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HISTALKUS OF THE REBBETZIN

CHOF BEIS SHEVAT 5748

The following is a description of the events surrounding Chof-Beis Shevat 5748, a time-period forever engraved in the hearts and minds of Chassidim. This account is based on diaries of various bochurim who were present at that time.

EARLY INDICATIONS

On several occasions during the *sichos* said in the month of Shevat 5748, the Rebbe spoke with great fervor that all Jews should have long, healthy lives, continuing to live through the coming of Moshiach. The Rebbe's words were received with astonishment—even striking a bit strange—as the Rebbe continually spoke, with great emphasis, in this manner.

THE REBBETZIN TAKES ILL

In the days preceding Chof-Beis Shevat, the Rebbetzin did not feel well. On Tuesday evening, the night of 22 Shevat, a team of doctors held a meeting at the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's home, at the conclusion of which they resolved that the Rebbetzin must be hospitalized for about two weeks until she would regain her complete health. The Rebbe was also present at the meeting and agreed with the doctors' decision to have the Rebbetzin go to the hospital. Before leaving home, the

Rebbetzin requested to be alone with the Rebbe for a few minutes and they remained together for close to a half hour. Meanwhile, Mrs. Esther Sternberg headed to the hospital, along with the doctors, to arrange the necessary preparations for the Rebbetzin's arrival.

Rabbi Krinsky was immediately summoned to drive the car. As the Rebbetzin left her home, the Rebbe accompanied her and walked with her until she entered the car. Upon arrival at the hospital, the Rebbetzin sat down on the wheelchair that had been prepared for her and began to speak with Reb Zalman Gurary for a while. One of the doctors approached and asked the Rebbetzin some questions, when the Rebbetzin suddenly requested a cup of water. Mrs. Sternberg brought a cup of water and handed it to Reb Sholom Gansburg to give to the Rebbetzin. The Rebbetzin then said *shehakol* and drank the water.

HISTALKUS

A short while after she was admitted, the doctor realized that the Rebbetzin had lost consciousness. The medical team immediately attempted to handle the situation to the best of their ability. Reb Sholom, who all the while kept in close and constant contact with the Rebbe, called the Rebbe and notified him of



Suddenly the Rebbetzin requested a cup of water

INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE

During the *sichos* leading up to Chof-Beis Shevat 5748, the Rebbe seemed to continually use 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, based on what the Torah teaches. Namely, 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'cha*] rav, and so on. The Rebbe also mentioned that all requests for *brachos*, without exception, are taken [by the Rebbe] directly to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe, and therefore there is no reason for every person to wait for a personal response, as the *bracha* is given regardless.

Yud Shevat 5748 occurred on a Friday, so the *farbrengen* for the Frierdiker Rebbe's *hilula* 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 15 Shevat the Rebbe reiterated these words, prefacing that the [Frierdiker] Rebbe provided us with all the guidance that we need throughout his lifetime, and continues to do so in an ever-greater measure, today, after his *histalkus*. One can find answers to all difficulties by studying Chassidus, and if there still remains a doubt, one should consult his rav.

On 21 Shevat, the Rebbe held a *yechidus klolis* for the guests who came for Yud Shevat. During his talk then, the Rebbe spoke yet again about how to resolve the various issues that arise.



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the circumstances. When he called, the Rebbe was in the middle of being *magiah* the *sicha* he had said on 15 Shevat. The Rebbe suggested a few methods of medication, which were subsequently related to the doctors. At 12:45 a.m., one of the doctors came out of the room and notified all those present that the Rebbetzin had passed away.

Words cannot describe the pain they felt. They realized that they were faced with the daunting task of informing the Rebbe, yet no one wanted to be the one to convey the heartbreaking news. A call was immediately made to Rabbi Groner's house, and he was asked to be the one to convey the sad information to the Rebbe. Rabbi Groner thereupon called Reb Berel Junik, and the two decided to go to the Rebbe's house together. When they arrived, they found Reb Sholom Gansburg waiting outside, and he explained to them that the Rebbe had requested that no one enter the house. Finally, Dr. Feldman called the Rebbe from his car-phone and told the Rebbe about what had happened. Upon hearing the news, the Rebbe asked to speak to Rabbi Groner, who was instructed to bring the Rebbe's *tallis* and *tefillin* from his room in 770, and a few *sefarim* that deal with the laws of mourning.

Following is the description of events that followed, as recounted in the diary of one of the *bochurim* in 770 at the time:

THE SHOCK

It is late at night, yet I am still overwhelmed by all the occurrences of this dreadful day.

Perhaps writing things down will help lighten the heaviness that weighs on my heart. This is what happened:

Last night, at 1:25 a.m., a few of us were sitting in our room talking. We hadn't yet gone to sleep, when suddenly, one of our friends entered. He appeared frightened and teary-eyed, and asked us to turn off the tape of *niggunim*. After we did so, he added in a sad voice, "Bad news. The Rebbetzin..."

It took a few seconds until we absorbed the words we had just heard. Without saying another word, we got dressed to go outside, and soundlessly left the building. *Bochurim* who had heard the news were also coming down the steps. We crossed the street and headed towards 770. A few hundred people were already standing outside; all were silent. The only sound to be heard was occasional whispering every now and then. "When exactly did it happen? How did it take place? Where is the Rebbe now? What was the cause of the passing? Was it sudden or were there hints and indicators beforehand?" The questions filled the air, but no one had any answers.

A few dozen *bochurim* sat and recited Tehillim. We each took a Tehillim in hand, sat down quietly, and began reading. The small *zal* of 770 gradually filled with many more *bochurim* and *yungeleit* who had all heard the news. Everyone sat and said Tehillim silently.

In the meantime, some pieces of information began circulating, shedding a bit of light on the situation. It was related that the Rebbetzin



A HANDWRITTEN YOMAN OF THE TIME AROUND CHOF-BEIS SHEVAT 5748.

had passed away at 12:45 a.m., and that the Rebbe was now at home. The Rebbetzin hadn't been feeling well during the past few days, and suddenly her condition had worsened and become critical, so she had to be taken to the hospital. Apparently, her condition had been quite serious and the doctors had begun giving her medication. She passed away while being treated, may her *zechusim* protect us.

After spending some time with Dr. Feldman to work on having the Rebbetzin's *guf* released, Rabbi Groner continued to 770 to collect the items that the Rebbe had requested. While there, he announced that a *goral* should be made amongst the *bochurim* to determine who would take part in the *minyan* for Tehillim near the Rebbetzin. The *minyanim* would be on a rotation of every hour. This took quite some time to arrange, but we *bochurim* finally managed. A list of *bochurim* was posted on the wall containing the names of those who would take part in the *minyan* during the first hour, the second, and so on. We heard that the *aron* had not yet arrived at the house, but, nevertheless, many *bochurim* headed to President Street to await its arrival. When they reached the house, they were met by a large crowd that had already gathered there.

The *mikva* on Eastern Parkway was opened at 3:00 a.m. We were told that whoever wished to participate in the *minyan* and say Tehillim had to immerse in the *mikva* beforehand. It was said that the *levaya* would take place the next day at 12:00 p.m. and that the *tahara* would take place at the house.

TAHARA

After going to *mikva*, we waited for a while outside the Rebbe's house in the bitter cold. The *aron* arrived at 5:20 a.m. At 5:30, the door of the house suddenly opened, and the Rebbe walked out wearing a coat. The look on his face was frightening, his head tilted forward. The street was dark, save for the light emanating from the bulb atop the front door. The light shone on the Rebbe's face, revealing an indescribable expression of sadness and pain, as he proceeded slowly while gazing at the *aron*.

The Rebbe slowly descended the steps in front of the house, his right hand clutching the banister. The Rebbe gazed at the members of

בס"ד.

להלן רשימת המסיימים ואנשי חזן כמאן והן ששאר עירות שיכנסו להפילות, הרשימה
הוא ע"ס הגורל, והסדר הוא כדן (לדוגמא) ביום ה' ששאר יכנסו כל אלו אשר
שם ששחמם סתחיל באות קו"ף, וביום ה' בנחה יכנסו כל אלו אשר שם ששחמם
סתחיל באות ביי"ח או ה"א, וכן הלאה.

באם תהי' (לדוגמא) יותר סתחילים איש אשר שם ששחמם סתחיל באות קו"ף וכן
הלאה, אז תהי' גורל כינייהם על אשר.

וסתחילים אשר כל אלו אשר אינן זה הורם להיכנס, נא לא לנסות להיכנס וכדו'.

יום ה' ששאר	אות קו"ף
יום ה' בנחה	אות ביי"ח וה"א
יום ה' פקריב	אות פדו"ק ושי"ן
יום ו' ששאר	אות נא"ב, זי"ג וזי"ח
יום ו' בנחה	אות אל"ף ורל"ח
פועש"ק פקריב	אות פ"א ורי"ס
יום א' ששאר	אות נו"ן וסס"ך
יום א' בנחה	אות ניס"ל
יום א' פקריב	אות כ"ף וקיי"ן
יום ב' ששאר	אות טי"ת ויג"ד
יום ב' בנחה	אות פ"ס
יום ב' פקריב	אות לפ"ד ותי"ו

המארגנים
בשם המנהל

THE LIST, DETERMINED BY GORAL, OF WHO WOULD JOIN THE MINYANIM AT THE REBBE'S HOME DURING THE WEEK OF SHIVA.

chevra kadisha from Shomrei Hadas, nodded his head in thanks, and then said "א גרויסן יישר כח" (Thank you very much).

The Rebbe followed the *aron* into the house, and the members of the *chevra kadisha* followed behind. After the candles were lit, the Rebbe went up to the second floor.

At first we followed the *goral's* results as best we could, although each group's time span was reduced to a mere ten minutes each. Nevertheless, due to the accumulating crowd of people who wished to enter the house and have a chance to recite Tehillim, a new arrangement was made—groups consisting of a few dozen people would enter the house for five minutes to recite Tehillim, and then exit through the back door, at which point a new group was to enter.

We passed through a small foyer to a larger room, and then into the living room. The look of the house was that of one clean with simplicity; the lack of extravagance and modernism was clearly evident. It was a simple home with uncarpeted floors and plain walls.



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We finally reached the kitchen, located at the end of the house. Before the kitchen there was a flight of stairs, which led to the next floor. On the right side of the small kitchen lay the Rebbetzin, wrapped in a white sheet, with wooden planks beneath her. Her head was facing south, and there were two large beeswax candles nearby.

We stood in a line and said Tehillim, slowly moving towards the exit. Tears flowed from my eyes. A few minutes later we left through the back door at the opposite end of the kitchen to a small porch with steps leading to the backyard.

It was now dawn, and thousands of people kept coming. The line was very long, containing many people who had just been informed about what had happened.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE LEVAYA

Police cars closed off President Street from New York Avenue to Kingston Avenue to cars. "No Parking Today" signs were also posted alongside the curb.

The plans for the *levaya* were that the Rebbe would accompany the *aron* by foot from the house until Kingston Avenue, and then follow the *aron* by car to the cemetery. The men were to likewise walk that same route, while the women would walk down Brooklyn Avenue and then turn onto Eastern Parkway.

Signs notifying of the Rebbetzin's passing and the time of the *levaya* were written up and distributed in all the *frum kehillos* in New

York City. I also heard that, already from early morning, the radio in New York was broadcasting the news every quarter-hour. This was in addition to notices that appeared in various newspapers.

At daybreak, many people were still streaming towards 770. At 7:00 a.m., a double siren (from the Shabbos alarm) blasted throughout the neighborhood, broadcasting the sad news to anyone who had not yet heard. Throughout the night and into the morning the phones in 770 rang continuously. There was just one question: "Is it true?"

At 7:00 a.m., the members of the *kollel* went to dig the *kever* next to Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, *a"h*, wife of the Rebbe Rashab and grandmother of the Rebbetzin.

A *minyan* was arranged at the Rebbe's house at 9:30 a.m. for the Rebbe to say *kaddish*.

Chassidim arrived from all over the U.S. and Canada. We heard that a large group from Europe would be arriving on the Concorde jet, leaving there at 8:00 a.m. and arriving at 11:00 a.m. local time.

A meeting was called to discuss the necessary arrangements for the *levaya*, beginning at 10:30 a.m. in 770. Two Chassidim went up to the *bima* to start the discussion. One began to speak, but was immediately interrupted by his own tears and thus unable to continue. When the second one attempted to take charge in his stead, he too choked up with tears as he began to speak.

The decided arrangements went roughly as follows: In addition to the police presence, who were to oversee a general maintenance of orderliness, 150 *bochurim* would be appointed by the *Vaad Hamesader* to ensure the smooth flow of the procession. The Rebbe was to be the first to walk directly behind the *aron*, followed by the *gabba'im*, members of *mazkirus*, Chassidishe rebbes, rabbanim, and *gedolei Torah*. The police, along with the team of *bochurim*, would follow and ensure that a respectable empty space remains between the Rebbe and the entire crowd at all times.

The police closed off the entire route to traffic, as well as the adjacent streets. At approximately 11:00 a.m., both sides of President Street and all the adjoining streets



were replete with people, with many more still on their way.

Police barricades were erected along the pavement's edge. The area near the house was clear, aside from policemen, members of the *Vaad Hamesader*, and specific individuals, who were permitted to stand there. Dozens of motorcycles and police cars stood ready in pairs in order to travel in front of the procession and to ensure that order was kept. There were hundreds of policemen, in addition to the 150 *bochurim* of the committee.

Chassidishe rebbes began to arrive, as well as rabbanim, *roshei yeshivos*, and many public figures.

It was related that earlier that morning the Rebbe had sent members of the *chevra kadisha* to the Ohel of the Frierdiker Rebbe to notify about the *histalkus*.

Approximately ten minutes before the *levaya*, the Rebbe descended from his room to the first floor, and spent some time alone in the room where the Rebbetzin lay. Rabbi Fuchs of the *chevra kadisha* cut the Rebbe's *sirtuk* for *kriah*, after which the Rebbe ripped it further by hand, leaving a lengthy tear.

THE LEVAYA

At exactly 12:00 p.m., absolute silence prevailed over the throngs of people. The procession left the house headed by those who carried the *aron*, as the Rebbe followed closely behind. He walked with his head bent, occasionally glancing from side to side observing the procession and uttering words the entire time. The Rebbe looked pale and tired. Behind him were the *gabba'im* and members of the secretariat, followed by Chassidishe rebbes and distinguished rabbanim. After them walked the police, and continuing still behind them, the enormous crowds.

Order was maintained with much difficulty as the people in the crowd continuously pushed forward to be able to see the Rebbe. The Rebbe's car traveled immediately behind him, so that he would be able to enter it as soon as he wanted to. Another row of 70 policemen surrounded the car, preventing the crowds from pushing forward and blocking it. When the procession reached Eastern Parkway, the pushing was so forceful that the police and the members of the



THE Kfar CHABAD SPECIAL EDITION PUBLISHED FOLLOWING THE REBBETZIN'S HISTALKUS.

Vaad Hamesader were barely able to keep the situation under control. Then the Rebbe entered the car and continued to the cemetery, while the secretaries, Rabbi Hodakov, Rabbi Groner, and Rabbi Klein, sat in the back. Police motorcycles led the way, clearing traffic and passing through all the traffic lights. Dozens of buses headed towards the cemetery, as well as hundreds of private cars.

The large crowds were not permitted to enter the cemetery, so they remained standing outside, behind the fence. Only the *mazkirim*, members of the *chevra kadisha*, and a group of 100 distinguished individuals went inside with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe stood facing the open grave. His head was bent and he continuously looked at the members of the *chevra kadisha*. The Rebbe asked Reb Berel Lipsker of the *chevra kadisha* a number of questions privately. When they lowered the *aron* into the *kever*, the Rebbe shuddered a bit and his head moved back slightly. It was a painful sight to behold... Before filling the *kever*, a bag was placed next to the *aron*.

After the *kevurah*, one of the *mazkirim* removed the Rebbe's non-leather shoes from a paper bag and set them down near the Rebbe. The Rebbe slipped off his regular shoes and put



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on the non-leather shoes. This took no more than several seconds.

After covering the grave of the Rebbetzin, the Rebbe recited *Tziduk Hadin* followed by *kaddish*. The Rebbe's voice choked with tears a few times while saying *kaddish*.

NICHUM AVEILIM

Two long rows of people stood alongside the path out of the cemetery. As the Rebbe passed between these rows, they said "*HaMakom yenacheim eschem...*" (May Hashem comfort you...)

The Rebbe entered the car looking pained and moving with great difficulty. Then the Rebbe suddenly exited the car, plucked bits of grass from the ground, and tossed it over his shoulder, as is customary according to Kabbalah. As the car made its way back to Crown Heights, it was again led by a police escort.

Only once the Rebbe left did the vast crowd of thousands enter the cemetery and approach the *kever* of the Rebbetzin. There was tremendous pushing as each person said a *perek* of Tehillim. There were shovels placed on the side as each person attempted to add a bit of earth on top of the *kever*.

The main floor of the Rebbe's house was rapidly transformed into a makeshift *shul*, and



The Rebbe's voice choked with tears a few times while saying kaddish.



22 SHEVAT 5748, CB HALBERSTAM VIA JEM, 10734



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at 3:15 p.m. the Rebbe davened *Mincha* at the *amud* in his home. Only a few dozen people were allowed to join, primarily shluchim who had arrived from around the world and would be returning home later that day. After *Mincha*, the Rebbe surprisingly said a short *sicha* that lasted a few minutes, in which he mentioned that according to *halacha* the mourner must begin with some words of his own before taking comfort from others. The Rebbe concluded by making mention of the verse “*V’hachay yitein el libo...*” (see below), highlighting that this is especially applicable in our instance, where the first name of the *nifteres* is Chaya, and with that, the Rebbe gave a slight smile. Although up until that point the Rebbe appeared to be quite broken-hearted, his smile made the Chassidim feel a bit better.

This was followed by *nichum aveilim*. The davening had taken place in the large room on the first floor. After davening, the Rebbe sat on a box covered with a thin black cover (which he generally used on Tisha B’Av) in the south-eastern corner of the room, and people passed by the Rebbe quickly, exiting through the door at the southern wall. The Rebbe gazed deeply at each person. A very sad and heart-rending scene...

For the remainder of the *tefillos*, beginning with *Maariv* at 6:00 p.m., it was decided that a *goral* would determine who was to be allowed into the house to daven with the Rebbe’s *minyan*. The *mazkirim* announced that on Motza’ei Shabbos the Rebbe would daven in the large *shul* at 770, thus giving all the opportunity to pass by and be *menachem avel*.

After each *tefilla*, many people passed by to be *menachem avel*, even those who did not participate in the *minyan*. The *tefillos* were transmitted live to 770 enabling the vast majority of Chassidim, who were not privileged to be present while the Rebbe davened at home, to hear the Rebbe’s davening. This made things a bit easier for us in this particularly difficult period.

That night, a group of shluchim from around the world convened to discuss various projects that would be initiated in the Rebbetzin’s memory, including the establishment of funds that would bear her name. An extra emphasis was to be placed upon increasing the observance of the three *mitzvos* associated particularly with Jewish women—*kashrus*, *taharas hamishpacha*, and Shabbos candles.

All throughout the *shiva*, many distinguished people continuously arrived at the Rebbe’s home



THE REBBE DAVENS AT THE AMUD IN HIS HOME.

to be *menachem aveil*, including United States senators, Israeli officials, Chassidishe rebbes, Litvishe *gedolim*, and so on. Each one passed by the Rebbe as he sat near the door following davening, at times stopping to share a few words.

During *Shacharis* on Thursday, the second day of *shiva*, there were already four *yungeleit* who named their daughters Chaya Mushka after the Rebbetzin. Chassidim noticed from the Rebbe's expression that this brought much satisfaction.

SHABBOS

For Shabbos *Parshas Mishpatim*—Shabbos *Mevorchim* Adar, the Rebbe stayed at 770. Before Shabbos, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Piekarski, *rosh yeshiva* of the central Tomchei Temimim, if it would be halachically permissible to hold a *farbrengen*, although it was still during *shiva*. Rabbi Piekarski told the Rebbe that being that the Rebbe is accustomed to *farbrenging* each month on *Shabbos Mevorchim*, refraining from doing so would be an indication of mourning in public, which is forbidden on Shabbos.

Indeed, the Rebbe held a *farbrengen* that week as he would every month. Chassidim observed that although the Rebbe was still in the midst of *shiva*, he did not show any signs of mourning at all. On the contrary, the Rebbe encouraged the singing strongly.

During one of the *sichos*—on the topic of the imminent arrival of Moshiach and the return of the souls of the departed to their bodies with *techiyas hameisim*—the Rebbe made mention of an interesting point, adding: Why must they suffer? What have the souls done wrong that they must wait for us to complete our task and bring Moshiach sooner? It is only due to *our* failure to carry out our own duties that they find themselves waiting so long for that day.

All those present could not help but apply the Rebbe's sorrowful words to the tragedy that had just befallen the Rebbe and his Chassidim, and it inspired and urged them to do all in their ability to hasten the coming of Moshiach.

The Rebbe also dedicated a *sicha* to discuss the establishment of new institutions that will carry the Rebbetzin's name, offering a few

instructions regarding how to go about doing so.

[Immediately following Shabbos, the Rebbe edited the *sicha* for publication. It is interesting to note that on the following Sunday, a large gathering was held in 770 for all Chassidim in response to recent events, and in the midst of it, Rabbi Krinsky hurried in with a special message from the Rebbe. He was instructed to review before Chassidim the details that the Rebbe had discussed on Shabbos with regard to the establishment of new institutions, and to mention a few additional directives.]

At the conclusion of Shabbos, the Rebbe davened *Maariv* at the *amud* in 770 and afterwards sat down to receive *nichum aveilim*, enabling the broader public—who would not have a chance to perform it while the Rebbe was at home—to do it as well, as mentioned earlier.

THE END OF SHIVA

On 27 Shevat, a *sefer Torah* dedicated to the memory of the Rebbetzin was started, organized by N'shei Chabad, and the ceremony was held in the Rebbe's home.

On Tuesday, 28 Shevat, the final day of *shiva*, the Rebbe sat after *Shacharis* for only twenty minutes. Then a delegation of *rabbanim* came into the room and told the Rebbe with tears in their eyes to stand up from mourning, as dictated by *halacha*. Words cannot describe the

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There were already four yungeleit who named their daughters Chaya Mushka, after the Rebbetzin



RABBI ELIEZER ZIRKIND BEGINS WRITING A SEFER TORAH IN HONOR OF THE REBBETZIN IN THE REBBE'S HOME, 27 SHEVAT 5748.

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EXCERPTS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH THE REBBE DURING NICHUM AVEILIM FOLLOWING CHOF-BEIS SHEVAT 5748

RAV BORUCH
MEIR YAAKOV
SHOCHET
STOLIN-KARLIN REBBE

Rav Shochet inquired about the age of the Rebbetzin, and the Rebbe replied that generally it is customary not to calculate years, etc. However, because the question was asked, he'll respond: On her upcoming *yom huledes*, 25 Adar, she was to be eighty-seven.

The Rebbe: The concept of *siluk haneshama* (departure of the soul from the body) is an *inyan pnimi*—it bears a much deeper meaning—though it also expresses itself in *chitzoniyus* on a practical level. *Bipnimiyyus*, the *siluk* refers to an *aliya*—an elevation.

Although the word *histalkus* literally means departure, in the Zohar it is understood to mean elevation, specifically in reference to the *Shechina* being in an elevated state. Being that “*tzaddikim domim l'Boiram*” (*tzaddikim* are likened to their Creator), the same must be said concerning the *histalkus* of the *neshama*—it cannot be referred to as departure. On the contrary, it indicates an *aliya* to an even higher level.

MR. DAVID CHASE
CHAIRMAN, MACHNE
ISRAEL DEVELOPMENT
FUND

Mr. Chase: G-d bless you.

The Rebbe: From now on may we meet—together with all the members of the group—in good circumstances.

Mr. Chase: Rebbe, with your permission I would like to set up a trust fund in memory of the Rebbetzin. It is not the time now to talk about the details, but I just want to get your permission.

The Rebbe: In general, it is the appropriate time—the time of *shiva*. Concerning the details, they should be discussed with the rabbinical council, being that this is a matter of rabbinical decision. May it be in a good and auspicious time, for the benefit of many and *l'aliyas haneshama*...¹ for all who will benefit from the fund, and for you as well.

MR. DOV HIKIND
ASSEMBLYMAN, NEW
YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
MR. ANDREW STEIN
CHAIRMAN, NEW YORK
CITY COUNCIL

The Rebbe: May G-d Almighty bless you for your kindness and assistance to the population of this city, including, and especially, the Jewish population of this city, without discrimination. May you go from strength to strength in all your public and communal affairs.

Mr. Hikind: We are very sorry to hear about your tragedy. Please accept my sincere condolences. We are all praying for you.

The Rebbe: May G-d Almighty bless you to succeed in translating this into action for the good of the entire population, as I mentioned before, and this will serve as a gratification to the soul of the departed.

Her first name was Chaya, which means life. This is the name that will be inscribed on her *matzeiva*, which means that it is perpetual even after her life on this earth, until *techiyas hameisim*. I hope it will be very soon...

Mr. Hikind: I hear she was a wonderful woman.

The Rebbe: In my opinion it is underestimated—in *my* opinion. In any case, G-d Almighty knows the full truth. And especially if everyone will try his or her best to emulate her and to fulfill her wishes, and to do as I said before, then this is the best gratification for the *neshama* and also brings great benefit for all who follow in her ways.

MR. NATHAN LEWIN
ONE OF THE PRIMARY
LAWYERS IN THE
SEFARIM CASE (HEI
TEVES)

MR. YITZCHAK
LEWIN
NATHAN'S FATHER

The Rebbe (to Mr. Y.L.): I am sure you know what your son has done for us [concerning the *sefarim* of Agudas Chasidei Chabad].

Mr. Y.L.: Yes. I was there when he spoke. I just heard yesterday from him how the Rebbetzin, *a"h*, affected the court case, enabling it to succeed. He showed the deposition the Rebbetzin gave and it made a tremendous impact. She was a good messenger.

The Rebbe: Her words made their impact, but it was ultimately your son who acted as the messenger to bring these statements before the judge.

Mr. Y.L.: So he was the messenger. I am sure that he succeeded in the merit of the Rebbe. The Rebbe had someone to rely on. May G-d continue to help him and enable him to influence further. He has tremendous abilities and the Rebbe's *bracha* helps him every time.

The Rebbe: To the extent that it depends on me, he has my *bracha* in double measure. **1**

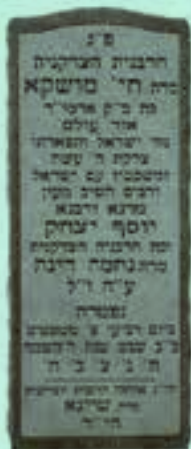
1. The Rebbe cried while saying these words.



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In the midst of the farbrengen, the Rebbe approached the top of the stairway on the second floor and attempted to listen in



THE REBBETZIN'S MATZEIVA.

emotions that overcame the members of the group as Reb Zalman Gurary blessed the Rebbe with many long years and success in all that he does. Rabbi Chaim Gutnick of Australia blessed the Rebbe with *Birkas Kohanim*, crying all the while.

Mincha was at 3:15, after which the Rebbe distributed dollars for more than three hours.

FARBRENGEN

Before *Maariv*, the Rebbe gave the *gabbai'm* one hundred dollars, instructing them to hold a *farbrengen* in memory of the Rebbetzin. After *Maariv*, the *gabbai* announced that a *farbrengen* would take place in 770 that night. The Rebbe turned to him and said that it would be more appropriate to hold the *farbrengen* in the home where the departed soul resided during her lifetime. The *gabbai* immediately revised his announcement, saying that the *farbrengen* will take place here, in the Rebbe's home, and will continue later in 770. The Rebbe went upstairs and within a few minutes sent down a message that the entire *farbrengen* should take place in the house.

Crowds of Chassidim flocked to the Rebbe's home that night to participate in this very unique *farbrengen*. It has been said that during the *farbrengen* the Rebbe approached the top of the stairs on the second floor and attempted to listen in to what was being said downstairs. At the conclusion of the evening, the *gabbai* announced that an additional *farbrengen* was to be held in 770 the next day.

SICHA FOLLOWING SHIVA

On Wednesday, 29 Shevat, the day after the Rebbe got up from *shiva*, he delivered a *sicha*, throughout which his holy eyes were closed. The Rebbe expressed thanks to all those who were *menachem avel* and gave *brachos* during the *shiva*, quoting the *pasuk*! "And I will bless those who bless you." The Rebbe then divulged, based on the *maamar Chazal* that "one who gives a gift to another must inform him,"² that he had mentioned all the well-wishers at the Ohel earlier that day.

The Rebbe also mentioned, amongst the initiatives that were established *Pilui nishmas* the Rebbetzin, the special *gemach* fund, Keren Chomesh, based on the *roshei teivos* of her name. The Rebbe also expressed *brachos* and

wishes for *gashmiyusdike* good to all, repeating it a second time. These words left a powerful impression upon all present.

The Rebbe concluded with the announcement that, as customary on such occasions, dollars would be distributed for *tzedaka*. Within minutes(!), throngs of people gathered in front of the Rebbe's house, lining up for the *chaluka*. (Most came from 770 where they were listening to the hook-up.) The *chaluka* lasted around 45 minutes, during which hundreds received dollars for *tzedaka*.

SURPRISE SICHA

After going upstairs following *havdala* on Motza'ei Shabbos, Beis Adar, the Rebbe unexpectedly came back downstairs to say a *sicha*. This was the famous *sicha* about בואו ונחשוב חשבוננו של עולם (including detailed instructions about how to conduct oneself after the *histalkus*), which left all in total shock.

The Rebbe employed unique terms in speaking about the Rebbetzin, mentioning her words during the court case that "my father the Rebbe, together with his *sefarim* and everything else, belongs to the Chassidim." It was her words that had affected the verdict, even of the non-Jewish judge, the Rebbe explained.

SHLOSHIM

On the night of 21 Adar, the *shloshim* of the Rebbetzin, the Rebbe said a *sicha* after *Maariv*. The next day the Rebbetzin's *matzeiva* was erected, and the Rebbe went to the Ohel and spent much of the day there. That night, a *siyum sefer Torah* celebration and *seudas mitzvah* took place in 770, in memory of the Rebbetzin and *lizchus* the Rebbe. The *sefer Torah* was dedicated by all of the Rebbe's shluchim from around the world.



THE ALGEMEINER JOURNAL REPORTS ON THE REBBETZIN'S LEVAYA.

CHANGES IN CONDUCT

Following *shiva*, the Rebbe continued to stay at his home and daven there. In a sense, the Rebbe relocated Lubavitch World Headquarters to 1304 President Street. The *sichos* that were said during the weekdays, the distribution of dollars on Sunday afternoons, and the frequent trips to the Ohel were all based out of the Rebbe's home.

Being that the Rebbe's house was relatively small, only guests and individual Chassidim were allowed to be present. For the vast majority of Chassidim who wished to hear the Rebbe's *tefillos* and *sichos*, a live hookup was always connected to 770. In the early stages there was only an audio connection, but eventually video was incorporated as well.

This continued throughout the year of *aveilus*, except for *Shabbosim* and *Yomim Tovim*, when the Rebbe would stay in his room at 770. Beginning from 24 Elul 5748 through Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5749, the Rebbe stayed in 770 (for the festive month of Tishrei, and remaining there through the *Kinus Hashluchim*).

After the year of mourning concluded, the Rebbe remained at home for a little while, until the passing of Rashag, on 6 Adar I 5749. From that period onward, the Rebbe generally stayed in 770 and returned home only periodically for a few weeks at a time. [As time went on, the Rebbe frequented his home less and less, until 5752, at which point he stopped going home altogether.]

For the first three *Shabbosim* following the Shabbos of *shiva*, the Rebbe did not leave his house. Only married Chassidim and *chassanim* were allowed to join davening there; the *bochurim* who remained in 770 were brokenhearted, as 770 was left deserted... the Rebbe did not *farbreng* or daven there at all.

Finally, on Shabbos *Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei*, the Rebbe stayed in his room at 770. It has been said that the Rebbe told one of his secretaries that from now on there will be a *farbrengen* every Shabbos without exception—"Ad bias goel..." (until the coming of Moshiach).

From then on, the Rebbe stayed in 770 every Shabbos, and for the next four years the Rebbe would indeed *farbreng* every week until Shabbos *Parshas Vayakhel* 5752.

WEEKDAY FARBRENGENS

A very drastic change that followed the passing of the Rebbetzin was the end of the weekday *farbrengens*. The first time that this was noticeable was on Purim, because the Rebbe consistently held a *farbrengen* on Purim every year, but in 5748, Purim was during the *shloshim*. The Rebbe instructed the Chassidim (by way of his secretaries) to hold a *farbrengen* in 770 at 9:30 p.m., the exact time at which the Rebbe would usually begin his *farbrengen*.

When the staff of Jewish Educational Media, who were responsible for televising the Rebbe's major weekday *farbrengens*, asked the Rebbe for the exact date of the *farbrengen* for Yud-Alef Nissan 5748, the Rebbe responded, "As it seems, matters will be as they were on Purim," meaning, that there would not be a *farbrengen* at all.

Chassidim hoped that this was only due to the fact that the Rebbe was in the year of mourning. They entertained the notion that perhaps this was akin to the period following the passing of the Rebbe's mother in 5725, when the Rebbe did not want to hold *farbrengens* during the week either. Back then, before Yud-Tes Kislev, Reb Shmuel Levitin requested of the Rebbe on behalf of all the Chassidim that he reconsider and *farbreng* nonetheless. The Rebbe agreed then, and continued to *farbreng* during the week, but made a point to conduct a *siyum* each time to avoid any halachic issues.

Now as well, the Chassidim presumed that with the completion of the year of mourning the Rebbe would once again hold *farbrengens* during the week. To our great disappointment, the custom of *farbrenging* during the week on special days was suspended indefinitely. To date, the last time that the Rebbe held a *farbrengen* during the week was on 15 Shevat 5748.

On the other hand, there were new changes to the Chassidim's advantage as well: The Rebbe began to join the *minyán* for davening three times a day, every single day. Whereas up until the Rebbetzin's passing, the Rebbe only joined the *minyán* for *Mincha* and *Maariv* in the small *zal* each day, and *Shacharis* on Shabbos and *Yomim Tovim*.



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THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED

In the years that followed, the Rebbe always made mention of the Rebbetzin on Chof-Beis Shevat. In 5749, Chof-Beis Shevat occurred on Shabbos. The Rebbe dedicated almost the entire *farbrengen* to speaking about the *yahrtzeit*. (See Derher Shevat 5776 for a detailed description of that Shabbos.)

The next year, 5750, Chof-Beis Shevat occurred on Shabbos as well. The Rebbe connected every point spoken about throughout the *farbrengen* to the *yahrtzeit*.

In 5751, the first annual Kinus Hashluchos took place in Crown Heights on Shabbos *Parshas Mishpatim*, following Chof-Beis Shevat. On Sunday, 26 Shevat, the Rebbe addressed the women who attended the Kinus.

KOVETZ CHOF BEIS SHEVAT

In 5752, on the night of Chof-Beis Shevat, the Rebbe davened *Maariv* at the *amud* in 770 as he would every year. Following davening, the Rebbe ascended upon his *bima* and began to say a short *sicha*. Due to the enormous crowd that had come to be with the Rebbe for this day, the Rebbe's *bima* was filled mostly with elder Chassidim and only a small enclosed area remained for the Rebbe to stand near his *shtender* (see picture above).

Speaking about the Rebbetzin, the Rebbe made special mention of the fact that she has the merit of having so many children named after her.

After the *sicha*, the Rebbe distributed a pamphlet to all of the Chassidim; men, women, and children.

The pink-colored booklet (the color was chosen by the Rebbe's special request), titled "Kovetz Chof Beis Shevat," contained *sichos* and letters of the Rebbe regarding the unique role and special qualities of the Jewish woman,



THE REBBE SAYS A SICHA ON CHOF-BEIS SHEVAT 5752.

and was handed to each and every individual, along with a five dollar bill and a piece of *lekach*. The Rebbe stood for many long hours until the entire crowd managed to pass by, eventually distributing by hand a total of over ten-thousand booklets!



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During the distribution itself, the Rebbe seemed to be high spirited, and he encouraged the singing in a manner that looked similar to the way he would at *kos shel brocha*. When a young girl went by and told the Rebbe that her name is Chaya Mushka, the Rebbe responded:

"חי', זאלסטו לאנג לעבן מיט געזונטע יארן!"
 ("Chaya; you should live long and healthy years!") ①

1. *Bereishis* 12:3.
2. *Shabbos* 10b.