

לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה'
גוטא תח'
לרגל יום הולדתה כ"ז תשרי
לשנת הצלחה בגו"ר לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר
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וזוגתו מרת העניא חסיה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
רבקין

“The Rebbe Brought His Followers to a High Point”

Simchas Torah 5728*

In honor of the festive month of Tishrei, we present this beautiful description of Simchas Torah with the Rebbe in the year 5728 as published in the New York Times. On Isru Chag of Sukkos, Rabbi Leibel Groner recorded in his diary, presumably about this article: “The Rebbe was given a copy of the newspaper article about Simchas Torah and he was very pleased, especially by the accompanying photograph...”

HASIDIC JEWS CELEBRATE 3 DAYS TO MARK SIMHATH TORAH; SINGING AND DANCING ARE AT HIGH PITCH IN CONGREGATION HERE

by Sidney E. Zion

Thousands of Hasidic Jews ended a long weekend of singing, dancing, jumping and clapping yesterday, rejoicing as ever in the Torah, if a little tired from it all.

“We hustle—religion is no picnic with us,” said a red-bearded young rabbi, Samuel Schrage,¹ at the height of the tumultuous Simhath Torah festivities at the Lubavitcher Synagogue, 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn.

The happiest day in the Hebrew calendar, Simhath Torah (literally “rejoicing in the law”) marks the completion of the Torah cycle, a year-long reading through the Five Books of Moses, which detail the basic guidance and teaching imparted to Israel. The cycle ends with the chanting of the last chapter of the last book and the reading of the first chapter of the first book.

The holiday is celebrated with gaiety by all branches of Judaism, but none bring to it the exuberant joy of the Hasidim, whose rejoicing in strict Orthodox beliefs leads them to pitches of religious excitement unknown in others less fervid.

Indeed, while Simhath Torah officially ended before sundown on Friday, Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky said confidently: “The Rebbe will keep things moving right up to Sunday.”²

CONVERGE ON BROOKLYN

And he did, speaking until 1:30 a.m. yesterday³ when the service ended with the singing of “Dem Rebbens Niggun” (“The Rabbi’s Tune”), written by Schneor Zalman, the founder of the movement.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is Menachem M. Schneerson, who, as the rabbi of rabbis, is the leader of 250,000 people, the world’s largest Hasidic group.

Black-coated, bearded Jews from many parts of the world flocked to Brooklyn last week to be near the Rebbe, and in the early hours of Friday,⁴ the cavernous synagogue was packed.

The 65-year-old Rabbi Schneerson, whose family traces back some 200 years to the group’s birthplace in the Russian village of Lubavitch, brought 30 elderly Russian Jews to Brooklyn for a visit over the holidays.⁵

Many had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union and were quietly released and sent to Israel within the last two years, due largely to the efforts of the Lubavitcher movement.

'Hasidic Jews Celebrate 3 Days to Mark Simhath Torah

**Singing and Dancing
Are at High Pitch in
Congregation Here**

By SHIRLEY E. ZUCK

Thousands of Hasidic Jews ended a long weekend of singing, dancing, jumping and clapping yesterday, rejoicing as ever in the Torah, of a Simhath Torah from it all.

"An hour—perhaps 15 minutes with us," said a red-bearded young rabbi, Samuel Schiagel, at the height of the simultaneous Simhath Torah festivities at the Lubavitch Synagogue, 779 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn.

The happiest day in the Hebrew calendar, Simhath Torah (literally "joyous in the law") marks the completion of the Torah cycle, a year-long reading through the five books of Moses, which detail the four guidance and teaching imparted to Israel. The cycle ends with the chanting of the last chapter of the last book, and the reading of the first chapter of the first book.



Hasidic Jews at the Eubank-Synagogue on the Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, as they celebrated Simhath Torah. Seated at table, center, is the rabbi of the synagogue, Samuel M. Schneerson, leader of New York's Hasidic congregations.

and with black hats. The Hasidim turned and began crowds swarming to get near. At a high post nearby, where

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Some of the Russian émigrés, white-bearded and wearing peaked caps reminiscent of the Lenin period, stood behind the Rebbe's dais for five hours as he spoke in Yiddish to 1,500 people on subjects ranging from the mystical interpretation of the scriptures as contained in the Cabala, to hippies.

"That man spent 22 years in a Russian prison," a congregant said, pointing to an old but alert man standing by Rabbi Schneerson.⁶ "All his life he's waited to be where he is now, all his life to be with the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Simhath Torah."

VODKA IS SERVED

Rabbi Schneerson stopped speaking from time to time to serve vodka and sponge cake to those around him. As the Rebbe sipped, so did the Hasidim. Women of the synagogue looked down from the balcony.

But the singing and dancing was dominant as the pulsating rhythms of the melodies turned the synagogues into a festive hall.

A visitor, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr., chaplain of Yale University, smiled as he watched the celebration. "Wonderful," he said, "wonderful, just wonderful."

Rabbi Schneerson, patriarchal figure in a long black coat and soft black hat, led the singing at the apex of the Simhath Torah ceremonies. Using his right hand to conduct, he brought followers to a high point and the chanting and jumping seemed to rock the building.

He then turned and began to pray,⁷ and the congregants stopped where they were.

Finally, the Torahs were removed from the Ark and Rabbi Schneerson walked⁸ with his closest followers between the crowds swarming to get near him.

In the middle of the synagogue, Rabbi Schneerson and a few elders did the traditional dance – one man's arm on another's shoulder, circling the floor with scrolls in hand.

At a high post nearby, where the rabbi had earlier led the singing, a Russian Jew looked into the eyes of a stranger, smiled, and without a word put his arm on the stranger's shoulder and the two danced until the rabbi stopped. ①

1. A Crown Heights activist in those years. See *Here's My Story*, Jem, Erev Shabbos Ki Teizei 5775; see also *Crown Heights*, Derher, Cheshvan 5777.

2. Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah that year occurred on Thursday and Friday, and *kos shel bracha* lasted through the night on Motzei Shabbos.

3. The Rebbe began the second farbrengen of Shabbos Bereishis close to *shkia*, continuing long after Shabbos had ended.

4. Preparing for the farbrengen of the night of Simchas Torah, before *hakafos*.

5. See *Igros Kodesh* vol. 24, p. 384, where the Rebbe invites the emigres to come to New York for Tishrei with all travel expenses paid.

6. Presumably speaking of the Chossid, Reb Lazer Nannes.

7. I.e. the *hakafos* themselves began.

8. For the first and seventh *hakafos*, the Rebbe danced in the middle of the shul.