

AFTER ENABLING CHASSIDIM TO BENTCH ON THE REBBE'S LULAV AND
ESROG, REB MEIR BRINGS THE SET TO THE REBBE FOR HALLEL.

20 TISHREI 5736, LEVI FREIDIN via JEM 142498



A Life in BEIS CHAYENU



He's been a fixture in Beis Chayenu since the earliest years. He would hold the Rebbe's *lulav* and *esrog* for Chassidim to shake. He can be seen helping during *kos shel bracha*, standing next to the Rebbe at *Kiddush Levana*, and assisting during the weekly Sunday Dollars and more.

He almost never missed a davening or farbrengen in the Rebbe's presence and is present in almost every video of the Rebbe, and thousands of pictures as well.

A Chassidisher Derher staff sat down with Reb Meir Harlig for an exclusive interview, where he told stories, anecdotes, and *hora'os* that he was privy to throughout the years of the Rebbe's *nesius*.

*Special thanks to Rabbi Shea Harlig, shliach to Las Vegas, NV
and Rabbi Mendy Dalfin, shliach to North Bay Village, FL.*

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
החתן הרה"ת ר' חי' שי' קאהן
והכלה המהוללה מרת חנה שתח" כהנוב
לרגל חתונתם ביום
ה' טבת ה'תשע"ז



EARLY CONNECTIONS

Reb Meir Harlig was born on 6 Elul 5696 (תרצ"ו) in Zurich, Switzerland.

His father, Rabbi Mordechai Harlig, served as a rav in Vienna in the years prior to World War II. (The elder Rabbi Harlig's uncle was the famous Reb Meir Shapiro of Lublin whom Reb Meir was named after.) There he became acquainted with the Frierdiker Rebbe, who would periodically visit the city. During those trips, he had the merit to assist the Frierdiker Rebbe in various ways.

"There was one time that the Frierdiker Rebbe had a *yahrzeit*; my father organized a *minyán* and after davening he said to bring out *l'chaim*.

"Someone asked if he could ask a *shayleh*, and the Frierdiker Rebbe said yes, so he asked: How come the Frierdiker Rebbe wrote to a certain individual with the title of *yarei Shamayim*, when his business is open on Shabbos? How could he be a *yarei Shamayim*?

"*Ich vel dir entfernen*—I will answer you' the Frierdiker Rebbe told him, '*ich bin azoi vi a chemist*—I am like a chemist.

"When a chemist takes blood, he sees a lot of components; sugar, cholesterol, etc. *Ich hob gezen in em a horele yiras Shamayim*—I saw in him a strand of *yiras Shamayim*.

"Years later, my father told me that this person eventually became a *shomer Shabbos*."

SAFER SHORES

Rabbi Mordechai Harlig arrived in the United States with his family in 5700, and took up a position as a rav of a shul in Crown Heights. The close proximity to 770 led to further encounters with the Frierdiker Rebbe.

"The Frierdiker Rebbe once called a meeting of rabbonim, and my father was one of the attendees. I came along

with my father to 770 and waited in the hallway while the meeting took place in the Frierdiker Rebbe's room.

"At the conclusion of the meeting, my father requested permission to remain in *yeichidus* for a moment. He used the opportunity to ask for a *bracha* for my mother, who was not feeling well at the time.

"My father then mentioned my name to the Frierdiker Rebbe, and Rabbi Simpson, the *mazkir*, (or maybe the Frierdiker Rebbe himself) said '*er iz doh*—he is here,' so the Frierdiker Rebbe told me to come in. He picked up the right side of his *kapota*, and gave me his *tzitzis* to kiss. I was about seven or eight years old."

Another time Reb Meir saw the Frierdiker Rebbe was at a farbrengen in the small *zal*.

"It was Yud-Beis Tammuz 5706 or 5707.

"There was a *bimah* set up with three seats. On the sides sat the Rebbe and Rashag, and in the center sat the Frierdiker Rebbe. I remember the Frierdiker Rebbe saying, '*Heint iz di Yom Tov*—today is the Yom Tov...' My father was inside, but for most of the time I was playing outdoors."

When the Harligs arrived in America, there were two religious schools: Torah Vadaas and Lubavitch Yeshiva. Being that he was a Chossid, Rabbi Harlig sent his son meir to Lubavitch.

Years passed, and on Yud Shevat 5710 the Frierdiker Rebbe was *nistalek*. Reb Meir remembers attending the *levaya*:

"The *histalkus* took place on Shabbos morning, and *bochurim* went around to the various shuls to inform everyone about what had happened. I remember that my classmate Reb Zushe Posner came to my father's shul during *shacharis* and delivered the sad news. The following day was the *levaya*. People sobbed with such intensity, the grief was unbelievable."

"Ich vel dir entfernen—I will answer you" the Frierdiker Rebbe told him, "I am like a chemist. When a chemist takes blood, he sees a lot of components; sugar, cholesterol, etc. I saw in him a strand of yiras Shamayim." Years later, my father told me that this person eventually became a shomer Shabbos.

Meir was learning then in Tomchei Temimim on Bedford Ave. and Dean St., but each Shabbos Mevorchim he came to 770 to participate in the Rebbe's farbrengen. (Reb Meir notes that another farbrengen that the Rebbe held by explicit request of the Frierdiker Rebbe, was the farbrengen before *hakafos* on Simchas Torah.)

After the *histalkus*, Chassidim began flocking to the Rebbe—until then referred to as the Ramash— and as the year passed, it was clear that the Rebbe would assume leadership of Chabad.

"I remember the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5711, when the Rebbe said the *maaamar Basi Legani* and accepted the *nesius*. The room was packed and the hallway was also full of people. Rabbi Yolles from Philadelphia arrived just before the Rebbe's entry and he did not know how he was going to get

inside. The Rebbe told him, ‘Hold on to my *gartel* and follow me.’”

A NEW CURE

As a *bochur* in the early 5710s, Reb Meir was a beneficiary of the particularly close attention that the Rebbe accorded the *bochurim* during those years. The Rebbe would be regularly apprised of each *bochur*’s situation in frequent *duchos* submitted

by the *hanhala*, and every *bochur* would enter *yechidus* twice each year.

Once, the *rosh yeshiva* Rabbi Mentlik submitted a list of *bochurim* and inquired as to which subjects the different *bochurim* should be learning. For some it was *Yoreh De’ah*, for others *shechita* or something else. The Rebbe reacted with surprise about Reb Meir learning *shechita*. “The son of a rof learning *shechita*?” the Rebbe asked.



THE REBBE LEAVES THE SHUL FOLLOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF KOS SHEL BROCHA MOTZEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5724.

Together with this close attention came personal *horaos*, sometimes on the topic of keeping *sidrei hayeshiva*.

“Once I came down with hay fever. The doctor first prescribed me some pill, then a different pill, and then he said that I need an injection. I received the injection in his office, and while I was waiting for the bus to take me home, the nurse came running after me saying that the doctor had given me the wrong injection, so he called me back. My hand had already gotten a bit swollen so he gave me an antidote, and sent me home in a taxi.

“A few weeks later I went into *yechidus* before my birthday, and I wrote the whole story in my *tzetel*. The Rebbe looked up at me, and told me as follows:

“*Es iz doh a naye erfindung*—There is a new invention for all of this; if you will be careful not to miss the morning *seder Chassidus* and the night *seder Chassidus*, all of the issues will go away.”

“Over the next two or three years, I didn’t miss a single *seder*.”

“One year before Pesach, I was standing near the window of the small *zal* during *seder* watching the Rebbe going to draw *mayim shelanu* [in later years this took place in the front of 770, but during those years it would occur in the *chatzer*]. When the Rebbe noticed me peeking, he shut the window...”

MESHAMESH BAKODESH

Over the years, Reb Meir was given numerous jobs and tasks, and ultimately, he took care of many functions at 770—buying the cake and wine for the Rebbe’s *farbrengen*, setting up the Rebbe’s place, and many other roles.

More importantly though, Reb Meir had the merit to help the Rebbe personally in a variety of ways. One very unusual job that Reb Meir recalls,



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is a somewhat discreet *shlichus* that he was sent on as a *bochur*.

“Once, as a *bochur*, I was sitting alone in the small *zal* after *maariv*, and suddenly the Rebbe walked out of his room and beckoned me to come over.

“The Rebbe gave me a package of matzos, and told me to go to the airport, to Pan American Airways, where I should look for a Jew traveling to the Far East. The Rebbe told me to give the matzos to that person; he will know who to give it to, and while doing so, he will know who to give it to, and while doing so, he should wish all those that receive the matzah ‘*a kosher un freilichen pesach in my name*’. The Rebbe also gave me copies of the *michtav kloli* for him to distribute. As compensation for the shlichus, the Rebbe said that the

individual can take two matzos for himself; one for each *seder*.

“How are you going to get to the airport?” the Rebbe asked me. I replied that I would take a taxi.

“*Es kost gelt*—it will cost you money,” so I told the Rebbe I have money. ‘Are you sure?’ the Rebbe asked me, and I replied in the affirmative.

“What about the way back? It will also cost money.”

“I assured the Rebbe that I had enough money for both ways, and the Rebbe told me to knock on his door when I return and inform him how it went.

“I went to the airport (it was Idlewild Airport at the time), the man came over to me, and I gave him the matzos along with the other messages from the Rebbe. When I arrived back

in 770, the door to *mazkirus* was open, and Rabbi Hodakov noticed me and said that the Rebbe had already come out a couple of times to see if I had returned.

“I knocked on the Rebbe’s door and was let in. When I gave over that I had fulfilled the shlichus, the Rebbe said, ‘*Yasher koach*; you have fulfilled your shlichus, I have fulfilled my shlichus, and together we have fulfilled the *Aibershter’s* shlichus.’”

IT’S PURIM!

Starting in the early years of the Rebbe’s *nesius*, Reb Meir would prepare the Rebbe’s place for the farbrengens.

“Purim 5714 fell out on Friday, so the annual Purim farbrengen was instead scheduled for Shabbos afternoon. On Friday afternoon, as I was preparing the ‘*shalash*’ (the tent-like structure in the courtyard of 770 sometimes used as a shul in those years) for the farbrengen, which would take place the following day, the Rebbe came downstairs on his way home. When he saw me working, he said with a smile, ‘*Du veist as heint iz Purim, un m’darf gehen essen seudas Purim?*—You know that today is *Purim*, and one is required to eat *seudas Purim?*’”

The first time the Rebbe requested Reb Meir’s assistance was when he was still a young *bochur*, on Rosh Hashana 5712.

“On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe asked me to bring him a Mishnayos (Taharos) so that he could recite a few sections before *kaddish* at the end of davening.



REB MEIR AND MENACHEM WOLFF CONVERSE OUTSIDE 770, 30 ADAR 5749.

(The Rebbe would say *kaddish* for the Frierdiker Rebbe's youngest daughter, Rebbetzin Sheina, whose *yahrtzeit* is on the second of Tishrei.)

"On Yom Kippur, as *musaf* concluded, the Rebbe asked me, '*Du bleibst doh*—are you staying here during the break?' I said yes, and the Rebbe asked me to keep an eye on the bags of *panim* which he had brought along to davening. (Usually the Rebbe would bring *panim* on Rosh Hashanah to *tekios*, but that year he brought them on Yom Kippur as well.)

"A few days later, at the *farbrengen* that took place in the afternoon of the second day of Sukkos¹, the Rebbe asked for the time, so that those that didn't wash for *hamotzi* would be able to use the opportunity to say *l'chaim* before *shkiah*. I took off my watch and put it on the Rebbe's table. Later when the Rebbe gave it back to me, he said "*A groisen Yasher Koach, uber du zolst visen az Yom Tov trogt men nit kein zeiger*—Thank you very much, but you

should know that one shouldn't wear a watch on Yom Tov²."

On another occasion, at the *farbrengen* before *hakafos*, the Rebbe

The Rebbe asked, "*Du bleibst doh*—are you staying here during the break?" I said yes, and the Rebbe asked me to keep an eye on the bags of *panim* which he had brought along to davening.

gave Reb Meir two pieces of cake and told him to go outside and give the cake to two people standing there. "The Rebbe pointed to the two men but I was not familiar with them. It seemed that they were not *frumme* Yidden but they were present at the *farbrengen* and the Rebbe wanted them to get some of the cake."

These are just a few of numerous such instances over the years, where the Rebbe singled out Reb Meir for specific jobs.

THE REBBETZIN

Among the unique jobs that Reb Meir had was one that brought him in close contact with the Rebbetzin. Reb Meir relates:

"I used to bring the Rebbe *mezonos* and tea each morning. I would bring the cake from the Albany Bakery, milk from Reb Yankel Lipsker's store, and I would pick up the tea from the Rebbe's house. The Rebbetzin would prepare the tea in a thermos; sometimes she would leave it on the foyer in between the two doors, and sometimes she would tell me to come inside and I would wait while she prepared it.

"On one occasion, as I was waiting inside the house, the Rebbetzin inquired about my children's wellbeing. Right around that time, my son Sholom Ber was constantly catching colds and missing school, and the doctor recommended removing his tonsils. I told the Rebbetzin about the doctor's recommendation, and she said that if we would not need tonsils, the *Aibershter* would not have created them; since he did, it probably means that we need them.

"Two days later I came back, and she told me, '*Ich hob geredt mit mein man*—I spoke to my husband about it, and he said the same thing."

“WE DAVEN TOGETHER EVERY DAY”⁹

To anyone visiting 770 for close to forty years, Reb Meir was a constant part of the scene. Every farbrengen, every davening, every *krias haTorah*, Reb Meir was loath to miss an opportunity to be in the Rebbe’s presence. When his children were still young, he would bring them along as well to take part in the Rebbe’s *minyán* and farbrengen.

“My father once asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* that he should have *nachas* from his *einikel*, my son Sholom Ber, who was then two-and-a-half years old. The Rebbe told him:

“*Ich ken em doch*—I know him; we daven *mincha* and *maariv* together every day.”

“I indeed used to bring my son to *mincha* and *maariv* every day, and he would play around, *shlep* the *paroches* all over the place and sometimes I would even punish him for being too wild. From then on, I stopped bothering him, and I let him do whatever he wants.”

When Reb Meir got married, his father planned to host a large *kiddush* and *sheva brachos* at his shul on Shabbos. But Reb Meir soon broke the news to him that he would not be able to attend—that week was Shabbos Mevorchim and the Rebbe would be holding a farbrengen.

“My father went into *yechidus*. He told the Rebbe, that he understands that my *aufruf* will obviously take place in 770, but his *balebatim* are expecting that the Shabbos *sheva brachos* celebration take place in his shul, with their participation.

“The Rebbe told my father that he shouldn’t try to change my mind, instead the Rebbe suggested that my father should make a large *sheva brachos* on Motzei Shabbos, with all of

the *balebatim*, and that way they would be satisfied.”

On a later occasion, after the birth of a child to his son Sholom Ber, by then a shliach in California, the Rebbe took a different stand:

“I wrote into the Rebbe that my son Sholom Ber had a son and that my wife would be traveling to the *bris*. I wasn’t planning on going, because it was Shabbos Mevorchim that week, and there would be a farbrengen.

“The Rebbe told Rabbi Groner, ‘*Vi falt em ein aza zach*—how did he come up with such an idea? A shliach is making a *bris*, and it is possible to go and speak with people and be *mekarev* them. To miss it because of the farbrengen? He will come back and be able to read a *hanacha* of everything that was said.”

On the topic of distant shluchim, Reb Meir relates another story, which took place many years earlier.

“Reb Berel Baumgarten [shliach in Buenos Aires, Argentina] wrote to the Rebbe that he had never missed hearing *tekios* from the Rebbe, and he wants permission to come in for Rosh Hashanah. He promised to leave back to Argentina immediately after receiving *kos shel bracha*.

“The Rebbe answered him, ‘*Gloibt mir*, believe me, when I blow *tekios*, I think more about the shluchim, than of those pushing right in front of the *bimah*.”

In fact, being that many of his close friends had moved out on shlichus to distant lands and were no longer able to participate in the goings on in 770, Reb Meir would keep them informed via mail and, when possible, phone calls.

In 5718, Reb Meir acquired a tape recorder and he would send full recordings of the Rebbe’s weekday farbrengens to Reb Leibel Raskin in Morocco, Reb Nachman Sudak in England, Reb Chanoch Glitzenstein in Yerushalayim, and others.

Reb Meir never wrote to the Rebbe about his project, but somehow the Rebbe did learn of it.

“Once, at a yom tov *seuda* in the Friediker Rebbe’s apartment, the Rebbe said something and then immediately followed up by saying, ‘*Keiner zol dos nit iberchazeren*—no one should repeat it, and it should stay here.’ When the Rebbe was leaving the meal, he turned to me, and he said, ‘*Ich mein nisht kein joke*—I’m not joking around; I know you do good things, you send things from here to the shluchim, but what I said here should not be sent around.’

“I’m not sure how the Rebbe found out; it could be that one of the shluchim wrote to the Rebbe about it.”

Valuing anything that had a connection to the Rebbe, Reb Meir was known to collect every *sicha* and *maamar*, and any item connected to the Rebbe, and to keep them all in an organized form. He also wrote a diary listing various *hanhagos* of the Rebbe over the years.

One year, Reb Meir relates, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Groner to bring him the *michtav kloli* that he had written in a year with a similar *kvius*. Not having the letter immediately on hand, the *mazkir* called on Reb Meir, asking him to rush over to 770 and bring it.

On a different occasion, the Rebbe asked *mazkirus* if he had gone to the Ohel on this date in a previous year. Again, it was Reb Meir who was called on to provide the information being that he had all this information transcribed in his diary.

Regards

As mentioned in the article, Reb Meir would send recordings of the Rebbe's farbrengens and keep his friends who were on shlichus in far away places informed about the goings on at 770.

Below are excerpts of letters of correspondence between Reb Leibel Raskin a"h, shliach in Casablanca, Morocco, and Reb Meir. Reb Meir writes about the recent farbrengens, Lag B'omer 5720 parade with the Rebbe, Yud Shevat in the Rebbe's court, *tahalucha* on Pesach and many other events.

In his letters in response, Reb Leibel Raskin thanks Reb Meir and expresses his great appreciation for the recordings of the Rebbe's sichos and for keeping him in touch with Beis Chayenu.

Special thanks to Reb Hirshel Raskin for sharing his archive with us.





CHOL HAMOED SUKKOS MORNING, REB MEIR WAITS AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE SUKKAH FOR THE REBBE TO HAND HIM THE DALED MINIM FOR CHASSIDIM TO SHAKE.

LEVI FREIDIN *via* JEM 188211



NOW YOU SHOW UP?

For many Chassidim, one of the most well known images of Reb Meir is that of him holding the Rebbe's lulav and esrog, passing it from person to person allowing each a moment for a *bracha* and a light shake.

This position was given to Reb Meir by the Rebbe himself:

From the earliest years of the Rebbe's *nesius*, Chassidim merited to *bench* on the Rebbe's lulav and esrog. After the Rebbe would *bench* and conduct the *naanu'im* each Sukkos morning, he would open the door to his sukkah, and Chassidim would file in one by one and quickly recite a *bracha* in the Rebbe's presence. During that hour or two, while reciting *korbanos* or studying the *maamarim* of the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe would watch each person *bench*. Often, the Rebbe would say that it was a "*matana al menas lehachzir*" (this would be throughout Sukkos, not specifically on the first day of yom tov).

In 5722, a large group of guests arrived in New York to spend Tishrei

with the Rebbe, and on the first day of Sukkos, the line for *benching* continued until 10:45, much later than the planned time for *shacharis* to begin.

That night after *maariv*, Reb Meir (who was still a *bochur* at the time) was informed that Rabbi Hodakov wanted to speak with him. Initially, Reb Meir procrastinated; he thought Rabbi Hodakov wished to reprimand him for speaking his mind during a *simchas beis hashoeva* farbrengen the night before; he therefore didn't rush to see him.

However, receiving one message after another, he realized he had no choice, and made his way upstairs to look for Rabbi Hodakov, only to find

out that he was standing inside *gan eden hatachton*. Arriving there, he saw that the Rebbe's door was open.

Noticing him, Rabbi Hodakov pointed towards the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe wanted to speak with him.

The Rebbe told Reb Meir that he would be arriving late the next morning and he asked that Reb Meir take his lulav and esrog, keep them in a safe place, and the next morning take them out and allow the public to *bench* on them. When the Rebbe will arrive, he will take them for a few minutes, and then the public *benchen* will continue.

Startled by the staggering responsibility, Reb Meir was dumbstruck for a few moments, but he

The Rebbe told Reb Meir that he would be arriving late the next morning and he asked that Reb Meir take his lulav and esrog, keep them in a safe place, and the next morning take them out and allow the public to *bench* on them.



LEVI FREIDIN via JEM188211

REB MEIR EMCEES THE FARBRENGEN OF ROSH CHODESH KISLEV 5752.

quickly regained his composure and left the room with the lulav and esrog.

The next morning, at eight o'clock, Reb Meir stood in the Rebbe's sukkah and gave each person the opportunity to *bench*.

For the next two years, the *seder* reverted back to normal and the Rebbe himself remained in the sukkah while everyone *benched*. Then, when Sukkos 5725 came around, Reb Meir was once again given the responsibility for the public *benchen*. From that year on, rain or shine, Reb Meir would stand in the public sukkah—and later in the special sukkah built for this purpose—and hand each person the Rebbe's lulav to recite the *bracha*.

"Once, an elderly Chossid shook the Rebbe's lulav with much emotion, and dropped the Rebbe's *esrog*. To our shock and dismay, the *pittum* fell off. With no other option, I went to the Rebbe and told him that the *pittum* had broken off. Hearing that, he said not to tell him who had dropped it, because then 'it won't be good for me or for him.' On another occasion when the *pittum* fell off, the Rebbe instructed me to go to his house and bring the Rebbetzin's *esrog* for him to use during *hallel*. But this *esrog* was not sent out for people to *bench* on; the Rebbe said that it doesn't belong to him, so he can't give it out.

Someone once wrote to the Rebbe, protesting the fact that Reb

Meir would be the one holding the lulav and esrog. It should have been given to someone more befitting, he maintained, perhaps an elderly Chossid or the like. He received a sharp answer from the Rebbe. "*Itzt kumst du*—now you show up, after he saved me hundreds of hours, now you come?"

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

One of the most common roles that Reb Meir filled was organizer and master of ceremonies at many farbrengens that Chassidim held in 770.

Among those, a few stand out as unique.

Each year, on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Reb Meir 'hosts' the farbrengen and *seudas Yom Tov* celebrating the Rebbe's recovery and return home on Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5738. Reb Meir has been organizing this farbrengen since the very first anniversary, in 5739.

Another unique time was Chof-Ches Sivan, the day that the Rebbe and Rebbetzin arrived in the United States by boat in 5701 after escaping Europe and the Nazis. The date was unknown to most of the Chassidim throughout the years, but in 5743, when the Frierdiker Rebbe's Igros were published, a letter marking the milestone was included. When 28 Sivan of that year came around, *bochurim* and *anash* sat down to farbreng in 770 at what was then a small and unofficial farbrengen. However, through Reb Meir's effort, this later became a full *seudah* and official farbrengen. A few years later, in 5746, this farbrengen received additional approval, when, during the Shabbos farbrengen prior, the Rebbe gave Reb Meir a bottle of *mashke* towards the celebration.

As per the custom, when receiving a bottle of *mashke* from the Rebbe at the Shabbos farbrengen, Reb Meir announced the occasion for which he was receiving the *mashke*, and invited the crowd to the farbrengen. When the Rebbe heard him announce that the farbrengen was in honor of the Rebbe's arrival in America, the Rebbe added, "*Ish ubeiso*, man and his household," referring to the Rebbetzin.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Reb Meir's father passed away on Rosh Chodesh Av 5748, during the year of *aveilus* for the Rebbetzin, when the Rebbe was leading the *tefillas* in his home.

Rising from *shiva* on Thursday morning, Reb Meir rushed to the Rebbe's house to participate in what

was left of *shacharis*, and arrived just as *krias haTorah* was about to commence.

The reading progressed, and as usual, the Rebbe was called to the Torah for the third *aliyah*. During the entire year of *aveilus*, the Rebbe would bring along his *siddur* to the *bima*, in order to recite the half-*kaddish* at the conclusion of the *kriah*, customarily recited by mourners. This time however, the Rebbe left his *siddur* on his *shtender*.

Seeing that the Rebbe had left the *siddur* behind, Rabbi Groner rushed to bring it along, but then the Rebbe looked up, glanced towards Reb Meir, and told Rabbi Groner that today Reb Meir will be reciting *kaddish* in his stead.

This became the normal *seder* during every Torah reading over the next few months. The Rebbe would receive the third *aliyah*, but *kaddish* would be recited by Reb Meir.

This continued until the last day that the Rebbe recited *kaddish* for the Rebbetzin. During the last *kriah* before the *siyum hakaddish*, the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner to let Reb Meir know that this time, he would be reciting the last *kaddish* himself.

The following is another occurrence highlighting the special attention that the Rebbe showed to Reb Meir:

Many people are familiar with the image of the Rebbe reciting *V'yiten Lecha* after the distribution of *kos shel bracha* when a Motzei Yom Tov coincided with Motzei Shabbos. Reb Meir is always seen standing at the Rebbe's side and reading out of the same *siddur*.

"One Motzei Shabbos in 5712 or 5713, which coincided with Motzei Yom Tov, the Rebbe pushed the *siddur* in my direction, hinting that I should say *V'yiten Lecha* with him. From then on, I continued doing so."

At Kiddush Levana as well, the Rebbe would always tell Reb Meir "*shalom aleichem*" (along with two other people, as customary).

"One Motzei Tisha B'av, by the time I had changed back into my shoes and so on, I had missed Kiddush Levana, so I stood near the door to the small *zal* waiting to watch the Rebbe come back into 770. The Rebbe walked in, and right after he passed by me, he turned around and said once again '*Shalom Aleichem*.'"

GREATEST ZECHUS

Reb Meir's father had a close relationship with the Rebbe as well, going in often for *yechidus* and seeking out the Rebbe's advice. Once, Rabbi Harlig related, the Rebbe gave him a certain directive, and then concluded, "*Di yungeh* don't always listen to me, but I know that you will follow my instructions."

As a rof, Rabbi Harlig's activities included assisting couples going through hard times in their *shalom bayis*. One such couple was visiting Rabbi Harlig on a constant basis for over a year and a half, and he finally came to the conclusion that there was no way out; he could see no way that the couple can continue living together.

A short time later, he received a telephone call from Rabbi Hodakov.

"The Rebbe wants to know what is going on with this couple."

Reb Meir relates:

"My father went into *yechidus* a few days later, at 2:30 in the morning.

"Speaking to the Rebbe about the situation, he said that he sees no solution..."

"The Rebbe leaned forward, and pounding his fist on the table, said, '*Vi ken men tzubrechen a bracha vos m'hot gemacht b'sheim umalchus*—How can one renege on a *bracha* that was made with Hashem's name [the *brachos* of *kiddushin* and *nisu'in*]?!'





LEKACH, EREV YOM KIPPUR 5738.
YOSSI MELAMED via JEM 114468

SNIPPETS FROM THE YOM TOV MEALS

For many years of the Rebbe's *nesius*, the Yom Tov meals were held in the Frierdiker Rebbe's apartment, with the same arrangements that had been present during the lifetime of the Frierdiker Rebbe. While the elder Chassidim would dine with the Rebbe at the table, the youngsters gathered around to hang on to every snippet of conversation that the Rebbe had. Chassidim, primarily Rashag, would often pose questions to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe answered, usually with terse concise answers.

In his interview with A Chassidisher Derher, Reb Meir recalled a few of those conversations.

"Each year at the *seder*, they used to serve tongue, based on the story of Avraham Avinu, who served tongue to his angel guests.

"Reb Shmuel Levitin would not eat meat, and I remember once they brought him turkey. He thought it was the regular tongue that everyone else had received, and after noticing that he was staring at the plate, the Rebbe commented to him, '*Oich a indig hut a tzung*, a turkey also has a tongue.'

"Reb Elye Simpson also didn't eat meat, and the Rebbe told him that until arriving in America he had also never eaten meat, but when he arrived he was served meat at the table of the *shver*, the Frierdiker Rebbe, and since then he began eating.

"One time on Pesach, someone mentioned that it is not our custom to use a *kaarah* under the matzos, and the Rebbe was surprised. 'No *kaarah*? But there are three matzos, six *minim* which represent the first nine *sefiros*, and the *kaarah* represents *malchus*...'

"During another Pesach meal, the Rebbe said that if he would find a source in Chassidus for wearing silk on Shabbos, he would tell everyone to do so, for on Shabbos it is proper to wear silk.

"By the next Yom Tov meal, on Shavuot, Reb Elye Simpson showed the Rebbe that he had begun wearing a silk *kapota*...³

"Reb Shmerel Gourarie from Tel Aviv once mentioned to the Rebbe that it says in *sefarim* that *yizkor* is recited on the same day that *Aseir Te'aseir* is read in the Torah (Shemini Atzeres, Shvi'i Shel Pesach and the second day of Shavuot). But in Eretz Yisroel, where only one day of Yom Tov is celebrated, it doesn't work out that way. The Rebbe responded, '*Nu*, do as I do; keep two days of Yom Tov...'

"Reb Shmerel also used to bring his own matzos with him from Eretz Yisroel. Once, the Rebbe commented to him, 'You come here, you keep only one day of Yom Tov instead of two, and even our matzos are not good enough for you?'"

“My father began to excuse himself and tried to explain his position quoting a P’nei Yehoshua on the topic, but the Rebbe stopped him. ‘Harav Harlig, it’s now a quarter to three,’ he said pointing to the clock, ‘and five-six people are still scheduled to enter for *yechidus*. You can return a different time to talk in learning, but the point is clear; *vi ken men tzubrechen a bracha vos m’hot gemacht b’sheim umalchus*.”

Reb Meir relates another episode that occurred with his father:

“Before my oldest son had his *upsherenish*, my father went into *yechidus*. He asked the Rebbe how long *peyos* are supposed to be, and the Rebbe told him that in the Shulchan Aruch of the Arizal it says that they must cover the cheekbone, and in relation to that, he told my father a story.

“A few weeks ago, the Neturei Karta were here, and they demanded to know why I don’t promote wearing long *peyos*. When I told them that short *peyos* are based on the Shulchan Aruch of the Arizal, they were astounded; they didn’t believe me. I had to get up, go over to the shelf, and show it to them inside the *sefer*.”

“Before leaving, the Rebbe told my father one more thing. ‘The obligation of *chinuch* is on the father, not the grandfather,’ and that he should have me ask the questions on my own. My father’s response was, ‘He never would have asked these questions.’”

When the Yidden began moving out of Crown Heights in the 5720s, Rabbi Harlig’s congregants began moving out as well and begged him to come with.⁴ Some of the more wealthy members even promised that

they would build him a shul in their new neighborhood. He asked the Rebbe whether he should follow his community or not, and the Rebbe told him that his followers will be fine, but he should remain in Crown Heights. Like a soldier at the battlefield, stay he did; keeping his shul open until he passed away.

Reb Meir points out that all of his seven children are on *shlichus*; no doubt in the merit of their grandfather’s insistence on listening to the Rebbe’s words. ①

1. This farbrengen took place each year, through 5730.

2. See “Derher Letters” Sivan and Elul 5776

3. See Hamelech B’mesibo vol. 1 p. 163

4. See “Crown Heights,” A Chassidisher Derher Cheshvan 5777



THE REBBE TURNS TOWARDS MEIR HARLIG IN THE GREETING “SHALOM ALEICHEM” DURING KIDDUSH LEVANAH, 11 TISHREI 5748.