

shabbos in Lubavitch

לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'
מנחם מענדל שיחי'
לרגל הולדתו
י"ב אדר ה'תשע"ח
ולזכות הוריו
הרה"ת ר' שלמה יוסף וזוגתו אסתר חי'
שיחי
זעלערמאיר

ולזכות החייל בצבאות ה'
מנחם מענדל שיחי'
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הרה"ת ר' משה ארי'
וזוגתו רבקה יהודית שיחי
שריף

נדפס ע"י זקניהם
הרה"ת ר' יצחק יהודה
וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחי
קופפר

עפ"י

Lubavitch.

A town rich in history.

A town filled with holiness.

For more than 102 years, the Rebbeim of Chabad called this town home, and from here Chassidus spread around the world. Chassidim from all over would journey to the town of Lubavitch to spend a few uplifting days, weeks, or months with the Rebbe. In this article, we revisit the incredible experience of Shabbos in Lubavitch after the Rebbe Rashab founded Tomchei Temimim.

Friday Night

The highlight of the week in Lubavitch was the *maamar*. Every Friday night, before *Kabbalas Shabbos*, the Rebbe Rashab would say a *maamar*. The *maamar* was attended by the *temimim*, guests, and some of the local residents.

Every Chossid yearned to be present, but there was a *seder* in Lubavitch. *Mashmaas* (discipline) and *seder* were paramount; and while the younger *talmidim* (and their teachers) would have wished nothing more than to be at the *maamar*, their *seder* rarely afforded them the opportunity, as they would be studying from when Shabbos began. Undeterred by this seemingly insurmountable obstacle, some members of the faculty did all they could to be there. The *mashgiach*, Reb Yechezkel Himmelstein, would sometimes switch duties with another *mashgiach*, so as to afford himself the opportunity to hear the holy words of the Rebbe with his own ears.¹

Niggunim and Hachanos

The Rebbe Rayatz would come to shul earlier, wearing a *shtreimel* and Shabbos clothing. Once everyone found their places, the *bochurim* would sing *niggunim*, including *Yedid Nefesh*. The singing was led by a group of *menagnim*, headed by Nosson Nota Paharer, who had a beautiful voice, was proficient in music, and sang beautifully. Some of the *niggunim* sung had been composed by the holy Rebbeim, while others could be traced to legendary Chassidim.

The singing would go on, sometimes for half an hour and sometimes for an hour or more, until the Rebbe would appear.

As the Rebbe's footsteps were heard approaching the room, the *niggunim* stopped, and everyone turned to face the door.²

The Maamar

A hush fell over the crowd, as a wide path opened, and the Rebbe Rashab entered. It felt as if a *malach* had entered the room. Seeing the Rebbe would leave a deep impression on everyone present. Even a regular person looks different on Shabbos; how much more so the Rebbe. In particular, on Friday night, before saying the *maamar*, the Rebbe's face shone with the G-dly light contained within. The Rebbe Rashab was tall, head and shoulders above the crowd. While during the week the Rebbe Rashab wore a silk hat, on Shabbos he wore a *shtreimel*, as well as a silk coat and a snow-white silk kerchief around his neck.

The Rebbe would walk to the *cheder sheini* and remove the silk coat and scarf. Then he would slowly walk to his place, between the rows of *talmidim* standing like soldiers at attention, and would sit down facing the assembled Chassidim.

The Frierdiker Rebbe would stand across the table facing the Rebbe Rashab. The *temimim* and guests would stand all around, everyone jostling and pushing to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe's holy face or at least to be in the front row. They would soon be dripping with sweat, "*ze'iah shel mitzvah*."

For a moment, the Rebbe Rashab would sit silently, exchanging gazes with the Frierdiker Rebbe.



The Rebbe Rashab would begin the *maamar* in a soft voice, but would steadily grow louder and louder, more and more powerful. Every Chossid in the room, however distant he was standing, could clearly hear the powerful, deep baritone of the Rebbe's voice. The Rebbe's face was flaming red.

The Chassidim would stand silently, absorbing every word. The Friediker Rebbe would stand as well, occasionally nodding his head attentively. From time to time, in middle of the *maamar*, the Rebbe Rashab would pause, and the Rebbe Rashab and the Friediker Rebbe would look into each other's eyes. The *maamar* would generally continue for between an hour and a half to two hours.

The awesome experience would leave a deep impression on young and old, even on those who had never heard Chassidus before. It truly felt like one was standing at the foot of Har Sinai, surrounded by 600,000 fellow Yidden all hearing the word of Hashem.

Upon the conclusion of the *maamar*, the Rebbe Rashab, soaked with sweat, would go to the *cheder sheini* to rest for about five minutes, sometimes longer.

The Rebbe would then enter the small *zal*, the *minyán* would daven *Maariv*, and then most of the people would go home to their *Shabbos seuda*.³

Chazara

A select few *temimim* and guests wouldn't head straight home just yet. Instead, they would gather to *chazzer*—to review the *maamar*.⁴ Among them were individuals with tremendous capacity for remembering things who would recite the *maamar* verbatim. The head *chozer* was Reb Shilem Kuratin, who during the *maamar* would stand away from the



The “Bittul” of the Chassidim

In Lubavitch, it didn't matter who you were in your hometown; here, everyone was equal.

The great Chossid, Reb Shmuel Gurarie of Kremenchug, was a tremendously learned man, in both *nigleh* and Chassidus. He was wealthy and well-connected with the government. It happened many times that in the midst of meeting with a government official, he would ask their pardon to daven *Mincha*, the official acquiescing with respect. Reb Shmuel had a guard at his door who would only allow people in with an appointment, as was customary among the local elite.

This very same Reb Shmuel would leave his honor and prestige behind when he came to Lubavitch. In the *zal* in Lubavitch, Reb Shmuel would be among the people pushing to catch glimpse of the Rebbe. There was no trace of Reb Shmuel the well connected magnate, the sage. He was replaced by Reb Shmuel the Chossid, an equal amongst equals.

He would stand before the Rebbe with complete *bittul*, like a servant before his master.

(Mareh Kohen p. 50)

pushing and shoving, with his eyes closed in extreme concentration. While Reb Shilem's natural abilities may not have been as great as some of the other *chozrim*, he succeeded in remembering the *maamar* more precisely than anyone else by way of sheer effort and diligence. He would begin the *chazara*, and the other *chozrim* would assist him.

After much time went by, the entire *maamar* was pieced together from memory. Only after this was completed did the *chozrim* daven *Maariv* and eat *seudas Shabbos*, long after midnight. After eating, they would gather again to go over the *maamar*, lest they forget it, and only then would they go to sleep for a short while.

The Small Zal

The small *zal* was used in the earlier years for the *maamarim*,⁸ and even later on (when the large *zal* was used for the *maamar*) it continued to be used for *tefillos*.⁹

The room was illuminated in the daytime by three large wide windows on the south wall. A water barrel stood in the northwest corner of the room. Another three wide windows were on the north wall. The *aron kodesh* was in middle of the south wall (Lubavitch being nearly due north from Eretz Yisroel -ed.). On the eastern side of the southern wall was the Rebbe Maharash's place. The next seat was empty, and it was followed by the seat of the Rebbe Maharash's son-in-law, Reb Moshe Arye Leib. Near him sat the Rebbe Maharash's sons—Raza, then the Rebbe Rashab, followed by Reb Menachem Mendel. The seventh seat was empty, saved for the future husband of the Rebbe Maharash's daughter Chaya Mushka. On the other side, the first seat was reserved for the Rebbe Maharash. Nearby, was the door to the *yechidus* room. The Rebbe Maharash would daven in the *yechidus* room, and come out to hear *krias haTorah*.

The *bima* was in middle of the room.¹⁰

On the western wall was the door to the *cheder sheini*, which had an *aron kodesh*, a *bima*, and some benches.

When the Rebbe would say a *maamar* in the small *zal*, they would prepare the southeast corner of the room for the Rebbe. They made a *shlos-mem* which consisted of the southern and eastern walls; the west side consisted of the davening benches (which had attached shtenders and compartments) and on the north side was a table. This *shlos-mem* extended until the *amud*, near the *aron kodesh*.¹¹

In 5668 the winter was especially cold, so the fires in the fireplaces had to be roaring with intense heat to combat the bitter cold. One evening, as the *talmidim* were learning, they noticed sparks flying out of the chimney. They told their *mashgiach*, who reproached them:

“Why are you concerning yourself with this? Keep learning!” About half an hour later, the fire spread too large to be ignored.

There was no fire department in Lubavitch, so a bucket line was quickly formed. All of the *talmidim*, as well as the family of the Rebbe, who lived in other buildings in the same courtyard as the *zal*, quickly took to the task, drawing buckets of water from the two wells situated in the courtyard of the yeshiva.

The Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe came to the *zal* after the flames had been quieted, as the *talmidim* were still busy putting out the remaining fires and tearing down the ceiling as well as the wall of the *ezras nashim*.

For a number of months following the fire, *tefillos* did not take place in the small *zal*.

From then on, the Rebbe Rashab would say Chassidus in the big *zal*.¹² The crowd had also gotten bigger, and using the large *zal* allowed for more people to be present by the *maamarim*.¹³

The Large Zal

As one walked into the large *zal*, he would see long white tables surrounded with *temimim*, learning assiduously, each facing his *chavrusa*. Eighteen tables held a total of about 150 *talmidim* between the ages of 18 and 25.

The door to the room was on the eastern side.

The Rebbe Rashab gave numerous directives to the builders of the *zal*. Among these were that the ceiling should be supported by 13 columns, and each corner of the room should have a “*shin*” shape built into the architecture.

There was a *cheder sheini* in the eastern part of the *zal*, where the *mashpi'im* would learn Chassidus with groups of younger *talmidim*.

Two tables for the *mashgichim* of *nigleh* and Chassidus were situated on a platform.¹⁴

The room would be prepared for the *maamar* right after *Mincha* on Friday, with four long tables set up in a square in the center of the room. The Rebbe's chair was placed inside the square, at the middle of the northern table, facing north.¹⁵

Upon awakening, Reb Shilem and a select five or six of the *chozrim* would go to the Rebbe's house for *chazzara* while the Rebbe would drink tea. The Rebbe would sit, and Reb Shilem would say over the *maamar*. The Rebbe would clarify and connect any points that were unclear and correct anything that needed correction, occasionally explaining a difficult concept in the *maamar*.

Reb Shilem would then go out and recite the *maamar*, which he now knew clearly, and would say it over fluently.⁵

Davening

The Rebbe Rashab would enter the small *zal* at 9:30, davening with the *minyán* from *Ma Tovu* until *Baruch She'amar*. During *krias haTorah*, the Rebbe sat facing the *sefer Torah*. After the *minyán* concluded, the Rebbe would go home and continue *davening* for three hours or more.

After davening he would make *kiddush* on wine, and have a bite of *mezonos*, and then daven *Mincha* with a small *minyán*. After *Mincha*, the Rebbe would eat *seudas Shabbos*, stating beforehand that this did not take the place of *seuda shlishis*.

Meanwhile, after davening, the assistant *chozrim*, such as Reb Moshe the *chozer* from Zemin, would also say over the *maamar*, but everyone wanted to hear it from Reb Shilem, whose precision in repeating the Rebbe's words had no match.

After Shabbos, Reb Shilem would test many of the *talmidim* on the *maamar*, which they had reviewed over and over throughout Shabbos as an integral part of their *seder*.⁶

Publishing the Maamar

The Rebbe Rashab would give a manuscript of the *maamar* in his holy handwriting, to Reb Shmuel "the Writer." Reb Shmuel would hand-write

numerous copies, printing many more, and he would sell them.

However, not every *maamar* was released by the Rebbe Rashab for publication. When the Rebbe Rashab didn't give out a handwritten manuscript, the head *chozrim* would usually prepare a transcript on their own.⁷

This was Shabbos in Lubavitch. A day spent listening, studying, reviewing, and again reviewing the *maamar*. While plentiful *seudos* were provided for the *temimim*, they did not linger over their meals, nor did they sleep much; the holiness of Shabbos was palpable in the heartfelt *tefillos*, soulful *niggunim*, and the *maamar Chassidus*—the highlight of the week. 🕒

1. *Mareh Kohen* p. 49; *Reshimos Devorim* p.

335.

2. *Zikaron Livnei Yisroel* p. 12; *Mareh Kohen* p. 49, 53; *Reshimos Devorim* p. 342.

3. The detailed description of the *maamar* is culled from: *Zikaron Livnei Yisroel* p. 12; *Mareh Kohen* p. 50-54; *Reshimos Devorim* p. 342-343; *Lubavitch V'chayoleha* p. 24; *As I Heard Them* p. 102.

4. See *Retaining Chassidus*, Derher Adar I 5776.

5. *Lubavitch V'chayoleha* p. 24; *Mareh Kohen* p. 54-55.

6. *Reshimos Devorim* p. 343; *Lubavitch V'chayoleha* p. 24.

7. *Lubavitch V'chayoleha* p. 25.

8. *Zikaron Livnei Yisroel* p. 12.

9. *Reshimos Devorim* p. 342-343.

10. *Likkutei Dibburim* part 4. 5672 8.

11. *Zikaron Livnei Yisroel* p. 12.

12. *Ibid.* p. 15.

13. *Mareh Kohen* p. 49.

14. *Reshimos Devorim* p. 332.

15. *Mareh Kohen* p. 50.

