זכרונות
Zichronos

By Rabbi Yehuda Leib Schapiro

Sukkos in the Rain

On Shabbos Chol HaMoed Sukkos תשכ"ז (1966), there was a farbrengen in the Sukkah, and it was raining hard. Everyone was standing in the rain when the Rebbe came in. The Rebbe entered with his coat over his shoulders, and when he sat down, he simply moved his shoulders and let the coat fall back over the chair behind him.

Then the Rebbe made Kiddush and I was watching carefully. I heard very clearly that the Rebbe made the brachah of Leisheiv BaSukkah. We know that the Rebbe brings down in many Sichos regarding the Baal Shem Tov and his Talmidim and Talmidei Talmidim, that they would eat in the sukkah even in the rain. But it was never clear whether one should make the brachah or not. But right then and there, I saw clearly that the Rebbe did make the brachah and it was visible to everyone.

The likely explanation is that the reason one is exempt from eating in the Sukkah when it is raining is because he is a mitzta'er, one who is burdened by it, and מצטער פטור מן הסוכה. But if a person is not a mitzta'er because the Mitzvah of Sukkah is so precious to him that he does not feel it as a burden, then he remains chayav in Sukkah. And if he is chayav, then he makes a brachah. (Some might argue that perhaps batlah da'ato אצל כל אדם, that since most people are mitzta'er, one person's attitude does not change the general halachic reality. But here it would seem that this was not just an individual matter. In this inyan, at least among Chassidim and certainly among Lubavitcher Chassidim, the Mitzvah of Sukkah is so precious that in a sense there is more tza'ar in eating inside the house on Sukkos than in sitting in the rain in the Sukkah. This is not a definite halachic explanation, but it is something to think about and maybe a possible way to understand it.)

The Yetzer Hara is Standing Right Here

In general, the farbrengens of Leil Simchas Torah before Hakafos, had a somewhat different character from regular farbrengens. For one thing, the crowd was usually smaller because many of the bochurim and yungerleit would go out to different shuls to help with Hakafos. Some would return in the middle of the farbrengen, some only toward the end, but at the beginning, there was a smaller oilam.

Additionally, in those years, the Rebbe often used more English words at the farbrengens seemingly because with the crowd being smaller, more outside people and strangers would just walk in. It was always a special kind of farbrengen.

I especially remember the farbrengen of Leil Simchas Torah תשכ"ג (1962). The Rebbe was speaking, as he often did then, on the Pesukim of Atah Horeisa, explaining different ideas in the Pesukim. He brought a vort from the Baal Shem Tov, a vort from the Frierdiker Rebbe, and other ideas as well. In connection with one of the Pesukim, the Rebbe began explaining with great emotion and tears, that no matter how much a person works on himself, no matter how great his avodah may be, and even after Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, etc, the Yetzer Hara does not let go. It is still there.

The Rebbe said that the Yetzer Hara tells a person: "You want to go to Hakafos? Go to Hakafos: אבער איך בין אויך דא. — But I am also here. I am with you at Hakafos too."

"You want to say Atah Horeisa? Say Atah Horeisa, אבער איך בין אויך דא — But I am also here."

You say אין עוד מלבדו, (there is no one besides Hashem)! Yes, but I am also here. "You want to say a pshat from the Baal Shem Tov? Let it be a \pshat from the Baal Shem Tov, the Yetzer Hara says, אבער איך בין אויך דא — But I am also here." "A vort from the Frierdiker Rebbe? — Let it be a vort from the Rebbe, der Shver. אבער איך בין אויך דא— But I am also here."

And the Rebbe quoted that chassidus says referring to the Yetzer Hara "אל זר אשר בקרבך" — the strange G-d that is Bekirbecha, inside you. In other words, whatever you do, the Yetzer Hara is still mixed in.

The Rebbe was crying as he said it. Then he began banging on the table with his fist and cried out: "אָט דא שטייט דער יצר הרע! אָט דא שטייט דער יצר הרע" — "The Yetzer Hara is standing right here! Right here stands the Yetzer Hara!" And the Rebbe went on: "no matter what one does, even if one takes mashkeh, the Yetzer Hara says: איך בין אויך דא — I am also here."

The Rebbe added that because of the Yetzer Hara constantly being around, a person wants everyone to listen to him and give him honor. Why do you care if you're not listened to, if not for the Yetzer Hara being there?

The Rebbe was crying so much that he put his head down on the table. The point that no matter what a person does, the Yetzer Hara can still be there, involved in everything, was

discussed with such depth and pain that it made an extraordinary impression.

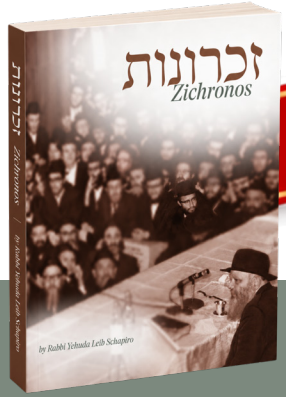
I remember that after this farbrengen, I went home to my Zeide's house, where I was staying. My Zeide had not been at the farbrengen because he was paralyzed and could not come. He had been the Rebbe's Melamed, and he had the greatest Derech Eretz and deepest hiskashrus to the Rebbe, but he could not walk, and since it was Yom Tov, he was not able to be there. Only on weekday farbrengens was he able to come for a short while.

After I came home and repeated what I had heard at the farbrengen, he told me the well-known story about Reb Levi Yitzchak of Barditchev. After the Barditchever got married, he left for a long time to learn by the Mezritcher Magid. Once, when he returned from the Maggid, they gave him the honor of saying Atah Horeisa. Before the Hakafos he put the Tallis over his shoulders, as was the custom, and stood there waiting and waiting and waiting, but he did not begin. Everyone wondered what was happening. Then suddenly they heard him say: "אויב אזוי זאג דו." — "If so, then you say." And he walked away.

Later, they asked him what had happened. He explained: I wanted to say Atah Horeisa, and I turned around and saw the Yetzer Hara standing right there beside me. So I asked him, "What are you doing here?" And he answered me, "What are you doing here?" I said, "What am I doing here? I am going to say Atah Horeisa." He replied, "You are going to say it? I am saying it with you." So I said, "You are saying it with me?" He answered, "Why not? Who are you?" I said, "Who am I? I learned by the Maggid." He answered, "You learned by the Maggid? I learned there together with you." And whatever else I said, I did this, I did that, he answered, "That I, too, was with you." So finally, the Barditchever said: "אויב אזוי זאג דו." — "If so, then you say." And he walked away.

My Zeide told me that this was exactly what the Rebbe had been saying: "אָט דא שטייט דער יצר הרע."

But the way the Rebbe said it, the crying, the depth, the brokenness, the pounding on the table made an immense impression on the whole oilam. It came from the deepest place in his heart, and you could feel it.



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Stav Ya Pitu and "Cheshbon Tzedek"

For many years, through 1963 (תשכ"ד), after the farbrengen of Leil Simchas Torah, the Rebbe would go to Hakafos. After Hakafos, he went upstairs to the apartment of the Frierdiker Rebbe to eat the Seudas Yom Tov, and then later, very late, towards morning, he would come back down and teach a new niggun.

The Rebbe would give out mashkeh to those who took upon themselves a Hosafah in learning Chassidus. During the distribution of the mashkeh he would teach a new niggun, and usually say a few words explaining its content. In (תשכ"ג 1962), the Rebbe taught the niggun "Stav Ya Pitu." It is a very difficult niggun because both the words and the melody are not simple. In fact, after Yom Tov, the Mazkirus gave out a tzetel with the words written in Hebrew letters with Nekudos. It was said that the text had been written by the Rebbe himself, though of course they did not distribute the actual ksav. Without that, people would hardly have known the words properly because it is not straightforward Russian and not straightforward Ukrainian.

When the Rebbe taught it, he also explained the Toichen of the niggun and would ask Reb Yoel Kahn and Reb Moshe Teleshevsky to repeat it. The crowds would slowly catch on. The Rebbe also said that on the next day, at the farbrengen of Yom Simchas Torah, he would explain it further.

Often, when the Rebbe introduced a new niggun after Hakafos, at the next farbrengen of Yom Simchas Torah he himself would sing it over again. Sometimes at the farbrengen he would ask someone else to repeat it, such as Reb Moshe Teleshevsky, and then the Rebbe would explain it and speak about it. Here too, when the Rebbe explained the niggun, he first sang it himself. The Tziyur was unforgettable.

When the Rebbe came to the words: "אוי חשבון צדק..." he stopped, pointed to himself, and said: "דאָס מיינט מען מיר." — "This means me." Then he pointed with his finger to the left and said: "און דיר." — "And you." Then to the middle: "און דיר." — "And you." Then to the right: "און דיר." — "And you."

In other words, the Rebbe was showing that it applies to everyone. The whole Avoda of a truthful accounting is not for someone else. It applies to every person. These motions that the Rebbe made had a very deep effect on the whole crowd for a long time.

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