



TORAH EXPANSE

THE KINUS TORAH

לע"נ
מזכיר כ"ק אדמו"ר
הרה"ח ר' ירחמיאל בנימין בן
מנחם הלוי ע"ה קליין
נלב"ע י"ח סיון ה'תשע"ה
ת"נצ"ב
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



BACKGROUND

During the Yomim Tovim, 770 was crowded with many guests who would travel from around the world to be in the Rebbe's holy presence. In particular, during the month of Tishrei as is widely known, and also for Shavuos, when many rabbonim would visit.

Beginning in 5718*, with the Rebbe's encouragement, Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik, the *rosh yeshiva* of 770, initiated a *kinus Torah*, a gathering where *roshei yeshivos*, rabbonim, and others would deliver *pilpulim* and hold discussions in Torah. The *kinus* was held in the upstairs *zal* of 770, on the day after Shavuos (when we receive the Torah), as well as the day after Simchas Torah (when we complete the Torah and begin it anew). Since 5732*, a *kinus* was also held on the day after Acharon Shel Pesach (presumably because of the large crowd who had come for Pesach in connection with the Rebbe's 70th birthday).

One day ahead of the inaugural *kinus Torah*, during the *farbrengen* on the second day of Shavuos 5718*, the Rebbe delivered a deep *pilpul* weaving together both *nigleh* and Chassidus. At the conclusion of the *sicha*, the Rebbe announced: "Considering that



A KINUS TORAH IN THE 5730S*.

tomorrow a gathering will take place where words of Torah will be discussed, the idea I shared will serve as my participation... Just as the Torah was given in a desert where no one lives, so that no one shall lay claim that the Torah belongs to them, rather it is for each and every Yid—surely everyone will participate in the kinus, whether they were personally invited or not..."

Ever since then, at the Yom Tov *farbrengens* ahead of the *kinus Torah*, the Rebbe would say a *sicha* that would serve as his participation in the *kinus*. These *sichos* were usually an in-depth idea in *nigleh*. Sometimes, the Rebbe would explain the idea from a Chassidus perspective too. Once, the Rebbe mentioned that the order of the *sicha* is first the idea in

nigleh followed by Chassidus, as the Alter Rebbe writes in Hilchos Talmud Torah, that this is the appropriate approach to studying Torah.¹

Rabbi Leibel Schapiro relates: "The *farbrengen* of Simchas Torah 5722* was quite a memorable one. The Rebbe had said a lot of *l'chaim* on a strong *mashke*, and the style of *sichos* that followed was very unusual. The Rebbe cried heavily when speaking about the Yidden behind the Iron Curtain. At one point the Rebbe said *l'chaim* while standing in his place, and then said an entire *sicha* while standing.

"Just before he went on to say the *sicha* for the *kinus Torah*, the Rebbe put his hand over his forehead and began to speak a very deep *nigleh sicha* regarding the Rambam's ruling



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

SCENES FROM SOME OF THE EARLY KINUSEI TORAH THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE SMALL ZAL.

that a king who inherits the rule from his father does not need to be anointed with the *shemen hamishcha*. The *sicha* lasted for about 45 minutes while the Rebbe's eyes were closed from the beginning until the end."

After the Rebbe would say this *sicha*, Rabbi Mentlik would announce the details of when the *kinus* would take place, and the Rebbe would give him the leftover challah, *mezonos*, and wine from the farbrengen to be served at the *kinus*.

The *kinus Torah* was always set to take place on *Isru Chag*. It would begin after Mincha and usually continue until 9:00 or 9:30 when it was time for Maariv. Sometimes, it would continue after Maariv and could conclude close to midnight.

One year, *Isru Chag* fell on a Friday, so the *kinus* was scheduled for Sunday, and various prominent rabbonim were invited to participate. At the farbrengen, when the Rebbe concluded the *sicha* for the *kinus*, he told Rabbi Mentlik to make an announcement inviting everyone to the *kinus* which would take place the next day. Without batting an eyelash, Rabbi Mentlik announced, "The *kinus Torah* will begin tomorrow at 12 o'clock, and will continue on Sunday at 3:30." Subsequently

this became the regular schedule whenever *Isru Chag* fell on a Friday.

Pesach 5749* fell out like this. At the farbrengen of the following Shabbos, the Rebbe commented that since the *kinus* had begun on Friday and will continue on Sunday, it follows that Shabbos is in the middle of the *kinus Torah*, so to speak.²

THE KINUS

The first speaker at the *kinus* was Reb Yoel Kahn, who would repeat the Rebbe's *sicha* said as a participation in the *kinus Torah*. At times, moments before the *kinus*, the Rebbe would send out a note adding to the *sicha* from the day before. As per the Rebbe's instructions,³ the *sicha* would be discussed at greater length by the subsequent speakers.

It should be noted that these *sichos* were said only one day before they were to be discussed by the *roshei yeshivos* from their own point of view, giving them little time to delve into the subject. Oftentimes, at the farbrengen the following Shabbos the Rebbe would continue the discussion and include various thoughts that were raised during the *kinus*.

In Rabbi Leibel Groner's diary from

*Isru Chag Sukkos 5722** (see above), he writes how the Rebbe asked him about the *kinus Torah*. When Rabbi Groner mentioned that Reb Yoel repeated the *sicha* from the farbrengen, the Rebbe asked whether there were any questions raised on the *sicha*, and noted: "Previously they have sent in questions they had [on the *sichos*], probably they will do the same today."

On occasion, the Rebbe would instruct various people to speak at the *kinus Torah*. For instance, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Mentlik to invite Rabbi Simcha Elberg of Agudas Harabbonim to participate. Mr. Zalmon Jaffe was also instructed by the Rebbe to speak at the *kinus*. When Rabbi Leibel Kaplan was a *chosson*, the Rebbe told him in *yechidus*, "Prepare an idea in *nigleh* and either publish it in one of the *kovtzim* or deliver it at the *kinus Torah* after Simchas Torah."

Often, while a speaker was delivering his *pilpul*, he would be interrupted with questions from those present, who disagreed with his reasoning, which led to a public debate that went on for some time.

At the *kinus Torah* after Pesach 5736*, Rabbi Chaim Gutnick spoke about the Alter Rebbe's opinion regarding the prohibition of *chametz*, whether it is a prohibition that applies to the person, mandating that a person may not own *chametz*—'*gavra*'—or a prohibition that applies to the



MR. ZALMON JAFFE WOULD OFTEN SHARE EXCERPTS FROM HIS DIARY FROM THE YOMIM TOVIM WITH THE REBBE.

RABBI SIMCHA ELBERG OF AGUDAS HARABBONIM WAS INSTRUCTED BY THE REBBE TO SPEAK AT THE KINUS TORAH.



* 5749-1989, 5722-1961, 5736-1976

chametz that it should not be in Jewish possession—‘*cheftza*.’ Rabbi Gutnick concluded that it’s an *issur gavra*. Instantly, this raised a huge ruckus in the *zal*, for in the *sicha* said for the *kinus* the Rebbe concluded otherwise.

Rabbi Gutnick later wrote about this to the Rebbe, to which he received an answer: “Without a *gevald*,” indicating that he need not be concerned to raise a perspective different from the *sicha* at the *kinus*, and then went on to bring many sources that indicate the nature of the prohibition of *chametz* being an *issur cheftza*.⁴

Between talks, there would be a short break, when many would continue the discussions on the topic just delivered. During these breaks, the challah, *mezonos* and *mashke* received from the Rebbe would be distributed.

After the *kinus* a report would be sent to the Rebbe. In 5736*, the report included that *tzedakah* was given at the *kinus* and that it extended into a *farbrengen* later on. In the Rebbe’s answer to the report, he emphasized both of these points.

THE REBBE’S COMMENTS ON THE IDEAS RAISED

On some occasions, the Rebbe would comment on ideas spoken about by the *kinus Torah*.

One such example occurred during a Shavuos meal in 5730*. The Rebbe requested that one of the rabboim present should share a Torah idea. A rav who was visiting from out of town raised a question on the Rambam in the *halachos* of the *omer*, concluding that he prepared to speak about this



WHEN ISRU CHAG WOULD FALL ON FRIDAY, THE KINUS WOULD BEGIN IN THE SMALL ZAL ON FRIDAY AND CONTINUE WITH A LARGER CROWD ON SUNDAY IN THE LARGE ZAL.

at the *kinus Torah*, so he didn’t want to share his answer at the table. The Rebbe commented that he should take into account that this issue is raised in the *Sefer Hamoadim B’halacha* by Rabbi Zevin, thus people may say that he copied his speech from there. Then the Rebbe went on to answer the question raised.

Dayan Michael Fischer of London, a well known *Litvishe* rov, spent Shavuos 5736* in the Rebbe’s presence.

Naturally, he was honored to speak at the *kinus Torah*. Before he delivered his *pilpul* he began with an introduction: “*Rabbosai*, I don’t have a drop of Chassidic blood in my veins, I’m a *Litvak* all the way back to the Vilna Gaon. *Rabbosai*! I sat at the *farbrengen* the evening before Shavuos and within two hours half of Shas had been cited, and you are sleeping? How can you sleep when you hear half of Shas in two hours?”

The following day he merited to have a long *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Among other things, he told the Rebbe about the topic of his *pilpul* at the *kinus Torah*, to which the Rebbe responded, “We will talk about this later.”

During the *farbrengen* on the following Shabbos, the Rebbe delivered an unusually long *sicha*

on the topic of *tevilas keilim*, and particularly Rashi’s opinion on the matter, in his commentary on Chumash. Following the *sicha*, the Rebbe turned around to Dayan Fischer (who was seated behind the Rebbe) and remarked “Did I pay up my debt?”

Rabbi Schapiro relates: “One year, the Rebbe spoke about the Alter Rebbe’s ruling that it’s preferable to make the *bracha* on the lulav in the sukkah. The Rebbe explained that it’s not only ideal in regards to how to perform the mitzvah of lulav, but it is also the ideal manner of performing the mitzvah of sukkah, for anything meaningful during Sukkos should be done in the sukkah.

“During the *seudah* in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s apartment, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Dubruskin posed a question to the Rebbe: ‘Why is that we do not make the *bracha Leishev Basukkah* before *bentching* lulav? The Rebbe replied, indeed, it is appropriate to eat some *mezonos* immediately after lulav in order to say the *bracha Leishev Basukkah*, having in mind also the mitzvah of lulav. (Surprised, Rabbi Dubruskin asked, ‘Before davening?’ To which the Rebbe replied, ‘Nu...’)

“After Yom Tov, Rabbi Dubruskin spoke about this topic at the *kinus*

Torah, reasoning that ostensibly a *bracha* must be made prior to performing the mitzvah, only to conclude that for the mitzvah of sukkah, we indeed find this unique exception and a *bracha* can be made after performing the mitzvah.”

OUTSIDE 770

At the farbrengen of 15 Shevat 5731*, the Rebbe launched a new initiative, stating that it was now necessary to conquer the world through the study of Torah⁵. A few months later, just before Pesach, the Rebbe sent a message to the directors of Tzach in Eretz Yisroel, saying that a *shturem* must be made regarding increasing Torah study: When the *bochurim* are home from yeshiva, people should see a *bochur's* learning, and *kinusei Torah* should be held throughout Eretz Yisroel over Chol Hamoed. That year in New York too, *bochurim* traveled to Boro Park and held numerous *kinusei Torah* there. In 5749*, whenever the Rebbe would speak about the *kinus Torah*, he would encourage that they take place in all locations.

PUBLISHING THE TALKS

In 5727* the first booklet titled “*Kovetz Kinus Torah Lubavitch*” was published. It contained the talks from a *kinus* a year earlier. For the occasion of this *kovetz* being published, the Rebbe specially edited a *sicha* to be printed at the beginning of the booklet. In the *sicha*, the Rebbe speaks about the necessity of studying Torah in depth, a learning that demands full concentration and self-exertion to understand the in-depth meaning of the text.

This *sicha* was said at the farbrengen of Shavuot 5716*, and was later published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, after being edited by the Rebbe. Yet for its publication in this *kovetz*, the Rebbe edited the *sicha* again.

At the farbrengen of Shavuot 5746*, when speaking about the *kinus Torah*, the Rebbe mentioned the talks later being published. He stressed that everyone that speaks at the *kinus* should write up their talks so they can benefit a wider audience:



THE FIRST BOOKLET TITLED “KOVETZ KINUS TORAH LUBAVITCH” PRINTED IN 5727*.

“It is befitting and appropriate to publicize the Torah ideas discussed at the kinus Torah by printing them...”

“Obviously, regarding this matter there is no place for acting humble, since anything that’s related to Torah must be done in a bold manner. Thus, entertaining the thought of ‘who am I’ is opposed to the will of Hashem... Aside from speaking at the kinus, one should write up his talk in order that they be published for the benefit of the public...”⁶

To better appreciate the



RABBI YISROEL YITZCHOK PIEKARSKI, THE ROSH HAYESHIVA IN 770, SPEAKS AT THE KINUS.

* 5731-1970, 5749-1989, 5727-1967, 5716-1956, 5746-1986

importance the Rebbe regarded for the *kinus Torah*, we will conclude with the following story:

The Rebbe once left 770 while the *kinus Torah* was taking place. On the sidewalk, there was a *chosson* in conversation with his future father-in-law. Seeing them, the Rebbe gestured in surprise, implying “What’s this about?”

The *chosson* explained that they were discussing matters related to the upcoming wedding. “During the *kinus Torah*? During the Kinus Torah?!” replied the Rebbe. “To prepare for the wedding, time can be borrowed from sleeping.” He then indicated for both of them to enter 770 and attend the *kinus*.

A NEW WORLD

Over the years, the Rebbe extolled the participation in the *kinus Torah*, stating that it was a “*kinus shel tzaddikim*,” which as the Mishnah says,



RABBI MENTLIK AT THE KINUS OF TZACH ON CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS 5748*, A FEW DAYS BEFORE HIS PASSING.

is “pleasant for them [the participants] and pleasant for the world.”

The Rebbe also connected this gathering—the *kinus Torah*—with the ultimate “gathering” that we are all awaiting: “ואתם תלוקטו אחד אחד”—when Hashem will gather each and every Yid by the hand and lead us all to the *geulah*, speedily.⁷

1. Simchas Torah 5747.
2. Toras Menachem 5749 vol. 3, p. 72.
3. Toras Menachem 5750 vol. 3 p. 293.
4. Igros Kodesh vol. 31, p. 198.
5. See Derher, Shevat 5773.
6. Toras Menachem 5746 vol. 3 p. 526.
7. See Simchas Torah 5746, et. al.

RABBI MENTLIK’S DEVOTION

Although the *kinus Torah* as we know it began only in 5718*, on two occasions there was a *kinus Torah* in 770, led by Rabbi Mentlik, during the *nesius* of the Friediker Rebbe, in the summer of 5705*. Many prominent rabbonim of the time were in attendance at those *kinusei Torah*. Among those who spoke was Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who was invited as the guest of honor.

Throughout the years, Rabbi Mentlik regarded the *kinus Torah* as his sacred duty. In the weeks before he passed away, he was in and out of the hospital regularly. During Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5748*, he was hospitalized for the last time. While sitting on his hospital bed, in between examinations, he was busying himself organizing the details of the upcoming *Kinus Torah*.

Rabbi Mentlik passed away on Motzei Shabbos Bereishis, and his *levaya* took place the following day while the *kinus Torah* was taking place in 770.

After his passing, others took over his responsibility of arranging the *kinus Torah*. Regarding the criteria of who should fill this responsibility, the Rebbe wrote

a sharp answer after one of the following *kinusim*:

Our Rabbeim were very firm about the rigorous study of nigleh in Tomchei Temimim, so much so that the Rebbe Rashab stated publicly that he is not pleased by the lack of rivalry, etc., between the teachers of nigleh and of Chassidus in Tomchei Temimim. One of the things that is unique in the yeshiva since it was founded, is obviously the kinus Torah. Is it impossible to find in Tomchei Temimim—or at least among the guests—one baal nigleh to take part (at the very least) in heading the kinus??

