



RABBI PINNY LEW

GREETING THE CAMPERS

Elul 5717

With the establishment of Camp Gan Israel in upstate New York in the summer of 5716, the Rebbe revolutionized the role of summer camp in the Yiddishe and Chassidishe lifestyle. And as he expressed many a time, this new venture was most cherished.

The Rebbe's *sichos* regarding camp and his three visits to the campgrounds are well known and have been written about in the past.¹ Something a little less known is the welcome rally the Rebbe held for the campers as they arrived back home, following the summer season of 5717.

1. "In the Rebbe's Reshus" Derher issue 34, Av 5775.

1. As the bus with the campers and staff arrived to 770, the Rebbe came outside to greet them.

2. As all the children assembled in the *shalash*², the Rebbe entered with his *siddur* and *gartel* in hand. While children's rallies were held regularly over the coming years, in 5717 this was still considered a quite rare occurrence.



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2. The area between 770 and 784 Eastern Parkway was once a driveway that led into a courtyard. This area was known as the *shalash*, and was used as a makeshift hall where *tefilos* and *farbrengens* with larger crowds were held. Eventually the area was properly constructed, and is now part of the large shul of 770.

3. Usually the Rebbe would daven *mincha* and *maariv* in the small *zal* near the Rebbe's room, but in honor of this occasion the Rebbe davened in the *shalash*, where a special *bima* was erected.



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4. Following *mincha*, one of the camp staff addressed the children. The campers and staff then began a *freileche niggun*, as the Rebbe clapped along and encouraged the singing.



5. Amidst the joyous singing, all the campers filed by as the Rebbe looked on, greeting each child.



6. These post-camp rallies became an annual tradition, and beginning in 5737 the Rebbe also said a *sicha* to the returning campers.

