

Special Days IN A Special Month



A ROUND-TABLE FARBRENGEN

*About Erev Rosh Hashanah, Vov
Tishrei, and Yud-Gimmel Tishrei
in the Rebbe's Presence*

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לעילוי נשמת
ר' יצחק ליב
בן ר' חיים אהרן ע"ה
בלאק
נלב"ע ערב חגה"ס י"ד תשרי ה'תשע"ח
ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



When one hears the words “Tishrei with the Rebbe,” one’s thoughts immediately go to the month’s special Yomim Tovim in the Rebbe’s presence. The exalted moments of *Tekias Shofar*, the closeness felt during *Birkas Habonim*, the exhilaration of *Hakafos*.

All those Yomim Tovim have been extensively chronicled in the pages of *A Chassidisher Derher*.¹ However, the period of Tishrei is also host to three chassidishe *Yomei D’Pagra*—the birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek on Erev Rosh Hashanah, the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbetzin Chana on Vov Tishrei, and the Yom Hilula of the Rebbe Maharash on Yud-Gimmel Tishrei. Each of these dates brought a unique flavor and an atmosphere of its own to 770.

We sat down with three Chassidim, Rabbi Michoel Seligson (Mashpia and author, Brooklyn, NY), Rabbi Yossi Lew (Shliach in Peachtree City, GA), and Rabbi Yisroel Noach Vogel (Mashpia of Yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim of Queens), who generously shared their memories about those special days in the Rebbe’s presence. The interviews were conducted individually but are presented here as a single, continuous conversation.

Good Yom Tov!



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THE REBBE DELIVERS A MAAMAR AT THE FARBRENGEN OF EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5737.

PART I:
Erev Rosh Hashanah
The Birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek

The Gained Farbrengen

Rabbi Yossi Lew: Erev Rosh Hashanah would begin with a farbrengen.

The first time was in 5732. Around that year, the Rebbe began to farbreng on every Erev Yom Tov, and it was widely understood that it was meant to replace the Yom Tov farbrengens and *maamarim* which had just ceased.

For example, the Rebbe would farbreng in 770 after conducting the second Seder in the Friediker Rebbe's apartment. When the Seder moved to his home after the passing of Rebbetzin Nechama Dina, the post-Seder farbrengens ceased, and the Yud-Aleph Nissan farbrengens began.

On Shavuot, the Rebbe would say a *maamar* at three in the morning, after spending the night in 770. Again, when the *seudos* upstairs ceased and the Rebbe returned home for the meal, the *maamar* no longer took place—and the Rebbe began farbrenging on Erev Yom Tov instead.

On Sukkos, the Rebbe would farbreng in the Sukkah on the second day of Yom Tov. When the crowding in the Sukkah became life-threatening—in 5730, a table broke and Rabbi Marlow was badly hurt—the Rebbe began farbrenging on the night of Erev Yom Tov instead.

Erev Rosh Hashanah was unique: there was nothing specific on Rosh Hashanah that had ended, but the Rebbe

began to farbreng each year anyway. We gained a new farbrengen.

Rabbi Vogel: In the beginning, the schedule wasn't always certain. In the first year after Rebbetzin Nechama Dina's passing, 28 Elul fell on Shabbos, and that's when the Rebbe held a farbrengen. The following two years featured Erev Rosh Hashanah farbrengens, but at the end of 5734, the Rebbe held a farbrengen on 25 Elul instead. Afterwards, it was consistent. The Rebbe farbrenged on Erev Rosh Hashanah every single year—even if it was Motzei Shabbos and just a few hours after the Shabbos farbrengen—until 5748, when the weekday farbrengens ceased entirely.

Rabbi Seligson: Even when it became regular, there was a slightly irregular aspect to it. Some farbrengens were scheduled long in advance, such as Yud-Tes Kislev or Yud-Beis Tammuz. There were surprise farbrengens when the Rebbe would return from the Ohel and give only short notice prior to the farbrengen. But farbrengens like Erev Rosh Hashanah were still considered semi-official. As far as I remember, they were only officially announced when the Rebbe would inform Rabbi Hodakov about them.

Rosh Hashanah is Here!

Rabbi Lew: Throughout the 5730s and even in the early 5740s, the Rebbe would walk into the farbrengen and—almost immediately—ask to sing the *maamar niggun*. The *maamar* was obviously a Rosh Hashanah'dike *maamar*, and that immediately brought you into the atmosphere of Rosh Hashanah.

It wasn't the same as Selichos. The days of Selichos

brought a serious mood to 770. Despite the custom to farbreng on the first night, everyone knew they were about to give a *pidyon* to the Rebbe. Many *bochurim* didn't go for *lekach* or *kos shel bracha*, but everyone went for *panim*, and we all understood that it was very serious and it necessitated *hachana*.

However, at the farbrengen of Erev Rosh Hashanah, a mood shift occurred. Now, it was Rosh Hashanah in the air, and that was different. That was an uplifting feeling. Almost every single year, the Rebbe would mention the words of the Tur, "*lovshim levanim umis'atfin levanim*,"² that the Jewish people are confident—from the very outset—that Hashem will grant them a happy and sweet new year.

The Rebbe would also give many *brachos* during the farbrengen. In the later years, it would sometimes be *brachos* going through the entire Aleph Beis, "*Shnas orah, shnas bracha, etc.*" and

in the 5730s, I remember the Rebbe's voice loudly declaring, "*A ksiva vachasima tova l'shana tova umesuka...*" It was all the pre-Rosh Hashanah 'lingo' that you 'saw around town,' but here the Rebbe was saying it. It was so uplifting.

At the end of that farbrengen, you felt that *Rosh Hashanah was here*. There was an intensity there. You felt the power, the empowerment. It was very palpable. This was a farbrengen that we really looked forward to.

Sedorim in Peterburg

Rabbi Vogel: Although it was the birthday of the Tzemach Tzedek, that wasn't really the focus of this farbrengen. Yud-Gimmel Nissan was very focused on the Tzemach Tzedek, while this farbrengen focused on Rosh Hashanah. Nonetheless, the Rebbe often dedicated a *sicha* to the Tzemach Tzedek as well.

At the end of 5740, the Rebbe told the story from Hayom Yom:

The Tzemach Tzedek came home from Cheder one day and asked his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, how it was possible that Yaakov Avinu lived his best years in Mitzrayim?

The Rebbe spoke at length about the Alter Rebbe's answer, that when a Jew lives with Torah, he can live anywhere, because the Torah raises him above any situation, and also derived a lesson from the very fact that the Alter Rebbe bothered to answer a young child in the first place—a lesson in *Mivtza Chinuch*.³

One year, the Rebbe mentioned that the Tzemach Tzedek would make 'sedorim' in Peterburg (spiritual workings that influenced the Czarist government) on Rosh Hashanah. That year, the head of the Soviet Union, Brezhnev, died.⁴

The next year, the Rebbe mentioned it again, and sure enough, the new leader—Andropov—died as well.⁵ Andropov was a frightening figure; he had served as the head of the KGB, and many were afraid that he would take a very hardline stance. Well, he didn't survive very long, and a year after his death, Gorbachev took over—the leader who ultimately dismantled the Iron Curtain.

In 5741, the Rebbe said an entire *sicha* in Russian.⁶ It is the only full Russian *sicha* said at a farbrengen; the others were said during rallies.

THE NEW DIBBUR HAMAS'CHIL

Rabbi Lew: There was a special *dibbur hamas'chil* we earned because of these farbrengens: *Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah*. When the first day of Rosh Hashanah fell out on Shabbos, the Rebbe would often say a *maamar* with this *dibbur hamas'chil* the night before.

This was unique to the Erev Rosh Hashanah farbrengens; the Rebbe never said this *dibbur hamas'chil* during the farbrengen of the second day of Rosh Hashanah, presumably because it wasn't Shabbos anymore.

I remember these *maamarim* well from my childhood, because it opens with a question that even a child can understand—how can we cancel a *mitzvah d'oraissa* of Shofar because someone might carry it on Shabbos?



WISHING L'CHAIM TO THE CROWD,
LEIL EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5748.

A few weeks later, I attended a Simchas Beis Hashoeva farbrengen in my hometown of London with Rabbi Shmuel Lew, who had just returned from a trip to the Soviet Union for Rosh Hashanah. He shared that on Rosh Hashanah evening in the home of a Russian chossid, he announced to the crowd, “Let me tell you something the Rebbe said three days ago.” Immediately, someone interrupted him and said, “Let me tell you something the Rebbe said a few hours ago...” Somehow, the *sicha* had been transmitted to Russia.

The Russian Chassidim showed him how careful the Rebbe was to avoid endangering them; the Rebbe had spoken about “the country in which the Tzemach Tzedek was born,” but that was all.

Rabbi Seligson: One special occasion regarding the Tzemach Tzedek took place in 5749, on Leil Erev Rosh Hashanah 5750. It was two hundred years from the Tzemach Tzedek’s birth, and the Rebbe distributed the *Kitzurim V’ha’oros* of the Tzemach Tzedek on Tanya. The Rebbe explained the significance of two hundred years in the *sicha* beforehand, based on the *possuk* “*Masayim l’notrim es piryo.*”

In the earlier years, at the farbrengens, the *maamar* was also usually based on a *maamar* of the Tzemach Tzedek.

In general, the Rebbe had a special connection to the

Chassidus of the Tzemach Tzedek. In fact, the Rebbe would personally sponsor the publication of *Or Hatorah*, the set of the Tzemach Tzedek’s *maamarim*.

One year, during the Nine Days, the Rebbe requested that the *maamar Binyan Mikdash* of the Tzemach Tzedek be printed. Reb Zalman Gurary, who usually sponsored the publications of *maamarim*, knew that Chassidus of the Tzemach Tzedek the Rebbe kept for himself, so he



THE KITZURIM
V’HA’OROS OF THE
TZEMACH TZEDEK ON
TANYA, DISTRIBUTED BY
THE REBBE.

wrote to the Rebbe asking for special permission to sponsor it. In that instance, the Rebbe agreed.

Someone once mentioned to the Rebbe in *yechidus* that his *maamarim* are a mix of *nigleh* and Chassidus, and the Rebbe responded that this was the manner of the Tzemach Tzedek, and “I try to do the same.”

A Fresh Meaning

Rabbi Vogel: The Erev Rosh Hashanah farbrengen was also the moment we usually received the new *roshei teivos* for the year.

It began in the middle of the year 5742, when Rabbi Seligson submitted his biography of the Rebbe for the preface to *Hayom Yom*, and the Rebbe added in the content of 5742 that the Rebbe had “raised awareness that 5742 is a year of a *keitz* in *seforim*, and that it has the *roshei teivos* of *Tihye Shnas Bias Moshiach*.”

Afterwards, it became a yearly custom at the farbrengen on Erev Rosh Hashanah. I recall 5744, specifically, because the Hebrew letters for that year had a bad connotation—שמ”ד—and in the *sicha* on Erev Rosh Hashanah the Rebbe said that the *roshei teivos* are in a different order: *Tehi Shnas Divrei Moshiach*.⁸

A Welcome Maamar

Rabbi Lew: There was one Erev Rosh Hashanah farbrengen in the early years.

At the end of 5722, a significant group of guests came for Tishrei to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe held a special Erev Rosh Hashanah farbrengen in their honor. Even the *maamar* was “*Gedola Hachnosas Orchim*.” The Rebbe was then presented with the key to Kiryat Gat, which was an unusual occurrence in those early years, and the *bochurim* of Beis Sefer Limlacha also presented the Rebbe with a *shtender* at that farbrengen.

Rabbi Seligson: Even in the later years, the farbrengen was considered a *kabbalas ponim* for the newcomers. Many guests would arrive right before the farbrengen, and piles of suitcases would be lined up near the entrance. During one farbrengen, the Rebbe asked specifically whether the guests had arrived.

The Rebbe once smiled when he repeated the

maamar chazal that “*gedola hachnosas orchim mei’hakbolas pnei haShechina*,” receiving guests is greater than welcoming the *Shechina*,”⁹ pointing out that there was no *gashmiyus* to offer—this *kabbalas ponim* didn’t have food or any of the regular trappings of receiving guests—but there would be a *maamar chassidus*, and that would be the welcome for the *orchim*.

PART II:

Vov Tishrei

The Yahrtzeit of Rebbetzin Chana

Personal Memories

Rabbi Seligson: I was under Bar Mitzvah in 5725. The phone rang early in the morning to inform my father, Dr. Seligson, that the Rebbe’s mother wasn’t feeling well. (Usually, if the phone rang several times on Shabbos, he would pick up.) He attended to her, and her condition improved.



THE REBBE RECEIVES A SHTENDER BUILT BY THE STUDENTS OF THE BEIS SEFER L'MELACHA.



THE REBBE AT THE AMUD, 6 TISHREI 5727.

The Rebbe visited his mother on Shabbos morning, as usual, and afterwards, went to 770, instructing my father to keep him updated every few hours.

People noticed something was going on when they saw my father talking to the Rebbe before davening, and again during the farbrengen. By that time, her condition began to worsen again, so—with the Rebbe’s permission—my father announced her name for a *refuah sheleima*. He asked the elder Chassidim what Rebbetzin Chana’s mother’s name was, but nobody knew, so he announced “Chana bas...” and the Rebbe said, “Rochel.”

After Mincha, my father and two other doctors told the Rebbe that she needed to go to the hospital. The Rebbe said that he would comply because three doctors had said so. An ambulance was called. They offered the Rebbe to sit in the front, but the Rebbe sat in the back and held Rebbetzin Chana’s hand for the entire duration of the ride to Brooklyn Jewish Hospital.

After she was *nistalek*, the Rebbe asked to pay my father for his services. At first, he refused, but the Rebbe pointed out that even the contractors who worked for the Sanhedrin would get paid. My father then acquiesced; he said, “*Mesarvin l’katan v’ain mesarvin l’gadol*—one may refuse an ordinary person but not a distinguished person,”¹⁰ so he took the money and made sure to channel it back into the Rebbe’s *inyonim*.

Yud-Gimmel Tishrei that year was on Shabbos. At the farbrengen the Rebbe spoke about an interesting dilemma: whose *kaddish* should come first, the *kaddish* he recites for his mother, or the *kaddish* recited for the

Rebbe Maharash?

In those years, Reb Shmuel Levitin would recite *kaddish* on days that the Frierdiker Rebbe would observe *yahrtzeit*; this was something he had done before Yud Shevat, in the years when the Frierdiker Rebbe was weak, and he continued doing so afterward as per the Rebbe’s instructions.

Now, whenever the Rebbe recited *kaddish*, the *chiyuvim* in the crowd would wait until the Rebbe concluded, and then recite *kaddish* separately. On this Shabbos, an interesting situation arose in which the Rebbe was first saying *kaddish* for his mother, and Reb Shmuel was then saying *kaddish* for the Rebbe Maharash, one of *Rabboseinu Nesieinu*. In a full *sicha*, the Rebbe spoke about the various sides of the issue, and deliberated what would be the most appropriate way to go about it.¹¹

Moments in Davening

Rabbi Lew: When the Rebbe davened at the *amud*, there was a whole reorganizing of 770. Many *bochurim* had *mekomos kevuim*. I had a place behind the Rebbe, but the really well-connected *bochurim* had places to the Rebbe’s left, on the other side of the *aron kodesh*, where it was possible to see and hear even better.

Maariv was always jam-packed; all the *balebatim* of Crown Heights showed up. You needed to arrive early to secure and hold your place. The next day was easier, because Shacharis was at 9:30 and Mincha was at 3:15, so the working *balebatim* weren’t able to join.

The Rebbe was always very serious when he entered the shul on a *yahrtzeit*. A *yahrtzeit*, in general, was a serious occasion.

Rabbi Vogel: One year, the seriousness was really noticeable to me. The year 5740 had started out on a very *lebedike* note. The Rebbe had encouraged the singing during *kos shel bracha* in an extraordinary way, almost like *Hakafos*. In the two days after Tzom Gedalia (4 and 5 Tishrei), the Rebbe surprised us after Mincha and began singing *Hu Elokeinu* with half a smile on his face...

But when Vov Tishrei arrived, all of that disappeared. The Rebbe was very serious throughout the day and even during the *farbrengen*. There was only a slight change at the very end, when the Rebbe told Reb Yoel Kahn to begin *Uveyom Simchas'chem*. After the Rebbe said that, he smiled. We *bochurim* theorized that perhaps the Rebbe smiled because Reb Yoel didn't know the *niggun!* It was a new *niggun* the Rebbe had just asked Chazan Teleshevsky to put to a tune at the recent *kos shel bracha*, but Reb Yoel hadn't been there, because he had been occupied with *chazara*.

In 5742, I was in Kfar Chabad until after Yom Kippur, so I listened to the *tefillos* via hookup. To listen to Mincha, I remember standing in the *machsán*, the small storage that represented the entirety of Kehos in Eretz Yisroel at the time, using Rabbi Meni Wolff's phone to listen. It was just me and Rabbi Shmuel Greisman.

As I was listening, I realized that the tune was different, and I had heard that tune before. The Rebbe was davening with a Shabbos *nusach*, just as he had done several years earlier, on Yud Shevat 5739.

I once heard that the Rebbe said he's 'not good at *nusach*' (i.e., the tune of davening). Even on Shabbos, the Rebbe would daven very simply, often using the weekday tunes. There were some special moments, like *Lecha Dodi*, where the *nusach* was very recognizable, but that was usually not the case. But here, you can hear it on the recording as well—the Rebbe davened softly in the Shabbos *nusach*.

The Special Focus

Rabbi Seligson: The *farbrengens* of Vov Tishrei had a strong focus on Chana, the mother of Shmuel

IS THERE A MAAMAR?

Rabbi Lew: Vov Tishrei (and Chof Av) almost never had a *maamar*; the *hadran* was the centerpiece of the *farbrengen*. There was the sense that the Rebbe was *farbrenging* with the Chassidim as a son who was marking the *yahrtzeit* of his parents; he didn't emphasize the "*rebbistive*."

Rabbi Seligson: There was one year, 5730, where the Rebbe said a *hadran* on Menachos, and followed that with a *maamar k'ein sicha* titled "*Isa b'sof Menachos*."

Rabbi Vogel: In 5737, I was standing next to Yossi Tiefenbrun *a"h*, and at some point he turned to me and asked, "Is there a *maamar* on Vov Tishrei"? I confidently responded, "No, there isn't." A moment later, I see the Rebbe turn to Reb Yoel Kahn and nod his head, hinting to begin the *maamar niggun*. That year, the Rebbe was *mezakeh* us with a *maamar*.

Hanavi. It was always 'present' by the Rebbe from the Haftorah on the first day of Rosh Hashanah—when the Rebbe would very often break down in tears—through Vov Tishrei. In the 5730s, it was literally every year. One point the Rebbe repeated several times was her decisions about *chinuch*—she gave her child entirely to Hashem, to be raised by the Kohen Gadol in purity. But that's only one *sicha*—there is a wealth of *sichos* about Chana and her story.

Another common theme was N'shei Ubnos Yisroel, and the Rebbe would often speak about his mother, Rebbetzin Chana. One oft-repeated story was about Rebbetzin Chana preparing ink for her husband, Harav Levi Yitzchok, to be able to write down his *Divrei Torah* in exile.

In 5745, a full twenty years after her passing, the Rebbe shared a story he had never before



LEADING THE DAVENING, 6 TISHREI 5742.

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told—that Rebbetzin Chana had taken care of the refugees during World War I, and how it had made such an impression on him—the Rebbe—that it remained etched in his memory “*lechol meshech yimei hachayim*,” for the rest of his life.

There would also be *sichos* about the three *mivtzoim* in the name Chana—Challah (Kashrus), Niddah, and Hadlokas Neiros Shabbos Kodesh—as well as many other things pertaining to women.

In 5734, there was a *sicha* addressing women’s obsession with careers; the Rebbe spoke about the special role of women who remain in the home to raise and educate their young children. The *sicha* was so forceful that the

teachers of Beis Rivkah began to doubt their decision to teach! They wrote to the Rebbe about it, but the Rebbe replied that he was referring to careers, not *chinuch* and *avodas hakodesh*.

Rabbi Lew: In 5745, the Rebbe said a surprise *sicha* after Maariv and asked that twenty new *mikvaos* be established in honor of twenty years since Rebbetzin Chana’s passing. There was another surprise *sicha* after Mincha as well.

Rabbi Vogel: I walked into the WLCC office after Maariv, and saw that they were trying to figure out how to get a recording of the beginning of the *sicha*. It had taken about a minute for the microphone to be brought over, so the audio was missing.

When I heard the predicament, I told them to call a place that had listened to davening via hookup. For some reason, it was standard behavior to record the hookup, and the listeners usually didn’t turn off the tape recorder until they were informed that the Rebbe had left the room. I assumed that the small microphone at the *amud* had likely picked up a weak recording of the beginning of the *sicha*, and that being the case, someone likely had a recording. That’s what they did; they called California and got the tape from them.

Rabbi Lew: On Vov Tishrei 5735, the Rebbe marked Rebbetzin Chana’s tenth *yahrtzeit*, and a number of special things happened.

The Rebbe had just announced *Mivtza Neshek* a week earlier, just before Rosh Hashanah, and now the Rebbe



PREPARATIONS FOR THE HOOKUP OF THE FARBRENGEN AT THE OFFICE OF WLCC, 6 TISHREI 5737.

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washed for Hamotzi at the farbrengen and gave out *kos shel bracha* at the end. That was completely out of the ordinary.

Then there was the *hadran* on Maseches Sukkah about Miriam bas Bilgah. In my opinion, it is one of the most amazing *sichos* we ever heard from the Rebbe.

The Rebbe opened by asking why he would do a *siyum* on Sukkah right before Yom Kippur, and explained that Sukkah has the “bad luck” of being four days after a different Yom Tov, which means that nobody has time to think about it. “*Vos is Sukkah shuldig?*” the Rebbe asked.

But clearly there was another reason—Sukkah is the Masechta that mentions a woman in the final Mishnah, so it was very appropriate when the Rebbe was marking the *yahrtzeit* of a woman, Rebbetzin Chana.

Rabbi Vogel: The next year, the Rebbe shared two stories—one from England and one from Eretz Yisroel—about how a little girl’s Shabbos candles transformed an entire home.

The story from England was about a family who would light Shabbos candles every Friday evening at six o’clock, summer or winter, until the little girl learned about Shabbos candles in school and came home insisting that they light at the proper time.

The story from Eretz Yisroel was about a little girl who came home with a little candlestick and insisted on lighting it. After a while, the mother felt uncomfortable that she wasn’t lighting as well and began to join in each week. Things snowballed from there—they began turning off the television, they began having a shabbos *seuda*, and soon the entire home was transformed.¹²

Special Moments

Rabbi Vogel: I recently listened to a Vov Tishrei farbrengen from the early years, and in one special moment, I detected the sharpness of Reb Yoel Kahn:

On the recording of 5728, I heard the Rebbe say to Reb Yoel to sing “*Ashrei ziknoseinu, vi iz di haschala dorten...*” (how does that statement begin?) I was confused as to what *niggun* the Rebbe was referring to, but Reb Yoel—without missing a beat—began to sing, “*Eilu Veilu Omrim.*”¹³

I realized that the Rebbe had referenced the

beginning of the Gemara which leads into *Eilu va’eilu omrim*. The Gemara says that at the Simchas Beis Hashoevah, the ‘Chassidim’ would say אשרי ילדותנו שלא ביישה את זקנותנו, and the *baalei teshuvah* would say, אשרי זקנותנו שכפרה את ילדותנו, and both—*eilu va’eilu*—would say, אשרי מי שלא חטא.¹⁴ That’s what the Rebbe was referring to.

Vov Tishrei— International

Rabbi Vogel: During the farbrengen of Vov Tishrei 5731, the Rebbe asked to hear the Chassidim in Eretz Yisroel say *l’chaim*. It was the beginning of the hook-ups, now people all over the world could call in and listen to the Rebbe’s farbrengen, but this time, the Rebbe asked for the opposite—he wanted those Chassidim to be heard in 770.

Towards the end of the farbrengen, Rabbi Groner told the Rebbe that the hookup was ready. Everyone stopped singing. Rabbi Chaim Boruch Halberstam put a speaker out of the small window between his office and 770, but the audio feedback was terrible, and you couldn’t hear a thing.

The Rebbe said that according to *seforim*, when a shofar doesn’t work, you recite the *possuk*



KOS SHEL BRACHA AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FARBRENGEN, 6 TISHREI 5735.



FARBRENGEN, 6 TISHREI 5731.

of *Vih Noam*. For a moment, people laughed, but the Rebbe repeated himself, and Reb Shea Yuzevitch, who was standing next to the speaker, turned and recited the *possuk* into it.

A moment later, the speaker shrieked, and they suddenly heard “*lchaim, lchaim!*” It was Reb Folle Kahn, directly from Kfar Chabad.

Rabbi Halberstam later said that the entire thing was a miracle; he had no clue how to make the connection, and he had just been playing with the wires. Somehow, it worked.

Ten years later was another hookup milestone: it was the first farbrengen seen live outside of 770.

At the time, Rabbi Hillel Dovid Krinsky had the idea of doing television broadcasts, and decided to test the idea in California. That Vov Tishrei, the shlichim in California gathered and were able to watch the entire farbrengen live on the screen. It was so earth-shattering that one of them called in middle of the farbrengen and begged that someone go to the Rebbe and tell him that they were watching the farbrengen live. Rabbi Groner didn’t think it was appropriate, so that didn’t happen, but right after the farbrengen, the Rebbe wanted to hear if the broadcast had been successful.

It so happened that at that specific farbrengen, there was something unique that was not captured on audio. Usually, the Rebbe would hold his hands carefully under the table, but during a *sicha*, the Rebbe wanted to describe the *shtreimel* of the Mittlerer Rebbe, so the Rebbe took out his hands, made an upside-down v shape to describe the *shtreimel*, and then pointed to the tip—where the sweat

would pour out during his *avoda*.

Interestingly, the last cable hookup of a farbrengen was also Vov Tishrei, in the year 5748.

Teshuva

Rabbi Lew: In 5742, the Rebbe spoke at length about *teshuva* (see “Step Inside” column in this magazine), and there was an interesting side-story to that farbrengen:

Reb Reuven Dunin was a special chossid in Eretz Yisroel who had become a *baal teshuva* in the 5710s. He had led a very colorful life until then, and after becoming a chossid, he would often ask the Rebbe for a *tikkun*.

At some point, the Rebbe told him to stop asking for the *tikkun*; when the time came, he would know.

That Vov Tishrei, as the Rebbe said *sicha* after uplifting *sicha* about *teshuva*, Reb Reuven Dunin felt that this was his moment. He thought that the Rebbe was talking to him.

In between the *sichos*, he climbed over the tables to the Rebbe’s place and asked the Rebbe if that was his moment, and the Rebbe acknowledged it.

The Rebbe’s focus on *teshuva* at that farbrengen was unique. Even though it was Aseres Yemei Teshuva, the Rebbe usually approached *teshuva* from a different direction. The Rebbe would often quote the end of Yoma, “אמר, רבי עקיבא אשריכם ישראל,” where it speaks about the *maalos* of the Jewish people.

During one Vov Tishrei farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the Jew who is not involved in Yiddishkeit and arrives at his office on Yom Kippur; realizing the date, he has a momentary *hirschur teshuva*. That *hirschur teshuva*, the



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AT THE FARBRENGEN OF 6 TISHREI 5741, THE REBBE DEMONSTRATES THE SHAPE OF THE MITTELER REBBE'S HAT.

Rebbe said, can sometimes be more powerful than an entire day spent davening in shul.

PART III:

Yud-Gimmel Tishrei

*The Yom Hilula of the
Rebbe Maharash*

L'chatchila Aribber!

Rabbi Lew: At the Yud-Gimmel Tishrei farbrengen, *Zman Simchaseinu* was already in the air. It was *moiredik*.

The Rebbe also had a tremendous *koch* in the Rebbe Maharash and his motto of “*l'chatchila aribber*.” The Rebbe quite literally adopted that as a mantra. It's a *pisgam* that the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions once in his own writings in the name of the Rebbe Maharash, but the Rebbe had an amazing *koch* in it. The Rebbe pointed out how every aspect of the Rebbe Maharash's life reflected this motto. The Rebbe even named the *niggun l'chatchila aribber*; until then, it was called *eintz, tzvei, drei, fir*.

Rabbi Seligson: In the early years, we heard *l'chatchila aribber* mentioned by the Rebbe on occasion, but in the later years, the Rebbe really began to *koch zich* in it, especially in 5743, when it was one hundred years since the *histalkus* of the Rebbe

Maharash.

In general, the Rebbe had a special *koch* in the Rebbe Maharash; he personally printed the *Sefer Hatoldos* of the Rebbe Maharash—which he didn't do for any of the other Rabbeim. The Rebbe even connected *tiferes shebitiferes*, from his birthday on Beis Iyar, to Yud-Gimmel Tishrei, because the four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos represent the four letters of *shem Havaye*, and Yud-Gimmel Tishrei represents the *Vov, Tiferes*.

Rabbi Vogel: In 5739, the Rebbe spoke a long *sicha* pointing out the *l'chatchila aribber'dike* aspect of everything in the Rebbe Maharash's life—in his *maamarim*, in his *baal shem'ske* behavior, and even in the material wealth in his home. The Rebbe said that someone brought a valuable item as a gift to the Tzemach Tzedek, and the Tzemach Tzedek told him, “I don't need it, give it to my *mezinik*.” For some reason, the Rebbe choked up as he told the story.¹⁵ There was another point, during the *maamar*, where the Rebbe also cried.

There was another story about the Rebbe Maharash the Rebbe told several times, and always choked up:

When the Frierdiker Rebbe visited Eretz Yisroel, he was visited by a chossid of the Rebbe Maharash. As soon as the chossid entered, he fainted. Later, he explained that the Frierdiker Rebbe looked exactly like his grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash.

In 5740, the Rebbe began the farbrengen with that story.¹⁶ A year later, I was in London for



FARBRENGEN, 13 TISHREI 5743.

Sukkos, and on the evening of Yud-Gimmel Tishrei I was waiting for my ride to Lubavitch House for the hookup when I realized I would probably miss the first *sicha*, so I asked them to connect me to the line and I listened to it from my home phone.

As the farbrengen began, I got confused. Was I listening to a recording from the year before? The Rebbe had begun the farbrengen with the exact same story.¹⁷

Years later, I also watched the video of that farbrengen, and I noticed that when the Rebbe asks for *l'hatchila ariber* to be sung, many of the guests didn't know that we would repeat the high note based on the Rebbe's head motions, and they continued the song. The Rebbe looks very uncomfortable for a moment until they catch on.¹⁸

Rabbi Lew: That was a very serious *niggun*. Whenever the Rebbe would ask to sing it, he would become very serious, similar to the Alter Rebbe's *niggun*. The Rebbe would not look around and answer *l'chaim*; he would focus his eyes forward and remain very serious the entire time.

The Signs

Rabbi Lew: Yud-Gimmel Tishrei 5738 was the last farbrengen before the Rebbe had a heart attack on Shmini Atzeres.

When you look back at the farbrengen now—and in general to the farbrengens of that *tekufa*—you can start to see all sorts of interesting hints to what was coming. For example, on Chai Elul, the Rebbe sang *Tzama Lecha Nafshi* and substituted *uz'cha uchevodecha* with the words *nafshi uch'vodi*, and on Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe spoke about a heart.

I actually got a hint earlier, at my bar mitzvah celebration in Sivan 5737. Rabbi Groner spoke at the *seuda*, and in his speech, he said that we need to protect the Rebbe's *gezunt*. I remember being surprised at the time; the Rebbe seemed quite healthy, and nothing seemed to be wrong. A few months later, the Rebbe suffered the heart attack.

Rabbi Seligson: There was a moment I noticed on Erev Rosh Hashanah that year as well. Usually, when receiving the *pan klali*, the Rebbe would say that Hashem should fulfill all the wishes *that are mentioned in this letter*. That year, however, the Rebbe continued, “*vegen velche m'shreibt duh, un vegen velche m'hot gedarft shreiben, vegen velche der Oibershter veis... that which is written here, that which should have been written here, and which Hashem knows...*”¹⁹

During the farbrengen of Yud-Gimmel Tishrei, the Rebbe also spoke about having *simcha* through Shabbos Bereishis, and the Rebbe also suddenly began speaking

about the Frierdiker Rebbe's health, repeating what the doctors said at the time—that the Frierdiker Rebbe lived through miracles for the last sixteen-seventeen years of his life. As Chassidim noticed after Gimmel Tammuz, it was the same length of time from then until Gimmel Tammuz...

The Rebbe's Voice

Rabbi Lew: Yud-Gimmel Tishrei 5743 marked one hundred years since the passing of the Rebbe Maharash and I was looking forward to a special farbrengen, but as the Rebbe began the first *sicha*, we saw that something was wrong: the Rebbe was completely hoarse. When the Rebbe said the *maamar*, we could barely detect the tune—that's how bad it was. Still, the Rebbe insisted on continuing the entire farbrengen as usual.

Someone actually ran to *es'n'bench* and purchased tea for the Rebbe, but the Rebbe didn't touch it. The styrofoam cup was there when the Rebbe left.

After that farbrengen, we were very concerned about the *sicha* on Yom Tov the next night, when there would be no microphone. *Baruch Hashem*, there was no problem; the Rebbe's voice was entirely healed by the next day.

During that farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke sharply about the fact that the *bochurim* spend the entire davening "looking at a *basar v'dam*," i.e., the Rebbe himself. The Rebbe went on for quite a while against the trend of always staring at the Rebbe when he was coming and going from 770 or during davening.

After the farbrengen, Reb Mendel Futerfas farbrenged with the *bochurim* and rephrased the problem to us: *hayitochen* that we are looking at the Rebbe as if he were a *basar v'dam*!

Rabbi Vogel: After that farbrengen, I heard that the Rebbetzin had asked the Rebbe to limit the farbrengen to two hours. The actual farbrengen was longer, but the *sichos* themselves are approximately two hours in length.

At one point, the Rebbe began the *niggun Ki Anu Amecha*. Usually, the crowd would try to avoid joining in, hoping to catch another line of the Rebbe singing, but this time, everyone jumped in immediately.

After hearing the *sicha* about "looking at a

basar v'dam," I made sure to not be around when the Rebbe came and left 770. If the Rebbe didn't like it, I didn't want to be there. To my good fortune, that meant I wasn't outside on Beis Kislev 5748 either (when the *seforim* were about to come back to 770 and the Rebbe expressed great frustration at those who were standing around and waiting).

Rabbi Vogel: Much of this discussion focused on the Rebbe's farbrengens on *Erev Yom Tov*. The Rebbe would often remind us that we are now at *Erev Shabbos* of the *Geulah*, in the *elef hashishi*, the sixth millennium which precedes the coming of Moshiach, in the very final moments of *galus*.

May Hashem help us that we should merit the *Ge'ulah Ho'amitis V'Hashleima* immediately, and celebrate the upcoming *Erev Yomim Tovim*, and the *Yomim Tovim* themselves, in the Rebbe's presence.

As the Rebbe concludes his first *maamar*, "ונזכה ונזעהן זך מיט'ן רבי'ן דאָ למטה אין אַ גוף... והוא יגאלנו, we should merit to meet the Rebbe here, in our world, in a body...and he will redeem us." **T**

1. "Rosh Hashanah with the Rebbe – Roundtable Discussion" in Tishrei 5777, "Yom Kippur With the Rebbe – Roundtable Discussion" in Tishrei 5779, "Sukkos with the Rebbe – Roundtable Discussion" in Tishrei 5780, and "Simchas Torah with the Rebbe," in Tishrei 5778.
2. Orach Chaim *siman* 581.
3. Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 3, p. 1130.
4. Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 4, p. 2297.
5. Toras Menachem 5743 vol. 4, p. 2073.
6. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 3, p. 767.
7. Shir Hashirim 8:12.
8. Toras Menachem 5743 vol. 4, p. 2074.
9. Shabbos 127a.
10. Pesachim 86b.
11. Toras Menachem 5725 vol. 1, p. 63.
12. Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 1, p. 25.
13. <https://ashreinu.page.link/XD4r>.
14. Sukkah 53b.
15. Sichos Kodesh 5739 vol. 1, p. 68.
16. Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 1, p. 100.
17. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 1, p. 110.
18. Minute 4 of the farbrengen on JEM.tv.
19. Likkutei Sichos vol. 14, p. 367.