

# CELEBRATING YUD-TES KISLEV-CHAG HAGEULA

The main *farbrengen* of Yud-Tes Kislev took place Tuesday night in 770. Thousands of *Anash, ziknei ha'Chassidim, T'mimim, shluchim* and guests sat side by side at tables set in honor of the Rosh HaShana of *chassidus* in the place from which the light of *chassidus* goes out to the entire world.

The *farbrengen* was organized by the *gabbaim* and by R' Yaakov Herzog, and was emceed by Rabbi Y.Y. Katzman. The program began with a *D'var Malchus*, a video of the Rebbe.

100 years ago, the Rebbe Rashab sent his famous letter to the *yeshiva* in Lubavitch revealing that Yud-Tes Kislev is the *Rosh HaShana* for *Toras HaChassidus*. Rabbi Nachman Shapiro, *mashpia* in Oholei Torah and member of the Vaad L'Hafatzas Sichos, taught the letter at the *farbrengen* on Tuesday night with the Rebbe's explanations.

Rabbi Shalom Yaakov Chazan spoke about the connection between the Chag HaGeula of Yud-Tes Kislev and the seventh generation, in which a whole new dimension was added to the day since it is one of the seven days of *Sheva Brachos* of the Rebbe MH"M.

Rabbi Osdoba of the Crown Heights Beis Din made the *siyum ha'Shas* which is customarily done on Yud-Tes Kislev. Then he explained the connection between the beginning of *Shas* and the end, and connected it to *inyanei Geula* and *Melech HaMoshiach*.

The first Mishna in *Shas*

discusses a disagreement regarding the *sof z'man Krias Shma shel Arvis*. According to Rabbi Eliezer, the time is until the end of the first *ashmora* (watch); according to the *divrei chachamim* the time is until *chatzos*; and according to Rabban Gamliel, the time is until *alos ha'shachar*. Rabbi Osdoba homiletically explained these three times as corresponding to the three *Battei Mikdash*.

The first *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of a lack in Torah study, which is particularly associated with the first *ashmora*. The second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of unwarranted hatred, which is alluded to in the word "*chatzos*" from the root "*chatzi*." The third *Beis HaMikdash* is connected with the *alos ha'shachar*,

and according to those who explain the *alos ha'shachar* to mean two lights which rise in the sky before the light of day, this can allude to the lights the Alter Rebbe brought to the world as a preparation for the third *Beis HaMikdash*.

Then Rabbi Osdoba explained the connection between the authors of the statements and what they said. Rabbi Eliezer was Rabbi Akiva's foremost teacher, and Rabbi Akiva established five students from whose Torah we learn; these *rabbanim* establish the connection to *limud ha'Torah*. The *chachamim* in the time of the second Mikdash are connected with the strife that destroyed the Mikdash. And Rabban Gamliel, who was the *Nasi*, is associated with true and complete Redemption.



People at the main *farbrengen* on Yud-Tes Kislev in 770



Thousands in attendance at the *farbrengen*



(From right to left) R' S.M. Simpson, R' Nachum Volosov, R' Y.S. Kalmanson, R' S. Matusof, R' Chaikel Chanin, R' S.Z. Gurary, R' Y. Raitport, R' A. Osdoba (speaking)



(From right to left) R' Y. Schwei, R' L.Y. Shapiro, R' Y. Dubrawsky, R' Mendel Morosov, R' Moshe Morosov

Rabbi Yitzchok Raitport made a *siyum* of *Tanya*. He said that on Yud-Tes Kislev it is customary to make *siyumim* on *Shas* and *Tanya*. The difference between the two is that everybody participates in order to make the *siyum ha'Shas* by learning one tractate, but *Tanya* is completed by each individual.

Between speeches *niggunim* were sung. Cards were distributed so people could sign up for the *mesechta* they choose to learn this year. The guest speaker, R' Yitzchok Shochet, *shliach* in England, spoke at length about the connection between Yud-Tes Kislev and the final *Geula*.

Rabbi Yaakov Schwei made a *siyum* on the Rebbe's *HaYom Yom*. Rabbi Shneur Zalman Labkovski connected the *sidra* with Yud-Tes Kislev and *Geula*. Rabbi L.Y. Shapiro said the Rebbe's chapter of *T'hillim* and "*Yechi*." This concluded the official part of the program, and after the emcee thanked R' Sholom Ber Drizin for donating the *seuda*, people settled down in groups to *farbreng* on their own.

# THE 2ND EUROPEAN MOSHIACH CONGRESS

After last year's great success, the second European Congress was held in Beis Menachem – Chai Center in Stamford Hill, London. R' Chaim Yitzchok Cohen, director of the *mosad*, organized the event. Eretz Yisroel, Australia, Italy, Belgium, the U.S., France, and Canada had representatives at this year's congress.

The Congress began on Thursday night, *Motzaei* 14 Kislev with a *kabbalas panim farbrengen* for the first arrivals of *shluchim* and *Anash*. Those who were settled in were able to go on *mitvzaim* on Friday despite the short day.

After the spirited Friday night *davening*, there was a communal Shabbos meal for all the guests. *Anash* of London participated to hear the impassioned speech of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg, *mashpia* in Kfar Chabad and longtime columnist in *Beis Moshiach*, who came especially for the Congress along with the *shliach* from Ramla, R' Yitzchok Merla.

Throughout his stay, R' Levi Yitzchok continually *farbrenge*d, and his words left an indelible impression on all who heard him, including many Polish Chassidim who came to hear the *talmid muvhak* of the *mashpia* R' Mendel Futerfas. Local *mashpia* from *chashuvei ziknei Anash*, R' Shmuel (Mulla) Lieberov, also *farbrenge*d.

The Shabbos day was short, but every minute was used for *davening* and *farbrenging*. Many local people attended the *Melaveh Malka*, for they remembered last year's wonderful speech by Rabbi Shalom Dov Ber Kalmanson, *shliach* in Cincinnati.

Also this year his speech was well received. The *Melaveh Malka*

for that night's *farbrengen*, which drew a crowd of nearly 300 people.



Some of the people *farbrenging* at the Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengen*

*farbrengen* ended at 5:00 a.m.

On Sunday there were workshops on the topic of "*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*" – what else could be done to thaw the European cold and to prepare people to greet Moshiach. In the afternoon, a delegation of representatives of the Congress, Rabbis Cohen, Ginsberg, and Kalmanson, paid a courtesy call to Rabbi Efraim Padua, *av beis din* of the Chareidi Kehilla in London. The *sichos* of 5751-5752 were discussed, with Rabbi Padua taking special interest in the *sicha* of Bo 5752 in which the uniqueness of this generation, the ninth from the Baal Shem Tov, is explained.

Monday was devoted to preparing

The guest of honor was Rabbi Zushe Silberstein, who came especially from Montreal, and the main speech was delivered by R' Herschel Glick, a *rav* in London, who, following in the footsteps of his late father, serves as the itinerant *shliach* in a number of European countries.

R' Glick explained the role of our generation in disseminating the wellsprings as the means of bringing about the *hisgalus* of the Rebbe *shlita*. Every participant received a special gift: the beautiful book, *Shlita*, which was edited by R' Shneur Zalman Hertzel. At this *farbrengen*, which also lasted into the wee hours, there were many distinguished members of *Anash* of London, and students of the

## R' CHAIM YITZCHOK COHEN'S SPEECH

Good evening to the *shluchim* of the Rebbe MH" M who have traveled from all over the world, and who are assembled here this evening. They have journeyed from Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Israel, Italy, and the United States.

This is the second European Moshiach Congress, and unfortunately it is still taking place in *Galus*. I had hoped last year that we would celebrate this Congress in the *Geula*. But unfortunately it is not to be.

The question would therefore be, what and why are we still in *Galus*? What do we still need to do? Surely there has to be something that we have not done yet, and why haven't all those things that we have done the world over not yet brought about the true and complete Redemption.

At the same time I also, right at the onset, want to stress that as the Rebbe MH" M's *shluchim*, *chayalei Beis Dovid*, soldiers in the Rebbe's army, we are not really the ones to ask, but rather the ones to do. The question I put before you is only in order to help us in our dedication to the mission that the Rebbe MH" M has put before us.

Recent world events have moved the world forward in greeting Moshiach like never before. The Rebbe tells us that the world is ready to hear and learn about Moshiach; if there was doubt before the September 11<sup>th</sup> event, there should no longer be doubt.

A *shliach* of the Rebbe in the US told me that he was invited to speak at a Chabad House gathering outside and away from the cities of mainstream Judaism. It was after the September 11<sup>th</sup> event, and he said to himself that he will not mention Moshiach in his talk as people are too distraught about what had happened to America.

After his lecture, a hand was raised and the first question from the person in the audience was if the speaker

could spend time to talk about Moshiach and the connection to the event.

Another *shliach* in California spoke about someone about being invited to another city to speak, and the local *shliach* told the speaker not to mention Moshiach. He spoke about *Kabbala* and about *chassidus*, and left Moshiach out of his speech. The first question that was asked by one of the listeners: Does he believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach? The speaker did not waver – he responded positively with a lengthy explanation.

We see that the world is ready, that the world is forcing even those who do not want to speak about Moshiach to deal with it.

The unfortunate events that are taking place in Eretz Yisroel have brought also those who do not yet consider themselves observant to ask in private and in public when the Rebbe will be revealed already as Moshiach! ...

This is precisely my suggestion this evening. Our *shlichus* to the world is already moving full steam ahead. We are dealing with people, Jews and non-Jews, who are thirsty for spiritual knowledge and want to hear about

Moshiach. We do not need any more to fear the world, as the world is ready! ...

I call today to my colleagues the world over, especially those gathered here today. Let's try and find ways to bring those who have not yet come aboard the Rebbe's ship. Let's seek ways, whether by publication or other means, to bring everyone around to do what the Rebbe asks of us. Let's unite and close the ranks.

The Rebbe MH" M made some remarks in 1961 in reference to an American President who called for the Peace Corps and asked that volunteers travel to far-off places. The Rebbe said then that as a result of certain Chassidim who didn't want to go on *shlichus* to far-flung places, the gentile President made this concept more acceptable by bringing it down to the reality of the world.

Now is undoubtedly the appropriate time to quote the current President of the US, who said, "Are you with us or are you with them?"

Or as we would say it: Are you with the Rebbe in doing what is called for regarding Moshiach, or...? Each *chassid* is definitely with the Rebbe!

*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam va'ed!*



R' Chaim Yitzchok Cohen, reading the *hachlatos* of the Congress

# R' MEIR AVTZON, A'H

R' Meir Avtzon *a'h*, one of the *ziknei chassidei Chabad* of Crown Heights, was *niftar* on Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev. Hundreds of people participated in his funeral, including dozens of *ziknei ha'chassidim* who knew R' Meir throughout his life.

R' Meir personified a life of tremendous *mesiras nefesh* throughout the *nesius* of the Rebbe Rayatz. With total *bittul* he accepted the *nesius* of the Rebbe in 5710, and he was *mekushar* to the Rebbe *b'lev u'b'nefesh*.

Seeing him was seeing a *chassid* steeped in the ways of *chassidus*. He lived his life with every fiber of his being like a true 'CHaYaL' – *chassid*, *yira Shamayim*, and *lamdan*. He was often referred to as an *oved*, noted for the exemplary way in which he *davened* for hours at a time, totally immersed in every word, infused with *chassidishe niggunim*, and often in tears. For many years he had the *z'chus*, to stand like a soldier behind the Rebbe at *farbrengens*, and was famous for his meticulous attention to *niggunei Chabad*.

He was replete with stories of *elter chassidim* from the beginning of the Chabad dynasty, and told the many stories he had heard and seen in his youth. Each story he retold in clear detail, including all the famous Chassidim present at that time. As he told the story, he lived it – recalling vivid details as if he was once again transported to that time and place. Thus he contributed to the chain of *chassidishe* stories passed on from generation to generation.

He was unwavering in his belief and yearning of the *hisgalus* of the Rebbe MH"M. Hardly a greeting to a child or family member was without a *bracha* mixed with tears, hope, and joy for the coming of Moshiach. At every family *simcha* he had the *z'chus* to read the Rebbe's letter, and with tremendous emotion personally wished each *baal*

*simcha* that we should all be *zocheh* to the *hisgalus* of the Rebbe MH"M.

R' Meir was born on 8 Teives 5669 (1909) in the Poltava province in the Ukraine. He attended *cheider* as a child, and following his *bar mitzva* he learned in *yeshiva* in Kiev for one and a half years. Returning to his hometown, R' Meir continued his studies in a *shul* until 5686 (1926), when the *shadar*, R' Meir Gurkov, came to his town and convinced him to travel and learn in *Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim* in Charkov.

Arriving on Lag B'Omer, he was drawn to *Toras ha'chassidus* and became



*mekushar* to the Rebbe Rayatz. He received his *chassidic* education from the famous Mashpiim, R' Yechezkel Feigen and R' Nisson Nemenov. After *Simchas Torah* 5687, the *yeshiva* moved to Nevel, where R' Meir heard the ingenious lectures of the *rosh yeshiva*, R' Yehudah Eber.

When the Rebbe Rayatz was imprisoned, R' Meir joined his fellow *talmidim* in fasting and saying *T'hillim*. On *Simchas Torah* 5688, (1927) R' Meir was at the last *farbrengen* with the Rebbe Rayatz in Leningrad, and accompanied the Rebbe to the train station when he left Russia. For dozens of years thereafter, R' Meir would share his

experience of that *Simchas Torah*.

After the *yeshiva* in Nevel closed down, R' Meir went to teach boys in the *Yeshiva of Vitebsk*. A few weeks later he was sent to serve as *mashgiach* in the *Lubavitch Yeshiva* in *Kremenchug*. When the *Yevsektzia* came after him, he fled to *Vitebsk*, where he continued serving as a *melamed*. Unfortunately, the *Yevsektzia* caught up with him and they arrested and interrogated him. R' Meir was released and continued his wanderings, staying in *Moscow* until his second arrest in 5695 (1935). There, he worked only if it wouldn't entail desecrating *Shabbos*, and studied with children of *anash* in his free time.

On 13 Elul 5695 (1935) he was again imprisoned, this time with other Chassidim, and was sent to exile in *Turkistan* for 3 years. Even there, with great *mesiras nefesh*, he managed to eat in a *sukka*, *farbreng* on *Yud Tes Kislev*. etc.

During one of his incarcerations, R' Meir was placed in the same cell with another *chassid*, the father of two children. One day an officer came into their cell with an announcement that one of them may go free, but they should decide amongst themselves whom it would be. R' Meir told his friend to go because he had an obligation to his wife and children. The friend responded that R' Meir should leave so that he can find a wife and start a family. R' Meir was not to be persuaded differently and insisted that he is staying in prison whether his friend leaves or not. The friend left and returned to his family, eventually making his way to *England*. Many years later, this friend was elated to hear that R' Meir had gotten married and was the father of a very large family, *bli ayin ha'ra*.

After his release from exile in 1938, R' Meir returned to *Moscow* but was not given permission to live there. He lived in *Darchava*, quite a distance away, and had to escape many times to other locations. During *World War II* he

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returned to Moscow. During this time period, he was *moser nefesh* for the children of *anash* learning in underground *yeshivos*.

R' Meir's life was saved by R' Avrohom Maayor (Drizin), and he was greatly influenced by him. For 6 years, 1940-1945, the Drizins hid R' Meir in their cellar, in Moscow, despite the tremendous danger this posed for their family. They treated him in every way as a member of their family. During this time, the Drizin home merited frequent searches by the NKVD, and they constantly had to cover up for his presence. *B'chasdei Hashem*, both R' Meir and the Drizins remained unharmed.

Due to continuous searches for him by the NKVD, he moved to Tashkent, where he married his wife Cheyena, daughter of R' Yehuda Leib Karasik, *a'h*. During the migration from Russia in 1947, R' Meir left with his wife and their daughter. They lived in Poland for a few months, and then remained a few years in Paris, during which time R' Meir raised money for Tomchei T'mimim. They finally arrived in the United States in 5714 (1953).

R' Meir arrived in America, dressed in his *chassidische* clothing. As he deplaned with his six children, a photograph of him was snapped and publicized in the Jewish papers. It was considered most unusual for someone to take pride in his *Chassidic* appearance in America.

R' Meir and his family settled in Detroit, Michigan, where they established an open home. R' Meir worked as a *mashgiach* in *kashrus*. In his free time he studied *nigleh* and *chassidus*, taught his children, and disseminated *chassidus* in Detroit, at every possible opportunity. He gave a weekly *Likkutei Torah shiur* every Shabbos, taught and learned *chassidus* with many individuals, and celebrated every *Chassidische* event with *niggunim*, stories, and *chassidus*. With time, dozens of families and individuals became Lubavitch, some whose children are now on *shlichus*. Many more were brought close to the

Rebbe through corresponding with the Rebbe and receiving his *brachos* and guidance, and by coming to *yechidus* and *farbrengens*.

Living in Detroit did not change R' Meir's total Chassidic lifestyle. His uncompromising standards of *halacha*, and his constant learning, *davening*, and spreading *chassidus* were an example of his total belief that "*America iz nit andersh*." R' Meir and his wife rose to the challenge of raising a *Chassidische* family in the 1950s, in a city just beginning to plant seeds of *Yiddishkeit*. At that time there were only a handful of families in Detroit whose father had a beard and mother wore a *sheitel*.

Following the Rebbe's guidance, R' Meir and his wife Cheyena joined into the community effort in establishing a *yeshiva* and *mikva*. One by one they influenced many families to become committed to a Torah way of life – send their children to day school, use the *mikva*, etc.

R' Meir would save hard earned money from his small weekly salary to come to the Rebbe every year for Simchas Torah. Mrs. Avtzon joined a delegation from Detroit every year to go to the *kinus* of N'shei Chabad in Crown Heights. On a number of occasions, the Rebbe asked for her, and referred others to her. The Rebbe appreciated the tremendous influence they both had in Detroit, and added, *b'yad kodsho*, the title "*Shadar*" on several letters written to them.

When hundreds of Russian Jews moved into Detroit, Mrs. Avtzon established a large organization that arranged *brissin* and weddings for them. The Rebbe showed great approval for her work, in which her husband played a great part. The Rebbe sent special letters of greetings and dollars to the yearly festivals she and her husband made in recognition of the men and boys who had *brissin* that year. On one occasion, 48 men and boys were being honored. Several weeks in advance of the event, the Rebbe sent 49 dollars for the occasion. No one understood the

significance of the extra dollar until the day of the event. On that morning, a newly born Russian boy had his *bris* on the eighth day.

As more children were born, R' Meir had *yechidus* with the Rebbe in which he asked for a *bracha* for plentiful *parnasa* to marry off his children. The Rebbe did not give him the *bracha* he asked for. Instead, the Rebbe said, "You give Ruchnius Naden, and that is definite Naden." During another *yechidus*, the Rebbe *bentched* R' Meir that he would marry off all his children. Indeed, one and a half years ago, he married off his youngest son, and was overjoyed to take part in the *bris* and *pidyon ha'ben* of his grandson.

As a *chassid* of the seventh generation, R' Meir was firm in his belief in the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach. Even in the beginning of the Rebbe's *nesius*, he proudly shared this belief. When the Rebbe was informed of this, he responded that it shouldn't bother others that a *chassid* declares what he truly believes.

R' Meir settled in Crown Heights over fifteen years ago, after his wife's passing. He would *farbreng* with the youngsters and spent all hours of his day *davening* and learning. During the court case with the *s'farim*, when members of Agudas Chassidei Chabad had *yechidus* with the Rebbe, the Rebbe told them that it should really be the *ziknei anash* who represented Chassidim, and mentioned two names – R' Mendel Futerfas and R' Meir Avtzon.

The night of his *p'tira*, when R' Meir took ill and was taken by Hatzolah to the hospital, one of the attendants in the ambulance asked him, "Do you know where you are going?" R' Meir replied, "Yes, to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach." May he use his strength to demand the *hisgalus Melech HaMoshiach teikef u'miyad mamash*.

R' Meir Avtzon was *niftar* on Erev Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5762. He was *zocheh* to see much *chassidische nachas* from his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, many of who are *shluchim* and *askanim*.