

The sun sets

JERUSALEM REFLECTIONS
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Last week here in Jerusalem Purim fell on Friday – a day after *chutz l'aretz* – by all accounts one of the busiest days of the year. Since it was *erev Shabbos*, most people davened early in order to squeeze in all necessary requirements. You can't imagine the scene as parents as well as children gave out *Mishloach Manos*, a tremendous 'give and take' packed into a short space of time! Many guests also stayed on for Shabbos, the *seudah* finishing too late for them to make the journey home.

Late afternoon, however, the joy of the day was dimmed when we learned suddenly of the passing of *Sar HaTorah*, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky. First to hear the news were *yeshiva bochorim* – always with their ears to the ground – and from them the news spread like wildfire.

Expecting massive crowds, already on *Motzoei Shabbos* the police announced that certain highways and routes into Bnei Brak would be closed. For this reason, many made the journey there straight after Shabbos, lodging with family and friends, and taking up every available mattress.

Scheduled for 11am the next morning – afterwards pushed off until 12 noon – the early morning *minyanim* were packed, straight afterwards everyone rushing for the buses. Lined up one after the other, local city buses were used rather than intercity ones, allowing for standing

passengers. Racing all the way, you would have thought you were on an inter-city one!

Reaching Bnei Brak, all forms of transport pulled up at the bridge leading into the city – opposite 'Coca Cola' – passengers then ascending the bridge and crossing over. From there it was a matter of following the crowds converging on Rechov Rashbam – or as near as one could get.

Passing through the streets on the way, we were greeted by a wonderful sight. Residents of many buildings had put out on the pavement endless refreshments, drinks and biscuits. Even hot coffee was available, much appreciated by those who had travelled far, a heart-warming display of *achdus* and good-will.

The weather being warm, in the direction of Rashbam, every *mirpeset* (balcony) of the buildings on each side was filled, 'spectators' not wanting to miss out on what was going on. Ambulances also marked the route, the familiar yellow ones of *Magen David Adom* and the orange ones of *Hatzola*. On occasion medics were indeed called into action, racing in their bright jackets to someone in need. It seems, *Baruch Hashem*, that there were only minor incidents.

Contact with the police over here is not always favourable. However, this time they indeed did a good job. Eager to avoid difficulties the likes of which we have seen before, they prevented the crowds from



The crowds arriving and crossing the bridge into Bnei Brak.

packing too intensely, looking daunting and dressed in their black uniforms and full gear. Periodically, a *ram kol* (Loud Speaker) called out, "*Lo Li'kanes Penimah – Pikuach Nefesh!*" (Do not approach any closer – Life at Risk!).

At 12 noon it all began, *Tehillim* followed by *Selichos*, then the *hespedim*.

We strained ourselves to hear the words, echoing between the buildings, and having to compete with helicopters hovering ahead. The *levaya* continued along Rechov Chazon Ish, the massive crowds converging in that direction. The Sun Rises and the Sun Sets, but Reb Chaim will shine forever!



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Thousands pay shiva calls, babies named Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim

Following the massive *levaya* for Rav Kanievsky, the late Gadol Hador's sons began sitting shiva in the modest home they grew up in on Rechov Rashbam 23, the very place where Rav Chaim sat and learned for decades, only interrupting his *limmud* to receive the public who constantly flocked to him.

Three separate *minyanim* for *Mincha* were held at the shiva house for Rav Chaim's three sons, Rav Avraham Yeshayahu Kanievsky, Rosh Kollel of Orchos Ish, Rav Shlomo Kanievsky, Rosh Yeshivas Kiryat Melech, and the youngest son, Rav Yitzchak Shaul Kanievsky, who was appointed as the Rav of the Lederman shul at the *levaya*.

Many of the *menachamim* at the shiva

house mentioned the fact that Rav Chaim was *niftar* during the year of *Shemita*, a topic about which he spoke about often throughout his life and about which he was very stringent. Another intriguing fact mentioned was that since this year is a leap year, Rav Chaim, who completed *Shas* every year on *Erev Pesach*, finished on *Erev Purim* this year thanks to the extra month, which enabled him to complete *Shas* one final time before his *petirah*.

Meanwhile, dozens of babies in Eretz Yisrael and throughout the world have already been named *Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim* after Rav Chaim, including a great-grandchild in the Kanievsky family.