



To Participate In
א אידש'ן סדר

“The *Seforim* tell us that *Eliyahu Hanavi* is unable to be present at two locations simultaneously, so only one spark of his soul visits each Seder. But in the presence of the *Amora, Rav Hamnuna Sava*, we are told, *Eliyahu Hanavi* appeared in his full glory.

With that being the case, could there be another place where there are higher revelations, than at the Rebbe’s own *Sedorim*?!”¹

With these words, the Rebbe articulated the reason for every Chossid’s sincere longing to be present when his Rebbe holds the Seder. It is on this night when we relive *Yetzias Mitzrayim* each year, a night overflowing with Heavenly revelations; where else could a Chossid wish to find himself at such a time?

In our generation, Chassidim were privileged to witness the Rebbe’s conduct on the Seder night for a number of years, immersing themselves in this inspirational event, year after year. Those who merited to participate in those *Sedorim* recall the Seder night as one of the highlights of the year with the Rebbe, when the Chassidim enjoyed a spiritual satiation unmatched by any other experience during the year.

“Ah Yiddish’n Seder”

On one rare occasion, the Rebbe himself noted the extraordinary privilege it was to participate at the Rebbe’s Seder. That year, the Israeli government insisted that the *Bochurim* who had spent a year in 770 for “*Kevutza*” were to return home to *Eretz Yisroel* before Pesach. Even after much persuasion (with the Rebbe’s persistence) they we’re still unwilling to extend their visas and the *Bochurim* were forced to return before Pesach, thus losing the opportunity to witness the Rebbe’s *Sedorim*. When the Rebbe learned of this, he remarked, “מ’האט זיי ניט געלאזט זעהן א אידיש’ן סדר...” (Roughly translated: “They wouldn’t permit them to see a ‘Jewish’ Seder...”).

Preparations

Through the year 5731, the Rebbe ate all the *Yom Tov* meals, including the

Sedorim on Pesach in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s apartment on the second floor of 770, until this custom was suspended after the Frierdiker Rebbe’s Rebbetzin passed away on *Asara B’Teves*, 5731. It was during those years that the Chassidim were granted entry to be with the Rebbe at the *Sedorim*.

Before arriving at the Frierdiker Rebbe’s apartment, the *Bochurim* held their own Seder in the Yeshivah dining room. Needless to say, these were carried out in great haste, at times lasting merely twenty minutes, enabling them to join the Rebbe early on in his Seder. The Rebbe always visited the *Bochurim*’s Seder at the Yeshivah on the first night of Pesach, where he would say a short *Sicha* to them. No one dared begin before then.

Each *Bochur* prepared the Seder needs at his place and respectfully awaited the Rebbe’s arrival. As soon as the Rebbe concluded the *Sicha* and left the dining-room, they immediately began their rushed Seder and headed towards 770 to grab a good spot for the Rebbe’s Seder. Consequently, their *Yom Tov* “meal” for *Shulchan Oreich* consisted of nothing more than a hard-boiled egg!

Usually, the *Bochurim* arrived soon after the Rebbe did, but at times, especially when the line to receive *Matzos* from the Rebbe after *Maariv* was very long they managed to get there before the Rebbe made his entry.

At the Rebbe’s Seder Table

Observing the Rebbe and marveling at his conduct on the Seder night are said to have been very distinctive to what Chassidim were accustomed to at other special moments during the year. The holy atmosphere seemed to sweep the bystanders into it in a most unique fashion. Reb Y. Y. (“Fitch”) Offen explains:

“I remember that at the first Seder that I merited to attend in the year 5727, there was something remarkable in the air that really “took” me. True, I did see the Rebbe before at some very excessively elevated moments; while he blew

the *Shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, while he stood at the Ohel, and on other occasions. But when I entered the Rebbe’s Seder for the first time I was overcome with an uplifting feeling that I will not forget to this day. It is difficult for me to bring this into words, but I still remember that state very well...”

The table setting

The chair at the head of the long table always remained empty; it was reserved for the Frierdiker Rebbe. Near this chair on the table there was a full setting for a Seder (i.e. a silver cup, a Seder-plate containing all the necessary items, and so on). On the right side sat the Rebbe, and on the left, the Rashag. Around the table sat some of the elderly Chassidim along with a few additional exclusively invited guests, including Reb Yankel Katz from Chicago and his young son. No one, aside for the Rebbe, leaned during the Seder (*Halacha* states that one is not to lean in the presence of his Rebbe).

The Rebbe held two *Haggados* near him throughout the Seder: the first edition of his own *Haggadah*, printed in 5706, and the *Siddur Ha’Arizal* containing the kabalistic meditations for the Seder.

Upon the Rebbe’s request, Reb Yankel Katz read the *Haggadah* aloud while the Rebbe read quietly at a steady and relatively fast pace. Every so often, while the Rebbe waited for Reb Yankel to catch up, he read to himself from the explanations (*Lekutei Ta’amim Uminhagim*) on the *Haggadah* and if time permitted, he read from the *Siddur Ha’Arizal* as well. Reb Yankel’s son would ask the four questions, and the Rebbe listened attentively.

Customs of the Seder

The Seder night is full of so many specific customs detailing how to go about each step of the Seder, varying diversely all across the Jewish spectrum. It is no wonder, then, why the Chassidim who were present observed each and every aspect of the Rebbe’s holy conduct on that night, taking note of the meticu-

lous methods with which the Rebbe performed each phase of the Seder.

Their observations have all been carefully documented and published in numerous places (primarily in “*Otzar Mithagei Chabad*” by Rabbi Y. Mundshein), and serve as a guide for Chassidim how to conduct themselves at their own Sedorim today. Every move carried out at the Seder; the way the items were placed upon the Seder-plate, the pouring of the wine, preparation and use of the *Charoses*, the consumption of the *Matzah* and *Marror*; each step was done with utmost care and carried out explicitly in its necessary form.

Shulchan Oreich

The Rebbe almost never spoke on his own initiative when in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s apartment (just as he would not do so during the Frierdiker Rebbe’s lifetime). Only when posed questions by the Rashag and the elderly Chassidim pre-

sent would he respond appropriately. Thus, at times, the meal during *Shulchan Oreich* lasted up to an hour. At its conclusion, Reb Yankel Katz lead the Bentching.

Hallel – the Climax

From “*Sh’foch chamoscha*” until the conclusion of the Seder, the Rebbe read the *Haggadah* aloud and at a slow pace. Reb Yankel Katz still read the *Haggadah* aloud, but nonetheless, those who stood near the Rebbe’s seat were able to hear his voice clearly. In fact, the recitation was so slow that in one instance Reb Yankel had long finished reading the *Haggadah*, while the Rebbe was only at the beginning of “*Nishmas*”.

Throughout the year, Chassidim never witnessed the Rebbe Davening “*Be’avoda*”, so to speak (i.e. the Rebbe almost never displayed any emotion openly and usually appeared quite calm on the outside). *Hallel* on Pesach night

was the one exception in that regard. Each phrase was recited in a beautiful tune that expressed sincere *D’veikus*, and often tears flowed from the Rebbe’s holy eyes...

[It’s difficult to describe in writing the exact tune as it was, but it had been told to have been a combination of the tune the Rebbe used while reciting *Chazzoras Hashatz* at the *Amud* and that of the recitation of the *Pessukim* following *Tekias Shofar* on Rosh Hashanah.

Escorting home

At the conclusion of the Seder on the first night of Pesach, the Rebbe went down the staircase to his room, while the *Bochurim* stood at the side in song. When taking his leave for home, the *Bochurim* escorted the Rebbe all the way, singing joyous Pesach songs until they reached the house.

There, at the doorstep of his home, the Rebbe would turn around and wave his hand vigorously to encourage the singing. This was a most memorable moment for all.

Farbrengen

On the second night of Pesach, the Rebbe wouldn’t head for home until much later.

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes (recorded in “*Hayom Yom*”, 15 Nissan) that on the first night of Pesach, the *Rabbeim* did not expound upon the *Haggadah* with lengthy interpretations in order to conclude the consumption of the *Afikoman* before midnight.

On the second night, however, they would speak for many long hours, ending late into the night. In accordance with this custom, the Rebbe held a *Farbrengen* each year on the second night of Pesach after the Seder, when he explained citations from the *Haggadah*. No *Le’chaims* were said at this *Farbrengen*, as it took place after the Seder, and one is not to eat or drink anything after the *Afikoman*. This continued through the year 5730. Once the Rebbe began holding his *Sedorim* at home in 5731, this practice was suspended (see below).





These Farbrengens had a very special atmosphere, and often included several interesting occurrences. (In 5715, the Rebbe taught the *Niggun* of “*Ve’hi she’amda*” at this Farbrengen), but that is beyond the scope of this article.

Bochurim No Longer Join

In the earlier years, the crowd present at the Rebbe’s *Sedorim* was relatively small. But as the years progressed, the number of *Bochurim* grew disproportionately, especially when the “*Kevutza*” began to arrive from *Eretz Yisroel*. Each group came to the Rebbe before Pesach, remaining in 770 for a full year, and leaving after Pesach the following year, which meant that during Pesach there were always two groups; the group that had just arrived, as well as the group that was on its way back.

It appears that the growing numbers of *Bochurim* resulted in an overly crowded presence at the small room in the Friediker Rebbe’s apartment and the crowded conditions became unbearable.

On the first night of Pesach, 5729, one of the bottles of wine standing on the table was knocked on its side, spilling out across the table. The Rebbe said nothing, but gazed at the scene with a look of apparent disappointment.

The next day, the administration of the Yeshivah notified the *Bochurim* that they would no longer be allowed to join the Rebbe’s Seder upstairs. That night, during the meal, the Rashag asked the Rebbe if he would allow the *Bochurim* of the returning “*Kevutza*”, who would soon head back to *Eretz Yisroel*, to join the Seder now, and the Rebbe agreed.

The group of *Shluchim* who had recently returned from a two-year *Shlichus* in Australia were also allowed to join the Seder that night. When the Rashag asked the Rebbe if he would permit them to come in, because they had been away for so long now, the Rebbe responded, “Of course! What’s the question?” Later on, the Rebbe gave each of them a piece from his personal *Afikoman*, explaining that “they are my *B’nei-Bayis*; they have worked tirelessly for two years!”

That night, the Rebbe held a Farbrengen (as usual), during which he quoted the passage from the *Haggadah* when the students of the five *Chachomim* arrived at their teachers’ Seder to notify them that הגיע זמן “רבותינו! קריאת שמע של שחרית.”

The Rebbe asked: “Where were they until now? Why did they not hold the Seder together with their Rebbes?” The Rebbe continued: “Whatever the explanation may be, the fact is clear that they were not present at the Seder. Let this serve as an appeasement for not allowing the *Talmidim* to join the Seder this year...”

“Slipping” In

The next year, in 5730, the *Bochurim* were told not to rush through their Seder as usual, for they would anyway not be permitted to join the Rebbe’s Seder. Most of them indeed complied, but a daring few resolved that they would try their luck.

After hurrying through their Seder as in the past, a small group arrived at the Friediker Rebbe’s apartment and knocked on the door. They pleaded with the attendant, Reb Sholom Gansberg to allow them inside, as they numbered only a select few and couldn’t be all that harmful...

After some persuasion, Reb Sholom agreed and the overjoyed *Bochurim* were privileged to see the Rebbe at his Seder yet again. Later on, more groups of *Bochurim* gathered outside the locked door, but they would not be allowed to enter, despite their fierce knocking on the door. Nevertheless, when the door was eventually opened for “*Sh’foch chamoscha*” the Rebbe indicated that the accumulated crowd of *Bochurim* be allowed to join.

On the second night of Pesach, the Rebbe allowed the “*Kanim*” (*Bochurim* who excelled in their learning; seven of them excelled in *Nigleh* and seven in *Chassidus*) to join from the beginning of

the Seder.

Again, upon reaching “*Sh’foch chamoscha*” the Rebbe allowed the remainder of the *Bochurim* to join. He asked, “Have you opened the door? I don’t mean only for *Eliyahu Hanavi*...” The *Bochurim* understood how much the Rebbe really wished to allow them to participate.

As it turned out, this was the last Seder that any of the Chassidim merited to spend with the Rebbe. Beginning from the following year (5731), the Rebbe no longer ate the Yom Tov meals at 770, and all the *Sedorim* were held at home.

Seder Night - 5714

In conclusion, we’ll recount some very interesting occurrences from the year 5714. At the end of the Seder, the Rebbe stopped in the hallway and said, “Being that the *Niggun* of ‘*Keili ata*’ is known to bring about the revelation of *Eliyahu Hanavi*, the preparation to the coming of *Moshiach*, let us sing this *Niggun* joyously and hopefully bring about the final *Geulah*, here and now!”

When he reached the door of his room downstairs, the Rebbe delivered a short *Sicha* and then instructed all the *Bochurim* to dance along with their *Rosh Yeshivah*, Rabbi Mentlick. The Rebbe also joined the circle and danced energetically together with everyone. Then, while standing amidst the circle of Chassidim, the Rebbe delivered a second short *Sicha*.

When leaving for home, the Rebbe instructed everyone to go into the Shul and dance yet again and with great joy!

לשנה הבאה בירושלים!

1. Said by the Rebbe on the first night of Pesach, 5710 (*Yemei Bereishis* pg. 130).