

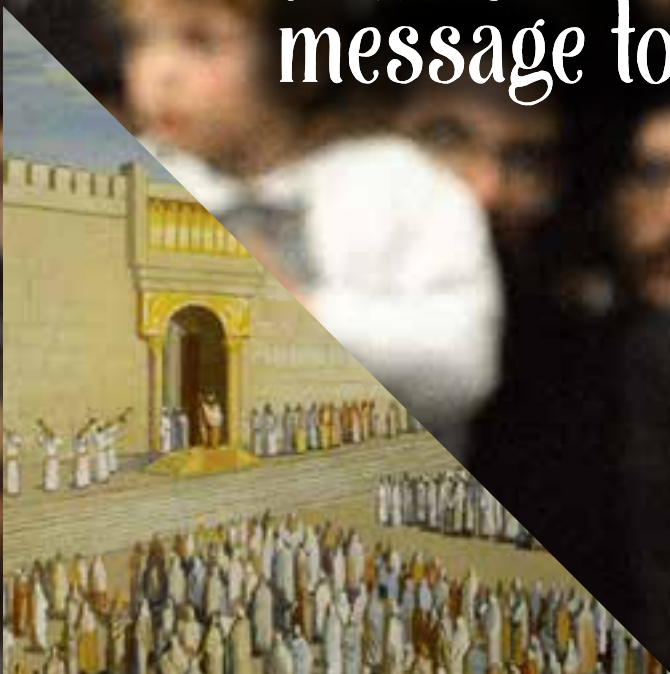
מקץ שבע שנים במעד שנת השמטה בחג הסוכות; בבוא כל ישראל...

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף

וגרף אשר בשערי למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם
ושמרו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת

(ויקרא, י"ב).

the Momentous Gathering and its message today,





לזכות הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל זוגתו מרת חיה מושקא ובתם חנה שיחיו גרינברג
בקשר עם נסיעתם בשליחות כ"ק אדמו"ר לוואסילה, אלאסקא שיצליחו ביתר שאת
ויתר עוז במילוי הוראת כ"ק אדמו"ר "מאכן דארט ווארעם" בהתגלות משיח צדקינו
נדפס ע"י הוריהם הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק זוגתו מרת אסתר גאלדע שיחיו גרינברג

A SCENE TO BEHOLD

Once every seven years, everyone would come. The multitudes of Yidden scattered throughout Eretz Yisroel and beyond would make the long trek to Yerushalayim. *Everyone* was there: the hoary elders and the squealing infants; the farmers and the housewives; the simpletons and the learned scholars; the men, women, and children. They would all travel to Yerushalayim for '*hakhel*,' the national mass gathering in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

It was a scene of Yiddishkeit at its height.

The gathering was set for the first day of Chol Hamoed. As the time came closer, one would hear kohanim stationed throughout the public places in Yerushalayim blaring golden trumpets *tekia! terua! tekia!*

In fact, every Kohen would be blowing a trumpet on this day; if a Kohen was seen without a trumpet in his hand, people would murmur, "Seems that he isn't a kohen!" Close your eyes and picture it for a moment: every Kohen alive is sounding a trumpet; the sound must have been deafening.

These blasts were the signal for everyone to start making their way towards the *Beis Hamikdash*.



It was a sight of holy pandemonium. Millions of men, women, and children swarmed into the *Beis Hamikdash* and gathered around a huge wooden podium in the *azara* upon which the king was to speak; miraculously the entire Jewish nation fit inside¹. The deafening sounds and crushing crowds overwhelmed the senses.

Finally, the time arrived. The king climbed onto the podium. The *chazzan* took the special Torah that was kept in the *azarah*² and gave it to the *rosh haknesses*; the *rosh haknesses* passed it to the *segan Kohen Gadol*; the *segan Kohen Gadol* passed it to the *Kohen Gadol*, and the *Kohen Gadol* passed the Torah to the king of Israel. [This signified that the king was elevated in ever higher levels above the rest of the nation.]

Under the gaze of the entire Jewish nation, the *hakhel* ceremony commenced. The king made the *bracha* on the Torah like at a regular *krias hatorah*, opened the Torah to *parshas Devarim* and read various *parshiyos* where Hashem exhorts the Yidden to keep true to His mitzvos. At the conclusion of the reading, he recited seven special *brachos* unique for this ceremony.

It was a stirring call for renewed dedication to Hashem and His mitzvos. All Yidden participated in the *hakhel* ceremony, no matter their station in life, whether they were great scholars or complete ignoramuses lacking a basic understanding of Hebrew, for its inspirational message was felt equally by all.

In fact, women too were obligated to participate, making *hakhel* unique among positive mitzvos that are time-dependent. And even newborn children were obligated to participate, which makes *hakhel* stand out amongst all other mitzvos³.

Every single person in the Jewish nation was present at *hakhel*, and the effects were felt for years afterward.

Everyone was there: the hoary elders and the squealing infants; the farmers and the housewives; the simpletons and the learned scholars; the men, women, and children.

Throughout its years of publication, *The Moshiach Times's* cover would be checked over by the Rebbe, who would often give fascinating comments.

On the original design of the Tishrei 5748 cover (right), which depicted hakhel in the Bais Hamikdash, the Rebbe gave the following comment through the *mazkir*: "יתוסף עוד שיה' נראה יותר ילדים וטף". "More should be

added [to the picture], so that more children and *taf* are visible."

This comment was then written up and given to the Rebbe for final verification. The Rebbe underlined it twice and added a check indicating approval.

The final printed version (left).



A MATAN TORAH EXPERIENCE

But *hakhel* wasn't just an inspiring moment. The Rambam compares it to *matan Torah*, writing that each person must listen intently and picture himself as if he was standing before *Har Sinai* and Hashem was giving him the Torah.

Indeed, it seems from the Rambam's language that the experience of *hakhel* is not simply compared to *matan Torah*, rather the theme of *hakhel* is to relive *matan Torah* every seven years.

But what does *hakhel* have to do with *matan Torah*?

Let us first examine *matan Torah* for a moment. What was its main idea? It wasn't simply to transfer

the Torah to the Yidden (especially considering the fact that they already had the Torah, which they had been studying since the times of Avraham Avinu). Rather, the main theme of *matan Torah* was that Yidden saw *Elokus*. As it's written in the *pesukim*, "The entire nation saw the thunder..." "You have *seen*..." "Hashem has *shown*..."



Why was it so important for them to see *Elokus*? The *possuk* explains: "In order that His *yira* will be upon your faces and you will not sin." When a person simply hears or learns about something, it can remain theoretical. But when he actually sees it, it suddenly has a much greater impact. It becomes real. So at *matan Torah*, when the Yidden saw *Elokus*, it gave them a much more emotional and immediate *yiras Hashem*. The absolute truth of "*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*" was seared in their souls.

Now we see how *hakhel* is so connected to *matan Torah*: they have the exact same theme. The purpose of *matan Torah* was to cause *yiras Hashem*, and the theme of *hakhel* is "in order that they learn and fear Hashem"—also to spur the Yidden's *yiras Hashem*. Hashem gave Yidden the mitzva of *hakhel* so that they can re-experience *matan Torah* and reignite their *yiras Hashem*.

When the king climbed the tall wooden podium, read the stirring passages from the Torah, and roused the *yiras Hashem* in the Yidden—it was *matan Torah* all over again.⁴

🌀 A YEAR OF HAKHEL 🌀

Although *hakhel* was a one-time event at the beginning of the year, the entire year is a *shnas hakhel*. Indeed, when the Torah writes the mitzva of *hakhel*, it emphasizes that it's "At the end of [every] seven years," meaning that it is connected with the year as a whole.⁵

🌀 UNITY 🌀

At the time of *hakhel*, the *entire Jewish nation*—men, women and children—came together. This is because the message of *hakhel* applies to all Jews equally. In regards to learning Torah, or other issues pertaining to the mind, each person is on a different level; but *yiras Hashem* is critical for all people equally, regardless of their intellectual status.⁶

IN GALUS

Midoirasa, the mitzva of *hakhel* only applies when all Yidden are in Eretz Yisrael, not in *galus*. *Chachomim* did not establish a mitzva *miderabbanan* as a *zecher* to *hakhel*, as they did with many other mitzvos; so there is no mitzva of *hakhel* today at all.⁷

Nevertheless, the Rebbe made a huge *shturem* about *hakhel*. This began in the earlier years of the *nesius* (and even earlier), and culminated in the year 5748, when the Rebbe went on a campaign that every person become a "*hakhel Yid*" and bring *hakhel* into their lives.

In the second part of this article, we will see up close the Rebbe's *koch* in *hakhel*. But first we must understand the why. Why the huge excitement about *hakhel*? It was a beautiful ceremony in the times of the *Mikdash*, but what relevance does it really have in the time of *galus*, when we have no king and no *Beis Hamikdash*?

Other mitzvos were also celebrated with huge fanfare and excitement in the times of the *Mikdash*, like the mitzva of *bikurim* for example, yet we find no *koch* in them in the times of *galus*. Why is *hakhel* different?

DEEPER LAYERS

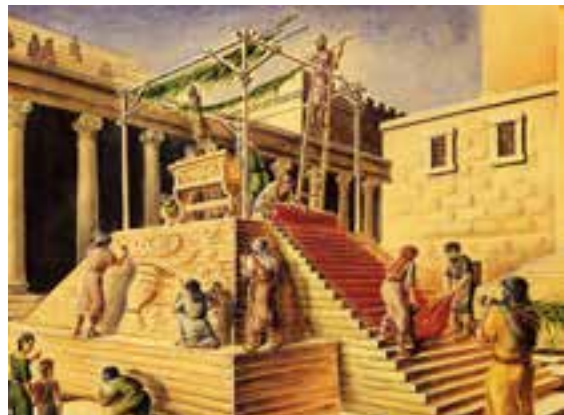
In order to understand this, we must dig a bit deeper into the nature of the mitzva of *hakhel*.

Every mitzva has two parts: the **action** and the **kavana**. Let's take matzah as an example. The action of the mitzva is to eat matzah; the *kavana* is to remember that Hashem took us out of *Mitzrayim*.

Now which part of the mitzva is more important, the action or the *kavana*? Is the mitzva of matzah primarily the act of eating matzah,

with the added *kavana* of remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim*? Or is it essentially remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim* with an added action of eating matzah? Or perhaps a combination of both?

In most mitzvos, the action is more important than the intent. If you eat matzah without *kavana*, you still fulfilled the mitzva. However, if you thought about eating matzah without actually doing it, no mitzva was fulfilled.



TEFILLA

But then there are some exceptions, mitzvos where the *kavana* is central to their fulfillment. Take davening for example. The **action** of davening is saying the words, and the **kavana** is to realize that you are davening to Hashem. If you just say the words of davening—the action—with no *kavana* at all, you did not fulfill the mitzva of *tefilla* according to some opinions, because without *kavana* it is not *tefilla*. In davening, the *kavana* is much more integral to the mitzva.

Hakhel doesn't only have some relevance in the times of galus, it is even more relevant and immediate in galus.

HAKHEL

In a similar vein, the mitzva of *hakhel* also has two parts: the action, which is the *krias haTorah* of the king; and the *kavana*, which is to inspire the Yidden to Torah and mitzvos. Which part is more important, the action or the *kavana*? Is it like *matzah*, where the action is paramount, or like *davening*, where the *kavana* is more important?

Based on the language of the Rambam, and sourced in the actual *pesukim*, the Rebbe learns that the *kavana* of *hakhel*, to rouse Yidden to Torah and mitzvos, is the most integral component of the mitzva. The action, the king's reading of the Torah, is only secondary; it serves as a vehicle to reach the integral part of the mitzva. [With this in mind, the Rebbe explains various other aspects on the mitzva of *hakhel*.]

Once we establish that the integral part of *hakhel* is to stir the Yidden to Torah and mitzvos, we can understand its relevance today.

If the most essential part of the mitzva had been the king's reading of the Torah, it would not have been relevant in the time of *galus*. But, in truth, the central part of the mitzva is to inspire the Yidden - which is just as relevant today as it was in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*.⁸

So far, so good. We have a powerful insightful explanation on the relevance of *hakhel* today. But now the sichos take takes a fascinating turn.

EVEN MORE IN GALUS!

The Rebbe says that in a way, the mitzva of *hakhel* is even more relevant today than in the times of the *Mikdash*.

But how can a commemoration of the mitzva be more potent than the mitzva itself?

This, the Rebbe explains, is because doing an action can sometimes drown out the meaning behind the action. When you focus on the action part of the mitzva, you can be distracted from the meaning behind it.

Korbanos is a good example for this. When a person brought a *korban* in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it was a big deal; twenty four Kohanim were involved in sacrificing and offering the animal. With all the action going on, a person could easily feel that bringing the physical animal was enough, and he might forget about the spiritual *avoda* associated with *korbanos*, which is to do *teshuva*; his *yetzer hara* could remain the same animal it was before. It would be a difficult task to convince him that the physical *korban* is not sufficient.

Today, on the other hand, when we don't have physical *korbanos*, a person knows that he has no choice but to do *teshuva*, because there is no physical *korban* to distract him from the spiritual element.

The same is true with *hakhel*. When the entire Jewish nation—men, women and children—gathered together in the *Beis Hamikdash*, a person could miss the king's true message of inspiration amidst all the commotion and excitement.

Today, on the other hand, there is nothing to distract us from focusing on the true message of *hakhel*—to rouse our *yiras Hashem* and recommit ourselves to Torah and mitzvos.

In effect, *hakhel* doesn't only have some relevance in the times of *galus*, rather it is even more relevant and immediate now. [In a *shulei hagilyon* (secondary footnote) the Rebbe immediately qualifies that, of course, nothing can be compared to the king's reading of the Torah; indeed, the Rambam writes that the king is a *shliach* of Hashem at that moment. Nevertheless, there is a real bonus in the times of *galus*.]⁹



EARLY BEGINNINGS

The Rebbe's *hakhel* campaigns only began decades later, but early seeds for this *koch* can be found as early as 5692, long before he assumed the *nesius*. [Note, that this was the Rebbe's first *hakhel* as the Friediker Rebbe's son-in-law, and we immediately see a huge *koch* in *hakhel*.]

The Rebbe had come to spend Tishrei with the Friediker Rebbe in Otwock, Poland, and many other Chassidim were there as well. During Chol Hamoed, the Friediker Rebbe instructed the Rebbe to farbreng for the Chassidim.

The farbrengen lasted many hours—from 8 o'clock in the evening until 7 o'clock in the morning—and as participants later recounted, it was a farbrengen to be remembered. Those were the days when few people knew the Rebbe more than on a superficial basis, and his greatness was hidden from public view. This was an extremely rare opportunity to see the Rebbe up close. During this farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke in all parts of the Torah, as he weaved together *nigleh* and Chassidus, *halacha* and *agada*, along with practical *horaos* in *avodas Hashem*.

Notes of this farbrengen were kept in the Rebbe's *reshimos*¹⁰, and there we find that a main focus of the farbrengen was *hakhel*, as 5692 was a *hakhel* year. The Rebbe gives fascinating explanations, in *nigleh* and Chassidus, on many different aspects of *hakhel*: the reason that *hakhel* was set for the year after *shemita*; why the king must read the Torah (and the king's general role in Jewish society); the Torah portions that the king reads; and more.

In the same time period, the Rebbe also kept a fascinating correspondence on these subjects with his father, HoRav Levi Yitzchak¹¹.

WITH TIME

As far as we can tell, the Rebbe's *koch* in *hakhel* was his own *chiddush*; we don't find that the earlier Rebbeim emphasized the idea of *hakhel*.¹²

Even by the Rebbe himself the focus on *hakhel* didn't start all at once. In the first years of the *nesius*, we find only a smattering of *hora'os* about *hakhel*, but as the years went on, it became a major focus and a huge *shturem*.

In 5713, the Rebbe mentioned *hakhel* many times in letters and *sichos* throughout the year, and in addition to that, something special happened. Every



THE YARD OF THE YESHIVA IN OTWOCK, POLAND. ON CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS 5692, THE REBBE FARBRENGED AT THE YESHIVA FOR HOURS, SPEAKING AT LENGTH ABOUT THE MITZVAH OF HAKHEL.

year, the Rebbe would hold a farbrengen for *talmidei hayeshivos* during Sukkos (a custom that began before the *nesius*). In 5713, the Rebbe held an additional farbrengen in honor of *hakhel*, where he spoke at length on the subject. (These *sichos* were later printed as *sichos* in Likutei Sichos in 5747-5748, in the lead-up to *hakhel*.)

In the following *hakhel* years of 5720, 5727, and 5734, the Rebbe said many *sichos* explaining the concept of *hakhel* and how it applies today. The Rebbe also mentioned it very often in letters; in fact, every *nichtav kloli*, all letters to *mosdos chinuch*, and even telegrams for yom tov, had a mention of *hakhel*. In these letters, the Rebbe emphasized the significance of *hakhel* and the effect it should have on every single person.

In 5734, Shemini Atzeres was the scene of a special event. During *hakafos*, before *Ata Horeisa*,



A HANDWRITTEN LETTER FROM THE REBBE'S FATHER, HORAV LEVI YITZCHAK TO THE REBBE DISCUSSING HAKHEL ACCORDING TO KABBALA; PART OF A FASCINATING CORRESPONDENCE THEY HAD ON THE SUBJECT.

PHOTO: LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD



PHOTO: JEW/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 189184

THROUGHOUT TISHREI 5741, THE REBBE PLACED A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE CHILDREN'S UNIQUE ROLE IN HAKHEL.

HAKHEL IN YOUR OWN LIFE

The Rebbe pointed out that every person can make *hakhel* in their personal lives.

What does this mean? The theme of *hakhel* is to unite the entire nation: men, women, and children. Now, each of these segments have general characteristics; men have the trait of leadership and strength outside of the home; women are the *akeres habayis*—they oversee the home and the *chinuch* of the children; and children are the ones who are being educated and receive from their parents.

Every person has—and needs—all of these characteristics: strength and firmness to lead the outside world; leadership in the home; and the willingness to learn from each and every person.

In the year of *hakhel*, a person must take all of these characteristics and bring them together in his inner *Beis Hamikdash*; that his whole being and all his traits should be infused with a singular idea: “to fear Hashem all the days.”

the Rebbe instructed the *gabbai* Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz to announce the following: “Since this year is *shnas hakhel*—עמדו הכן כולכם—stand ready, all of you, men, women, and children, to bring in *zman simchaseinu* of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah!” [Similar announcements were made after the second and third *Ata Horeisa* as well.]

Such pronouncements didn’t happen every day; this was a unique scene that left a lasting impression on everyone there.

NEW FRONTIERS

In 5741, many people came to spend *hakhel* with the Rebbe, and 770 was even more packed than a usual Tishrei. This was the year that *hakhel* became a central focus of the Rebbe’s *sichos*.

The Rebbe introduced the concept of *kinusei hakhel*—*hakhel* gatherings—and said that all children should participate in at least three *kinusei hakhel*: before Rosh Hashanah, during Asseres Yemei Teshuva, and on Sukkos¹³. In many, many *farbrengens* during that Tishrei, the Rebbe *shturemed* again and again that a “multitude of children”¹⁴

A LARGE SIGN WELCOMES THE GUESTS COMING TO 770 FOR TISHREI OF SHNAS HAKHEL, 5748



should come together for the *kinusei hakhel*, and that every person must work on arranging this according to their ability. “But their ability in a way of *lechatchila ariber!*”¹⁵ The Rebbe added that, “when a Yid makes a *hachlata* about *hakhel*, he is guaranteed that he will be successful!”

[This wasn’t the first time the Rebbe encouraged *kinusim* for *hakhel*. In 5734, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Ezra Schochet, who lived in Bnei Brak at the time, to visit the Kosel with his family on Sukkos and learn a few *pesukim* of *parshas hakhel*. A similar *horaah* was given to Rabbi Efroim Wolf, with the added request to visit during the days of *selichos* as well.]

NIGHTLY KINUSIM

On the first night of Sukkos 5741, after *maariv* had drawn to an end and the Rebbe had wished the crowd the customary ‘*Gut yom tov*,’ something astonishing happened. Instead of walking down from his *bima* and leaving shul, the Rebbe suddenly began saying a *sicha!* The Rebbe explained that although *hakhel* (and *simchas beis hashoieva*) would be held in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash* on chol hamoed, that was simply because certain aspects of *hakhel* could not be arranged on yom tov. However, in the times of *galus* we do not have these constraints, and “the *hakhel* that we make now—gathering Yidden together, men, women, and children—must begin on the first day of Sukkos.”¹⁶

These *sichos*, which served as the Rebbe’s own *kinusei hakhel*—continued for the rest of the nights of Sukkos. (In fact, the Rebbe continued saying a *sicha* every night of Sukkos every year thereafter. In 5748, the next *hakhel* year, the Rebbe said a *sicha* every night of Sukkos, Chanukah, and Pesach.)

Throughout Tishrei, the Rebbe placed a major emphasis on the role of children in *hakhel*. (As mentioned above, *hakhel* is the only mitzva that children—even the very youngest—have a central role in.) On Chol Hamoed Sukkos of that year, the Rebbe established Tzivos Hashem.

The clearest indicator of of the Rebbe’s *koch* in *hakhel* is from the Rebbe himself. A short history of each of the Rebbeim is printed in the front of Hayom Yom. The Rebbe’s history is also printed there, and each time the Hayom Yom was reprinted, they would add to the Rebbe’s section to reflect the

years that had passed. At the beginning of 5742, the Rebbe was given the history of 5741 for editing. In his own handwriting, the Rebbe added a new line: מעורר שהשנה שנת הקהל את האנשים והנשים והטף וגו’ לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת year being a year to **gather** the men, women, and children...to fulfill all the words of this Torah.

Throughout the year, the Rebbe continued mentioning *hakhel* in *sichos* and *letters*, making 5741 the first year known as being a “*shnas hakhel*.” However, nothing could have prepared anyone for 5748.



PHOTO: JEW/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 191265

RABBI HODAKOV READS THE REBBE’S LETTER ADDRESSING THE ANNUAL TZACH CONVENTION, 18 TISHREI, 5741. NOTICE THE HAKHEL SIGN HANGING IN THE BACKGROUND.

MIVTZA HAKHEL

The *shturem* of *hakhel* came to a climax in 5748. It is difficult to overstate the prominence *hakhel* held that year. Beginning in the month of Av 5747, the Rebbe connected everything he spoke about with *hakhel*, and discussed it without rest.

Every *sicha* was connected to *hakhel*. If the Rebbe explained a Rashi, he tied it in with *hakhel*. If he spoke about Rambam, there was a lesson for *hakhel*. The *kinus Torah* at the end of Tishrei was about the various *halachos* concerning *hakhel*.

And then there was *mitvza hakhel*.

The *mitvza*’s central focus was that every person should arrange *kinusei hakhel*. The Rebbe said that in the year of *hakhel*, this is the mission of every single person—men, women and children: to gather the Yidden around them and rouse their *yiras*



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 17880 / 18 TISHREI, 5748

SIMCHAS BEIS HASHOEVAH 5748.

Hashem through speaking words of inspiration and teachings of Torah. Every person should reach out to all the people they know, in all the circles they run in, and gather them for *kinusei hakhel*.

A STORM!

As Tishrei 5748 progressed, the *shturem* in *hakhel* continued gathering steam, and the Rebbe constantly spoke about the activities that every Yid must do during *hakhel*, utilizing all of his energy and *kochos*. During every farbrengen in honor of every Yom Tov, the Rebbe would emphasize the connection with *hakhel*, and the need to continue increasing the *hakhel*-activities as Tishrei progressed. The Rebbe utilized every opportunity to implore, request, and inspire the Chassidim about *mitvza hakhel*.

On Sukkos, the *hakhel* fervor reached new heights. The Rebbe explained that one of the focuses of *hakhel* on Sukkos is to gather Yidden to dance during *simchas beis hashoieva*¹⁷, and asked over and over that the *peulos* of *hakhel* should grow ever stronger. In the *sichos* on each night of Sukkos, the Rebbe explained the *maale* of each

day in relation to *hakhel*, and expounded on the connection of each of the *ushpizin* with *hakhel*.

”

It is already quite a while that we are *shtureming* about *hakhel*, and we continue to *shturem* that all that was done until now is not sufficient; more and more must be done.

Someone might argue: ‘I already worked on *hakhel*, what else do you want from me?’

And it’s true, he did indeed work on *hakhel*... he went out, gathered men, women and children, and influenced them to add in their fulfillment of Torah and mitzvos. So what else is expected from him? What else is demanded from him?

But what is being demanded of him is this: He should work and toil in *hakhel* to the extent that when looking at him, you don’t see anything else, you only see *hakhel*!...You see before you that *הקהל* עס גייט ארום *hakhel* is walking around!¹⁸

In one *sicha*, the Rebbe said that *hakhel* should be so much a part of a person’s life, that upon

meeting a friend on the street, the first thing he should greet him with is a *bracha* for *hatzlacha raba umuflaga* in all things related to *hakhel*; even before he wishes him *ah gut moed!*¹⁹

In fact, the Rebbe himself spoke about the fact that he keeps *shtureming* about *hakhel*, adding that since the whole point of speaking about *hakhel* is that it should translate to action, the great amount that he spoke about it must be reflected in a huge amount of action. No matter how much was done until now, everyone must do even more!²⁰

”

When a person is *navuch*—confused and unsure about the whole *mitvza hakhel*—he doesn't know whether the [Rebbe's] words about *hakhel* are directed towards him; he's unsure how to get involved, he's concerned about people's reactions to *hakhel*, etc. etc.

But through the *hiskashrus* to the Rabbeim, everything is done in a manner of *lechatchila ariber*. The Rebbe's entire being—from the beginning to the middle to the end—is in a manner of *lechatchila ariber*; and when he goes together with every Chossid, he will surely not allow the Chossid to go *arunter*.²¹

CHANGING A MINHAG?

The *sichos* throughout Sukkos 5748 were pulsating with *hakhel*, but one of the highest points was a *sicha* on the fifth night of Sukkos.

But let's go back a bit: During *hallel* on the first day of Sukkos, the Rebbe held his lulav and esrog together throughout the entire *hallel*. Now, as you probably know, the *minhag* of Lubavitch is to hold only the lulav throughout *hallel*, and to pick up the esrog for the *naanuim*. So when people saw that the Rebbe was holding them together, they were shocked. Why would the Rebbe suddenly do something different from the accepted minhag?

On the fifth day of Sukkos, the Rebbe addressed the issue²²; but before providing an answer, he made the question even stronger:

The reason for the minhag to hold only the lulav through most of *hallel* is because that's what the Frieddiker Rebbe did. For a while, this was a question by me: the *daled minim* represent the



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 15946 / 20 TISHREI 5748

IN ADDITION TO HOLDING ALL FOUR MINIM TOGETHER DURING HOSHAANOS (AS PICTURED), DURING SUKKOS OF 5748 THE REBBE HELD THEM TOGETHER THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE HALLEL AS WELL; IN CONTRAST TO THE LONG STANDING CHABAD MINHAG.

four letters of *Shem Havaya*, and by bringing them together, the letters are united into one name. [There is a famous story of someone who didn't hold the esrog during the *naanuim*, and he was told that he is disconnecting the last letter of Hashem's name!] Hence, it would seem better to hold all *daled minim* together throughout the entire *hallel*. Why put the esrog down?

The Rebbe said that the reason seems to be in order to avoid damaging the esrog. The Frieddiker Rebbe began this custom in his later years; he refrained from holding the

I was forced to do something against my habit and nature - even something which has a ch'shash that it may ch"v affect my hiskashrus...

esrog together with the lulav so it wouldn't get scratched do to his health situation.

Now, it says in the Gemara that Rav Acha brei D'Rava would specifically try to use a *haddas* that was only kosher according to his Rebbe, Rav Kahana. Although Rav Kahana held that other *haddasim* were also kosher, and he could have used other *haddasim* as well, Rav Acha pursued those *haddasim* in particular as an expression of his *hiskashrus* to his Rebbe.

The same is true here: since the Frieddiker Rebbe would put down the esrog during *hallel*—whatever the reason may be—many Chassidim started doing the same.

In effect, not only had the Rebbe strayed from an accepted *minhag*, he had changed a *minhag* that was rooted in *hiskashrus* to the Frieddiker Rebbe!

The Rebbe answered that this was all for one reason:

“When the *shturem* about *hakhel* began, in order to affect myself as well in regards to *hakhel*, I was forced to do something against my habit and nature, even something that has a *ch'shash* that it may *י"ן* affect my *hiskashrus*, and hold the esrog together with the lulav throughout *hallel*.

“Why?”

“The four *minim* represent the four types of Jews, and uniting the four *minim* represents the unity of Yidden; the unity of Yidden is the theme of *hakhel*.

“Therefore, in order to emphasize how important *hakhel* is—that it is *ikri*, *pnimi*, *nafshi*, and *gufni*, and all the other adjectives that could, and should, be used to describe *hakhel*, according to the letters of the *Alef Beis*—I changed my custom of holding the *daled minim*. This was done *specifically* because it is so difficult, and *specifically* because it's so shocking to the onlookers!”

[The Rebbe concluded that about the issue of *hiskashrus*, we can rely on the words of the Frieddiker Rebbe before he accepted the *nesius* from his father, that his *hanhaga* would be with *chesed* and *rachamim*. This is especially true when dealing with *hiskashrus*, since he surely knows that the reason for changing the *minhag* is only to emphasize *hakhel*.]

Changing a *minhag* is no small matter, and the fact that the Rebbe did so is a powerful message about the importance of *hakhel*.

THE SICHOS OF SUKKOS 5748 BRIM WITH THE THEME OF HAKHEL, STIRRING A CALL TO ACTION. A SICHA DURING CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS, 18 TISHREI, 5748.



HATZLACHA RABBA UMUFLAGA!

The above *sicha* was on the fifth night of Sukkos, and the *shturem* continued through Hoshana Rabba, Shemini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah. The *simcha* and excitement of Tishrei 5748 is legendary, remembered by all who merited to witness it, but it is beyond the scope of this article to describe all those amazing sights.

At the end of Yom Tov, the Rebbe distributed *kos shel bracha*, and when everyone had finished going by, the Rebbe made an announcement:

“*Hatzlacha rabba umuflaga* to every single person in *hakhel es ha'am hoanoshim vehanashim vehataf...* Every single person could, must, and surely will be successful in the activities of *hakhel* in their place, neighborhood, and overall surroundings...”²³

In the *yechidus klolis* to the guests a few days later, the Rebbe said that the time had come to act:

“Now, when everyone is going back to their homes, comes the time for *maase bepoel*. Every person is returning to their city, neighborhood and



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE /15401

social sphere, which is where he has influence; so he has the responsibility to start getting things done.”²⁴

HAKHEL BY THE REBBE

For Chassidim, *hakhel* is the time to gather by the *melech*, the king—to be by the Rebbe. During the year of *hakhel*, many Chassidim traveled to be by the Rebbe for Tishrei in general, and specifically Sukkos. In fact, in numerous letters the Rebbe expressed his appreciation for those that came, and his dismay that others did not. (See Derher Elul 5775 for a general overview.)

On Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5748, the Rebbe said:

“...A *yasher koach* to all the guests whose *chassidishe hergesh* has illuminated their path in a revealed way, bringing into action the words of the *possuk* “*Lech lecha meiartzecha*” in order to be in the *daled amos—shul* and *beis midrash*—of the *nossi hador*, the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, during the time of *hakhel* [during Sukkos], even for

at least an hour, a day, and especially those who were here for the entire Sukkos.”²⁵

As explained in the Rebbe’s letters and sichos,²⁶ the mitzvah of *hakhel* unifies each and every Yid, through their connection to the *melech*, who illuminates the innermost *bittul* to Hashem within each and every Yid. For the *melech* is the “heart” of all the Jewish people - לב כל קהל ישראל.

May we be zoche that this year we will experience the real *hakhel* - in the Beis Hamikdosh with *Moshiach tzidkeinu*.

A yasher koach to all the guests whose chassidishe hergesh has illuminated their path...to be in the daled amos—shul and beis midrash—of the nosi hador.

HAYITACHEN?!

Similar to the kohanim in Yerushalayim, the Rebbe explains, every person must ‘blow a golden trumpet’ and publicize *hakhel* to the world.

Someone can argue: What do you want from me? I don’t really connect with the whole excitement of *hakhel*, so how can you expect me to get involved for yet another night of *hakhel*? Besides, what do you need me for? There is already a huge amount of people clutching their ‘trumpets of gold’ and blowing. What will I add?!

To this we respond: How can you go now and relax, and chat about all good things in the world?! **Hayitachen! Where is your golden trumpet?!**

All the *chochmos* and explanations won’t help you...and it doesn’t help you if your father, teacher and son are already blaring their trumpets. You have a personal obligation, because if any kohen didn’t have a trumpet in his hand, people would say that it “seems that he isn’t a kohen at all!” If you’re not ‘blowing your trumpet’ and publicizing *hakhel*, you’re missing something at the essence of your identity!²⁷

Hakhel

in practice



PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

THE SICHOS AND LETTERS OF TISHREI 5748 RELATING TO HAKHEL WERE COLLECTED AND PRINTED AS A KUNTRES BY THE MATEH MITVZA HAKHEL.

KINUSEI HAKHEL

Who should arrange these kinusim?

Hakhel is clearly no regular *mitvza*. Unlike other *mitvzoim*, like *mitvza tefillin*, which entail encouraging a single person to do a mitzvah, the focus of *hakhel* is to arrange communal gatherings and influence many people at a time. It can feel intimidating to get involved in these activities. ‘I’m not a leader, I’m not an activist, I’m not a rabbi, I’m not a *mashpia*.’ It’s so easy to feel like *mitvza hakhel* is out of your league.

The Rebbe acknowledged this feeling, and strongly opposed the notion.

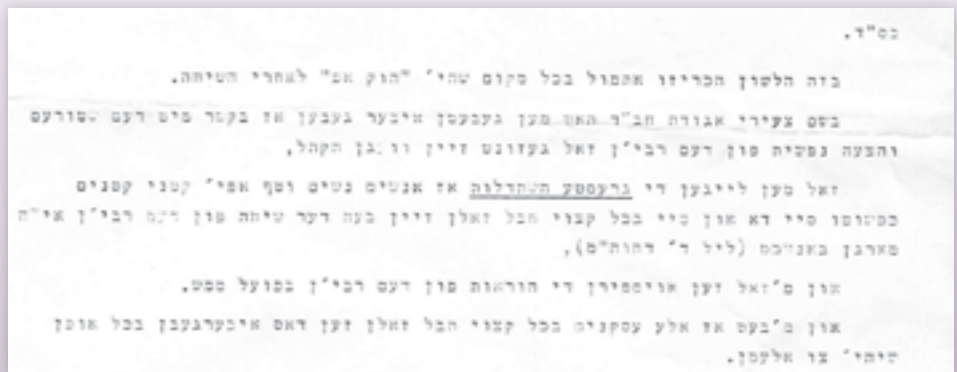
Every person is a leader on some level, the Rebbe said, and can influence people. Some people have more and some have less, but everyone has some influence and can gather at least a few people.²⁸

Kinusim should therefore be arranged by everyone, men women and children. The king was the one who would gather the Jewish people, and every person is a “king” and a leader in his own way.²⁹

“This is within the capability of every single man and woman,” the Rebbe said. “[There are] those that think they are only “small people” and can’t really do much. [However, this mindset is wrong,] only the world’s concealment of holiness can bring someone to think this way! The truth of the matter is that every person was given the highest and most amazing *kochos*!”

Reach out to everyone you know: family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, business associates, classmates, and on and on - and bring them together for a *kinus hakhel*.

Children should make *kinusim* for their friends.



FOR CHASSIDIM, THE REBBE’S NIGHTLY SICHOS FROM THE BIMA WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT HAKHEL GATHERINGS. ONE NIGHT, AFTER THE REBBE DELIVERED A PARTICULARLY POWERFUL SICHA ON THE SUBJECT OF HAKHEL, AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE OVER THE HOOK-UP THAT EVERY PERSON - MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD - SHOULD MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO BE AT THE SICHA ON THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.

This is especially incumbent on the “kings,” a person with status in his circle—a rof in his community, an educator in his classroom, and a father in his family.³⁰

When should they be held?

You should find *every opportunity* possible to make a *kinus hakhel*, and even more so on special days like Shabbos and Yom Tov. [On Vov Tishrei, the Rebbe listed special times to make *kinusei hakhel*, and he mentioned almost every day from the day he was speaking until the end of Tishrei: *Asseres Yemei Teshuva*; Yom Kippur; the four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos; Sukkos; Chol Hamoed; and Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. The Rebbe wanted *kinusei hakhel* at every opportunity.]³¹

Where should they be held?

In a “*Beis Hamikdash*”—in an atmosphere of holiness.³² Even better if it is done in a physically holy place, like a shul, *beis midrash*, etc.³³ The main point is to arrange it in the right time and setting so that the influence and inspiration will be at its fullest.³⁴

The *kinusei hakhel* should also be done virtually—over the telephone and the like—in order to reach all Jews no matter how far they are.³⁵

What should I speak about?

Quite simply, speak from the heart and inspire the participants to do Torah and mitzvos. No audience is the same, so find the appropriate words that will have an effect on your particular crowd.³⁶

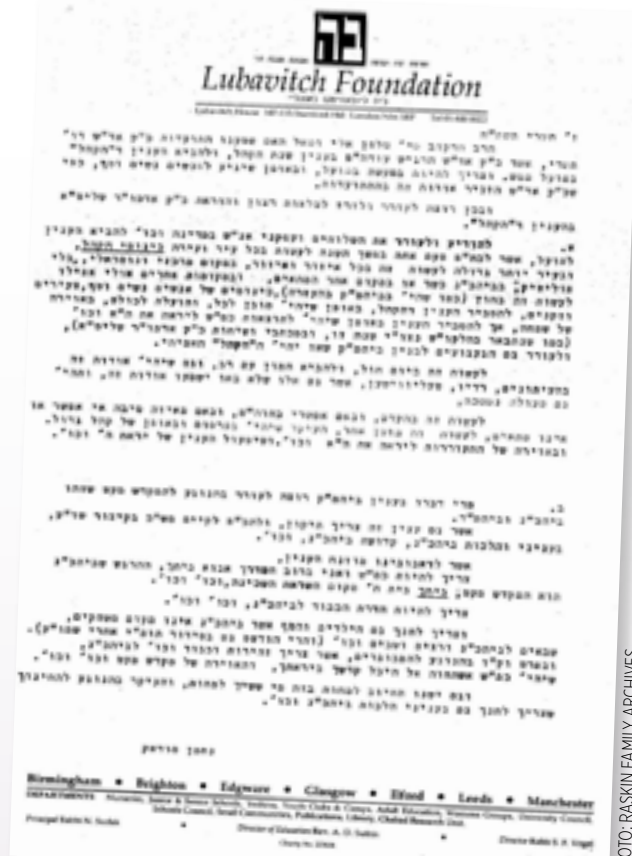
Certain things are particularly effective:

Focus on the message of the *pesukim* that were read during *hakhel*.³⁷

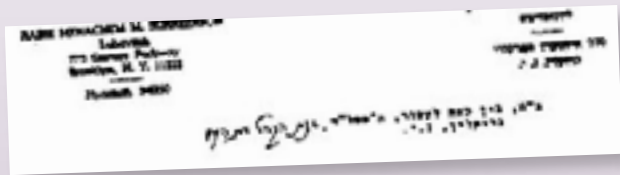
Describe *hakhel* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, how the entire Jewish nation—men, women, and children—would listen closely as the king would read the *pesukim* of *hakhel*; and how they would listen with powerful *kavana*, knowing that it’s as if they are hearing it from Hashem himself! [We see clearly, the Rebbe says, that when a person describes *hakhel* in the *Beis Hamikdash* in all its details, it makes a powerful impression on the listeners, and brings them *yiras Hashem*.]³⁸

Speak about the fact that after the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, Hashem’s *Beis Hamikdash* is in the heart of every Yid.³⁹

The *kinusei hakhel* should be tailored according to the time of the year: During Sukkos, gather Yidden for a *hakhel* gathering and dance for *simchas beis hashoeiva*⁴⁰; before Chof Cheshvan, arrange *hakhel* farbrengens in every place.⁴¹



AFTER THE FARBRENGEN OF VOV TISHREI 5748, RABBI HODAKOV CALLED RABBI NACHMAN SUDAK, HEAD SHLIACH OF ENGLAND, ADVISING SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR MITVZA HAKHEL, WHICH RABBI SUDAK RELAYED TO THE SHLUCHIM IN THIS LETTER.



ON THE DATE OF A LETTER, THE REBBE ADDS TO THE YEAR, 5734 - “SHNAS HAKHEL ES HA'OM”.

PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

Hakhel

in practice

What is the goal of the *kinusei hakhel*?

The ultimate goal is for the participants to be motivated to fulfill the Torah and mitzvos, and that this inspiration carry them “all the days,” for the years following *hakhel*. Yidden are ready for inspiration, you just have to do your part and you *will* have an impact on them, and toiling in this—*yagaata*—will bring to *umaztasa*, success totally beyond the work you put in. The men, women, and children whom you gathered will be inspired in ways completely beyond your estimation.⁴²

In fact, Yidden have the potential to be inspired to *yiras Hashem* that will carry “all the days” in a single moment, because Yidden are above the limitations of time. In this year of *hakhel*, Yidden have the opportunity to put themselves in a position of *yiras Hashem* in a single instant.⁴³

In one sicha the Rebbe emphasised, “It’s plainly obvious that even influencing *one single Jew* is a great accomplishment...As *Chazal* explain, “Adam was created alone in order to teach you that every single Jew is an entire world. He was created differently from the rest of creation, all on because of *this Yid* [the Rebbe pointed at someone] who is sitting among the rest of the crowd, in Brooklyn, in 5748!”⁴⁴

MIVTZA HAKHEL

The Rebbe gave general instructions on how the *mitvza* should work; some of the main points are included below.

Organizations

The *mitvza* of *hakhel* is specifically geared towards organizations and societies that bring Yidden together. When Yidden unite, even in a secular organization, e.g. clubs for workers, professionals, etc. a central focus of their organization must be to increase in Yiddishkeit. This goes without saying for an organization whose entire focus is spreading Yiddishkeit, like Tzeirei Agudas Chabad, Nshei Ubnos Chabad (although it is in no way limited to only Lubavitch organizations).

Therefore every community, organization, society, and club, and especially organizations whose focus is spreading Yiddishkeit, should get involved and take the initiative of *mitvza hakhel*. Every person in the organization should sign up to the *mitvza*, and from time to time, they should be gathered for a *kinus hakhel*. This should be done at least once a month.⁴⁵

Yeshivos/Talmud Torahs/High Schools

In all organizations of *chinuch*, both for boys and girls, whether it’s a *yeshiva gedola*, *yeshiva ketana*, *talmud Torah*, high school or kindergarten, the person in charge (e.g. the *rosh yeshiva* or *mashgiach*) should appoint someone

PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES



AN ATTRACTIVE HAKHEL BROCHURE DISTRIBUTED BY TZACH; OVER 100,000 COPIES PRINTED. FOLLOWING THE PRINTING, A DUCH WAS WRITTEN TO THE REBBE.



PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

to galvanize and remind people about making *kinusei hakhel*. These appointees should do their job *bidarkei noam*, in a nice way, but in a way that will bring to *tapuru da plachu* (“axe on the wood”), that will get things done.⁴⁶

Bochurim The primary role of *talmidei hayeshivos* is to learn, and they must be extremely careful not to stop their learning for anything else. Nevertheless, during the year of *hakhel*, they, too, have the responsibility to be involved in *hakhel*.⁴⁷

In his *Brocha* to the *Bochurim* on *Erev Yom Kippur 5748*⁴⁸, the Rebbe urged them to unite all the characteristics of men, women, and children in their *limud haTorah*: the firmness and leadership of men; utilizing the *midos* and emotion to make a *seder* in all aspects of life, the characteristics of women; and to receive and learn from every person—and specifically from the Torah and *sichos kodesh* of the Rabbeim - the trait of children.

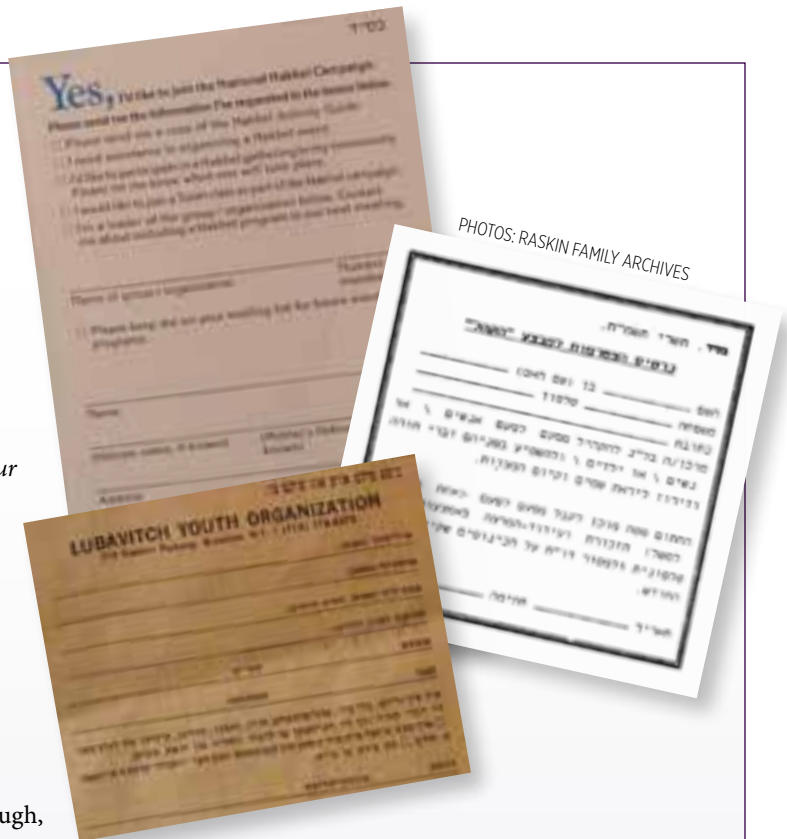
Influence your teachers! Generally, the teachers and parents influence the children. Sometimes, though, *bas komo b'ima*, the daughter influences the mother about Torah and mitzvos. In regards to *hakhel*, both are necessary: The teachers should motivate the students about *hakhel*, and the *talmidim* in the yeshivos and high schools should demand from their teachers to inspire them about *hakhel*. Of course, this must be with the greatest respect.⁴⁹

Written Commitment

In order to ensure that people will get involved in *hakhel* to the full measure, the Rebbe said that every person who is ready to get involved should write down their commitment on a card. A central office should be set up in every community and organization, and everyone will submit their cards to them. They will coordinate the activities and remind everyone about their commitment, and ensure that everything is carried out.

There are several advantages to doing this: 1) When a person commits in writing, he/she is more bound to it. 2) The office will remind, encourage, and push people to be active. 3) The simple knowledge that one is part of a larger organization will serve as an impetus to work. 4) If a person needs help in his *hakhel* activities, he will know where to turn to for advice and guidance.

The cards should only include a person's name and mother's name, and a phone number where, with his permission, the office will call him once a month to check up on his activities and motivate him to do more.⁵⁰



PHOTOS: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

DURING THE FARBRENGEN OF YUD GIMMEL TISHREI 5748, THE REBBE INSTRUCTED THAT THE VARIOUS HAKHEL OFFICES DESIGN SIGN-UP CARDS TO BE PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED ALL OVER, INCLUDING IN THE NEWSPAPERS, AND ALSO GAVE VERY SPECIFIC GUIDELINES ON THEIR CONTENT AND DESIGN. THIS INCLUDED: THAT THE WORDING BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM; THAT THE SIZE BE A TEFACH BY TEFACH; AND MORE.

THESE CARDS WERE LATER PRINTED IN MANY LANGUAGES, INCLUDING HEBREW, YIDDISH, AND ENGLISH.



PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

A NEWSPAPER CLIPPING ABOUT MIVTZA HAKHEL.

Hakhel

in practice

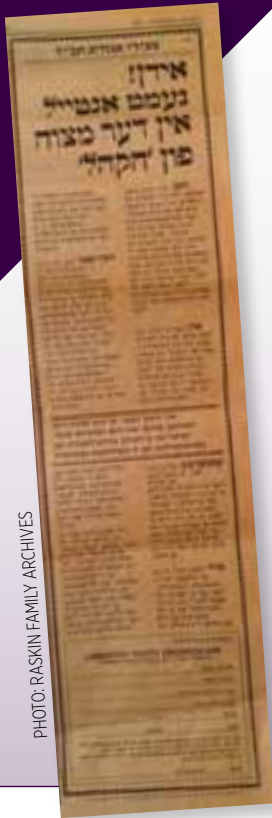


PHOTO: RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

FOLLOWING THE REBBE'S EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS AT THE FARBRENGEN OF 13 TISHREI 5748, THE CALL FOR HAKHEL GATHERINGS WAS ADVERTISED IN MAJOR JEWISH NEWSPAPERS.

Newspapers and Media

In order to involve as many people as possible, *mitvza hakhel* should be publicized wherever possible, including advertisements in newspapers with large Jewish readerships. These advertisements should have a few lines about the *mitvza*, and a tear-out card for people to sign up and send to the central organization.

These cards should be printed in the newspapers in order to reach as many Jews as possible.⁵¹ **T**



15416 / 18 TISHREI, 5748

GUARANTEED SUCCESS!

The Rebbe has assured us that all hesitation is only theoretical, because we see clearly, that those who get involved in *hakhel* are successful completely beyond their expectations.⁵² We have special *kochos* from the *nosi hador*: The *nosi hador* unites the entire Jewish nation, and he gives us the *koach* to unite the Yidden for *hakhel*.⁵³ Every person who works in *hakhel* is guaranteed to be successful.⁵⁴ It only depends on your willpower. If you get involved, and work according to your abilities guided by the *hora'os* of *nosi doreinu*⁵⁵, you will surely succeed.⁵⁶

1. See Likutei Sichos vol. 19 p. 325 note 29.
2. Or the King's personal *Sefer Torah*, see *ibid* p. 327 note 46.
3. *Sichos Kodesh* 5734 p. 118.
4. Likutei Sichos vol. 34, pg. 211.
5. *Toras Menachem* 5748 p. 53.
6. *Michtav Kloli* Chof-Hei Elul 5747
7. For an explanation, see *Toras Menachem* 5748 p. 366.
8. Likutei Sichos vol. 34, pg. 211 and on.
9. *ibid* pg. 215. *Toras Menachem* 5747 part 4 p. 391-393.

10. *Reshimos* vol. alef p. 171 and on.
11. Likutei Levi Yitzchak *Igros Kodesh*, p. רלט and on, p. רנח and on.
12. See *Toras Menachem* 5748 part 1 p. 300.
13. See for example Likutei Sichos vol. 24 p. 204, *Sichos Kodesh* 5740 vol. 3 p. 1134-35.
14. *Sichos Kodesh* 5740 vol. 3 p. 1135.
15. *Sichos Kodesh* 5741 vol. 1 p. 117.
16. *Ibid* p. 218.
17. *Toras Menachem* 5748 vol. 1 p. 178.
18. *Ibid* p. 205-206
19. *Ibid* p. 242.
20. *Ibid*.

21. *Ibid* p. 176.
22. *Ibid* p. 243-245.
23. *Ibid* p. 372.
24. *Ibid* p. 379.
25. *Ibid* p. 429.
26. See Likutei Sichos vol. 19 p. 301; *Michtav Kloli* *Yemei HaSelichos* 5726; et. al.
27. See *Toras Menachem* 5748 vol. 1 p. 219-223.
28. *Ibid* p. 339.
29. *Ibid* p. 224 note 45; p. 524.
30. *Ibid* p. 97.
31. *Ibid* p. 119.
32. *Ibid* p. 97.
33. *Ibid* p. 152.
34. *Ibid* p. 118.
35. *Ibid* p. 233-234.

36. *Ibid* p. 416.
37. This includes various *parshiyos* of *Devarim*: From the beginning of the *sefer* through *Shema Yisrael* (6:4); The second paragraph of *Shema*, *Vehaya im shamo'a* (11:13-21); *עשר תעשר* (14:22-27) *כי תכלה לעשר* (26:12-); (15); The section about appointing a king (17:14-20); The blessings and curses (28:1-69). Also the *parsha* of *Kedoshim* (see *Rashi* *Vayikra* 19,2.)
38. *Ibid* p. 152.

39. *Ibid* p. 154.
40. *Ibid* p. 178.
41. *Ibid* p. 455.
42. *Ibid* p. 119
43. *Ibid* p. 153.
44. *Ibid* p. 360.
45. *Ibid* p. 162.
46. *Ibid*.
47. *Ibid* p. 163.
48. *Ibid* p. 139.
49. *Ibid* p. 163.
50. *Ibid* p. 159 and on.
51. *Ibid* p. 160.
52. *Ibid* p. 379.
53. *Ibid* p. 233.
54. *Ibid* p. 371.
55. *Ibid* p. 301.
56. *Ibid* p. 416.