



BEHIND THE PICTURE

THE GUARANTORS' GUARANTEE

Distribution of Siddurim to children – Eve of Erev Shavuos 5739

“They had brought back with them their children whom they had taken from their cots and beds, in order to receive their gift from the Rebbe.”

The pen that authored these words is that of Reb Zalmon Jaffe, who wrote what he had heard from his friend Bernard Perrin, about the memorable sights of the farbrengen of Wednesday evening, *leil Erev Shavuos 5739*.

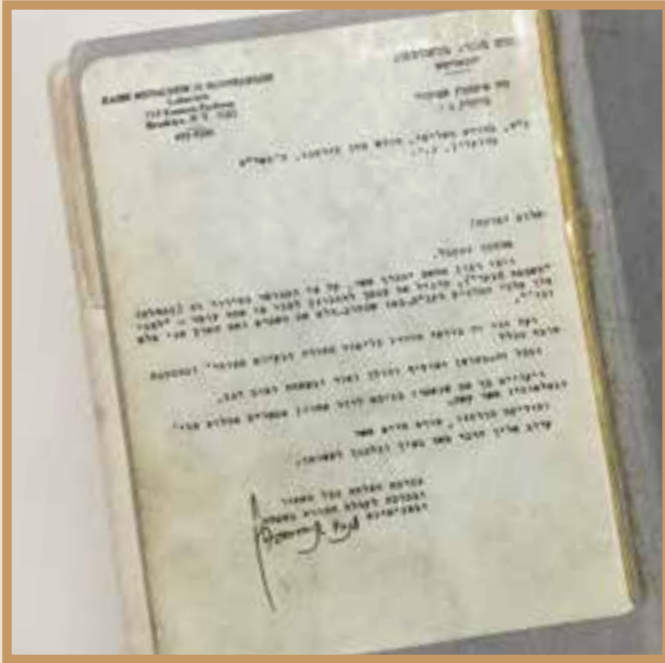
What was the Rebbe distributing?

Let us take a look...

In the week prior to this farbrengen the Rebbe made numerous mentions of the famous Midrash¹ that expounds upon the role the children played in the story of Matan Torah, and their responsibility. One example was on Motzaei Shabbos, the eve of Rosh Chodesh Sivan. The Rebbe demanded that given the children's part in receiving the Torah, a special effort be made for children to increase their Torah study and their tzedakah.

In the days following the Motzaei Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe penned





a brief letter addressed to all children, and instructed his *mazkirus* to glue copies of it to the first page of a pocket-sized siddur, which will be distributed to children along with a dollar bill. The letter was printed in two formats; one bearing the opening greeting “*Sholom Uvracha*” which was the standard greeting the Rebbe used when corresponding with males, and another with “*Bracha Vesholom*”—its counterpart for female recipients.

The Rebbe didn’t specify how the siddurim will be given to the children or when the distribution will take place. So when the Rebbe announced during the Wednesday evening farbrengen that he will personally distribute a siddur to every boy and girl under bar and bas mitzvah, it caught everyone by surprise!

The farbrengen had begun at 10:00 p.m. and after only one sicha, it was already fairly late. Indeed the Rebbe had brought up to the topic of children, and declared them to be the focus of the farbrengen, but a special *chalukah* for them was just extraordinary!

Following the announcement, the Rebbe said that the distribution will actually take place at the farbrengen’s conclusion—so as not to send the room into chaos, in a fashion more befitting the

mode of “*ad delo yada*” which belongs to Purim rather than Shavuos.

The Rebbe then shed light on a subtle issue. He explained that although he was distributing a siddur, which seemed not to be in line with the recent campaign centered around an increase in Torah study, it must be kept in mind that the siddur includes the *Shema*, which is from the *Chumash*; and *Eizehu Mekoman* and *Avos* which are part of *Mishnayos*. Thus, together with the dollar bill, each child will receive something related to Torah, tefilah and tzedakah.

In an overt display of affection the Rebbe then said that this item was to be a “*nachlas olomim*”—a legacy for posterity—from which the children should אויסבעטען אלע גוטע זאכען, daven for —and bring about— all good things. The Rebbe instructed the children to have an adult write their name in the siddur, prefaced by לה' הארץ ומלואה, which declares that ultimately everything belongs to Hashem. The Rebbe also said that they should give their dollar, or its equivalent, to tzedakah, even before the onset of the impending Yom Tov. Should the child receive a siddur with the letter missing, added the Rebbe, he or she may request a new copy from *mazkirus*.

Perhaps in an another special show of

care, the Rebbe also requested that if a child is able too, he or she should come up to receive the siddur alone, and that the adults only assist those incapable of coming themselves.

Over the course of the evening the Rebbe instructed that the children say *l'chaim*, even asking if the plexi glass panel in front of the *ezras noshim* was removable, to allow the girls to say *l'chaim* as well.

Following an intricate *hadran* on *Mesechta Sotah*, the farbrengen concluded and the children—boys first, followed by the girls—made their way up to the Rebbe’s dais and received each their special gift. During the distribution, the crowd sang lively niggunim, which the Rebbe sporadically encouraged.

As more and more children went by, the lines hardly thinned, since—as Reb Zalmon Jaffe recounted—young men who had been present at the farbrengen on their own, dashed home returning shortly thereafter with their young children, many of whom still wearing their night attire, and tired faces!

But what is sleep when the Rebbe is distributing a personal gift with a fatherly smile on his holy countenance? **D**

1. Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:4