



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES COINS FOR TZEDAKA BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE OHEL, 27 ADAR I 5752.

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Farbrengen for All Time

SHABBOS VAYAKHEL 5752



INTRO

It was a very unique month. On one hand the Rebbe said a *sicha* almost every night, with the topic inevitably leading back to a demand to increase in *simcha* by leaps and bounds. The Rebbe highlighted that because it is a leap year and there are sixty days in Adar, it means that we can nullify all bad things with the joy of Adar, just as food can be *batel b'shishim*. And the Rebbe's demand for joy increased as each day passed.

The Rebbe's constant insistence to add joy and true expressions of happiness led Chassidim to begin dancing one night in 770. It was the night

after Purim Katan, when the Rebbe distributed the *maamar Ve'ata Tetzaveh*,¹ that *l'chaim* and music were arranged in 770, and the *bochurim* danced. When Rabbi Shmuel Butman submitted a report on the dancing to the Rebbe, the Rebbe answered: "It should be ongoing and increasing. I will mention it at the *tziyon*."

Another point the Rebbe stressed was the fact that every Yid has to be strong and healthy in the practical, physical sense. During Adar, the *mazel* of Yidden is strong, and in a year of two Adars it will become a reality—that every single Yid must be healthy and strong physically, and even wealthy!

The amount of dollars the Rebbe distributed was also extraordinary, giving dollars almost every night following *maariv* or a *sicha*.

But on the other hand it was a very difficult time. On the second day of Adar I there was a tragedy in Crown Heights. A young mother, Mrs. Peshah Leah Lapine was brutally murdered *al kiddush Hashem*. Shockwaves spread through the community. Thousands streamed to the Friday funeral, Chassidim alongside (להבדיל) local African-Americans; reporters and camera crews came to document the event.

The funeral was to pass 770 and a short time before the *aron* arrived, news came out that the Rebbe would be joining the funeral. The Rebbe came out of 770 and followed the hearse down Eastern Parkway and part of Kingston Avenue. Then he waited until the procession continued out of sight.

The effect of the tragedy was extremely devastating. The next Thursday, when *shiva* ended, the Rebbe spoke about the incident. The Rebbe began by saying, “We will talk about a topic that is timely, even though we aren’t opening with a *bracha* as we usually do,” and continued to speak about the amazing merit one must have to fulfill the mitzvah of *kiddush Hashem*. But, the Rebbe continued, we demand that Moshiach must come! A day passes, and another day; a week and another week; over 1900 years and Moshiach has not yet arrived!²

You could feel the Rebbe’s pain and anguish!

In days and weeks that followed it became clear that the Rebbe was visiting the Ohel much more frequently than usual. The Rebbe’s regular practice had been to visit twice a month, Erev Rosh Chodesh and on the 15th. Later, the Rebbe visited every Sunday and Thursday (even later it moved to Monday and Thursday). The only time the Rebbe



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THE REBBE FOLLOWS THE LEVAYA OF MRS. PESHA LAPINE, WHO WAS TRAGICALLY MURDERED IN CROWN HEIGHTS, 2 ADAR I 5752.

visited the Ohel day after day for an extended period, was during the *seforim* court case, and it was obviously because of the case.

But suddenly, this month, the Rebbe visited the Ohel almost every day.

The Chassidim watched in wonder. Something was happening that no one could understand. Constantly urging for more *simcha*, delivering more *sichos*, giving out more dollars, visiting the Ohel more often; it seemed as if the Rebbe was working to counterbalance something.

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SHABBOS VAYAKHEL, 25 ADAR I

For Shabbos, a few different groups of guests arrived. Two groups came from France, led by their shluchim. Rabbi Mendel Raskin brought a group of children from Montreal, and another group came from Pittsburgh.

Friday began with a surprise. After *shacharis*, instead of the usual announcement with the time for *mincha*, the *gabbai* announced that *mincha* will be “When we are ready,” which usually meant “When the Rebbe returns from the Ohel.”

Before going to mikveh, the Rebbe gave the *siddur* to two *chassanim* who were waiting in *Gan Eden Hatachton*³. After returning from mikveh and on the way to the Ohel, the Rebbe gave the *siddur* to a third *chossan*, gave him a *bracha*, and handed to him, his family, and the *mazkirim* present, coins for *tzedakah*.

The Rebbe returned from the Ohel less than 40 minutes before *licht bentchen*. *Mincha* took place in the upstairs *zal*, a few minutes after *licht bentchen*, which was at 5:26 pm.

Signs were posted on the walls of 770 announcing the *mitvza hakholas kehilos*, to take place over Shabbos, in connection with the *parsha*, which speaks of Vayakhel—Moshe gathering the Yidden. The *mitvza* was planned for the neighborhoods near Crown Heights, where Chassidim would go to share words of Chassidus and inspire the listeners. The signs listed the shuls and those responsible to speak at each shul.

After returning from the Ohel, the Rebbe asked if the group from France had arrived.

At Lecha Dodi during *Kabbolas Shabbos* the *chazzan* sang upbeat *niggunim* and the Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing, especially at the end.

SHABBOS MORNING

This Shabbos was a *Shabbos Mevarchim*, so the Rebbe came down for *Tehillim* before *shachris*. After a short break, the Rebbe came back down for *shachris*. There was a lot of singing during *davening*. For *Ho'aderes Veho'emunah* the French March was sung. Not only did the Rebbe urge on the singing by banging on the *shtender*, but even once it ended he continued encouraging for another two rounds of the *niggun*. During *kedusha* the *chazzan* sang “*Mimkomach*” to the tune of *Lechatchila Aribet*, and the Rebbe encouraged the *niggun*, motioning to repeat the middle stanza.

This week was Shabbos Shekalim so there were two Torahs on the *bima*. When the Rebbe went to the *bima* for *maftir*, he kissed the first Torah on the way up.

Before the blessing of the new month, the Rebbe turned around, pulled the *tallis* behind his ear, and faced the *chazzan* on the *bima*, to hear the announcement for the time of the *molad*. This was unusual.

THE FARBRENGEN

As the Rebbe walked into the shul, the crowd sang *Es Kumt Shoin Di Geula*, as they usually did at the start of the Shabbos *farbrengen* during recent months.

At the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe spoke very loudly, and those present recall that one could clearly hear the Rebbe even at a distance away.

(This stood out because ordinarily it was hard to hear the Rebbe during the Shabbos *farbrengens* of those years. With no microphone, and as much as the large crowd—packed into the benches of 770—tried to remain quiet, there was always some background noise. In earlier years, the Rebbe would project his voice over this noise. In these later years, the Chassidim tried to squeeze in as close to the Rebbe as possible, to try and hear the Rebbe's softer spoken tone.)

The *farbrengen* was also exceptionally rich in content, with the Rebbe offering lengthy and

detailed explanations on a wide variety of subjects.

The first *sicha* was very long, over 50 minutes, and focused on the fact that Vayakhel is usually joined with Pekudei, but this year it is separate. The lesson is that we need to focus on bringing Yidden together—“*vayakhel*,” which leads to the ultimate *vayakhel*—the coming of Moshiach, when all Yidden will be gathered to Eretz Yisroel.

In that *sicha* the Rebbe also mentioned that none of the Rabbeim—the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, or the Rebbe Rashab—moved to or even visited Eretz Yisrael. Even the Frierdiker Rebbe, who did visit, only did so because he was unable to visit the Ohalim of the Rebbes’ in Lubavitch and Rostov at the time.

The *sicha* was filled with many other important points and lessons in *avodas Hashem*, touching upon a number of topics:

The need to feel as one with each and every Yid in the spirit of true *ahavas Yisrael*. When influencing the conduct of another Yid, it must be done in a peaceful manner. This is also the reason why the *possuk*, when speaking of *machtzis hashekel*, uses the term “half of a 20 *geira shekel* coin” and not just “10 *geira*”; for each Yid only reaches completion when joining up with another, totalling the full “20 *geira*.”



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For this reason, we recite “*Hareini Mekabel*” each morning before davening; to unify ourselves with others in a manner of *ahavas Yisroel*.

While on this topic, the Rebbe also spoke at length of the meaning of *Modeh Ani*, recited immediately upon awakening even before *Hareini mekabel*.



In the tradition of singing the *niggun* of the Rebbe's *kappitul* at the beginning of the farbrengen, the Chassidim sang *Shuva* and the Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing. At the repeating stanza, the Rebbe first encouraged the guests, who were sitting to his left, and then to the general crowd; first with just his right hand, and then waving both arms, leading the singing very strongly.

In the second *sicha*, the Rebbe drew a lesson from Shabbos Shekalim, that one should give tzedakah without calculations, and this should be done in a manner where it is as if one is giving away from within his very self.

The *niggun* afterwards was *Vayehi Bimei Achashverosh*.

In the third *sicha* the Rebbe invited those who brought *mashke* to be distributed to come up and receive the bottles. Their "coming up" signifies "*aliya*," an elevation from below upward, and is connected to *simcha*.

After the *sichos*, those who brought *mashke* came to get *l'chaim* from the Rebbe.

Fourteen bottles were lined up on the Rebbe's table, each marking an event during the upcoming week or weeks. For each one, the Rebbe took his *becher*, poured a little into the bottle, poured back into the cup, and poured *l'chaim* to the person receiving the bottle. Some of those who got bottles: Reb Dovid Karpov, for a farbrengen in Moscow. Reb Sholom Duchman, for a *hachnosas sefer Torah* in Florida. Reb Hillel Pevzner (with his son Yosef Yitzchak and a guest from France) for a farbrengen in the Mosdos Sinai school in France. Reb Moshiach Chudaitov for farbrengens in Russian cities. Reb Avrohom Meizlish for a farbrengen in Beit Sefer Lmelacha, Kfar Chabad. Reb Tzvi Steinmetz, for a farbrengen for the descendants of the Tosfos Yom Tov. Reb Fitch Itkin, for Pittsburgh. Reb Menachem Gerlitzky, for the *siyumim* on Rambam. Two *bochurim*, M. Heber and A. Evri for the

bochurim going on shlichus to Morocco. Reb Shmuel Plotkin for a farbrengen in Berditchev.

After giving out the *mashke*, the Rebbe began HoRav Levi Yitzchok's *hakafos niggun* and strongly encouraged the singing.

The Rebbe concluded the farbrengen by speaking again for a few minutes about Parshas Shekalim and the importance of increasing in tzedakah.

Mincha immediately followed the farbrengen. The Moshiach *sefer Torah* was used, and the Rebbe was called up for *shlishi*.

At the end of davening the Lapine children said *kaddish*. In the middle of *kaddish* the Rebbe turned towards them and watched them until the end.

That night, after Shabbos, the *bochurim* danced, as they did the last few nights.

Also that night, the summary of the farbrengen which was usually printed immediately after Shabbos, was edited by the Rebbe before publication. This was highly unusual. This means that as soon as Shabbos ended the editors of the summary made a *chazarah*, transcribed the summary, submitted it to the Rebbe, who in turn edited it and returned it—all in the course of a few hours!

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that joined the line and the
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ROEH NE'EMAN

The following day, Sunday, 26 Adar I, the Rebbe davened *mincha* in *Gan Eden Hatachton* at about 1:50 p.m. This was a custom the Rebbe started on Sundays this winter⁴ because the line to receive dollars could stretch for many hours, into the early winter night. Two *chassanim* were present at *mincha* to receive the siddur.

The Rebbe began distributing dollars later than usual that Sunday. Due to the many groups that joined the line and the unusually large crowds, 'dollars' extended for over five hours! Many interesting incidents occurred during that day's 'dollars' (see Derher Issue 29 page 30 for a selection of those encounters).

For the first time ever, several hours into the distribution, the Rebbe asked how long the remaining line was, providing a small clue that not all was well. The distribution of dollars continued until 7:30 p.m.

The next day, Monday, 27 Adar I, the Rebbe went to the Ohel, as he usually would on a Monday. While the Rebbe was at the Ohel, davening and pleading for Klal Yisroel, reading the thousands of letters and *panim* that arrived at his door with requests for *brochos* and *yeshuos*, the Rebbe had a stroke, to the shock and distress of all the Jewish nation.

While we can never know why the Rebbe encouraged certain activities or behaved in a certain way, the month of Adar I 5752 stands out as a time that was disconcertingly different from the Rebbe's regular schedule. All those nights of surprise *sichos* (which with time were no longer perceived as surprising), the many distributions of dollars, the *Kuntres Purim Katan* distributed with lekach and dollars; all of these incidents seemed to implicate that the Rebbe was pouring more and more *hashpa'a* to the Chassidim.

The Rebbe's unusual demand for *simcha*, a *simcha* that would "drown out" all negative things, suddenly took on new meaning. The need for every Yid to have strong health, the unrelenting call for the *geulah* and an end to all tragedy, and all of this with a real sense of urgency; it now bears clearer context.

Chof-Zayin Adar I marked the beginning of the doubled and redoubled dark *golus*; a time that we do not see the Rebbe in his full glory, as we should.

For the short meantime, we hold steadfast in the path that the Rebbe set for us, guided by the principles he spoke of in all these *sichos*. And as the Rebbe teaches in the *maamar Ve'ata Tetzave*, it is our connection with the *roeh ne'eman*, the faithful shepherd of our time, that gives us the necessary capability to carry through with our *avodah* in the darkest times of *golus*.

Until we will ultimately see the day when the Rebbe will return in his full strength, and lead us out of *golus*, may it be *bekarov Mamash!* 🕒

1. See detailed story in *The Timeless Maamor*, Derher 16 (93), Adar I 5774
2. *Sichos Kodosh* 5752, vol 1, pg 730.
3. See more about this in Behind the Picture in this magazine.
4. See *Behind the Picture* Derher issue 21 (98), Tammuz 5774