



BEHIND THE PICTURE

GATHERING IN THE SUKKAH

19 Tishrei 5737

Pictures courtesy of Jewish Educational Media

The inception of the famed “Released Time Program” (RTP) can be uniquely credited with touching the lives of tens of thousands of Jewish children learning in the public school system throughout New York City. These were children who for the most part were unexposed to Yiddishkeit. The Rebbe displayed an extreme fondness for the program, going as far as to make it the only task a bochur could be excused from *seder* for!

Occasionally, regular children’s rallies included participants from the “*Mitvoch-Sho’oh*”¹ during which the kids had the *zechus* to see the Rebbe.

In one instance, however, on 19 Tishrei 5737, the third day of Chol Hamoed Sukkos, a gathering would be solely dedicated to the RTP participants. There were many outstanding *giluyim* that

the Chassidim were *zoche* to witness during that extraordinary occasion. This included seeing the Rebbe washing for challah for the gathering; something usually only done by *farbrengens*. Furthermore, in 5730 the Rebbe discontinued the practice of holding *farbrengens* in the Sukkah due to extreme pushing in the crowd, and unsafe conditions. On this occasion however, the Rebbe ordered the rally to be held there.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

On Sunday, the second day of Sukkos 5737, the Rebbe summoned Rabbi Yaakov Hecht to his room, and told him that he intended to hold a *farbrengen* for the children of RTP in the Sukkah on the upcoming Wednesday.² The Rebbe said that he intended on washing for challah, and would distribute *kos shel brocho* after *birkas hamazon*.

The announcement caught the chassidim by surprise and was welcomed with joy and excitement.

Rabbi Hecht drafted several tentative schedules for the event, however each one was rejected by the Rebbe. In the end, the Rebbe handwrote the entire program *biksav yad kodshoi*, and gave it to the organizers on the following day! (see inset)

Due to limited space the Rebbe enumerated exactly who should be present for the *farbrengen*, and made it abundantly clear that only those explicitly mentioned should attend.

Those mentioned were: all the members of *mazkirus*, Rabbi Yaakov Hecht, Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik, Rabbi Berel Junik, and all card-holding staff members of the RTP.



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THE FARBRENGEN

At 3:15pm when the Rebbe appeared in the main shul for *mincha* the RTP children were already in attendance. Following *mincha* the children were lead to the large Sukkah in the courtyard between 770 and the library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad. As per the Rebbe's instructions, the boys had their farbrengen first, while the girls and their counselors watched from the small zal.

At 4:15pm the Rebbe walked in the Sukkah and seated himself at the far end facing the street. The Rebbe (and a minyan of men) washed and made *hamotzi*. The Rebbe instructed the bochorim to distribute the *lekach* that had been designated beforehand.³

All the children recited the *brocho* of *mezonos* out loud, and the boys added *layshev basukah* as well. Shortly thereafter, fruits and drinks were distributed and the children recited the appropriate *brochos* out loud together. During this time the Rebbe said lechaim to the children who drank their soda. The *nigun* "Atoh Vechartonu" was sung followed by a brief *sicha*, which Rabbi Hecht translated into English for the children.



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This concluded the exceptional farbrengen for children from the Released Time Program. Before leaving each child was given a copy of the booklet called 'Tishrei', along with a *michtav kloli* from the Rebbe that had recently been published.

The program in its entirety ran for an hour and a half with impeccable punctuality.

Indeed the Rebbe himself expressed his satisfaction to Rabbi Hodakov saying that the orderly fashion of the farbrengen was *Berov Pe'er Vohodor!* **D**

After the *sicha* the twelve *pesukim* were recited, and the Rebbe repeated each word along with the children.

After the *nigun* of "Utzu Aytzah", the Rebbe again delivered a *sicha* (with translation by Rabbi Hecht).

After the second *sicha* the children sang "Hoshiah es Amecha" three times. The Rebbe then said *birkas hamazon*, and gave all the counselors bottles with wine from *kos shel brocha* as well as two dimes

to be handed to each child. The Rebbe explained that one of the coins they were to keep as a gift and use as they pleased, and the other (or another coin of the same value) was to be given to *tzedakah*.

The children made a *brocha* on grape juice, and said *lechaim* to the Rebbe.

After reciting *brocha acharona*, the boys exited the Sukkah making room for the girls, who received *lekach* and grape juice to say *lechaim* to the Rebbe.

1. Another name of the Released Time Program, earned by the fact that the programs took place for one hour on Wednesday afternoons. More about the Released Time program appears in the album "Shaloh", published by Kehos.

2. Presumably this was part of the 'Shnas Hachinuch' the Rebbe had declared in Nissan 5736. See *Sichos Kodesh* 5736 Vol. 2 p. 118

3. As it was being distributed, the Rebbe exclaimed 'Far zich oych!' indicating that he too should be given a piece.

THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

(FREE TRANSLATION)

The program for the farbrengen of Simchas beis Hasho'evah with the students:

Each group [shall sit] with its counselors [nearby].
(The girls [should do the same] in the [adjacent] shul).
When all that has been taken care of, they shall notify me.
Netilas Yodaim [of the Rebbe] after hamotzi (of the minyan).
Mezonos and Layshev baSukkah of the children.

Nigun of Atoh Vechartonu

Sicha and translation

Nigun of Vesomachto

Sicha and translation

12 Pesukim, Nigun of Utzu Aytzah

Nigun of Hoshiah es Amecha (three times)

Bentching [of the Rebbe]

The counselors will get from me: 1) From kos shel brocha
(from the bottles) and distribute to their groups
also 2) envelopes with dimes, and distribute them
two dimes per child
(also to the girls).

Brocha acharona [of the children]

If there is sufficient time and it will not disturb the schedule at all – after the exit
Of the boys, the girls will enter the sukkah, say the brocha mezonos

Layshev baSukkah etc.

If it is unclear [whether it can be arranged for the girls to come in after the boys] – better not to.
If possible, distribute to each child the pamphlet with the 12 pesukim,

The 'Tishrei' pamphlet.

התכנית להתועדות שמחת בית השואבה עם התלמידים [שי']

כל קבוצה ומדריכה אצלה – (הקבוצות בכיהכנס"ס [בבית הכנסת])
כשיוסדר כ"ז ידיעוני.

נט"י [נטילת ידיים] לאחרי המוציא (דהמנין).

ברכת במ"מ [בורא מיני מזונות] ולישב בסוכה דהת' שי'

ניגון אתה בחרתנו

שיחה, תרגום

ניגון ושמחת בחגיד

שיחה, תרגום

י"ב פסוקים. ניגון עוצו עצה ותופר

ניגון הושיעה א"ע [=את עמך] [ג"פ] [=ג' פעמים]

ברכהמ"ז [ברכת המזון]

המדריכים יקחו אצלי 1) מכוס של ברכה

(מהבקבוקים) ויחלקו לקבוצתם

כן 2) מעטפות שבכא"א [=שבכל אחד ואחד] דיימס ויחלקון

לכא"א 2 דיימס

(גם להבנות).

ברכה אחרונה.

באם די זמן ולא יתבלבל הסדר כלל – לאחר שיצאו

הבנים יכנסו הבנות לסוכה, ברכות במ"מ ולישב

בסוכה וכו'.

באם ספק – לא כדאי.

באם אפשר ליתן לכא"א החוברת די"ב פסוקים,

חוברת תשרי.