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לזכות
הילד החייל בצבאות ה' מנחם מענדל שי'
לרגל ה"אפשערניש" שלו ביום ד' ניסן תשע"ה
נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' בניציון וזוגתו מרת בלומא שם טוב

לעבן מיט'ן רבי'ן

SURPRISE FARBRENGEN

As Chassidim, we carefully follow the Rebbe's every move in anticipation to learn as much as possible from his actions, just as we do from the Torah he teaches. There are times when the Rebbe does things that are seemingly out of the ordinary and may be difficult to understand, which makes us appreciate them even more. On Shabbos Parshas Nasso 5751 something happened that came across to be so exceptional, that it borderlines mysterious. After conducting the usual farbrengen at 1:30 in the afternoon, the Rebbe appeared in the shul a second time just minutes before shkia. The few lucky ones who happened to be present at that moment were in for a surprise...

The following description of that memorable shabbos is based on numerous diaries and recollections of those present at the time. Among them: Yoman Ar'enu Niflaos, Beis Chayenu, an extensive article by Rabbi Yossi Lew, and more.

This Shabbos, Yud-Beis Sivan, was a direct continuation of the Yom Tov of Shavuot. Most of the guests were still present at 770, and many additional shlichim and rabbanim who could not leave their congregations over the holiday joined as well, to catch the 'last licks' of the Yom Tov'dike atmosphere.

Indeed, a very large crowd was present, and the feeling of Shavuot was strongly felt; not only in the air, but also, and primarily, in the sichos that the Rebbe spoke during the afternoon farbrengen,

which were almost entirely dedicated to the theme of *matan Torah*.

Shacharis was also held in a festive mode; 'Sim Shalom' was sung, and the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing, motioning for the tune to be repeated three times.

Typical Shabbos

A *lebedike* tune was sung as the Rebbe entered the packed shul for the farbrengen. After the Rebbe recited *kiddush*, the crowd began to sing 'Sisu

Vesimchu Besimchas Hageula, while the Rebbe encouraged the singing, showing special attention to a group of French Jews visiting from Montreal.

The first sicha dwelt on the occasion of receiving the Torah anew this past week. The Rebbe spoke at length about our obligation to begin learning Torah on an entirely new level, with the same excitement we would have for something brand new. At the conclusion of the lengthy sicha, those in attendance sang the Rosh Chodesh Kislev Nigun, with the

ש"פ נשא
תנש"א

Rebbe's strong encouragement. During the singing, the Rebbe gave a piece of cake to one of the Sharf children.

The Rebbe then turned to his left side, facing the guests from Montreal, and began saying:

"Guests are present; surely they will say *lchaim*, and the entire congregation will join them.

"Since some of them are from France and do not understand Yiddish, therefore [the Rebbe continued in French:] They should say *lchaim* three times, with *zrizus*, and this will be a preparation for the *geula ha'amitis v'hashleima* through Moshiach Tzidkeinu."

The guests immediately began singing *Ho'aderes V'haemunah* excitedly, and the whole crowd joined in, with the Rebbe again encouraging the singing with his arm.

[The Rebbe also motioned the number two, and then the number three with his fingers to the group, indicating that they should say *lchaim* a second time and third time. It is interesting to note the following:

Three times on their way back to Montreal they encountered, and overcame obstacles. First the wheels of the bus went flat twice during the journey, and then they collided with a deer crossing the road. In all three instances, no one was hurt. After the third incident, they understood the Rebbe's motions to them as a clear indication that they will arrive home safely despite the three obstacles].

At the conclusion of the third sicha, the Rebbe distributed the customary bottles of *mashke* for different events of *hafotzas hama'ayanos* occurring during the coming week around the world. Due to the large crowd, a total of 23 bottles were placed on the table. Each person announced the event that was to take place, received *lchaim* from the Rebbe, and then received his bottle, which was to be distributed partly at the farbrengen, and the rest at the event.



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THE REBBE GIVES OUT KOS SHEL BRACHA AFTER THE SURPRISE FARBRENGEN.

After the last bottle was presented, the Rebbe began singing the *hakafos nigun* of his father, which was followed by *Sheyibone*, led by Chazzan Moshe Teleshevsky. The Rebbe then started 'Nyet Nyet Nikavo,' and with this the farbrengen came to a close.

As the Rebbe recited the brocho acharona, (after reminding everyone to do so as well), the bochorim began to sing 'shuva,' this year's Yud Aleph Nissan Niggun, being that it had not been sung yet at the farbrengen. The Rebbe encouraged the singing, and started walking towards the *shtender* near his seat. Anticipating the beginning of davening, the crowd quieted down, but the Rebbe continued encouraging the singing even as he reached his davening place. *Mincha* was recited, after which the Rebbe sat down to recite the first *perok* of *Pirkei Avos*.

The Shock

The time was 3:55 p.m. when the crowd at 770 slowly dispersed. Some headed

home for the Shabbos meal, while others remained to hear *chazzarah* of the sichos that were just spoken; and yet a third group headed out to conduct Shabbos gatherings at shuls in the neighboring areas¹.

All in all, with this it seemed that the Shavuos festivities of this year had concluded. There had been a farbrengen on Shabbos-Erev Yom Tov; a short Sichah outside 770 said to the *tahalucha* participants upon their return on the second night of Yom Tov; a regular Yom Tov farbrengen on the second day, with *kos shel bracha* distribution afterwards lasting until 2:00 a.m.; during the week there was a *yechidus kholis* for the guests that spent Shavuos with the Rebbe; and now we just ended the post-Shavuos Shabbos farbrengen. This should have drawn to close all the Shavuos related events for this year. Or so we thought...

Due to the large amount of guests present, *maariv* was scheduled to take place in the large shul downstairs, as opposed to in the small upstairs *zal*,

where it was normally held on Motzoei Shabbos. As the afternoon progressed, some people started to gather in 770 to learn, participate in the seder niggunim led each week by Rabbi Nochum Kaplan, or simply to be in 770. The atmosphere was subdued, as people calmly went about minding their own business; nobody anticipated what was about to happen.

At 8:05 p.m. the Rebbe suddenly appeared alone—without any of the *mazkirim*—at the door in the back of the shul, holding his *siddur* in his right hand, and a silver-colored *kvort* filled with water along with a pink towel in his left hand. The estimated 50 people who were present at the time watched in amazement as the Rebbe walked towards the *aron kodesh*. After recovering from the initial shock of the scene, they began following the Rebbe until he reached the bleachers—still standing from the afternoon *farbrengen*—which blocked his path to the *aron kodesh*. The bochorim hurried over and hastily moved them to the side, allowing the Rebbe to pass and

reach the platform where he davens.

Placing the *kvort* on the *bima*, the Rebbe requested that a *shissel* be brought so he can wash his hands before the *shkiah*. Chants were suddenly heard from all over, “A *shissel! A shissel!*”

The Rebbe waited as Reb Avrohom Holtzberg ran to bring the large coffee urn, (usually used to serve coffee to the Chassidim before the Rebbe’s *farbrengen* every Shabbos). Remnants of coffee spilled all over the floor as Reb Avrohom pushed his way through the crowd until he reached the Rebbe.

The Rebbe’s chair was brought over and placed on the floor next to the platform.

As none of the *mazkirim* were present when the Rebbe appeared, Rabbi Levi Garelik hurried to his father-in-law’s house, Rabbi Binyomin Klein—who lives a few doors down from 770—and notified him of the surprise.

All the while, the Rebbe continually wiped his hands with the towel until Rabbi Klein appeared at the scene and

handed a *challah* to the Rebbe. The Rebbe made *Hamotzi*, tearing the *challah* into two, and then—with a slight smile on his face—‘dipped’ one piece into the other².

The Rebbe then told Rabbi Klein that he wishes to sit on the platform so that the crowd will be able to see him better. So after the Rebbe stood up and walked up the stairs, the chair was immediately situated on top of the *bima* in the corner, facing the crowd. The Rebbe sat down, balancing his *siddur* on top of the banister. The position in which the Rebbe sat was totally unprecedented; the Rebbe sat in his chair directly facing the crowd with no table between them.³

The tenseness in the air was almost palpable. No one knew what to expect after such an unusual appearance.

Second farbrengen

Opening his *siddur*, the Rebbe instructed that the crowd sing *B’nei Heichala*, and he sang along with everyone. Since only a handful of people, mainly bochorim, were present, and they were unsure of the



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THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE SINGING.

words—and perhaps a little confused—the song ended relatively quickly, with many wordless “*ay yai yais*” substituting for the words. The Rebbe looked up from his siddur and asked Rabbi Klein, “They finished already?” So the singing of the tune without words was continued for a bit longer.

When the singing finished, the Rebbe closed the siddur, placing it back on top of the banister and began with the first sicha. The Rebbe spoke fervently of the imminent *geulah*, connecting it with the current time and date, and then concluded: “As is the custom at these farbrengens⁴, we will now sing the nigunim of all the rabbeim [the Rebbe specified each one by name], concluding with the niggun of my father-in-law, the [Friediker] Rebbe, and with this nigun we will finally go out of *golus!*”

The singing of the nigunim, with their solemnity as well as excitement, took a significant amount of time, and the Rebbe’s expression was unusually serious throughout.

During the ‘*Shalosh Tenuos*’ of the Ba’al Shem Tov, Maggid and Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe made strong motions encouraging the singing. *Keili Atah*, the Mitteler Rebbe’s *Kapelye*, and *Yemin Hashem* followed, with the Rebbe’s

encouragement during the latter.

When singing *Lechatchila Aribet*, the Rebbe signaled with strong head motions that the high note be sung ten times. All present felt that these were truly special moments within a very unique farbrengen.

The final nigunim were *Nigun Hachana*, the *Beinoni*, and *Hu Elokeinu*⁵.

As time progressed, word that the Rebbe was holding a farbrengen spread swiftly across the neighborhood, and 770 was gradually filling up. Bleachers began to rise in all directions, surrounding the *bima* completely, and very soon the all-too-familiar ‘pushing’ began.

The second sicha was regarding the unique *avodah* that is required right before the coming of Moshiach. The Rebbe explained that we have already completed the work that was expected from *klal Yisrael*, and the only thing remaining is to serve Hashem with *oneg*; primarily regarding the study of Torah with *chayus* and pleasure.

The Rebbe also revealed that the farbrengen would conclude with the distribution of *kos shel bracha*, and then he greatly encouraged the study of *Pirkei Avos*, *Chitas*, and the anticipation of Moshiach’s arrival. Mentioning the

closing words of bentching, ברוך הגבר, אשר יבטח גו’, the Rebbe explained that one must believe, expect, and await Moshiach’s coming daily; and not just that he may arrive someday, but rather that he will arrive on that day *mamosh!*

In the absence of a table, everyone could see the Rebbe’s holy hands as he was talking. Unlike regular farbrengens, where the Rebbe holds his holy hands under the table, here everyone was able to see the Rebbe gesturing with his hands. For example, when the Rebbe mentioned the saying, “עצם כשאתה תופס” - במקצתו אתה תופס בכולו - he displayed the act of “grasping” by grasping one hand with the other.

At the conclusion of the sicha, the Rebbe began singing his father’s *hakafo*s nigun. By this time, 770 was filled from wall to wall. Lots of people had the opportunity to see the Rebbe, and be part of this historical and unusual, heavenly experience. Those that merited to stand—or hang on to the edge of a bench—close to the front of the shul, sang joyously, with those scattered throughout the shul joining along.

Throughout the farbrengen, the Rebbe made numerous extraordinary statements about our proximity to the time of

geulah, and about the uniqueness of the current time and location. All of these, understandably, had a deep effect on all of the assembled chassidim, which heightened the uplifting feeling that was already felt in the room.

Bentching

The Rebbe then began a third, shorter *sicha*. He asked if ten people had washed for *Hamotzi*, in order to say *birkas hamazon* with a *zimun* and with *'neva'rech Elokeinu'* (or at least three, or even one, who—out of *ahavas yisrael*—can include everyone, because he recites every day *'Hareini mikabel'* etc.). Then the Rebbe concluded with a fervent wish that from Yud-Beis Sivan we go directly to the *geulah ha'amitis vehashleima*.

At the conclusion of the *sicha*, the pushing and shoving around the Rebbe's place had grown unbearable and the makeshift bleachers, which had sprung up on all sides, blocked a large part of the crowd from participating in the *farbrengen*. People were climbing on and off bleachers and ladders, and there was lots of noise and confusion.

The Rebbe instructed that everyone should go down and stand on the floor. Within seconds, the bleachers were dismantled, but there was still a great commotion and disorder in the room. The Rebbe began motioning to all of those who were standing on benches to get down. "Everyone should go to their places. We will not begin *bentching* until everyone is in their places," the Rebbe said, asking that the *gabba'im* restore order. The Rebbe remarked that if the *gabba'im* cannot take control, new *gabba'im* should be appointed.

Kos Shel Bracha

After some time, a semblance of order was restored. The Rebbe turned to Rabbi Groner, asking him if there was a minyan of people who had washed for *Hamotzi*. Rabbi Groner answered in the affirmative, and Rabbi Berel Junik—the Rebbe's *'sar hamashkim'* after the passing of Rabbi Mentlik—brought the Rebbe's

cup and wine to the table that had been placed to the Rebbe's left, and he filled the Rebbe's *becher*.

The Rebbe lead *bentching* with *zimun*, and in addition to the regular parts that he usually concludes out loud, he added the words לעולם אל יחסרנו for everyone to hear.

Bentching was followed by *maariv*, and then the Rebbe returned to make *havdalah* at the spot he sat during the *farbrengen*. (The Rebbe's brown wooden table was brought over in the meantime.)

As the Rebbe recited *havdalah*, the tall table upon which the Rebbe generally distributes dollars after *tefilos* was brought up onto the platform for *kos shel bracha*; but the Rebbe motioned that the distribution will take place on the floor, from the same spot as dollars and *kuntreisim* were distributed (whenever they took place in the downstairs shul).

While the Rebbe descended the steps, Rabbi Meir Harlig wrapped the Rebbe's siddur with the yellow towel and held it, wrapped in the towel.

Bochurim crowded around, piled on benches and tables, joyfully singing various nigunim, while a long line of

people stretched through the shul, waiting for their turn to approach the Rebbe and receive a bit of wine in their cups. This *kos shel bracha* was much different than every *Motzaei Yom Tov*, as it never took place in this setting and location.

After a few minutes of the line moving slowly, the Rebbe turned to his right, towards the *aron kodesh*, and waved with the left hand, instructing the people there to move away and to get into the line. After a few more minutes, the Rebbe did so again, with a more definite motion. After a while towels were brought to catch the dripping wine, and more towels to serve as an armrest for the Rebbe.

News of the surprise *farbrengen* had spread like wildfire as soon as Shabbos was over, and streams of people began pouring in from all over the city and beyond, no one wanting to miss out on this momentous occasion.

At the beginning of the distribution, the Rebbe did not react to the nigunim. However, in the midst of the *chalukah*, Rabbi Shlomo Cunin passed by the Rebbe, enthusiastically singing *Didan Notzach*. The Rebbe powerfully waved his arm in his direction, encouraging



AFTER KOS SHEL BRACHA, THE REBBE SAYS BRACHA ACHRONA.

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the joyous singing, and from that point on, the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing in all directions, during almost every nigun.

One of the special moments was when the Rebbe encouraged the singing towards the end of *Stav Ya Pitu*, when the crowd sang “*un mir zogen aleh, tzuzamen lchaim.*”

Another individual that received special attention was Mr. Shmuel Shmueli, editor of the newspaper *Yisrael Shelanu*, to whom the Rebbe also waved his arm in encouragement.

After about an hour-and-a-half, the chair and brown table were brought and the Rebbe sat down. Reb Meir Harlig removed the siddur from the towel and placed it on the table for the Rebbe to say a *bracha achrona*.

The Rebbe then stood up to say *Veyiten Lecha* and was facing north (i.e. 770’s left side), with the siddur on the table. At that point, several latecomers arrived and the Rebbe gave them *kos shel bracha*.

Once that was done, the Rebbe began singing *Ki Besimcha*, and left the shul

holding the siddur, as well as the becher with a napkin and the tray covering over its top. The time was 12:15 a.m.

Shortly afterwards, the Rebbe came out for *kiddush levana*.

This entire event, from the beginning to the end, is extremely difficult to adequately describe; the excitement and delight of all those who merited to take part was unimaginable. After *kiddush levana*, a spontaneous joyous dance broke out. Everyone placed his hand on his fellow’s shoulders—while attempting to catch another *vort* that he may have missed from the farbrengen—celebrating the unbelievable occurrences that they were privileged to experience.

Later that night, a *tzeischem l’shalom* was organized by Agudas Chassidei Chabad for the many guests that had been in town for Yom Tov.

After the amazing events everyone had just experienced, the atmosphere was understandably electrified, and all agreed that this totally unprecedented and completely unusual farbrengen was

definitely one of the more “heavenly” ones ever experienced.

While we may not know how the process of *geulah* will work, we do know that when it happens—speedily in our days—it will surely be a most unexpected surprise, ushering in the most incredible “heavenly” experience in history.

This farbrengen was a taste of that. **D**

1. About a year and a half before, on Shabbos Parshas Noach 5750, the Rebbe reinvigorated a custom that he had started many years earlier, called ‘*hak’holas kehillos.*’ Bochorim would go to shuls around New York to speak and farbreng with the congregants about Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.
2. Later on when salt was brought, the Rebbe dipped the *challah* into the salt.
3. Someone had brought up a table, in front of which the Rebbe could sit. But the Rebbe did not want it in front of him. It seemed as though the Rebbe preferred to be closer to the crowd. Only a small table was placed on the floor where the Challah and water were held.
4. I.e. Yom Tov farbrengens when the Rebbe washed before *shkia* and continued into the night.
5. Normally, the Rebbe’s nigun sung on similar occasions was *Atah Vechartanu*.



THE REBBE LEAVES SHUL AS THE TEEMING CROWD LOOKS ON.