

לע"נ
הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' אברהם יעקב
ב"ר חיים מרדכי ע"ה
נלב"ע כ"ה תשרי ה'תשנ"ו

ולע"נ זוגתו האשה החשובה
מרת פריידא ראצא
בת הרב יחיאל אפרים פישל ע"ה
נלב"ע ט"ז אדר-שני ה'תשע"ו
תנ"צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י בנם
הרה"ת ר' משה מאיר שמואל
וזוגתו מרת רבקה לאה ומשפחתם
שיחיו
גלוצאווסקי





RABBI SHOLOM BER BUTMAN

The Reunion

The Rebbe's historic visit to Paris in 5707, where he reunited with his mother, Rebbetzin Chana

Winter, 5707*. Communism is dominating the Soviet Union, making it ever-hard for *frum Yidden*, and especially Chassidim, to conduct their lives in a proper Torah manner. Escape was crucial. Following World War II, a means of escape developed: In an attempt to conceal their barbarous actions, Russia allowed Polish citizens to return to their home country, Poland. With the *brachos* of the Friediker Rebbe, many hundreds of Chassidim took the opportunity and successfully obtained forged documents, managing to escape the clutches of the Soviets.¹

Rebbetzin Chana too was trapped in Russia. Thankfully, she too was able to obtain a passport and after a few months, arrived safely in Paris, to the home of a relative, Reb Schneur Zalman Schneerson².

Now, after being separated from his mother for close to 20 years, an opportunity arose for

the Rebbe to reunite with Rebbetzin Chana. Indeed, in late Adar, 5707*, the Rebbe took off from New York and landed in Paris, for a nearly three-month visit.

During this visit, Chassidim were privy to many *farbrengens*, experiences and *giluyim* with the Rebbe, a rarity for the years preceding the *nesius*.

Although many details of this visit were never properly documented, a sizable amount of information has been documented by Chassidim who were there and were *zocheh* to spend time in the Rebbe's presence then.

Rabbi Sholom Ber Butman, nephew of Reb Zalman Schneerson, was a child at the time living in Paris. He resided in the same home as Rebbetzin Chana.

As we mark 75 years since the Rebbe's visit in 5707*, Rabbi Butman graciously shared with **A Chassidisher Derher** his memories of that unique visit.

Arrival in Paris

My family escaped Russia in the beginning of the month of Cheshvan 5707* on the famous train ride together with many other Chassidim. After crossing the Polish border, we traveled to Czechoslovakia, Austria, until finally reaching the displaced-persons (“DP”) camp in Wegscheid, Germany.

We stayed in the DP camp for a few months. On Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we

left the DP camp and began making our way to Paris, France. Out of a large group of *anash* families, spread across several DP camps throughout Germany, we were the first to make our way from the pitiful conditions of the camps, to the “new world” that seemed so distant just a short time ago, epitomized by Paris.

Our miraculous arrival in Paris was credit to the ceaseless and relentless efforts of our uncle (my mother’s brother), Reb Schneur Zalman Schneerson.

Our uncle was an *askan* of the highest order. Originally from Russia, he had moved to Eretz Yisroel for some time. On the Frierdiker Rebbe’s instruction, he moved to Paris, where he was appointed as a *rav* in the community. Throughout World War II, he arranged for many Jewish children to be hidden in secret locations (such as monasteries) and took care of their *ruchniyusdike* needs there as well. After the war, with the help of several other Chassidim, he opened a network of institutions for the surviving children. He had also helped with the rescue of Rebbetzin Chana and her eventual arrival to Paris.

We safely arrived in Paris on a



10 RUE DIEU 75010 PARIS. THE HOME OF REB SCHNEUR ZALMAN SCHNEERSON WHERE REBBETZIN CHANA STAYED THROUGHOUT HER VISIT.



REB SCHNEUR ZALMAN SCHNEERSON AT HIS HOME IN PARIS AFTER THE WAR.

Sunday or Monday; a few days into the month of Nissan 5707*. The Rebbe had arrived in Paris just a few days before our arrival. I don’t remember the exact date of our arrival, but I recall Chassidim saying that the prior night the Rebbe had *farbrenge*d in honor of Beis Nissan, the *yom hilula* of the Rebbe Rashab.

We also heard that on the day of the Rebbe’s arrival, a telegram from the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived at the house of Reb Zalman Schneerson with the words “*Baruch atah b’voecha.*” Plans quickly developed among the Chassidim to greet the Rebbe at the airport. Ultimately however, the Rebbe arrived later that night via taxi to

TIDBITS

Rabbi Butman shared with us several small anecdotes from day-to-day life in the Rebbe’s presence in Paris:

I once overheard a phone conversation between the Rebbe and Reb Isser Kluwgant.⁷ He told the Rebbe that he gives a *shiur* in Tanya beginning from the *haskomos* prefacing the *sefer*. The Rebbe spoke with him about a seemingly puzzling part of the *haskomos*: In the signatures of the “*b’nei hamechaber*” — children of the Alter Rebbe, the author — the Mittlerer Rebbe signs off as the son of the Alter Rebbe and refers to the Alter Rebbe as “*K’dosh Yisroel marana v’rabbana.*” Reb Chaim Avraham signs off the same yet omits

the words “*Kedosh Yisroel,*” whereas Reb Moshe ommits the words “*marana v’rabbana*” as well!⁸

It happened once that the Rebbe was in a deep, quiet discussion with my father in the shul in my uncle’s residence. I don’t remember why, but I somehow ran into the shul in the middle of the conversation. The Rebbe looked at me sharply without saying a word. My father immediately signaled for me to leave.

The Rebbe once sent me to deliver a letter to Reb Shmuel Betzalel Althaus. The Rebbe gave me the envelope when it was still open and told me: “*Oib du vilst, kenstu farklepen*—If you wish you can seal it.” I obviously sealed it immediately.



REB ZALMAN BUTMAN WITH HIS FAMILY IN PARIS. SHOLOM BER BUTMAN IS SEEN ON THE FAR RIGHT.

the house of Reb Zalman. Following the initial reunion with Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe farbrenged with the Chassidim for about an hour. During this farbrengen the Rebbe spoke of Yosef, who had not seen his father for 22 years. While speaking of this, the Rebbe wept.

When we arrived in Paris, we made our way to the home of our uncle, Reb Zalman, with whom we would be staying for the time being. The building was owned and managed by the Rabbinical Council of Paris, an institution founded and managed by my uncle. The building had some historic significance to it as well: In 5696* the Friediker Rebbe visited the building and said a *maamar*³ there.

Rebbetzin Chana was staying in this home as well. In the afternoon, the Rebbe arrived for a visit. Seeing my father, the Rebbe smilingly told him: "It seems that this is Reb Zalman Butman." My father jokingly responded, "It seems that this is the Rebbe's son-in-law." I approached the Rebbe and gave "*shalom*."

The Rebbe asked me: "What are you learning?" I told the Rebbe I was learning the *perek Hazahav* of

Bava Metzia. The Rebbe asked me a question based on the very first line of the *perek*: Is gold *koneh* silver? And is silver *koneh* gold?⁴

The Rebbe took up residence at a first-class hotel on Avenue De L'Opera. I recall that a Chossid was once refused entry into the hotel for not wearing a tie!

Pesach

In those days, kosher wine was sparse in Paris. Many Chassidim would soak raisins to make wine⁵. As Pesach was approaching, my father presented the Rebbe wine he had made out of raisins, with an amount of sugar deemed permissible by the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe declined to use the wine over Pesach (possibly because of the *minhag* of the Rabbeim not to eat sugar on Pesach⁶). Instead, Reb Yankel Lipsker obtained grapes to squeeze into wine for the Rebbe to use.

The Pesach *sedarim* were held around a large table. The Rebbe sat at the head of the table. On his right sat Rebbetzin Chana and the women, and on his left, my father sat followed by the men. As I was one of the youngest participants, I found myself sitting at the end of the table.

The Rebbe's matzos were in a box

PRIMA

After Pesach, a group of Chassidim arrived in Paris from Austria. They were staying at the Prima hotel in the suburbs of Paris. The Rebbe visited them on Lag B'omer and spoke for them.

On the way to the hotel, the Rebbe stopped off to visit a relative, Yitzchak Schneerson.

on a small chair next to his place. The fork and spoon the Rebbe used were tied together with a string as not to mix with the other cutlery.

From Day-to-Day

My uncle's residence had three floors: The first floor was for storage, the middle floor hosted a workspace, his expansive library, offices, a large room for events, an additional large room (where the Rebbe farbrenged before his departure), and a kitchen. The top floor was split into two apartments and a shul.

Rebbetzin Chana stayed in a room on the third floor of the building. Every day, the Rebbe would visit his mother twice.

On Shabbos mornings the Rebbe



THE REBBE AT THE REUNION WITH REBBETZIN CHANA AT THE HOME OF REB SCHNEUR ZALMAN SCHNEERSON, 26 ADAR 5707*.

* 5696-1936, 5707-1947

LAG B'OMER IN THE "PLETZEL"

Rabbi Nochum Aharon Yaakovovitz related:

Following the Rebbe's address in the shul, the congregants requested of the Rebbe to continue on with a farbrengen. He responded: "Today is not a good time, as we find ourselves in the days of *sefiras haomer*." Instead, the Rebbe committed to farbrengen on Lag B'omer.

Indeed, on Lag B'omer, the shul once again filled with people craving to hear the Rebbe's words. The Rebbe arrived and took his place at the head of the table, surrounded by important rabbonim from across the spectrum.

As the end of the farbrengen drew near, the Rebbe spoke for a while about the Friediker Rebbe, lamenting the current situation. Tears welled up in the Rebbe's eyes as he said with emotion: "The Alter Rebbe lived in Liozna, the Mittlerer Rebbe lived in Lubavitch" — the Rebbe listed all the Rabbeim — "they all had Chassidim who were substantial *ovdim* with a deep understanding in Chassidus. My father-in-law however, tore himself away from his personal preoccupations — *yichuda ila'ah* and *yichuda tata'ah*—and teaches children *aleph-beis* in America."

would arrive earlier in the morning to visit Rebbetzin Chana. When the *minyán* would reach *chazaras hashatz*, I would enter to inform the Rebbe. The Rebbe would then take his tallis (he would bring his tallis in a white paper bag on Friday), enter the shul, take off his hat and put on the tallis. The Rebbe would stand by the *mizrach* wall, on the right of the *aron kodesh*. At *krias haTorah*, the Rebbe would stand on the side of the *amud*, facing the Torah, while following along with a *chumash*. He would remain in the shul until after davening, and would then begin davening; word for word out loud.

The Rebbe would receive an *aliyah* every Shabbos. After every *aliyah* the Rebbe would pledge 300 francs to the shul. Several times the Rebbe was asked to speak. I remember once, as the Rebbe was speaking from the *amud*, he burst into tears, covering his face with his tallis.

The Rebbe often spoke at the *shalosh seudos*. I recall once

the Rebbe spoke about the *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos*: "*Rebbi omer eizehu derech yeshara* — What is the right path man should choose for himself?" The Rebbe asked: Why doesn't the *mishnah* use the terminology "*Rebbi Rebbi*," which is generally used when there is no argument on the matter, instead of using the words "*Rebbi omer*" which is principally used in the context of an argument. The Rebbe answered that when a Rebbe says something, the entire world may have an opposing opinion. However, although the entire world may argue with him, what a Rebbe says is nonetheless the true path in *avodas Hashem*.

One Shabbos when we were studying the fifth chapter of *Pirkei Avos*, the Rebbe turned to me with a smile and said: "You too say *Pirkei Avos*?! You must **learn** *Pirkei Avos* as well!" The Rebbe then told me: "Next week I will ask you to repeat the 48 ways the Torah is acquired (discussed in the sixth chapter of *Pirkei Avos*)." Needless to say, I immediately got to work memorizing. Ultimately however, the Rebbe did not ask me further on this.

At the Shabbos meals the Rebbe would sit at the table with our family, at times with the addition of guests (for example: Reb Bentzion Shemtov, who was in Paris at the time). On Shabbos Mevarchim additional Chassidim would join.

At the meals my cousin, Reb Sholom Ber Schneerson, would begin *niggunim*. Once when he was not present, the Rebbe turned to me and said: "Nu! Today you are going to have to sing!"

I had a handkerchief I would use and for some reason, I was obsessed with folding it meticulously. I noticed that whenever I would begin folding the handkerchief the Rebbe would begin looking at my hands with a penetrating gaze. Feeling uncomfortable, I began folding the



THE REBBE LEADS A FARBRENGEN AT THE SHUL, LAG B'OMER 5707*.



A KABBALAS PANIM FOR THE REBBE IN YESHIVAS ACHEI TEMIMIM. (THE REBBE IS NOT SEEN IN THE PICTURE).

handkerchief under the table. Years later I realized that it's possible that the Rebbe had not wanted to embarrass me by telling me aloud that it is forbidden to fold a handkerchief on Shabbos. So the Rebbe attempted to get my attention by staring at me. Clearly, I had not gotten the hint.

Shavuos

Shavuos 5707* occurred on a Sunday and Monday. As I mentioned earlier, kosher wine in Paris was scarce. As such, on the Shabbos before Shavuos, Chassidim made *kiddush* on *mashke*. Naturally, the meal that followed was extremely joyous, and as an indirect result of the festivities, a china plate was accidentally shattered.

On the first day of Shavuos, before *kiddush*, the Rebbe began speaking about the potentially negative effect *mashke* can bring. Following the Rebbe's words, silence reigned in the room. No one dared to make *kiddush* on *mashke* following what the Rebbe had just spoken. When the Rebbe saw that my father was hesitating to make *kiddush*, the Rebbe told him in wonder: "Nu?!" The

Rebbe then explained that he had not prohibited making *kiddush* on *mashke* in the current situation, but rather he had wanted to lay down guidelines in order to maintain order.

On the first night of Shavuos the lights in the shul had been turned off and candles were brought to light up the room, enabling people to recite *Tikkun Leil Shavuos*. The Rebbe recited the *Tikkun* out loud.

After concluding *Tikkun*, the Rebbe set out to leave. The weather outside was extremely hot, yet the Rebbe began putting on a coat on top of his *sirtuk*! My father approached the Rebbe and commented that the weather outside is exceptionally hot. The Rebbe answered simply that he doesn't want to go in the street with just a silk *sirtuk*.⁹

As a young boy, I was unable to hold myself in. I exclaimed: "I see many French men going around in silk garments" (it was in style then to wear such clothing). The Rebbe answered, "But they also wear 'Cotélac' (a hard hat with a brim)". The Rebbe then related that when he was in Vienna with the Frierdiker Rebbe, he entered the Frierdiker

VISITING THE SURVIVING CHILDREN

During the Rebbe's stay, the Rebbe visited the institutions run by my uncle, Reb Zalman. I remember hearing (although I did not take part in the visit), that when the Rebbe visited the Yeshiva Achei Temimim, one of the students asked the Rebbe: "Why is it that when one forgets *Ya'aleh V'yavo* during *birkas hamazon* he makes an additional *bracha*, yet if one forgets *Ya'aleh V'yavo* during davening he does not?" The Rebbe answered that the first three *brachos* of *bentching* are *midoiraisa*. Following them comes another *bracha*, as a *takanas Chazal*. However all 18 *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* are *takanos Chazal* and the *Chachamim* would not add an additional *bracha* to what they had instituted.

The Rebbe asked the students questions as well. One question I remember was to describe a scenario where one does not have to make a *bracha acharona*, even if he ate the *shiur*.

Obviously, being that I wasn't present during the Rebbe's visit, I cannot take responsibility for the Rebbe's words.

Rebbe's room with just a *sirtuk*, and the Frierdiker Rebbe was not happy.

The "Pletzel"

Throughout Paris there were many *Chassidishe* and *heimishe* shuls. Noteworthy was the shul in the "Pletzel" area at Rue des Rosiers 25. The shul was referred to by its address: "25." The attendees of the shul were *Poilisher Chassidim*. In

* 5707-1947

A SHABBOS IN PARIS

Rabbi Nochum Aharon Yaakovovitz related:

It was a Shabbos before Shavuos. On Friday the Rebbe had received a new *sefer Chassidus* (I believe it was the famous *hemshech "Vekacha"* of the Rebbe Maharash). The temperatures on Shabbos were extremely high, bringing to unbearable conditions in the shul. Following Shacharis, the crowd immediately dispersed. The Rebbe however, went to a corner of the shul with the new *sefer*, and remained learning with his *sirtuk* and *gartel* for six to seven hours straight; all in the seemingly unbearable heat!

this shul there was a Yid named Reb Yosef Goldstein who was an alum of Tomchei Temimim in Poland. He would give a *shiur* in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch and Tanya.

They once invited the Rebbe to speak to the community. The day

the Rebbe was scheduled to address the shul, the room filled to capacity with men of all backgrounds filling the shul to its rafters. Important rabbonim, *admorim*, Chassidim and common folk all streamed to hear the Rebbe's words.

When the Rebbe arrived, everyone stood up in their places. The Rebbe was shown to a prestigious place in the *mizrach* of the shul. The Rebbe first davened Mincha with the crowd, and then approached the *bima* to begin speaking. The Rebbe began by inquiring as to what the shul is currently learning.

The crowd responded that they were learning Ein Yaakov. The Rebbe took the *sefer*, opened it for a moment, and began addressing the topic at hand.

For over an hour the Rebbe wove together an elaborate tapestry, drawn from *nigleh*, Chassidus, Kabbalah and *aggadah*, as all the participants listened in amazement. Following the Rebbe's address, he davened Maariv. Following Maariv they asked the Rebbe to speak yet again. The Rebbe initially refused. Yet after much exhorting, he acquiesced. The Rebbe once again asked what the attendees were learning. They responded they were studying *hilchos tefillin* in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch. The Rebbe asked where they were holding, and after they showed the Rebbe the place, the Rebbe began teaching the following two *se'ifim*.

Once again the crowd listened in astonishment as the Rebbe brought down *poskim*, *rishonim* and *acharonim*, and after a lengthy explanation the Rebbe began explaining the topic according to Chassidus as well!

As the Rebbe concluded his second address, the *gabbaim* told the Rebbe that the local *shiur* in Tanya was up to *perek mem-aleph*. The Rebbe began speaking on the *perek* as well and to the amazement of

all those present, the Rebbe drew a connection between the *perek* Tanya discussed, to what he had spoken about earlier in Shulchan Aruch and Ein Yaakov! The enthralled crowd hung on to every word, spellbound!

The Rebbe concluded with a *bracha* that everyone should be *zocheh* to greet Moshiach with their Rebbe, and we will go with our Rebbe — here the Rebbe burst into tears for a moment — *b'meheira b'yomeinu amen*.

I had the privilege of accompanying the Rebbe from the shul to the home of my uncle, to visit Rebbetzin Chana.

Initially, the Rebbe planned on taking a taxi. However due to lack of availability the Rebbe took the Metro train. As we waited in the station the Rebbe said: "You certainly know where the exit is located at our destination. Being that we're waiting anyway, let's try to get as close as possible to the exit." I replied that I didn't know exactly where the exit was located, but going to the middle of the train would make the most sense. To my luck, when we reached our destination, the exit was directly across our train car, in the middle of the station.

"Like a Bar Mitzvah Boy!"

Once, when the Rebbe was honored with reading the *haftarah*, he recited it loudly, in a high-pitched voice. A *Polisher* Chossid (who was accustomed to hearing the *haftarah* read quietly) came over and said: "You read the *haftarah* like a bar mitzvah boy!" The Rebbe responded with a smile: "A bar mitzvah boy is a *groise ma'ala* (a great position to hold)!"

Parting Gifts

On the Shabbos before the Rebbe left, he had with him a part of the Frierdiker Rebbe's diary for us to read. This portion described



"ZIBETZEN" (17 RUE DES ROSIERS), THE HISTORIC CHABAD SHUL WHERE THE REBBE USUALLY DAVENED DURING HIS TIME IN PARIS BEFORE AND AFTER THE WAR.



THE REBBE IS MESADER KIDDUSHIN AT THE WEDDING OF REB YOEL KAHN IN THE YEAR 5714*. REB SHOLOM BER BUTMAN (REB YOEL'S BROTHER IN LAW) IS SEEN ON THE LEFT.

his imprisonment under the Communists¹⁰. The Rebbe warned us sternly not to copy it. He turned to me and said with a smile: "Must you be warned as well not to copy it?" The typewritten, folio sized papers were divided among the Chassidim; when one person finished reading he passed his few pages on to the next. It worked out that throughout Shabbos everyone managed to read through the entire diary.

Before the Rebbe left he distributed gifts to my family members.

To my father the Rebbe gave a Siddur Torah Ohr with a Machzor, two booklets of *Hatomim*, and several pamphlets of *maamarim* and the like that had been published in Poland. To my aunt Sara, as well as to my mother, the Rebbe gifted a set of porcelain dishes. Some of those dishes have stayed with the family until today. To my sister Leah the Rebbe gifted an album of stamps (interestingly, whenever the Rebbe received a letter from the United States during his visit he would give

my sister the stamps). To my cousin, Sholom Ber, the Rebbe gifted a Chumash bound in one volume and the four volumes of *Shulchan Aruch*, all published by Chovev. To me the Rebbe gave a *Sefer Hammamarim* Yiddish from the Frierdiker Rebbe. To my brother Shmuel the Rebbe gave a bike. My younger sister Miriam received an oversized spinning top suitable for her age.

The Rebbe returned to the United States after Shavuot with his mother, Rebbetzin Chana. As per the instructions of the Frierdiker Rebbe, they traveled via boat and not by plane, as the Rebbe did when he came.

"Ich Gedenk Aich!"

Following the Rebbe's departure, my father and the Rebbe continued to exchange letters.

In the first letter written after the Rebbe's return to the United States, the Rebbe writes¹¹ — amongst other things — about the Frierdiker Rebbe's recent Yud-Beis Tammuz *farbrengen*. The Rebbe writes that he mentioned the name of an individual to the Frierdiker Rebbe as my father requested. Then the Rebbe continues: "Obviously, I said that this was your idea, with my intention being that your name should also be mentioned."

In many letters, the Rebbe would conclude: "Can you also be kind to send regards to the *gabbaim* and *mispalelim*,"¹² or a similar note.

Usually the Rebbe would enclose letters printed in the *kuntreisim* being published then of the Frierdiker Rebbe's *maamarim*.

Only years later, on Tuesday, 13 Adar I 5714* did my family finally arrive on the shores of the United States. We got off the boat in the morning, and merited to be received that very night for *yechidus*.

We were the first group the Rebbe received that night, at 8:00 p.m.

The Rebbe received us warmly and asked: "*Kinder, ihr gedenkt mir?* (Children, do you remember me?)" and without waiting for an answer the Rebbe continued, "*Ich gedenk aich!* (I remember you!)"

What a *zechus* we had, to constantly be in the memory of the Rebbe! ❶

1. See *The Great Escape* in this issue for a detailed account.
2. A cousin, a descendant of the Tzemach Tzedek (the son of Harav Menachem Mendel, son of Harav Levi Yitzchack, son of Harav Baruch Shalom, eldest son of the Tzemach Tzedek).
3. *Ani Lidodi* 5696.
4. The Rebbe was asking the young Rabbi Butman on this *halacha* stated in the first *mishnah* of *perek Hazahav*, about when is the exact moment of transaction when exchanging silver and gold.
5. See *Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken* 272 *seif* 7.
6. See *Sefer Hasichos Kayitz* 5700, p. 37. See also *Hamelech Bemisibo* Volume I, p. 307.
7. Shliach of the Frierdiker Rebbe to Australia, and a relative of the Rebbe.
8. See the Rebbe's explanation in *Shiurim B'Sefer HaTanya*. See also *sichas Shabbos Parshas Naso* 5742.
9. This is a practice sourced in Kabbalah that the Rebbe held for many years to come.
10. Later published in *Likkutei Dibburim* (booklets 34, 35, 36).
11. *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 3 p. 209, letter #273.
12. *Ibid.* p. 327 letter #352. Vol. 3 p. 52, letter #443.

Farbrengens during the visit

During the Rebbe's three-month stay in Paris, he farbrenged with the local Chassidim quite a few times. These farbrengens are remembered for their rich flavor and special style; full of unique expressions from *hiskashrus* to the Frierdiker Rebbe.

We present a taste of these farbrengens, mostly culled from the memories of Rabbi Nochum Aharon Yaakovovitz.¹³

Beis Nissan

On Beis Nissan, a farbrengen took place in the shul located in the residence of Reb Zalman Schneerson. The Rebbe began the farbrengen saying: "Since one of the things instituted by the Rebbe Rashab was bringing *neginah* to Chassidim, as well as the establishment of a *kapelye* (ensemble), it would be fitting to start off with a *niggun*."

During this farbrengen the Rebbe explained the term "*zechuso yagein aleinu*" [may his (-the *tzaddik's*) merit protect us] to mean, that what the *tzaddik* accomplished in **refining** the world (an additional definition of *zechus*) — may that merit protect us.¹⁴

As morning drew closer, and it seemed the farbrengen was about to conclude, one of the participants poured some more *l'chaim* for the Rebbe. The Rebbe

commented: "If you wish to tire me out, I surmise you will get tired first." The Rebbe then began to explain the *mishnah* "*Shlosa trissin heim*"¹⁵ in great depth.

Yud-Aleph Nissan

On Yud-Aleph Nissan, several Chassidim were standing in the Schneerson residence, when Rebbetzin Chana suddenly appeared, and said: "Did you know that today is Yud-Aleph Nissan? Yud-Aleph Nissan is my son's birthday." The Chassidim stood silently, not knowing what to respond. "Ask him to farbreng," Rebbetzin Chana said. The Chassidim approached the Rebbe, and requested from him to farbreng. The Rebbe responded: "*Avadeh, a gleiche zach* (Certainly. It's a good idea)."

During the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the idea of a birthday, noting that the first place in Torah where a birthday is discussed is by Pharaoh. The Rebbe connected this to the level of Pharaoh in *kedushah*, and to the idea of *yetzias Mitzrayim*.¹⁶

The Rebbe also spoke about a picture of himself playing chess with the Frierdiker Rebbe. He explained that the doctors had recommended that the Frierdiker Rebbe abstain from involving himself in responsibilities that demand extra concentration, so the Rebbe was summoned to play chess with him. The Rebbe related, that at a certain point the Frierdiker Rebbe presumed that the Rebbe was allowing the Frierdiker Rebbe to win, so the Frierdiker Rebbe asked to play one more round. That game resulted in the Rebbe winning.

Pesach Sheini

The Rebbe spoke at length about "*es iz nishta kein farfallen*,"¹⁷ both according to *nigleh* and Chassidus.

During the farbrengens in Paris, the Rebbe spoke time and again, about the importance of "*foren tzum Rebbe*" — going to the Rebbe. "To travel then to New York was the equivalent of traveling to the moon," related Rabbi Yaakovovitz. "Both the financial barrier and the



THE PHOTO OF THE REBBE AND THE FRIERDIKER REBBE PLAYING CHESS (IN 5697*) THAT THE REBBE SPOKE ABOUT AT THE FARBRENGEN IN PARIS ON 11 NISSAN 5707*.

lack of necessary documents made traveling to the Rebbe extremely difficult. Yet the Rebbe demanded so vigorously from the Chassidim that they must travel to the Rebbe.”

“A *bochur* must be by the Rebbe,” the Rebbe told Reb Refoel Wilschansky, a *bochur* at the time. “Although closeness to the Rebbe is mainly *b’ruchniyus*, we see nonetheless that physical distance still separates, thus, one must be in close physical proximity to the Rebbe as well.”

When the time came for the Rebbe’s bi-daily visit to his mother, the Rebbe ended the *farbrengen* promptly.

Farewell Farbrengen

The final *farbrengen* before the Rebbe’s departure from Paris began at around 8:00 in the evening. The Rebbe began by standing at a podium, as an official event. Then, at around 10:00, when mostly *anash* remained, the Rebbe gave a *klap* on the table and announced: “Now will begin the *Chassidishe farbrengen*!”

The Rebbe spoke many *sichos* with *niggunim* interspersed throughout. Most of what the Rebbe spoke was connected to the names of the participants. For example: The Rebbe spoke of the name Isser (referring to the Chossid Reb Isser Kluwgant), repeating a *maamar chazal* that mentioned איסר. The Rebbe connected the name of Reb Refoel Wilschansky with his work in the European “Lishkah,”¹⁸ and more. The Rebbe also connected each person’s name with his personality; the Chassidim listened in amazement, as the Rebbe’s description matched perfectly with the respective person.

After the Rebbe finished explaining the names of the participants, the crowd began announcing more names for the Rebbe to interpret. Some people began saying their second names as well! The crowd was amazed how the Rebbe’s interpretation matched perfectly to the respective individual, all explained in a simple, concise manner, yet evoking utmost depth.

Unlike the *farbrengens* in later years, when the Rebbe’s tone would vary and *niggunim* would be sung throughout the *farbrengen*, in these Paris *farbrengens* the Rebbe would speak in the same tone for hours non-stop, delivering deep treasures in all parts of Torah, in a way that would enlighten the simplest of men. It was a literal illustration of “*Shechinah medaberes mitoch grono shel Moshe*!”

Rabbi Aharon Morderchai Zilberstrom related: In preparation for this *farbrengen*, Reb Michoel Lipsker had toiled the entire day to obtain food and arrange the event. When the Rebbe arrived at the *farbrengen*, he spoke briefly of how beautiful it is to be able to join together. The Rebbe then turned to Reb Michoel and said: “You deserve a *yasher koach* for your hard work in preparing the *farbrengen*.”



A SERIES OF TELEGRAMS SENT TO REB BINYOMIN GORODETZKY AFTER REBBETZIN CHANA ARRIVED IN PARIS.

During the *farbrengen*, Reb Zalman Butman mustered the courage and told the Rebbe that he had heard from the Rebbe’s father, Harav Levi Yitzchok, “*az er macht besser fun mir* — He [referring to the Rebbe] does better than me.” Silence reigned in the room for a moment. The Rebbe replied: “Nu, parents speak this way about their children.” Reb Zalman responded: “Nu, a son speaks this way of his father as well.”

This *farbrengen*, which lasted for over ten hours, concluded at 8:00 the next morning!

13. Published in the Kfar Chabad magazine 11 Nissan 5767.

14. See Sefer Hasichos 5704, p. 124, et. al.

15. Keilim 24, 1. See Igros Kodesh vol. 2, p. 271.

16. See also Chof Cheshvan 5737, Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 1, p. 225.

17. Hayom Yom, 14 Iyar (Pesach Sheini).

18. Bureau to arrange assistance for refugees who had just escaped the Soviet Union. The Bureau was founded by the Frieddiker Rebbe following the escape of many Chassidim in 5706.