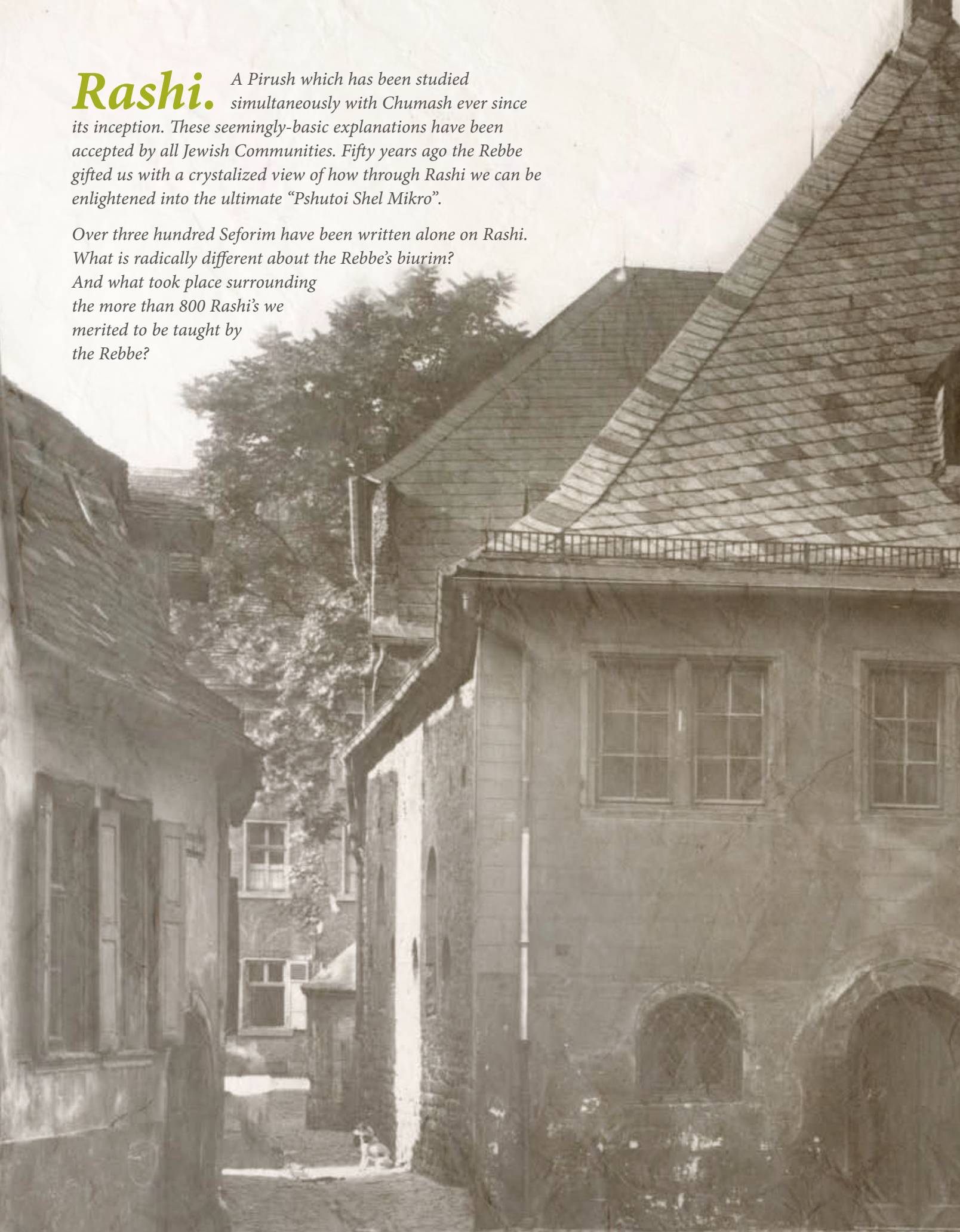


Rashi. *A Pirush which has been studied simultaneously with Chumash ever since its inception. These seemingly-basic explanations have been accepted by all Jewish Communities. Fifty years ago the Rebbe gifted us with a crystalized view of how through Rashi we can be enlightened into the ultimate "Pshutoi Shel Mikro".*

Over three hundred Seforim have been written alone on Rashi. What is radically different about the Rebbe's biurim? And what took place surrounding the more than 800 Rashi's we merited to be taught by the Rebbe?





revolution in

שבת

PART I



THE RASHI SICHA

Perhaps, of all the initiatives that the Rebbe undertook in memory of his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, the most noted was the new, innovative addition of the famous Rashi Sichos to the regular Shabbos farbrengens.

In retrospect, the Rebbe did not only explain a passage of Rashi's commentary each week, rather the Rebbe revolutionized the method to which Rashi is studied. In fact, he formulated an entire new systematical approach to his *pirush*. This resulted in the release of several new *seforim* elucidating this approach.

The following is the story of how this innovation was introduced, and how it evolved through the years. This is not an attempt to analyze the actual Rashi Sichos themselves (which we hope to present in a forthcoming magazine IY"H), rather, it is a glimpse at the history of this remarkable area of the Rebbe's Torah.

Throughout the first year following his mother's passing, the Rebbe farbrenged each and every Shabbos afternoon. Until then, farbrengens were generally only held on Shabbos mevorchim, or on a Shabbos corresponding with a special date.

In response to a letter from Rabbi Yosef Wineberg the Rebbe disclosed his plan to farbrenging each Shabbos. (See Sidebar).

During the Rebbe's farbrengens on Shabbos he always shared insights on the weekly *parsha*. At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Noach, the Rebbe discussed a Rashi on the first *possuk* in the *parsha*. He quoted the Alter Rebbe and the Shaloh both whom praise the depth of each and every word in Rashi. The Rebbe explained how Rashi's careful choice of words portrays the most basic implication of the *possuk*, while at the same time contains layers upon layers of deeper meaning.

Later at the farbrengen, the Rebbe also explained another Rashi on a *possuk* found towards the end of the *parsha*.

Following the inaugural Rashi Sicha of Parshas Noach, this practice continued every week throughout the year of *aveilus*.¹

The Rebbe's approach to the study of Rashi is based on Rashi's own unequivocal statement:

”אני לא באתי אלא לפשוטו של מקרא, ולאגדה
המיישבת דברי המקרא דבר דבור על אופניו”

“I have only come [in order to explain] the basic meaning of the possuk, and to [bring] the Aggados which clarify the Psukim in a way which fits into the words.”

**“...WHEN THE REBBE
ENTERED 770 THIS
MORNING HE CALLED ME
OVER AND ASKED ME TO
TELL WALDMAN THAT
THE RASHI THIS WEEK
WILL BE...”**

With time, the Shabbos farbrengens began to take on a unique structure. The Rebbe would begin the farbrengen with sichos based on the time of year, after which he would deliver a Ma'amer.

The Rebbe would then pose a host of questions on the Rashi he chose to speak about that Shabbos. He would compare Rashi's comment to its source in the Midrash or Gemara, cite other connecting comments of Rashi elsewhere in Torah, and equate it with *pirushim* given by other *Meforshim* on the same Rashi.

After pausing for a *niggun*, the Rebbe would provide an explanation which often revealed a new “*Klal*” in Rashi's way of explaining *Pshutoi shel Mikro*. The Rebbe would elucidate how every minute detail of that Rashi falls into place.

NOT SHPITZ CHABAD!

A few weeks before the first yortzeit of his mother, the Rebbe expressed dismay that Chassidim's excitement towards the Rashi Sichos was waning. Therefore, he said that the sichos would shortly come to an end.

One individual found this extremely hard to accept; he couldn't fathom who wouldn't appreciate the greatness gleaned through the Rebbe's Rashi Sichos. He was determined to do what he could to ensure its continuation.

“I didn't even wear a beard and a Kapota at the time,” relates **Rabbi Yosef Waldman** of Crown Heights. “However, when I heard that the Rashi Sichos were coming to an end I was extremely disheartened. Not because I was a Chossid, but because I treasured the Rebbe's incredible way of illuminating Rashi. I was simply ‘*Farkoched*’ in it”.

I penned a letter to the Rebbe in which I expressed my distress. I reasoned that it would only add in the Rebbe's goal of *Hafotzas Hamayanos*, and wondered how the Rebbe sensed any opposition to the continuation of such wonderful Torah!

In the Rebbe's response to me he made an arrow pointing to the word ‘opposition’

Time for Good News



and remarked: 'Their lies here more than just what I mentioned at the Farbrengen.' Then the Rebbe continued on the side of the page: 'You should speak to the heads of Anash, Vaad Hamesader etc. etc.'

Needless to say I immediately spoke to the individuals mentioned by the Rebbe, and reported that I had done so to the Rebbe. A maxim often repeated by the Rebbe was the response I received: Ha'mayse Hu Hoikar.

I took this reply to mean that despite the efforts of the Chassidim, they were not involving themselves in the sichos adequately. Therefore, the sichos would end one year after its inception as the Rebbe had stated.

Needless to say, I was taken by utter surprise when the Shabbos after Vov Tishrei 5726 the Rebbe began to explain that week's Rashi just as he had done each previous week until then!

What stunned me even more was the Rebbe's introduction to this unforeseen change. The Rebbe stated as follows:

"א' יונגערמאן וואס איז אפילו גיט פון שפיץ חב"ד, ס'ענה'ט ער אז מ'קאכט זיך אין ד' ביאורי רש"י, ס'אז נאך א געשמאקע זאך..."

'A Yungerman who is not even from the Shpitz Chabad claims that the biurim in Rashi are being Koched in, and moreover it is a Geshmake thing...'

Thus, the Rebbe concluded that the Rashi Sichos would continue!

My worries quelled, I now encountered a new challenge."

“TELL WALDMAN THE RASHI IS...”

During 5725 the Rebbe consistently explained the first and last Rashi of each Parsha. With the onset of 5725 the

In the report below, which Rabbi Yosef Wineberg sent to the Rebbe, he details how he dedicated the last shiur on the radio, which included a synopsis of the Rebbe's most recent farbrengen, to the memory of Rebbetzin Chana.

He continues by requesting the Rebbe's permission to add another feature to his weekly shiurim.

Being that Rebbetzin Chana was a great admirer of Rabbi Wineberg's shiurim, especially when he reviewed the Rebbe's sichos in them, perhaps he should give over a point from the Rebbe's sichos each week (in addition to the ones already airing on Motzoei Shabbos Mevorchim). He noted that on those weeks that the Rebbe held a farbrengen he would review points from that day's sichos, and for the rest of the weeks he would give over an idea from Likutei Sichos.

He concluded with remarks about the growing costs of this program, and his intent to cover it out of his own personal money.

On the general report, the Rebbe responded:

ת"ח על הענין ועל ההודעה אודותו, והרי בכ"ע [=בכל עת] מצפה כ"א [כל אחד] לענין של נח"י [=נחת רוח] ובפרט בעת כו'

Many thanks for the doing so for reporting about it; at any given moment, everyone awaits pleasurable [news], especially at a time of... [mourning].

Where he proposed his idea of reviewing sichos at his shiurim, the Rebbe responded:

זה מחזק סברתי להתועדות - בל"נ [=בלי נדר] - בש"ק [=בשבת קדש] במשך השנה עכ"פ [=על כל פנים] בקיצור בכמות

This reinforces my idea to farbreng - bli neder - on Shabbos throughout this year; at least briefly - time-wise.

Where he had written about the growing costs, the Rebbe noted:

מחצה עלי

Half [of the costs] on me

A DEDICATION IN LIKUTEI SICHOS OF THE REBBE'S FIRST RASHI SICHOS TO THE MEMORY OF REBBETZIN CHANA



Rebbe began to expound on Rashis from throughout the Parsha, so the Rashi that the Rebbe focused on could not be predicted by the Chassidim.

For Rabbi Waldman this change was very difficult. Over the past year he would thoroughly learn the first and last Rashi of each Parsha doing as much surrounding research as possible so that he would be sufficiently prepared for that week's Rashi Sichah. The new development now made it impossible for him to prepare the Rashi before the Farbrengen.

"Ah, how sweet were the days when we would know which Rashi the Rebbe would explain on Shabbos," I moaned to my friend while riding the subway to work one day," related Rabbi Waldman. "My friend suggested something I thought was unfathomable: 'If the Rebbe corresponded with you regarding the continuation of the Rashi Sichos, why don't you write to the Rebbe and request that he let it be known which Rashi he will be speaking about each Shabbos?'"

I thought that it would be incredulous for me to suggest this to the Rebbe! After all, who was I to dictate to the Rebbe how to go about his affairs? Eventually, my thirst to study the *possuk* beforehand got the better of me, and I wrote to the Rebbe in pleading terms, how wonderful it would be if we would know which Rashi would be explained before the farbrengen. This way, I explained, we would be able to prepare in advance, and our internalization of the Rebbe's teachings would be greatly intensified.

The Rebbe responded with the following shortly after receiving my letter: "Generally, it is decided [just] before the Farbrengen, or at the most on Shabbos itself, however this week the Rashi is *'Im kesef talve es ami'*."

I wrote to the Rebbe again, saying that if an exception is ever made, and the Rashi

is known before Shabbos, if he could please let me know. To this I did not receive a written reply.

Instead, what took place that Shabbos took me by surprise.

I was getting ready to leave my home at 899 Montgomery to walk to Shul Shabbos morning, when I heard a knock on the door. On the other side stood Rabbi Sholom Yisroel Hodakov. I was sure he had arrived at the wrong address. "What do you need?" I asked. "Does Rabbi Waldman live here?" he inquired. What could this be about, I wondered. I opened the door and he said: "I don't know the meaning of this, but when the Rebbe entered 770 this morning he called me over and asked me to tell Waldman that the Rashi this week will be... so I ran to find you. I didn't know your address so I asked passersby until I finally found the correct location."

**"WITH A HEAVY HEART
I TURNED TO THE
FELLOW STANDING
NEXT TO ME AND
REMARKED 'THUS ENDS
A GOLDEN TEKUFA.'"**

Completely astounded I thanked him and headed to Shul. It occurred to me that although the Rebbe may not necessarily publicize the Rashi before Shabbos, it

could be that the Rebbe would already have chosen it by Shabbos morning and I would have a few hours before the beginning of the Farbrengen to get ready.

Still, it could be that the Rebbe would not always have a messenger to tell me the Rashi. Therefore, I decided from then on that I would wake up early on Shabbos morning and wait for the Rebbe to arrive at 770. I would send a standard note before each Shabbos asking the Rebbe to inform me of the Rashi of the week, and if I didn't receive a response then I would make sure to await the Rebbe's decision Shabbos morning at the door of the small Zal.

Eventually a huge crowd began forming behind me each Shabbos morning. So I instead waited to greet the Rebbe at the entrance of 770. Once I knew the Rashi I would relay it to the Gabboim and Bochorim so everyone could prepare for the Farbrengen. "

**NOT A
LAUGHING MATTER**

A most painful occurrence took place on Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5729. Due to an inadvertent series of events, the gabbai



in 770 announced that the Rebbe would expound on a particular Rashi that week when in fact, the Rebbe had not even intended to Farbreng.

A deep sense of dismay was visible on the Rebbe's face after the gabbai finished the announcement. Those that were in 770 realized that something was terribly amiss.

After davening the Rebbe told the Mazkirus to relay the message that a farbrengen would indeed be held that Shabbos.

At the farbrengen the Rebbe explained the Rashi that had been mistakenly announced, but then the Rebbe said:

"In truth, we would've needed to end it [the Rashi Sichos] in entirety. For if something like this [that took place this morning] happened, this serves as a hora'a that we should cease explaining the Rashis each week..."

Rabbi Waldman was especially frightened by the conclusion of the sicha, for it seemed as though the Rebbe was using similar expressions to when the Rebbe had expressed that the Rashi Sichos might come to an end a few years earlier in 5726.

As soon as Shabbos was over Rabbi Waldman penned a heartfelt letter to the Rebbe wording his request in the

expression of the posuk: *"ויחל משה את פני ה' אלוהיו"*. He further reasoned, that if in fact this sad occurrence of events are a hora'a, they should serve as a hora'a to stop the weekly announcement of the Rashi; but not to stop explaining the Rashi altogether.

Emotions flowed through the pages of Rabbi Waldman's letter, in which he implored the Rebbe not to stop the Rashi Sichos.

Rabbi Waldman relates what took place after he submitted his letter to the Rebbe:

"I soon received an answer from the Rebbe:

"א"כ מהי ההוראה בזה?"

"If so, what is the hora'a in this [story]?"

I understood the Rebbe's reply to mean that the hora'a was not just about the announcement, but about the entire idea of explaining a Rashi every Shabbos. It seemed as if there was nearly no hope.

A GOLDEN ERA CONTINUES

Despite the Rebbe's response I decided to make one last attempt. I gave in the *tzetel* that I would write to the Rebbe each week, asking which Rashi the Rebbe would explain that Shabbos.

On Friday I didn't receive an answer from the Rebbe, so on Shabbos morning I waited at the door of 770 in the hope that the Rebbe would answer me then. I waited with great anxiety, nervous at what the final outcome would be.

The door soon opened and the Rebbe entered 770 walking past me without even a glance. This was the first time anything of the sort had occurred to me.

Once the Rebbe entered his room I put on my coat and got ready to leave. With a heavy heart I turned to the fellow standing next to me and remarked "thus ends a golden *tekufa*."

Just as I was about to exit 770, the door to Gan Eden Hatachton suddenly opened a small crack and the Rebbe motioned for me to come closer! I immediately moved toward the door, and the Rebbe said to me:

“וישמע משה וייתב בעיניו – ובתנאי שלא יכריז...”

“Moshe heard and it became good in his eyes – On condition that you shouldn’t announce...”

I left 770 that morning in a state of elation. The Rashi Sichos would continue!

From that week forward, I continued receiving answers from the Rebbe letting me know which Rashi would be spoken about that week.³ However, announcements were no longer made in 770 to publicize the Rashi of the week.

If it turned out that I would not be in Crown Heights for Shabbos, I made sure to write to the Rebbe and inform the Rebbe that I would be away for Shabbos.

Each week Rabbi Waldman would use a Nusach with which he would ask the Rebbe if he might share which Rashi the Rebbe would be explaining that Shabbos. Below is the Nusach:

כ”ק אדמו”ר

אולי יואיל בטובו להודיענו, באם אפשר לפני שבת קודש, איזה פירוש רש”י יפרש
במשך ההתוועדות בשבת קודש הבעל”ט

Translation: Perhaps would [The Rebbe] be as so kind to inform me, if possible before Shabbos Kodesh, which Pirush Rashi will be explained at the Farbrengen of this coming Shabbos.

THE REBBE POINTED TO THE KOVETZ HAOROS OF OHOLEI TORAH, WHICH UPON CLOSER LOOK WAS OPEN TO THE HAORO THAT I HAD WRITTEN!

I hurried to the phone and sure enough Rabbi Binyomin Klein was on the line!

He told me that the Rebbe had just written a response to my notification that I would be leaving for Shabbos with the *maare makom* of that weeks Rashi.

This only fortified my understanding of the unique affection the Rebbe had toward the Rashi Sichos.”

HAOROS U’BIURIM

In the 5740s, the Rebbe incorporated an entirely new twist in the Rashi Sichos.⁴ At one Shabbos farbrengen the Rebbe expressed disappointment that proper attention was not being given to the Rashi Sichos. In order to infuse a new *chayus* into the Rashi Sichos, the Rebbe would begin a new *seider*; asking a question each week without answering it. People would try to come up with answers throughout the week to be published in the various Kovtzei Haoros



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איך האב דאך אויך הנאה!

Rabbi Waldman relates:

In the year 5729 I had a Yechidus with the Rebbe during which I asked for Brochos and advice regarding mundane affairs. After about 20 minutes the Yechidus came to a close and I advanced toward the door, when the Rebbe called out to me:

יוסף, טו ווייטער אין די רש"ס, דיר קומט דאך א יישר כח דערפאר, דו האסט דאך
דאס מעורר געווען!

*Yosef, continue to involve yourself in the Rashis, you deserve a
Yasher Koach for this, you were the one who encouraged it!*

I froze in surprise and replied:

מיר קומט א יישר כח דערפאר?! איך האב דאך הנאה
I deserve a Yaasher Koach?! I enjoy it...

The Rebbe shrugged his shoulders and smiled:

איך האב דאך אויך הנאה
I too enjoy it!

The Rebbe answered:

“דערפאר האב איך דאס געקליבן, דו ביסט דאך א
תושב השכונה.”

*“That’s why I chose this one, you’re a
resident of this neighborhood.”*

Sure enough, the Rebbe expounded on my question during the farbrengen, and showed how the answer I offered was inherently incorrect. Instead, the Rebbe explained the Rashi with uncanny brilliance and clarity.

On another occasion I wrote a *ha’oro* about a Rashi on the Megilla that I had long questioned. That Shabbos morning the Rebbe’s notification to me was:

“וועגן דעם וואס דו האסט געשריבן”

*“[I will explain the Rashi] about which
you wrote.”*

It seemed as if the Rebbe had differed from the regular minhag of explaining a Rashi from the weekly Parsha, just because of the questions that were posed in the Haoros Ubiurim.” **D**

1. Many of those farbrengens with the earliest Rashi Sichos were *mugah* by the Rebbe and appear in *hosafos* of Likkutei Sichos Vol. 5.

2. See Rashi Bereishis Perek 3 Posuk 8. And many times elsewhere in the Torah.

3. After the Rebbe had a heart attack on Simchas Torah 5738, the Rebbe began holding Farbrengens on Shabbos. The first time the Rebbe said a Rashi Sichah was on Parshas Emor 5738. Following that Shabbos Rabbi Waldman continued asking the Rebbe about which Rashi the Rebbe would explain each week.

4. For an in-depth perspective on this, see Sefer Hayovel Haoros Ubiurim – Oholei Torah. More on this topic will appear in a forthcoming magazine IY”H.

Ubiurim, and the Rebbe himself would answer the question at the farbrengen the following week.

At a later point, the Rebbe instituted that people should ask questions in the weekly *kovtzim*, and the Rebbe would choose from amongst them, which one to expound upon.

A new excitement and a competitive spirit took hold of the Chassidim. They endeavored to ask questions coinciding with the Rebbe’s *kolim* and often offered explanations of their own.

It soon became practice that the Rebbe would enter Kabolas Shabbos with one or more of the Kovtzim. On many occasions the Rebbe would spend some time looking through them during Maariv.

The enthusiasm would come to a climax when the chosen Rashi was heard from the Rebbe at the farbrengen. The Rebbe would often focus on some of the simplest questions posed.

Rabbi Waldman relates:

“I too took pleasure in contributing to the *kovetz* on a weekly basis. I was joined by my brother Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech who had gained a tremendous appreciation to

the Rebbe’s *derech* in explaining Rashi, despite his not living in Crown Heights nor being a Lubavitcher. He was familiar with the Rebbe’s *biurim* through the *biurim* I had told him over the years.

In the kovetz from the week of Parshas Vayera 5748, both my brother and I had written *haoros* relating to Rashis from that week’s Parsha.

On that Thursday I submitted my usual request to the Rebbe regarding which Rashi would be spoken about that week. Being that I didn’t receive an answer on Friday, I waited Shabbos morning in 770 for the Rebbe to pass by me and let me know.

To my surprise, when the Rebbe opened the door of Gan Eden Hatachton he signaled that I follow him into his room. There, the Rebbe pointed to the Kovetz Oholei Torah, which upon closer look was open to the *haoro* that I had written!

I understood that the Rebbe was signaling that he would be speaking about what I had written.

Taken by surprise, I exclaimed:

“This is my *haoro*!”