

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער
וזוגתו מרת ח' מושקא
ובנותיהם ברכה ליפשא
ועליזה ושיינדל
שיחיו
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LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 204415

THE REBBE ENTERS HIS
ROOM AT THE CLOSE
OF YOM KIPPUR, 5737.



Yom Kippur *with the* Rebbe

a roundtable discussion

Every Yom Tov in the festive month of Tishrei has its special moments with the Rebbe. Even a day like Yom Kippur, being solemn and serious and not necessarily a time of lively occurrences, has its special story to tell. Lekach, the brocha to anash, the special brocha to the bochurim, and the climax of Napoleon's March; these are some of the most special moments with the Rebbe throughout the year.

*We are privileged to record the following zichronos of these special moments with the Rebbe as recounted by **Rabbi Sholom Duchman** of Brooklyn, NY, **Rabbi Avraham Mann** of Toronto, ON, and **Rabbi Yosef Nemes** of New Orleans, LA.*

See similar roundtable discussions we've held about Rosh Hashanah, Derher Tishrei 5777; Simchas Torah, Derher Tishrei 5778.



JEM108990

THE REBBE EXITS 770 HOLDING THE KAPOROS CHICKEN FOR THE SHECHITA, EREV YOM KIPPUR 5729.

Let's begin with the seder on Erev Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Duchman: On Erev Yom Kippur in the morning, the Rebbe would arrive at 770 early for *kaparos*. After performing it in his room, the Rebbe would come out to the back of the building where he would give the chicken to the *shochet*, and after the *shechita* the Rebbe would perform *kisui hadam*. The Rebbe would then go to the mikvah and come out for *Shacharis*.

Generally, the Rebbe did not visit the Ohel on Erev Yom Kippur (with the exception of 5750).

Rabbi Mann: One thing we always noticed was that during the *shechita*, the Rebbe shuddered a bit and had an uncomfortable face. Then the Rebbe

covered the blood five times with the feathers, after making the *brocha* “*al kisui hadam*.” This can be seen on video.

Throughout the day (and specifically by *kaparos*), the Rebbe's face was extremely serious, perhaps even more than on Yom Kippur itself. Sometimes it appeared as if the Rebbe's eyes were red from tears.

After *Mincha*, for instance, when the Rebbe gave a *brocha* to *anash* in the shul, the Rebbe was very serious throughout. (One exception to that was in 5752, when the Rebbe spoke in a very joyous tone; more about that later on.) The vibe was a seriousness that seemed to imply concern that all the Yidden should have a *shana tova umesuka*. The content of those *sichos* after *Mincha* were always about

positive things; *brachos* and assurance for a good year ahead, etc. The Rebbe also often spoke of *teshuva ila'a*, the higher level of *teshuva* that we all hope to attain; a *teshuva* done with joy.

Later on, on Yom Kippur night, the Rebbe was still serious, but slightly more relaxed.

Interestingly, in 5750 the Rebbe put things in a fascinating perspective. On Shabbos Shuva, the Rebbe said that there should be *farbrengens* every day until Yom Kippur. Then he listed all the remaining days, and when he came to Yom Kippur he said, “*Af Yom Kippur farbrengt yeder Yid mit Atzmus u'Mehus alein!*” On Yom Kippur, every Yid “*farbrengs*” with Hashem Himself!”

Rabbi Duchman: Throughout most of the years of the Rebbe's *nesius* (until Chof-Beis Shevat 5748), one of the few



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THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES LEKACH EREV YOM KIPPUR, 5749.

days a year that the Rebbe davened *Shacharis* on weekdays with the *minyan* was on Erev Yom Kippur. It was a special time when we were able to see the Rebbe during *Shacharis* and daven with him. It was usually a fairly quick davening, as it is a very busy day.¹

Lekach

Rabbi Duchman: After concluding *Shacharis*, the Rebbe began distributing *lekach* at the door to his room. Sometimes, when there were still people that hadn't received, the Rebbe continued giving out *lekach* after *Mincha*.² Men and children all passed by, receiving a piece of cake, and a *brocha* for a *shana tova umesuka*. (Women would come by the Rebbe for *lekach* on Hoshana Rabba.)

Rabbi Nemes: The distribution of *lekach* was obviously a very special part of the day. The Rebbe stood for

hours greeting each individual and blessing them with a good year. A very long line would form to get *lekach*. We used to go to mikvah, daven, and say lots of Tehillim to prepare ourselves before seeing the Rebbe.

Mincha and Brocha to Anash

Rabbi Duchman: The Rebbe came downstairs to the large shul for *Mincha* holding bags of coins. Plates (makeshift "*tzedakah pushkas*") were set up and the Rebbe dropped money into each one. After *Mincha*, the Rebbe gave a *brocha* to *anash* and then the Rebbe would go home, returning later for *birkas habanim*.

As early as I can remember (5727 or 5728), the Rebbe davened *Mincha* on Erev Yom Kippur in the big shul downstairs.

On Yom Kippur, every Yid 'farbrengs' with Hashem Himself!"



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 190094

ON HIS WAY TO MINCHA, THE REBBE STOPS
AT THE TABLE WITH PUSHKAS AND PLATES
COLLECTING FOR VARIOUS CAUSES, PLACING
A COIN IN EACH ONE. EREV YOM KIPPUR 5741.



In the earlier years, when I was a young child, the Rebbe gave a short *brocha*. In the later years it evolved into more of a *sicha*. I remember the Rebbe once standing on a table to give this *brocha*.

Rabbi Mann: Many times, the Rebbe gave a long *brocha* specifying a word beginning with each letter of the entire Aleph-Beis.

At times, we were able to see what seemed to be heavenly occurrences during this *sicha*. Two examples that I remember: On Erev Yom Kippur 5748, the Rebbe spoke about the concept of a *kli cheres*, an earthenware utensil that was not made with the intention of being an absorbent *keli* is not *mekabel tumah*. The Rebbe connected this with the concept of “*adam yesodo me’afar*,” that man was created from dust of the earth and is likened to a *kli cheres*. As long as we are not absorbed with our own *metzius*, we are *bottul* to Hashem, then we too will not be *mekabel tumah*. While discussing this concept, the Rebbe was crying.³ In retrospect, we understood that this alluded to the Rebbetzin’s *histalkus* later that year on Chof-Beis Shevat.

Another example was during the *sicha* of 5745, when the Rebbe concluded with a *brocha* for young and old, using the words of the *possuk* “*binareinu u’bizkeineinu*.” It seemed as though the Rebbe was “stuck” on those words. Later that evening, during *Kol Nidrei*, one of the elder Chassidim, Reb Shmaryahu Gurary from Eretz Yisroel, passed away in 770. (The Rebbe actually came out to his *levaya* on the day after Yom Kippur.)

In 5752, the Rebbe said an amazing *sicha* with *brachos* and hopes that Moshiach would come before Yom Kippur, and then we wouldn’t have to fast; because the *Beis Hamikdash* will be built, and we would celebrate—just like the *chanukas Beis Hamikdash* in the times of Shlomo Hamelech, when the fast of Yom Kippur was suspended.



RABBI PINNY LEW

FOLLOWING MINCHA, THE REBBE GIVES A BROCHA TO THE CHASSIDIM, EREV YOM KIPPUR 5728.



JEM

THE REBBE BENTCHES THE BOCHURIM WITH BIRKAS HABONIM, MOMENTS BEFORE THE ONSET OF YOM KIPPUR, CIRCA 5740S.

The Rebbe turned toward us and started waving his hand, motioning that we should come up on the *bima*.

The expressions the Rebbe used and the joyful look on his holy face were incredible, *shtureming* about the imminent *geula*. The Rebbe concluded by starting his father's Simchas Torah *niggun*! This was unprecedented for a time as serious as Erev Yom Kippur.

Birkas Habanim

Rabbi Nemes: In the 5740s, the *brocha* to *anash* lasted quite a while, until around 4:15 p.m., leaving a little more than two hours until *Kol Nidrei*.

Just before *Kol Nidrei*, the Rebbe famously came out to the *bochurim* to *bentch* them with *birkas habanim*. This was a custom the Rebbe started in 5712, the first Tishrei after *kabbolas hanesius*, when the Rebbe said that the *bochurim* are the “Rebbe’s kinder” and should therefore come in to his room to receive a *brocha* just as a father *bentches* a child.

As soon as the Rebbe finished the *brocha* to *anash*, we hurriedly ate something for *seudah hamfsekes* and then ran back to 770 to get a place for *birkas habanim*. Many *bochurim* brought small containers of food with

them earlier so that they wouldn’t have to leave 770 for the *seuda*.

Rabbi Duchman: I was a sixteen-year-old *bochur* in 5730 and I remember that in those years the Rebbe gave the *brocha* to the *bochurim* in *Gan Eden Hatachton*. There were hundreds of *bochurim* crowded in to the tiny area and many more all the way up the staircase. Then in 5731, it was moved to the hallway right at the entrance of 770. It was so crowded—it was literally *sakanas nefashos*. The following year, the *brocha* was moved to the small *zal* upstairs.

The Rebbe would wear his *tallis* and *kittel* and his head was covered. In the years that I was a *bochur*, it was a short *brocha*; not really like a long *sicha*.

Rabbi Nemes: The doors to the *zal* were locked until 6:00 p.m. Also the *chatzer*, the yard where the sukkah stood with the big windows open to the *zal*, was closed until 6:00. But people still came earlier to be first in line and get a good place when the doors did open.

There were three sections in which *bochurim* stood: The younger *bochurim*

stood in the *chatzer*. Those who were 21 or older (as well as the “*kvutza bochurim*”) stood in the *cheder sheini*, where they saw the Rebbe through the large window between the two rooms (the shelves in the window were taken out). Those who were 22 or older were allowed in the *zal* with the Rebbe.

The most pushing was outside in the *chatzer*; we are talking about all the *bochurim* younger than 21—hundreds and hundreds. But there is nothing in the world that can compare to being there at that moment. Receiving a “father’s *brocha*” directly from the Rebbe is an incredible *zechus* that every *bochur* lived for.

Rabbi Mann: There was often a strong sense of emotion heard in the Rebbe’s voice during this *brocha*, although the Rebbe seemed to try and “tone down” the emotion a bit. The earlier *brocha* to *anash* sounded more like a *sicha*, but the tone of this *brocha* was more like a *yechidus*. The Rebbe spoke quieter. As you can see in the videos, the Rebbe covered his eyes with his *tallis*, like a father giving a *brocha* to his children, spreading his *tallis* over their heads...

Rabbi Nemes: I was *zoche* to stand right near the Rebbe in 5749. I remember how the Rebbe walked in and looked around at everyone present. Then the Rebbe covered his eyes with the *tallis*. From under the *tallis*, some were able to notice the Rebbe’s tears. There was a great level of closeness we felt at that moment.

Here the Rebbe is on his way to *Kol Nidrei*, a time when Jewish children around the world are each receiving blessings from their fathers, and the Rebbe was taking the time to *bentch* us. The whole room and the yard outside fell totally silent.

The Rebbe began with the traditional *pesukim* of *birkas kohanim* and continued with a *brocha* that we should succeed in all the *inyanim* of a *bochur* in *Tomchei Tmimim*. The

Rebbe often spoke about everything that is expected of a *bochur*, learning *nigleh* and *Chassidus*, davening, and being “*neiros le’hair*,” but it was all delivered in a tone of *kiruv*.

Rabbi Mann: After Chof-Beis Shevat, the Rebbe *bentched licht* for Yom Tov before arriving at *birkas habanim*, so a microphone was no longer used. I remember that in 5751, I had a good place by the window and was able to hear very well, even though there was no microphone.

Moments later the Rebbe would come downstairs for Kol Nidrei.

Rabbi Nemes: Davening with the Rebbe on Yom Kippur was a special thing. More than any other day of the year, we were with the Rebbe for so many hours; almost the entire day. From *Kol Nidrei*, to *Maariv*, to Tehillim, *Shacharis*, *Musaf*, *Mincha*, and *Ne’ila*. The Rebbe came into shul for *Kol Nidrei* at around 6:30 and would remain with us until after Tehillim at 10:30 at night! And the next day again, we were with the Rebbe all day. This was obviously very special and uplifting.

Rabbi Duchman: When the Rebbe arrived for *Kol Nidrei*, he would recite Tehillim for a while. Then the *sifrei Torah* were brought out; the Rebbe would go down from his place, stand next to the *chazzan* and was given the first *sefer*. Reb Shmaryahu Gurary from Tel Aviv had a special *kvius* to hand the *Sefer Torah* to the Rebbe. As mentioned earlier, in 5745 he collapsed right before the *aron* was opened. The entire shul waited until he was taken out and the Rebbe stood and spoke to the doctors for a while.

After *Maariv* the Rebbe would remain in the shul for the recital of the entire Tehillim. In the earlier years, my grandfather, Reb Zalman Duchman, would be the *chazzan*. Later after he

passed away, he was replaced by Reb Zalman Schmerling from Tel Aviv.

Rabbi Mann: Reciting the entire Tehillim on Yom Kippur is not mentioned in the *minhagim*; the Rebbe himself instituted this practice in 5712. Interestingly, the Rebbe sometimes remained in shul even after the *chazzan* concluded, until he finished the entire Tehillim himself. (On Shabbos Mevorchim, the Rebbe would leave the shul as soon as the *chazzan* concluded, even if he hadn’t yet finished the entire Tehillim.)

I remember in 5752, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Klein where the *yahrtzeit* candles were and if they were actually in the shul, not in a side hallway. The Rebbe wanted to confirm that the candles were lit in the shul.

Shacharis

Rabbi Duchman: Yom Kippur morning was quite relaxed, as far as pushing and the like. It was a quiet *Shacharis*. The Rebbe wasn’t called up to *maftir* in the morning (he received *Maftir Yona* in the afternoon), and Rabbi Hodakov read the *haftorah* instead. This was one of the only times during the year that the Rebbe was not called up for *maftir* (the one other time was Simchas Torah).

Mincha and Maftir Yona

Rabbi Duchman: The real “pushing” started by *Mincha*, of course.

Mincha-Ne’ilah was when everyone wanted to get the best places. I remember that in certain years, after *Maftir Yona* the *bima* that was used for *kriah* was moved all the way to the back of the shul, in order to not obstruct the view. Other times, people stood on the *bima*. I always made sure to have a good place, and after I got married I had a place right behind the Rebbe. I made sure to get there right after the Rebbe recited *Maftir Yona*.

It was a tough decision that one had to make: Stand near the *bima* of *krias haTorah* and hear the Rebbe's *maftir* or stay close to the front of the shul and have a good place for *Ne'ila* and Napoleon's March?

The Rebbe always came in to shul for *Mincha* wearing his hat. Upon reaching his place, the Rebbe placed the hat inside his *shtender* and covered his head with the *tallis*.

Very often while reciting *Maftir Yona*, the Rebbe cried profusely; heart wrenching *bechiyos*. I remember this specifically occurring while reciting the *pesukim* of *yud gimmel middos* at the end. In the later years this happened less frequently.

Ne'ila

Rabbi Duchman: In earlier years, *bochurim* stayed up the entire night of Yom Kippur to reserve their place near the Rebbe for *Ne'ila* some 20 hours later. But that was before my times. Then in 5728, the Rebbe spoke about this and rebuked those "*vos men kukt, un men davent nisht*—who just stand and look, not davening at all." After that, things got somewhat calmer.

Either way, *Ne'ila* was the climax of Yom Kippur; the culmination of the momentum that built up throughout the day.

Reb Shmuel Zalmanov was the *chazzan* in the earlier years. Later it was Reb Mordechai Teleshevsky, and then Reb Mottel Berkowitz.

Rabbi Nemes: In addition to the pushing and trying to get a good place for the "March," there was a certain intensity in the air. There was an unbelievable energy in the whole room. During *chazzaras hashatz*, the Rebbe encouraged the singing with his hand much more intensely than at any other time on Yom Kippur; notably during the singing of "*Ki Anu Amecha*" and "*Ata Vechartanu*." The energy was set by the Rebbe's intensity, and it impacted us as well.

At times, the *chazzan* was slightly ahead of schedule. In these instances the Rebbe would encourage the singing of some *niggunim* many times over, especially during the second half of *Ne'ila*, depending on how much time was left. (The Rebbe had a watch in front of him on his *shtender* indicating the *z'man* when it would be acceptable to blow the *shofar*.⁴) By the time we reached *Avinu Malkeinu*, the Rebbe's encouragement got much stronger and much more intense. The Rebbe was now not only motioning with his hands; his whole *guf* was shaking.

Heavenly Affairs

Rabbi Duchman: In 5734 (the year of the Yom Kippur War), the Rebbe cried loudly and profusely. I remember this occurring during *Avinu Malkeinu*; the Rebbe was banging very strongly on the *shtender* and *poshut* sobbing. It was a sight to behold. We could see the Rebbe's face literally moving up and down.

Rabbi Nemes: There are certain things that occur throughout one's lifetime that will never be forgotten. For me, one of those moments was when I was 10 years old. Let me share what took place:

It was during the break between *Musaf* and *Mincha*. A group of friends and I, maybe six or seven of us went all the way over to the front of the shul where all the *bochurim* usually stood. At first there was a little bit of extra room, but then, as many of the *bochurim* began pushing forward, we ended up getting shoved further up, eventually reaching very close to where *Rashag*, the Rebbe's brother-in-law, davened.

At some point toward the end of *Mincha* or the beginning of *Ne'ila*, the Rebbe turned and glanced at us a few times. Then the Rebbe called Rabbi Groner and told him to make sure we

weren't pushing *Rashag*, or the *aron kodesh*.

But as Rabbi Groner was talking to us to convey the message, the Rebbe turned toward us and started waving his hand, motioning that we should come up on the *bima*. At that point we went up to the *bima*, standing just a few feet behind the Rebbe; *mamash* right there. This lasted literally through the entire *Ne'ila*, maybe even from the end of *Mincha*. It was incredible. Every time there was a *nigun*, the Rebbe encouraged the singing of the crowd with his left hand, and he also encouraged us with his right hand.

At some point, I think it was right before *Avinu Malkeinu* or perhaps even earlier, the Rebbe called over Rabbi Groner and told him something. Rabbi Groner immediately stood at the other end of the *bima* and screamed out that the Rebbe asked for all the children to come up!

I don't remember exactly what he said but it was clear that this wasn't for very young babies. Only children of six or seven and older were passed up. It was unbelievable! Children were being passed over heads from every corner of the shul and brought up to the *bima*. Pandemonium erupted; it was very noisy.

The Rebbe himself picked up the *shtender*—I was standing just a few feet away when this happened—and moved it all the way to the left side of the *bima*, closer to the *chazzan*, so there would be more space for the children on his right side and behind him. Eventually there was no place left on the *bima*, so the Rebbe motioned to the *bochurim* to move back, leaving room on the side of the *bima* for more children who came afterwards. To me it seemed like there were 200 or 250 children there.

Then came *Avinu Malkeinu* and again, the Rebbe encouraged the singing with both hands. We heard



THE REBBE TURNS TO WISH "GUT YOM-TOV!" AT THE CLOSE OF YOM KIPPUR.

terrible *bechiyos* from the Rebbe; I was very close, but I understand that even people who were behind the Rebbe's *bima* heard these tremendous sobs.

The Rebbe was standing with his back to us but we were still able to hear. It was not like when the Rebbe would choke up slightly during a *sicha* or the like; this was full-on crying. At the time, I didn't necessarily realize the depth of it, but as I got older, I began to think about what had

happened that Yom Kippur: There was obviously some heavenly affairs being orchestrated right before our eyes; the Rebbe, the *nossi hador*, standing with all the children next to him. It's unbelievable when you think about it! It was like a "*Baal Shemsker ma'aseh*."

If I remember correctly, after the *shofar* was blown and *kaddish* was over, the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner that now the children can return to their places.

Rabbi Mann: A similar scene took place when I was an eleven-year-old child, in 5742. Right at the beginning of *Mincha* we were standing near the Rebbe's *bima* and the *gabbaim* were chasing us away. Seeing this, the Rebbe told them to allow us to come back, so I was standing right near the Rebbe.

All of a sudden, during *Ne'ila*, we heard crying. It was the Rebbe! While the crowd sang *Avinu Malkeinu*, the Rebbe was waving both of his hands very strongly, indicating that we should sing it over and over. The Rebbe banged on the *shtender* very strongly, not just banging but picking up his hands very high. He repeated this same *tenua* with both hands over and over and the *nigun* was repeated 10 times! All during this time, the Rebbe was crying loudly.

Napoleon's March

Rabbi Duchman: Napoleon's March was one of the most incredible moments with the Rebbe. In the earlier years, the Rebbe would stand on his chair and then (starting in 5743) the Rebbe went up a special set of stairs with a platform. Imagine, the Rebbe was approaching 80 and *mamash* jumping and dancing on the chair. It was incredible!

Notably, the Rebbe would not look at the crowd. He stood with his eyes closed and for most of the time, his *tallis* was over his eyes. The time that the Rebbe stood on the chair was relatively long; maybe three to five minutes. Perhaps even longer.

Rabbi Nemes: As the Rebbe was standing and encouraging the singing on his chair, he would hold on to the *tallis* tightly as it kept falling at the sides as a result of the jumping and dancing.

But it all happened in stages. The Rebbe didn't begin on the chair; first he encouraged the singing at his place. Then he would get up on the chair (or the stairs), face the crowd, and



start clapping and swinging his hands vigorously.

The Rebbe exhibited great *simcha*, the march symbolizing our *nitzachon*, but the intensity of Yom Kippur was prevalent. The jumping and dancing of the crowd was like Simchas Torah, but the Rebbe himself was joyous and serious at the same time.

It was one of those times when everyone was able to see the Rebbe (although his face was usually covered). The Rebbe was very high up, on top of his chair or the platform, which was on top of the *bima*.

Rabbi Mann: It is hard to describe the *simcha* in the room during those moments. The movements the Rebbe made with his hands were unbelievable. I'll never forget those *tenuos*, how the Rebbe waved his hands from side to side. It was a great expression of *simcha poretz geder*—joy breaking all boundaries.

As a young *bochur*, I remember thinking how I'm not going to have enough strength at the end of the fast to sing and dance; I thought I'd be hungry and weak. But once we saw the Rebbe in his full glory dancing and moving from side to side like that, we forgot about everything in the world.

Usually the Rebbe's face was covered with his *tallis* during the March. However, there were a few times when the Rebbe's face was not covered. In 5748, at first the Rebbe's face was uncovered; but then, all of a sudden, the Rebbe pulled his *tallis* down over his holy face.

Because I was standing right there, I was able to see that the Rebbe was in middle of encouraging the singing when suddenly he burst out crying. Immediately, the Rebbe pulled down the *tallis* and covered his face.

In 5752, we witnessed something extraordinary:

Throughout the entire singing of the March, the Rebbe's face was not covered by his *tallis*. The Rebbe

stood on the steps for a much longer time than usual, remaining there until after the *shofar* blowing. Then the Rebbe called out "*Lshana haba'a b'Yerushalyim*" along with the entire crowd. It seemed as though the Rebbe was continuing the great joy of that year's Erev Yom Kippur.

Maariv and Havdala

Rabbi Duchman: When the Rebbe turned around, the singing concluded. The *chazzan* finished *Aleinu* and *Tehillim*, the Rebbe put on his hat, and davening would conclude as usual.

Ironically, one of the most incredible moments of Yom Kippur was actually after Yom Kippur, when the Rebbe turned around after *havdala* and swung his hand, wishing a loud "*Gut Yom Tov!*" three times. From that moment on, the Rebbe's face was glowing!

It was a turning point: In one instant, the mood shifted from seriousness to joy. You could feel it in the air.

Everything changed in that split second when the Rebbe exclaimed "*Gut Yom Tov!*" In the earlier years this was actually the only time this occurred throughout the year; the Rebbe never called out "*Gut Yom Tov*" any other time, only on Motzei Yom Kippur! The Rebbe would then begin singing a *freilicher niggun* (*Vesamachta* or his father's Simchas Torah *niggun*).

Rabbi Nemes: Even the people who were outside when the Rebbe went out to *kiddush levana* could still see that the Rebbe's face was glowing. We felt like we were witnessing the face of the *Kohen Gadol* after the *avoda* of Yom Kippur; the "*mareh kohen*."

That moment marked the beginning of *Zman Simchaseinu*. Instant change. There was such a shine and glow; a ways away from the seriousness of Napoleon's March only 15 minutes earlier. It was incredible.

Once we saw the Rebbe in his full glory dancing and moving from side to side, we forgot about everything in the world.

“...They davened *Ne’ila*, the expression of *yechida shebenefesh*, but when Motzei Yom Kippur arrived, everyone rushed through davening!”

Where’s the Moon?

Rabbi Mann: I remember how in 5749, the Rebbe davened *Maariv* at the *amud* (it was the year of *aveilus* for the Rebbetzin), and afterwards he turned around and said with a large smile “*Leich echol b’simcha lachmecha*—go and eat your bread with joy.” It is a phrase that the Alter Rebbe cites in *Shulchan Aruch*, quoted from the *Midrash*. It was a time of incredible *simcha*.

That same year, one of the Chassidim (Reb Sholom Ber Levitin) had come into the shul and announced: “*Nishta kein levana*”—there is no moon (for *kiddush levana*).

THE REBBE RECITES KIDDUSH LEVANA OUTSIDE FOLLOWING YOM KIPPUR, 5750.



The Rebbe was in a very “*simchadiker*” mood and responded, “*S’da, ober s’iz fardekt*—there is [a moon]; it’s just covered.” The Rebbe’s mood was shining.

Kiddush Levana

Rabbi Mann: I’d like to conclude with a very interesting *vort* from the Rebbe:

In 5750, after the whole day of fasting and davening, the Rebbe came out to *kiddush levana* and said a short *sicha* afterwards.

Later, on Simchas Torah the Rebbe said that he saw how some people were rushing their davening on Motzo’ei Yom Kippur, eager to be over with it.

They davened *Ne’ila*, the expression of *yechida shebenefesh*, but when Motzei Yom Kippur arrived, everyone rushed through davening! Some might say it is because they are concerned about their health. But the truth is, people were just eager to eat...⁵

Chassidim understood that perhaps the Rebbe was thereby explaining why he had caused *kiddush levana* to last longer by saying a *sicha* afterwards, even though everyone was fasting. It’s as if the Rebbe was saying, “Why the rush? Yom Kippur is such a holy time, the *gilui* of *yechida shebenefesh*...” And when Simchas Torah came around, the Rebbe used the opportunity to

reprimand the Chassidim, because—as the Rebbe often repeated—“Simchas Torah *shadt nisht*, Simchas Torah does no harm.”

May we be *zocheh* to the time when we will no longer need these *zichronos* and printed stories. We will see the Rebbe again and behold his holy presence, *b’karov mamash!* **1**

1. See Sefer Hasichos 5699, p. 304.
2. In the later years the distribution of *lekach* began a few days before Yom Kippur, leaving time for the ever growing crowd to receive.
3. Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 1, p. 130.
4. Although it is halachically permitted to blow the *shofar* earlier, the Rebbe was careful to wait.
5. Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 1, p. 230.

THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE JOYOUS SINGING WHILE LEAVING FOR HOME AFTER YOM KIPPUR 5738.



My Yom Kippur with the Rebbe— Niflaos Bakol

The following is a letter written by Reb Yaakov Cohen of Potomac, MD, after spending an uplifting Yom Kippur with the Rebbe in 5752. In order to preserve the authentic sentiment of the original letter, we have left the material mostly raw with very minimal editing.

Motzo'ei Yom Kippur 5752

What are my feelings after spending Yom Kippur in Crown Heights with the Rebbe Shlita? When I arrived, there were lots of people on the streets, sukkahs were being built everywhere, and people were crowded around “770.” My first action was to drop my bags at the Butmans and run over to “770” to check my seat and get *lekach* from the Rebbe. People were lined up and I squeezed my way in, and then there was our Rebbe. His eyes were looking at everybody so intently while giving you his *brocha*.

After *lekach*, it was time to get back for the first *seudah* at 2:00 p.m. It was a nice meal with plenty of food. As we were eating, the siren went off two times indicating the Rebbe was saying a *sicha*. We *bentched* and went off to “770.” The Rebbe was speaking but it was too crowded to get a spot where we could see him. This is the most frustrating part; not being able to understand the Rebbe as he speaks. At times like that I feel like a foreigner among my own people. I left early because it was getting late and I knew I had to be back early to insure my seat at *Kol Nidrei*.

After the *seudah hamafsekes*, I got my *tallis*, *kittel*, and *machzor* and rushed over to “770.” At this point I was still apprehensive and not sure what to expect. I was saying Tehillim, anxiously waiting for the Rebbe. The shul was filling up and up... the usual “770” scene. Then the Rebbe came in but I could hardly see him due to the crowd and he was covered in his *tallis*. I could see him as he went to his *shtender* and *Kol Nidrei* began. I remember the feeling that I couldn't concentrate because of all the people, and that it was different than what I was used to at Beth Shalom. This feeling continued throughout *Kol Nidrei*. Then after *Aleinu* the Rebbe sits down and we start saying Tehillim for the next hour and a half.

One problem I had was standing, due to the benches, but how do I sit in front of the Rebbe? I didn't finish the

whole book of Tehillim like everybody else but I got to *Nun* or thereabout. When a full “770” starts to sing *Avinu Malkeinu* it's unbelievable! We would sing this whenever the Rebbe came in.

After the Rebbe left, I walked to the Butmans thinking I was disappointed in my davening and was determined to get up early to finish Tehillim, and prepare for davening. I awoke at 8:30 a.m. and felt tired, but I got up and headed to shul. It was not crowded because *Shacharis* didn't start until 10:00 a.m., so I started saying Tehillim.

When the Rebbe came in we were quite crowded, but I had my seat.

As the day went on I felt glad that I was with the Rebbe. My davening wasn't like normal but I was feeling like I was part of a very unique spiritual event. When the Torahs came out this was the first time you could see the Rebbe's face under the *tallis* as his eyes followed the Torahs to the *bimah*. It was like a “*malach*” was standing there. I wish I could have been closer. The man next to me said to his grandson, “Look at the Rebbe on Yom Kippur, it's beautiful.”

When the *leining* started the Rebbe turned back around. I wanted to make eye contact with the Rebbe, but I was too far away. Meanwhile the grandfather was telling his grandson, “the Rebbe is looking right at you and he knows what you are thinking, therefore you should be thinking of *Yud, Kay, Vav, Kay...*” This man loves the Rebbe and Chassidus. He kept telling his different grandchildren thoughts of Chassidus and questioning them. He said learning Tanya is a *kapparah* for everything.

The anticipation was growing as *Musaf* approached. I kept wondering what the Rebbe looked like and what he was thinking. It was getting difficult to hear the *chazzan* and I felt I was getting weaker and getting a headache. I think it was Hashem's way of keeping me with a taste of reality.

(In retrospect, that was reality; this *golus* outside is the bad dream.)

It was getting extremely crowded as we approached *Aleinu* and everybody, small or large, wanted to see the Rebbe as he bowed. I actually saw him getting up and then I bowed under my bench. When the *chazzan* got to the first *V'hakohanim* in the *avoda*, I saw the Rebbe bow, you could feel the Bais Hamikdash... I started to think about the Rebbe and I contrasted him to my *avodas Hashem*, and I am embarrassed. Here he is doing *teshuvah* for all our *aveiros*, and I need to do much more than I currently am. The *avoda* service was very quick in "770."

Then the *chazzan* got to *Ki Anu Amecha*, it was BOOMING and you see the Rebbe's left hand moving up and down pushing for more. It's hard to explain the feeling of security that Hashem is going to answer *klal Yisroel* for good. By the end of *Musaf* I was drained physically and mentally. People were getting very anxious for the Rebbe's *Mftir Yonah* and *Ne'ilah*.

When I returned to "770" everybody was talking about Napoleon's March (the *niggun* which breaks out at the end of Yom Kippur and the Rebbe dances on his chair).

The kids are everywhere and it's amazing how they climb around over the people and benches. I thought about the kids near me, how beautiful they are and how lucky they are to be growing up with the Rebbe in their midst. Their heartfelt singing and their love of the Rebbe is unbelievable.

The people of Lubavitch don't over-venerate the Rebbe; they love him and he loves us! How do we let him down by not carrying out his lead in bringing Moshiach?

The Rebbe came down at 5:30 p.m. and you saw his face as he watched the Torah... One little kid said to his friend "the Rebbe has a happy face on." It was hard for me to tell but you cannot explain the feeling you get seeing the Rebbe on Yom Kippur.

When the Rebbe is called for his *aliyah*, he took his blue *machzor* with him and I had a perfect view of him at the *bimah*, although his face was covered by his *tallis*. Several times during the *brocha* he lifted up the end of the Torah and I kept thinking "I wonder what his *kavanos* are?"

After his *aliyah* the Rebbe said the *haftorah*. I could barely make out the words but I could see him and I watched his hands. They look so frail but they have the strength of Hashem in them. How does he have the ability to do what he does? The only answer is that the spiritual level the Rebbe is on somehow gives him the physical strength.

The next set of *Avinu Malkein* was getting louder and more powerful. By the end of *Mincha* the place was wild. I had no seat left, and Rabbi Raichik, who is so frail, came to sit next to me. As time was passing the excitement was

building. I tried to remember it's *Ne'ilah* and to give myself completely over to Hashem, not just in words, because they weren't flowing very well, but I said to Hashem "I am exhausted, my body has no strength, I'm tired, I have a headache, and I came to be with my Rebbe on Yom Kippur... I can't do anymore, please accept my *teshuva*. I am going to work much harder on my *avoda*."

Then came the end of *Neilah* and everybody was standing on the benches crowded to the inch. Rabbi Raichik told his son to lift him onto the bench so he can see the Rebbe. Here is an old, frail, rabbi standing on a bench so he could see the Rebbe. He said "at the end of Yom Kippur, I need to see the Rebbe." This rabbi is so attached to the Rebbe you could see it in his eyes as he stared, stooped over, at the Rebbe dancing on his platform. This is what a Chossid is; he attaches himself to holiness.

Then the booming "*Shema Yisroel*" is said. I tried to have the correct *kavana*. Then, the Rebbe climbed the steps to the platform and a booming *niggun* was being sung by thousands of men. The Rebbe was leading it and dancing, completely covered by his *tallis*. I was jumping up to see him and singing and crying at the same time... Just writing this brings tears to my eyes. I can't explain the feelings of love and hope I had at that time.

The Rebbe came down and we finished *Neilah* and *Maariv*. I saw the Rebbe standing there with his hat and watching *havdala*. I was drained and extremely emotional as I left "770." I walked back thinking I can't let the Rebbe down this year. Then I heard my name being called and it was Avremel Goldberg asking me to come up to his house and break the fast. There was a house full of children and activity around; it seemed like the table went on for about a block.

I sat down and they brought me juice and a piece of cake which I needed badly. I tried to socialize but found it very difficult. I needed time to think. As I walked to the Butmans I started to feel better and we ate a long meal. I enjoyed being with them immensely. I left early the next morning at 5:15 a.m. to catch the train back home. That is where I am sitting writing this. I feel like I was in a dream and the only thing missing was my family. I thought about them throughout the day, including them in all my *tefillas*.

In retrospect I can say my personal davening was not as intense as normal, but I really gave my body and soul over to Hashem with the resolve to be a better Chossid and help bring Moshiach today.

One day I hope my children will read this and get a glimpse of my feelings of being with the Rebbe on Yom Kippur...

Motzo'ei Yom Kippur 5752

Niflaos Bakol