

א חסידישער דערהער...^{♦♦♦}

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 17

ערש"ק פרשת שלח, ט"ו סיון, תשע"א

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Leben Miten Rebben	1
The Luchos: Square or Round?	2
Niggun — Seder Niggunim	3
Biography - Reb Berke Chein -4	3
Q&A - Why do we say Pirkei Avos all summer?	4

ש"פ) נשא תנש"א - Nossai Tinassei

As Chassidim, we carefully follow the Rebbe's every move in anticipation to learn as much as possible from his actions just as well as the Torah he teaches. There are times when the Rebbe does things that are out of the ordinary and may be difficult to understand, and we appreciate them all the more. On Shabbos Parshas Nossai, 5751, something happened that came across to be so strange; it borderlines mysterious. After conducting the usual Farbrengen at 1:30 in the afternoon, the Rebbe appeared in the Shul a second time just minutes before Shkia. The few lucky ones who happened to be present at that moment were in for a surprise...

The time was 3:55. The Farbrengen having ended with Mincha following shortly after, the crowd at 770 slowly disbursed. Some headed home for the Shabbos meal, while others remained to hear a *Chazzarah* on the Sichos that were just spoken, and yet a third group started out to hold Shabbos gatherings at Shuls in the neighboring areas. All in all, the Shavuot festivities of this year have just come to their close. There was a Farbrengen on Erev Yom Tov, a short Sichah outside 770 said to the Tahalucha participants upon their return on the second night of Yom Tov, a regular Yom Tov Farbrengen on the second day with Kos Shel Brocha distribution afterwards lasting until 2:00 a.m.; during the week there was a *Yechidus Klolis* for the guests that arrived to spend Shavuot with the Rebbe, and now we have just ended the post-Shavuot Shabbos Farbrengen. This should have concluded all the Shavuot-related events for this year. Or so we thought...

A few minutes past eight in the evening the Rebbe appeared at the door in the back of the Shul holding his Siddur in one hand and in the other, a silver-colored *Kvort* filled with water and a pink towel. Only an estimated 50 people were present at the time who watched in amazement as the Rebbe walked towards the Aron Kodesh. After recovering from the initial shock of the scene, they began to follow behind the Rebbe until he reached the bleachers that blocked his way in front of the Aron Kodesh. The Bochorim hurried over and hastily moved them aside, allowing the Rebbe to pass by and reach the Bima where he davens. Right in front of the Aron Kodesh stood the small Bima used for Krias Hatorah during the week where a Minyan was in the midst of Krias for Mincha but they quickly relocated as soon as the Rebbe entered the Shul.

Placing his Siddur on the Bima, the Rebbe asked, "A Shissel?" and chants were suddenly heard from all over, "A Shissel! A Shissel!"

The Rebbe waited for two minutes as Reb Avrohom Holtzberg ran to bring the large Coffee urn (used to distribute coffee to the Chassidim before the Rebbe's Farbrengen each Shabbos). Remnants of the coffee spilled all over the floor as Reb Avrohom pushed his way through the crowd until he reached the Rebbe. The Rebbe then washed his hands and while drying them, he motioned that Challah should be brought.

As none of the *Mazkirim* were present when the Rebbe appeared, people were in doubt as of what could be done. Rabbi Levi Garelik hurried to his father-in-law's house, Rabbi Klein (who lives next-door to 770) and notified him of the surprise. Rabbi Klein, in turn brought a Challah from somewhere.

All the while, the Rebbe continually wiped his hands with the towel until his chair (which was still at its place from the Farbrengen) was brought over and placed on the floor next to the Bima where he davens. After the Rebbe sat down Rabbi Klein handed the Challah to the Rebbe. The Rebbe smiled at him, and then made Hamotzi, dipping on piece of Challah into the other. (Later on when salt was brought, the Rebbe dipped his Challah into it again).

The Rebbe then told Rabbi Klein that he wishes to sit on the Bima so that the crowd will be able to see and hear him better, so the after the Rebbe stood up and walked up the stairs, the chair was immediately situated on top of the Bima in the corner, facing the crowd.

The tenseness in the air could almost be touched with bare hands. No one knew what to expect after such an unusual appearance...¹

Opening his Siddur, the Rebbe instructed that they sing B'nei Heichola and sang along with everyone. When the singing finished, he closed the Siddur, placing it on top of the banister and began with the first Sichah.

The Rebbe spoke fervently of the imminent Geulah connecting it with the current time and date, and then concluded, "As is the custom at Farbrengens as these², we'll now sing the Nigunim of all the Rabbeim [the Rebbe specified each one by name], and with these Nigunim we will finally end the Golus!"

Continued on back page

התקשרות

ענינו של נשיא אמיתי הוא לדאוג לצרכיהם של בני", הן בענינים רוחניים והן בענינים גשמיים, וכפי שמצינו אצל הנשיא הראשון - משה רבינו - שע"י ניתנה לבני התורה ("משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה כו"), ועל ידו ירד לבני"ן "לחם מן השמים", כלומר, שמה רבינו דאג לבני"ן הן ברוחניות - תורה, והן בגשמיות - מן. . . ומזה מובן, שכאשר יש ליהודי שאלה או ספק בענין מסויים, וענין זה מעיק לו כו' - בודאי ניתנו לו רבותינו נשיאנו את הדרך המתאימה למצוא פתרון לשאלתו. (משיחת פורים תשמ"ג)

* ומה שמקשה הלא א"א עתה לשאול את כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר הכ"מ כשיש ספק בהנהגה - אם יעמוד חזק בהתקשרותו אליו, מבלי ישיב לב לפתויי היצר, וישלח השאלה על ציון כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר הכ"מ - וועט דער רבי געפינען א וועג ווי עם צו ענטפערן.

(אג"ק ח"ג ע' 107)



Square or Round?

What shape were the Luchos?

The Luchos from the cover of Talks and Tales



Shavuos is the time of the giving of the Torah. 3,323 years ago Hashem descended on Har Sinai and gave the Torah to the Yidden. More accurately, he gave them two stone Tablets known as the Luchos, with the Aseres Hadibros written into them. The Luchos were the work of Hashem, 'Masse Elokim', and the words were engraved from one side to the other. Together with the Luchos, Hashem gave the entire Torah, both Torah Sh'beksav and Torah Sh'ba'al Peh.

Later, on the 17th of Tammuz Moshe Rabeinu broke the Luchos after witnessing the Yidden dancing before the Eigel Hazahav. Finally, on Yom Kippur, Hashem gave the second set of Luchos, without the commotion that had surrounded the first set. The first (broken) and the second sets of Luchos were placed into the Aron which was kept in the Kodosh Hakodoshim of the Mishkan.

Nearly every Lubavitcher bocher now knows that the Luchos were square, not rounded at the tops. We will trace back and see when the Rebbe re-established this fact, why we must say they were round, and even suggest the origin of the rounded Luchos.

The First Public Shturem

The first time the Rebbe publicly spoke about the Luchos was Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5741¹. The Rebbe said the time had come to fix a widespread mistake about the Luchos, namely - the Luchos do not have rounded tops, but square. The truth is, the Luchos were not even rectangular but two perfect squares, each stone six *tefachim* by six *tefachim* and three *tefachim* thick.

Every single vessel in the Mishkan was filled to the top when used for *Avoda*. Hashem did not create something to go to waste, each object has its purpose, even physical space. This is highlighted when dealing with the Mishkan, the place where the Shechina resides. This is one of the explanations why a vessel can only make its contents holy if it is full.

The Luchos had to be square. The Gemara Baba Basra, Daf 14a describes the Aron and the Luchos giving measurements for both. The Aron was two and a half *amos* by one and a half *amos*, if the Luchos were rounded, the Aron should also have been rounded. And if the Aron was square and the Luchos were round then the Luchos would not 'fill' the Aron.

Many other *sforim* also describe the Luchos as being square, for example Rabbeinu Bachye says clearly "...and know that the Luchos were square..."

So what created the common perception that the Luchos were round?

The Root of the Error

In that very same sicha the Rebbe suggests the root of the mistake:

Originally all Yidden pictured the Luchos as square. When they began printing *sforim* they would have to put them through a government censor, usually a goy. The censor would mark on the front page a Jewish symbol using the rounded Luchos as a Jewish sign to make the sefer "look" Jewish. Those who bought the sefer would not focus on the front page or on the cover, rather on the inside. And so many years passed and hundreds of *sforim* were printed, until the rounded Luchos became common accepted knowledge. (The reason the goyim would make round Luchos might have been because they wanted to "decorate them" and make them "nicer". In any case they would play with pictures from the Torah doing their own style, as seen in the "horns" they added to Moshe, not understanding the meaning of *Karnei Hod*.)

Loss of Trust

In the Farbrengen of Simchas Torah 5742 the Rebbe responded to some objections people had had against changing the Luchos to square.

There were some who claimed that changing the Luchos would 'Motzei Laz' (give a bad name) to the many generations of Talmidei Chachamim that never changed it. However, this is no simple matter; it might very well have a dangerous effect on the child's education.

When a child receives a certificate, or sees the school letterhead, with the wrong Luchos, he believes that the Luchos actually looked as they are depicted i.e. with rounded tops. Later, while learning through the Gemara in Bava Basra, he discovers that the Luchos were in fact squares! This undermines the trust that he once had in his teachers, principal and school, and this affects him even when learning topics that are true from beginning to end.

Early Beginnings

In fact, the Rebbe had already been talking about the mistake (and fixing certain cases) long before 5741. The earliest sign we find of this is in a letter from 22 Shvat 5721² to Rabbi Sholom Rivkin (from Seattle later from S. Luis). The Rebbe writes: "The picture of the Luchos is rounded on the top! I was always surprised by this, from the Gemara it seems that they were square. The Luchos on Shmuessen³ are precise (specifically square)."

Spreading the Word

Soon after the Rebbe announced the mistake, he began a campaign to spread the knowledge of this fact, because of two reasons. Firstly, this has to do with the Luchos which are the basis of the entire Torah, and secondly, because the mistake is a result of non-Jewish influences affecting our holy tradition.

Use the Opportunity

Every cover of the Moshiaich Times, published by Tzivos Hashem, was first given in to the Rebbe to be checked over. Many times the Rebbe would add or give direction on the pictures and design. The cover of the Shavuos Edition 5743 showed a man holding a Torah for children to kiss. The Rebbe added on the side: "It would be *kedai* to use the opportunity to show on the Torah Cover a picture of the square Luchos." (See pictures below)

The square shaped Luchos has entered the common mindset and what has previously been the "Lubavitcher Luchos" is now found in many shuls and schools around the world.

1. Sichos Kodosh, 5741 Vol. 2 p. 513

2. Igros Kodosh Chelek 20 pp. 157

3. Shmuessen Mit Yunget Un Kinder, the Yiddish Edition of Talks and Tales. The Luchos are found on both covers.





שערי נגינה

Seder Niggunim

This week we present you, not with an actual niggun, but rather the history behind what we call "Seder Niggunim". It's during this time that niggunim are taught and learned. For many this is a time of expression, a place to lose themselves in the deep emotions of the *neshama*. It's a time that every bochur should cherish, especially whilst keeping in mind the great role it plays in Darkei HaChassidus.

The Idea is Inspired

On Simchas Torah 5660, the Rebbe Rashab spoke at length about the importance of singing in davening. He explained this with the saying of Chaz'al "*kol meorer kavonah*" - a niggun has the ability to affect ones train of thought and mediation, arousing him to reach higher, deeper, levels.

In the Beginning Stages

After Yom Tov a meeting was called in which it was decided that the students of the yeshiva should place special stress on learning chassidische niggunim. A group of *menagnim* was put together and within a few weeks the beautiful sounds of the T'mimim singing chassidische niggunim between Mincha and Kabolos Shabbos was heard.

The group expands

As time went on the group grew bigger, however, it lacked orderliness. The knowledge of niggunim was far from satisfactory and aside from that they were not being sung with clarity. This changed two years later with the coming of Noson Nota Paharer¹ in 5662. He is the one who is credited for having rearranged the "group of menagnim" and stood at their head. Many times the Rebbe Rashab expressed his satisfaction that they were arranged in an orderly fashion².

The T'mimim from this special group also made various compositions, including the niggun 'Yedid Nefesh'³ and 'Shoshanas Yaakov'⁴. They sang Yedid Nefesh in front of the Rebbe Rashab who took great liking to it and from then on it was sung every Shabbos.

Seder Niggunim in Lubavitch

Amongst the many diaries in which Tmimim wrote about their stay in Lubavitch, we find a most vivid description of the special "*Seder Niggunim*"⁴:

"After Mincha the older bochurim began to arrange the tables in the large zal (originally it was in the small zal which barely had enough room for everyone) into the shape of a "shlus-mem" (a box shape). In the meantime the Friediker Rebbe would arrive and sit at his place. Only older bochurim and Anash would be allowed to attend and each one would try to arrange a good spot for himself from which he would be able to hear the ma'amer.

Up until the Rebbe's arrival the group would sing different niggunim with the rest of the T'mimim and the Chassidim joining in. This would usually go on for about half an hour, though sometimes it lasted up to an hour. Upon the Rebbe's arrival, silence quickly filled the large zal. A path was hastily cleared and they moved aside a table from the big 'mem'. The Rebbe then made his way through the square, sitting down directly across the table at which the Friediker Rebbe would sit. The *hachana niggun* would then begin and as the last notes died down the Rebbe Rashab began the ma'amer in a low voice, raising it as he went on..."

This special seder, of singing niggunim and chazzering a

א ציור פון א חסיד

Reb Berke Chein Part 4

Criminals Arrange Chanukah

On Chanukah, Reb Berke would relate the incredible story of how he lit candles in a Soviet prison. When he spoke about it, his face filled with emotion as he relived his experience.

"It was one time when I was arrested by the secret Soviet police," Reb Berke would begin his story. "I sat in prison with criminals, murderers, and thieves. They had a leader, a dictator, his face alone could frighten you. It was among these criminals that I was imprisoned, but for some reason I found favor in their eyes and they did not harm me.

"Erev Chanukah came and I was depressed. Every Jewish home will have Chanukah candles; they will sing songs, eat latkes and be happy. But my house will be dark: no candles, no latkes, no joy, and no chassidisher farbrengen. I will have to spend Chanukah with these criminals..."

"I was very sad. One prisoner noticed it and asked me, 'Rabin (Rabbi) why are you depressed? How can we help you?' I tried to give an excuse, but he was not to be dismissed easily. He soon returned with the leader of the gang. 'What's the matter with you?' he asked in a firm tone. 'There are no secrets here, we're all friends.'

'Och un vei to such a friendship,' I thought to myself. I had no choice but to tell him the truth.

'What can we do for you? What do you need to observe the holiday?' the leader asked. I replied, 'I have to light candles, but even if I had candles, it is forbidden to light fire in prison.'

'Let me worry about the prison regulations,' he interrupted.

"He soon returned and said, 'everything will be all right, Rabbi. I spoke with my colleagues and each one committed himself to set aside a piece of margarine from our food ration. We'll make wicks from the insides of our coats. We will then put the margarine in onion halves and you'll have beautiful candles..."

"I was shocked. But what about the fire?' I mumbled. 'In the evening you will see,' he said proudly.

"In the evening the leader brought me margarine which he had collected from the other prisoners and the wicks from their coats. I put everything together and waited for the fire. The leader then told his friends to surround me like a wall in order to conceal the fire. He then took a piece of cloth, placed it on the floor and began rubbing it with his boot. After about a minute suddenly a flame appeared.

While reciting the brochos I was very emotional and when I reached 'Shehecheyonu tears flowed from my eyes. I lit the candle and my heart was filled with joy.

"As long as the candle burned, the prisoners stood around and hid it with their coats. They did this every night of Chanukah. Luckily, the guards didn't notice. This is how I celebrated Chanukah in prison with the help of my gentile neighbors."

To be continued...

ma'amer, continues to this very day by Anash and especially by bochurim in Yeshivos.

1. See Derher Issues 1, 2.

2. Hatomim No. 5

3. Found on Heichal Neginna

4. This description is taken from sefer "Zikoron L'bnei Yisroel" (Reb Yisroel Jacobson) and "Reshimos Devorim" (Reb Yehudah Chitrik).



Q & A: So why do we say Pirkei Avos after Shavuos?

Before we look into the reasons why we continue saying Pirkei Avos after Shavuos, let's first briefly explain why we say it at all.

Hachonah for "Matan Torah"

After the Yidden left Mitzrayim, they embarked on a period of self-refinement and character improvement. This was critical in order that they be worthy of receiving the Torah on Shavuos. While counting the Omer, we too try to perfect our Middos. To assist in achieving this goal, we study Avos, the Masechta which is devoted to piety, humility, kindness and ethics. ("Mili D'chasisusa"). Pirkei Avos contains six Perokim, and there are six Shabbosim between Pesach and Shavuos. Every Shabbos, we learn one Perek. This corresponds to a person's Middos of which there are mainly six. (Malchus is sometimes considered a collection of all the other Middos.)

Pirkei Avos teaches us 'Derech Eretz' ('Midas Chassidus'), the way to behave and act, not Halochos. We know there is a rule: "Derech Eretz Kodmah L'Torah", before one can actually go ahead with the learning of Torah, one first needs to know how to behave in the most ethical way, and bring into practice. Therefore the learning of Pirkei Avos serves as a most suitable preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuos.

Right before the first Perek the Alter Rebbe writes in the Siddur: "It's customary to recite one Perek of Pirkei Avos on each Shabbos between Pesach and Shavuos... and some have the Minhag to continue this throughout all the summer Shabbosim.

It's seems quite clear that this is the Minhag we follow today.

When did this become the accepted practice?

It is known that the Rebbe Rashab learned Pirkei Avos during all the summer Shabbosim. Seemingly the reason is because he learned it very much in depth and was only able to cover a number of Mishna's a week, therefore it stretched out the whole summer.

It appears that the Friediker Rebbe followed this Minhag, as the Rebbe mentioned on numerous occasions that a number of Maamorim from after Shavuos start with quotes from Pirkei Avos. This seems to imply that it was continued to be said, hence the relevance of the 'Dibbur Hamaschil'.

On Shabbos Parshas Shmini, 5712, the Rebbe said that the accepted Minhag by Anash is to say Pirkei Avos only until Shavuos. However, occasionally after Shavuos the Rebbe would explain things from the Perek of that week, saying –as mentioned above– that we have Maamorim which start with quotes from Pirkei Avos.

For many years the Rebbe would not say Pirkei Avos with Anash but rather go to his room immediately after Mincha.

However, on Shabbos Parshas Nasso, 5738, which was the first Shabbos after Shavuos the Rebbe stayed downstairs, sat in his place and began learning Perek Rishon.

At the farbrengen that Motzoei Shabbos, the Rebbe explained the idea of learning Pirkei Avos before and after Shavuos.

From that day on it became the accepted Minhag by Anash to continue learning it throughout all the summer Shabbosim. On many occasions after that the Rebbe strongly encouraged this practice.

For questions and/or comments please call: (347) 541-4770.

All content is copyright © by A Chassidishe Derher and/or previous authors and publishers as applicable.

Countering the Temptations of Summer

In addition to the above-mentioned reason that Pirkei Avos serves as a preparation for Matan Torah, there is an additional motive which is connected to the time of year, the summer months.

The summer is generally a time when people are more active, tend to vacation, and all too often relax their moral and religious standards. The chapter-a-week of Avos is meant to keep us spiritually strong and healthy, and prepared to face the moral challenges the summer months present. This applies throughout the entire summer².

1. See Otzer Minhogei Chabad, Nissan – Sivan.

2. Toras Menachem, Hisvaaduyos 5747, pp. 460-466. In addition the Rebbe also explained how the first reason applies for the other summer months as well

On another occasion the Rebbe said: "Being that we have maamorim with Dibur Hamaschil's from Pirkei Avos and this was done publicly shows that it is something for all of us.

Continued from front page

As time progressed the rumor that the Rebbe was holding a Farbrengen spread swiftly all across the neighborhood, and 770 was gradually filling up until the pushing became unbearable...

This Farbrengen included many, many awesome moments³, but a shortage on space compels us remain brief...

At the conclusion of the third Sicha, the Rebbe said that in order to allow people in other neighborhoods to participate in the Farbrengen, he would distribute Kos Shel Brocha after Bentching.

The distribution lasted until 12:15 a.m.

After Kiddush Levona, Chassidim broke out into a spontaneous joyous dance. Each placed his hand on his fellow's shoulders while attempting to catch another 'vort' from the Farbrengen that he may have missed, celebrating the unbelievable occurrences we were privileged to experience today...

1. Bear in mind that the position in which the Rebbe sat was also totally unprecedented. The Rebbe sat in his chair directly facing the crowd with no table in between them! (Only a small table was placed on the floor where the Challah and water were held).
2. I.e. Yom Tov Farbrengens when the Rebbe washed before Shkiah and continued into the night.
3. The Rebbe sang the Rabbeim's Nigunim along with the Chassidim bearing a very solemn look throughout.

פרק א' ליום	ג' פרקים ליום	מורה שיעור ללימוד הרמב"ם
הל' גזילה ואבידה פ' יא	הל' גירושין פ' ז-ט	ט"ו סיון
פרק יב	פ' י-יב	ט"ז סיון
פרק יג	פ' יג-הל' יבום וחליצה פ' א-ב	י"ז סיון
פרק יד	פ' ג-ה	י"ח סיון
פרק טו	פ' ו-ח	י"ט סיון
פרק טז	הל' נערה בתולה פ' א-ג	כ' סיון
פרק יז	הל' סוטה פ' א-ג	כ"א סיון