



JEM105999

<p>ע"י בנם ר' יקותיאל יהודה וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו רוהר</p>	<p>טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן' הוקדש לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'</p>
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# Through Fire And Water

IYAR 5726\*



Despite the gloomy weather forecast, the Lag B'omer parade of 5726\* was truly one to remember. Thousands of Jewish children, from schools on all ends of the spectrum, proudly marched in solidarity to celebrate their heritage. The highlight of the parade was when the Rebbe stood on a *bima* outside 770 and addressed the large audience.

Here are selections from letters written by Reb Sholom Ber Wolpo, then a *bochur* from Eretz Yisroel who was learning in 770.

## PARADE PLANS

**7 Iyar:** Lag B'omer will fall out again on a Sunday this year. As the schools have off on Sundays, Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch utilizes the opportunity to arrange a grand parade for Jewish children enrolled in New York public schools. In previous years (with the exception of 5723\*), the Rebbe came out in front of 770 to address these children.

Hopefully, this year, the Rebbe will come out again. It looks rather promising, as the Rebbe has expressed significant interest in this year's parade, urging us to try to get tens of thousands of children to attend.

Today, I went on Released Time to a public school around half-an-hour away from 770. As usual, we waited for the children to trickle out of their respective classes and then transported them to a nearby shul. We sat with them and told stories, taught *halachos*, sang songs, etc. Afterwards, we went to the school gates and upon dismissal distributed pamphlets advertising the upcoming Lag B'omer parade.

## FIRE

**15 Iyar:** Last night, we were learning in *zal* when at around 11:30 p.m., we were interrupted by a sudden commotion and the sounds of sirens from approaching fire trucks. We watched as the Rebbe left his room and walked out of 770. Naturally, we ran outside after him to see what was going on. The Rebbe went over to the Rebbetzin, who was waiting in a car nearby, and told her something. He then turned towards the firefighters, who had just stopped at their destination—the building on the corner, which housed the yeshiva dormitory where we slept...<sup>1</sup>

The Rebbe said, "*Lomir geien zeh'n vos tut zich*" (let's go see what's going on) and went to the entrance of the building. There were tens of firefighters running about, all dressed in protective gear and wearing oxygen masks as they descended into the basement of the building. This was no minor blaze. It was a very dangerous situation, as the building and its surrounding buildings were all made of wood and thus very flammable. Worse still, the basement housed the building's central heating with fuel canisters lying around! All this was happening to a building that was attached to 770!

Moving closer to the building, the Rebbe approached the firefighters and inquired about



the situation. They informed the Rebbe that they had already extinguished the fire and that everything was under control. Apparently, the janitors were partying wildly in the basement when they started the fire in a state of intoxication.

The Rebbe returned to 770 and knocked on the door of the office of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, seeking Rabbi Hodakov. One *bochur* ran to retrieve him. The Rebbe told Rabbi Hodakov what had transpired: "*S'iz geven a sreifah in unzere binyan un m'hot gerufen di parzharnikes, un di bochurim dreyen zich un s'iz nito keiner vos zol reden mit di parzharnikes.*" (There was a fire in our building, the fire department was called and the *bochurim* are loitering about, but there is no one [responsible] to speak to the firefighters.) Then the Rebbe turned to the *bochurim* and, clearly displeased, said, "*Dos iz a farbrengen? Vos leift men mir noch?*" (Is this a farbrengen? Why are you all following me?)

The Rebbe went back to the Rebbetzin, and after the fire trucks left, her car was able to pass. At the end, everything worked out, and there was no severe damage except for one old couch in the basement.

## EXTRACURRICULAR ENDEAVORS

Last Thursday night, 8 Iyar, the *hanhala* had a *yechidus*. The Rebbe requested that the *bochurim*

from Eretz Yisroel draft a written commitment to increase their learning of *nigleh* and Chassidus after *seder* and to have it signed by every *bochur*. This would be a concrete implementation of a previous request, as the Rebbe had urged several months ago that the *bochurim* from Eretz Yisroel should study more outside of *seidarim*.

And so it came to be. We committed to learning every evening, from the end of *seder* until 11:30, and on Thursday nights until midnight. Over the next few nights, we noticed Rabbi Hodakov would “casually” drop in to survey the *zal*. He would scrutinize the *bochurim* to see who kept their commitment, and reported it to the Rebbe.

## YECHIDUS

The Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Yehuda Unterman, was slated to arrive for a *yechidus* today. However, due to technical difficulties, his visit was postponed until next week.

Instead, the first to enter for *yechidus* was the rav of Antwerp, Rabbi Medalie. His *yechidus* lasted for an hour and a quarter. After him, Rabbi Kalman Kahana<sup>2</sup> entered. His *yechidus* will probably last for a long while. A *bochur* who was standing next to the Rebbe’s room saw how the Rebbe got up and extended his hand in welcome when he walked into the room. My grandfather

## NO RAIN ON MY SCHEDULE

As the morning of the parade was very wet, alternate arrangements were being prepared for the parade, that some children would gather inside the shul and others would remain on the buses.

Earlier that day, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht met the Rebbe on his way back from *mikveh* and exclaimed, “There is no rain on my schedule!” The Rebbe responded, “There is no rain on my schedule either.”

When it came down to it, by the time the Rebbe was ready to come out, the rain had stopped. For the rest of the day, the weather was nice.

Interestingly, during the *sicha*, the Rebbe avoided using the words “*Im bechukosai*” and “*V’nasati gishmeichem.*” When Rabbi Hecht repeated the *sicha* in English, he wasn’t conscious of those omissions and included those *pesukim*.

Afterward, the Rebbe corrected him: “When so many Yidden gathered here it is not “*Im bechukosai*” (if you will heed my laws) as it is certain that they will! Also, there is no need to say “*gishmeichem*” (rains) as now is a time that we would prefer that it shouldn’t rain.”



A VIEW OF THE PARADE FROM THE ROOFTOP OF 788 EASTERN PARKWAY.

JEM 105598

(Reb Ezriel Zelig Slonim) was also scheduled to have a *yechidus* tonight, but it too was postponed until next week.

## THE PARADE

Over the past few weeks, we have all been very busy with the parade preparations. All in all, it was a beautiful parade. Although we had anticipated over ten thousand children, the torrential downpour that afflicted New York City that morning brought the number down to around five or six thousand.

I will write a brief rundown of today's parade:

The police closed off five large blocks on Eastern Parkway, from Albany to Rogers. The children were situated in four neat rows along Eastern Parkway, facing 770. There was a *bima* set up on the steps of 770, which allowed the Rebbe to walk right out and address the crowd.

Once everybody got into position, the Rebbe came out and spoke for approximately 15 minutes. The *sicha* was about essential lessons children can learn from the story of Lag B'omer.

Here is the general outline of what the Rebbe said:

“When the Roman senate issued a death warrant on Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, he took his son, and together they hid in a cave where they studied Torah for many years. In the merit of their learning, not only did they miraculously survive, but once they emerged, they became great Torah leaders.

“Thankfully, nowadays we do not suffer from such cruel edicts. However, one decree is still relevant – that is, the decree of the *yetzer hara*, who does everything in his power to prevent us from learning Torah and doing mitzvos. When a child realizes that the *yetzer hara* is baiting him, he should emulate Rashbi and seclude himself in a cave. That is, to hide from worldly matters and distractions, instead focusing on learning Torah and doing mitzvos, thereby foiling the *yetzer hara's* plans. And just like Hashem sustained Rashbi in the cave by providing him with a carob tree, etc., so too Hashem will provide anything you may need. Your parents will reap much *nachas* from this, and it will further hasten Moshiach's coming.”

Of course, I shortened it for brevity, but in a nutshell this was what the Rebbe said.

The *sicha* left a strong impression on all those present. In fact, after the parade, a woman (who had come to bring her children) told me that while the Rebbe said the *sicha*, she noticed women around her weeping emotionally.

Indeed, the scene of the parade left an indelible impression on anyone fortunate to be present at this momentous occasion. Just picture five or six thousand Jewish children marching together while

carrying banners emblazoned with phrases like “*Ein Od Milvado*” and other slogans in English and Yiddish urging the observance of Shabbos and *kashrus*...

After the Rebbe delivered the *sicha*, the parade coordinator, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht, repeated the *sicha* in English. Then the parade began. In groups of four, the children marched along Eastern Parkway and were led past the Rebbe by their counselors. Each group proudly carried their banners which also identified their school. The procession lasted for about an hour until all the children had walked past.

Throughout the procession, the Rebbe smiled and waved to the children. It was a spectacular scene vividly demonstrating how the Rebbe's greatness expresses itself in his humility. He gives so much of his precious attention to small children because every Jew matters dearly to him.

The procession continued all the way to Eastern Parkway and Rogers, where 180 buses were waiting to take the children to the largest park in Brooklyn. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I claimed that this park is bigger than the entire Yerushalayim. Upon arrival, we distributed sandwiches and fruits to all the children, and of course, we washed and *bentched* with them. Then the counselors entertained their groups with activities and games.

It is incredible that we were able to source so many yeshiva *bochurim* to be counselors. We recruited counselors from almost every yeshiva in Brooklyn; for example, Yeshivas Yitzchak Elchanan (Yeshiva University) provided us with 70 *bochurim*.

I was appointed to distribute the food to each group. Once I had finished, I was given a group to take charge of. I had to keep them entertained with all sorts of games and amusing “*shtick*.” My co-counselor speaks English, so he told them interesting stories. Every set of counselors was paired up with that in mind.

At 3:00 p.m., megaphones blasted, summoning all the children to the center of the park. They raffled off fancy prizes like cameras and bikes for all the children who participated. After the raffles, the children boarded their respective buses and went home content after a full day of fun and excitement.

Overall, the event was a great success and will hopefully result in many positive outcomes. **1**

1. This is the basement of 788 Eastern Parkway, which was purchased by Merkos in 5725. During those years it was occupied by 770 *bochurim* and several *anash* families. See “The Heartbeat of Lubavitch,” part 2 in Derher Iyar 5775.

2. Rabbi Dr. Kalman Kahana was a rav in Eretz Yisroel, and a member of Knesset from the Poalei Agudas Yisroel party. He started a *beis midrash* dedicated to learning *halachos* of an agricultural lifestyle.

# פרסום ראשון



IN ORDER TO HELP WITH THE TRANSLATION OF SICHA, RABBI HECHT RECORDED THE REBBE'S WORDS AND THEN LISTENED TO THEM WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY OFFERING AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION (IN ADDITION TO TAKING NOTES, AS HE USUALLY WOULD). IN THE VIDEO OF THE EVENT, RABBI HECHT IS SEEN SHOWING THE REBBE THE RECORDING DEVICE BEFORE BEGINNING THE TRANSLATION AND THE REBBE SMILES AT HIM. WHILE RABBI HECHT SPEAKS, THE REBBE FOLLOWS ALONG IN RABBI HECHT'S NOTES, PICTURED HERE IN THIS NEWLY RELEASED PHOTO FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE NCFJE.

IN THE ENSUING YEARS, RABBI HECHT USED A SEPARATE PODIUM DURING THE PARADES.