



לעבן מיטן רבין



19 TISHREI 5741, LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 191437

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The Children's Hakafa

SHEMINI ATZERES - SIMCHAS TORAH 5741* – SHNAS HAKHEL



We present this account of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah 5741*—Shnas Hakhel—with the Rebbe.

This was only days after the establishment of Tzivos Hashem, and unprecedentedly, the Rebbe had the children join him for a *hakafa* on both nights of Yom Tov!

It was also the first time the Rebbe danced his usual *hakafa* by himself.

WEDNESDAY, 21 TISHREI, HOSHANA RABBA

After davening, the Rebbe distributed *lekach* at the door of his sukkah to those who hadn't received on Erev Yom Kippur; first men, then women. When a police officer from the local precinct wished the Rebbe that there be peace in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe replied: "May there be peace in Brooklyn..."

The Rebbe davened Mincha in the small *zal*, after which he began singing "*V'samachta*." Then, after

visiting his home, the Rebbe returned to 770 and resumed the *lekach* distribution.

In preparation for *hakafos*, most of the tables and benches were removed from the shul. A small stage (known as the “ches”²) was erected where the Rebbe dances *hakafos*, so the crowd would be able to see him.

HAKAFOS, LEIL SHEMINI ATZERES

Upon entering the shul for Maariv, the Rebbe energetically clapped his hands, animating the song. Following davening, the Rebbe began singing his father’s *hakafos niggun*.

Hakafos was called for 9:00, at which time the Rebbe entered the shul while vigorously waving his hand. After ascending the *bima*, the Rebbe stood at its edge, facing the crowd, and clapped his hands toward the crowd. There was still a lot of noise and commotion in shul when the Rebbe was honored with the *possuk* “*Ata Hareisa*,” and he motioned that only once order was restored would he recite it. The Rebbe led all the *pesukim* in the first round, while in the second and third, he only chanted the first and last *pesukim*. Following the first *Ata Hareisa*, the Rebbe began “*Hosheia Es Amecha*,” and after the second, “*Ufaratzta*.” Upon completing the *pesukim* for the third time, the Rebbe proceeded with “הגני”³... as in every *Shnas Hakhel*, after which he began his father’s *hakafos niggun*.

First Hakafa

The Rebbe held his small Torah⁴ for the first *hakafa*, and walked behind the *chazan* to the center of the shul, with Rabbi Hodakov and several others in tow. The Rebbe stood in the center of the “ches.” For the first time since the beginning of the Rebbe’s *nesius* the Rebbe danced solo in a circle (Rashag was not present at *hakafos*.)⁵ Another shift from the norm was the *niggun* sung at this *hakafa*: instead of starting the usual *hakafos niggun*, the Rebbe began his father’s *niggun*. While holding the Torah with one hand, the Rebbe encouraged the song with the other, raising it above his head.

During the *hakafa*, Reb Zalman Gurary, who was carrying one of the *sifrei Torah*, suddenly did not feel well, and he fell on the table with the Torah in his hand. A commotion ensued, and the Rebbe asked: “Why are people pushing?” They tried taking the Torah from Reb Zalman, but he wouldn’t let go. When they attempted with force, the Rebbe reprimanded them, saying that the person is more

important than the Torah and they should tend to him. They stood Reb Zalman up and left the Torah in his hands. The Rebbe continued with the *hakafa*, but upon noticing several minutes later that Reb Zalman was still not feeling well, he cut it short. The *hakafa* lasted about five minutes.

On the way back to his place, the Rebbe blessed several people who requested *brachos*. The Rebbe blessed all those who kissed the *sefer Torah* with a good year ahead.

Upon ascending the *bima*, the Rebbe asked Dr. Weiss to examine Reb Zalman, and Rabbi Krinsky to bring him a chair. After Reb Zalman was seated and examined, Dr. Weiss came over to update the Rebbe. The Rebbe then summoned Dr. Feldman, requesting that he tend to Reb Zalman, and sent Dr. Weiss to join the dancing.

Second Hakafa

During the second *hakafa*, the Rebbe stood at his *shtender*, leaning on it with one hand. Although he clapped now and then, the Rebbe’s face remained serious. In the meantime, Reb Zalman Gurary got up and began clapping his hands. Upon seeing this, the Rebbe motioned for him to be seated.

At the *hakafa*’s conclusion, the Rebbe sat in his chair. When Dr. Weiss noticed the Rebbe sitting, he asked if everything was okay. The Rebbe replied that he’s preserving his energy for the seventh *hakafa*.

Spotlight on Children

Fifth Hakafa

Ahead of the fifth *hakafa*, the Rebbe conveyed something to Rabbi Groner. Upon receiving the message, Rabbi Groner rushed to the *gabbai* who then announced the Rebbe’s instruction: The children of Tzivos Hashem, those who learn *osiyos haTorah*, “*ben chamesh l’mikra*” and “*ben eser l’mishna*,” will be honored with this *hakafa*! Their teachers should circle together with them, and they should hold the Torahs.

Pandemonium immediately ensued. Children of all ages were being passed over heads from all corners of the shul. All made it in one piece, although some children who didn’t understand what was going on were in tears.

The *melamdim* received Torahs, while the Rebbe took his small one. On the way to the center of the shul, the Rebbe asked several individuals if they were teachers of children under bar mitzvah. Those who answered in the negative were told to clear the



MOTZEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5741, YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM116492

space for the children. Upon reaching the “ches,” the Rebbe noticed several people and he instructed them to leave the *hakafos* area. Some fathers asked if they could remain with their young children and the Rebbe agreed.

“Are you one of the children?!” the Rebbe asked one *bochur* who was still standing there. “Are you part of the Vaad Hamesader?!” The Rebbe told him to leave the space.

The Rebbe requested for “*Utzu Eitza*” to be sung, and proceeded to dance in a circle surrounded by the throng of children. The crush was great. With one hand, the Rebbe clutched the Torah, while he encouraged the singing with the other, energetically swinging it above his head. The *hakafa* lasted ten minutes.

When heading back to his place at the *hakafa*’s conclusion, the Rebbe instructed that Moshiach’s Sefer Torah⁶ be taken up to the women’s section, for the girls to kiss it. The *gabbai* asked whom he should send, to which the Rebbe replied: “A strong person...” Moshiach’s Sefer Torah was brought to the *ezras nashim*, while the rest were returned to the *aron kodesh*.

The Rebbe sat down in his place and asked to halt the *hakafos* until Moshiach’s Sefer Torah returned. At that point, tens of children were standing on the Rebbe’s *bima*, and the Rebbe began singing “*Utzu Eitza*,” clapping along with them. Shortly thereafter, the Rebbe began “*V’samachta*,” and further propelled the children.

During the singing, the Rebbe called for Rabbi Groner and instructed that the Moshiach’s Sefer Torah be brought to the other women’s section as well. After being brought there, the Torah returned to the shul. Upon seeing it, the Rebbe stood up and clapped energetically.

Sixth Hakafa

“*Chayolei Adoneinu*” was sung during the sixth *hakafa*, with the Rebbe singing along in the first round. The Rebbe’s hand motions were slightly different than usual, circling above the head with a raised finger. A toddler standing opposite him imitated these motions, and the Rebbe turned toward him several times with a smile, and waved his hand in the same fashion.

Seventh Hakafa

The seventh *hakafa* was just like the first, including the *niggun* of the Rebbe’s father. The



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TZIVOS HASHEM WAS FOUNDED JUST DAYS BEFORE THIS SIMCHAS TORAH. A CHILDREN’S RALLY, 5 TISHREI 5741*.

Rebbe danced quite passionately, sporadically hoisting the Torah toward the crowd. At one point the Rebbe gestured toward the elders situated in the back of the “ches” to move aside, whereupon he went and danced there as well. The *hakafa* lasted about 10 minutes.

Following *hakafos*, the Rebbe returned to his place. At davening’s end, the Rebbe blessed all present in a loud voice: “Gut Yom Tov, Gut Yom Tov, Gut Yom Tov,” along with a wave of his hand, and then began singing “*V’samachta*.” On his way out, the Rebbe made strong hand motions encouraging the song. *Hakafos* concluded at 11:30.

Several minutes later, the Rebbe exited his room and walked toward the library building, where he would be eating *seudas Yom Tov* with the Rebbetzin.⁷ A group of children stood near the library and were singing. The Rebbe clapped along.

THURSDAY, SHEMINI ATZERES

Upon arriving at 770 this morning, the Rebbe conversed with Dr. Weiss. In a matter of seconds a crowd had gathered around. The Rebbe was not pleased with this, and exclaimed: “Not everyone has to hear the conversation!” (The Rebbe was inquiring about Reb Zalman Gurary’s health.)

Before Mincha, the Rebbe inquired as to Rashag’s health, as he was visited in the hospital in the morning.

Maariv was nearly empty, as most people were on *tahalucha*. After Maariv the Rebbe began the *niggun* “*U’faratzta*.”

Pre-Hakafos Farbrengen

The Rebbe entered the farbrengen at 9:00 p.m. and began with a *sicha* on the advantage of

making *kiddush* in public. Due to the late hour, the Rebbe explained, he isn't making *kiddush* at the farbrengen. The Rebbe noted, however, that if someone present had not yet made *kiddush*, he should do it here (and thereby be *motzi* others who also hadn't yet heard *kiddush*).

After a member of *anash* made *kiddush*, the Rebbe began his father's *hakafos niggun*.

During the singing at the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe turned toward one of the *rabbonim* who was sitting groggily, with one hand on his cheek and told him to wake up and rejoice.

The Rebbe then distributed bottles of *mashke* to a number of *anash* elders, for them to distribute amongst the attendees. (Reb Mendel Futerfas was instructed to distribute his amongst Russian emigres.) After handing out the bottles, the Rebbe requested for a *niggun* linked with *yetzias Mitzrayim* to be sung, whereupon Chassidim sang "Al Hasela Hoch."

When the elders had finished distributing the *mashke*, the Rebbe intimated that this was only a beginning and that it would resume tomorrow. Thus, those who didn't receive would get the next day and there's no reason to push. Now we must stop to prepare for *hakafos*.

The Rebbe requested for the seder of *hakafos* to be announced. Before leaving, the Rebbe began his father's *hakafos niggun*. The farbrengen ended close to midnight.

HAKAFOS, LEIL SIMCHAS TORAH

The Rebbe arrived to *hakafos* at 12:40 a.m., and was honored with leading the first and last *pesukim* of all three "Ata Hareisa" rounds. The *gabbaim* initially wanted to honor the Rebbe with Rashag's *possuk* as well, but the Rebbe instructed that all the teachers and *mashpi'im*⁸ lead the recital instead.

Children's Hakafa - Again

Before the fourth *hakafa*, the Rebbe once again discussed a children's *hakafa* with Rabbi Groner. The Rebbe originally wanted it to be during the fourth *hakafa*, but ultimately decided that it would be better during the fifth, as in the previous night.

When the children's *hakafa* was announced, chaos broke out once again. Tonight, everyone knew to bring their children, exponentially increasing the crowd. The "ches" was jam packed, with additional children sitting on the enclosing tables, as well as behind them, with the rest of the crowd.

The crowd waited for about 20 minutes, hoping that some *seder* would be enacted, but to no avail. Eventually, the Rebbe took his Sefer Torah and headed to the *hakafos* area. Before entering the "ches" the Rebbe had to stop because the path was totally congested. Rabbi Groner futilely attempted to clear a passage.

Upon seeing this, the Rebbe began making a *seder*. First he instructed all the *melamdim* to leave the area (those holding Torahs were told to stand on the *kriah bima*). The children standing on the tables were instructed to get down and join the *hakafa*. Despite all this, the squeeze was terrible.

The Rebbe instructed everyone standing in front of the southern table to clear the place. Many people generally gather in this space, but it was not long before it was absolutely cleared. The children without a spot were moved there. The Rebbe single-handedly made a *seder*, instructing people to move



outside the “ches.” To one person the Rebbe said: “With all due respect, you don’t belong here...”

The Rebbe also cleared the area behind the western table, and those standing near the northern table took their cue and cleared the area as well. Children were then put around all the tables. And still, there was a great crush in the “ches.” Nevertheless, the Rebbe finally proceeded with the *hakafa*.

The Rebbe began singing “*Utzu Eitza*,” and everyone joined the spirited song. While holding the Torah in one hand, the Rebbe encouraged the singing with the other. Every so often the Rebbe brought the *sefer Torah* down closer to the children’s height, for them to kiss it.

The Rebbe danced in a circle near the tables, sporadically signalling children to let him pass. The *hakafa* lasted ten minutes, after which the Rebbe again asked that Moshiach’s *Sefer Torah* be brought upstairs for the girls.

When the Rebbe returned to his place, he sat down and began singing “*V’samachta*.” Several children were *zoche* to have the Rebbe tell them a few words, others received the Rebbe’s hand together with a “*Gut Yom Tov*,” while a few got wine for *l’chaim*.

Gematriaos

Between *hakafos*, the Rebbe sat and conversed with various individuals. One of these was Reb Gershon Ber Jacobson, publisher of the *Algemeiner*, whom the Rebbe wished that he merit to bear headlines of Moshiach’s arrival this very year.

The Rebbe also told several people to say “*l’chaim*.” When Reb Gershon Ber did, the Rebbe asked him if it was *mashke*. He replied in the affirmative. The Rebbe pressed on: “What is the alcohol percentage?” Reb Gershon Ber replied: “86.” Soon after that, the Rebbe asked him if he knows its *gematria*, and he said no. The Rebbe informed him



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that it's the *gematria* of שמאלקים. A short while later as the Rebbe was about to go towards the center for one of the *hakafos*, a bottle of 96% was brought. One of individuals present turned to the Rebbe and declared that surely this also has a *gematria*. Holding the *sefer Torah*, the Rebbe advanced to his *hakafa*, without answering. After the *hakafa* the Rebbe asked Reb Gershon Ber to convey to his friend that 96 is *bgematria* א-ל-ל-ד-ג-ו-ו-ו, adding that the main thing is the pleasure of him knowing that this too has a *gematria*.

As the Rebbe returned from one of the *hakafos*, Reb Chaim Baruch Halberstam looked toward the Rebbe and announced that all the people who are involved in the Rebbe's *inyanim* should be blessed *bgashmiyus ub'eruchniyus*. Someone standing next to him mentioned that the one giving the blessing is a grandson of the Sanzer Rebbe. The Rebbe answered "amen" and added that "a blessing from the grandson of the Sanzer Rebbe who was a grandson of the Alter Rebbe, will surely be fulfilled."

Camp Style Davening

Ahead of *Aleinu*, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Avraham Shemtov to lead the children "Gan Yisroel" style. After doing so, the children sang "Utzu Eitza," then they proclaimed "We Want Moshiach Now" in unison, and sang "Chayolei Adoneinu." The Rebbe encouraged them with hand motions. Before leaving, the Rebbe waved his two arms toward the assembled, exclaiming: "Gut Yom Tov" in a loud voice three times. *Hakafos* concluded at 3:00 a.m.

FRIDAY, SIMCHAS TORAH

Prior to circling the *bima* for *hakafos*, the Rebbe waited for all those who would be accompanying to enter the circle. Upon seeing Dr. Weiss lingering in the aisle, the Rebbe signalled for him to join.

After circling one time and reaching the entrance to the "ches," the Rebbe instructed the *chazzan* to start the next *hakafa*. One person claimed that the *hakafa* began further, and therefore the pause should also be a few steps away, but the Rebbe didn't accept his words. Reb Zalman Gurary chimed in and told this individual to heed the Rebbe, to which the Rebbe smiled...

Following the three and a half circuits, the Rebbe began his father's *hakafos niggun*, and danced for 10 minutes.

Upon ascending his *bima* for *Choson Bereishis*, the Rebbe picked up a yarmulke that had slipped off a child's head and gave it back to him.

After davening, the children sang "Utzu Eitza," to the Rebbe's encouragement. The Rebbe wished the crowd "Gut Yom Tov," and headed to his room. Several minutes later, the Rebbe reappeared and went to the library. On his way, he vigorously clapped his hands to the singing of those gathered outside.

Simchas Torah Farbrengen

The Rebbe entered the shul for the farbrengen at 6:15 p.m. After washing and reciting "Hamotzi," the Rebbe stated:

"Since this farbrengen is in continuation to yesterday's (Simchas Torah eve), and not everyone received *mashke* (due to a shortage), it will be distributed now. And being that *shkia* is very soon, everyone should hurry and say 'lchaim.'

"Those who studied at, or are current students of the *kolel*, should come up and take *mashke* to distribute to the entire crowd."

Using both his hands, the Rebbe proceeded to hand two bottles of *mashke* to each member of the *kolel*. In middle of the *chaluka* the Rebbe noted that only members of the local *kolel* should come, and those who already received their bottles should distribute the *mashke* immediately. (When the bottles ran out, the Rebbe sent Rabbi Groner to get another case, which was also given out.)

The Rebbe then requested for the *maamar niggun* to be sung, after which he recited the *maamar dibur hamaschil* ביום השמיני שלח את העם וגו'

Wonders In Our Time

In the *sicha* following the *maamar*, the Rebbe elaborated on the *possuk* "לעשה נפלאות גדולות לבדו" ¹. The Rebbe laid out in plain terms that even a child could understand, that for a Yid, even simple water is "נפלאות גדולות."

The Rebbe explained that when a Jewish boy who is thirsty runs to a mobile drink vendor and buys a drink to quench his thirst, this is not a chance occurrence, but rather *hashgacha pratit*. For this exact reason the vendor was aroused at the exact moment, and drove to the boy's precise location, so that his thirst could be quenched. The Rebbe said that a child understands this, for he heard a story of the Baal Shem Tov on this topic.¹² Furthermore, the Rebbe added that specifically



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such stories should be told to children, not “*Bubbe-mayzes*.” The Rebbe then went on to discuss proper children’s education.

Uplifting Aura

After singing the usual *niggunim*, the Rebbe said that we must pause for *seudas Shabbos*, and the *farbrengen* will therefore resume tomorrow. The Rebbe encouraged everyone to properly utilize the final moments of Simchas Torah.

The Rebbe led the bentching, and then handed the *challos* to Reb Moshe Yeruslavski, for the *hachnasas orchim*. The *farbrengen* lasted about two hours.

While walking to his place for Kabbalas Shabbos, the Rebbe clapped energetically; the aura was quite uplifting. The *chazzan* Reb Berel Zaltzman sang “*Lecha Dodi*”¹³ and many other portions of davening, and the Rebbe motioned with his hand for the crowd to join in the song.

The Rebbe recited *kaddish yasom*.¹⁴ After davening, the Rebbe wished those present a triple “*Gut Yom Tov*” with hand motions, as usual, and left while encouraging the singing along the way.

Fortunate is the eye that witnessed all this! **T**

1. For a full history, see: *On the Front Lines: The Founding of Tzivos Hashem*, Derher Adar 5777.
2. The square enclosure in the middle of 770 where the *hakafo*s would take place, surrounded by metal tables to ensure that the crush of people wouldn’t overrun it. For more on this, see: *Uniting. Uplifting. Transcending: Simchas Torah with the Rebbe*, Derher Tishrei 5778.
3. Yirmiyahu 31:7.
4. For a history of the Rebbe’s Torah, see *The Rebbe’s Sefer Torah*, Derher Tishrei 5773.
5. He spent Yom Tov in the hospital, due to a health issue.
6. For this Torah’s history, see: *Sefer Torah shel Moshiach*, Derher Shevat 5776.
7. For more on this, see: *Shabbos at the Library*, Derher Sivan 5776.
8. The yeshiva (and its staff) was under Rashag’s auspices.
9. Under the auspices of the Rebbe’s *mazkirus*.
10. Melachim I 8,66.
11. Tehillim 136,4. One of the *pesukei Ata Hareisa*.
12. Likutei Diburim vol. 4, א, תקפד.
13. *Lecha Dodi* was generally chanted - not sung - in those years.
14. For the Rebbe’s grandmother, Rebbetzin Rochel.



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