



לעבן מיט'ן רבין



לזכות
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דוד, אליהו, בן חנה
שיחיו

The Power to Bless

SIMCHAS TORAH 5744

After *shacharis* on Hoshana Rabba, the *gabbai* announced the schedule for *hakafos* in the evening, and that everyone should use out the time remaining before Shemini Atzeres for *mitvza lulav*. As he finished, the Rebbe motioned in surprise and told Rabbi Leibel Groner that they should announce regarding the extra *tzedakah* mentioned in the *sicha* the night before.¹

Shortly after that, the Rebbe went to the sukkah and started distributing *lekach* to those who didn't receive on erev Yom Kippur. The distribution for men took two hours, and another hour for the women.

A few minutes after distribution ended (around 3:30 p.m.) the Rebbe joined the minyan in the small shul for *mincha*, and then headed home.

On the way to the car there was a large group of children waiting, and the Rebbe gave each one a coin for *tzedakah*.

When he returned before candle lighting, there was a group of French women waiting, and at their request, he gave each one a coin for *tzedakah*.



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES LEKACH AT THE DOORWAY OF THE SUKKAH, HOSHANA RABBA 5744.

24 TISHREI 5744, LEVI FREIDIN via JEW 197692

YOSSI MELAMED via JEW 113755

EVE OF SHEMINI ATZERES

The Rebbe came down for *maariv* at around 7:30, put his *siddur* down on the *shtender* and turned around to the signing crowd, waving both arms in encouragement.

Following *maariv* the *gabbai* announced that *hakafos* would begin at 9 o'clock. The Rebbe then went to his room. [Rumor was that he asked Rabbi Groner to check whether there was *kiddush* arranged for the guests from out of town.]

Some time later, the Rebbe came out suddenly and asked for Rabbi Leibel Bistritzky (head of Hatzalah in Crown Heights). When he arrived a few minutes later, the Rebbe asked about Rabbi Yisroel Leibov,² who had taken ill in the evening. Upon the Rebbe's advice, he remained in 770 rather than going to hospital. (The *cheder sheni* of the upstairs shul was emptied especially for him, and a place was arranged for him to rest there.)

An Extra Joyous Hakafos

At 9 o'clock the Rebbe came down to the shul for *hakafos*, and as soon as he reached his place he turned to the crowd. For **five minutes** (!) the Rebbe enlivened the singing, waving both hands vigorously.

(The Rebbe's platform was moved out slightly from the southern [=right] wall, and several senior Chassidim stood in that space. Some of them stood on the platform, and the Rebbe stood further to the left.)

After the first round of *Ata Haraisa*—the first and last *possuk* of which the Rebbe says every Shemini Atzeres—the Rebbe turned to the crowd and clapped along to the *niggun* being sung. Same after the second and third round. After the third round of *Ata Haraisa* the Rebbe started singing "*Ufaratzta*."

The *sifrei Torah* were removed from the *aron kodesh*, and *hakafos* started.

The Rebbe was given the small *sefer Torah*, and he followed the *chazzan* to the *hakafos bimah*. The shul was arranged so that the pathway for the Rebbe was flanked by tables on both sides. Many people pushed closer to kiss the Rebbe's *sefer Torah* as it passed.

Rashag followed behind the Rebbe. He struggled to pass, and the Rebbe turned around to him.

When they reached the *bimah*, the Rebbe put one hand on Rashag's shoulder, while in the other

hand he held the *sefer Torah*, and they danced like this for longer than usual. All the while, the crowd sang the *hakafos niggun*, and the Rebbe nodded in encouragement.

As they turned back to the front of shul, someone removed the crown from Rashag's *sefer Torah* [to make it easier for him to carry], much to his protest. The Rebbe noticed that he wasn't following, and turned around. Seeing what was going on, the Rebbe told them to put the crown back on the Torah.



For the second *hakafa*, special guests from Eretz Yisrael were honored. The *niggun* was “*Chayolei Adoneinu*.” At first the Rebbe stood in his place, looking at the *sifrei Torah*. But after a short while, the Rebbe began to encourage the singing with great enthusiasm, using both of his hands, at times even throwing them all the way up and all the way down again.

For the third *hakafa*, the *sifrei Torah* were given to guests from other countries around the world. The Rebbe instructed that Zalmon Jaffe—who had

remained on the platform in the front—should also be given a Torah. The song was “*Sheyiboneh Beis Hamikdash*.” In the beginning the Rebbe clapped at a regular tempo, and then started waving his arms in circles at great speed. As in the previous *hakafa*, the Rebbe also raised his hands all the way above his head and down again.

As the *Sifrei Torah* were being returned, the Rebbe sat down. When Dr. Weiss saw this he got a bit scared, and rushed over to check the Rebbe’s health, and the Rebbe said he was feeling fine.



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For the fourth *hakafa*, they sang “*Vechol Karnei*.” In the second verse—“*Oivov albish...*” the crowd stretched out the “*oyyy*,” and the Rebbe signalled for them to repeat that part over and over, waving his arms in circles. The Rebbe again lifted his hands up and down. At the end of the *hakafa*, again the Rebbe sat down.

The fifth *hakafa* began with singing “*Al Hasela*.” The Rebbe encouraged this greatly, in particular by “*hoch hoch*,” where the Rebbe waived his right hand right and left. The singing continued on with “We Want Moshiach Now.” Although at first they went through the whole song, in order, several times, the Rebbe encouraged just the line “We want Moshiach now!” With the repetition, it became more of a chant than the usual lively song. This went on for a while, repeating that line again and again, as the Rebbe stood still, only occasionally motioning to continue.

The *niggun* of the sixth *hakafa* was “*Hoshiah Es Amecha*.” Again the Rebbe revved up the crowd with waving both hands (as in the fourth *hakafa*), but the singing did end quicker than in previous *hakafos*.

As customary, the last *hakafa* was like the first, being the Rebbe’s *hakafa*. Once again the *hakafos niggun* was sung.

Upon his return to the front, the Rebbe turned to Rabbi Mordechai Teleshevsky, who most years serves as *chazzan* on Yom Kippur, but this year he was unwell and was absent. That being the case, the Rebbe said that he should now sing a *niggun* [in lieu of what he missed]. He sang *Aleinu* in the well-known tune.

The Rebbe turned to the front and faced the wall as he finished davening. He then turned back to the crowd and called out three times: “Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov!” and everyone responded in kind.

As the Rebbe left his place and went upstairs, along the entire way he motioned with his hands to encourage the singing.

These *hakafos* were especially joyful, and lasted around two hours.

THURSDAY, SHEMINI ATZERES

Before *yizkor*, the Rebbe noticed a group of *bochurim* hiding in a corner, and motioned for them to leave the shul.

In the afternoon, *anash* and *bochurim* went on *tahalucha* to shuls all around town, spreading Yom

Tov joy to all. For *mincha*, at 6:15, there was just a very small group of people left in 770, and *maariv* was even smaller!

FARBRENGEN, EVE OF SIMCHAS TORAH

At 9:00 p.m. the Rebbe came in and started the *farbrengen*. He asked that someone make *kiddush* and be *motzi* whoever hasn’t heard yet.

The Rebbe began the first *sicha* with the quote of the Frierdiker Rebbe, that “the mitzvah of the day is to be joyful.” The Rebbe explained the uniqueness of the joy of Simchas Torah, which is higher than intellect, higher than logical limits. Although there is much to discuss on this subject, the main thing for now is to actually rejoice and dance.

During the *niggun* after this *sicha*, the Rebbe commented that if this is [all the] joy that has been mustered after having rested, one can only imagine what it was like before... The Rebbe added, “I don’t mean to merely admonish—it should make a practical difference.”

In the second *sicha*, the Rebbe explained that the ultimate level of joy is on Simchas Torah, not Shemini Atzeres. This explains why the Rebbeim’s *hakafos* on Shemini Atzeres were more serious, and had a time-limit, whereas on Simchas Torah they lasted much longer. Nevertheless—the Rebbe pointed out—last night’s *hakafos* (on Shemini Atzeres) were extra joyful being that “עמך ישראל—צריכים שמחה—The Yidden are in need of *simcha*,” and this is the only way to end the *golus*!

In time of need, it is sometimes necessary to amend the prevailing custom. To illustrate this, the Rebbe told the story of the war between Napoleon and Czar Alexander, during which there was much debate between the Jewish leaders regarding who should win. The Alter Rebbe maintained that the Czar should win—although the physical situation of Yidden would suffer, they would remain spiritually healthy. By Rosh Hashanah 5573 (תקצ”ג), at the

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height of the war, the tzaddikim each tried to influence the outcome Above. One Rebbe even rushed through *shacharis* on Rosh Hashanah, hoping that by blowing shofar first, his side (Napoleon) would win. Despite all his efforts, when he reached *tekios*, he exclaimed: איי! דער ליטוואק האט אויסגעכאפט —“Ay! The Litvak [the Alter Rebbe’s nickname amongst his peers] has preceded me.” The Alter Rebbe had deviated from the usual custom and had blown shofar before starting to daven.

The third *sicha* was an explanation and lesson derived from the above story for everyone. “Even a simple Jew has the power to alter the course and conduct of entire nations through his Torah and mitzvos.

“The fact that foreign nations are fighting one another, should bring out a greater desire for Moshiach; as the Midrash writes, “If you see other nations fighting, anticipate the footsteps of Moshiach.”

“Every Jew should take advantage of this power, and bless Jews with good things. Being that this

is an auspicious time, it would be appropriate for everyone present to bless their friends, and other Jews in general, ideally using the accepted formula of *birchas kohanim*.”

Based on the above, the Rebbe strongly protested those speaking negatively about Jews. “It is a tremendous *chutzpah* to say such things before the King of Kings, about his only son, the Yidden.”

At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe blessed those gathered, together with all Jews wherever they are, with the *nusach* of *birchas kohanim*, “*Vayedaber... Yevorechecha... Va’ani avoracheim.*” (The Rebbe did not say the beginning of the last *possuk*—“*Vesamu es shemi...*”—he skipped to “*Va’ani avoracheim.*” See the second farbrengen of Shabbos Bereishis this year for the reason³.)

At the conclusion of the farbrengen, the *gabbai* announced the time of *hakafos*, and the *kiddush* for the guests in the time remaining before *hakafos*.

It was a sight to behold: large crowds outside taking a bite to eat while blessing each other with *birchas kohanim*. Others were busy saving a place



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for *hakafos*. Another group was searching for some *l'chaim* from the bottles that the Rebbe had distributed.

Until the last moment before the Rebbe came into shul for *hakafos*, at 12:45 a.m., people were calling out to friends who had just arrived, standing on the other side of the room, and blessing them with *birchas kohanim*.

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12:45 A.M. - *Hakafos*

When the Rebbe came into shul for *hakafos*, he put down his *siddur* on the *shtender*, turned around,

and encouraged the singing with his hands for a few minutes.

The *gabbai*, Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz (who would announce the *pesukim* of *Ata Haraisa*) then blessed the Rebbe and the crowd with *birchas kohanim*. He ended at “*Veyasem lecha shalom.*” Surprised, the Rebbe said, “[Why didn’t you continue] ‘*Vesamu es shemi?*’” He then finished off with that *possuk* as well.

As customary, the Rebbe was honored with saying the first and last *possuk* of all three times that *Ata Haraisa* was recited. At the end of each round, the Rebbe turned to the crowd and clapped vigorously to the singing.

The order of *hakafos* was like the previous night: The Rebbe danced the first and last *hakafa* exclusively with Rashag. On the way to the *bimah*, the Rebbe spoke to a few people along the path. Reb Zushe Rivkin, (*gabbai* of Beis Menachen shul

in Kfar Chabad) was told “You are a *gabbai*—dance with the entire shul.”

The dancing and *hakafo*s were very joyful, ending around 3:00 a.m. After the seventh *hakafa*, the Rebbe wished “Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov!” and left shul, waving his arm, enthusing the singing.

Groups of people singing and dancing continued throughout the night. There were groups in the big shul, the small shul and the street, saying *l'chaim* and blessing each other with *birchas kohanim* until the morning.

FRIDAY, SIMCHAS TORAH

At 10 o'clock the Rebbe came into the shul for *shacharis*. When he got to his place, the Rebbe turned around and clapped along to the singing for a few minutes.

The Rebbe said all the *pesukim* of the first *Ata Haraisa*, as well as the first and last *possuk* of the second and third round.

At the *hakafo*s, the Rebbe, Rashag and several senior Chassidim circled the bimah three and a half times. The Rebbe then walked to the other side of the *bimah* and Rashag came there too. The Rebbe put his hand on Rashag's shoulder and they started dancing. The Rebbe danced energetically, nodding vigorously to encourage the singing.

As is customary, the Rebbe was called up for “*Chosson Bereishis*.”

At 6:00 p.m. the Rebbe came into the small shul for *mincha* and afterwards, at 6:15, the Rebbe came downstairs to the *farbrengen*.

First the Rebbe washed, and then he announced that, being that *shkiah* would be in only a few minutes, everyone should use out the time to say *l'chaim*, as this time⁴ they won't be doing “*pores mapah umekadesh*” (the procedure performed when one is already in middle of a meal and Shabbos/ Yom Tov starts). The Rebbe then asked that “*Vesamachta*” and “*Ata Vechartanu*” be sung.

In the first *sicha*, the Rebbe spoke about the Jews behind the Iron Curtain. “In their merit we will leave *golus* soon, and then everyone will recognize that... [the Rebbe began to sing] ‘*Nyet nyet nikavo...*’”

The Rebbe then reminded people about *Chitas*—the Chumash for Friday and Shabbos, and the whole Bereishis on Shabbos. Regarding *shnayim mikra*, the *minhag* is to say the portion of *Vezos*

Habrachah on the day before Simchas Torah (as the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed). Whoever didn't do so should make sure to catch up on it now. Additionally, there is *shanyim mikra* for Parshas Bereishis. For those complaining, wondering how it is possible to do all of the above in such short time, they should know just like Hashem can do the impossible—*nimna hanima'os*, a Jew too can achieve the impossible.

Following this, there was a lengthy explanation on the daily Chumash, the lessons from it, and its connection to Simchas Torah. The Rebbe concluded with a *bracha* that all the “revelations” of Simchas Torah should be drawn down and have a positive effect with blessings in all areas necessary—*בני חיי ומחזורי*. Based on this, the Rebbe strongly negated fasting and self-affliction, saying, “Hashem doesn't want fasters, He wants followers (פאלגערס)!”

The Rebbe then began his father's *hakafo*s *niggun*.

After the *maamar*, the Rebbe instructed to sing the *hachanah niggun*, then *Daled Bavos* and *Nye Zhuritzi*. After that was bentching. The Rebbe then gave the *challos* to Reb Moshe Yeruslavski (head of *Hachnasas Orchim*), and went to his place for *maariv*.

The *chazzan* inserted joyful tunes in the *nusach* of *maariv* and the Rebbe tapped along on the *shtender*. The Rebbe said *kaddish* for his maternal grandmother, Rebbetzin Rochel, whose *yahrtzeit* is on 24 Tishrei.

After davening the Rebbe turned to the crowd, waving his hand. They wished “Gut Shabbos!” (though the Rebbe may have meant to encourage singing), to which the Rebbe responded “Gut Shabbos!” He repeated it, as the whole congregation answered again.

SHABBOS BEREISHIS

At 8:30 a.m. the Rebbe came in for *Tehillim*, and said *kaddish* after each *sefer* (as well as by the rest of the *tefillos* that day.)

Several times during *shacharis* the *chazzan* added in tunes from *Yomin Nora'im* and Yom Tov, as is usually done on Shabbos Bereishis, and the Rebbe tapped along on the *shtender* in rhythm.

At 1:30 p.m. there was a *farbrengen*, during which the Rebbe said that, as customary, the *gabbai* should sell the “mitzvos” (*pesichas ha'aron*, *hagbah*, *gelilah* etc.), but he should start with saying a *dvar Torah*, as Torah must always precede mitzvos.



YOSSI MELAMED via JEM 114627

KOS SHEL BRACHA, MOTZEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5744.

The farbrengen ended at 4:30, and was followed by *mincha*.

At 6:15, the second farbrengen⁵ started with the Rebbe washing his hands for bread. As a continuation from the farbrengen of Simchas Torah, the Rebbe said to sing “*Vesamachta*,” with even more vigour than the day before.

The Rebbe began by explaining that after all of the *Yomim Tovim* of Tishrei, now is the time we must start work on keeping the inspiration and joy for the rest of the year. This includes in a literal sense, being physically happy. Therefore, the Rebbe continued, we will now distribute bottles of *mashke* to the assembled. Being that it’s not practically possible to give every single person a bottle—there are simply not enough bottles, and one person cannot drink an entire bottle—the fairest way would be to appoint the Kohanim as intermediaries. Within the Kohanim themselves, whoever gets there first, wins.

Several Kohanim approached and received bottles. When the bottles ran out, the Rebbe gave out *mashke* in cups. While the Kohanim returned to their places to give out the *mashke*, the Rebbe explained that although generally one shouldn’t use Kohanim for work, however with this instance being a labor of joy, surely they would “forgive” us.

Seeing one Kohen with a full bottle, the Rebbe said: “There are some Kohanim already making calculations as to how much to give out now and how much to take home. That wasn’t the idea...”

Seeing one Kohen with a full bottle, the Rebbe asked why he hadn’t distributed it. “There are some Kohanim already making calculations as to how much to give out now and how much to take home. That wasn’t the idea; they should give it all out now.”

Understandably, everyone wanted the *zechus* to receive *mashke* from the Rebbe, causing some commotion. The Rebbe reacted, saying “There are those who think that through making a tumult they’ll make a difference. To this the response is לא ’ברעש ה’—Hashem is not [found] in the noise.”⁶

The Rebbe turned to one Kohen and asked whether he had given out all his *mashke*. He raised the bottle, clearly empty. The Rebbe said he should take home the “old barrel”⁷ and fill it with “new wine” or “old wine,” and continue distributing in the following days.

Kos Shel Bracha

The Rebbe lead the *zimun* in bentching and then davened *maariv* next to the farbrengen place, (a small temporary “wall” was put up in front of the *shtender* that was brought there). After *maariv* the Rebbe made *havdalah*, which led into *kos shel bracha*, as thousands of people approached and received wine from the Rebbe. The Rebbe also gave out bottles of *mashke* to rabbonim, shluchim, *askanim*, and the *zochim b’goral* (those who won the raffles to spend Yom Tov with the Rebbe, as representatives of their communities).

The artist Reb Baruch Nachshon also received a bottle, and the Rebbe told him to mix the *mashke* into his paint. When someone took a bottle on his own, and someone else tried making him return it, the Rebbe waved dismissively [that he should keep it]. When Reb Zalman Teibel went by, the Rebbe told him to sing “*Ech Ti*”—Who Knows One in Russian, encouraging with his gaze and his hand.⁸

On Simchas Torah, a *bochur* fell from high up on the bleachers, and was taken to the hospital. On Shabbos, he had recovered sufficiently to be discharged, and walked back to 770. When he went by, Rabbi Groner told the Rebbe “This is the *bochur* that fell.” The Rebbe responded “Fell?!” and gave the *bochur* a bottle of *mashke*, saying “שבע יפול צדיק וקם—A *tzaddik* falls seven times, and gets up.”⁹ ❶

1. In the *sicha* on the eve of Hoshana Raba, the Rebbe said that a special request (הצעה בקשה והפצרה) should be publicized that everyone add in *tzedakah*. After the *sicha* the Rebbe distributed dollars through the *tankistin*.

2. Head of Tzach in Eretz Yisroel, who was spending Tishrei with the Rebbe.

3. Hisva’aduyos 5744 vol 1, p. 367

4. On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, they were *pores mapah*, and it caused confusion.

5. When Shabbos followed a Yom Tov, there would be a regular Shabbos *mevarchim* farbrengen in the early afternoon, and then a second one in the evening, as a continuation of Yom Tov. These ended with *havdalah*, and *kos shel bracha*.

6. Melachim 1, 19:11

7. Cf. Avot 4:20

8. See Behind the Picture, Derher Nissan, 5776

9. Mishlei 24:16