



A LIFE IN THE SICHOS

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Schapiro is the *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva Gedolah of Miami, Florida. He had the *zechus* to spend all his yeshiva years in close proximity to the Rebbe, and was witness to countless stories and experiences. In addition, he worked as a *chozer*, and was involved with preparing Likutei Sichos.¹

Rabbi Schapiro was gracious enough to share hundreds of stories with *A Chassidisher Derher*, yet due to space constraints, many were left out and others were condensed. This article focuses primarily on the stories that involve Rabbi Schapiro personally, along with a handful of unique memories, highlighting some of the special events that took place during the 5720s* in 770.

Many of his experiences were chronicled in his now renowned WhatsApp series, and are available online. We look forward to including more of these stories in future issues, ועוד חזון למועד.



לע"ג
הרה"ת ר' אייזיק גרשון
בן ר' אברהם זאב ע"ה
מינץ
נלב"ע ב' מר-חשוון ה'תשנ"ג
ת'נצ'ב'ה'
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו



ONE HUNDRED BLOWS

I was born in France, where my family lived for several years after fleeing Russia. In 5713*, when I was six-years-old, we immigrated to the United States. That is when I first saw the Rebbe. Shortly after we arrived, my family went in for *yechidus*.

I vaguely remembered hearing about the Friediker Rebbe's *histalkus*, and had constantly heard about the Rebbe from the older Chassidim. It was a very exciting moment for me. I was so in awe at the *yechidus*, that when the Rebbe asked me to say Shema Yisrael, I was too shy to respond. (That same night, the Rebbe gave a silver dollar to another child who did recite it; when I heard that, I was extremely disappointed.)

After a short visit in New York, the Joint Distribution Committee provided us with a home in Cleveland, Ohio.

My father, Reb Lipa Schapiro, began teaching Chassidus to local Jews and Telz *yeshiva bochurim*,



and created a small Chassidishe *seviva* around him.

We were joined by my maternal grandfather, Reb Zalman Vilenkin, who had been the Rebbe's *melamed*. He was quite elderly at the time but still retained his amazing *koach hasbarah* (ability to explain things clearly). I recall a farbrengen for *olam'she* Jews, where he reviewed Chassidus and expounded on the concept of *ain od milvado*. Afterwards, as the participants left, one individual was searching high and low for his *galoshen*—boots, and another person remarked, "Why are *galoshen* important? *Ain od milvado!*" That was the type of impact he made.

The next time I saw the Rebbe was in Tishrei 5718* when I was eleven-years-old. My father traveled to the



A YOUNG RABBI SCHAPIRO (MIDDLE LEFT) WITH HIS BROTHERS IN PARIS, FRANCE, 5713*.



A YOUNG RABBI SCHAPIRO (SECOND FROM LEFT) WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, MID 5710S.

Rebbe for Simchas Torah and brought me along.

When we went by for *lekach* on Hoshana Rabba, there was a considerable amount of people in line, but the Rebbe surprisingly stopped us and asked me, "*Vos hostu gelernt letzters*—what did you learn lately?" I answered that I studied Mesechta Betzah.

"Which *halachos*?"

The Rebbe probably meant which *perek* in Betzah, but I misunderstood and said, "Hilchos Shofar."

"How many *kolos* do we blow on Rosh Hashanah?"

"One hundred."

"Are the hundred blows *midina degemara* [or a custom which began in later generations]?"

Embarrassed, I said I didn't know. The Rebbe gave me *lekach* and a *bracha* and we moved on.

After that encounter, I was afraid that the Rebbe would quiz me again in *yechidus* after Yom Tov. However, my fears were unfounded, to my great relief.

Over Tishrei, I understood bits and pieces of the farbrengens, but there was one line that I remember very well: At the farbrengen of Simchas Torah, the Rebbe spoke about *birur hamidos*, and commented that "*S'iz a shvere zach*, it's a difficult thing."

He paused and said with a smile, "*Aderabe, proovt, vet ir zen*. Try it out yourselves; you'll see..."

That Shabbos Bereishis, there was the famous story with "*kalt un shmutzig*." The *gabbai* had told the Rebbe that the *shalash* (the temporary structure built in the courtyard where the Rebbe often held farbrengens in those years) wasn't suitable for davening because "*Unten iz kalt un shmutzig*—downstairs is cold and dirty." The Rebbe understood it as a message from Heaven, that even after the entire month of Tishrei, "*unten iz kalt un shmutzig...*" and wept bitterly about it at the farbrengen. For me, as a young child, it was a very difficult sight, and it made a very powerful impression.

BEDFORD AND DEAN

Shortly before my bar mitzvah, I traveled with my father to the Rebbe and had *yechidus*. At the *yechidus*, the Rebbe made it clear to my father that for the following *zman* I should join the *yeshiva* in New York.

My bar mitzvah was on 12 Av, and a few weeks later, in Elul 5720*, I enrolled in Tomchei Temimim on Bedford and Dean. I lived in my grandfather's home (he had moved to New York some time earlier), and each night, I had the opportunity to spend time in 770 with the older *bochurim*.



RABBI SCHAPIRO (LEFT) AS A BOCHUR POSING WITH HIS BROTHERS IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, LATE 5720S.

This meant that in the spring and summer months, when Maariv was at 9:30 p.m., I saw the Rebbe on a daily basis. My *chaverim* and I had all sorts of interesting experiences as we hung around 770 in the evenings.

One year on *nittel nacht*, for example, we noticed Rabbi Groner wheeling a tape player and a large reel into the Rebbe's room. Our curiosity was piqued, so as soon as he returned to *mazkirus*, we tiptoed over to the Rebbe's door to listen. (*Gan Eden Hatachton* was open in those years.)

We heard the Rebbe listening to the recording of the large Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen in Kfar Chabad. He listened to several speeches, and fast-forwarded through "Padah Beshalom" and Reb Nochum Goldshmidt's *chazaras dach*.

At one point we made some noise, and we suddenly noticed the handle of the Rebbe's door turning. The Rebbe was coming to see who was standing there...

We immediately raced into the staircase going downstairs, and we watched from afar as the Rebbe looked around and closed the door...

INTERACTIONS

On a personal level, we didn't have many interactions with the Rebbe. We had a *yechidus* on each birthday, and if a major issue came up, we wrote to the Rebbe about it.

Most of my *yechidusen* were personal, and I won't share the details. I do recall one incident which could be a *hora'á l'rabim*: I wrote certain

negative descriptions about my *avodas Hashem*, and the Rebbe responded that it is forbidden to speak *lashon horah* on oneself too...

As young *bochurim*, my *chavrusa* Leibel Kaplan a"h and I once wrote to the Rebbe a question on the Gemara we were learning, because, at our age, we assumed that if no one knew the answer, we had to write it to the Rebbe. Leibel Kaplan had done this once as a child, so he was already "experienced," and the Rebbe indeed wrote back a *marei makom* which answered our question.

In Tammuz 5723*, our class transferred to 770 permanently. We were 16-year-old *bochurim* at the time and many of us remained in 770 for the next 7-8 years until we got married.

In general, there were only 60 or 70 *bochurim* in yeshiva at the time, so when the Rebbe would come into Mincha in the small *zal*, it almost felt like a personal encounter. Every *yechidus* would leave you with a *roshem* that whenever you saw the Rebbe, you would feel a sense of personal recognition, something that wasn't as evident in later years.

Sometimes, the Rebbe would walk into the small *zal* to see who was on time to *sefer*. There were other times when he just glanced into the *zal* as he passed by on the way into his room

WE MADE SOME NOISE, AND WE SUDDENLY NOTICED THE HANDLE OF THE REBBE'S DOOR TURNING. THE REBBE WAS COMING...

(we would all rise and quietly wait for the Rebbe to pass).

On one interesting occasion, during the farbrengen on Yud-Tes Kislev 5723*, the Rebbe began reading through all the slips where people had written their pledged *masechta* for the *chalukas haShas*.

Some people became very nervous; they feared that the Rebbe would begin calling out names and telling them to choose larger or more difficult *masechtos* (as the Rebbe had done—with regards to money—on Yud-Tes Kislev 5718* during the *magbis*). In the end, this didn't occur, and the Rebbe just collected them into the bag.

However, some of my friends had chosen several difficult *masechtos*, and they soon received a call from *mazkirus* asking if they really intended to learn it all.

FARBRENGENS

Being in 770 in those days meant I was able to participate in all the Rebbe's farbrengens and hear the Rebbe's *sichos* from a young age. Those are the most precious memories of my life.

One of my most memorable experiences by the Rebbe was Simchas Torah 5722*, as a 14-year-old *bochur*.

Reb Berke Chein had arrived in 770 for his first time after coming out of Russia (no one left Russia in those days!). He arrived with his Russian *kasket*, but by Simchas Torah, he had already purchased a fedora like the Rebbe.

During the farbrengen, he brought the Rebbe a bottle of 96% *mashke* from the Chassidim in Russia. Although the Rebbe would normally take a little *mashke* from each bottle presented, this time, the Rebbe filled up his entire *becher* with the strong *mashke*. As Reb Berke walked away to distribute the rest of the bottle, the Rebbe drank the entire contents of his *becher*, and then called Reb Berke back to refill it. The



RABBI AARON GOLDSTEIN

THE REBBE POURS "L'CHAIM" FOR REB MENDEL FUTERFAS.

Rebbe immediately drank the second cup too, and I think he drank a third as well.

When Reb Berke took his seat, the Rebbe asked him, "Where is your *kasket*?"

The Rebbe instructed him to remove his hat. As his *kasket* was being retrieved from his lodgings, it was noticeable that Reb Berke felt uncomfortable sitting in front of the Rebbe without a proper head covering, so the Rebbe called out, "*Na dich an Amerikaner makif*" ("Here, take an 'American' covering") and threw him a napkin to put on his head.

From that point in the farbrengen, there were unbelievable *giluyim*. The Rebbe said a *sicha* about the Russian Jews, and he spoke with great emotion. It was a very heightened atmosphere.

The *eltere Chassidim* asked the Rebbe to watch his health and not say so much *l'chaim*, but the Rebbe didn't take their advice. The Rebbe sang *Tzamah Lecha Nafshi* and then *Hoshiah Es Amecha*, and stood up and began dancing and encouraging the singing with an enthusiasm we had never seen before, dancing for a very long time.

Suddenly, the Rebbe paused, and the singing died down. While still

standing, the Rebbe announced—in a very emotional tone—that since there was more than a *minyan* present, a *psak din* should be made that the Russian Jews should be released from their bondage.

After the *sicha*, the Rebbe sat down and declared that everyone was welcome to bring bottles of *mashke* and ask for *brachos*.

Pandemonium broke loose. Scores of people went running to find bottles of *mashke* to bring to the Rebbe. As each person approached, the Rebbe poured a little *l'chaim*, gave a *bracha*, and instead of returning the bottle, placed it on his table. Soon the entire table was crowded with bottles of *mashke*.

The Rebbe spoke very openly to people on that occasion. I watched as my neighbor at the farbrengen approached the Rebbe, and the Rebbe asked him emphatically, "*Du host a shiur in lernen*—do you have a set time to learn?" The person remained silent, and the Rebbe kept prompting him for a response.

In the following *sicha*, in a slow and emphatic voice, as the Rebbe would speak after saying *l'chaim*, he related:

"*S'iz tzu mir arein a yungeman oif yechidus*—a young man came into *yechidus*..."

The Rebbe had asked him if he had a *shiur* in Torah, and he had responded in the negative. The Rebbe spoke at length, expressing his surprise that it was possible for a *yungerman* not to have a *shiur* in learning Chassidus.

This unique part of the farbrengen lasted a long time. Suddenly, we watched as the Rebbe wiped his hand over his forehead, and began speaking a *sicha* in a composed tone of voice, vastly different to his earlier manner of speech. It was a *nigleh sicha*, as a participation in the Kinus Torah, and the Rebbe spoke for close to an hour with his eyes closed.

Astounded, I recalled a similar story of the Tzemach Tzedek waving his hand over his forehead and suddenly composing himself. He later explained that the Gemara says, "*Yayin kashe, pachad mefigo*—the effect of heavy wine dissipates through fear."² A short *hisbonenus* in *gadlus Hashem* evoked a fear that removed the effect of the *mashke*. I saw this literally take place with my own eyes.³

Another memorable farbrengen that year (5722*) was Shabbos Yud



Kislev. The farbrengen began with a *maamar*, and in the *sicha* that followed, the Rebbe related that the Mittlerer Rebbe would sometimes say Chassidus three times in one Shabbos, and that there were occasions where he would say Chassidus a fourth time on Motzei Shabbos at four in the morning.

To our surprise, the *sicha* was followed by a second *maamar*, *V'shavti B'shalom*. The Rebbe then followed with another *sicha*, and then, to our shock, he continued with yet a third *maamar*, *Padah B'shalom*.

We couldn't believe that the Rebbe had said three *maamarim* at one farbrengen. Taking note of the story, we thought that the Rebbe might show up at four in the morning to say a *maamar* again, so a large group of us came to 770 in middle of the night in anticipation of a *maamar*. However, that didn't come to be.

THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES

From a young age in yeshiva, our lives were centered around the Rebbe's farbrengens. Thinking back, it was like living in Gan Eden. We always were careful not to leave town on a Shabbos

that there was a chance the Rebbe would farbreng.

At the farbrengens, we listened as closely as we could, slowly teaching ourselves to follow the Rebbe's style and to be able to pick up the *sichos* and remember them. Afterwards, we would crowd around Reb Yoel to hear—and help him—during *chazara*.

Over the next days we would review the *sichos*, research them for further depth, and argue about their meanings. And then, the next farbrengen would come around...

In the process, we became very close with Reb Yoel, who also taught us Chassidus. He would farbreng with us for many hours, guide us in our studies, and teach us how to learn and retain the Rebbe's *sichos*. The *bochurim* in my class became his *talmidim muvhakim*.

As an older *bochur*, the Rebbe appointed me and several others (as I will soon relate) to help with *chazara*, but it was because we had become involved earlier from our own volition. I recently discovered *hanachos* that I wrote in 5722*-23*, when I was just 15-years-old, which I intend to send to Lahak in case they can glean any missing *sichos* or details from them.

Many of the *maamarim* in *Toras Menachem 5724** were reconstructed from my notes that year.

The Rebbe had a lot of *nachas* when Chassidim *koched zich* in the *sichos*, and expressed his displeasure when he didn't see enough interest.

He also wanted women and girls to be a part of it. Once, when I was in *yechidus* with my family, the Rebbe asked my mother and sister if they were at the farbrengen and if they were able to hear the *sichos*. Turning to my father, he commented, "*Di zin ayere, zeh ich bam farbrengens*—I see your sons at the farbrengens," but he wanted to know if the women were there as well.

TURN OVER ALL BOTTLES

Shivah Asar B'Tammuz 5724* fell out on Shabbos. Nobody expected a farbrengen, so most *anash* went to the country for Shabbos. However, the Rebbe decided to farbreng,⁴ and it turned out to be quite a memorable farbrengen.

The Rebbe explained that when a fast is postponed, it is an impetus for it to be cancelled entirely (meaning, with the coming of Moshiach), and he said that we need to prepare by



CHAZARA AFTER A FARBRENGEN IN THE UPSTAIRS ZAL AT 770.

being more *b'simcha* through saying *l'chaim*. The Rebbe announced that for this occasion he rescinds the *hagbala* on *mashke*. Everyone present began saying *l'chaim*. The Rebbe said many *l'chaims* himself, and whenever he saw a bottle with contents, he motioned that people should say *l'chaim* and finish it.

It became a very *freileche* atmosphere. We sang many *niggunim*; it was a very small crowd and the Rebbe was very personable. When more people brought bottles, the Rebbe made sure that they were used for *l'chaim*. That was one of the only occasions we drank *mashke* in the Rebbe's presence, and by the end of the farbrengen, it became more difficult for me to follow along with the *sichos*.

The Rebbe left the farbrengen at seven o'clock(!), a lot later than a typical Shabbos farbrengen, which would usually end at around 3 or 4

in the afternoon. Before concluding, he said that we should continue the farbrengen after Shabbos, until *chatzos*—when, according to the Alter Rebbe, the fast begins in northern countries.

The farbrengens indeed lasted until the moment of *chatzos*. I remember that *chazara* on Motzei Shabbos was relatively unattended, until the moment of *chatzos* when all the *bochurim* began streaming back into 770 *begilufin*.

Another interesting time that the Rebbe told us to farbreng was on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah 5728*, when the Rebbe said to hold farbrengens every night until the new year.

The following week was very *geshmak*; every night there was a grand farbrengen which lasted throughout the night. However, *seder hayeshiva* was very weak.

On Shabbos Shuva (the third day of Yom Tov), the Rebbe spoke a warm *sicha* to the *bochurim*, explaining that a *bochur's* primary job in life is to learn, and that is especially true during Aseres Yemei Teshuva; so no matter how much we farbreng, the *seder hayeshiva* must remain strong.⁵ With a smile, the Rebbe added that if a *bochur* will claim that his missing *seder* was an *onnes*—he slept in without intending to, the truth is that it is *techilaso b'pshia v'sofo b'ones* (the beginning of the act was a negligence, i.e. staying up too late, even though the end result was beyond his control) and *halacha* rules that it is considered a *pshia*—negligent.

The following week was very *shturemdik*. Big farbrengens were held every single night as per the Rebbe's *hora'a*, but *zal* was packed every single day, from the first moment of *seder*.

WITH A SMILE, THE REBBE ADDED THAT MISSING SEDER IS TCHILASO B'PSHIA V'SOFO B'ONES...



THE REBBE SAYS KADDISH FOLLOWING THE KEVURA OF REBBETZIN CHANA, 7 TISHREI 5725*.

MAMTIK DINIM

On Rosh Hashanah 5725*, a few days before Rebbetzin Chana's *histalkus*, the Rebbe was unusually *freilach* at the *farbrenge*n.

At the end of the *farbrenge*n, the *gabbai* made the regular announcement. “*Der seder vet zein azoi*: Now will be bentching, then Maariv, then *kos shel bracha*, and no one should push; *azoi hot geheisen* the new Vaad Hamesader, *un m'darf folgen*, everyone must follow the instructions.”

The Rebbe immediately followed, in almost a tone of jest: “*Der seder vet zein azoi*: Now we will enter the new year, and we will learn an abundance of *nigleh* and Chassidus, which will bring to *mitzvos b'hiddur*. Beforehand, Hashem will give us a *ksiva vachasima tovah*... [the Rebbe added many *brachos*]. *Azoi hot geheisen* the new

Vaad Hamesader, *un m'darf folgen*, everyone must follow instructions.”⁶

After Yom Tov, we mused about the Rebbe's *lebedikeit*. Some Chassidim spoke about a *kabbalah* that whenever the Rebbeim were unusually happy on Rosh Hashanah, it was in order to be *mamtik dinim*, to sweeten a *gezeira*. I can't vouch for the theory, but Rebbetzin Chana wasn't feeling well at the time, and a few days later on Vov Tishrei, she passed away.

Throughout the proceedings of the *levaya* and *shiva*, the *bochurim* always wanted to be near the Rebbe, but the Rebbe expressed his displeasure about the presence of *bochurim* (and the pushing) several times, saying, “*Vos shtupt men duh? Es iz nisht kein farbrenge*n—Why are they pushing? It's not a *farbrenge*n...”

This took place in the hospital, at the *levaya*, and so on. We felt bad that we had caused the Rebbe *agmas*

nefesh, and decided to do something to bring the Rebbe *nachas*. We arranged a *chalukas haMishnayos* among the *bochurim*, to be concluded at the end of *shiva* (the *shiva* only lasted two days) before Yom Kippur.

On Erev Yom Kippur, when Rabbi Hodakov showed the Rebbe the list of the *chaluka*, the Rebbe was indeed very pleased. He looked at it and said, “*A koras ruach*” (an expression of pleasure). Then he looked at it again and said, “*A groiser koras ruach*,” and then a third time, “*A gur groiser koras ruach*—a very great *koras ruach*.”

On the eve of Yom Kippur, the Rebbe gave a *bracha* to *anash* right before Kol Nidrei (instead of after Mincha as usual). Afterwards, he instructed that a *siyum* be made, and he said Kaddish Derbabanan.

BECOMING OFFICIAL

Around midnight on the night before Yud Shevat 5726*, Rabbi Binyomin Klein walked into the small *zal* and said that Rabbi Hodakov wanted to see three *bochurim*—Ephraim Piekarski, Shlomo Zarchi, and me.

When we came in to *mazkirus*, Rabbi Hodakov asked us, “Are you ready to get more involved in *chazara*?”

Feeling that it came from the Rebbe, we all answered, “Of course.”

Rabbi Hodakov asked, “Do you understand what it entails?”

“Yes,” we responded. We had been previously involved anyway.

“Can I write this to the Rebbe?”

We all answered in the affirmative.

After the Yud Shevat *farbrenge*n, we were informed that the Rebbe was surprised that we hadn't gone up to say *l'chaim*, and that he wanted us to go up the following Shabbos. Meanwhile, a fourth *bochur* was added to the group, Sholom Ber Levitin.

On Shabbos at the *farbrenge*n, when we approached the Rebbe, Rabbi

RUSSIAN JEWRY

When Reb Mendel Futerfas left Russia to England on Rosh Chodesh Elul 5724*, the news generated a lot of excitement. I recall that Reb Shlomo Cunin started singing *Padah Beshalom* at the Rebbe's *minyán* after Mincha.

Although we Americans had never met him, the Rebbe had spoken a *sicha* on Yud Shevat 5722*⁷ about “a Jew in Russia” who is *moser nefesh* to build *mikvaos* etc. From then he had become a living legend.

He arrived in 770 for Yud-Tes Kislev 5724*. We were all sure that the Rebbe would give him amazing *kiruvim* at the farbrengen, but to our surprise, he received no special attention. He said *l'chaim* like everyone else, and even when he brought the Rebbe a bottle of *mashke*, nothing out of the ordinary took place.

We later understood that it was probably because of the presence of Russian agents at the farbrengen. They would come quite often in those years; I personally remember an individual coming to the farbrengen with a tiny pen camera, quietly taking pictures of the entire crowd—not of the Rebbe—evidently to document the presence of the new Russian immigrants.

A very special farbrengen⁸ took place on the Shabbos following Yud Shevat that year. The Rebbe said that it was a *tzeischem leshalom* for the guests, and that there were three categories of guests present: those who recently left Russia, those who were never in Russia at all, and those who left Russia many years ago. The Rebbe seemed to be referring to Reb Mendel Futerfas, Reb Zalmon Jaffe, and Reb Folle Kahn.

The Rebbe spoke about the Russian Jews throughout the farbrengen. During the *maamar*, he repeated the *tochen* of the Mittlerer Rebbe's *maamar* about the Cantonists, where he explained that when there is a *kitrug* on the Jewish people for doing mitzvos only out of habit, Hashem takes away our ability to do mitzvos, and our resulting *mesiras nefesh* proves that we really do love mitzvos.

The Rebbe repeated this explanation while weeping bitter tears. Expressing the yearning of a Jew to do Torah and mitzvos, the Rebbe wept several times, “The Jew cries out to Hashem, ‘*Oy li, alilay li, keili keili lamah azavtani...*”

The Russian Jews were a big focus of the Rebbe in those years, especially before the great “exodus” of 5727*-35*. At the end of every large farbrengen, the Rebbe would speak a *sicha* about Russian Jewry, and afterwards, everyone would say *l'chaim* to the Rebbe and sing *Hoshiah Es Amecha*.

On Shavuos 5724*,⁹ a very sad thing took place. The Rebbe spoke about Russia, but for some reason, nobody said *l'chaim* or sang when he finished. After a few moments of quiet, the Rebbe became visibly disturbed, and said,

“Regarding your brother or relative, you don't need to be reminded, but now, regarding an entire *klal*, nobody cares...”

Realizing the mistake, people began singing *Hoshiah Es Amecha*, but the Rebbe clearly wasn't satisfied. He began quietly singing to himself *Essen Est Zich*, expressing a deep bitterness.

Some individuals didn't understand that the Rebbe was expressing his frustration, and they began to sing along. The Rebbe showed his displeasure again, throwing a napkin onto the table and knocking over the (nearly empty) *becher* in the process.

With a terribly pained expression, the Rebbe began to speak.

“Tomorrow, you'll come to ask about sending papers to a brother or relative, but now, when there is an *eis ratzon* and you could have helped two,/two and a half million Yidden to go out, nobody cares...”

The Rebbe said some sharp and painful words that weren't included in the *hanacha*.

Then the Rebbe asked for a child under bar mitzvah, because “I can't have any *taanos* to them,” and the children sang *Hoshiah Es Amecha* together with the Rebbe, who sang with a profound *deveikus*.

Hodakov wanted to introduce us, but the Rebbe said that we ourselves should say why we were there.

One of the *bochurim* who was standing closest to the Rebbe said, “To help.”

“To help what?” the Rebbe asked.
“With *chazara*.”

The Rebbe asked each of us, “And you too?” We all answered, “Yes.”

Each of us then returned to our places, but the Rebbe turned to Reb Yoel and said (evidently because we were becoming semi-*chozrim*) “Either you should go to them, or they should come to you.”

He began approaching us on the other side of the table, but the Rebbe stopped him, saying, “It must be בעלייתן של בעלים.” In other words, we were to go to him, and we immediately went to stand next to Reb Yoel. The Rebbe then told us to say *l'chaim* on a full cup of wine, after which he said that our fathers should also say *l'chaim*.

With all the excitement, it wasn't easy to focus and follow the following *sichos*. All I remember is that the Rebbe spoke about the Slav, and that it's a fat bird... However, from then on, we got involved in *chazara*. We also wrote *hanachos* (primarily Reb Avraham Gerlitzky led this) with Reb Yoel's guidance. We first began publishing them in a very unofficial way, and called them “Hanachos Hatmimim,” to differentiate it from

Reb Yoel's *hanachos* which were called plain “*hanachos*.” Later, they took on a more official form.

For the following months, we did not receive any reaction from the Rebbe to our work. Then, after Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5727*, the Rebbe had written an answer to someone's question about the *sicha*, and we wanted to incorporate it into the *hanacha*. We wrote it up, and asked Rabbi Hodakov to bring it to the Rebbe before he left 770 that night. To our delight, the Rebbe spent a half hour editing it right before leaving for home (Rabbi Hodakov warned us not to hold the Rebbe up at night again).

A more official acknowledgment was on Toldos 5728*, when we wrote that Yitzchak was “blind.” In a later *farbrenge*n, the Rebbe addressed this publicly, saying that such language “*shnaidt mir in di everen*—grates on my ears,” and offered alternate ways of saying it. Although this wasn't quite positive feedback, we were very excited that the Rebbe had acknowledged the *hanachos* that we—a few *bochurim*—had written, and this gave us the incentive and excitement to continue.

As *chozrim*, our job wasn't only on Shabbos. There were occasions where the Rebbe surprised us with a *sicha* or a *maamar*, and often there were no tape recorders on site to preserve it.

After Mincha on Lag Baomer 5729*, for example, the Rebbe suddenly walked over and sat down at his Shabbos place near the *cheder sheni*. I normally stood at that table during Mincha, so when the Rebbe sat down, I was stuck right there next to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe took out his handkerchief and began saying a *maamar* (*Hinei Ma Tov*). Immediately, everyone crushed around the Rebbe's place, and I realized that the table was about to slide into the Rebbe, *chas veshalom*. I stood sideways to block the table with my body, while simultaneously trying to concentrate; I knew there was no tape recorder present, and we would need to conduct a *chazara* from memory.

The commotion got so bad that the Rebbe paused and said he would stop the *maamar* if it didn't stop. Everyone calmed down a bit, and the Rebbe continued. Thankfully, Sholom Yisroel Hodakov arrived in middle with a tape recorder, so the second half of the *maamar* was preserved on tape.

There was another surprise *maamar* just a month earlier.

The shliach in Morocco, Reb Michael Lipsker, brought a *sefer Torah* to the Rebbe as a present from the students in Oholei Yosef Yitzchok of Meknes. The Rebbe received the *sefer Torah* in his room, thanked Reb Michael, and brought it to the *aron*



REB LEIBEL SCHAPIRO STANDS NEXT TO REB YOEL KAHAN AS THE REBBE SAYS A MAAMER, VOV TISHREI 5731. LATER THAT NIGHT RABBI SCHAPIRO WOULD SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF REVIEWING AND TRANSCRIBING THE FARBRENGEN.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 22748

RABBI SCHAPIRO DELIVERS A SHIUR AT THE KINUS TORAH IN 770, 24 TISHREI 5738*.

kodesh in the small *zal*, where *kriah* was about to commence (it was Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5729*).

After davening, the Rebbe instructed that Reb Michoel hold a *farbrenge* and tell over a little bit about Morocco, so he sat down with some *mashke* at the back wall of the *zal* and began a little *farbrenge*. I was taking off my Rashi tefillin near

the door to the *cheder sheni*, when I suddenly see the Rebbe walk in! Rabbi Mentlik was sitting right next to me; I put down my Tefillin and we both raced over to the other side of the *zal* to be near the Rebbe.

The Rebbe walked over to Reb Michoel, sat down right next to him, said *lchaim* and said a *maamar*.

SPREADING THE WEALTH

I was a *bochur* before the Rebbe began *Mivtza Tefillin*. In those days, our main expression in *hafatzas hamaayanos* was teaching *shiurim* in Chassidus to *bochurim* in Litvisher yeshivos. I would give a weekly *shiur* in an old age home in the Lower East Side, for *bochurim* who attended

the adjacent yeshiva, called RJJ. We sometimes had 20 attendants. Many of those *bochurim* came to farbrengens and *yechidus*, and had significant encounters with the Rebbe.

I once repeated the Rebbe's *sicha* about whether *haseibah* at the *seder* is an independent mitzvah, and one of my students wrote to the Rebbe that Reb Velvel Brisker writes a very similar idea. The Rebbe answered him that the *sefer* must have been printed only recently, because otherwise he would have known about it.

When Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin got married in California, a group of us went to participate in the wedding. One evening, as we sat in Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik's home in Los Angeles, Rabbi Hodakov called and asked to speak to one of the *bochurim*. I took the phone, and he asked me when we planned to return. I said we planned to return before Shabbos in case the Rebbe would farbreng, but he suggested that we remain and speak in the shuls of Los Angeles over Shabbos. I argued back that there might be a farbreng, so he asked to speak to Rabbi Raichik.

Soon, Rabbi Raichik came over and informed us that the Rebbe had been on the line, and we were to remain in California. Indeed we stayed and spoke in all the shuls, and made a very nice impression on the city.

Another memory in this regard is from Yud-Tes Kislev 5729*.

That year, a big dinner/farbreng was held in Boston, and the guest speaker was Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik. A group of *bochurim* came from New York to be able to speak to him in learning during the dinner, and indeed, as the official dinner ended, he invited us to sit down with him and farbreng in honor of Yud-Tes Kislev.

We spoke to him about various *inyanim*, especially about the Rebbe's recent *sichos* on Igeres Hateshuvah,

which dealt significantly with Rambam's Hilchos Teshuva. Rabbi Soloveitchik had a special *koch* in those *halachos*, so he enjoyed the conversation and was very impressed by our proficiency in the concepts.

When the Rebbe heard about the encounter, he asked for a detailed report. We sent in a detailed description, and in his response, the Rebbe thanked us and added, "*Bevadai, kimedubar kamah p'amim, shaklu v'taru gam mishelahem b'inyanim hana*"^l (*lo rak chazara mehanidbar b'hisvaadus*)—You surely also discussed your own insights in these matters (not only a review of the talks at the farbreng).."

PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS

The original Chabad custom (until 5736*) was to begin wearing Rabeinu Tam's tefillin when one turned 18 years old, after receiving the Rebbe's approval in *yechidus*.

When I went into *yechidus*, it was still several weeks before the date (as I was going to be on Merkos Shlichus on my birthday), but the Rebbe said I should begin immediately, "*Vos frier*

mit a voch, vos frier mit a tog—a week earlier and a day earlier."

The next year, I told the Rebbe that I had missed a day of Rabeinu Tam soon after that *yechidus*. The Rebbe answered that because it was right at the beginning, it wasn't as bad (probably because I wasn't yet committed to it as a *neder*), and instructed me to study the practical *halachos* of tefillin in Shulchan Aruch and *maamarim* that speak about tefillin.

Another *hora'a* was regarding *semicha*:

When a *bochur* in 770 would turn 20, it was time to consider learning Yoreh Deah for *semicha*, as per the Rebbe's instruction to have *semicha* before marriage. The *hanhala* would periodically give the Rebbe a list of the new 20-year-olds who wanted to begin learning *semicha*, and the Rebbe would usually give his consent.

When I turned 20, my name was included in the list. However, the Rebbe stopped at my name and asked the *hanhala* in jest, "Why does an *eltere bochur* want to learn Yoreh



RABBI SCHAPIRO AT THE YESHIVA GEDOLAH IN MIAMI, FL.

את מי יורה דעה ואת מי יבין שמועה?
גמולי מחלב עתיקי משדים...”

The *possuk* is from Yeshaya where he complains that the (adult) Yidden

are not listening to the words of Hashem. “To whom shall he teach knowledge (*yoreh deah*)? To those just weaned from milk?” In his comment, the Rebbe changed it to a statement

instead of a question, meaning to say that Yoreh Deah *was* for little children.

In the end, the Rebbe said I should wait at least another *zman*, and then he agreed that I should learn it.



25 IVAR 5750, CB-HALBERSTAM VIA JEM 245137

SETTLING DOWN

In Adar 5731*, when I went into *yechidus* with my *kallah*, the Rebbe gave us a very beautiful *bracha*, “*Machen lichtig ba zich un arum zich*—to bring light in your home and your surroundings.”

The Rebbe also instructed me to speak in *nigleh* and Chassidus during my *sheva brachos* in Cleveland.

During my parents-in-law’s *yechidus* before my wedding, my father-in-law asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for a *refuah* from an ailment he was suffering. The Rebbe answered that since he was a *Poilisher*, and there was a Polish custom to ask *chassanim* for *brachos* at the *chupah*, he should do the same.

Indeed, I *bentched* him at the *chupah*, and his situation took a major positive turn.

When we were searching for an apartment, someone offered to rent us a single floor home, and I wrote to the Rebbe about it, describing it as a “home with seven rooms.”

The Rebbe responded, “*Ma ya’aseh im shiv’ah chadarim*—what are you going to do with seven rooms?”

When I found a smaller apartment, the Rebbe agreed that I should rent it, “*B’im ain bedaato liknos bayis*—if you don’t plan on buying a house.”

I understood that the Rebbe wanted me to buy a home (as he often instructed Chassidim during the difficult years of Crown Heights—see Derher, Cheshvan 5776), so we bought a house where we lived until leaving Crown Heights.

LIKUTEI SICHOS

I’ll end off with a final story about the Rebbe’s *sichos*:

Likutei Sichos had been a sporadic thing for many years. They came out in 5718*-19*, then 5722*-23*, and then 5730*-31*.

Over the summer of 5732*, Rabbi Leibel Kaplan, Rabbi Nachman Shapiro and I decided to prepare a few *sichos* (from Bereishis through Vayetzei), and see if the Rebbe would agree to be *magia* them.

At first, we didn’t believe it would be possible for us to write *sichos* on our own. Some time earlier, the Rebbe had instructed Reb Yoel to focus on *Sefer Ha’erkim* and we heard that the Rebbe had mentioned to somebody else that “another person can write the *sichos*,” but we couldn’t fathom how that was possible.

However, we decided to give it a shot. We sent them to the Rebbe, but we didn’t get a response. An entire Tishrei passed, and still nothing. We decided to go by *kos shel bracha* after Simchas Torah together, hoping to bring up the matter again there.

This time, we were in luck. With a big smile, the Rebbe gave us a bottle of *mashke* and said, “This is for Vaad L’hafotzas Sichos.”

We hoped that the Rebbe would send us the *sicha*, but we didn’t receive anything back.

We decided to be more audacious: We re-sent the *sicha* for Bereishis, with a note that we planned on printing



it no matter what, and we asked the Rebbe to edit it. It was a big *chutzpah* on our part, but several hours later the *sicha* came back *mugah*.

Aside for a break in 5735*, Likutei Sichos became a weekly staple for Chassidim until 5752*, and I had the great merit of being a part of it. **T**

1. For a full interview with Rabbi Schapiro and others about Likutei Sichos, see Derher Tammuz 5777.
2. Bava Basra 10a.
3. For the full *sichos* described here, see Toras Menachem 5722 vol. 1 pg. 136.
4. Toras Menachem 5724 vol. 3 pg. 251.
5. Toras Menachem 5728 vol. 1 pg. 37.
6. Toras Menachem 5725 vol. 1 pg. 19.
7. Toras Menachem 5722 vol. 2 pg. 50.
8. Toras Menachem 5724 vol. 2 pg. 79.
9. Toras Menachem 5724 vol. 3 pg. 84.