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YOSSI MELAMED via JEM 118345

“Saluting the Unity of the Jewish People.”

LAG B'OMER 5747



THE GREAT PARADE

Amongst the various features characterizing Lag B'Omer throughout the years, the grandiose parades conducted in the Rebbe's presence, stood out.¹ In addition to saying a *sicha*, the Rebbe listened to the children's *pesukim* recital beforehand (from the year 5736 and on, when the 12 *pesukim* were introduced), and

stayed afterward to observe the children passing before him, presenting artistic signs and displays about Yiddishkeit in general, and the mitzvot in particular. The glow on the Rebbe's face was evident, as he lovingly gazed at all the passersby, waving his hands, and saluting. It was obvious that this royal *kiddush Hashem*, in the presence of thousands, generated much *nachas ruach* on the

THE REBBE'S BRACHA FOR THE PARADE

On Friday, 16 Iyar, the Rebbe communicated the following message to the parade committee:

והצלחה למעלה מן המשוער, וביותר מן היותר.
“[The parade should have] more *hatzlacha* than expected, and even more so.”

Rebbe's part; something that was also expressed in the unique *maanos* the organizers received.

The year 5747 was one of those special years. A grand parade, complete with floats and all, took place. In fact, several months later, Kehos, in conjunction with N.C.F.J.E. and Tzivos Hashem, published “We March as One”: A Photographic Journal of the Lag B’Omer Parade - 5747/1987. This year, marking thirty years from Lag B’Omer 5747, JEM has released newly restored video footage of the parade. We strongly encourage our readership to watch the parade, and “relive” those special moments.

To that end, we are proud to publish descriptive details of that year's parade. The following account is based largely on an article printed in the Kfar Chabad magazine at the time, a *yoman* written by Rabbi Michael Seligson, and various other diaries.

PARADE PREPARATIONS

In the weeks leading up to this colossal show of Jewish pride, the excitement in the air was palpable. Many volunteered day and night for this grand production, which included constructing floats, and decorating 770 and surrounding buildings with enormous banners exhibiting Jewish ideas. Tens of workers toiled on setting up the children's fair on Empire Boulevard, which was set to take place following the parade on Eastern Parkway.

On Motzei Shabbos, the eve of the parade, Crown Heights was abuzz with activity. Students of the various *mosdos* affixed banners to the buildings, and built educational floats atop flatbed trucks. Tens of *bochurim* worked throughout the night on this



year's main attraction: a display of all the various *galuyos* throughout the ages, culminating with this year portrayed by the words “*Ad Mosai?! “Dalo! Galus!”*” “Enough is enough!” This unique idea, the brainchild of Gershon Eichorn, Heshy Rubashkin, and Meyer Preger, displayed all of *am Yisroel's galuyos*, from *galus Mitzrayim*, passing through *galus Bavel* and *Romi*...up through Auschwitz. Standing out was the exhibit portraying Chabad activities in the current *galus*, in the form of mitzvah tanks standing against Manhattan skyscrapers.

In front of 770, others were erecting the main *bima*, on which the Rebbe would stand the next day and participate in the parade.

Shortly after ten o'clock the following morning, the Rebbe arrived at 770 with a policeman sitting inside the car. The Rebbe exited the car, waved to the crowds already assembled for the parade, and entered his room.

“By now, I'm sure you all know who I'm talking about,” continued Rabbi Hecht, shortly before 11:15.

AN UNFORGETTABLE PARADE

Veteran parade opener Rabbi Yosef Goldstein (also known as “Uncle Yossi,”) began by explaining the meaning of Lag B’Omer—*Yom Hilulah D'Rashbi*. This was followed by an Uncle Moishy concert.

Following the show, Rabbi Goldstein introduced the parade chairman and emcee, executive vice president of N.C.F.J.E. Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht.



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Rabbi Hecht began: “There is one man in the world today who is acknowledged and recognized as the true dedicated leader of world Jewry. Because of his love and concern for his people wherever they may be, he in turn is loved by the masses...” Rabbi Hecht continued speaking about the Rebbe and the wide-ranging activities of Lubavitch the world over, under the Rebbe’s leadership.

“By now, I’m sure you all know who I’m talking about,” continued Rabbi Hecht, shortly before 11:15. “Although I do not feel worthy of this great honor, I nevertheless have been given the distinct privilege of introducing to you the saintly and revered leader of world Jewry, the *nossi* of our generation, and the Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai of our times—the Lubavitcher Rebbe.”

It was then that the entire crowd rose to their feet in respect. As the band began playing the stirring melody of “*Ani Maamin*,” the Rebbe emerged from 770’s main entrance. Advancing swiftly down the passage, the Rebbe smiled while waving to the crowds, and ascended the tall, decorated *bima*.

As arranged beforehand, children from various yeshivos and day schools worldwide ascended the platform and led the crowd in the recitation of the Twelve Pesukim. All the while the Rebbe stood facing the child leading the *possuk*, his face shining with pleasure as he recited along with the children.

Facing the Rebbe’s *bima* was a raised platform on which reporters and TV crews from all major news networks stood, broadcasting the event. There were also camera operators transmitting the event directly to tens of Jewish communities around the world who were watching the live hookup. It was a real show of *kiddush Hashem*, leaving its mark not only on the multitudes participating in the event, but also on the scores of Yidden watching the live hookup in Chabad Houses around the world.

A special staff of *bochurim* ensured the smooth *seder* that characterized this year’s parade, this thanks to advance planning and preparations.

The entire Eastern Parkway, from Albany to New York Avenues, was closed off from early morning hours by the hundreds of police officers spread throughout the area, ensuring the smooth

performance of one of the biggest *hafatzas hamaayanos* events.

THE REBBE SPEAKS

After the singing of “We Want Moshiach Now,” the Rebbe began the *sicha*. It was split into three, with Rabbi Hecht relaying an English summary between each segment.

This lasted about an hour and a half. The *sicha* included messages highlighting the greatness of the moment; the fact that young and pure Jewish children gather together on such a special day, in a spirit of *ahavas Yisroel*.

The Rebbe also elaborated on the special lesson from the days of *sefiras haomer*, which remind us of the Jewish people’s excitement to receive the Torah at Har Sinai, and the lesson we can learn to cherish the Torah—Hashem’s precious gift to us.

Another lesson the Rebbe taught was from the Torah of Rashbi, about the fact that Hashem accompanies His people in *galus*. This should serve to strengthen us in our mission here, especially the charge to influence all inhabitants of the world to observe the *sheva mitzvos b’nei Noach*.³

JUDAISM ON WHEELS

This was followed by the parade.

The procession began with children carrying the American flag, as well as the flags of Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch, Machne Israel, and N.C.F.J.E., respectively. Following them was a delegation of NYPD mounted officers who saluted the Rebbe and

received a salute in return. Then came officers of the New York Color Guard who marched with flags.

Oholei Torah’s Tzivos Hashem Marching Band, following a decorated mitzvah tank, continued the procession. Next were several Marine Guard vehicles on which Col. Yaakov Goldstein and members of his unit saluted the Rebbe. All the while, the Rebbe smilingly looked on and clapped energetically.

Then came the clowns! The doors of an oversized Cadillac opened up to release tens of clowns who livened up the crowd.

The crowd stood and remained standing for an hour as the floats went by. Volunteers from the various *mosdos*, including Machon Chana, Oholei Torah, Lubavitcher Yeshiva of Brooklyn, Tomchei Tmimim of Morristown, Tiferes Bachurim of Morristown, Tzach in Eretz Yisroel, Beis Rivka, 770, F.R.E.E., and others, built these decorated educational floats.

As a special truck carrying boys who were celebrating their *upshernish* together with their fathers went by, the Rebbe waved to them, performing a cutting motion with his fingers. Scores of children from various day schools and *chadarim* throughout the greater New York area, representing almost every spectrum of the Jewish community, marched by. Jewish children in public schools who participate in the Released Time program also attended, carrying signs conveying messages of Jewish pride. The Rebbe stood for the duration, waving to the many youngsters passing by.



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RABBI JJ HECHT TAKES NOTES AS THE REBBE DELIVERS A SICHA TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE PARADE.



A skywriter flying above the parade adorned the bright blue, cloudless sky with the message: “Bais Yaakov of Brooklyn Salutes the Lubavitcher Rebbe.” When Rabbi Groner mentioned this to the Rebbe, he raised his eyes and gazed at the message for a while.

The *talmidim* of Tomchei Tmimim of Morristown built a float portraying the Chabad City in Yerushalayim. (The Rebbe had spoken publicly several times that year about building housing for the new wave of immigrants that would soon be leaving Russia.)⁴ The float attracted much attention from the spectators, as the Rebbe began clapping, with the crowd following suit, and motioned to Professor Branover⁵ standing nearby, to ascend the float.

Students of Beis Rivkah carrying signs marched along with their teachers, and mothers pushed their baby strollers. The Rebbe’s face shined as he smilingly waved at the children with his hands, occasionally bending his head to see what was written on the banners.

As the Chamah Publishers’ float was going by, portraying their influence amongst Russian Jewry worldwide, the crowd could hear Rabbi Hecht shouting “Hold it, driver...” as the Rebbe was seen motioning to his left. The Rebbe then said in Russian “Say it in Russian!” after which someone shouted “Happy Lag B’Omer!” in Russian, and began singing a song. The Rebbe then began the niggun “Nyet, Nyet, Nikavoh...” As the entire assemblage joined in the singing, the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the crowd.

“I LIFTED YOU UP!”

At the end of the parade, Rabbi Hecht thanked Rabbis Bentzion (Benjy) Stock, Sholom Ber Baumgarten and Moshe Katzman, as well as all the

The Rebbe then said in Russian “Say it in Russian!” after which someone shouted “Happy Lag B’Omer!” in Russian...

other organizers and volunteers for “one of the most gorgeous parades we have ever had.” Rabbi Hecht then continued: “And I hope the Rebbe is satisfied.” The Rebbe immediately added “And especially the children...” after which microphones were put before the Rebbe, and he continued: “Especially the children, the boys and the girls, b’nei Avrohom Yitzchok v’Yaakov, b’nos Sara, Rivka, Rochel, v’Leah.” The Rebbe then began singing “*Ki V’Simcha Seitzu*” as the crowd enthusiastically joined along, with the Rebbe’s energetic encouragement.

As the Rebbe was about to leave, Rabbi Hecht said to him that he hopes the Rebbe received *nachas ruach* from the parade. The Rebbe answered “Very [much so]. What about your *mara-shchora* [melancholy]?” (Before the parade, Rabbi Hecht had complained that the preparations were not going well). Rabbi Hecht responded, “The Rebbe pulled me out of it,” to which the Rebbe responded, with a swift raise of his hand, “Pulled you out of it? [I] lifted [you] up!” As the Rebbe exited the parade and entered 770, another round of animated clapping followed.



AT THE FAIR

With that, the parade was over, and the crowds began heading toward the children’s fair. Once there, they enjoyed the various rides, carnival games, and exhibits displaying Yiddishkeit. Tzach



בעומר תשמ"ד
הילולא דרשב"י
השמיטה-שבת לה'

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set up special *mitzvot* booths, laying Tefillin with many of the thousands of visitors from all over the New York area.

At 3:00 p.m., the Rebbetzin's car arrived on Empire Boulevard via Kingston Avenue with a police escort, and as she drove through, she waved to those participating in the celebrations.

At around 4:20, as the Rebbe's car, accompanied by that of members of *mazkirus* and a police escort, was on the way to the Ohel, it drove down Kingston to Crown and from there to Brooklyn, going through the fair on Empire. All the while, the Rebbe observed the various goings-on, and waved to the children with both of his hands. It was a fascinating sight to behold.

When the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, *mincha* and *maariv* took place. The Rebbe then began distributing dollars to the large crowd gathered at 770, as a continuation of the parade that took place earlier that day.

It was a special end to a successful day.

PUBLISHING THE SICHA

On Tuesday, 20 Iyar, Reb Gershon Ber Jacobson, publisher of the *Algemeiner Journal*, was speaking with Rabbi Groner in Gan Eden Hatachton. When the Rebbe arrived and saw Reb Gershon Ber, he turned to him, motioning to come inside the Rebbe's room. While the Rebbe stood near the door of his room, he began conversing with Reb Gershon Ber on several matters.

At the conversation's end, Reb Gershon Ber asked the Rebbe if he is planning on editing the Lag B'Omer *sicha*.

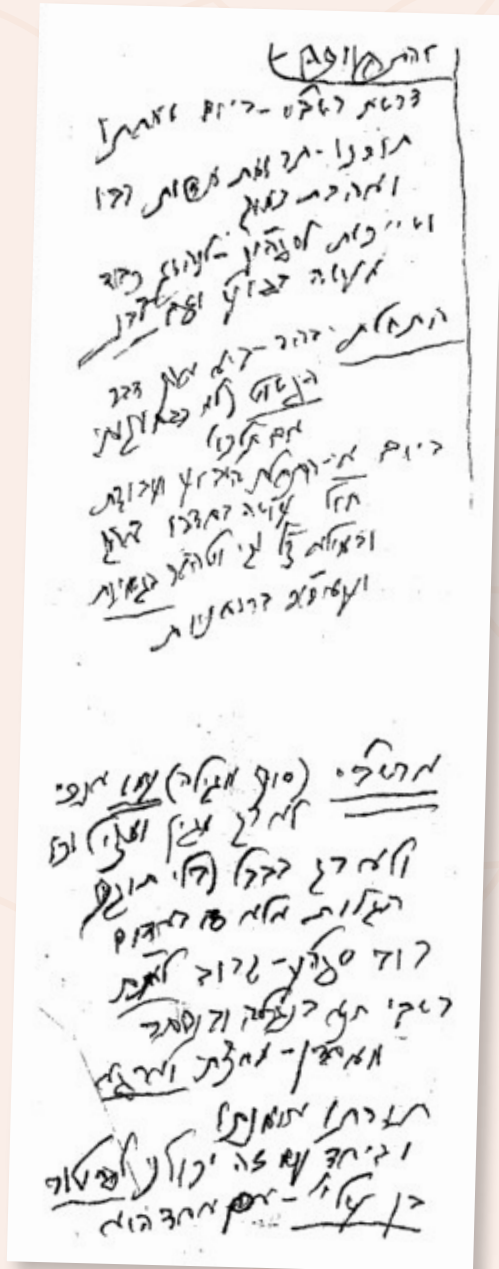
The Rebbe smilingly responded, "Is there a shortage of my *sichos*?" Then turning to Rabbi Groner, he asked, "Is there a *sicha* [written up]?"

Rabbi Groner, pointed to the *sicha* sitting on the Rebbe's holy table. The Rebbe then looked at the *sicha* and declared, "However, it is self-understood that the *sicha* should not detract from the article and pictures of the parade."

Reb Gershon Ber replied "Of course not."

The Rebbe concluded, "I will make an effort to look it over."

And in fact, the Rebbe submitted for publication the edited version of the Lag B'Omer *sicha* that night. **T**



THE REBBE'S NOTES FOR THE SICHA TO BE SAID DURING THE PARADE.

1. For a general overview on Lag B'Omer with the Rebbe, see Derher, Iyar 5774
2. "Enough [of this] Golus," in Russian.
3. The *sheva mitzvos b'nei Noach* campaign was reinvigorated by the Rebbe earlier that year, on Purim. Throughout the following months, the Rebbe continuously encouraged this effort. See Derher Shevat 5777.
4. See Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol 3. pp. 91-105, 147-149.
5. A longtime "refusenik," and Chairman of SHAMIR (Shomrei Mitzvot Yotzei Russia), he was on the committee responsible for these housing projects.