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**TWENTY!**

**SIYUM  
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לד"ר  
הרב יצחק בן שלמה דוב הכהן עבערט  
מהתמימים הראשונים בתו"ת באמריקא  
לרגל יום היארצייט שלו כ"ב חשוון

לע"ר  
הרבנית מרת סימא בת שרה  
לרגל יום היארצייט שלה ג' כסלו  
מוקדש ע"י

**Rabbi Elchonon and Dr. Racheli Ebert**

**This** month, Jews around the world will complete a cycle of Limud Harambam: the 33rd cycle for those that learn three *perakim*, and the 11th for those who learn *perek echad*.

It is almost superfluous to explain to the readers of this magazine the immense *kochos* the Rebbe invested in Mivtza Rambam, and the tremendous importance the Rebbe attached to it. By farbrengens, the Rebbe would constantly urge that people take upon themselves to join one of the cycles of Limud Harambam, preferably three *perakim* and also to encourage others. Throughout the years and beginning with the introduction of the *takana* on Acharon shel Pesach 5744, the Rebbe would dedicate a part of each farbrengen to explaining the Rambam of the day according to the cycle of three *perakim*, sometimes spending entire sichos analyzing the Rambam and its *hora'a* in Avodas Hashem. The Rebbe is also famously pictured learning Rambam in the car on the way to the ohel.



As part of the Takanas Limud HaRambam, the Rebbe urged that festive siyumim be held when finishing the Rambam, and also encouraged that siyumim be made on every Sefer individually. Beginning Zayin Adar 5745 - towards the end of the first cycle of Rambam - and continuing throughout the year, the Rebbe *shturemed* that people around the world arrange siyumim to celebrate the completion of the entire cycle of limud haRambam.

However, in addition to the special regard the Rebbe showed for siyumim in general, the Rebbe showed a notable *chavivus* for the siyumim that were held in the places where the Rambam lived, and where he is interred.

The Rebbe explained in a sicha that the significance of celebrating siyumim at these places can be understood based on a *Yerushalmi* on the verse אך בצלם יתהלך איש. The *gemoro* states that when someone repeats a Torah from an individual, he should deem it as if the author of the Torah is standing before him. Now a tzadik is united with his Torah and they become one. Therefore, anytime, and anywhere, someone studies his Torah, it's as if the tzadik himself is there with them. So when one studies the tzadik's Torah at the physical location of where the tzadik lived or where he is buried, the presence of the tzadik is even more palpable.

In the following article, we will tell the story of these siyumim - how they came about, who arranged them, and the Rebbe's unique involvement.

A quick background: The Rambam was born in Cordoba, Spain, in 4896 (1135). After the Jews were exiled from there, the Rambam's family moved about southern Spain, and eventually settled in Fes, Morocco. During this time, the Rambam wrote the Pirush Hamishnayus, his commentary on the Mishna. In 4926 (1165), the Rambam was forced out of Fes, and he went to Eretz Yisrael. After a few months, he settled in Alexandria, Egypt, and later in Cairo. There he wrote the Mishneh Torah, Yad Hachazakah, the sefer that has come to be called Sefer HaRambam. The Rambam passed away in Cairo in 4965 (1204), and was interred in Eretz Yisrael, in Tveria.

**Ed. Note:** This article is based primarily on extensive interviews with the individuals personally involved in these unique events. We would like to thank the many people who took from their time to share their memories with us, and searched through their archives to share the photos and documents printed here. The following is a partial list.

**Rabbi Mordechai Bistrizky, Rabbi Shimon Elitov, Rabbi Shmuel Greisman, Rabbi Yosef Hecht, Rabbi Chaim Kaplan, Rabbi Yosef Kramer, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Levenhartz, Rabbi Hirshel Raskin, Rabbi Levi Shemtov.**

ביתו של הרמב"ם

# Morocco



RABBI LEIBEL RASKIN (CENTER RIGHT) AND RABBI SHLOMO MATUSOF LEAD THE SIYUM NEAR THE RAMBAM'S HOUSE IN FES, MORROCO.

In 5745, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of organizing that people the world over make siyumim celebrating the completion of the first cycle of Rambam study. Rabbi Leibel Raskin A”H, shliach in Casablanca, Morocco, decided to try to arrange a siyum near the house that the Rambam had lived in in Fes, Morocco. He worked with his fellow shluchim Rabbi Shlomo Matusof and Rabbi Sholom Eidelman to arrange the event. The first step was to get a permit from the mayor of Fes.

Rabbi Raskin related:

He asked us, “Why the sudden urge to make this event?”

We told him, “We are coming on the shlichus of the Rebbe. The Rebbe asserted that because it’s 850 years since the birth of the Rambam, it’s an appropriate time to make celebrations in his honor.”

The Arab turned to his friend and said, “Why is it that we have to wait for a tzadik from overseas to tell us that it’s 850 years from the Rambam’s birth - we should have thought of it ourselves!”

I told him that the Rebbe is the leader of the generation, and he thinks about every person in every place, and he makes sure that they are doing what they need to do to improve.





JOYOUS SPIRIT PREVAILED ON THE FOUR-HOUR JOURNEY TO FES.

He immediately directed his staff to give us all the permits we needed.

They still needed a permit from the President's office, and they soon succeeded in obtaining one. However, getting to the Rambam's house in Fes was no simple feat. Although the new city of Fes had modernized over the years, the old city, where the house was located, was occupied by radical Muslims. No Jews ever entered.

But Rabbi Raskin was not going to give up, so, they arranged for a special security detail, made up of the secret police, police and government officials who would accompany them to the house.

On 28 Adar, 5745, Rabbi Dovid Raskin wrote a letter to the Rebbe in his brother's name detailing the plan of the upcoming siyum in Fes and asked for the Rebbe's *brocho*. The Rebbe wrote on the letter "ויבשר ט", "he should report good tidings".

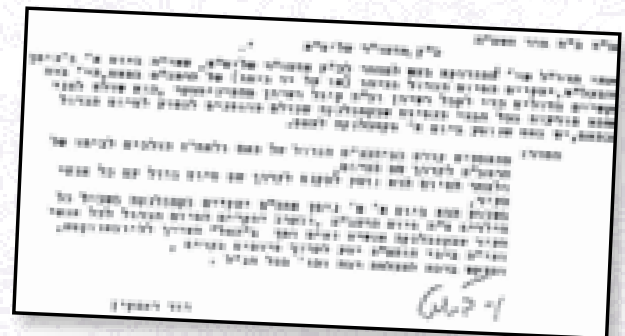
A chartered bus was arranged from Casablanca to Fes so that the community could join the trip. The final group included the shluchim; the talmidim hashluchim who were in Morocco at the time; and a group of members from the Jewish community. The group traveled together by bus for the four-hour trip to Fes. They stopped outside the old city, and the security detail accompanied them as they walked through the old city to the area where the Rambam's house was situated.



EXTERIOR OF THE RAMBAM'S HOUSE, WHERE THE RAMBAM KEPT CERAMIC PLATES TO INDICATE THE TIME.



THE GROUP WALKS THROUGH THE UNFRIENDLY STREETS OF FES EN ROUTE TO THE RAMBAM'S HOUSE.



A LETTER FROM REB DOVID RASKIN TO THE REBBE, INFORMING OF THE DETAILS OF THE PLANNED SIYUM IN MOROCCO AND ASKING FOR A BROCHA. THE REBBE RESPONDED: ויבשר טוב

The siyum took place on the roof of a building facing the Rambam's house. Rabbi Raskin set up a picture of the Rebbe, a picture of the Rambam and (*l'havdil*) a picture of the king of Morocco. Rabbis Matusof, Eidelman and Raskin made the siyum and *haschala*, followed by a blessing to the king and to the security team which had escorted them. The participants said "*l'chaim!*" and broke out in the song of "*Hoshia es amecha.*" Then they erupted in a spirited dance.

The community members who accompanied the shluchim couldn't believe their eyes! This was something that was unimaginable and something they never experienced. But it was just beginning.

The Talmidim Hashluchim suggested to Rabbi Raskin that it might be a good idea

to try to get into the actual house where the Rambam lived. They knocked on the door, and an old Arab woman came to the door. They asked her whether she knew anything special about the house. She told them that she had a family tradition that this was a holy place--the house where the Rambam had lived. She gave permission for them to enter, and the entire entourage packed in and made another siyum--this time inside the Rambam's house. Again, they said "l'chaim!" and danced.

After leaving the old city, they got back on the bus and went to the shul in the main city of Fes, where the leaders of the community and a large crowd awaited them. A grand siyum was held in the Shul, and the shluchim spoke to the community. Afterwards, they traveled to the city of Meknes<sup>1</sup>, where they held another siyum.

Most of the Talmidim HaShluchim were returning to New York for Yud Alef Nissan and Pesach, so Rabbi Raskin approached one of the *bochorim*, Levi Shemtov (today a shliach in Riverdale, New York,) and asked him to take the bottle of *mashke* from which they had said "l'chaim!" on and bring it to the Rebbe's *mazkirus*. Their flight was scheduled for Thursday night before Shabbos Hagadol, but it was delayed a number of times, and they arrived in New York less than an hour before Shabbos. Levi ran to "770"--before even going home--and gave the bottle to Rabbi Binyomin Klein as Rabbi Raskin had requested.

The following day at the *farbrengen*<sup>3</sup>, the Rebbe spoke about the upcoming siyum that would be taking place that week, and said that he will now give *mashke* to all those organizing siyumim until Yud Alef Nissan. The Rebbe continued, that he will mix the *mashke* to be distributed with *mashke* that was brought from the siyum in Fes, Morocco. To the *bochorim's* astonishment, the Rebbe then said:

But first, we will give *mashke* to those who merited to arrange the siyum in the Rambam's house and to bring the *mashke* from there to here.



THE SIYUM HARAMBAM NEAR THE RAMBAM'S HOUSE, CHAI NISSAN 5748.



THE GROUP POSES WITH THE SECRET POLICE, CHAI NISSAN 5748.

The Rebbe poured into his *becher* from the bottle of *mashke* from Fes. The Talmidim HaShluchim went up to the Rebbe's bima, and the Rebbe poured *mashke* into each of their cups. The Rebbe then poured from his cup into the *mashke* bottles for the other siyumim, mixing the *mashke* from Fes with the *mashke* for the other siyumim.

At the *Farbrengen* of Yud Alef Nissan, the Rebbe said that in addition to all the siyumim, a *shturem* should be made among non-Jews, too, to mark 850 years to the Rambam's birth. The Rebbe said that everyone should use their full influence on non-Jews to encourage them to make celebrations and events in honor of the Rambam, and even to print stamps with the



RABBI LEIBEL RASKIN DISTRIBUTES MASHKE TO THE CROWD DURING THE SIYUM IN 5745. THE MASHKE WAS LATER BROUGHT TO THE REBBE AND FURTHER DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER SIYUMIM AROUND THE WORLD.

Rambam's likeness. The Rebbe added that when people try to influence non-Jews in this area, they will definitely be successful. The Rebbe brought proof to this from the siyum haRambam in Fes:

...In the last few days, a siyum haRambam was held in the Rambam's house in Fes, Morroco.... It is self understood, that in order to make such an event, they needed permission from non-Jews. With the proper effort, they did, in fact, get permission to make the siyum. Thus, it was through the help of the non-Jews that the siyum in the house of the Rambam was made possible.

At the end of the farbrengen, after reciting the *brocho acharona*, the Rebbe said:

All those who will arrange siyumim on the Rambam before Pesach will be able to obtain from the Mazkirus (tomorrow or even tonight), a bit of the *mashke* which was brought from the siyum of the Rambam in the house of the Rambam in Fes.

The Rebbe then added a unique *kiruv* to the Talmidim HaShluchim:

And because it was brought by shluchim who are בני תורה, this *mashke* is connected with Torah, and also with Tefilla. And all of this is in a manner of <sup>4</sup>...כולנו כאחד.

At the *kos shel brocho* of Acharon Shel Pesach, (following a lengthy farbrengen in which the Rebbe spoke at length about Rambam,) the Rebbe gave each of the Talmidim HaShluchim a bottle of wine to take back with them on their shlichus to Morocco.

At the Farbrengen of Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, the Rebbe mentioned the siyumim in Egypt, Morocco, and Tveria. (See the sicha in the Egypt section). After the sicha, the Rebbe gave *mashke* to those making siyumim in the upcoming days. Then the Rebbe turned to Rabbi Leibel Groner and asked him to call up "Leibel Raskin's son." Rabbi Groner called





PHOTO: LUBAVITCH ARCHIVES

UPON RETURNING TO THE MAIN CITY OF FES, A GRAND SIYUM WAS HELD IN THE CENTRAL SHUL.



RABBI LEIBEL RASKIN POSES WITH THE GROUP OF "TALMIDIM HASHLUCHIM" FOLLOWING THE SIYUM.

over Rabbi Mendel Raskin, and the Rebbe gave him a bottle of mashke to give to his father Rabbi Leibel Raskin.

Without delay, Rabbi Mendel Raskin went to JFK airport on Sunday and located a traveler who agreed to bring the bottle to his father.

Rabbi Raskin continued organizing these siyumim for many years until Rabbi Raskin fell ill. Each year brought with it an eventful story of how he received the permissions from the mayor, the president's office, deal with the government and so on.

Rabbi Raskin recounted:

In 5748, we received a message and an official letter from the capital that when we had said

"*Ichaim!*" at the siyum, Muslims in the area had also drunk from the *mashke*, which was a desecration of their religion. Therefore, the government had decided that not to allow a siyum there the following year.

I sent a *pidyon* to the Rebbe asking that we merit to fulfill the Rebbe's wishes and be able to organize a siyum in Fes.

What's the end of the story? We figured, let's wait a year and see what happens. During that year, the mayor was removed from his position and a new mayor was elected. This time around, they didn't mention the alcohol issue and everything went over well.



# דבות מופתי בארץ מצרים

# Egypt



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

In the year 5738, the Rebbe launched a campaign to have the Tanya printed in cities and towns all around the world, wherever a Jew could be found. Four years later, in 5742, the shliach in Eilat, Rabbi Yosef Hecht, came up with the idea to print the Tanyas in Egypt, and he wrote about the idea to the Rebbe.

He received the Rebbe's response shortly after: "הוצאה לאור של התניא בקהיר ובאלכסנדריה", "The printing of the Tanya in Cairo and Alexandria is fitting, and very much so."

After receiving such a powerful answer from the Rebbe, he contacted the Egyptian consul

general in Eilat and set up a meeting.

Before the meeting, he wrote again to the Rebbe, and received the answer:

"להסביר גודל העיר שפעל בה הרמב"ם, שדר בה וכו'"

"Explain to him the importance of the city where the Rambam was active, where he lived etc."

Although the consul general was of assistance in getting the project underway, he soon found out that printing anything in Egypt, especially by interests from outside the country, required special approval from the cultural offices, the foreign offices, and the police.

Undaunted, he worked through the Egyptian ambassador in Washington and the Israeli embassy in Cairo. The Israeli ambassador in Egypt at the time, Mr. Moshe Sason, put in tremendous effort to speed up the process of approval, and, after many months of work, they finally received the necessary authorization documents.

Joined by Rabbi Yisroel Glitzenstien, shliach in Eilat, the shluchim spent two weeks in Egypt, and in accordance with the Rebbe's *hora'os*, printed three thousand copies of the Tanya, one thousand in Alexandria and two thousand in Cairo.

The Rebbe's initial answer regarding the significance of the Rambam's living in Egypt, served the Shluchim as a catalyst to plan a siyum Ha'Rambam in Egypt, as well, and they began the process of arranging a siyum in Egypt--the location in which the Rambam wrote the Mishneh Torah. The shluchim wrote to the Rebbe about their idea, and the Rebbe agreed.

They obtained the necessary visas, and began securing funding for the trip. Rabbi Glitsenstein invited his uncle, Rabbi Chanoch Glitsenstein to come along as well, and he too began putting together funds for the trip. However, when they wrote about it to the Rebbe, he answered that they wouldn't be funding the trip – for the Rebbe himself was going to pay for the entire undertaking. (The Rebbe continued to fund the siyumei Rambam in Egypt every year thereafter.)

The Rebbe instructed that the delegation should be made up of the shluchim in Eilat, Rabbis Glitsenstein and Hecht, as they had printed the Tanya there already, as well as the Shliach and rov of Tzfas, Rabbi Levi Bistritzky *a.h.* be part of the group travelling to the siyum, having arranged the siyumim at the burial place of the Rambam in Tveria, and as the *rov* of the city near the burial place of the Rambam. The Rebbe added that a photographer should be on hand to capture the event, so photographer Levi Freidin joined the group too.



PHOTO: JEW/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

LETTERS FROM THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT PRINTING THE TANYA IN EGYPT.





THE INVITATION PRODUCED FOR THE SIYUM WITH A GOLD STRING BINDING THE TWO SIDES, AS PER THE REBBE'S DIRECTIVE.

A few days before the Siyum, the Rebbe said “דער רב פון כפר חב”ד זאל אויך מיטגיין” “The *rov* of Kfar Chabad should also go along,” so Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi joined the delegation.

As Arabic is the spoken language in Egypt, Rabbi Hecht asked Rabbi Shimon Elitov, a Lubavitcher *rov* who had an Arabic radio show, to join.

In an interview with *A Chassidisher Derher*, Rabbi Elitov related:

“Although I speak a basic Arabic, I wasn’t so familiar with Egyptian Arabic, but after being asked to join such an extraordinary siyum, I turned to Rabbi Shalom Shai Gamliel (a *rov* in Yerushalayim, originally from Egypt) to help me learn Egyptian Arabic. Learning a new language in general is not enjoyable, and it was quite difficult for me, so I called Rabbi Hecht and asked him if I could be excused from going to Egypt, and send Rabbi Gamliel instead.

“He called me back a while later and told me, that when Rabbi Groner relayed to the Rebbe that they were taking Rabbi Gamliel instead, the Rebbe asked him, “און פארוואס נישט עם” “And why not [Elitov] himself?”

When I heard that, I obviously resumed my Egyptian Arabic studies, eventually going to the siyum in Egypt and learning the beginning and end of the Rambam in Egyptian Arabic.”

The attention the Rebbe paid to every detail of the trip amazed everyone involved. The Rebbe showed an interest even in such minute details as the design of the invitation. The Rebbe said that the invitation should be with a “חוט” “a tassel,” implying that the invitation be made with two separate parts to it. A beautiful invitation divided into two sections was prepared, with a gold-color string holding the two parts together. These invitations were sent to all Jews in Egypt.

The shul in Cairo was specially decorated by the Egyptian Jewish Community for the exciting event. It was beautiful to see the shul, which for so many years had been forsaken and empty of human activity, suddenly sparkle with life, as the community prepared to host this historical and monumental siyum harambam.

Others also joined them in the delegation to Egypt, and as the years went on, more

people joined. Rabbi Yitzchok Goldberg from Migdal HaEmek would go along because he speaks French – a language that many Egyptian Jews are familiar with. Rabbi Shmuel Greisman, Rabbi Berke Wolf, and Rabbi Yitzchok Yehuda Yeruslavsky, among others, also joined the siyumim.

The siyum took place on 30 Nissan 5745. It was an event the likes of which Egypt had not seen in over fifty years, and it left a deep impression on everyone who was there.

The speeches were said in Hebrew, Arabic, English and French, to ensure everyone understood. Between the speeches, the crowd was swept up in the heartfelt *niggunim* and dancing. Who could imagine that this would happen? That in the city where the Rambam lived, a city that had for so many years been forsaken of Yiddishkeit, there would be a Chassidische farbrengen with dancing and singing in honor of the Rambam!

In accordance with the Rebbe's *hora'a*, each participant received a Tanya printed in Egypt the previous year, with gold lettering in Arabic that said "a memento from the siyum haRambam".

The next year, at the end of the second cycle of Rambam, the Rebbe urged<sup>2</sup> that siyumim be arranged "בכפליים לתושי" in a double measure, and so two siyumim were arranged in Egypt--in Alexandria and Cairo.

The siyum in Alexandria took place on Sunday, 5 Adar Sheini 5746, in the grand "Eliyahu Hanavi Shul" in the center of town, with the participation of the entire Jewish community of Alexandria. The siyum in Cairo took place in the shul of the Rambam on the following day. Both siyumim drew sizeable crowds, and everyone there was swept up in the wave of excitement and emotion.

Like the year before, each person received a Tanya. It was inscribed with the words:

"A memento from the siyum haRambam in Alexandria/Cairo, marking the end of the 850th year of the Rambam's birth."

Each year, the Israeli embassy and consulate would greet the group and take

care of all security concerns and technical arrangements. Generally the event would be arranged as follows: Rabbi Elitov would emcee the event in Arabic and Ladino.

The Israeli Ambassador and Israeli Consul General would participate and say a few remarks. (In fact, most of the Israeli diplomatic corps in Egypt was there.) Rabbi Goldberg would speak in French, Rabbis Hecht and Bistrizky in English, and Rabbi Ashkenazi in Hebrew. The director of historic sites in Egypt would bring the greetings of the Egyptian government.



In accordance with the Rebbe's *hora'a*<sup>5</sup> for all the siyumei haRambam (that the speeches and chiddushei Torah said at the various siyumim be transcribed and printed), a pamphlet, titled *גינת המלך*, was published containing the Chidushei Torah and speeches of the first three siyumim.

Every year after the siyum, Rabbi Hecht would give a detailed report to the Rebbe's secretariat over the phone. They would also send albums with the pictures that were taken at the event.

One year, Rabbi Glitzenstein spoke with Rabbi Binyomin Klein after the trip. At the end of the call he said, that "Shimon Peres wishes that he receive such respect in Egypt



like the Rebbe's shluchim.” (Around that time, Shimon Peres had wanted to travel to Egypt, but he wasn't welcomed). Later, when the Rebbe received a report about the phone call, he asked, “וואס דערציילט ישראל, וואס דערציילט ישראל וועגן די נסיעה לגליצנשטיין וועגן די נסיעה?” “What does Yisroel Glitzenstein report about the trip?” When Rabbi Klein told the Rebbe of the comment about Shimon Peres, the Rebbe smiled broadly.

At the Farbrengen of Acharei-K'doshim 5745, the Rebbe again spoke about studying Rambam and the siyumim<sup>6</sup>.

The Rebbe said that he would now give *mashke* to all those organizing siyumim after Shabbos, after mixing it with the *mashke* from Fes, Cairo, and Tveria:

This *mashke* is mixed with the *mashke* that was brought from the siyum של תורה לגמרה which took place recently in the shul of the Rambam in Cairo, the place where the Rambam lived most of his years, and where he also wrote his work. (In addition to the siyum that took place in the house of the Rambam in Fes, where he lived for about six years.) The siyum in Cairo was held with joy and happiness, and they said Lchaim and wished brachos for all Yidden no matter where they may be--and some of that *mashke* was brought here.

This *mashke* is also mixed with the *mashke* from the siyum on *Sefer Hamada* which took place at the resting place of the Rambam in Tveria, where his body was interred after he finished his *avodah* on this earth (as the Alter Rebbe explains in *Igeres Hakodesh* the great significance of a *yom histalkus*).

Although only a “*chelek*”, a bit of the *mashke* was brought here, being that most of the *mashke* was used at the siyumim, nevertheless it is self understood that the main thing is the essence and core of the *mashke*--not the vodka--and העצם כשאתה תופס בכולו אתה תופס אותה תופס בכולו, when you take hold of a part of the essence, you take hold of it all!



THE TANYA PRINTED IN CAIRO, DISTRIBUTED AS A MEMENTO AT THE SIYUM.

During the day, the shluchim were busy making the events around Egypt.

They would also visit the Ibn Ezra Shul in the old city of Cairo (which many sources contend is in fact the Rambam's shul,) and the house where the Rambam lived in Cairo. (The house is still in good condition, including the office where the Rambam accepted his patients and the *mikveh* he used.) They would make a siyum in both of these places as well.

In the evenings, after a day filled with visitations and events for the Jewish community members, they would gather in one of the corners of the hotel and farbreng, with singing and saying “*lchayim!*”. It is an experience they fondly remember.





PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

Shortly after the Siyum in 5745, some of the people who had participated in the siyum in Egypt came to the Rebbe for Shavuos. Once again, the Rebbe spoke about the siyum, on Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan:

“In continuation to what was spoken earlier about limud haRambam, we will now give out *mashke* to those who are arranging siyumim in the next few days,

“After mixing it with the *mashke* that was brought here from the siyum which was made in the house of the Rambam in Fes, Morocco, and also from the *mashke* that was brought from the siyum which was held in the shul of the Rambam in Cairo, Egypt,

“And to point out the hint in the name of the Rambam: רמב"ם is the *roshei taivos* of רבות" מופתי בארץ מצרים", “Multiplying my great wonders in the land of Egypt.” The period of the Rambam’s living in Egypt, the sefer *Mishneh Torah* which he wrote in Egypt, and the *g’zairos, takanos* and *minhagim* which he instituted while there--these are the great wonders which happened in Egypt....

...“And as mentioned many times, through giving the *mashke* here, we are uniting the people here with those who will be at the future siyumim, and with those who

THE BOOKLET “GINAS HAMELECH”, INCLUDING TRANSCRIPTIONS OF CHIDUSHIM ON THE RAMBAM’S MISHNE TORAH ORATED BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE SIYUM IN CAIRO, EGYPT.

were present at the past siyumim in the various places associated with the Rambam.”

After the sicha, Rabbi Hecht went up to the Rebbe’s bima, and the Rebbe poured *mashke* into his cup. Afterwards, the Rebbe gave the bottle of *mashke* to his father, Rabbi Moshe Yitzchok Hecht, *a.h.*, for the Siyum he was arranging that week in New Haven, Connecticut. Turning to Rabbi Levi Bistrizky, the Rebbe said, “Why are you not coming forward? Didn’t you attend the Siyum in Cairo?” The Rebbe gave him and his father, Rabbi Leibel Bistrizky, *a.h.*, some *mashke* adding to Rabbi Bistrizky senior: “והשיב לב אבות על בנים.”

The Rebbe then turned to Rabbi Ashkenazi and motioned that he too should come forward. “Does everyone need to be called?” the Rebbe said. The Rebbe asked Rabbi Ashkenazi if anyone else present was at the Siyum in Cairo, to which he answered that Rabbi Shmuel Greisman also participated.

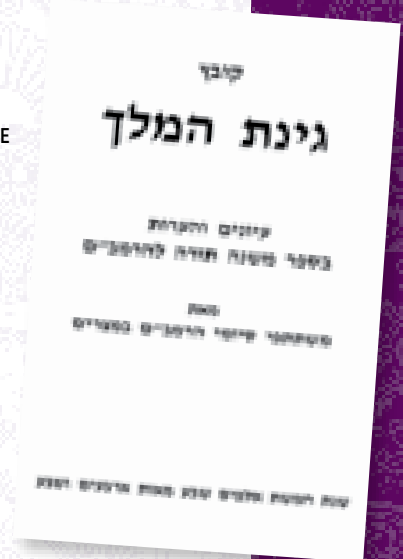


PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE



PHOTO: JEM/ THE LIVING ARCHIVE

When pouring the *mashke* to Rabbi Greisman the Rebbe blessed him “זאל זיין” “בהצלחה רבה” “It should be with much success”.

Rabbi Hecht related:

“In 5750, the yearly cycle ended on 25 Cheshvan. However, the Rebbe surprisingly instructed that the Siyum in Egypt be pushed off until Chanukah. Eventually, we understood that by combining the event with a Chanukah celebration, many more of Cairo’s Jewish population attended, making it a much greater success”.

From then on, they made the siyum on Chanukah every year. They took the opportunity to publicize Chanukah wherever they could, and even lit a menorah at the pyramids. In 5752, a clip of this event was broadcasted all over the world on *Chanukah Live*.

The trips always brought much excitement to the Egyptian Jews. The visitors would spend as much time with the locals as possible, schmoozing, discussing matters, seeking advice and guidance, and requesting

*brochos* from the Rebbe. With these visits, the locals came to understand that someone was thinking about them. More than once, the leaders of the Jewish community told the shluchim that the few hours they spend together gives the community *kochos* for the entire year.

One time, Levi Freidin brought a stack of pictures of the Rebbe with him, and he was giving them out to the Arab children gathered outside the Rambam’s shul. Suddenly, a policeman came over to him, and asked, “May I also have a picture of the Rambam from New York?”

One year when the shluchim were in Egypt, they met a tour group of American students. When they met at the shul, the shluchim invited the Jewish boys in the group to lay *tefillin*, some for the first time in their lives. The Shluchim celebrated these “bar mitzvahs” and wished them well with a “*lchaim!*” and blessing. One of them exclaimed that the entire trip was worth it if only to meet the Chabad Chasidim from Israel who gave them this exceptional opportunity.



SHAAR HASHOMAYIM SHUL  
CAIRO



ELIYAHU HANAVI SHUL  
ALEXANDRIA



IB'N EZRA SHUL  
CAIRO



שפתותיו דובבות

# Tveria



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When the Rebbe first established the *takana* of limud haRambam in 5744, Rabbi Levi Bistritzky *rov* and shliach of Tzfas, took a *minyán* of *anash* from Tzfas to the *kever* of the Rambam in nearby Tveria to learn the first *shiur* of Rambam, the *Minyan Hamitzvos*. When the cycle was holding at the end of *Sefer Hamada*, they celebrated with a siyum at the *kever*.

As far as they were concerned, it was nothing more than a novel idea.

When Rabbi Bistritzky came to the Rebbe for Shavuos, he brought along with him the

bottle of *mashke* from which they had said “*Ichaim!*” at the siyum. At the farbrengen of Shabbos Mivorchim Sivan, the Rebbe said:

... In connection with the siyum of *Sefer Hamada*, the *Aibishter* put in the hearts of a group of people to gather for a siyum at the *kever* of the Rambam in Tveria where he is interred (as the well-known expression, פה גטמן).

...They also arranged a farbrengen in honor of the siyum, a farbrengen which was conducted with joy and happiness--joy for the completion of Torah, and because it is a *sefer*



of *halachos*, which tells us how to conduct our daily life--it is also a שמחה של מצוה.

*Mashke* from that farbrengen was brought here to the *daled amos* of the my father-in-law, the Rebbe...

...And when we use the *mashke* for this farbrengen, then our farbrengen comes in continuation to that farbrengen, and it connects all the participants in this farbrengen with the participants in that farbrengen.

Present here is the person who organized the siyum, brought the *mashke*, and reported the *besuros tovos* of what happened. קריינא דאיגרתא איהו ליהוי פרוונקא—let him be the foremost participant in this *simcha*, and therefore come up to take this *mashke* and distribute it to all the participants in the farbrengen here...<sup>8</sup>

After the *sicha*, the Rebbe then gave the bottle of *mashke* to Rabbi Bistritzky.

Following such a strong endorsement from the Rebbe, the siyumim at the Rambam's resting place now took on an official aura. At the end of each *sefer*, Rabbi Bistritzky would take a *minyán* of *anash* to Tveria, make a siyum, say "Ychaim!", and every time would send the *mashke* to the Rebbe. The Rebbe responded with special *maanos* regarding these siyumim.

When the entire Rambam was completed on 11 Nissan 5745, Rabbi Leibel kaplan *a.h.*, head Shliach of Tzfas, arranged a large siyum by the Rambam's *tziyon*, and it continued in 5746 as well. Following the actual siyum at



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RABBI LEIBEL KAPLAN (LEFT) LOOKS ON AS CHIEF-RABBI MORDECHAI ELIYAHU CONDUCTS THE SIYUM NEAR THE RAMBAM'S KEVER IN TVERIA, 5745.

the kever, another large event took place at a rented hall nearby.

In 5749, the siyum haRambam was on Asarah b'Teves. The following Shabbos, the Rebbe encouraged that more siyumim be arranged across the globe in honor of the Rambam's *yahrzeit* on the 20th of Teves. The Rebbe specifically mentioned Tveria:

...It is therefore fitting that among the siyumim on Rambam which are taking



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PHOTO: LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD

RECEPTION HELD IN A HALL FOLLOWING THE SIYUM AT THE RAMBAM'S KEVER, 5745.

place around the globe, siyumim should be arranged for this coming Wednesday, the *yahrzeit* of the Rambam. There should be at least one celebration in Eretz Yisrael, and ideally (“ma tov”), at the *kever* of the Rambam in Tveria...<sup>9</sup>

Tzeirei Agudas Chabad immediately arranged a siyum for the 20th of Teves in Tveria. On Wednesday night, the Rebbe came to *mincha-maariv* with a pocket-sized Rambam, and made a siyum after *maariv* (which was in addition to the siyum which the Rebbe had made on the 10th of Teves). In the *sicha*, the Rebbe once again mentioned the siyum in Tveria:

“Although several siyumim were already made both in chutz l’Aretz and in Eretz Yisrael, and, notably, by the *kever* of the Rambam in Tveria

- Which, if the body of every Jew is holy, how much more so is the body of the Rambam, inasmuch as he was a Jew of the entire Torah, who is a guide to all generations after him. From this we can understand the significance of a siyum at his *tziyun* where his body is interred--

Nevertheless it is important to join in to more siyumim...”<sup>10</sup>

From then on, Tzeirei Agudas Chabad held a grand siyum by the Rambam’s *tziyon* every year. The Rebbe continued to mention the siyum in the upcoming years. For example, in the *sicha* of Shabbos Lech Lecha 5751:

...May we merit to immediately go to Eretz Yisroel, and especially those who learn Rambam. Throughout his entire life, the Rambam thirsted to go to Eretz Yisroel, yet



PHOTO: LUBAVITCH ARCHIVES

he couldn’t actualize it. This was because specifically in Egypt he accomplished רבות מופתי בארץ מצרים. Only after he completed his *avoda* in this world did he go to Tveria ( - to where the Bais Din will return when Moshiach comes - ) for burial, as is told in Jewish history. And especially since a siyum haRambam is being made by his *kever*.

In 5750, shortly after the Siyum took place by the Rambam’s *kever*, the Rebbe instructed that a memento should be printed from the siyum in Tveria. A special booklet titled טוב ראי was published, and it includes the various speeches and pictures from the event. **D**

1. The Rebbe sent Reb Michael Lipsker on Shlichus to Meknes in 5710.
2. Shabbos B’shalach , 15 Shevat, 5746.
3. Hisvaaduyos 5745 vol. 3 p. 1667
4. Ibid. p. 1717
5. Lag B’omer 5745; Ibid. p. 2010
6. Ibid. p. 1996
7. Ibid. vol. 4 p. 2076
8. Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 3 p. 1800
9. Sefer Hasichos 5749 vol. 1 p. 174
10. Hisvaaduyos 5749 vol. 2 p. 171