BH

DIARY: NEILA WITH THE REBBE (by a girl from LSGS)

Leah Namdar

My dear machzor... The crinkly, thin pages have absorbed the songs, tfilos and thunderous cries of thousands. The soft brown leather cover has been zoche to see the Rebbe's face for hours upon hours in awesome, joyous holiness. Each time it is opened, the scent of 770 - that special smell of seforim, wooden benches and holiness- and the sights, sounds and silences of Yom Kippur come alive. אשרי עין ראתה כל אלה...הלא למשמע אזן דאבה נפשינו...

Yom Kippur beim Rebben...

The awesome day is drawing to its close. A day full of tfillos rising upwards on the coattails of the Rebbe's own. Joyful and hartzige nigunim, teshuva. Outpouring of souls.

The heartfelt rendition of the avoda was led by the sobbing and trembling voice of the unforgettable baal tefilla and dedicated chossid Rabbi Yosef Wineberg, a'h. His tefillos in the Rebbe's presence - brought one to tears. Now that he is in Olom Haemes, I confess that there was sometimes a fear of Rabbi Wineberg having klos hanefesh in the middle of the avoda. His weeping voice would rise up undauntedly, yet muffled as he bowed to the ground, wrapped in his Tallis: היו כורעים ...ונופלים על פניהם

We saw the awesome and almost frightening sight of the Rebbe bowing during Korim.

And heard the huge crowd thundering ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד!

It was incredible to witness ״עומדים צפופים ומשתחווים רווחים״ ״

When they stood it was crowded, yet when they bowed down there was space..."

Joy and tears.

It was being in the Bais Hamikdash, seeing, hearing, experiencing the Kedusha ...but at the same time, there was something so painful about realizing: most of the world is missing this!

Maybe we were - with Hashem's incredible kindness - given a taste of Moshiach tzeiten so that we would know what we are working for..

We girls were standing, crowded together in the first shul on the Eastern Parkway side. By a nes, we had managed to climb through the window of the first shul after the shul was locked after maariv and stayed all night in 770, to save our places in the first aisle, since all the seats were sold. From the place under the colored glass window, we could feel cool air and see in real color - actually, mainly in black and white- an aerial view of hats and taleisim ....and the incredible lichtigkeit surrounding the Rebbe.

The day of Yom Kippur passes so fast. Too fast..

Another page turns.

אימה ויראה

, fear and trepidation

The heart quickens its pace.

אשרי יושבי ביתך....

Neilah has begun

פתח לנו שער בעת נעילת שער כי פנה יום !....

"Open for us the gate, at the time of closing of the gate, for the day has turned..."

The Rebbe stands motionless, dressed in the white kittel, head covered with his Tallis...

A feeling of desperation: Tayere Aibishter, farmach nisht di tiren! Don't close Your gate yet... We're not yet ready...

״היום יפנה, השמש יבא ויפנה, נבואה שעריך״ Bitte Tatte ...wait for us! Please let this day of kedusha never end....

The last modim of chazaras haShatz is followed by a thunderous cry: "וחתום לחיים טובים כל בני בריתיך!!" "And seal for good life all the children of Your covenant!"

That's it. It's chasima now. We need Moshiach! Written on Rosh Hashana, now it's coming to that last moment. The page turns, the heart hammers..

Avinu malkeinu begins. There are no words that can possibly describe the power of that nigun sang in 770 with the Rebbe. The Rebbe's head, still covered with the tallis, was bent slightly forward, and his holy hand banged rythmically on the shtender with greater and greater intensity, sweeping the whole of 770 into the nigun.

אבינו מלכינו אין לנו מלך אלא אתה...

Each pound on the shtender broke away another barrier.

אין לנו מלך אלא אתה .... אין עוד מלבדו.... Somehow, the entire area around the Rebbe, the white mizrach wall,seemed to be lit up with a brilliant light that glowed brighter and brighter, a glow not coming from the electric lamp. The entire room was filled with the nigun as thousands of chassidim below sang with one voice and with one heart, in a thunderous melody of hishtapchus hanefesh. And as the nigun comes to its end, it begins again immediately, following the Rebbe's hand on the shtender, repeated again and again, faster and ever more powerful. The Rebbe, the great conductor of souls, uplifting, uniting and leading all tefillos together through the great

doors of shomayim, that we could feel were wide open, hovering above the Rebbe's place at that moment.

And then as the Rebbe is still, the last note of the nigun ends, and then for a moment there is a trembling silence. A silence that is stronger and more powerful than any sound, where the neshama is aflame, tugging upwards to be one with its source.

And then a great, thunderous cry breaks out, shattering the heavens, shattering the heart, tearing through all mechitzos benenu uven ainu shebashamayim:

שמע ישראל ה׳ אלקינו ה׳ אחד!

The tiny print in the machzor says that at the moment of saying Shema of Neila bekol rom and kavanas halev, every one of Yisroel should have the kavana of being ready to give one's life for kiddush Hashem yisborech shemoi.... And then three times: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד!

The heart is racing so fast, it is hard to breathe, and tears choke the voice... 7 times: ה׳ הוא האלקים!

The huge storm of the revelation of yechida shebenefesh - the innermost part of the soul- experienced simultaneously by thousands together with the Rebbe defies description.

Kaddish. And then Napoleon's March begins.

The song of victory, of nitzachon of kedusha. Slowly at first, the Rebbe still at the shtender. And then the Rebbe turns...The heart almost stops. Looking like a malach Hashem, completely dressed in white, the Rebbe's holy face is mostly hidden by the tallis. Last year, the Rebbe stood on his red velvet chair for Napolean's March, but this year, there are stairs, placed against the wood paneled wall on the Rebbe's bima.

סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע שמימה...

"A ladder placed on the ground, and its head reaching the heavens..." The Rebbe slowly ascends the stairs...the nigun intensifies. ..מה נורא מקום הזה"... how awesome is this place..." The Rebbe reaches the top step. .והנה שער השמים... This must be

the Gate of heaven! The singing intensifies. The Rebbe is now facing forward, his holy face completely covered by the tallis. With one swing of the arm, the nigun reaches fever pitch. The whole room is dancing in place, singing with an indescribable simcha. The Rebbe swings both arms with tremendous energy. The nigun is louder and louder, faster and faster. The Rebbe adjusts the Tallis which slips from his shoulders, and continues to dance in place. The crowd strains, hoping to see the Rebbe face, and then suddenly, a long awaited moment: the tallis moves and the Rebbe's holy face is revealed, a flaming visage of kedusha. Words cannot describe this incredible and awesome moment- קרן אור פניו של משה... The Rebbe swings both hands, uplifting the whole of 770....surely by extension all of Am Yisroel..and the world. The nigun becomes a thunderous roar, so fast, so joyous, and the huge expanse of people below are jumping, dancing, bobbing up and down like the waves of the sea in a storm of joy.

A victory of the forces of kedusha.

A simcha that breaks all barriers.

The nigun ends.. A long pure clear and triumphant shofar blast. לשנה הבאה בירושלים!

The chazan raises his voice: תתקבל...and concludes Kaddish, ein Kelokeinu and Alenu.

Shikur mit freid- drunk with joy- the crowd davens a most freiliche maariv, followed by havdalla.

ובכן מה נהדר כהן גדול בצאתו מן הקדש...

How splendid was the Kohen Godol as he left the Holy of Holies...

The Rebbe is now wearing a hat, tallis draped over his shoulders, over the white kittel.

The Rebbe turns to the olom, his holy face lit up with joy, and with a swing of the hand:

'Gut yomtov!'

The crowd joyously echoes: 'Gut yomtov!' Another swing of the Rebbe's arm:

' Gut yomtov!'

Gut Yomtov!'

And the last 'Gut yomtov!' explodes into the joy filled nigun - Vesamachta bechagecha.

In an instant, zman simchaseinu has arrived.