



*rosh  
hashanah  
with the  
Rebbe*

*Exclusive Roundtable Discussion*

לע"נ  
מרת אסתר ע"ה בת הרה"ח ר' יוחנן ע"ה  
נלב"ע טו"ב תשרי ה'תשע"ד  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

נדפס ע"י בנה  
הרה"ת ר' שמואל זאנוויל  
וזוגתו מרת צירל ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גאלדמאן



## ”אשרי העם יודעי תרועה”

The story is told about Reb Chaim Avraham, the Alter Rebbe’s son, who once came to hear *tekias shofar* on Rosh Hashanah from the Tzemach Tzedek, despite his old age and difficulty walking.

When asked why he would go through so much trouble, Reb Chaim Avraham replied:

“The *possuk* says אשרי העם יודעי תרועה - fortunate is the nation that *knows* how to blow shofar. Notice it does not say חוקעי תרועה - those who blow the shofar; rather יודעי - those who know how to. The shofar cannot be heard from merely any ordinary person. We need to hear it from one who ‘*knows*’.”<sup>1</sup>

~

Chassidus explains that Rosh Hashanah is called “*Rosh*” and not “*Techillas*” Hashanah, because it is not just the beginning of the year. It is the head, containing all the necessary *chayus* for the entire year.

In more general terms, the entire month of Tishrei is considered the head of the year; as the letters of תשרי can also form the word רשית.

The head of the year is also connected with the head of the Jewish people; the *nossi*, the Rebbe.<sup>2</sup> In the Rebbe’s presence this *chayus* is most apparent and felt; through all the *giluyim* Chassidim witnessed on each day of this festive month.

But of all the special moments throughout the month, one of the loftiest times was certainly when the Rebbe himself blew the shofar and crowned Hashem as our King once more.

In order to help us relive these moments as they occurred with the Rebbe, the staff of A Chassidisher Derher sat down for a round-table discussion with five Chassidim who were fortunate to experience them first-hand: **Rabbi Yosef Kesselman** (Oak Park, MI), **Rabbi Moshe New** (Montreal, QC), **Rabbi Sholom Ber Spielman** (Crown Heights), **Rabbi Leibel Korf** (Los Angeles, CA), and **Rabbi Zalman Duchman** (NYC). We thank them for their time and patience, sharing these precious memories for the benefit of our readership.

THE REBBE RECITES HATORAS NEDORIM,  
EREV ROSH HASHANA 5737.



**Good afternoon rabbis, and thank you for joining us for this special interview.**

**Let us begin with a short description of the events in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah in the Rebbe's presence.**

*Rabbi New:* During the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe began publishing the *michtavim klolyim*. The first would

come out on Chai Elul, a second one during the week of *selichos*, and the third one—all with a contiguous theme—was dated Vov Tishrei.

In those letters, the Rebbe would define and explain what the special *avodah* of the new year was; explaining and emphasizing what our task is in our work towards a *dirah betachtonim*.

These letters brought a special feeling with them. They set the tone—culminating the *avodah* of

the previous year, and telling us what we have to work towards in the coming one.

*Rabbi Kesselman:* The atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah began with *selichos*, on Motzei Shabbos. From shuls all around, from Boro Park and all over New York, Yidden would come to participate in the *selichos* by the Rebbe, and 770 was filled to capacity.

When the Rebbe entered the shul, the look on his face was



different than the rest of the year; it was clear that the *Yomim Noraim* had arrived.

### What would happen on the day of Erev Rosh Hashanah in 770?

*Rabbi Duchman:* I was fortunate enough that my father always brought me to 770, I was literally raised around 770, so I merited to be with the Rebbe throughout my childhood. In Tishrei 5752 I was eleven-years-old.

Erev Rosh Hashanah was a day that one spent hours in 770 and going to the Ohel; there was a lot of activity going on. I remember once, when Erev Rosh Hashanah was on a Sunday, that in addition to all of the regular activities, the Rebbe distributed dollars as well.

For us children it was a special day, as it was one of the few times a year that we didn't have to be in school and many of us would therefore use the opportunity to hang around 770.

*Rabbi Spielman:* The Rebbe would join the *minyan* for *selichos* at seven o'clock following which he would go to *mikveh*. Then he would daven *shacharis* with the *minyan*, which was a special occurrence; the only weekdays—until Chof Beis Shevat—that the Rebbe would join the *minyan* for *shacharis* were Erev Rosh Hashanah, Erev Yom Kippur, Purim, Tisha b'Av and on the days he davened at the *amud* (Vov Tishrei, Yud Shevat, and Chof Av).

At the conclusion of *shacharis* the Rebbe would recite *Hataras Nedarim*, then he would receive *panim*, and at the conclusion of all this he would go to the Ohel.

During the later years, beginning in 5738, *panim* would start a few days earlier.

*Rabbi Korf:* For us *bochurim*, *panim* was a unique experience. This was the time of year that we felt our *neshamah's* connection to the Rebbe. Standing in line with a *pan*, there was a feeling '*az mir geien betten zich bam Rebbe'n*'—that we are waiting to give ourselves over, to dedicate our *neshamos* to the Rebbe. This feeling of a Rebbe-Chossid relationship was something that we felt very clearly by *panim*.

There was once a *bochur* that expressed his doubts to a friend while waiting on the line, saying that it isn't possible that the Rebbe is paying special attention to each person, in a line so long and so quick. The *bracha*, he maintained, is more a general one. As he approached the Rebbe, the Rebbe wished him "*kesivah vachasimah*

*tovah*" like everyone else. Moving on, the Rebbe turned around to him again and said once more "*kesivah vachasimah tovah*." Obviously, his doubts immediately evaporated.

*Rabbi Kesselman:* After the line for *panim* finished, the elder Chassidim would approach the Rebbe with a *pan kloli*. Only the elder Chassidim were allowed inside to this 'event,' and the *bochurim* would not even sign the *pan*. That being the case, this was something I never merited to see with my own eyes.

Following *panim* and the *pan kloli*, at about twelve or one o'clock the Rebbe would leave for the Ohel.

As a rule, we knew that the Rebbe didn't appreciate people watching him in the Ohel. When I was there, I saw the Rebbe put on his glasses and read letters, and I was even able to see his lips



*Standing in line with a pan, there was a feeling 'az mir geien betten zich bam Rebbe'n' – that we are waiting to give ourselves over, to dedicate our neshamos to the Rebbe*



LEVI FREDIN via JEM 189029

THE REBBE RECEIVES PANIM,  
EREV ROSH HASHANA 5737.

YOSSI MELAMED via JEM 128882



LEVI FREIDIN via JEM 188004

moving, but I didn't see too much more. I knew the Rebbe didn't want us to watch him.

*Rabbi Korf:* Erev Rosh Hashanah and Yud Shevat were the only times during the year that Chassidim were allowed to be inside the Ohel together with the Rebbe, and therefore they were the only opportunities for us to see the Rebbe's *avodah* there.

One Erev Rosh Hashanah, I noticed that the Rebbe was tearing small pieces off of *panim* and putting them into a bag. Another time I saw—I really shouldn't have been watching—the Rebbe reading a lengthy wedding invitation written by one of the more interesting characters in 770, which he had filled with many novel and unique ideas. The Rebbe was reading it with much seriousness, reciting all the words on the invitation.

Seeing that taught me so much about the Rebbe's care

and concern for every Yid. The Rebbe is the father of literally every Yid, including the people that were lacking in one way or another. This invitation provided the 770 *bochurim* with much entertainment, but nonetheless, the Rebbe was reading it, with the full seriousness, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, at the Ohel. The scene made an indelible impression on me.

The Rebbe would return from the Ohel quite late. One year, as the Rebbe was arriving back in 770, I saw the door of the car swinging open before the car came to a stop; the Rebbe was clearly in a very big hurry.

**The new year has arrived, and the Rebbe enters the shul for maariv on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. Can you describe the atmosphere?**

*Rabbi Korf:* When the Rebbe would come into the shul for *maariv*, I remember his face being quite solemn. Even as a child, I was able to feel that the *tefillos* of the *Yomim Noraim* were not regular *tefillos*; there was a seriousness evident throughout the entire davening. The whole atmosphere was a higher one; the *niggunim* were different, the *chazzanim* sang in a different tone and we felt a very different feeling than the rest of the year. Although the Rebbe never moved much during davening, and this davening was no different in that respect, we still felt that it was still quite different than the Rebbe's davening all year.

*Rabbi Kesselman:* In 5734 something very notable took place. That year, the shul had been expanded to its full current size, and the work had been completed right as Rosh Hashanah arrived. It was then that the Rebbe agreed

to stand on a *bimah* for the first time; being that it was a *Shnas Hakhel*, some of us connected it to the custom of Hakhel in the *Beis Hamikdash*, where the king would stand on a *bimah* made of wood, while reading the Torah to the nation gathered before him.

From that year on, a *bimah* would be erected each Tishrei, and it enabled us to see and watch the Rebbe during the *tefillos*.

**Rabbi Spielman:** When the Rebbe would come in for *maariv*, he would begin with reciting Tehillim for about ten to fifteen minutes. Then, the Rebbe would indicate that we should begin singing “*Avinu Malkeinu*” (beginning davening with the singing “*Avinu Malkeinu*” was customary at most of the Rosh Hashanah *tefillos*, as long as it was not Shabbos). Following this, *maariv* would commence.

**Rabbi New:** “*Avinu Malkeinu*” and the various other *niggunim* during the *Yomim Noraim* were very special, as the Rebbe would conduct the singing by banging his hand on the *stender*. The fusion of everyone singing along in unison following the Rebbe’s hand motions was amazing. This would take place all year as well, but on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it took on a whole new element of feeling and excitement. Often, the Rebbe would motion to repeat the *niggun* of “*Avinu Malkeinu*” a number of times.

### **Rosh Hashanah morning: How did one “earn” a place for davening and *tekios*? And what was the *seder* when the Rebbe would enter?**

**Rabbi Kesselman:** In earlier times, *bochurim* would

be standing from six o’clock in the morning and onwards to save a place close to the *bimah* for the Rebbe’s *tekios*. Some would faint, and the situation was becoming unbearable. By the time I arrived in 770 in 5731, they had made a *seder* that the places would be reserved from Erev Rosh Hashanah. Then, on Rosh Hashanah morning, you had to return to your place by eight o’clock, otherwise it was up for grabs. After we arrived at 8:00 a.m. to secure our places, some of the *bochurim* left for *mitvza shofar* to different areas and returned to their places in middle of davening. The first few rows around the *bimah* would be reserved this way, and around them, a bit farther from the *bimah*, the places would be open to the public. People would jostle each other for the best location, pushing and shoving and then holding on to their places for dear life.

I held on to a place in the second row in front of the *bimah*, where I could face and look up at the Rebbe during *tekios*. In front of me, in the first row, stood Reb Meir Harlig, Reb Sholom Duchman, Reb Simcha Zirkind a”h and others. We were all familiar with who stood in which place each year so everyone made sure that his companions’ places were not taken by someone else.

**Rabbi Duchman:** On Rosh Hashanah, a number of children—me included—would sit on the table that was positioned directly in front of the *bimah*. There was a special place reserved for children near a table behind the *bimah*, but I would be on the table in front, facing the Rebbe during *tekios*. From there, I was able to stand up on the table and see the Rebbe clearly during *shacharis*, over the

heads of the people standing in front of me. But what was more essential was the fact that by *tekios* I was literally a foot away from the Rebbe, being able to hear everything, including the ruffling of the paper bags as the Rebbe moved them around. However, I could not stand up to see the *tekios* because then I would be blocking the other people standing behind me in the first few rows.

We children had our own competitions and arguments over places and *mekomos kevuim*. It was quite *lebedik*.

**Rabbi Korf:** The Rebbe would enter the shul holding the shofars wrapped in handkerchiefs, and behind him the *mazkirim* Reb Leibel Groner and Reb Binyomin Klein would be holding paper bags, which they would place on a table located right next to the Rebbe’s *shtender*. These bags were filled with *panim* and letters that people had sent to the Rebbe throughout the year.

**Rabbi Spielman:** In addition to the shofars and the bags, the Rebbe would come in with the Arizal *siddur* and the regular *siddur* (Torah Ohr), and in the later years, with the newly printed large *machzor* as well. There were various other *siddurim* the Rebbe would bring in sometimes, but that differed from year to year.

### **Preceding *tekios* is the *haftarah* which the Rebbe would recite. What was the *seder* by *krias haTorah* and when would the Rebbe come to the *bimah* in the middle of the shul?**

**Rabbi Duchman:** Once *kriah* began, the pushing became crazy. As it progressed the room



got very noisy, and there was a major *balagan*. It took the Rebbe some time to get to the *bimah* before *maftir*; there were no tables creating a *shvil* like on Simchas Torah, so a pathway would have to be made within the masses of people, and it was a very difficult task. The path would open two feet in front of the Rebbe, and close two feet behind him.

*Rabbi Korf*: Before *krias haTorah*, the Gabbai, Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz a”h would make an announcement regarding the *seder*, ending off that “*m’zol vissen vu men shteit, un far vemen men shteit*—we should be aware of where we are, and before whom we are standing.”

The feeling of *tekios* was already in the air, and the announcement of “*yaamod*” before the Rebbe’s *aliyah* felt like a prelude for the exalted moments that were approaching.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe came to the *bimah* when he was called up for *maftir*, just like a regular Shabbos. On the second day, however, the Rebbe recited *Kaddish* for the Rebbetzin’s sister, Rebbetzin

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Sheina, so he would come to the *bimah* earlier.

When the Rebbe came to the *bimah* for his *aliyah*, he brought along the shofars and the *machzorim*, and the *mazkirim* followed behind with the paper bags of *panim*.

**Rabbi Kesselman:** It was hard to hear the Rebbe reciting the *haftarah* due to the pushing. In the earlier years, the Rebbe would often cry during the *haftarah* of the first day, when reading about Chana, at *pesukim* such as “והיא פשה ומרת נפש ותתפלל על ה' ובכה” or “תבכה”. I remember one time, when reading Chana’s response to Eli, after he had accused her of being a drunk, “לא אדני, אשה קשת” לא אדני, אשה קשת... ואשפך את נפשי לפני ה'”, the Rebbe began sobbing; we barely heard the words.

Standing near the Rebbe on the *bimah* would be the *gabbaim*, *mazkirim* and people holding the *sifrei Torah*. In the late 5720s, another group joined: The Rebbe had asked that the Yidden that had recently emigrated from Russia stand near him during *tekios*. That custom remained from year to year and the Russian Yidden would always be on the *bimah* during *tekios*.

**Rabbi Spielman:** Although those that stood in the first few rows, like Rabbi Kesselman, were pretty stable in their places, the area a bit further away between the *bimah* and the *aron kodesh* was nicknamed the “washing machine” as *tekios* would approach. It earned its name because you would come in dry, leave sopping wet, and you were in a constant spin, being pushed from all sides.

One year on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, due to the fierce pushing as the Rebbe was returning to the front of the shul

after *tekios*, my glasses got pulled off my face, and I never saw them again. In order to witness *tekios* the following day, I had to borrow a pair from a friend; it wasn’t exactly my prescription, but it was definitely better than nothing.

### Let’s move on to the actual *tekios*, the part we’ve all been waiting for.

**Rabbi Spielman:** My father-in-law, Reb Berel Junik, related: The first day of Rosh Hashanah 5725, a few days before Rebbetzin

Chana’s *histalkus*, she was present by the Rebbe’s *tekios*. On the second day, when she was unable to go to shul, she told my father-in-law that although going the day before affected her health, it was well worth it in order to hear the Rebbe’s *tekios*.

Then she told him, “*Ir veist nit vos far a Rebbe ir hot*—You don’t know how great of a Rebbe you have. I’m not saying this as a mother; I’m saying it because that’s how it is.”

**Rabbi Korf:** For a number of years, I stood just a few rows

## Heaven on Earth

**Rabbi New:** Spending Rosh Hashanah with the Rebbe, was unique even in the context of other Yomim Tovim. All the Yomim Tovim commemorate an event in the past; Chassidus teaches us how to understand each Yom Tov as a current event, with a message for our day. But Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are so clear that even those who don’t learn Chassidus can relate to it. The *Aibershter* is simply sitting and judging the world. It is a very current and happening thing.

With the Rebbe it took on a whole new dimension: Rosh Hashanah, as we know from Chassidus is the *hamshacha klolis* for the entire year. It is the point of contact between heaven and earth, with the whole *avodah* of awakening Hashem’s will to be our king, which happens primarily at *tekias shofar*. Standing near the Rebbe during *tekios*, one knows and senses and feels that the whole purpose of creation, and this new *hamshacha*, and all of the Yidden’s *avodah*, is all embodied in the Rebbe, during these moments of *tekias shofar*.

Right before *tekios*, the crowd in 770 would swell. All of the shuls in Crown Heights emptied out, and their congregants came to hear *tekios* from the Rebbe, the *nasi hador*.

During the moments that the Rebbe blew the shofar, we were all “*guf echad*,” totally united; the thousands of people packed into the shul merged into one entity, with the Rebbe, the *nosi*, as its mind and heartbeat. Words cannot adequately describe the feeling that enveloped the room during those moments.

These were times that we literally transcended the physical limitations of the body; no matter how crushed one felt by the massive crowd, it was meaningless in the face of the magnitude of the moment.

The Rebbe’s face changed entirely. It looked like fire; it was awe inspiring and it was difficult to gaze at, yet at the same time you could not look anywhere else. Usually the Rebbe’s *tenuos* were the most simple, but now was entirely different.

away from the *bimah*. Standing so close to the Rebbe was not easy physically, but in such close proximity, one felt as if you were under the Rebbe's tallis as he conducted his *avodas hakodesh*.

When the Rebbe finished the *haftarah* and the time for *tekios* would arrive, he first looked around to make sure that the *sifrei Torah* were being held around him, and also to see if the *makri*—Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum—was on sight. (Rabbi Tenenbaum was the *baal tokea* during *musaf*.) By this point, the *mazkirim* would have already placed the bags of *panim* on the *bimah* and the Rebbe began moving them around to bring them closer to himself. The Rebbe made sure that the *siddur* was open, that the bags were in their proper place, and then he would begin organizing the shofars.

**Rabbi New:** The Rebbe had a number of shofars. A light yellowish one, which had belonged to the Tzemach Tzedek; a black one, which the Rebbe Maharash had used, and later belonged to the Rebbe's father, HoRav Levi Yitzchok; and another white one, from the Friediker Rebbe. There was also a shofar that was sent from Eretz Yisroel that the Rebbe used for a few years after 5738.

**Rabbi Kesselman:** The 'organizing' of the shofars was very unique. The Rebbe would begin moving around the shofars and the handkerchiefs (a red

handkerchief passed down from the Tzemach Tzedek, a large white handkerchief, and another one), covering them and uncovering them again and again in a deliberate manner. While doing so, exertion was apparent on the Rebbe's face; it looked similar to a person lifting heavy weights, all the while moving around and organizing the shofars.

It was clear that there was some *rebbe'she hanhagos* happening in what the Rebbe was doing, which we did not see in other times. It was a special moment; this was one of the very few times of the year that we were able to catch a glimpse of such a *hanhagah*.

After organizing the shofars, sometimes for several minutes, the Rebbe would throw his tallis far over his head, covering the *panim* as well, and he would stand silently that way for a few minutes, leaning over the *bimah*. We would sometimes hear the Rebbe crying from under the tallis. I remember on Rosh Hashanah 5734, just ten days before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe cried very much, and we saw his shoulders shaking from emotion.

**So the Rebbe would organize the shofars and then pull his tallis over his head. When and how did he begin the pesukim?**

**Rabbi Kesselman:** After being under the tallis for some time,

the Rebbe put the tallis back to its normal position and pulled down its upper side. Then he held on to the two sides of the tallis tightly with both hands, leaving it in a straight position from on top. In a very loud voice, almost a shout, the Rebbe would begin "לְמַנּוּחַ לְבָנֵי קָרָח מְזֻמָּר". Immediately afterwards, the Rebbe would once



RABBI ZALMAN DUCHMAN AS A YOUNG CHILD (BOTTOM FAR LEFT) IN THE EXACT SPOT HE STOOD DURING TEKIOS ON ROSH HASHANAH

*When the Rebbe recited the pesukim in their distinct tune, the atmosphere in the shul totally changed. In place of the balagan and tumult, came complete silence; you could hear a pin drop.*

again throw his tallis far over his head and covering the *panim*, until he concluded the *perek* seven times.

**Rabbi Spielman:** After being under his tallis for another period of time, the Rebbe would once again lift up his tallis and begin the *pesukim* of “*Min Hameitzar*,” leading the crowd, verse by verse:

מון המצור קראתי י-ה ענני במרחב י-ה  
קולי שמעה כחסדך ה' כמשפטך חגיגי  
ראש דברך אמת ולעולם כל משפט  
צדקך  
ערב עבדך לטוב אל יעש קני זדים  
שש אנכי על אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב  
טוב טעם ודעת למדני פי במצותיך  
האמנתי  
נדבות פי רצה נא ה' ומשפטיך למדני  
עלה אלקים בתרועה ה' בקול שופר

When the Rebbe recited the *pesukim* in their distinct tune, the atmosphere in the shul totally changed. In place of the *balagan* and tumult, came complete silence. The Rebbe would say them in a very loud voice, but the crowd was totally silent as well; you could hear a pin drop.



**Rabbi Korf:** Before starting “*Min Hameitzar*,” the Rebbe once again picked up his tallis, and held it from either side, as Rabbi Kesselman described. Throughout the year, there were never such intense and serious moments like *tekios* and its leadup, when the Rebbe recited the *pesukim*.

The *pesukim* recited before *tekios* are generally verses of supplication. Sometimes the Rebbe would emphasize one phrase or another, and later in the year, when something troubling came about, we would sometimes see a hint of connection to what the Rebbe had said with extra fervor and emotion. This was most specifically by the words אל תבטח בְּעֵשׂקוֹנֵי זָדִים; one year—5748, the year of the Rebbetzin’s *histalkus*—the Rebbe added a word: “*bal al yaashkuni zeidim*.”<sup>3</sup>

### And how were the *brachos*, and then the *tekios*?

**Rabbi Kesselman:** When the Rebbe finished saying the *pesukim*, he once again pulled the tallis over his head for a few moments. Then, the Rebbe picked up the tallis to its normal position and turned around once more to see if the *makri* was on hand. Now the Rebbe would begin the *brachos*:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר  
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְשִׁמּוֹעַ קוֹל שׁוֹפָר  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שֶׁהִתְיַבֵּן וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַיּוֹם

**Rabbi Korf:** The *brachos* of “*Lishmoa kol shofar*” and “*Shehechyanu*” were usually recited by the Rebbe very loudly, in his unique tune. The whole shul was able to hear as the Rebbe said them.

Then the Rebbe would begin blowing; he would blow the shofar

with two hands—one hand near his mouth—and start the *tekios*.

The Rebbe would generally start to blow with the black shofar, the one that had belonged to the Rebbe Maharash. If the *tekios* came with difficulty, he switched to other shofars. This happened a number of times.

During the *tekios*, there are points where the *machzor* instructs the *baal tokea* to “confess quietly.” At those points, the Rebbe usually pulled his tallis over his head once again for a few moments. However, in the last years, the Rebbe did it very quickly, sometimes skipping it entirely.

**Rabbi Duchman:** There were some years that it seemed hard for the Rebbe to blow, and the *tekios* took a very long time.

There are famous stories of the Baal Shem Tov davening very strongly on Yom Kippur, dealing with a heavenly *gezeirah*, and the *talmidim* present at the time felt that there was a *kitrug* in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

When we, as children, saw the Rebbe attempting to blow the shofar, sometimes with much difficulty, we felt—like those Chassidim of old did—that there was a *kitrug* in Heaven, which we are totally unaware of, and the Rebbe, the *nasi hador*, is supplicating for the Yidden on High. When the *tekios* went hard, or the Rebbe was under the tallis for a long time before hand, this was how we felt.

**Rabbi New:** During those moments, tension filled the air, there was a strong feeling of intensity. I’m sure that there were those who, upon hearing those difficult *tekios*, were awakened to *teshuvah*.

**Rabbi Kesselman:** I remember that one year, in 5732, the last *teruah* took a full half hour, and



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the Rebbe changed three shofars in the course of it. It went on for so long, that dozens(!) of people fainted, or almost fainted, and had to be helped out of the shul. That year, the Rebbe had specifically asked that the many Yidden who had come out of Russia and were spending Rosh Hashanah in 770 be on the *bimah* during *tekios*. The *bima* was filled to the brim with people.

I heard that there was once a person that was standing and



THE REBBE RECITES HAVDALAH AT THE CONCLUSION OF ROSH HASHANA 5736.

listening to the Rebbe having difficulty with the *tekios*, and he promised the Rebbe in his heart to accomplish a certain thing. Later, in *yechidus*, the Rebbe made sure that he had kept to his pledge.

During *tekios* and the moments that preceded it, the *bochurim* and *yungeleit* watching and listening to the Rebbe felt a very strong feeling of *hiskashrus* and closeness to the Rebbe. We felt that the Rebbe was giving us the opportunity to ascend to a level beyond our usual

limitations, and to become united with the Rebbe, the *neshamah kloris*. When the Rebbe would weep, those that stood close wept along, connecting to the Rebbe on the deepest of levels.

### Ashrei Ha'am Yod'ei Seru'ah: The *pesukim* after *tekios*.

*Rabbi Spielman:* As the *tekios* concluded, the Rebbe would say the three *pesukim* in the well-

known tune, raising his voice from one to the next, while the crowd would repeat after him. As in the *pesukim* before the *tekios*, when the Rebbe chanted them, the crowd was silent, listening intently to the Rebbe's voice:

אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעָם יוֹדְעֵי תְרוּעָה ה' בְּאוֹר פְּנֵיהֶם  
 הַלְכוּן  
 בְּשִׂמְחָה יִגִּילוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם וּבְצִדְקָתְךָ יְרוֹמוּ  
 כִּי תִפְאֶרֶת עֲזָמוּ אֶתְּךָ וּבְרַצְנֶךָ תִּרְוֹם  
 קִרְנֵנוּ

*Rabbi Kesselman:* There was a major difference in the Rebbe's

*The Rebbe turned around and called out “Gut Yom Tov” three times, just as he would do on Simchas Torah and other Yomim Tovim. The crowd was shocked; it was totally out of the ordinary, and we didn’t know what to make of it...*

expression from before *tekios* to afterwards. I don’t understand too much in *Elokus*, *binyan hamalchus*, etc. but I can tell you that physically, before *tekios* the Rebbe looked extremely serious, and afterwards, the *pesukim* were in a tone that gave off the feeling that *m’hot upgeton di inyonim*—everything has been taken care of. I wouldn’t call it relaxed, but it was definitely a change from beforehand.

**Rabbi New:** The feeling of the tune of “*Ashrei ha’am*,” especially when the Rebbe called out the words “*uvirtzoncha tarum karneinu*” at the end, was a feeling of confidence; victory has been achieved, the year will be good, Moshiach is coming, and all is wonderful. We felt safe in the Rebbe’s hands.

**It is brought down in sefarim<sup>5</sup> that after tekios, the baal tokea turns towards the congregation and they gaze at his face. How was it by the Rebbe?**

**Rabbi Kesselman:** First, before leaving the *bimah* after *tekios*, the Rebbe had the *makri*,

Rabbi Tenenbaum choose a shofar to use for the *tekios* of *musaf*. Understandably, he would choose the shofar that the Rebbe had used, and then the Rebbe turned to leave the *bimah* with the rest of the shofars and returned to his place at the front of the shul.

**Rabbi Korf:** The Rebbe left the *bimah* behind the *sifrei Torah*, returning to his place where he put the *machzor* and the shofars down, and the *mazkirim* placed the bags back on their table. Meanwhile, everyone rushed towards the front of the shul to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe’s face while he turned around. The Rebbe would turn around and make a full circle, very briefly, while scanning the crowd.

**Rabbi Duchman:** As a child, I never knew that this was a *minhag* that has to do with the *baal tokeah*; I thought it was to look at the Rebbe’s face, kind of like looking at the Kohen Gadol after the *avodah* of Yom Kippur. When the Rebbe turned around we have a chance to see his face, and there is a big *bracha* in seeing the Rebbe’s face after *tekios*.

The situation would be total chaos. Everyone wanted to see the Rebbe, and they knew it lasted only a few short seconds, so everyone tried to find a position from which he would be able to see. Many of the adults would get up onto the table that I was sitting on, right in front of the *bimah*. Being that my view was now obstructed, I would climb on to the ledge of the *bimah* itself—a much higher perch—from where I was able to see everything.

Being that high meant I was able to see, but others were being blocked. I was not the only one committing such a ‘crime,’ and calls would come from all corners

of 770—addressed to the various perpetrators—“*Arup fun bank! Arup! Arup!*” (“Get down, get down!”) And sometimes I was yanked down.

**Wow!**

**Musaf on Rosh Hashanah is also unique. Tekios Dim’umad, Kori’m, Birchas Kohanim... Can you describe these?**

**Rabbi Korf:** During *Shemoneh Esreh* of *musaf*, Rabbi Groner would stand closer to the Rebbe, in order to see when the Rebbe would finish each *bracha*, and motion to Rabbi Tenenbaum when to blow the *tekios*.

Watching the Rebbe perform *kor’im* was unbelievable; the Rebbe would quickly drop onto his knees, put his fists on the floor, complete the bow, and stand up quickly enough to watch the *shliach tzibur* do it as well.

**Rabbi Duchman:** In the later years, my father got a place for *musaf* right behind the Rebbe, so I was able to see everything. There was *kor’im*, then *Birchas Kohanim*—all the Kohanim had to go out to wash their hands, and then they needed to come all the way back to the front, and that provided good reason for some more pushing. By now, 770 would empty out quite a bit, and it was possible—albeit with difficulty—to make your way in or out of 770, and I would sometimes go outside to bring in my younger siblings who had come later for *Birchas Kohanim*.

The custom in 770 for *Birchas Kohanim* was that the Kohanim *duchan* from on top of the Rebbe’s *bimah*. Towards the end of *musaf*, the Rebbe left the *bimah* and stood

at a different *shtender*, which was prepared right behind the *bimah*'s staircase. He would remain there until the end of davening.

As the Rebbe went off the *bimah* for the *bracha*, the Kohanim dashed up the stairs, competing each other for a place in the front row, to be as close to the Rebbe as possible.

After the last one-hundred *kolos* of the shofar were blown, and it was once again permissible to speak, the Kohanim went off the *bimah*, and the Rebbe thanked them with “*Yasher koach Kohen.*”

**Rabbi Kesselman:** As I mentioned earlier, Rosh Hashana 5734 took place shortly before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, and the Rebbe cried profusely during the *haftarah* of the first day. However, on that same day, at the conclusion of *musaf* the Rebbe turned around and called out “*Gut Yom Tov*” three times, just as he would do on Simchas Torah and other Yomim Tovim. The crowd was shocked; it was totally out of the ordinary, and we didn't know what to make of it. This same scene repeated itself on the second day too.

Then, as if that was not enough, as the Rebbe turned to leave shul, he began his father's *hakafos niggun*. It felt as if Simchas Torah spilled into Rosh Hashana.

**Rabbi Korf:** In 5750 the first day of Rosh Hashanah fell out on Shabbos. At the beginning of *shacharis* the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner that he would hold a farbrengen a half hour after davening. A farbrengen on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, a day that the Rebbe would usually speak very little, was unheard of. The *gabbaim* were under a lot of pressure; many people had bought seats in which they planned on

sitting during the *tefillos* of the next day as well, and now 770 had to be totally reorganized for a farbrengen. The table where the Rebbe sat at during farbrengens was also not in its proper place, but of course everything was set up, and the farbrengen took place.

### On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, as on each Yom Tov, the Rebbe held a farbrengen. Was there something unique about this specific farbrengen?

**Rabbi Spielman:** Before all farbrengens at the conclusion of Yom Tov, and this one was no exception, the Rebbe davened *mincha* in the small *zal*, as the big shul was in the midst of being set up.

People would save places from a while before, and although my memories are more general, I remember that it was not a very long farbrengen. The Rebbe washed for bread at the start of the farbrengen close to *shkiah*, and said a few *sichos* and a *maamar*. At some point, the Rebbe also asked to sing the *niggunim* of the Rabbeim. At the end, the Rebbe lead the bentching on a *kos*. Then the Rebbe davened *maariv*, followed by *havdalah* and then *kos shel bracha*. For *maariv*, the Rebbe did not go to his place at the front of the shul; instead, a *shtender* was prepared behind the Rebbe's farbrengen place, with a large divider in front of it to act as a barrier. Meanwhile the Vaad Hamesader set up for *kos shel bracha*.

**Rabbi Duchman:** My grandfather, Reb Yisroel Duchman, had a place for *kos shel bracha*, right behind Reb Meir Harlig, who would stand

## Niggunim

**Rabbi Kesselman:** In 5732 the Rebbe explained that we customarily sing the *niggunim* of the Rabbeim at the end of Rosh Hashanah as we connect the head of the year with the entire year. In connection to this, the Rebbe spoke about a very interesting concept. The Rebbe said that each of the Rabbeim—starting with the Baal Shem Tov—added one minute to Rosh Hashanah, and that this time represents the *chiddush* of each one of the Rabbeim. Through *niggunim*, the Rebbe added, we connect with the *chaya* and *yechidah*, the deepest levels of the *neshamah*, of the Rabbeim.<sup>6</sup>

The *seder* was that after we finished singing the *Beinoni* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, we would sing the Rebbe's *niggun*—“*Atah vechartanu.*” The Rebbe would encourage this *niggun* very strongly and it was a very *lebedike* part of the farbrengen.

very close to the Rebbe. When he passed away, I took his place, and while standing there I would help out by handing out the cups to the people in line.

It is interesting to note, that during *kos shel bracha*, the entire line consisted of a bunch of tables and benches. In order to get into the line, you had to climb onto a bench and after a while you would go onto a table upon which you would walk passed the Rebbe.

As *kos shel bracha* drew to a close, and the Rebbe walked out with his *becher* and *siddur*, we all knew that there are many more precious moments waiting for us in the days and weeks to come, as Tishrei had just begun.

**Rabbi New:** Just to end off with a few words: There is a known tradition of Chassidim,

that when we arrive at the point in *tekios* where one is supposed to be “*misvadeh belachash*,”<sup>7</sup> one should picture the image of the Rebbe. We all have that image of the Rebbe, whether it is from our own personal memories or from seeing the Rebbe’s image in pictures and videos.

There is no question that as we listen to the shofar, be it in 770, at the Ohel, or in our Chabad Houses, shul’s and yeshivos, that the Rebbe is blowing the שופר גדול on behalf of all of us, bringing our *tefillos* up High and davening for the entire *klal Yisroel* that we should be blessed with a שנה טובה ומתוקה.

May we merit to see and hear *tekios* from the Rebbe this year with the coming of Moshiach, may it be NOW.

**We thank you all so much for sharing these special memories and experiences. We pray that speedily we will have the final and ultimate *geulah*, and spend Rosh Hashanah this year together with the Rebbe. ①**

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1. Sichas Shabbos parshas Re’eh 5731
  2. See lengthy explanation in “Pidyon Nefesh—Regenerating the Connection” Derher Tishrei 5775.
  3. See letter by Reb E.C. Althoiz about the year 5687, the year the Friediker Rebbe was arrested; Likutei Diburim (LaHaK) vol. 5 p. 1358
  4. See Kuntres Toras HaChassidus perek 2
  5. Kuntres Limud HaChassidus p. 11
  6. Sichos Kodesh 5732 vol 1, p. 1-5
  7. Otzar Minhagei Chabad Elul-Tishrei p. 125

KOS SHEL BROCHO,  
MOTZOEI ROSH  
HASHANA 5738.





YOSSI MELAMED via JEM114315