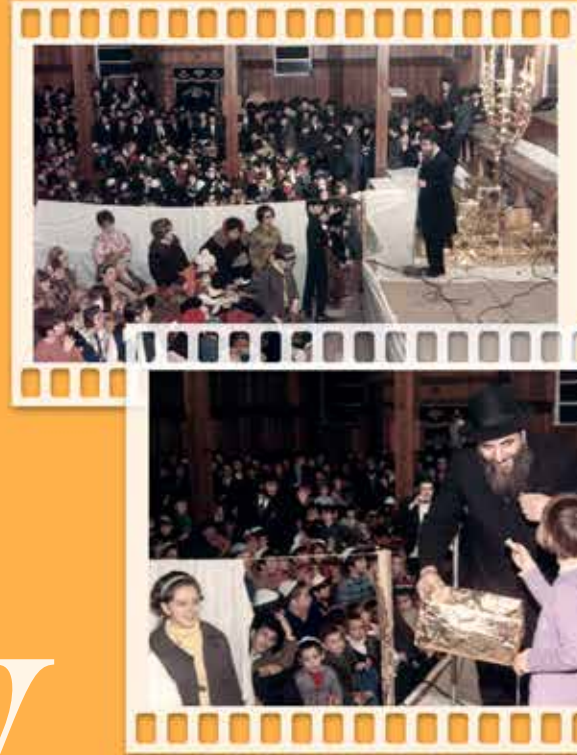




לזכות
החתן הרה"ת ר' שלמה זאב הכהן
והכלה המהוללה
מרת סאניא שיחיו
פרידמאן
לרגל חתונתם י"ב סיון ה'תשפ"ד

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' מיכאל יצחק
וזוגתו מרת חנה שי'
גורקאוו



Early Glimpse

Recollections of **Rabbi Yosef Goldstein**
describing life with the Frieddiker
Rebbe and the Rebbe during their
first years in the United States

By: **Rabbi Bentzion Schtroks**

S



Esteemed educator and master storyteller Rabbi Yosef Goldstein, affectionately known as “Uncle Yossi,” was uniquely privileged to reside on the first floor of 770 during his formative years. This unique front-row seat allowed him to experience many exclusive moments with the Frierdiker Rebbe and to develop a close connection with the Rebbe even before the *nesius*. Rabbi Goldstein was well known for an array of roles that he filled in the Rebbe’s sphere including leading Lag B’omer parades and children’s rallies, and recording the Rebbe’s farbrengens. Presented here are excerpts from his memoirs, drawn from treasured personal accounts he shared with his family.

I was born in Providence, Rhode Island in the year 5687, where my parents had settled after the First World War. My father ran a thriving printing business, and we were the only frum family in the city at the time. My father became known as “Moshe the Shomer Shabbos.” When I was three, my parents made the decision to leave Providence and relocate to New York, for our family to be part of a *frum* community and ensure that my siblings and I received a proper Jewish education.

It wasn't an easy feat, as that time was the height of the Depression. The economy was in bad shape, and the currency was severely devalued. Despite the grave financial risks, my father sold his business in Providence, uncertain of how he would support the family once we arrived.

When we arrived in New York, we settled in Boro Park, where there were only two *yeshivos*: the modern Zionist Eitz Chayim and Toras Emes. Initially, my father wanted to enroll my older brothers in Eitz Chayim, but it was too expensive, so they ended up attending Toras Emes instead.

As I grew older, I also attended Toras Emes. At that time, the yeshiva was run by Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson, a prominent Chabad chossid in the U.S., and all Chabad Chassidim in New York sent their children there.



YOSEF GOLDSTEIN AT AGE 3.

RABBI CHAIM LEVI GOLDSTEIN

This was the case for about ten years, until 5701 (1941), a particularly challenging year. The yeshiva administration struggled to pay the teachers on time, and when payments were made, they were only eighteen dollars a week. As a result of the delayed payments, many teachers eventually left.

The high rate of turnover made it difficult for me to connect with my teachers. In addition to this, there was a disconnect in our backgrounds—they were Litvaks, graduates of Mir and Slabodka—while I was entirely American.

New Beginnings

One day, everything changed. That morning, the classroom door opened, and in walked a new teacher. I later learned that he was Reb Shmuel Zalmanov. He was unlike any of the previous teachers. With his appearance reminiscent of a Jew from a bygone era—wearing a long coat, a black hat, and sporting a full, beautiful beard—he had a *hadras panim* I had only seen in history books. As soon as he entered the room, I stood up in awe, feeling an irresistible magnetic pull towards him.

His manner of conduct and speech were warm and gentle, and I could feel that everything he did came from a place of

deep love. Each day, my attachment and affection for him grew stronger. During recess, I often saw him resting his head on the table. Whether he was sleeping or just lost in thought, he usually looked quite frail. I approached him to check if he was feeling okay, and he asked me to get him something to drink. I quickly fetched a cup of water for him. The next day, I brought him a thermos of coffee, and he expressed his gratitude, telling me how much I had rejuvenated him. From then on, I occasionally brought him rolls of bread and other food to keep him sustained.

One day, my beloved teacher disappeared. I took it very hard, as I had grown so attached to him, and I began to investigate what had happened. I learned that Rabbi Zalmanov was a prominent chossid of the Friediker Rebbe and had been appointed as the secretary at Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim. It was the first time I had heard of Tomchei Temimim, and I thought to myself that if this yeshiva was good enough for my esteemed teacher, it must be excellent for me as well!

However, this resolution remained merely a thought, as Reb Shmuel Zalmanov's replacement, Reb Yitzchok Dovber Ushpal, was also a Lubavitcher chossid. I grew just as close to him as I had to my previous teacher, if not more so.



REB YOSEF GOLDSTEIN AROUND THE TIME HE FIRST ARRIVED AT 770.



REB YITZCHOK DOVBER USHPAL (LEFT) AND REB SHMUEL ZALMANOV (RIGHT) IN THE EARLY 5700S.



I saw this as *Hashgacha Pratis*, a sign that Hashem was sending angels to lift me from the muck. Rabbi Ushpal's material circumstances were dire. He would come to class in torn pants and shoes, resembling a war refugee. Despite his appearance, he was always orderly and clean, though his clothes were in tatters because he had no others. When I visited him, I was shocked to find his home completely unfurnished. Instead of chairs, he had crates that doubled as a table. I spoke with some friends, and together we provided him with a mattress, chairs, and a table.

One day, Reb Yitzchok said to me, "Yossel, you're a good boy, and I have a gift for you." He handed me a volume of *maamarim* and began studying it with me at his home. This was my first introduction to Chassidus Chabad.

A few happy months passed until Rabbi Ushpal left for Tomchei Temimim as well. At that point, I thought, why shouldn't I go there too?

First Encounter

At first, my parents didn't agree. Traveling from Boro Park to Crown Heights was complicated and costly, especially for a thirteen-year-old. Only after I insisted with "holy stubbornness," did they allow me to switch to Tomchei Temimim, on the condition that I stay in the dormitory to avoid daily travel.

I packed my bags and went off to yeshiva. This was the first time I was traveling by train so I asked someone how to get to Eastern Parkway. The man told me to get off at the Eastern Parkway stop, which was a half-hour walk from 770.

I left the subway and saw an impressive building; I was thrilled, thinking I was going to attend yeshiva in this beautiful facility. I quickly realized my error, discovering this was the Brooklyn Museum. I asked several people how to get to 770, and they told me I needed to walk another twenty blocks. I arrived at 770 and stood in wonder once again. I had expected to see a large shul, yet this was an ordinary house, like all the houses in the neighborhood.

When I walked into 770 a large farbrengen was taking place. Rabbi Zalmanov, my former teacher, noticed me immediately and called me over. He introduced me to Reb Eliyahu Simpson, the Frierdiker Rebbe's secretary at that time, and I was registered in the yeshiva.

Everything is Possible

Later, I learned the significance of this farbrengen. I arrived at 770 in the spring of 5702, during the difficult days of World War II. Amidst the turmoil of the war, the Frierdiker Rebbe urged Chassidim to purify the air by reciting Mishnayos by



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE ON THE PORCH OF THE SECOND FLOOR AT 770. THE FENCE SURROUNDING THE PORCH IS COVERED IN GREENERY FOR PRIVACY.

heart. To further this effort, the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed that every *talmid* in Tomchei Temimim submit a card with their name, to be entered into a raffle dividing the *mesechtos* of Mishnayos, and held a special farbrengen in honor of the occasion. The Frierdiker Rebbe was seated on the dais, the Rebbe on his left and Rashag on his right. It was truly a sight to behold.

I vividly recall seeing the Frierdiker Rebbe sitting on his chair on the small porch on the second floor of 770, reciting Mishnayos. The Rebbe once remarked, "It's a *kal v'chomer* (logical deduction). If the air surrounding the Rebbe, which is akin to Gan Eden (as the *possuk* describes regarding Yaakov Avinu), still requires purification through Mishnayos, how much more so must we, in our environment, take care to review Mishnayos." The Frierdiker Rebbe stated on one occasion that it was in the merit of the Mishnayos recited by heart that America was spared from the war.

These were difficult and tense times, and the Frierdiker Rebbe was in a somber state. Even in America, there were bombings, and the Frierdiker Rebbe's daughter, Rebbetzin



THE DINING ROOM IN THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S APARTMENT ON THE SECOND FLOOR AT 770 WHERE FARBRENGENS WERE HELD.

“I realized that I was looking at a man who had a direct line of communication on high.”

Shaina, who remained in Europe, was captured by the Germans. I recall attending a Rosh Hashanah farbrengen with the Frierdiker Rebbe in 5703 or 5704. As everyone stood around the table, anticipating the Frierdiker Rebbe's words, he suddenly declared, “Now is not the time to stand here and watch.” He said in Yiddish, “*Men darf bombediren Sefiras HaMalchus mit a millioneh osios fun Torah uteffila,*” meaning, “We need to bombard *Sefiras HaMalchus* with millions of letters of Torah and *tefilla*.” Upon hearing this, we immediately went downstairs to the Beis Midrash and began reciting Tehillim.

At one point, the Frierdiker Rebbe asked that a raffle be organized for the broader community, with the goal of dividing Mishnayos to be recited by heart. Upon receiving this instruction, the Rebbe asked me to quickly travel to Boro Park and ask my father to print cards to be mailed out for the raffle.

I said to the Rebbe, “It's already late in the evening; how can I possibly get this done so quickly?” But the Rebbe was insistent, and I agreed. The Rebbe gave me a sample card with the text and layout, which I took home to my father.

When I arrived home, it was late at night, and my father said he would have it ready the next day. I respectfully insisted, “No, it must be done tonight.” My father agreed and quickly completed the task. I then hurried back to 770 with the cards, and when I delivered them to the Merkos

Office, the ink was still wet from the press!

The next day, as I stood in front of 770, the Rebbe came over to thank me and said:

“ר' יוסף, זעסטו! אין לך דבר העומד בפני הרצון, אז מען וויל מיט אן אמת קען מען אלץ אויפטאן!”

”You see Reb Yosef, nothing stands in the way of [a person's] will, when one truly wants to, he can accomplish anything!”

Up Close

During those years, the Frierdiker Rebbe lived on the second floor of 770, while the first floor remained empty at night. Because of this, Rabbi Berel Chaskind asked me to sleep in 770. He chose me because I was an American who spoke English well, so I could effectively communicate with any policemen or mailmen who might come by. He handed me a key to a room on the first floor, directly beneath the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room. Thus, I was fortunate to sleep in 770 for an extended period.

In 5702, the year I came to 770, the Frierdiker Rebbe observed *aveilus* after the *histalkus* of his mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara. I had the *zechus* to be part of the *minyán* that *davened* upstairs with the Frierdiker Rebbe. Besides myself, there were a few other Chassidim who regularly *davened* in the *minyán*, such as Reb Nachum Sklar, Reb Avraham Pariz,



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE
WRITING IN HIS YECHIDUS
ROOM AT 770.

“Afterward,
Reb Sholom
Ber Eichorn
told me that...
The Rebbe
stood quietly
behind the door
throughout
the maamar,
listening until
I finished”...

and Reb Yisroel Jacobson.

I treasure the special moments I spent in the Friediker Rebbe's presence. I especially recall how the Rebbe would stand and observe every move the Friediker Rebbe made, keeping his eyes glued the entire time. Noticing this, I realized that I too should try to observe the Friediker Rebbe, so I would stand directly behind his place. One thing that stood out to me was the way the Friediker Rebbe said the word “*echod*” at the end of the Shema. He would prolong the end of the word, and as he said it, the pitch of his voice would rise higher and higher until it could no longer be heard. It was a beautiful and heavenly sound.

In those years, it was difficult for the Friediker Rebbe to walk, and since it was undignified to see him being wheeled in his wheelchair, the Friediker Rebbe would be wheeled into the room before the Chassidim entered and would be wheeled out after everyone had left. When we entered the room, the Friediker Rebbe was already seated, facing the front wall.

One day, after davening, the Friediker Rebbe asked for his chair to be turned around to face the crowd. The Chassidim were shocked and wondered why the Rebbe was turning to view them. This scene has remained engraved in my mind forever. The Friediker Rebbe looked at everyone with a penetrating gaze. This was the first time I saw the Friediker Rebbe in tallis and tefillin, and I suddenly understood the true definition of *ohr* (light). I saw an illuminated countenance, a handsome face, like a king in his crown, in full glory.

The Friediker Rebbe began to speak, saying, “*M'hut mir ibergigeben u'modia geven milmala*” (I was informed from

THE REBBE
IS MESADER
KIDDUSHIN AT
REB YOSEF'S
WEDDING,
ELUL 5706.



on High). He instructed that from now on, on a day when *Tachnun* is not recited, chapter 20 of Tehillim should be recited after davening, not as part of davening, but as *tachanunim* (supplications). I remember standing there, frozen in awe, as the Frierdiker Rebbe uttered these words. I realized that I was looking at a man who had a direct line of communication on high.

Years later, during a *yechidus* with the Rebbe, I wrote about this incident in my note and concluded that, to my great sorrow, despite having seen the Rebbe in such an exalted state, I hadn't changed. After reading the note, the Rebbe gave me a sharp look and said, "*Reb Yossel, af zich tohr men oich nisht reddan lashon hara.*" (It is not permitted to speak *lashon hara* about oneself either).

Another unforgettable moment happened that same year of 5702 on Shavuos. During the *farbrengen*, the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed the Chassidim to sing the *niggun Shalosh Tenuos*. In the middle of the *niggun*, the Frierdiker Rebbe suddenly stood up! Everyone rose and stood rooted to their spots. I was standing next to the Frierdiker Rebbe's table, facing him. The Frierdiker Rebbe stood with his eyes closed, singing along as tears streamed down his face. It was an indescribable sight. A few minutes later, the Frierdiker Rebbe stopped singing and sat down. The room fell into absolute silence, as none of us had ever seen anything like this before. The Frierdiker Rebbe opened his eyes, looked at each of us, and said: "I stood up in the middle of the *niggun* in honor of the three guests" [the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, and the Alter Rebbe].

A Glimpse Within

As a *ben-bayis* (a regular) in 770, the Frierdiker Rebbe's Rebbetzin tasked me with bringing food from the kitchen to the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's home, then located on the corner of President Street and New York Avenue. The building number was 346, and the Rebbe referred to it as "*shmo hagadol*" (the word "*shmo*" being numerically equivalent to 346). This responsibility allowed me to develop a special closeness with the Rebbe.

One time, after bringing a delivery to the house, I brought back a few empty milk bottles that the Rebbe and Rebbetzin had used. When I brought them to the kitchen in 770, the Frierdiker Rebbe's Rebbetzin asked me to take them along with some other bottles that were in the front room [where Rebbetzin Shterna Sara used to stay] to be thrown away.

I never imagined that I would be allowed to walk through the front room when the door to the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room was open. To my great surprise though, as I walked by and reached for the empty bottles, I saw that the door was wide open, and the Frierdiker Rebbe was sitting and writing, as music played from a record player that sat on the floor. I was fortunate to witness a heavenly and beautiful scene that no photo could ever capture.

As I was leaving, I noticed a maid carrying a plate with leftover soup and bread from the Frierdiker Rebbe. I offered to help her, and took it downstairs to distribute among the *bochurim* present.

In those days, it was customary for the *talmidim* in 770

to take turns reciting *maamarim* by heart at *Shalosh Seudos*. Since I would spend every other Shabbos with my parents in Boro Park, I made the journey to Crown Heights when it was my turn. Upon arriving at 770, I settled in the small *zal* and began reviewing the *maamar*, “*Ki Chelek Hashem Amo*” 5699.

Afterward, Reb Sholom Ber Eichorn told me that while I was there with my eyes closed reciting the *maamar*, the Rebbe had entered, then immediately left and closed the door behind him so as not to be seen. The Rebbe stood quietly behind the door throughout the *maamar*, listening until I finished.

In the Rebbe’s room

When the Rebbe arrived in New York, the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch was established, and one of its initial projects was printing Talks and Tales. I once overheard the Rebbe lament to Reb Sholom Mendel Simpson: “*Ich darf alein leigin di Talks und Tales in di envelops un ich darf alein leigin di stempes. Mistama darf ich leigin in post oich...*” (I have to put the Talks and Tales into envelopes myself and stick the stamps on myself. I’ll probably have to take them to the post

office, too.)

Upon hearing this, I immediately approached the Rebbe and offered to handle the task myself, suggesting I could do it in my room so as not to disturb him. The Rebbe accepted my offer but said that I would work in his room. I set up in a corner of the room, where I had the unique opportunity of observing the Rebbe at work. At that time, the Rebbe was editing the *kuntreisim* of the Rebbe Rashab with a pencil. He worked with one leg resting on a chair and the other on the floor.

As a gesture of appreciation for my help, the Rebbe gifted me some of the galley sheets he had used during the editing process, marked with his holy handwriting.

One time, I asked the Rebbe if I could borrow his typewriter to write a letter to someone whom I was bringing closer to the ways of Chassidus. The Rebbe readily agreed and said, “Tonight, I will be with the *shver* [Frieddiker Rebbe] until very late, and I know that you need to be up at 7:30 a.m. for Chassidus, and also open the doors for everyone. So, I’ll let you take the typewriter to your room. When you’re finished, just leave it by the door, and I’ll bring it into my room when I come downstairs.” I agreed, took the typewriter, and typed



1. THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE NOTIFIES REB YOSEF THAT HE PASSED HIS QUESTION ON TO THE REBBE.

2. SEVERAL DAYS LATER, THE REBBE SENDS AN ANSWER TO REB YOSEF.

During the ride, the Rebbe turned to me and asked, “Why haven’t I heard any questions from you in a long time?”

the letter. Afterward, I placed it in front of the Rebbe’s door as instructed.

As I was about to walk away, a thought struck me: “This isn’t right. The Rebbe will have to bend over to pick up the typewriter from the floor, which wouldn’t be respectful.” So I decided to wait. When the Rebbe returned, I planned to take the typewriter and place it on his desk myself. I waited and waited—ten o’clock passed, then eleven, and midnight came and went. By one o’clock, my eyes were growing heavy, and I was concerned that if I fell asleep, the Rebbe might pass by and end up picking up the typewriter himself.

I decided to lie down on the stairs so that the Rebbe would either have to step over me or wake me up. I was sleeping soundly when a door slamming upstairs jolted me awake. Hearing footsteps, I realized it must be the Rebbe. The Rebbe quickly descended the stairs, saw me lying there and the typewriter by the door, and effortlessly jumped over me—his athleticism was impressive. I scrambled to catch up and grabbed one side of the typewriter as he lifted it. I said, “Please

let me return the typewriter. I don’t want to burden you.” The Rebbe replied, “I told you to go to bed and be on time for tomorrow.” In the end, we both carried the typewriter into the office and placed it on the desk.

Early Guidance

This was the very same typewriter that the Rebbe used to type letters to me personally after I received the following response from the Frierdiker Rebbe.

I was accustomed to sending questions in Chassidus to the Frierdiker Rebbe. One time, when I wrote that it seemed there was a contradiction between two *maamarei chassidus*, the Frierdiker Rebbe responded: “I have given your letter with the question to my son-in-law... [the Rebbe’s holy name] *Shlita* and he will certainly answer you, *im yirtzeh Hashem*.” Indeed, a short while later, I received an answer to my question from



REB YOSEF GOLDSTEIN PLAYS HIS ACCORDION FOR THE CHILDREN GATHERED AT THE PARK AFTER THE LAG B’OMER PARADE, 5716. REB YITZCHOK GRONER IS SEEN AT THE MICROPHONE.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE’S SUKKA ABOVE THE MAIN SUKKA AT 770, TISHREI 5726.

“When the Frierdiker Rebbe looked up, he saw me with the schach, and began to smile broadly, it was a rare and unforgettable sight.”

the Rebbe, written on this very typewriter, and handed to me personally.

I perceived this to be an early indication from the Frierdiker Rebbe that I should become *mekushar* to the Rebbe. He sort of guided me towards the Rebbe, saying I did my part, and he will take care of you from now on, so to speak. I continued to send my questions in Chassidus to the Rebbe on a regular basis, and I merited to receive many beautiful letters in return.

After the Rebbe officially accepted the *nesius* on 10 Shevat 5711, I stopped sending in my questions to the Rebbe. I figured the Rebbe certainly had matters of greater importance to attend to, and I didn't want to take from his precious time with my questions.

When my brother-in-law, Reb Herschel Feigelstock got married, I traveled to the wedding in the same car as the Rebbe who was the *mesader kiddushin*. The Rebbe sat in the front, while Rabbi Hodakov and I sat in the back. During the ride, the Rebbe turned to me and asked, “Why haven't I heard any questions from you in a long time?”

I replied that I assumed the Rebbe had more important matters to attend to. The Rebbe responded, “Nevertheless, write!” Following the Rebbe's directive, I sent a letter with some questions I had at the time. Although I didn't receive a response, I continued to write each week, handing the Rebbe a new letter every Friday with the questions that arose.

For thirteen weeks, I handed in my letters but received no reply. Then, unexpectedly, I received a *michtav kloli-proti* (a letter sent to many individuals), on which the Rebbe had handwritten, “Your letters were received in a timely fashion and will be responded to when time allows, *bli neder*.” Soon after, I received a letter with answers to all the questions from my previous letters.

A Privileged Role

I was responsible for directing rallies for children on Chanukah, Lag B'omer, Purim, and other occasions. As the years passed, *bochurim* with fresh energy took over. For many years, I was the one who would open the rally with a general introduction about the significance of the day and the special place we were in. After a few songs with the children, I would hand the microphone to Reb Yankel (J.J.) Hecht, who continued running the rally. Reb Yankel Hecht was the one who invited the Rebbe to speak and had the exacting task of translating the Rebbe's words.

During a children's rally in the 5740s, Reb Yankel began to feel unwell and sat down to rest. Before stepping away, he signaled for me to come and take over his role of translating the *sicha*. At first, I was flustered and uncertain about how I would convey everything the Rebbe said, and translate it into English on the spot without any preparation. Despite the challenge, I had no choice but to proceed, and, with Hashem's help, I managed to complete the task successfully.

One year, on Lag B'omer, I hired a band to play music at the children's rally. Once their allotted time was up, they packed up and started to leave. *Boruch Hashem*, there was a large group of children, and the festivities were ongoing. The Rebbe turned to me and gestured with his hands that I should play my accordion. I quickly went home, retrieved it, and began to play.

I once received a special mention from the Rebbe at a *farbrengen* on Lag B'omer 5740. The Rebbe said, “The *Rosh Hamedabrim* (lead speaker) should say *l'chaim*.” Reb Meir Harlig pointed to me. I quickly got a cup to say *l'chaim*. The Rebbe looked at me and said, “*Aza kos? Du host geredt mer vi dem*—such a small cup? You spoke more than that.” He then instructed me to fill up a larger cup and say *l'chaim*.



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S LETTER REPRIMANDING REB YOSEF GOLDSTEIN AFTER HE LEFT ROCHESTER.

striking scene: the Frierdiker Rebbe sat at his desk in a *yarmulke*, while his secretary stood nearby. The Frierdiker Rebbe's presence illuminated the entire room. On the desk was a glass jar of pencils, and the secretary handed one to the Frierdiker Rebbe. When the Frierdiker Rebbe looked up, he saw me with the *schach*, and began to smile broadly, it was a rare and unforgettable sight.

After a few moments, the Frierdiker Rebbe signaled for me to proceed to the sukkah. I carefully navigated my way out of the room without turning my back to the Frierdiker Rebbe, and once outside, I took a deep breath. I faced a new dilemma: how to leave the sukkah without unintentionally disturbing the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Initially, I considered climbing down the pole alongside the porch but abandoned the idea, fearing I might worry the Frierdiker Rebbe with my sudden disappearance. To avoid causing any concern, I decided to retrace my steps back through the room. I quietly opened the door and tiptoed out.

I went to Reb Sholom Chaskind, hugged and kissed him, and expressed my gratitude for his immense favor. I then added with a smile, "You deserve some *petch* (slaps), too—why didn't you tell me the Rebbe was in there? I would have worn my Shabbos clothes or at least a hat and jacket!"

Following Orders

One day, around the week of Parshas Shemos in 5705, I was sitting in the Beis Midrash at seven in the morning when Rashag entered and informed me that Rabbi Tzvi Shusterman from Chicago was opening a yeshiva in Rochester but had no teachers. "Maybe you can teach there for two weeks?" he asked. I was 18 years old at the time and I didn't think I was capable of teaching, but then Rashag said, "The *shver* (the Frierdiker Rebbe) wants you to go." Upon hearing this I naturally agreed.

I went home to my parents in Boro Park to inform them that I was going to Rochester, an eight-hour train trip away. My mother wasn't happy about it, but my father told me to follow the Rebbe's instructions. I packed my few personal belongings, including some clothing and, most importantly, all the booklets of *maamarim* I had—my greatest treasure!

In Rochester, Rabbi Shusterman rented an old, freezing house with no electric boiler, just a wood-burning oven like in times of old. We gathered children and began teaching. After four weeks and no instructions from the Frierdiker Rebbe, I asked Rabbi Shusterman whether I should remain there. He said, "Do what you think is right." Since my initial two-week period had long passed, I decided it was okay to return to New York.

An Amazing Sight

One year, heavy rains fell during the early days of Tishrei. On Erev Sukkos, Reb Sholom Chaskind came to me in distress, saying, "It's been raining for days, and we don't have *schach* for the Frierdiker Rebbe's sukkah." I suggested that we say Tehillim and hope for a miracle. Just as we were speaking, a horse and wagon turned from Brooklyn Ave. onto Eastern Parkway, and the driver shouted, "*Schach, schach!*" Everyone rushed out, and we finally obtained the *schach* needed for the sukkah.

Reb Sholom then asked me to bring the *schach* up to the Frierdiker Rebbe's sukkah. Naturally, I was thrilled to do so, though I wanted to avoid dirtying my new suit. So, I removed my jacket, slung a bundle of *schach* over my shoulder, and happily climbed the steps to the second floor, heading towards the Frierdiker Rebbe's sukkah.

I was certain that if Reb Sholom had asked me to enter the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room, surely the Frierdiker Rebbe was not present at the time. Naively, I knocked softly, opened the door, and walked in. To my astonishment, the Frierdiker Rebbe was there!

I was struck with shock, unable to move or leave. I stood frozen with the *schach* bundles on my shoulder. It was a



Shortly after I arrived back in New York, the Frieddiker Rebbe's secretary came to the small *zal* and gave me a letter from the Frieddiker Rebbe, full of rebuke for leaving Rochester without permission. "Why did you leave Rochester without first getting permission from the *menahel shlita*? Such is not done. A *talmid* in Tomchei Temimim must be devoted to the *hanhala* with utmost discipline." The Frieddiker Rebbe concluded the letter with, "From now on you will listen to whatever they tell you, and travel wherever they send you for the amount of time they will tell you, and Hashem will help you materially and spiritually, and you will succeed in learning and in your conduct with fear of Heaven."

Years later, I showed the letter to the Rebbe, and he told me that it was specifically the sharp words that proved how close I was to the Frieddiker Rebbe. "For whom do you slap? The one who you love."

True to the Frieddiker Rebbe's words, "and from now on

you'll travel," I began to travel doing the Frieddiker Rebbe's work. I was sent with Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Groner to start a yeshiva in my hometown in Providence, Rhode Island. Later I traveled to Springfield, Massachusetts and New Haven, Connecticut amongst other places.

Final Moments

In his later years, the Frieddiker Rebbe faced significant health challenges. During the winter of 5705, a frightening incident occurred. I was asleep in my room when suddenly, strong knocks at the door woke me. I opened it to find Reb Shmuel Levitin standing there, trembling. He said, "Come upstairs quickly; we need a Yisroel." I realized that something terrible had happened.

In *seforim*, it is written that when a *neshama* leaves the body, it's appropriate to have a Kohen, Levi, and Yisroel



THE REBBE LOOKS ON AS REB YOSEF GOLDSTEIN LEADS THE FESTIVITIES AT THE LAG B'OMER PARADE, 5717.

standing nearby. Reb Shmuel was a *Levi*, Reb Sholom Ber Eichorn was a *Kohen*, and they woke me because I am a *Yisroel*. In great fright, I went up to the second floor. On the way, I saw doctors rushing toward the Frierdiker Rebbe's room with their equipment. Just as I was about to enter, the Rebbe arrived. He, being a *Yisroel*, motioned for me to leave, as he would take my place.

Later, I learned that the Frierdiker Rebbe had suffered a severe heart attack. Although he ultimately recovered, new decrees were enacted limiting *yechidus* and *farbrengens*, to ease his physical strain. I once heard that the doctors said they had no rational explanation for how the Frierdiker Rebbe continued to live after such a serious heart attack.

The events surrounding the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe are deeply engraved within me, and I find it difficult to even speak about them. Our lives were intertwined with the Rebbe—his *farbrengens*, his image, his *spodik*, his beard, and his holy face that always appeared aflame. We were as attached to the Rebbe as bees to honey, and suddenly he was taken from us.

Seeds of Chassidus

I served as the Principal of Bais Yaakov Girls School in New York for over fifty years, during which time I had the privilege of nurturing the Jewish education of thousands of children. On one occasion, during a *yechidus*, the Rebbe told me: “Do not underestimate the immense merit of being a conduit for the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, the Mezritcher Maggid, the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe *Nishmaso Eden*, and the Rebbe *der Shver*.” Then after a brief pause the Rebbe's expression turned serious as he repeated: “the Rebbe *der Shver* and the Tzemach Tzedek.” Indeed, it was a profound privilege to implant seeds of Chassidus to the *talmidos*.

On another occasion, I shared with the Rebbe how, *Boruch Hashem*, I was fortunate to inspire children to point to Hashem just as the Yidden had done after leaving Mitzrayim when they said “*zeh Keili vanvehu*.” I achieved this through composing the song “Hashem is here, Hashem is there,” which became a worldwide staple, and encourages children to point in all directions as they sing. I believe this is a manifestation of the Rebbe's *bracha* to me.

On Shabbos, 10 Shevat 5710, I was in Boro Park with my parents. On *Motzei Shabbos*, after *Havdalah*, Reb Sholom Mendel Simpson called. He could only say, “the Rebbe,” in a tone of despair. Hearing those words, I blanched. My mother, frightened by the look on my face, asked what happened, but I was speechless and could only say, “the Rebbe.” I went with Reb Sholom Mendel to Crown Heights, where the atmosphere was horrendous.

When we arrived at 770, all the doors were open. One could walk into the second floor where the Frierdiker Rebbe lived (which was usually locked), and straight into the *yechidus* room. This alone demonstrated the magnitude of the tragedy that had taken place. I shuddered as I entered “*lifnai velifnim*” [the inner chamber] of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *yechidus* room. The holy body of the Frierdiker Rebbe, covered with a tallis, lay near the door from east to west.

The Rebbe stood on the side reciting Tehillim, and I joined in saying Tehillim too. When I reached the *posuk*, “*yoshev bashamayim yischak*,” I accidentally said, “Yitzchok,” and the Rebbe gave me a sharp look. His facial features were extremely severe, yet he remained utterly composed, not revealing any sign of emotion. He was on top of everything, taking care of every detail. As people entered, the Rebbe asked if they had been to the *mikvah*, and those who hadn’t were not allowed to come in.

In the hallway, a heated conversation took place. Rabbi Rivkin, who wrote the *sefer Ashkavta D’Rebbi*, which describes the passing of the Rebbe Rashab, remarked, “I saw the first *churban*, and now I’m witnessing the second *churban*. I am certain that the third ‘*bayis*’ will last forever!”

A New Connection

After the *histalkus*, the young Chassidim immediately flocked to our Rebbe. He had always been involved with us, farbrenging and speaking with us. In the later years, it had become difficult to ask questions to the Frierdiker Rebbe, so the young Chassidim would direct their personal questions to the Rebbe instead. We held the Rebbe in great respect not solely for being the son-in-law of the Frierdiker Rebbe but also for his own immense wisdom, profound insight, and giant persona. We had no doubts about what would be in store for the future, and instantly became *mekushar* to the Rebbe. 🕒



Astronomically Impossible!

I once asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* that I should find a way to leave a lasting impact on children. After some reflection, I decided to share the stories my late mother used to tell us. I carefully chose educational tales and turned them into engaging story tapes with music and sound effects. To enhance these tapes, I commissioned Reb Zalman Kleiman to create accompanying artwork. Before publishing each tape, I presented a copy to the Rebbe.

One illustration featured Avraham Avinu looking at the sun, stars, and moon, with a *gartel* around his robe. With a smile, the Rebbe remarked, “Ah! At the young age of three, he’s wearing a *gartel*?” The Rebbe then noted that the moon’s ‘horns’ were facing the sun, which was astronomically impossible since the illuminated side of the moon faces the sun while the other side remains dark.

The Rebbe suggested I have the artist correct the moon’s position and offered to show me how. The Rebbe took a pencil and demonstrated the proper alignment on a piece of paper. After finishing the drawing, the Rebbe was about to hand it to me but noticed that the back of the paper had a list of individuals scheduled for *yechidus* that evening. The Rebbe said he would need to keep the paper, so unfortunately, I did not get to keep it.