded the Possuk with the words “V’somu...” as customary.) All the Chassidim repeated the Pesukim afterwards and the Rebbe answered “Amen”.



[Beginning from the year 5739, a lavish Kiddush was arranged on the service lane of Eastern Parkway (coordinated by Reb Nochum Markowitz); something which pleased the Rebbe very much, to the extent that, although generally, there were only forty five minutes between the Farbrengen and Hakofos, the Rebbe extended this intermission to be a full hour. During this Kiddush in 5744, in accordance with the Rebbe’s words during the Farbrengen, Chassidim were going about and blessing each other; it was a beautiful sight to behold.]

Rabbi Vogel relates:

“In 5746, towards the end of the Farbrengen, the Rebbe said “Lechayim” and drank the entire cup, holding it up-side-down for a while until the last drops escaped out of the cup. The Rebbe then raised the cup up high so that all could see that it was in his hand in an overturned position. I still recall the amused expression on the Rebbe’s face at the time, as Chassidim didn’t know how to react to this rather perplexing act. Finally (if my memory serves me correctly, it was Reb Yoel Kahan who understood the

Rebbe’s intentions, and), the Chassidim realized that the Rebbe meant that all of the cups and bottles should be consumed and turned over.

Indeed, in the Sicha that followed the Rebbe explained the significance of turning the cups upside-down according to what is said regarding the drawing of the Menorah in the Rambam’s manuscript, where the cups are portrayed in an overturned position. The reason given is, because it symbolizes the objective of the Menorah; to cast light outward and illuminate the world, much as the windows of the Beis Hamikdash, which were shaped similarly to allow the light to reach the outside². This is also what is indicated by turning the cups up-side-down, symbolizing the effort to influence, and ultimately transform, the world outside.

After that Sicha, the Chassidim began to sing “Al Hasela”, and the Rebbe encouraged the singing with exceeding zeal, while raising the up-side-down cup in his hand. What an incredible sight!

Meanwhile, a tumult began to form amongst the crowd. Everyone was pushing and shouting in order to catch a better view of what was going on, so the Rebbe related a parable he had heard as a child whilst attending Cheder: ‘When a father sleeps in his home, all the members of his household go about murmuring ‘Shhhh...’ to ensure a quiet atmosphere. When an important minister sleeps, all the people of the town go about and proclaim ‘Shhhh...’ When the king sleeps, all the citizens of his country go about chanting ‘Shhhh...’ One can only imagine what kind of “pleasant” sleep it turns out to be! If only everyone would just be quiet for themselves and not attempt to display that he’s a bigger Chossid by saying ‘Shhhh...’ then we may actually have quiet!’”

During Shemini Atzeres of 5752 Chassidim were privy to extraordinary moments with the Rebbe. The Rebbe entered to the exuberant singing of Ksiva V’chasima Tova. The singing roared louder and louder as the Rebbe drew closer to his place when the Rebbe sud-

denly turned around and encouraged the singing dramatically with both hands! This continued for a long while as the atmosphere in 770 grew ever more palpable.

After Ma'ariv, the Gabai Reb Shea Pinson announced that Hakafos would begin at 9:00 and a Kiddush would now be held in the Sukka. He concluded with a lively Gut Yom Tov, when suddenly the Rebbe began speaking a Sicha from the Bima set up for Davening! The Sicha lasted about 10 minutes and included brochos according to the order of the Alef Beis.

The Rebbe started his father's Hakafos Niggun and turned to leave 770. Chassidim headed to the Sukka for Kiddush astonished at what had just taken place. Hurriedly they did Chazora on the Sicha, and prepared for Hakafos that was turning out to be like no other.

HAKAFOS

On the night of Shmini Atzeres, the Rebbe recited the first and last Possuk of all three cycles of "Ata Horiesa", and on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe recited all the Pesukim of the first cycle and the first and last Possuk of the second and third cycles. The Rebbe recited the Pesukim aloud and it was possible to hear them across the Shul as long as one was quiet.

At the conclusion of each cycle, the Rebbe always began a Niggun – his father's Niggun after the first, the famous "Nigun Simcha" after the second, and "Uforatzta" after the third. The latter always came in sequence to the Possuk of "Vehaya Zar'acho" that the Rebbe recited at the conclusion of the three cycles on both the night and day of Simchas Torah.

Each year had its own incredible occurrences.

Often dignitaries and Israeli diplomats would come to 770 to take part in Hakafos. The Rebbe would speak to these officials in between Hakafos, and in the year 5729 the Israeli Council in USA bought three Pesukim of Ato Horeisa for the Rebbe!

Rabbi Vogel shares his memories with us:

"I remember, for example, three separate times when the Rebbe spoke during the Hakafos ceremony. The first was on the night of Shemini Atzeres 5737, when the Rebbe spoke in between the fourth and fifth Hakafah.

When it came time for the fifth Hakafah, the Rebbe suddenly turned towards the Gabbai, Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz, (who was in the midst of announcing who should come up for the next Hakafah,) and began to say something.

Everyone thought that he was going to give some sort of instruction regarding the announcement, but to their amazement, the Rebbe began to say a Sicha!

He said that now is the time when they are celebrating Hakofos in the holy city of Chevron, and being that Chevron is one of the cities that belong to the Levi'im, all the Levi'im are to go dance for this Hakafah, while singing the "Famous March". (Evidently, this was in response to the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Chevron prior to Yom Kippur, in which a few Sifrei Torah had been burned in Me'oras Hamachpeila.) And so it was. All the Levi'im gathered in the middle of the Shul, and the Rebbe, remaining at his place, began to chant "Melech Olamim Hoshea Na..." I remember this being done in a very loud voice. When he finished, the Rebbe said, "Nu! The famous march!" Immediately everyone began to sing, and the Rebbe encouraged the singing tremendously.

On the next night, the night of Simchas Torah, the Rebbe spoke between the fourth and fifth Hakafos again, instructing all those that have any connection with the IDF, either having been in the reserves or were still in the army, to dance by this Hakafah while singing the Niggun "Hoshee'a Es Amecha".





In 5739, the Rebbe spoke five times, before each of the middle Hakofos, instructing who exactly was to go for each one. When it came the turn for the guests from Eretz Yisroel, they sang the Niggun “Hoshee’a Es Amecha” for forty minutes straight!

The third year this happened was 5742. The Rebbe spoke on the nights of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, before the fifth and sixth Hakofos. During one of these talks, the Rebbe said, “It is known that ‘in the place where one **wants** to be, is where he is actually found’. Therefore, everyone should imagine that they are standing next to the Kosel HaMa’aravi.”

Following the Hakofos every year, the crowd was always still in very high spirits; we used to sing “Aleinu” as it is sung in camp, while the Rebbe encouraged us, followed by the “Al Tirah”, and so on. Generally, before leaving the Shul, the Rebbe would call out, “Gut Yom Tov!” three times, while waving his hand each time. In 5742, instead of Gut Yom Tov, the Rebbe called out, “Dalo! Galus!” three times, and immediately began to sing “Hu Elokeinu...”

During the Hakofos of Shemini Atzeres 5744, the Rebbe was exceptional-

“The Rebbe then raised the cup up high so that all could see that it was in his hand in an overturned position. I still recall the amused expression on the Rebbe’s face at the time.”

ly happy, much more than on a regular year. I remember, for example, that when we sang “Al HaSelah”, the Rebbe stretched out his hands in front of him from one side to the other. (It’s hard to articulate exactly what it looked like.) It was truly an unbelievable sight; the rejoicing on that night was remarkable.

The “electricity” of the atmosphere in 770 on Simchas Torah is something absolutely indescribable. There were certain Niggunim that were sung every year, like “Al Hasela” and “V’Chol Karnei Rishaim”.

Regarding “V’Chol Karnei Rishaim”, I’m always reminded of a very incredible scene, which reoccurred each time this Niggun was sung. There is one section of the Niggun, right before the words “Oivav Albish”, which is repeated over and over (“Oy...”). Sometimes this was done for a minute or even longer, with the Rebbe clapping his hands all the while. Imagine: the vast crowd of 770 are all engrossed in the song, chanting, “Oy...” with every last ounce of strength that they possessed, and instantly, as soon as the Rebbe stopped clapping, every single Chossid in the crowd stopped within a split second! This is where it was

clearly evident that all the singing in 770 was completely orchestrated by the movements of the Rebbe's holy hand.

During most of the years that I was present, the middle Hakofos lasted about five to six minutes each, and the Rebbe's Hakofos were shorter, due to the fact that as the years went on, the Rashag (who always danced along with the Rebbe) wasn't able to dance for so long. As soon as he started getting tired, the Rebbe immediately ended the Hakafah. Hence, in the later years, the Rebbe's Hakofos only lasted about three to four minutes each. This was the case until 5748.

The year 5748 ("Tismach") will always stick out in my mind as the most joyous Simchas Torah ever. That year, the Rashag was not well enough to participate in the dancing, and the Nigunim lasted much longer than usual. The Rebbe encouraged the singing with incredible intensity and each Niggun lasted for approximately ten to fifteen minutes. It was just unbelievable! The impressions of that night will always remain upon the hearts and minds of all those present. The celebration was brought to a new

level; something that we had never seen before. Even the elderly Chassidim who had been at the Rebbe's Hakofos since the beginning of his Nesius, all agree that they had never seen such rejoicing in 770 as they saw in 5748. (Someone told me that he had noticed that when the Rebbe entered the Shul he was wearing an old, worn out Kapote, as if indicating that he was "ready for work"...)

This was also the first year that the Bima from the middle of the Shul was raised on top of the Rebbe's davening Bima, so that for the middle Hakofos everyone in the Shul was able to see the Rebbe clearly. I remember that throughout the night everyone lifted their cups up to the Rebbe to say Lechayim. The Rebbe answered each one, "Lechayim V'Livrachah!" What a wonderful sight!

Each and every one of the Niggunim on that night were sung so joyously! One could almost see in the Rebbe's eyes the joy radiating onto the crowd. When the Rebbe looked at you, his gaze brought to the surface the purest happiness from within you.

That's as far as Hakofos went. But the

real amazement was to take place only afterwards. That year, Reb Yitzchok Kogan was honored to hand the Sefer Torah to the Rebbe for his Hakofos. At the conclusion of the seventh Hakafah, he stood at the front of the Shul and awaited the Rebbe's return so that he could take the Sefer Torah and place it in the Aron Kodesh. But when the Rebbe arrived at his place, he began to sing "Uforatzta". One thing I can tell you with utmost certainty: I will never **ever** forget that "Uforatzta". Through all my life that I've seen the Rebbe, I've never seen him rejoicing to such an extent. The Rebbe held the Sefer Torah in his hand and pointed it in all directions – when he said "Yomo", to the right, "Kaidma", to the left, and so on. At a certain point I actually saw both of the Rebbe's shoes off the ground; the Rebbe had jumped completely into the air! Just unbelievable!

When the Niggun concluded, Reb Yitzchok began to approach in order to take the Sefer Torah, but Rabbi Groner motioned to him to go away, because he realized that the Rebbe was about to begin another Niggun! Indeed, the Rebbe



The Bochorim's Chazoka

The second night of Hakafof in 5712 carried a unique elation and Simcha and the Chassidim danced late into the night even after the Rebbe had left.

At 1:45 AM the Rebbe descended from the Seuda in the Friediker Rebbe's apartment, beheld the Chassidim dancing and joined the circle of dancers! The dancing became so enlivened that it spread into the streets and the traffic wasn't able to move.

In the midst of the celebration the Rebbe called out: "If so, we will do Ato Horeisa and Hakafof again!" Startled yet excited, Ato Horeisa was once again chanted. The Rebbe was honored with reading Ato Horeisa for the first time. When he reached the posuk of "V'yhi Binsoa

Aron" the Rebbe instructed the Bochorim to read it.

After they said it the Rebbe said they should recite it again; "Shtarker un Lebediker!" Once again the Bochorim called out the posuk. The Rebbe responded that "Es is noch nit dos" and instructed they sing it again! The Bochorim launched into the Posuk with gusto and strength however the Rebbe was not yet satisfied, but since three times is a Chazoka they will not say it again.

During the next round of Ato Horeisa the Rebbe again motioned that the Bochorim should recite the Posuk of V'yhi Binsoa Aron. This time the Bochorim shouted the Posuk with every fiber of their beings, and this time the Rebbe responded to their delight: "Es iz shoin oif a veg!" [It's already on the right track]. In the third round of Ato Horeisa once again the Rebbe instructed the Bochorim to say the same Posuk.

began to sing "Nyet, Nyet..."

When the singing subsided, the Rebbe clutched the Sefer Torah closer to him and gave it a kiss. I spoke this over with many of my friends, and they all told me unanimously: we never saw the Rebbe kiss anything before! (Even if we did, it was done so quickly and inconspicuously that it was pretty hard to notice at all. But this time...) the kiss was as such that we were all able to feel the love that the Rebbe had towards the Sefer Torah; it brought tears to my eyes! I have never seen such a wholehearted kiss ever before in my life, and I shall never forget it.

In general, when the Hakofof ended and the Rebbe left the Shul, many of the Chassidim would remain in 770 and dance throughout the night. We were simply unable to leave the atmosphere at 770 and go home to sleep! The impressions of Hakofof forced us to stay. I remember that one year we danced continuously throughout the night, till seven o'clock in the morning, without even noticing that the night had passed. We wanted to continue the joy and celebration and keep it going for as long as possible. There were also many Bochorim who would go then and do a Hakafah, in accordance with the Rebbe's instruction

Every single Chossid in the crowd stopped within a split second! This is where it was clearly evident that all the singing in 770 was completely orchestrated by the movements of the Rebbe's holy hand.

in the earlier years that all those who didn't receive a Hakafah before should do so afterwards.

THE DAY OF SIMCHAS TORAH

Generally speaking, Shachris was at 10:00. In 5736, the Rebbe entered the Shul for Shacharis at 10:30. But in 5737, the Rebbe arrived at 9:55; the Shul was almost totally empty. For the remaining five minutes, the crowd sang a Niggun and the Rebbe vigorously encouraged their singing.

In 5747, Reb Yisroel Duchman davened Shachris at the Amud, and as soon as he finished the Kaddish following Shir Shel Yom, he had a bottle of Mashke and some Mezonos ready on the side. He immediately began to say out loud, "Aileh Mo'adei... Shehakol NiHiya B'Dvaro!" He quickly drank the Kiddush and straight away continued with "Borei Minay Mizonos!" All this was done in a very loud voice and came out in a very humorous manner, to the extent that the Rebbe began to laugh.

As is known, the Rebbe received Maftir at all times, with the exception of twice a year – Yom Kippur in the morning and Simchas Torah. On Yom Kippur in the morning, Rabbi Hadakov received it, and on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe did not

receive Maftir because he was called up for Chasan Bereishis. Until 5743, Reb S. A. Kasarnofsky received it. After he passed away, others did. So on Simchas Torah the Rebbe always returned to his place immediately after his Aliya and listened to the Haftorah from there.

In one of the later years, Reb Mendel Futerfas was called up for Maftir and, unlike most years, the Rebbe remained near the Bimah (and did not return to his place) in order to hear Reb Mendel's Haftorah from up close. In the following year, Reb Mendel was called up again. This time he figured from beforehand that the Rebbe would stand right next to him the entire time, so in order to ease his tense feeling that he would have from standing and reading right next to the Rebbe, he said a Lechayim earlier.

For Chasan Bereishis, the Rebbe was called up, together with the Frierdiker Rebbe, to the Torah, both by their full names. Here we saw an interesting difference in the conduct of the Rebbe on Simchas Torah and the rest of the year. Usually the Rebbe held the Sefer Torah just with his hands, whereas on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe held the Sefer Torah with his Tallis. (Most likely because this is what the Frierdiker Rebbe writes in a letter – that one should only hold the Sefer Torah with a Tallis.) It also seemed as if the Rebbe left a space between himself and the Ba'al Korei.

As the Sefer Torah was carried back into the Aron Kodesh, the crowd sang "Sisu Vi'Simchu", and the Rebbe clapped along.

FARBRENGENS

The Farbrengens of Simchas Torah day were known to be very long. After 5738, they did shorten a bit, but generally they lasted for many hours. For example, in 5736 the Farbrengen began at 7:30 in the evening, and the Ma'amar was recited at 12:35 at night! This Farbrengen continued well past one o'clock in the morning.

In 5722 the Rebbe spoke passionately about the Yidden who were suffering behind the "Iron Curtain". Initially it



The Rebbe was in joyous spirits and poured Mashke to many of those assembled, and instructed a number of Chassidim to turn their Kapotas inside out!

seemed that the Rebbe was trying to suppress his tears, however after a while the Rebbe began weeping emotionally.

Between the Sichos the Rebbe turned to Reb Berke Chein who had just been released from USSR. Reb Berke had switched into wearing the classical fedora hat as opposed to the Russian "Kasket". The Rebbe exclaimed to him: "Moderne?!" Immediately Reb Berke threw off his hat. The Rebbe handed him a napkin to wear on his head to take the place of the second Makif³. Only once a traditional Russian "Kasket" was brought did the Rebbe let him remove the napkin and wear the hat!

At the end of the Farbrengen, the Rebbe led the bentching with a cup of wine, as he did at all of the post-Yom Tov Farbrengens. In 5740 the Rebbe began to say

"B'Rishus Ado..." and then stopped. (There were times in the earlier years that the Rebbe would say out loud, "B'Rishus Adoneinu Moreinu ViRabeinu", and all through the years, the Rebbe always paused for a moment at that point.)

Let us pray that Hashem will have mercy on us and put an end to this overbearing Galus so that we will be able to experience Simchas Torah in the Rebbe's aura once more! ■

1. A Courtyard that used to divide between the buildings of 770 and 788 Eastern Parkway. During the earlier years of the Rebbe's Nesius, Farbrengens and rallies were often held there to accommodate the large crowds.

2. See Likkutei Sichos vol. 21 pg.164

3. Chassidim are careful to wear two head coverings (Makifim), particularly during Davening, and fulfilling Mitzvos.