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Erev Sukkos

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בהצרות קדשינו | חלק ג': חג הסוכות

*Excerpts from a conversation with
Rabbi Yosef Katzman:*

DAYS OF JOY

Inasmuch as Yom Kippur was a serious day, Motzoei Yom Kippur brought with it an immense *simcha* as the Rebbe clearly displayed that the days of joy were right around the corner. As Maariv ended and Havdala was recited, the Rebbe famously ushered in the festive atmosphere by announcing "Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov! Gut Yom Tov!" Immediately thereafter, the Rebbe began singing "Visomachta," while strongly encouraging the crowd to sing along. I can recall this happening as early as 5728.

In those days, Sukkos was a "*baalle-batish*" Yom Tov. While the bochorim were always with the Rebbe for the *Yomim Noro'im*, some went home for the first days of Sukkos. There was a bus from Montreal to Crown Heights, however those people who lived overseas stayed home. Inevitably, the remaining crowd consisted primarily of *baalle-batim* and guests. For the most part, the *baalle-batim* would come to New York on Chai Elul and stay until Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, though some stayed for less. Despite all that took place, the



RARE PHOTO: THE REBBE EXITS 770 FOR THE SUKKAH WITH LULAV AND ESROG IN HAND, CIRCA MID-5720'S JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE 102607

atmosphere was quiet. As the years progressed from the "*Chofs*" (5720s) to the "*Lameds*" and "*Mems*" (5730s and 5740s), the crowd grew as more people started coming to Crown Heights for Sukkos, and Simchas Torah.

Erev Sukkos was the day when the Rebbe would both receive and distribute the *Daled Minim*. The Rebbe received *esrogim* from Kfar Chabad, and gave *Daled Minim* to about thirty people. Besides the respected members of the community to whom the Rebbe presented *Daled Minim*, a lucky "*goiral*" winner, sometimes two, usually from

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...וכשיבוא מישהו
וישאלהו "וואס
עפעס מיט אמאל",
לשמחה מה זו
עושה? - הריהו
עונה לו: "וואס
הייסט", הרי כבר
נדפס בעיתונים -
שמושיח כבר בא,
"משיח איז שוין
געקומען!!" ותיקף
ומיד בא לכל אחד
ואחד מאיתנו,
וכאו"א מכס, ולוקח
את כולנו לאה"ק
ולירושלים עיר"ק,
שם ימשיכו בשמחת
בית השואבה.

(משיחת ש"פ האדוני תשל"ב)



FARBRENGEN SIMCHAS BEIS HASHOEVA IN THE SUKKA 5715



Eretz Yisroel (but sometimes from Europe), would receive a set as well.

During Chol Hamoed there were a number of special activities. “*Mivtza Daled Minim*” was started in 5714 and was one of the Rebbe’s earliest campaigns. The other event which took place during Chol Hamoed Sukkos was the Simchas Beis Hashoeva *Farbrengens*. Tzach would arrange for *anash* to travel to other communities and hold *farbrengens*. The Rebbe considered this to be very important, and at times he gave a special *hora’ah* that by each of these *farbrengens* there should be a local, an Israeli, a European and a Russian representative. This gave each gathering an international flair, bringing a special “*brocha*” and energy from each country to the *farbrengen*.

On Sukkos morning, beginning at 7:00am though sometimes later, everyone had the opportunity to shake the Rebbe’s *lulov* and *esrog*. At the time, we didn’t even buy a *lulov* and *esrog* to use at home because we used the Rebbe’s!

The Rebbe would *farbreng* on Motzoei Yom Tov of the first days (going into Chol Hamoed), on Shabbos Chol Hamoed (in years that this occurred), and during Chol Hamoed (“*Simchas Beis Hashoeva*”) for the yeshiva bochurim. (The weekday Chol Hamoed *farbrengens* went on until 5724).

JOY IN THE STREETS

The custom of dancing in the streets for *Simchas Beis Hashoeva* which exists until today, has a fascinating history behind it. After *Maariv* on the first night of Yom Tov in 5741, the Rebbe astounded the Chassidim in 770 by turning around and saying a *sicha* from his *shtender*. “In the times of the Beis Hamikdosh, *Simchas Beis Hashoeva* had to begin Motzoei Yom Tov, because then there was an obligation to play the *chalil* (recorder) and other musical instruments which doesn’t supersede the prohibition of playing music on Yom Tov. Nowadays when the joy doesn’t necessitate musical instruments, it must begin on the first night.”

In response to the Rebbe’s call for *simcha*, we began to dance with great vigor. This started in 770 and then continued into the street in front of the building. After Kiddush, a group led by Rabbi Leibel Raskin of Morocco continued the dancing that began in shul. Eventually, the troop snaked through the streets of Crown Heights singing and dancing very joyously. Their last stop was Montgomery and Kingston where they danced until daybreak. They were joined by the rest of the *bochurim* and *anash* as the night went on.

When the Rebbe heard about the all night dancing he was very happy, but recommended that in the future it be done with the consent of the police. The next



night the police made us dance on Montgomery itself, not allowing us to celebrate on Kingston. It was extremely *freilach*. Reb Avrohom Mayor farbrenged in his Sukkah and we danced outside. On Chol Hamoed live music was organized to enhance the evening; and so began the nightly *Simchas Beis Hashoeva* in the streets of Crown Heights. From then on, the Rebbe would deliver a *sicha* every evening of Sukkos, and showed his great satisfaction with the dancing in the street, thus making the custom all that much stronger.

FARBRENGEN IN THE RAIN

Until now we spoke about what happened in general during the early years, now let us explore some of the precious moments that occurred in specific years back then. In the year 5727 we experienced an event which proved that we really are judged for water on Sukkos. There was a heavy rainfall by the Rebbe's Farbrengen in the Sukkah on Shabbos Chol Hamoed and we all became soaked. The Rebbe entered with a coat, and I remember that at one point the Rebbe threw the coat off. At *kos shel berocha* the Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing as if nothing was happening. The joy and energy were exceptional, and although I was just a child then, I'll never forget the image of the Rebbe swinging his arm in the Sukkah on that rainy day.

On the second day of Sukkos 5730, Reb Tzvi Hersh (Heishke) Gansbourg's wife passed away at a young age, leaving him with five young orphans. When the Rebbe was notified of the terrible news in middle of the farbrengen, he was visibly distressed. As was his usual custom on Simchas Torah, that year Reb Heishke went with his children to *Hakafos* at a shul nearby despite having just attended his wife's funeral on the first day of Chol Hamoed. While there, he made Kiddush and returned to 770 in high spirits. The Rebbe said a powerful *sicha* about *simcha*, and as it was Reb Heishke's job to start the *niggunim* by the Rebbe's *Farbrengens*, he began to sing. I will never forget the *niggun* he started at that moment and how he sang it. The *niggun* was a joyous one traditionally sung with the Russian words "*E Vadye My Ne Utonem*," but Reb Heishke sang it wordlessly. The Rebbe just looked at him with an expression that I interpreted to say, "You? Wow!" And the Rebbe began to swing his arms very strongly while staring at Reb Heishke. Eventually, the Rebbe got the whole place on fire! It was an unbelievable scene.

THE REBBE'S UNITED NATIONS

The year 5730 was the last that the Rebbe farbrenged in the Sukkah. In 5731 the Rebbe farbrenged in the shul on *Leil Shabbos Chol Hamoed* and said the Maamer, "*Halilu Es Hashem Kol Goyim* (all the

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תבלת שחרית חול המועד סוכות תשכ"ט



הזכרת נשיאינו ופעולותיהם ותורתם מסייע בזה,
וכידוע פתגם כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר הכ"מ: עס איז דא ד
חסידשע אושפיזין הבעש"ט הר"מ [הרב המגיד],
אדמו"ר הזקן, אדמו"ר האמצעי, אדמו"ר הצמח צדק,
אדמו"ר מהר"ש נ"ע, אדמו"ר (מהורש"ב) נ"ע.

ואף אנו נאמר: כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר הכ"מ.

Mentioning our Rabbeim, their activities, and their Torah assists in all of the above. As the well-known saying of the [Friediker] Rebbe: There are [also] Chassidishe Ushpizin, the Baal Shem Tov, the Maagid, the Alter Rebbe, the Mittler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe (Rashab) Nishmasoi Eden.

And we let us also add: the [Friediker] Rebbe, my father-in-law HaKa"m.

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nations shall praise Hashem).” The *maamer*’s title was connected with the 25th anniversary of the United Nations which was marked that year; and the Rebbe made a big deal of the milestone.

On *Leil Simchas Torah* of that year the Rebbe said that he’s making his own UN with different Chassidim representing their various countries. “We’re the real *balle-batim* of the UN,” the Rebbe said, “and we’re going to vote as follows: Let our representatives decide now all together that the Jews are true, the Torah is true, Hashem is true, and that everything in the world must run according to the Torah. Then, anyone who agrees with this decision will say *L’chaim* together.” After the Rebbe’s UN voted, the Rebbe said, “The custom of those in the UN is when they finish voting they visit the theatre. So, let someone here perform a theatrical act! Someone should make a *kulleh*!” Reb Bentzion Shemtov took the Rebbe’s suggestion and made a somersault in the bleachers. Later on during *Hakafos*, the Rebbe reserved a special *Hakafa* for the members of the Rebbe’s United Nations.

In the year 5731 an interesting episode took place. Traditionally, the Chassidim that came to the Rebbe from Eretz Yisroel would keep only one day of Yom Tov. Despite this, on Simchas Torah that year the

Rebbe encouraged them to receive *aliyos*.

In the year 5732 the Rebbe paid for a group of recently immigrated Russians from Eretz Yisroel to come and spend Sukkos in New York. While they were in New York the Rebbe gave them a lot of attention. The program called “*Hachnosas Orchim*” arranged hosts for the Russian guests, and was started in that year by Reb Moshe Yeruslavsky from Tel Aviv. They ate in the Sukkah at 770, and the Rebbe came and visited them and delivered a *sicha* during the meal.

When the Russian group came, another interesting event occurred. Reb Avrohom Hersch Cohen, a fiery Chossid of Yerushalmi origin, felt that when Chassidim come to the Rebbe they should do as the Rebbe does and keep two days of Yom Tov. The Russian group, he reckoned, would be an easy crowd to convince as most of them were previously in Eretz Yisroel for only one to four months, and thus had never kept any Yom Tov for one day like Israelis do. They listened to his counsel, and the rest of the group from Eretz Yisroel followed in their footsteps. What ended up happening was that nearly all of the Chassidim from Eretz Yisroel kept two days Yom Tov from that year on! The Rebbe was recognizably happy about the development, although he never voiced his opinion. ■



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נדפס
לחיווך ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר
צוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע