

By: Rabbi Mendy Greenberg

Pesach *with* *the* *Rabbi*

In honor of Zman Cheiruseinu, we present the following collection of stories, anecdotes and recollections about Pesach with the Rabbeim.

beim

לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה' חי' מושקא תחי'

נדפס ע"י
הוריה הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל
וזוגתו מרת דבורה לאה שיחיו
טרייטעל



Pesach in Berdichev

In the days after Simchas Torah תקע"ט, the city of Berdichev was plunged into mourning. Reb Levi Yitzchak, their saintly Rov for many decades, had passed away. The holy presence of the world-renowned Ohev Yisrael, one of the last surviving members of the Maggid's *chevraya kadisha*, no longer graced their city.

The sad news slowly made its way to Liadi in White Russia, far to the north of Berdichev in Ukraine.

It hit close to home for Chabad Chassidim. Reb Levi Yitzchak was one of Alter Rebbe's closest colleagues and strongest supporters. He had been close with the Alter Rebbe in their youth as talmidim of the Maggid, a staunch defender during the disagreements with Reb Avraham Kalisker, and a *mechutan* with the Alter Rebbe twice over.

Word soon spread that the Alter Rebbe himself would embark on a journey to Ukraine to be *menachem avel* the family of the Berdichever.

The journey served several other purposes as well. The Alter Rebbe collected funds to better the situation for Jews banished from the villages,¹ he visited the Ohel of the Baal Shem Tov, and he visited Reb Boruch of Medzhibozh in an attempt to resolve their differences. It would be at least six months before the Alter Rebbe

returned home to Liadi.

In Adar, the Alter Rebbe arrived in Berdichev for the *nichum aveilim*. During his visit, Reb Levi Yitzchak's rebbetzin made a special request. "Who will lead the Seder in our home?" she said. "Perhaps you could remain until after Pesach!"

The Alter Rebbe agreed. He instructed that one of the boxes of luggage be opened; it contained *shmurah* flour, and matzos were baked for Pesach. The Alter Rebbe spent the weeks before Pesach visiting the surrounding area, but Pesach was celebrated in the home of Reb Levi Yitzchak, sitting in his seat and leading the Seder in his stead. Many *maamarim* were delivered during the visit, and some of them are in an unusual style, reflecting the fact that many of the listeners were probably not acquainted with ideas of Chassidus Chabad.

During the visit, terrible news arrived in Berdichev. The entire *chotzer* in Liadi had burned to the ground in a devastating fire, and all the Alter Rebbe's possessions were lost—money collected for Eretz Yisrael, important documents, and all his *seforim* and *kesovim*, including irreplaceable manuscripts of Shulchan Aruch. It seemed like there was nothing to return to.

Hearing the news, the Berdichev Jewish community came up with a proposal: The Alter Rebbe should remain in their city, and fill the place of Reb Levi Yitzchak as Rov! From their perspective, there could be no better *memaleh makom*. The Mittlerer Rebbe—in Liadi at the time—was alarmed at the suggestion, and issued a letter asking Chassidim to help rebuild the *chotzer*, saying that their support could play a role in the Alter Rebbe's decision to return.

Ultimately, the Alter Rebbe declined the offer and journeyed back to Liadi. But the Yidden of Berdichev were left with many incredible memories of his historic visit.²

UNAUTHENTICATED
PORTRAIT BY AN
UNKNOWN ARTIST,
MADE IN THE SAME YEAR
OF THE HISTALKUS OF
REB LEVI YITZCHOK OF
BERDICHEV, BEARING THE
INSCRIPTION "REB LEVI
YITZCHOK BEN MEIR."



What Happened To The Food?

Only a select *minyan* of people participated in the the Tzemach Tzedek's Seder, a few close guests and family members. The other guests would dine in the homes of Chassidim in Lubavitch. However, all the guests got their Pesach needs from the Rebbe's house. On Erev Yom Tov, they received wine, *maror*, *charoses*, and even matzah baked on Erev Pesach—and thus they were considered the Rebbe's guests.

One year, the elderly chossid Reb Yekusiel Liepler came to Lubavitch for Pesach. Reb Yekusiel did not visit the Tzemach Tzedek on regular occasions; whenever he felt a desire to see the Rebbe's countenance, he would pack a small bundle and set out to Lubavitch.

On the night before Pesach, Reb Yekusiel was preoccupied with thoughts of the intense and profound *avodah* of *Bedikas Chometz*. He prepared himself thoroughly, intending to remove not only the physical *chametz*, but also the spiritual *chametz* in his heart. Suddenly, the door opened. The *meshares*, Hershel der Shvartzer, approached Reb Yekusiel and gave him his Yom Tov package, saying, "Here, the Rebbe sent this for you."

Reb Yekusiel opened the package, glanced at its contents, and realized that if the Rebbe had just sent the food, it probably meant that he was to eat it this very moment to assist in his

avoda of *Bedikas Chometz*. He took the wine, *maror* and *charoses*, poured it into a *kvort*, and drank it down.

The night of Pesach arrived, and the entire town began their Sedorim. Suddenly, Reb Yekusiel burst into the Tzemach Tzedek's home. "Rebbe! I have nothing for the Seder; no wine, no *maror*, and no *charoses*!"

How could such an esteemed guest as Reb Yekusiel have been forgotten? Hershel der Shvartzer was immediately summoned, and he brought the list of recipients for the Rebbe to examine.

Reb Yekusiel's name was on it...

Hershel was puzzled. He distinctly remembered giving Reb Yekusiel the package and even reminded him where he was sitting. Suddenly, a thought occurred to Reb Yekusiel. "Ah, I remember the package he brought me during *Bedikas Chometz*... It truly 'revived' me..." It turned out that Reb Yekusiel had consumed the entire package the night before...

The Tzemach Tzedek smiled broadly, and instructed Reb Yekusiel to join him for the Seder.

Reb Yekusiel would later say that from that Pesach night at the Rebbe's table, he had fifteen years of *avodah*.³

Shehecheyanu—A Child's Explanation

During the Yom Tov meal of Acharon Shel Pesach 5666, when Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was five years old, her grandfather the Rebbe Rashab related that he had overheard a conversation she was having with her sister: "I was in the *sefarim* room when I heard them arguing, and I was interested in what they were discussing." The Rebbetzin and her sister disagreed about the significance of Acharon Shel Pesach. Her sister maintained that it was a Yom Tov like any other, while the Rebbetzin argued that it was special; it is the only Yom Tov when

Shehecheyanu isn't recited.

The Rebbe Rashab commented that their argument reminded him of a similar discussion he and his siblings had with their father, the Rebbe Maharash, and grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, in the year תרכ"ה, when he was just four years old.

At the Yom Tov meal on Acharon Shel Pesach, he had asked his father, "Why is the last day of Pesach a Yom Tov?"

His older sister, Rebbetzin Devorah Leah, suggested that Acharon Shel Pesach celebrates



the fact that the Yidden successfully avoided *chametz* for a whole week. Hearing this, the Rebbe Maharash commented, “Devorah Leah, you have a good head.”

Later that day, the Rebbe Maharash and his children visited the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe Maharash repeated the conversation to the Tzemach Tzedek, who also approved, saying, “That’s a good logical explanation.” But then he called over the children and offered his own explanation. He told them that the first days of Pesach celebrate our *geulah* from Mitzrayim, while Acharon Shel Pesach celebrates our future *geulah*.

In a *sicha* on Acharon Shel Pesach, the Rebbe spoke about the deeper meaning of both stories and explained that the ideas were linked. The reason we don’t recite *Shehecheyanu* on Acharon Shel Pesach, which was the Rebbetzin’s point, is connected to the Tzemach



REBBETZIN
DEVORAH LEAH,
DAUGHTER
OF THE REBBE
MAHARASH.

Tzedek’s answer. We don’t say *Shehecheyanu* since the *Geulah* we are celebrating has not yet occurred. This causes heartache to the Jewish people and the *Aibershter* himself, so it is not possible to recite *Shehecheyanu* on that day.⁴

The *Mayim Shelanu* Parade

One of the exciting moments every year in Lubavitch was *Mayim Shelanu*. The Rebbe Rashab himself would lead a procession to the river behind “Binyamin’s Shtibl,” surrounded by the *hanhala* and *mashpi'im* of the yeshiva, and followed by the bochurim, singing lively niggunim throughout.

Reb Chaim Mordechai Perlov writes that at this time of year, with the snow melting, the streets of Lubavitch were often muddy, and it was not an easy walk for the Rebbe Rashab. Drawing the water wasn’t straightforward either, as parts of the river were still frozen. The bochurim would wade into the river, while the Rebbe would stand on the bank, drawing water with a bucket attached to a long pole.

One year when the Rebbe Rashab was unwell, he didn’t leave his house for an extended period, but Chassidim suspected that the Rebbe would nonetheless want to participate in *Mayim Shelanu*. Hoping to convince the Rebbe to protect his health, they approached Rebbetzin Rivka, the Rebbe’s mother, suggesting she tell him not to go. Rebbetzin Rivka

replied, “I cannot interfere in my son’s spiritual matters.” The Rebbe Rashab went out that year as usual.⁵

Reb Folleh Kahn recalled a special moment that took place after *Mayim Shelanu*: After fetching the water, the bochurim would break into a lively dance in the *chatzer*, while the Rebbe Rashab would observe from his room. Once, he commented on a specific bochur, Shimson Milner from Vitebsk; “I saw how Shimshon Vitebsker was dancing after *Mayim Shelanu*—his *Yechidah Shebinesh* was alight...”⁶

By the Rebbe Maharash as well, *Mayim Shelanu* was a big moment. This description was written by Mr. Tzvi Har-Shefer, formerly Lokshin, who grew up in Lubavitch during the Rebbe Maharash’s *nesius*:

“The drawing of *Mayim Shelanu* was a special moment. Amid great singing and joy, we would go down to the river. The Rebbe himself would lower the bucket into the water. The next day, the Rebbe would personally mix the dough and hand out pieces to be rolled into matzah. In the evening, many Lubavitch townspeople

would hurry to finish their seder, to watch the Rebbe conduct the seder with his family.”⁷

The matzah baking in Lubavitch was also significant. The Rebbe Rashab remained present in the bakery, reciting Hallel and supervising the women rolling the dough.

Reb Folleh recalled that the dough kneader, Reb Mendel Ladier, took his job very seriously, and would grip the dough-kneader, called the “*meiyreh*,” very tightly as he kneaded the flour and water. He was one of the teachers in the younger classes of Tomchei Temimim, but his

‘grip’ on the classroom was far weaker than his grip over the dough; he was a very kind person, and the children didn’t always obey his instructions. One year, while kneading the dough, the Rebbe Rashab humorously told him, “You should hold the ‘*meiyreh*’ [fear] in your classroom the way you hold the ‘*meiyreh*’ [dough-kneader] here.”

The Friediker Rebbe would stand next to the oven, supervising the baking process, and afterward, the Rebbe Rashab would present a matzah to every bochur who had participated.⁸

Mivtzah Matzah – תרס"ה

In the early 1900’s war broke out between Russia and Japan over Russia’s eastern territories. Hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers found themselves moving over Russia’s immense expanse from the European center all the way to the Pacific coast.

The Russian army included many Jewish troops, and those soldiers were often released to neighboring Jewish communities when a Yom Tov like Pesach arrived. Decades earlier, the Tzemach Tzedek had been instrumental in arranging Pesach accommodations for soldiers moving through White Russia. But now,

Jewish soldiers suddenly found themselves at the other end of the world, with no Jewish communities to speak of.

What would be with Pesach?

In תרס"ג, the Rebbe Rashab traveled to Paris to meet with Baron Tzvi Hirsch Ginsburg, who had influence with the Russian government. Baron Ginzburg was a *maskil* who opposed the Rebbe Rashab on matters of Jewish education, but the Rebbe Rashab hoped that he would join the effort to bring the soldiers matzah for Pesach.

The Baron was not enthusiastic. “*Yidden*



RETURNING FROM THE DRAWING OF THE MAYIM SHELANU.



hoben an eitze, s'iz doch faran a Pesach Sheni, Jews have a resolution—there is Pesach Sheni,” he told the Rebbe Rashab.

“Oiften front zeinen nita kein baronen, there are no ‘barons’ at the front,” the Rebbe Rashab responded. “Di soldaten zeinen proste Yidden, ze veisen nit fun kein chochmes, the soldiers are simple Jews, they don’t know of such clever excuses. Zei darfen hoben matzah oif Pesach, they need to have matzah for Pesach.”⁹

Not getting much help from the Baron, the Rebbe Rashab began a massive campaign to galvanize the Jewish world on this issue. Articles were published in newspapers, all the Rabbonim were asked to get involved, and a special committee was established to lead the project. Every single Jew in the Russian empire was asked to make a contribution.

Interestingly, when the Friediker Rebbe suggested that Tomchei Temimim publicly endorse the project, the Rebbe Rashab rejected the idea. This was a mitzvah project which was

a responsibility of the entire Jewish world, and the objective of Tomchei Temimim was a specific Chabad endeavor. The Rebbe preferred that each community be involved through their own Rabbonim—whether Misnagdim, Poilisher Chassidim, or even followers of the other Chabad Rebbes. He refused to be the official chairman of the committee, wanting it to be seen as a Klal-Yisrael issue, not a Lubavitch one.

Nonetheless, the Rebbe Rashab remained closely involved, coordinating every detail. The Rebbe Rashab spent a full month in S. Petersburg, where efforts were made to convince the government to allow the project. The Rebbe Rashab even served as the personal alarm clock for Reb Shmuel Michel Treinin, phoning his home at seven in the morning to ensure that he was awake for an important meeting.

Back in Lubavitch on Pesach night of 5665, the Rebbe Rashab sat down to his Seder. There was nothing left to do; countless hours had been invested, endless money had been spent, and immense logistical arrangements had been made. It was now in Hashem’s hands.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door. A telegram had arrived in Lubavitch all the way from Harbin on the Pacific coast: the efforts had been a success. The matzah had reached the soldiers.

The Rebbe Rashab stood up and exclaimed, “Boruch Hashem”!¹⁰



A PAINTING MADE DURING THE WAR DEPICTING A BATTLE BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL SOLDIERS (LEFT) AND THE JAPANESE SOLDIERS (RIGHT).

JEWISH RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.
PESACH 5665.



The Incredible Hashgacha

Southern Ukraine is filled with expansive fields dedicated to cultivating wheat for the entire country, and, today, for much of the world. Naturally, much of the matzah throughout Russia was baked with flour from those areas, and as one of the leading Rabbonim in the area, Harav Levi Yitzchak—the Rebbe’s father—provided the *hechsher* at the local flour mills, confirming that the wheat was prepared in accordance with Halachah.

When the Communist government took control of all commercial establishments, including flour mills and bakeries, they realized that everyone had depended on Harav Levi Yitzchak’s certification for flour, and if matzah-baking—still legal in Russia—was to take place, it would be impossible without his approval. So, they summoned Harav Levi Yitzchak.

This story was told by the Rebbe on several occasions and was also recounted by Rebbetzin Chana. The account here is taken almost word-for-word from the Rebbe’s recounting of the story to children at a Tzivos Hashem rally on Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5743.

The authorities called Harav Levi Yitzchak and instructed him to provide certification

that year as well. They warned him that if he rejected any of the flour and did not certify it, he would be seen as harming the economy (as profits from flour sales went into the treasury), painting him as an enemy of the state.

Harav Levi Yitzchak was not impressed. “If you give me full authority over the supervision of flour mills and allow me to appoint my own *mashgichim*,” he told them, “I will provide certification for the flour this year as well. If not, I cannot and will not provide certification for the flour. Not only will I withhold certification, but I will also publicly declare and publish everywhere that the flour is not under my responsibility!”

The officials tried threatening and intimidating him, but nothing worked. Ultimately, they relayed the problem to higher authorities, and an order soon arrived from the “higher-ups”: Harav Levi Yitzchak’s instructions were to be fulfilled to the utmost.

Incredibly, through Harav Levi Yitzchak’s steadfast determination, matzos were baked in all the government bakeries using flour with the highest standards of kashrus, certified by Harav Levi Yitzchak Schneerson himself.

Passing the Torch

Reshimas Hayoman, which contains the Rebbe’s diary entries about his interactions with the Frierdiker Rebbe, is an incredible window into a private world which was—until its publication—entirely concealed from our view.

Some of the most fascinating entries pertain to the *hemshechiyus* of the Rabbeim. The Frierdiker Rebbe shared several linked stories that involved all (or most) of the Rabbeim.

One such story pertains to the Seder night. At the Seder in the year 5695, the Frierdiker Rebbe told the Rebbe:

“The niggun with which the Haggadah is recited is a tune that was passed through the

generations. It comes from the Alter Rebbe himself.

“When the Tzemach Tzedek was twelve years old, the Alter Rebbe called him over from his place at the Seder table and said, ‘Come hear how the Rebbe [i.e., the Maggid] says the Haggadah.’

“When the Rebbe Maharash was twelve years old, his father the Tzemach Tzedek likewise called him over and said, ‘Come hear how the Zaide says the Haggadah.’

“When the Rebbe Rashab was twelve years old, his father the Rebbe Maharash, likewise called him over and said, ‘Come hear how the

Tatte says the Haggadah.”

At this point, the Rebbe asked the Frierdiker Rebbe a question: did the twelve-year-old children—the Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab—actually hear the voices of

the Rabbeim from the heavenly realms?

“Yes,” the Frierdiker Rebbe responded. “My father [the Rebbe Rashab] told me that from that moment on, he began to experience *hargashos niflaim*, amazing experiences.”¹¹

The Holiday of Redemption — ה'ת"ש

In Adar Sheni 5700, the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in the United States from war-torn Europe. Chassidim all over the world breathed a sigh of relief; the Rebbe's arrival was the culmination of half a year of intense efforts to rescue him and his family from Nazi-occupied Poland, via Germany, Riga, Sweden, and finally to the United States.

During his first month in New York, the Frierdiker Rebbe stayed in a suite in the Greystone hotel, which turned into the temporary Chabad headquarters. For Pesach, a delegation from Lakewood proposed that the Rebbe spend Yom Tov in their town—then a popular Jewish resort town—where the weather was better and where they would find respite from the tumult of the city.

The Frierdiker Rebbe agreed, and the trip was set for Tuesday, 8 Nissan.

It was a thrilling occasion. Many Chassidim in New York hadn't seen the Frierdiker Rebbe in many years, and this would be their first opportunity to spend a Yom Tov with the Rebbe. After months of dangerous travel, the Frierdiker Rebbe would finally be spending *Zman Cheiruseinu* on safe shores, with peace of mind, free again. Chassidim quickly arranged lodgings in Lakewood.

The following description of Pesach in Lakewood was printed in *Sefer Hasichos* of that year, attributed to “one of the participants.” In truth, however, it was written by the Frierdiker Rebbe himself.¹² It is presented here in its entirety:

On Tuesday, 8 Nissan, representatives of the Lakewood community arrived at the Greystone Hotel, and at 1:15 p.m. the Rebbe Shlita and his family left New York. At the New Jersey border, they were greeted by a delegation representing

the governor.

On the way, the Rebbe's car stopped twice to greet delegations of Anash and *temimim* from towns near Lakewood, who then joined the convoy while singing Lubavitcher niggunim – a reminder of the luminous days in Lubavitch. It evoked memories of this time of year, a few days before Pesach, when the Rebbe Rashab would return from abroad, and the *temimim* would greet him at the outskirts of Lubavitch.

At 2:30 p.m., when they arrived at the house in which the Rebbe Shlita was to stay, he was welcomed in the spacious living room, and he responded with a short sicha. [The reception was captured on video; crowds of people throng around the house when the Frierdiker Rebbe arrives, and after the reception, a lively *farbrengen* ensues among the Chassidim present. The excitement is palpable].

At five o'clock, he reappeared, wearing his Shabbos garb, *farbrenge*d with Anash and *temimim*, and delivered the *maamar* entitled *Ohr LeArbaah-Asar*.

On the first night of Pesach, about sixty people were present at Maariv. The Seder began at nine o'clock with a minyan participating at the table, and some dozens of additional guests observing and listening.

The Haggadah and the sichos went on until 11:00 p.m., and the *seudah* and *benschen* were completed before midnight. More sichos and the conclusion of the Haggadah continued until 2:00 a.m.

From ten in the evening until one in the morning, the room was filled with the additional guests mentioned above. About one hundred people attended Shacharis, and the Yom-Tov meal that followed, including niggunim and sichos, lasted three hours.

The Seder on the second night began again at nine o'clock; the Haggadah and the meal continued till one in the morning, and the Seder ended at 3:30 a.m. About 120 people participated in Shacharis, and the seudah, which included niggunim and sichos, lasted two hours. At 7:00 p.m. the Rebbe Shlita delivered the *maamar* entitled *Ki Yishalcha Bincha*.

The evening and daytime seudos of Shabbos were accompanied by niggunim and sichos, and at 7:00 on Shabbos, the Rebbe Shlita delivered the *maamar* entitled *VaYakem Edus BeYaakov*.

The Three Pesachs

Describing Pesach with the Rebbe obviously needs much more than one article. But three unique instances stand out in the memory of Chassidim—years when Pesach marked

Many guests arrived for the last days of Pesach. The evening and daytime *seudos* of Shvi'i Shel Pesach, with their *niggunim* and *sichos*, each lasted three hours. At 7:00 p.m., the Rebbe Shlita delivered the *maamar* entitled *Az Yashir*.

The seudah on Acharon Shel Pesach evening also included *niggunim* and *sichos*, and went on for two hours. The daytime *seudah* on Acharon Shel Pesach, complete with *niggunim* and *sichos*, went on for about five hours, and after *benschen*, those at the table were joined by all the other invited guests in a lively dance.¹³

the beginning of a positive change, special moments that evoked *Zman Cheiruseinu*. We asked two Chassidim, both bochurim at the time, to share their memories:

The First Time—Pesach 5738

Rabbi Yossi Groner relates:

“Throughout the winter of 5738 (following the Rebbe’s heart attack on Shemini Atzeres), the Rebbe davened in the upstairs zal. In addition to attending Krias HaTorah on Monday and Thursday, the Rebbe joined the bochurim’s Friday night minyan at 8:30 p.m., and davened there on Shabbos morning as well.

“Rotations were held to determine attendance, but the situation was far from ideal. Many people, especially working *balebatim*, didn’t have many opportunities to see the Rebbe; if they would normally see the Rebbe during all the tefillos every Shabbos, their opportunity was now relegated to Shabbos morning—only if it was their turn on the



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE ARRIVES AT HIS LODGING IN LAKEWOOD AND SAYS A SICHA AT THE RECEPTION. THESE MOMENTS CAN ALSO BE SEEN IN THE VIDEO “AMERICA IZ NISHT ANDERSH”

rotation.

“On Erev Pesach, the Rebbe informed my father [Rabbi Laibel Groner] that there would be a change; he would begin davening with the main minyan downstairs on Yom Tov morning. The Rebbe told my father to notify him when the minyan was up to *chazaras hashatz*, and the Rebbe would then join the minyan for Hallel.

“The news spread like wildfire: The Rebbe is coming back downstairs! The next morning, the shul was packed from wall to wall. Although the Rebbe had already returned home on Rosh Chodesh Kislev, and held the ‘*Seudas Hodaah*’ farbrengen on Zos Chanukah, this Pesach morning felt like another important stage in the Rebbe’s *gezunt*; the Rebbe would be spending Shabbos with all the Chassidim again.

“As it turned out, I was *zoche* to have a hand in the events as well.

“On Pesach night, my father mentioned that he was concerned; the Rebbe had seemed unsure that my father properly understood his instructions regarding Shacharis, which were given with a very long list of other *horaos*. I was confused; if that was his concern, why didn’t he just tell the Rebbe that he understood?

“My father was surprised by my response; ‘You never initiate a conversation with the Rebbe!’ he said.

“It was astounding to me. At that time he had worked in close proximity to the Rebbe for

30 years, yet his reverence and absolute *bitul* was still as it was on the first day!

“The next morning, the minyan was in middle of Birchos Krias Shema and I was conversing with a friend in the upstairs hallway. Suddenly, we heard the door to *Gan Eden Hatachton* open. There was a bochur standing in 770’s doorway. His face turned white, and he ran out the front door.

“Instinctively, I ran to the entrance and saw the Rebbe, in his tallis, holding the door of *Gan Eden Hatachton* open. The Rebbe asked me if I knew where the minyan downstairs was up to, and I said that when I was downstairs they were up to *Yishtabach*.

“The Rebbe thought for a moment and said, ‘Nu, be sure I am notified when they are up to *chazaras hashatz*.’ I answered, ‘Yes.’ (Whenever I observed my father receiving an instruction from the Rebbe he always simply answered “Yes.”)

“The Rebbe said ‘Thank you’ and walked back into his room.

“I ran downstairs as fast as I could and told my father what had just transpired, and he said, ‘You see [why I was concerned]?’

“That brief interaction with the Rebbe shook me to my core, and I could not sleep for three nights straight. It was totally unexpected; being alone with the Rebbe as the Rebbe gazed at me like that was incredibly overwhelming and gave me an unbelievable adrenaline boost.”

The Surprise Announcement— Pesach 5746

Rabbi Zushe Greenberg relates:

“In the winter of 5746, the Rebbe was not in the best of health. When the Rebbe came downstairs for Kabolos Shabbos on Shabbos Mevorchim Adar Sheni, there was clearly something wrong. The Rebbe was in pain, and made his way to the front of the shul very, very slowly.

“We later learned that the Rebbe was

suffering from a condition in his leg that caused intense pain. It was quite evident on the Rebbe’s face; the next morning, it was announced that all davening would take place upstairs, in the small Zal.

“It was Shabbos Mevorchim, and skipping the farbrengen—a *hora’ah* of the Frierdiker Rebbe to the Rebbe—was unthinkable, so the Rebbe came downstairs that afternoon.

The Rebbe's entrance was painful to see, but incredibly, the Rebbe farbrenged with even more enthusiasm than usual. There was even an entire Hadran in honor of the Siyum Harambam.

"But that was just one bright moment. The Rebbe was in constant pain, and treatment and recovery demanded time and rest. In the weeks that followed, 770 felt like a ghost town. The Rebbe davened in *Gan Eden Hatachton* and later in the small Zal, which had very limited capacity. Aside from the few instances when the Rebbe came downstairs for a farbrengen, the usual crowds were not present. This situation continued, with slow improvements, for some six weeks.

"On Erev Pesach, I arrived at 770 to reserve a good place in the small Zal for Mincha and Maariv. It was quite empty; many Anash were planning to daven in local shuls and proceed directly home for the Seder. But then I saw

Rabbi Groner emerging from the Rebbe's room, his face shining. "The Rebbe will daven downstairs!"

"I later learned that a special initiative had taken place that day; a minyan had recited the entire Tehillim at the kever of the Rambam, whose birthday is on Erev Pesach. This was at the height of the Rebbe's '*koch*' in Rambam, and when Rabbi Groner brought the Rebbe the news, the Rebbe said, "they were by the 'great doctor,' so tonight we will daven downstairs."

"We rushed downstairs in excitement, and a few minutes later, the Rebbe arrived. The Rebbe was still walking carefully, but the change we were all waiting for was finally here. It was a tremendous moment—the Rebbe had reverted to the 'normal' *seder*, signaling that the worst was over.

"We all broke out dancing after Maariv; the next morning, the Zal was packed from wall to wall."

The Rebbe's Glowing Face—Pesach 5748

Rabbi Greenberg continues:

"Two years later, we experienced another very difficult period when the Rebbetzin was

nistalek on Chof Beis Shevat. Aside from the Shabbos Mevorchim Adar farbrengen, the Rebbe remained in his home throughout the





THE REBBE ENCOURAGES THE SINGING AT THE CHILDREN'S RALLY, CHOL HAMOED PESACH 5748.

Shloshim; for the first time in almost forty years, there was no Purim farbrengen.

“It was an incredibly sad time. You could feel the *aveilus* everywhere. Needless to say, 770 again became a ghost town, as all the *tefillos* and *sichos* moved to the Rebbe’s home.

“As Pesach approached, people began to whisper about the Rebbe’s seder. Would the Rebbe remain alone in his room for the *sedorim*? The thought was very jarring. On Erev Pesach, as we waited outside 770 for the Rebbe to arrive, a *Polisher chossid* next to me began to express his concern. ‘The Rebbe will be alone for the Sedorim? Terrible, how sad—something needs to be done about it!’ Truth be told, this was not the feeling among the *bochurim*; Chassidim didn’t get busy inserting themselves into the Rebbe’s ‘feelings’; but it was a question nonetheless.

“All these thoughts dissipated when the

Rebbe entered the shul for Maariv. The Rebbe’s face was glowing; he encouraged the singing of ‘*Vesamachta*’ along his whole walk to the front, and davening began in a very uplifting mode.

“That was only the beginning. After davening, the Rebbe turned around and wished ‘Good Yom Tov’ three times with a smile on his holy face. Again, we sang ‘*Vesamachta*,’ and then suddenly, the Rebbe began a *sicha*! Everyone rushed to the front to get a good spot. I laughingly noticed that if beforehand, people were worried about the Rebbe’s seder, now they were suddenly worried about their own...

“It was the beginning of a very uplifting Yom Tov. The Rebbe said a *sicha* every night, and was very *besimcha* throughout. Some of the most beautiful pictures of the Rebbe at children’s rallies come from that Chol Hamoed. It was truly a Yom Tov to remember.” **T**

1. See “Fields of Faith,” *Derher Adar I* 5784.

2. Based on *Masa Berdichev*, by Rabbi Yehoshua Mundshine.

3. *Shvi'i Shel Pesach* 5697; *Sefer Hasichos* pg. 246.

4. *Toras Menachem* vol. 43 (5725 vol. 3), pp. 201-203, 243-250.

5. *Likutei Sipurim* p. 268

6. *Lubavitch V'Chayaleha* pg. 45.

7. *Otzar Sipurei Chabad* v. 18 p. 151.

8. *Lubavitch V'Chayaleha* pg. 46.

9. *Sefer Hasichos* 5702 pg. 89.

10. Based on “The Chinese Matzah Campaign of 1905” by Rabbi Eli Rubin on Chabad.org.

11. *Reshimas Hayoman* pg. 372.

12. This was true of several other *Yomanim* and articles as well, such as the description of the *Frierdiker Rebbe's sicha* before leaving to exile in *Kostroma*, and the article about the Rebbe’s father, *Harav Levi Yitzchak*, printed in *Kovetz Lubavitch*.

13. This rendition is based on the translation of *Sichos In English*.