



THE FIRST PRINT OF THE REBBE'S HAGGADAH, WITH TEXT ON ONE SIDE, AND THE REBBE'S COMMENTARY ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE.



A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

the Rebbe's Seder

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After arriving in America in 5701, the Rebbe spent all of the Yom Tov meals with his father-in-law, the Frierdiker Rebbe, alongside a table full of *elters* Chassidim. During these meals, the Frierdiker Rebbe would farbreng with the crowd, while the younger Chassidim and *bochurim* would jostle around the table, trying to catch a glimpse of the Frierdiker Rebbe and to hear his *sichos* and conversations.

While the Frierdiker Rebbe's farbrengens were less formal than the Rebbe's farbrengens, and it was common for Chassidim to pose questions and inquiries to the Frierdiker Rebbe in between the *sichos*, the Rebbe would nevertheless sit with extreme *bittul* and deference. Chassidim took note of the fact that the Rebbe barely said a word, and in fact almost never moved, when sitting in the presence of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

After the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, the tradition of these yom tov meals continued. The Frierdiker Rebbe's place remained empty, and the Rebbe would sit in the same place he sat during the Frierdiker Rebbe's lifetime. Just as before, the Rebbe would sit throughout these meals quietly, with an intense *hadras kavod*, as if he was sitting before the Frierdiker Rebbe.

However, at points throughout these meals, the *elters* Chassidim would take the opportunity to ask the Rebbe various questions generally relating to *halacha* and *minhag*. Very often Rashag would pose questions that *bochurim* had requested of him to ask the Rebbe. The door would be open, and dozens of *bochurim* and

yungeleit would crowd into the medium sized dining room, to watch the Rebbe's *hanhagah* and hear the Rebbe's words.

This tradition took on a whole new life when Pesach came around. In addition to being able to hear the Rebbe answer various questions, any Chosid present at the *seder* merited to watch the Rebbe go through the entire *avodah* of the *seder*. Being that the *seder* night is filled with intricate *minhagim* and customs, Chassidim watched carefully and often—after Yom Tov—they wrote down the *hanhagos* they saw.

Although watching the entire *seder* was something special, the second half of the *seder* was even more extraordinary. To watch the Rebbe recite Hallel with *dveikus*, reciting it softly in a stirring and heartfelt tune, was one of the highlights of the year for those fortunate enough to witness it. Although this would take place late at night, after going through the often tiring and lengthy *seder*, no Chosid was too fatigued to be there at this heavenly experience.

The Rambam writes in *Hilchos De'os* that a *talmid chacham* is set apart not only in his wisdom, but also in the way he goes about his daily needs and functions; eating sleeping etc. If that is the case by an ordinary Talmid Chacham, all the more so in regards to the *nossi hador*; we can learn lessons not only from his Torah, but also by everything we see him do. The seder night, being filled with so much, was a most opportune time for chassidim to learn from the Rebbe's *hanhagos*.

These *sedarim* in the presence of chassidim took place until 5730. Afterwards, the Rebbe began to conduct the *seder* at home, together with the Rebbetzin, and after Chof-Beis Shevat, the Rebbe held it in his room at 770, with no one else present.

For this article, documenting stories and *hanhagos* of the Rebbe on those uplifting nights, we were privileged to interview five Chassidim who had the opportunity to partake in the Rebbe's *seder* for numerous years: **Rabbi Meir Harlig**, **Rabbi Yisroel Shmotkin**, **Rabbi Shlomo Zarchi**, **Rabbi Boruch Wilhelm**, and **Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Offen**. We thank them for their time and patience, sharing these precious memories for the benefit of our readership.

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Good afternoon. We are very grateful that you joined us for this unique interview with A Chassidisher Derher about the Rebbe's seder. We understand that you were all present in different years. Can you please tell us which years you merited to attend? Was everyone always allowed into the room during the seder?

Rabbi Wilhelm: Let's begin with a little background. On Erev Pesach, the Rebbe would distribute matzos to all the Chassidim (a custom that continued until 5738). The matzos only came from the bakery a while after *chatzos*. Because of the long lines and Erev Pesach being a busy day, it often happened that not everyone was able to receive matzah before yom tov, therefore, after Maariv, a line would again form by the Rebbe's room, and the Rebbe would spend some additional time completing the distribution.

After the *chalukah* finished, the Rebbe would leave 770 and head towards the yeshiva dining room, where he would visit the *seder* of the bochorim.¹ The bochorim would prepare their *ka'aros* before the Rebbe came, and then stand respectfully by their places anticipating the Rebbe's arrival.

As soon as the Rebbe would leave the bochorim's *seder*, after saying a short *bracha* or *sicha*, the race was on. We would immediately make *kiddush*, begin our *seder*, and attempt to finish it as quickly as possible, in order to be present by as much of the Rebbe's *seder* as possible. Our *Shulchan Orech* usually consisted of the egg on the *ka'arah*, and nothing more. Once

ONCE WE COMPLETED SHULCHAN ORECH, WE WOULD RUN TO 770, WHERE WE WOULD OFTEN ARRIVE EARLY ON IN THE REBBE'S SEDER, AND POSSIBLY EVEN BEFORE THE REBBE ENTERED.



we completed *Shulchan Orech*, we would run to 770, where we would often arrive early at the Rebbe's *seder*, and possibly even before the Rebbe entered.

Rabbi Shmotkin: I was *zoche* to be present at all the Rebbe's *sedarim* from 5722 until my marriage in 5728 (aside for 5723 when I was away). The first year that I came to 770 from Eretz Yisroel, in 5722, I was asked by one of the *meshamshim bakodesh* if I would be willing to check the lettuce for the *seder*.

Of course I agreed and in that merit I was allowed in from the very beginning of the *seder*. That is what happened every year. I would check the lettuce, and I would be allowed inside at the beginning of the *seder* even before the Rebbe would come in.

Rabbi Zarchi: Just before Shavuos 5722 the Rebbe said in a *sicha* that people will no longer be allowed to come in to the yom tov *seudos*. The Rebbe said that people are wasting their time looking at *ploni ben ploni*, to see what he eats and how he moves, wasting the precious time of yom tov.²

When Pesach 5723 came around, people assumed that the new policy would apply to the Pesach *sedarim* as well, and no one would be



allowed to enter. However when the Rebbe was asked about this just before Pesach, he replied, “*Leil shimurim is andersh,*” that the eve of the *seder* is different and everyone will be allowed in.

Rabbi Offen: In 5729, there was a lot of pushing at the *seder*. In those years, the *kvutzeh bochurim* from Eretz Yisroel would arrive before Pesach, and leave after the following Pesach (unlike today that they stay from Tishrei through the following Tishrei), and therefore many *bochurim* were present at the *seder*.

The pushing was so strong that a full bottle of wine spilled across the table, and a leg of one of the chairs broke. After the *seder*, we were notified that we will not be allowed in for the second night. The only *bochurim* that were allowed in were the *kvutzeh* that was returning to Eretz Yisrael after Pesach, and the *shluchim* that had just returned from two years of *shlichus* in Australia.

During the *farbrengen* that took place on the second night of Pesach after the *seder*, the Rebbe spoke about the story in the Haggadah, in which the students came to remind Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues that the time for *Krias Shema* had arrived. Where were they at the *seder*? the Rebbe asked. Why weren't they present at the *seder* of their teachers?

The Rebbe noted that he had always wondered why the Frieddiker Rebbe had not allowed *bochurim* and *yungeleit* to come and watch his *seder*, as they used to do during other *yom tov* meals. But what we do see clearly from the



BARUCHEZAGUI

THE DINING ROOM OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S RESIDENCE IN 770, WHERE THE SEDORIM TOOK PLACE.

Haggadah is that the *talmidim* were not allowed into the *seder* of their teachers.

The next year, it was again announced that we will not be allowed to enter. A small group of *bochurim*, myself included, decided that we will nevertheless stand next to the door, and perhaps, as a small group, we will be permitted entry.

To our excitement, we were allowed in, and before we knew it a large group of *bochurim* found out about it, and they too gathered at the entrance to the apartment, knocking on the door, but to no avail. Later, when the doors were opened for *Shefoch Chamaschah*, the Rebbe motioned that everyone should be allowed inside, and the entire group was able to enter.

The next day, someone had an idea: He asked Rashag to request the Rebbe's permission that the *kanim*³ of the yeshiva be allowed to enter. He did so, and the Rebbe agreed. Being that I was one of the *kanim* in Chassidus I was able to watch the second *seder* as well. That night too, when it came time for *Shefoch Chamaschah*, the Rebbe motioned that everyone at the door should be allowed to enter.

THE REBBE WOULD SPEND A LONG TIME CHOOSING WHICH MATZOS HE WILL USE FOR THE SEDER, PICKING UP MATZOS AND PUTTING THEM DOWN, CHECKING AND INSPECTING THEM METICULOUSLY

What were the seating arrangements, and where would the Rebbe sit?

Rabbi Wilhelm: The Rebbe would sit in the same place that he had sat during the lifetime of the Frierdiker Rebbe, to the Frierdiker Rebbe's left. Seated next to the Rebbe was Reb Shmuel Levitin, then Reb Zalman Teibel, and after him Reb Itche Churgin. On the other side was usually Rashag, then Reb Yankel Katz, and next to him sat his son. After them sat the *meshamshim bakodesh*. The Rebbe insisted that they be given places at the table, and he would not start the *seder* without them.

When the *seder* began, there were usually only about fifteen people standing around the table; as it would progress, many more people would come in, and the room became tightly packed. The first few times I was present, I stood in the area behind the Rebbe, where I was able to hear everything, but I could not see the Rebbe's face. Therefore I decided to change my spot to stand just on the right of the Frierdiker Rebbe's chair so I would be facing the Rebbe. As Rabbi Offen mentioned, In 5729 there was a tremendous amount of pushing and shoving. At one point it got so bad that I put my hand on the table, right by the Frierdiker Rebbe's place, so that I wouldn't fall. The moment I did so the Rebbe looked up at me with a piercing look. I did not know what to do with myself at that moment...

Rabbi Zarchi: It was amazing to see how the Rebbe sat at the table with such a *bittul*, as if the Frierdiker Rebbe was there; we also noticed that from time to time he would look up at the Frierdiker Rebbe's place.

Rabbi Harlig: Even after the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, they would set up at his place, at the head of the table, a silver tray with three matzos on it.

Rabbi Offen: The *makri* of the Haggadah (the one that would read out loud) was Reb Yankel

Katz⁴ from Chicago, who enjoyed a very close relationship with the Frierdiker Rebbe, and who the Rebbe was strongly *makarev*. He was a *poshute Yid*, and a big *baal tzedakah*. He would come to the Rebbe every year for Pesach, and his son would recite the *Ma Nishtanah*.

When would the Rebbe arrive to the seder?

Rabbi Shmotkin: As Rabbi Wilhelm mentioned before, on the first night, after spending some time in his room the Rebbe visited the *seder* of the *bochurim*. There were times that the Rebbe arrived at his own *seder* more than two hours after *maariv*.

Rabbi Harlig: After *maariv*, the people having the *seder* with the Rebbe would enter the Rebbe's room to receive matzos. The Rebbe would not actually hand them their matzos. They would come into the room and the Rebbe would direct them to the box of matzos and signal to them to choose for themselves. While they were choosing for themselves, the Rebbe would spend a long time choosing which matzos he will use for the *seder*, picking up matzos and putting them down, checking and inspecting them meticulously before deciding which three would go onto his *seder* plate.

Rabbi Wilhelm: The Rebbe would come into the *seder* holding a bottle of wine, the Haggadah, and the Siddur Ha'Arizal. Behind him was Reb Sholom Ber Ganzburg, holding the Rebbe's matzos.

Rabbi Harlig: On Pesach the Rebbe would use a larger *becher* than usual. When this was given to the Rebbe in 5710, along with a silver plate for under the matzos, the Rebbe instructed that they be *toiveld*, even though they were manufactured by Yidden.

How did the Rebbe set up the *ka'arah*?

Rabbi Shmotkin: The Rebbe would set up the *ka'arah* while standing, and he would recite all of the instructions from the Haggadah before doing each part.

When the Rebbe would recite the first words of the Alter Rebbe's instructions—*יסדר על שולחנו*—he would hold on to the matzos. While saying *הישראל*, he would hold on to the bottom matzah and let it go, then continue with *ועליו הלוי*, then let the middle one go, and then conclude with the top matzah.

Rabbi Offen: We never saw the Rebbe's *ka'arah* (the actual silver plate under the matzos), but I do believe that the Rebbe had one under the cloth holding the matzos. The cloth was folded four times, so that it created a square pouch with three openings, in which the Rebbe slipped the matzos.

Rabbi Wilhelm: The Rebbe would place the egg on the *ka'arah* without making a crack to stabilize it, but I do remember one year that the egg wouldn't remain in place and then the Rebbe did crack it slightly in order for it to stay on the *ka'arah*.

Rabbi Shmotkin: The Rebbe prepared the *maror* and the *chazeres* in the following manner: He would take a large leaf, shake the lettuce a few times, although it was already dried beforehand, remove the white at the bottom of it, then split the leaf in half. He would then cut it two times, which meant that now there was six pieces.

Next, he would scoop the ground horseradish that was in a bowl on the table with a tablespoon three times, and squeeze it in his hand. He would then remove the three top slices of lettuce and place the ball of horseradish on top of the left over three and then re-cover it with the three pieces of lettuce that he had taken off.

He would do the exact same process for the *chazeres*. Inside both of them, he would also place a piece of horseradish which he carved out from a full root of horseradish that was on the table, in addition to the three spoons of peeled and ground horseradish that were already there.

The Rebbe was also *makpid* that the onion for *karpas* should be whole. One year a cut onion was



prepared for the Rebbe, but the Rebbe chose a whole one instead.

How would kiddush start?

Rabbi Harlig: When the Rebbe would recite *kiddush*, the Rebbetzin would stand at the door of the room where the ladies sat, with the door slightly open, and listen to the Rebbe's *kiddush*, although it seemed impossible for her to hear it; even we, standing right behind the Rebbe, could not hear what he was saying.

Rabbi Shmotkin: For *haseibah*, the Rebbe would have a second chair next to him on the left, with two pillows on top of it. After reciting *kiddush*, the Rebbe would place the *becher* on the table, seat himself and lean in a good position on the pillows (real *haseibah*), and then he would pick up the *becher* again, together with its small plate, and drink the first cup of wine.

Rabbi Offen: As Rabbi Shmotkin said, the Rebbe would read all of the Alter Rebbe's instructions from the Haggadah. When it came time for *Urchatz*, he would also read the instructions for *Karpas*, because one is not supposed to make a *hefsek* after washing. The same would be by the *simanim* of *Matzah*, *Maror* and *Korech*. Before washing his hands, the Rebbe



קידוש



ורחץ



would recite all of the instructions through Korech.

For washing the Rebbe would go to the kitchen, and since we didn't want to lose our places, we weren't able to see exactly how the Rebbe washed his hands.



כרפס

Rabbi Shmotkin: For Karpas the Rebbe would carve out a small piece from the middle of the onion, and dip it three times into salt water. Afterwards, the Rebbe would not return the onion to the *ka'arah*, rather he would leave it on the side.



יחץ

Rabbi Offen: The Rebbe would do Yachatz—splitting the middle matzah—while the matzah was still in the *ka'arah*. Afterwards he would take out the larger piece and break it into five smaller pieces, placing them in a cloth which he would slip between the two pillows on the chair next to him.

Rabbi Shmotkin: Although the middle matzah was split inside the *ka'arah* with all the *minim* on it, the Rebbe did it so carefully and smoothly, that everything stayed in its exact place.



מגיד

And now we arrive at Maggid. You mentioned before that Reb Yankel Katz was the makri; what special hanhagos did you see by the Rebbe during this part of the seder?

Rabbi Shmotkin: After a child (in the years that I was present it was Reb Yankel Katz's son) finished saying *Mah Nishtana* the Rebbe would begin his *Mah Nishtana* by saying the Yiddish preface—"Tateh ich vel ba dir fregen"—and it would take him quite a while to do so. (It seemed to me—based on the amount of time it took—that the Rebbe was saying more than what is actually printed in the Haggadah).

Rabbi Offen: During *Vehi Sheamdah* the Rebbe would lift the *becher*, and everyone would say it together with the *makri* in the regular tune of the Haggadah; they would not sing the Rebbe's *niggun*.

The Rebbe's Haggadah was printed in a different format in those days. In those Haggadahs, the text was printed along an entire page, and then on the next page or two were the *minhagim* and explanations. During the *seder*,

we would see the Rebbe recite an entire page quickly, and then while waiting for the *makri* to reach the end of the page, the Rebbe would peruse the explanations—that he had written—on the next page, as well as look into the Siddur Ha'Arizal. When the Rebbe would look back into the Haggadah, Reb Yankel Katz would already be halfway through the next page. Then again, the Rebbe would read through the entire page and then go back to the *minhagim*.

Rabbi Shmotkin: When reading the ten *makos*, the Rebbe was brought a chipped china bowl, which was placed on the floor next to the Rebbe's chair, and the Rebbe would bend over slightly and pour into it. The Rebbe poured a sizable amount of wine into the bowl each time.

After pouring, the Rebbe filled up his cup again from his bottle of wine, which was wrapped in a manila envelope and placed on the floor next to him. In general, the Rebbe filled the cup on his own, and no one would do it for him.

One year, the Rebbe waited until everyone filled up their cups, but one person had not filled up his *becher* all the way, so the Rebbe waited for him to fill it up entirely before continuing.

קבעה האמונה בלבו

האמת היא, שע"י הנחת עצמותו למלא את השליחות של הרבי לעוסק בטובת הזולת, ניתוסף גם בנוגע לעבודתו עם עצמו.

וההסברה בזה:

כשעובד עבודתו בכח עצמו - אינו בטוח שיצליח ויכוין אל האמת. יכול הוא להתעמק במאמר חסידות במשך כמה שעות, ולא לעמוד על אמיתת הענין, אבל כשעוסק בשליחותו של הרבי - בודאי יגיע אל האמת, כיון שאינו הולך בכח עצמו, אלא בכחו של הרבי.

אין אתנו יודע עד מה: יהודי ששנים רבות לא הניח

תפילין, כשראה את הרבי בעת אכילת כזית מצה, נטעה

ונקבעה האמונה בלבו

ועד"ז בנדו"ד: יתכן מצב שלימוד החסידות אינו פועל

נפעלותו, ולפתע, כשמתחיל לקיים שליחותו של הרבי נפעלים

אצלו כל הענינים, כיון שאינו הולך בכח עצמו, אלא בכחו

של הרבי.⁵

(שיחת ל"ג בעומר תש"י)

WHILE WAITING FOR THE MAKRI TO REACH THE END OF THE PAGE, THE REBBE WOULD PERUSE THE EXPLANATIONS— THAT HE HAD WRITTEN—ON THE NEXT PAGE



מורצ'יא
מצה

After Maggid comes Motzi Matzah and Maror, etc. What did the Rebbe do then?

Rabbi Shmotkin: The Rebbe would eat the middle half-matzah, and half of the other matzah; it took a while for the Rebbe to eat it.

The Rebbe was careful to pick up and eat even the small pieces that had broken off while eating the matzah.

Another interesting thing we saw was that during Korech, the Rebbe always made sure to eat every part of it as a sandwich; he always made sure that every piece of matzah be eaten with some *maror* in between two pieces.

Rabbi Zarchi: One time, a bochur picked up a napkin that the Rebbe had used, but the Rebbe stopped him and said that it's a *chashash chametz* (perhaps because it had been on the floor).

Rabbi Offen: The Rebbe's *maror* was a "חתיכה" להתכבד, a large portion, and it took a while for the Rebbe to eat it. We also often saw tears in the Rebbe's eyes while eating it. As a bochur I always felt that the Rebbe's tears were a *ruchniyesdiker inyan*; the Rebbe was feeling the bitterness of the *golus* etc. In the Haggadah, the Rebbe explains why the *maror* is placed in the middle of the *ka'arah*, although it seems to signify the *kav hagevurah*, which belongs on the left. But the Rebbe explains, that it is because the *maror* brings a person to a *hisorerus rachamim*, which belongs in the middle row. Surely when the Rebbe ate the *maror* it was *me'orer rachamim*.

Rabbi Shmotkin: For *maror* the Rebbe would portion off some *charoses* from the *ka'arah* with a knife and put it into the wine plate, where he would press it a bit to get it wet with wine. He would then dip the horseradish into it, and then

place the horseradish back between the lettuce and eat it.

When it came time for Korech, the Rebbe would put some of the dry *charoses* from the *ka'arah* on the maror three times (this time he would not place it into the wine), and then he would shake off the *maror*.

Later, after finishing all of the mitzvos of matzah and *maror*, the Rebbe would take a piece of matzah and dip it three times into the salt on the table and eat some of it.

Shulchan Orech: Does anything specific stand out?

Rabbi Offen: After the Rebbe ate the egg, during the soup course, a large silver bowl was brought out that had belonged to the Alter Rebbe, filled with soup. The Rebbe would put three spoonfuls of soup into his own bowl, and then everyone else would follow suit.

Rabbi Shmotkin: The Rebbe would eat from the third matzah during the meal as well, and interestingly it didn't seem like he was careful to finish the matzah entirely before eating other foods (fish, soup, etc.).

Rabbi Zarchi: One interesting anecdote I remember: one year, the cook in the kitchen said as a joke to the *bochur* serving that she prepared *kneidlach* in the soup (they were made out of potatoes). When he served a bowl to the Rebbe, he said something about the *kneidlach*, and the Rebbe didn't eat any of it. Even afterwards, once it was clarified that it was made of potatoes, the Rebbe still didn't touch it.

Rabbi Wilhelm: The Rebbe never initiated a conversation at the *seder* table. If he was asked a question, he would respond in short, concise answers.

The Rebbe would also never place his hands on the table; you were able to see that the Rebbe's



REB YANKEL KATZ.

LEVI FREIDIN via JEM 204825



שלחן
עורך



מרור/כורך

hanhaga was just as if the Frieddiker Rebbe was there. The *derech erez* that the Rebbe had not to do anything extra, as if the Frieddiker Rebbe was sitting right there, was amazing to see.

Rabbi Offen: *Niggunim* were also rarely sung at the table. I remember just one time that Reb Yankel Katz mentioned this to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe replied, “Nu, sing a *niggun*.”

Regarding the questions, they were mainly posed by Rashag; often, the *bochurim* would give him questions to ask the Rebbe at the Yom Tov meals.

Several times there were questions that the Rebbe addressed later, during a *farbrengen*. One example was a question regarding the four *leshonos* of *geulah*. In the Torah, the order is “והוצאתי וגאלתי ולקחתי”. However, in the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*⁶, he switches the order to “והוצאתי וגאלתי ולקחתי והצלת”. When Rashag asked the Rebbe about it,⁷ the Rebbe replied that he will speak about it at the *farbrengen*.⁸

Rabbi Harlig: The Rebbe would eat *matzah* throughout the *seudah* and he would also drink wine. However he did not say *l’chaim* on the wine that he drank. He once explained that saying *l’chaim* would make the cup into an *ikar*, and it would look as if we are being *mosif* on the four cups of wine required at the *seider*.



How long did the *seudah* last? When did the *afikoman* start?



Rabbi Shmotkin: I would always stand to the Rebbe’s right. In the years that I was present, on both nights, the Rebbe would turn to me several times during the meal and ask for the time. Whenever that would happen, I would push my way through the crowd to the thermostat on the wall, which also had a clock, and return to tell the Rebbe the time.

The year after I got married, I came running to the *seider* as usual, hoping to get my usual place. But when I arrived at my place behind the Rebbe, I saw that the Rebbe had a small watch sitting next to him on the table.

Rabbi Zarchi: There was one time that the thermostat was broken, and when the Rebbe asked for the time, one of the *bochurim* replied that it was nine o’clock, when in fact it was close to midnight. The Rebbe gave a smile and looked at his own watch.

Rabbi Harlig: Something important to point out is that the Rebbe was *makpid*—on both nights of *yom tov*—to eat the *afikoman* before *chatzos*.

Once, on the second night, it was so late that the Rebbe ate only a few bites at *Shulchan Orech* and moved straight on to *afikoman*. As a rule, the Rebbe would begin eating only after everyone was served, and he would eat slowly, because as soon as the Rebbe would put his fork down, everyone else would stop eating as well and the course would be over. So in this instance, when the Rebbe put down his fork, the waiters immediately began clearing the plates. An elderly *Yid* at the table (known for his unique and interesting character), seeing his dinner disappear, took pieces of chicken and began slipping them into his pocket. Everyone around the table began to laugh, but the Rebbe turned to them with a serious look and said, “*Vos art ir az a Yid vet hoben seudas yom*

THE REBBE WAS MAKPID—ON BOTH NIGHTS OF YOM TOV—TO EAT THE AFIKOMAN BEFORE CHATZOS

Beim Shver in Tzimer

On the first night of Pesach in 5710, the year following the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, most chassidim remained in their homes during the seder, and only a select few *bochurim* decided to come watch the Rebbe's seder in 770.

When the Rebbe came downstairs, he noticed Reb Dovid Raskin (a bochur at the time) standing on the side. The Rebbe turned to him and asked him, "Where did you eat your *afikoman*? You could have eaten it here, in the place where the [Frierdiker] Rebbe would conduct the seder, and instead you ate it *by a ballebos in shtub* - in a *ballebos*' house".

The next morning, after Shacharis in the Frierdiker Rebbe's room, the Rebbe turned to a number of *yungeleit* and asked them why they did not come to the seder. The Rebbe said:

"When the doors were closed, a large crowd would gather and push, but now, when all of the doors are open, no one showed up. Yes, there were a few that - after finishing their own seder - came to peek in and see what

was going on, but no one brought along their *afikoman* in order to eat it in the same room that the Rebbe made the seder for close to ten years!

"It says in *sefarim*, that Eliyahu Hanavi cannot be present in all locations at the same time, and only a *nitzutz* of his *neshama* is found everywhere. However, to Rav Hamnunah Sava, Eliyahu would come in full. If that is the case, is it possible for there to be a bigger revelation than in the place where the Rebbe made the *sedorim*? As *seforim* say, after his passing, Rabbeinu Hakadosh would come to his house to make kiddush and be *motzi* everyone..."

That night, for the second seder, the *bochurim* rushed through the first part of the seder, and by 9:15 they hurried to the Frierdiker Rebbe's apartment, where they were still in middle of eating the *kezayis* of matzah. During Shulchan Orech, when they passed around the soup bowl of the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe instructed that the *bochurim* also be served from it, being that they had not yet eaten the *afikoman*.



A SEUDA IN THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S APARTMENT, MOTZAEI YOM KIPPUR.

WLCC

tov—Why does it bother you that a Yid will have *seudas yom tov*”.



Now we are getting towards the end of the seder. What was the custom with *kos shel Eliyahu*?

Rabbi Offen: When it came time to pour the third cup, the Rebbe would give his *becher* and plate, which had some leftover *charoses* on it, to the waiter for rinsing. A clean cup was brought back, and the Rebbe wiped it once more with a napkin, just as he would at *farbrengens*.

Rabbi Shmotkin: Before the Rebbe poured the third *kos*, he would pour *kos shel Eliyahu*. The Rebbe would use a simple glass cup—a standard eight ounce water glass—placed on a plate, fill it up and then push it towards the middle of the table.

Rabbi Offen: At the Frierdiker Rebbe's seder, on some occasions *kos shel Eliyahu* was poured after *birkas hamazon*, and sometimes it was filled before. The Rebbe once said he does not know the Frierdiker Rebbe's reason as to why he poured it after *bentching*, so he pours it beforehand. Additionally, the Rebbe explained, it is befitting to fill it up before. “I focus much on the *geulah*,” the Rebbe said, “better to fill up Eliyahu's cup sooner.”¹⁰

Rabbi Shmotkin: For the recital of *Shefoch Chamaschah*, one of the *bochurim* went to open the main doors to 770, and the Rebbe waited until all of the doors leading from the dining room to the front entrance were open.

Once the Rebbe requested from Reb Yankel Katz, the *makri*, that he recite *Shefoch Chamaschah* with a *shturem*.

Rabbi Harlig: Even though the *ka'arah* is not really needed by the table after *Shulchan Orech*, the Rebbe's *ka'arah* would remain on the table all the way through until the end of the seder.

We often hear about the special way the Rebbe recited Hallel and the rest of the Haggadah until the end. Would you be able to share with us some of your memories about it?



Rabbi Shmotkin: From *Shefoch Chamaschah* and on, the atmosphere at the *seder* changed completely. Everyone listened intently as the Rebbe would recite the rest of the Haggadah, and it was evident that he was in a different world.

Rabbi Zarchi: For a *bochur* in those years, this part of the *seder* was one of the highlights of the year with the Rebbe, similar to *tekios*. This was when we got to see a Rebbe'she *hanhaga*; the way the Rebbe would say Hallel and Nishmas Kol Chai—often crying—is indescribable. The Rebbe was transported—and brought us along—to an entirely higher realm.

The Rebbe said each part, word-by-word. Once, the Rebbe repeated “*ki lolam chasdo*” three times in a row, and instructed everyone to say it after him. The Rebbe was very serious, and was crying and shaking. The next morning we found out that MIGs of the Syrian Air Force were shot down over Eretz Yisroel.

This was the only time during the year that we were able to hear the Rebbe daven out loud. Usually the Rebbe davened quietly, but here we were able to see the Rebbe say the words with great *dveikus* and *erenstkeit*.

Reb Yisroel Friedman recalls that he was once standing at the *seder* on the other side of the table opposite the Rebbe and when the Rebbe recited the words “*sabuni kidvorim*.” The Rebbe was crying so much to the point that a teardrop flew across the table and touched him, where he was standing.

Rabbi Shmotkin: The Rebbe would often be saying the words with his eyes closed. At times, the Rebbe would be saying the words from four or five lines down the following page before actually turning it over.

There were years that the *makri*, Reb Yankel Katz, would finish reciting the entire Haggadah already, and the Rebbe was only up to *nishmas*. At that point, the Rebbe would sometimes finish quickly; but other times he would continue in his regular pace, slowly saying all the words until the end.

Through the years, during Hallel I noticed the Rebbe's *hisragshus* and tears more by the *pesukim* of praise and thanks than in the parts of *bakashos*.

Rabbi Offen: The Rebbe would recite Hallel in a stirring tune, while holding on to the arms of his chair and lightly shuckling back and forth, similar to the way he looked at farbrengens when the Alter Rebbe's *niggun* was sung.

It is impossible for me to describe the *dveikus* that we saw by the Rebbe during those minutes.

Rabbi Zarchi: In 5729, on the first night, after *Leshana Haba'a Biyirushalayim*, the Rebbe requested that the *niggun Prazos Teshev Yerushalayim* be sung, and strongly encouraged the singing with both hands for a few minutes. Afterwards, when the Rebbe returned home, the *bochurim* accompanied him, and while already standing at the door of his house, the Rebbe stood outside for five minutes encouraging the singing. It was *poshut moiredik!*

Wow! Would the Rebbe usually leave immediately after *Leshana Haba'a Biyirushalayim*?



Rabbi Wilhelm: At the end of the Haggadah, the Rebbe would pour the wine from *kos shel Eliyahu* back into the bottle. Standing in his place, the Rebbe would do so in a very unique fashion. He would pour from the *kos shel Eliyahu* to his *becher*, then to the bottle, and from the bottle back into the *becher*, back and forth, for a significant period of time, each time in a different way. All the while we would sing *Keili Atah* as is customary. No one I know ever managed to remember the exact order in which the Rebbe did it, and it seemed to be a very *ruchniyusdiker inyan*.

At the end of the *seder*, the Rebbe would take his *becher*, place a napkin on top of it, and on top of the napkin he would put the small plate, and that's how he would walk out.

Rabbi Offen: One time, when the Rebbe walked out of 770 after the post-*seder* farbrengen, he walked towards Kingston (usually he would walk on Eastern Parkway towards Brooklyn on his way home). We followed from a distance, not understanding why the Rebbe was going this route, and then suddenly we saw that on Union Street, the Rebbetzin was standing at the corner waiting for the Rebbe to walk home.

On the second night of Yom Tov, the Rebbe would farbreng after the *seder*. What would happen during those farbrengens?

Rabbi Harlig: About fifteen or twenty minutes after the end of the *seder*, the Rebbe would come down to the *zal* carrying his Haggadah. During the farbrengen, he would open the Haggadah and explain different parts of it.

Being that it was after the *afikoman*, we could not say *l'chaim*, and the farbrengen consisted

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My B'nei Bayis

In 5729, the *bochurim* were told that no one would be allowed into the Rebbe's seder. Present in New York at the time were the group of shluchim whom the Rebbe had sent for a two year shlichus in Australia, and had just arrived back from their lengthy absence. Hearing about the new arrangements, they asked Rashag if he could ask the Rebbe that an exception be made for them that they should be permitted access to the seder, and the Rebbe answered in the affirmative.

When it came time for the *afikoman*, the Rebbe turned to Reb Leibel Kaplan, who was one of the shluchim, and asked him if he had already eaten the *afikoman*. Not imagining that the Rebbe was talking to him, Leibel didn't answer, and the Rebbe clarified, "Kaplan, *ich mein dir*", and he then told the Rebbe that he had eaten it already. Upon hearing his answer, the Rebbe did not reply, and continued on with the seder.

The next night, the Rebbe again turned to him and asked him if he had eaten the *afikoman*. This time, the shluchim had been careful to come to the Rebbe's seder before eating their *afikoman*, and when the Rebbe was told that they did not yet eat it, he instructed

that chairs be brought and the shluchim - who were *bochurim* in their early twenties - be accommodated and seated at the table.

Although the table was already full, and it was not exactly possible to fit another five seats, the Rebbe waited and continued watching until they were all somewhat seated, asked that they be brought Hagaddahs and *bechers*, and then proceeded to hand each of them a piece of his own *afikoman* together with another full matzah, wrapped in a napkin.

Throughout the continuation of the seder, the Rebbe often looked at the shluchim to ensure that all was alright with them; as time would pass they would be pushed further away from the table, and each time the Rebbe would look, they would make an effort to come back, and so on and so forth.

At one point, someone else tried to sit on the same chair as a shliach, and the Rebbe turned to him and said, "one does not sit on the same chair as a shliach".

The next day, Rashag asked the Rebbe about giving the *afikoman* to the shluchim, "It says one should give (only) to members of his household (*b'nei bayis*)?" The Rebbe replied, "They are my *b'nei bayis*. They worked hard for two years!"

simply of *niggunim* and *sichos*. Sometimes the Rebbe would speak with his eyes closed, and he even once said that this is because so many people in the crowd were tired, yawning and falling asleep.

Rabbi Zarchi: The *farbrengen* was after the *seder*; in later years the time was officially set to 1:30 AM. Since the crowd was small, the Rebbe continued to hold this *farbrengen* in the small *zal*, even after the new shul was built.¹¹

In 5726, all of the Rebbe's *sichos* throughout the *farbrengen* were questions on the Haggadah, and at the end, in one *sicha*, the Rebbe answered all those questions.¹²

Rabbi Harlig: Usually the Rebbe would leave the seder, and come down to his room with the Haggadah, *becher*, and matzos, place them on his desk and close the door. On the first night in 5714, the Rebbe left the door open, and came back out, leaned on the doorpost, and held a whole *farbrengen* while standing in Gan Eden Hatachton. The Rebbe said a number of *sichos*, and there were *niggunim*¹³. At the end, the Rebbe said that we should go dance with the *rosh yeshiva* of Tomchei Temimim, meaning Rabbi Mentlick.

Rabbi Zarchi: Another year that stands out in my mind is 5732, which was *shnas hashiv'im*. At that point the Rebbe had his seder at home, and no longer held the post-seder *farbrengen*.

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That year the Rebbe farbrenged every day of yom tov. Even on Shvi'i Shel Pesach, the Rebbe farbrenged before *tahalucha*. On the first day of yom tov, during the farbrengen, which took place at 3:30 in the afternoon, the Rebbe called up all the children who had just left Russia, and had them say the *Mah Nishtanah* on the *bima*. When they recited the preface—*Tatteh ich vel ba dir fregen*—we noticed a smile on the Rebbe's face. At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe began encouraging the singing very strongly, and eventually stood up and danced in his place, with all of the Russian Chassidim standing and dancing close by him.

We thank you all for your time and for recounting these precious memories. In the spirit of Pesach, celebrating *geulas Mitzrayim*, we pray that speedily we will have the final and ultimate *geulah*, and celebrate the seder this year with the Rebbe. 🕒

1. See more about these visits - A Chassidisher Derher Nissan 5775.
2. Toras Menachem vol. 33 p. 469
3. A system instituted by the Rebbe of "*Shivas Kanei Hamenorah*." Seven *bochurim* who would dedicate themselves to learning on a higher level than the rest of the *bochurim*, and every week one of them would deliver : *pilpul* before the entire yeshiva. There was one set of *kanim* for Chassidus and one for *nigleh*.
4. See more about Reb Yankel - A Chassidisher Derher Nissan 5773
5. Toras Menachem vol. 1 p. 63
6. Orach Chaim vol. 3, siman 472 se'if 14
7. Hamelech B'Mesibo vol. 1 p. 289
8. Sichos Pesach and Shabbos parshas Shemini 5729, printed in Likutei Sichos vol. 11 p. 14
9. Toras Menachem vol. 1 p. 22
10. Hamelech B'mesibo vol. 1 p. 285
11. See more about the building of the shul in 770 - A Chassidisher Derher Nissan 5775.
12. This *sicha* was later edited by the Rebbe. Likkutei Sichos vol 17 p. 78
13. See the full Farbrengen - Toras Menachem vol. 11 pgs.182-186.



'HAMELECH B'MESIBO,' THE SET CHRONICLING THE CONVERSATIONS AT THE YOM-TOV MEALS WITH THE REBBE.