

Speech by David A. Kahn
Held at Machsike Hadas 100 years anniversary dinner
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Rabbi Tuwie Lewenstein was born in Paramaribo the capital of Surinam located on the northeast coast of south America where his father rabbi mojshe ben jehudoh was raw of the kehiloh and passed away at the age of 34 years. Rav lewenstein was born in 1863 in November / 15th kislev 5624. hereafter he came back to Holland with his mother and siblings and eventually became raw, first in the town of Leeuwarden and later in the hague. being in the hague he negotiated with the big community of Copenhagen to take up his position as the chief rabbi where he arrived in may 1903. his rabbonus was nothing less than a revolution within the community and sooner or later the leaders of the community had to realize that it was a serious mekach tous and the zibbur could not live up to it and co-operate with the raw and therefore elected next to him a second rabbi which made the situation within the frames of krystalgade impossible until raw lewenstein decided to daven at home with a private minjan; the day was shabbos parashas shekولim 1910 – the shabbos where we have gathered together here in Copenhagen.

This situation continued until parashas pinchos in 1912 where on the 7th of july raw lewenstein left the town.

Hereafter decided the group of balej batim to stay and remain outside the big shul and early in 1913 it was decided to form the Machsike hadas who send t famous brothers Cohn : naftoli and George Cohn to Frankfurt am/main to obtain the stattuten statues in engliush; what is the correct frame for an orthodox jewish community.

Very short hereafter it was decided to engage an own row and due to the fact that the world war 1 was over the sky horav michoel sholaum winkler who ached as a row in germanymoved to Copenhagen where he arrived on shabbos parashas shemous early in 1914 leseder vajokom melech chodosh.

The financial situation within Machsike hadas was impossible and already in 1918 one could not assemble 10 men together for the yearly generalforsamling and the minjan had to move out of itsrented premises and conituned in private home of mourejnu r. avrohom Samson ; there was no money topay for a shul.

In 1929 rav winkler participated in the knejsijo gedaulo in Vienna where he met the famous raw akivo soufer who was the great grandson of chasam saufer and said to him: I need a person to take care of the youth in my kehillah in Copenhagen and rav akivo saufer who is also known as the daas soufer sent him his best bochurin pressburg namely rav noson zwi knopfelmacher who arrived in Denmark on parashas nouach in 1929 where there was a great congregation gathered together because it was the bar miwe of preben guttermann , the oldest son of herman guttermann and mr knopfelmacher was very impressed with the sight of all these top hats in the shul. the next week was more back to normal in the shul.

As the situation was like always, extremely difficult, it was decided that rav winkler szl would travel over to the united states of America to raise some money for Machsike hadas and he left the town before purim though his oldest son, menashe zwi had bar mizwo the 5.nissan 5692 / 1932 at an aga where rav winkler was 67 years old and that was his oldest child. he could not participate and stayed on in new York until midsummer where he passed away on the 21st of tamuz and never came back to Denmark; a very great loss and a chok for each and every one.

Reb noson zwi knoepfelmacher was a good and strong melamed and leader for the youth and it is his schuss that a substantial group of young bachurim came to the jeshives in eastern Europe and allow me to mention: the two brothers Winkler, Reb Avrohom Jehudoh Besbroda, Reb Chone Aisen, Reb Shimshon Heimann, Dr Schalimtzek and many more famous names who all set the trend for Machsike Hadas in these years.

Again the situation in Europe and especially in Germany course that Machsike Hadas got a new rov; Rabbi Binjomin Zeev Jacobson who served the kehillah until October 1943 and after the war he stayed on in Stockholm in the suburb of Lidingo. At the same time the kehillah grew with a number of new members who arrived from other countries and Copenhagen became an ir miklat from year to year.

Nes godoul hojo shom – when the shul and its interiors were intact after the war; gemores had collected some dust but life continued and Mr Herbert Bachrach who left the shul as the last person in 1943 was the first to reopen in 1945 – many people however were lack of flats.

The question arose again: where do we get a rov from? But Hashem Jisborach sent a former dajan from Prague who now settled down in Copenhagen and stayed here for about 3 years.

In the war years in Sweden my father prepared himself for the battle about the schechito in Denmark which was soon due to come because Norway and Sweden were already long time before the war strong anti schechito societies and after having learned about the slaughter method used on the reindeers by our northern neighbours there was little doubt about what could be expected in Denmark which also happened in the early fifties; which I can just about remember. Especially when Rav Steinhaus organized a taanis zibbur with amiras tehillim in shul where all the cheder boys were placed on the front rows and the baalei batim behind.

After Rabbi Lebowitz left Copenhagen a delegation arrived in Gateshead to choose the next rov for Machsike Hadas and indeed the landscape had changed. Rav Steinhaus represented a new generation and the Gateshead kehillah and upcoming mokom turoh where many young people went to from Machsike Hadas; actually several minjonim of bachurim and sem girls sucked from the ruach haturoh in Gateshead and it was Rav Steinhaus hope to expand in Copenhagen as well. In 1951 the first Jewish kindergarten in Denmark opened its doors with the great thanks to Mr Jacob Kahn. At the same time cheder Lejaldei Jeshurun was the institute even for children from the greater community and many of them are present here tonight. But Rav Steinhaus aimed for more and had a dream of a proper jeshive in our community and tried very hard to attract new kohanim from Gateshead to help him but without success.

It was only when my father turned to Rav Gorodetsky in Paris that things started to move and with the arrival of Rav Chaikin who came to Denmark in 1958 that the jeshiva opened its doors on Sunday Rosh Chodesh Elul 1958 with its own minyan and seder halimud. Rav Steinhaus left the town in the autumn of 1960 and a new vacuum came up which lasted a full year until the members of Machsike Hadas elected Rav Ezriel Chaikin as the new moro dasro 5 days before Rosh Hashonah in 1961 and a new era started for Copenhagen.

And here I want to go some years back in the history to the problems of the schechito which would have an effect world wide. As mentioned already an enormous effort was made in order to save the schechito in Denmark even after the stage where the chief rabbinate had surrendered. My father, with the great help of the representatives of the community, never gave up until the final solution came on the 24th of June 1954 allowing schechito.

This may seem as history and nothing more; it is not. The Polish government as in autumn 2012 started to make big trouble for the schechito and hamodia on the 29th of November 2012 quotes that though schechito is forbidden in Norway, Sweden + Iceland it remains allowed in Denmark. As a matter of fact kosher schechito in Poland is carried out for various big kehilos in the world and even as far as the eido chareidis in Jerusholajim is using the Polish schechito who again has to follow the instructions from the EU in Brussels where the kingdom of Denmark has a strong opinion due to the law inaugurated in 1954 through Machsike hadas.

This is the reason why we are assembled here on this shabbos thanking for the past and to pray for the future.

Thank you

Kind Regards,

David A. Kahn