



THE REBBE WISHES L'CHAIM TO THE ASSEMBLED AT THE FARBRENGEN, ZOS CHANUKAH 5738.

לעבן  
מיט'ן  
רבי'ן

## SEUDAS HODA'A

*Everyone knows that the Yom Tov of Rosh Chodesh Kislev marks the day that the Rebbe left 770 for home for the first time since his heart attack on Shemini Atzeres, 5738. A lesser known fact is that the Rebbe chose the day of Zos Chanukah to celebrate this miraculous recovery. In an interesting chain of events, the Rebbe held a special surprise farbrengen in the midst of a seemingly ordinary winter afternoon.*

Zos Chanukah  
5738

On Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the doctors decided that the Rebbe had recovered satisfactorily enough from his heart attack, and that it was now safe for him to return home for the first time since Shemini Atzeres. Nineteen days later, on Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe held the first farbrengen in the downstairs shul—as opposed to speaking from his room—since the occurrence, with thousands of Chassidim in attendance.

But just as things seemed to be back to normal, the upcoming Chanukah was full of surprises. On the first night, the Rebbe davened Mincha and participated in the kindling of the menorah downstairs. On the third night, the Rebbe surprised

all of the assembled by saying a sicha, concluding with the announcement that he would now give Chanukah gelt to everyone present. The Rebbe then walked to the back of the shul, where, standing near the door, he handed everyone a dollar bill from the packet that he had brought down with him before Mincha. When the line was done, all the men exited the shul and the women entered in order to receive dollars as well.

### Thursday, Fifth Night

Upon returning from the Ohel, the Rebbe entered the overcrowded downstairs shul for Mincha. During the singing of “Haneiros Halolu” the Rebbe surprisingly

signaled to start a circular dance in the center of the shul, motioning to the many individuals on the bleachers to join in as well. An atmosphere of Simchas Torah reigned in the shul as all present joyously sang and danced vigorously. In the midst of the singing, everyone slowly stopped dancing in order to watch the Rebbe as he clapped and danced in the front. But the Rebbe instructed the circle to continue and went on to clap his hands fiercely, in a manner normally reserved for Simchas Torah!

On his way out, the Rebbe picked up and returned the fallen cane of an elderly individual standing alongside the *shvil*.

## Sunday, Seventh Day of Chanukah

During the morning hours, the service lane in front of 770 was filled with buses transporting children who attend the “Wednesday Hour” Release Time program, and who came to join a special Chanukah rally with the Rebbe.

The rally began with a skit acted out by the children, followed by some words about Chanukah from the emcee, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda (J.J.) Hecht.

At 3:15, the band struck up “*Nodah Biyehuda*,” with the children singing along enthusiastically. The Rebbe entered the shul and walked up to the special *bima* constructed in honor of the occasion, all along the way encouraging the children singing.

After Mincha and menorah lighting, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Hecht what was next, to which he replied that the Rebbe will distribute dimes and then go back upstairs. The Rebbe smiled and asked “You want to be relieved from my presence already?” Rabbi Hecht quickly answered “*Chas v’shalom!*” The Rebbe informed him that he would like to say a *sicha*, but first the children should recite the 12 Pesukim.

After the *sicha*, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Hecht to translate the words for the children, as was his custom. When a second microphone could not be obtained, the Rebbe offered him to come onto the *bima* and use his microphone. Naturally, however, Rabbi Hecht was hesitant to go up, but the Rebbe insisted and he had no choice.

## Monday, Zos Chanukah

At 12:30 p.m. the Rebbe called Rabbi Hecht into his room. The Rebbe thanked him for the great *nachas* that yesterday’s rally caused, and that if Rabbi Hecht wishes, the Rebbe would edit the translation of the *sicha*. But if not, “I have enough work without it!” the Rebbe said, pointing to all the letters on his desk.

The Rebbe then brought up a different topic:



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“I’m looking for a ‘*bal-meretz*’ and a ‘*bal-sod*’ [loosely translated: a determined and capable individual, and someone who can keep a secret] and I have found you!”

The Rebbe continued to say that he would like to hold a *farbrengen* after Mincha, during which he would wash and have *challah*, and distribute *kos shel brocha* to all present, along with *mashke* to all of the *shluchim*.

The reason it should not be public knowledge in advance, the Rebbe explained, was so that it wouldn’t disturb people in middle of their workday.

When Rabbi Hecht inquired whether he should tell the members of *mazkirus*, the Rebbe answered that he should not. The next question was whether to notify WLCC (World Lubavitch Communications Center), and the Rebbe responded in the negative, reasoning that although they will not be able to prepare a hook-up in advance, an audio-recording of the *farbrengen* will surely be made available afterwards.

Rabbi Hecht continued to ask if he may tell the *bochurim* in 770, and the Rebbe responded, “If you tell the *bochurim*, it’s like telling the whole world, until Australia!”

He then asked if he could let Morristown yeshiva know (his son Shimon was

learning there at the time). The Rebbe responded, “You have institutions here in New York, and there are always things happening. Just tell him to come to Crown Heights without mentioning anything about a *farbrengen*!” The Rebbe did agree, however, that Rabbi Hecht could let his brothers know about the *farbrengen* in advance.

The Rebbe ended the conversation with an anecdote from the Frierdiker Rebbe: “When it comes to keeping a secret, there are three types of people: The first is the one who lets it out right away. Then there’s one who doesn’t let others know, yet his expression discloses that he is holding a secret. But the third person hides it so well that it is not even noticeable that he is withholding something. Surely, you’ll choose the right category!”

A few minutes before Mincha, a rumor spread that there was to be a surprise *farbrengen*. However, this was not confirmed by *mazkirus*, as they themselves had not been informed about the upcoming event. But as it turned out, immediately after Mincha, *challah* and microphones appeared near the Rebbe’s *farbrengen* seat, not leaving much room for doubt. There was a subsequent rush to the telephones, as everyone wished to inform their friends and relatives of the

latest developments, so that they too can take part in the farbrengen.

At 3:35, the Rebbe entered the shul and sat down in his place, and the farbrengen was underway. The first sicha began with the Rebbe saying that since Chanukah is a time of joy, he is going to wash, and that anyone else who washes along with him will be blessed through *kos shel brocha*, which, in turn, will extend to those who don't wash as well.

After washing, the Rebbe noticed the two large wedding-like challos, which were prepared by Rabbi Hecht, and he glanced at him with a broad smile.

[The Rebbe later commented to him that in the future, only one challah should be used, lest someone mistakenly think that *lechem mishneh* is obligatory during weekdays as well.]

Then the Rebbe announced that anyone who has already washed or was going

wash should come up to receive a piece of challah. This caused great chaos, as all of the Chassidim instantaneously crowded around the Rebbe's table. "I didn't mean all at once!" the Rebbe said, giving one-and-a-half challos to be divided among the assembled.

During the farbrengen, the Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing of the Simchas Torah *hakafos nigun*, as he had

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done on the fifth night of Chanukah. This was understood by Chassidim to

be a substitute for the Rebbe's absence at *hakafos* earlier that year.

Throughout the sichos, there were many hints that this farbrengen was indeed a replacement for the Simchas Torah farbrengen. The Rebbe spoke passionately about the importance of rejoicing on Chanukah, explaining that the days of Chanukah are equivalent to those of Sukkos, and that the eighth day is like Shemini Atzeres.

The Rebbe also mentioned the importance of the daily study of Chitas, something usually discussed at the Simchas Torah farbrengen.

The Rebbe went on to explain that essentially there should have been a ninth day of Chanukah, just as every Yom Tov is celebrated one day longer in the Diaspora. And although this has not been established with regard to Chanukah, but because the issue is brought up in various



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THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE SIGNING OF A FREILECHE NIGUN AT THE FARBRENGEN, ZOS CHANUKAH 5738.



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CHASSIDIM WAIT OUTSIDE 770 MOTZAEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5738, HOPING TO HEAR SOME NEWS ON THE REBBE'S HEALTH.

## ESSENTIALLY THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN A NINTH DAY OF CHANUKAH, JUST AS EVERY YOM TOV IS CELEBRATED ONE DAY LONGER IN THE DIASPORA.

Torah sources, it must in fact have some significance. Therefore everyone is to increase in *mitzvoim* on this “ninth” day as well; and joyfully so!

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe said that due to the fact that on Simchas Torah he was unable to distribute *kos shel brocha*, he will do so now.

The Rebbe led the *bentching* in a special tune, and distributed *kos shel brocha* afterwards to all present, giving *mashke* to communal activists, leaders of institutions, shluchim, and the relatives of shluchim who weren't present.

Before taking leave, the Rebbe blessed everyone that we should soon merit greeting Moshiach with much joy. He then began singing “*Ki V'Simcha*” while leaving shul. The Chassidim broke out in a lively dance which continued for a long time, as if it were Simchas Torah!

### Tuesday, 3 Teves

The Rebbe called Rabbi Hecht into his room and began by saying that he had really wanted to thank him yesterday for

arranging everything so well, but he had not done so during the distribution of *kos shel brocha* due to the many people standing nearby.

The Rebbe then asked, “How did Reb Berel Junik find out about the farbrengen?”

Rabbi Hecht replied that he had notified him a bit earlier than everyone else, so that he can serve the Rebbe as usual. The Rebbe nodded in agreement.

He then told the Rebbe that his brother, Rabbi Avrohom Hecht had spoiled the secret! He had come to 770, and in response to Rabbi Groner's inquiry as to why he had come, he said, “To get a seat”. It was then that people sensed that something special was happening. (The Rebbe smiled.)

The Rebbe gave Rabbi Hecht twenty dollars as reimbursement for the expenses of the farbrengen, and then he asked what was doing with the translation of the sicha, adding that he should urge Reb Nissan Mindel to prepare it.

### Friday, 6 Teves

The Rebbe called Rabbi Hecht in again, asking for a full account of exactly how much money was spent on the farbrengen. The Rebbe added that if he refuses to reveal the sum, then the next time such a thing has to happen, “I'll tell someone else about it instead!”

The Rebbe asked how much the *mashke* cost. Rabbi Hecht answered that he had gotten it for free; explaining that there was a man who was close to Chabad that owned a liquor store nearby, and he had donated a few cases. The Rebbe then inquired about the cost of the challos, to which Rabbi Hecht replied that the total was \$65. The Rebbe gave him \$25 and said “I have already given you \$20 yesterday, here's another \$25, and as for the last \$20, I'll give you a bargain--I'll allow you to chip in!”

Rabbi Hecht was still reluctant to accept the money, saying that he was only taking it because he must listen (“*kabbolas ol*”), but the Rebbe told him to take the money happily and wished him a “Good Shabbos.” **D**

1. See Toras Menachem vol. 2 p. 65