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Shabbos *with the* Rebbe

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



Rabbi Aharon
Blesofsky



Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi
Glitzenstein



Rabbi Hershel
Raskin



Rabbi Asi
Spiegel



Rabbi Shaul
Wilhelm

מוקדש
לחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר
בקשר עם יום הבהיר כ"ח סיון

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת יוסף דוד וזוגתו מרת רבקה
בניהם ובתם
מנחם מענדל, לוי, חנה, ישראל ארלי לייב, דובער שיחיו
שטראקס

Every moment with the Rebbe is special and unique. Indeed, no moment in the Rebbe's presence can be called "regular."

Shabbos is no different. A "regular" Shabbos with the Rebbe is rich with pure and timeless moments that remain etched in the hearts of Chassidim who merited to spend them with the Rebbe. Be it an early morning Shabbos Mevarchim Tehillim, a joyous *Lecha Dodi*, perhaps a Motzei Shabbos Maariv, or the highlight of it all, the Shabbos farbrengen—these regular moments with the Rebbe all hold so much richness and depth.

A Chassidisher Derher sat down with several Chassidim who merited to spend time in 770 for a roundtable discussion about a typical Shabbos with the Rebbe; Rabbi Aharon Blesofsky, Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi Glitzenstein, Rabbi Hershel Raskin, Rabbi Asi Spiegel and Rabbi Shaul Wilhelm.

We must note that this article is a general overview of the standard weekly Shabbos schedule, and does not include the details of the many special events and extraordinary occurrences that took place throughout the years.

Despite the time that has passed since those last "regular" Shabbos moments with the Rebbe, we remain ever confident that very soon we will merit once again to stand at the Rebbe's Shabbos farbrengen, or just to partake in a "regular" Shabbos Shacharis, with the coming of Moshiach now!*

* Much of the material in this article is culled from the kovetz "Shabbos Mite'n Rebbe'n", published by the Vaad Talmidei Hatmimim Haolami, unless otherwise noted.

By: MENDEL ZAKLIKOVSKY

EREV SHABBOS

The atmosphere of Shabbos with the Rebbe begins on Friday afternoon, Erev Shabbos, as the day-to-day hustle and bustle slowly grinds to a halt and the serenity of Shabbos spreads its wings over 770.

In earlier years, the Rebbe spent Shabbos at his home on President Street. On Friday afternoon the Rebbe would visit his home for some time, returning shortly before Shabbos in time for Mincha.

Beginning in 5742*, the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin spent Shabbos in an apartment behind the library next-door to 770, renovated especially for this purpose.

The Rebbetzin would come to the library on Erev Shabbos with one of the *mashabakim*, usually Reb Sholom Ber Gansburg or Reb Chesed Halberstam. Shortly before Shabbos, the Rebbe would walk to the library for a short visit, bringing with him a bottle of wine.¹

The Rebbe entered the library from the main entrance facing Eastern Parkway. In Adar 5746*, a new

entrance was built from the back of the *chatzer*, giving the Rebbe easier access.

Upon returning to 770, which was usually shortly before *licht bentchen*, the Rebbe joined Chassidim for Mincha. The Rebbe would enter the shul dressed in a Shabbos *sirtuk*, and would daven at his Shabbos place, on the south side of the *zal*, next to the door of the *cheder sheini*.²

“Mincha on Erev Shabbos was a special *tefillah*,” Rabbi Yisroel Tzvi Glitzenstein recalls. “During my years in 770, the Rebbe would stand during the entire davening, and during *chazaras hashatz* he would rest his head on his hands and close his eyes for extended periods of time.”

“After the events of Shemini Atzeres 5738*, the Rebbe stopped joining the Chassidim for Mincha on Erev Shabbos,” relates Rabbi Shaul Wilhelm. “In the summer of 5748* the Rebbe once again resumed davening Mincha with the Chassidim, but at the same time as Mincha on a regular day, at 3:15. There was usually



a small crowd during Mincha (as all the *bochurim* were on *mitzaim*), and those who merited to be there remember the special intimate atmosphere.”

After davening the Rebbe would return to his room until Kabbalas Shabbos.

After the Rebbetzin’s *histalkus* on Chof-Beis Shevat 5748*, the Rebbe would light Shabbos candles in his room, using the Rebbetzin’s candlesticks. The Rebbe would light Shabbos candles around 25 minutes before *shekiah*, as was the Rebbetzin’s custom.

KABBALAS SHABBOS

Around an hour after *licht bentchen*, the Rebbe would come to the big shul to daven Kabbalas Shabbos.

“In the mid 5740s*, the Rebbe began entering the shul for Kabbalas Shabbos fifteen minutes earlier than usual,” relates Rabbi Hershel Raskin. “Many of the *balebatim* who would come from home for Kabbalas Shabbos only arrived at 770 towards the end of davening. Around that time we asked the *mazkir* Reb Leibel Groner if there was a reason for this change of schedule. Rabbi Groner answered us that the Rebbe had told him “איך וויל פארענדיקען דאווענען איידער די רעדנערס קומען—I want to finish davening before the talkers come.”

The Rebbe would enter the shul for Kabbalas Shabbos wearing his *gartel* and with a serious expression. To those who wished the Rebbe “*Gut Shabbos*” the Rebbe would simply nod.

“In the 5750s*, 770 would be packed during Kabbalas Shabbos,” relates Rabbi Shaul Wilhelm. “Davening would usually be very lively, and many people would come to witness the Rebbe encouraging the singing of *Lecha Dodi*. I remember one electrifying Kabbalas Shabbos, on Shabbos Bereishis 5751*. It was during a three day Yom Tov and the atmosphere was “wow!” When the Rebbe entered, the shul looked like *hakafos*, and the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing at *Lecha Dodi*.”

“In my days in 770, *Lecha Dodi* wasn’t sung,” relates Rabbi Aharon Blesofsky. “They only began singing it in the mid 5740s*, at the behest of Mr. Zalmon Jaffe. In later years the Rebbe would encourage the singing especially after *Bo’i veshalom*.”

“One particular moment that stands out in my mind,” relates Rabbi Raskin, “was when the Rebbe would turn around by *Bo’i v’shalom*. The Rebbe would turn to his left — without his *siddur* — until he would be facing west. After saying *Bo’i v’shalom* the Rebbe would turn back, until he reached his place. It was a special sight to behold (a ‘*reiche tziyur*’) to see the Rebbe

SHABBOS CANDLES

One Friday afternoon in 5749* (or 5750*), the *mazkirim* realized that they had run out of Shabbos candles. As Shabbos was rapidly approaching, someone ran to Reb Zalman Gurary’s house, which was right next to 770, to get candles from him.

The candles that were procured were long, six hour candles. A few months went by with the Rebbe using these extra long candles each Shabbos. When the box of candles finished, the *mazkirim* purchased standard candles once again. Before lighting Shabbos candles on the first Friday after the standard candles were purchased, the Rebbe asked: “וואו זיינען די אנדערע ליכט?”—Where are the other candles? Obviously, from then on they began purchasing the longer, six hour candles.

facing the crowd in such a fashion.”

In the later years, the Rebbe would come into Kabbalas Shabbos holding various *kovtzim* in his *siddur*. During davening, the Rebbe would look into these different *kovtzim*, especially the weekly *kovtzei ha’oros* published by Oholei Torah and the yeshiva in Morristown.

“In my years the Rebbe would learn the weekly *lik-kut* from the beginning of Kabbalas Shabbos,” relates Rabbi Glitzenstein. “It was a real sight to see the Rebbe learning a *sicha* that he spoke at a *farbrengen* and then edited (at least) twice...”

Usually, the Rebbe would stand from the beginning of Kabbalas Shabbos until *Borchu*.

After davening, the Rebbe would turn to face the crowd and wait for the *gabbai* to make his announcements about *shalom zachors*, Shacharis the next morning, etc. After the announcements, as the Rebbe would leave the shul, the Rebbe would wish Chassidim (starting with Rashag) “*Gut Shabbos*” until he got to his room.

Upon returning to his room, the Rebbe would stay there for a period of time, usually until around eight or ten o’clock.

“After the Rebbe left the shul on Friday night, the

crowd would sit down to learn the weekly *likkut*,” relates Rabbi Spiegel. “Usually, the *likkut* would be printed shortly before Shabbos, and the average *bochur* would only see it once Shabbos started. Although we would begin studying the new *sicha* already at the beginning of Shabbos, the deep and intense study (“*horovanye*”) would begin after Kabbalas Shabbos. That was the “*koch*” on Friday night, *bochurim* would learn *bchavrusa* and toil in the *likkut*.”

GOING HOME

“On Friday nights the *zal* would remain full for several hours,” Rabbi Wilhelm remembers. “Many *bochurim* would leave 770 only after the Rebbe returned to his home (or to the library); the feeling was that we’re not going to make *kiddush* before the Rebbe does.

“In the years when the Rebbe stayed at the library for Shabbos, we would crowd by the windows of the upstairs *zal* to see the Rebbe walk across the *chatzer* to the library.

“One fond memory that I have in this regard is from Rosh Hashanah 5748*. Rosh Hashanah was on Thursday and Friday, and there was a very joyous farbrengen on Friday evening. When the Rebbe left for the library after the farbrengen, the scene was beautiful, almost picturesque. The area in front of the Rebbe was empty, behind the Rebbe was a crowd of *bochurim*, obviously keeping a distance, and then there was a whole load of *bochurim* crowding by the windows of the *zal* to watch the Rebbe. The Rebbe walked to the library in an exceptionally joyous way, encouraging the singing with both of his hands. I was so excited!”

When walking in the street on Shabbos, the Rebbe would wear a coat over his *sirtuk*, even in the summer (presumably due to Kabbalistic explanations. Some say that this *minhag* came as a *hora'ah* from the Friediker Rebbe). Although the Rebbe would walk at a brisk pace during the week, on Shabbos he would walk slower.

In the 5720s*, a practice developed of two *bochurim* following behind the Rebbe, escorting him as he walked home. The two *bochurim* (based on a weekly rotation) would wait in the small *zal* until they would hear the Rebbe leaving, at which point they would begin following at a short distance. The Rebbe would generally not interact with them at all, though at times the Rebbe wished them “*Gut Shabbos*” when they reached his home.

“I vividly remember escorting the Rebbe home on Friday nights,” relates Rabbi Blesofsky. “The Rebbe would continuously walk without stopping or making

detours. If there was a puddle he walked through the puddle, and even when he would cross the street the Rebbe would barely stop for cars!”

For the rest of the *bochurim*, Friday night was not a time to waste. “On Friday nights a *bochur* would have to rest properly,” remembers Rabbi Spiegel. “Otherwise you wouldn’t have *kochos* for the farbrengen the next day!”

Rabbi Wilhelm relates: “In the period after Chof-Beis Shevat, when the Rebbe would stay in his room, I remember occasionally walking by the Rebbe’s room before going to sleep on Friday night and seeing the Shabbos candles flickering through the window.”

SHABBOS MORNING

On Shabbos morning the Rebbe would leave his house for 770 at around 9:30. A pair of *bochurim* would wait a short distance away from the house to escort the Rebbe on his way to 770.

In the first years of the Rebbe’s *nesius*, the Rebbe would walk through the *zal* after arriving. Several times the Rebbe said a surprise *maamar* upon arriving on Shabbos morning; a special surprise for those *bochurim* who were on time for *sefer Chassidus*!

On Shabbos Mevarchim the Rebbe would enter the *shul* for Tehillim at 8:30 a.m. He would usually stand while saying Tehillim, and even the times that he would sit, he would stand up for certain portions.

For many years the Rebbe would use a *Tehillim Yahel Ohr* with commentary from the Tzemach Tzedek. “It was fascinating to watch the Rebbe say Tehillim from the *Yahel Ohr*,” relates Rabbi Blesofsky. “Due to the length of the commentary, many pages in the *sefer* don’t have any words from Tehillim on them at all. As the Rebbe would be reading Tehillim, he would finger through the upcoming pages of commentary until reaching the next page of Tehillim. The Rebbe would do this without looking at any of the pages he was fingering through!”

From Shabbos Mevarchim Av 5745* and on (when the *sefarim* case began), the Rebbe started using the regular Tehillim - *Oholei Yosef Yitzchok*. Some time later, Chassidim prepared for the Rebbe a larger Tehillim, which the Rebbe used from then on.

When the *chazzan* finished Tehillim, the Rebbe would leave the *shul*. If the Rebbe had not finished yet, as was often the case, he would hold his place with a bookmark or his finger before closing the Tehillim.

SHACHARIS

A most memorable part of Shabbos with the Rebbe was definitely Shacharis. Indeed, until Chof-Beis Shevat 5748*, Shabbos was the one opportunity during the week when Chassidim were privileged to daven Shacharis with the Rebbe.

Shacharis would begin at 10:00, and on Shabbos Mevarchim, around a half hour later.

The Rebbe would enter the *shul* wearing a *gartel* and a *tallis* with his siddur and a *Chumash Torah Temimah* in his hands. Starting in 5744*, the Rebbe would enter the *shul* holding enlarged copies of the *haftarah*, and after Chof-Beis Shevat 5748*, he would bring a Tehillim as well.

Until 5738*, the Rebbe would bring a Tanya into the *shul*, and in later years also *kovtzei ha'oros* that were published for that Shabbos. The Rebbe would look into these *kovtzim* until *Baruch She'amar* and throughout *pesukei d'zimrah*. Many times the Rebbe would be seen learning from a *sefer* or saying Tehillim too.

"In my years, there was no singing during davening in 770 (as discussed earlier in regards to *Lecha Dodi*), including *Mimkomach*, *Sim Shalom* and the like," relates Rabbi Blesofsky. "Only in later years, as proposed by Mr. Zalmon Jaffe (with the Rebbe's encouragement), did Chassidim begin singing more."

Only on occasion did the Rebbe stand throughout the entire davening. During *krias haTorah* though, the Rebbe would usually stand (primarily until the events

of Shemini Atzeres 5738*, after which the Rebbe began to sit).

HAFTARAH

A highlight of Shabbos was undoubtedly hearing the Rebbe read the *haftarah*; the Rebbe's holy voice reciting the words of the *novi* in a simple yet soul-penetrating tune still rings clearly in the ears of those who merited to hear it.

Following the tradition of the *nesi'im* throughout the generations, the Rebbe would receive the *aliyah* of *maftir*, already from the first days of his *nesius*.³

Rabbi Hodakov once delivered a message from the Rebbe to Reb Michoel Teitelbaum, the *menahel* of Oholei Torah, that the *bochurim* should be sure to learn the weekly *haftarah* properly, with the *mefarshim*. These instructions, continued Rabbi Hodakov, are especially for those *bochurim* who push to hear the Rebbe read the *haftarah* on Shabbos.⁴

"Every week *bochurim* would push close to the *bima* to hear the Rebbe," relates Rabbi Blesofsky, "If a *bochur* didn't have a spot close to the *bima*, he wouldn't be able to hear the Rebbe's voice. *Baruch Hashem*, I had an excellent spot during the *haftarah*!"

Already during *kaddish* after the seventh *aliyah*, the Rebbe would stand up in his place until the *gabbai's* voice would ring out, calling him up for *maftir*. The Rebbe would take his siddur and Chumash (or enlarged *haftarah* papers in the later years), and walk briskly to



THE REBBE RETURNING FROM THE LIBRARY TO 770 ON EREV SHABBOS, 20 AV 5745, AS CAMPERS FROM GAN YISROEL LINE THE SIDEWALK.

the *bima* at the center of the shul.

After the *maftir aliyah* and *hagbah*, the Rebbe would take his place at the front center of the *bima*, facing east, and open his Chumash to the *haftarah* and his siddur to the *brachos*. (In 5752*, they began including the *brachos* of the *haftarah* in the enlarged copies as well).

Once *gelilah* was completed, a hush would befall the crowd and the Rebbe would begin reading the *brachos* of the *haftarah* in a soft tone. In order not to miss a single note from the Rebbe, Chassidim would not read along in the *haftarah*, but would remain absolutely silent.⁵

In the earlier years, the Rebbe's voice would choke with emotion almost every Shabbos as he read the words of the *haftarah*. As the years progressed and the crowd grew—and especially after the *bima* was moved atop a platform—the tears and emotion in the Rebbe's voice became less apparent, aside from several exceptions on rare occasions.

After the *haftarah*, the Rebbe would return to his place.

MUSAF

"After the *haftarah*, the conclusion of davening would usually pass uneventfully," recalls Rabbi Raskin. "For many years *Hu Elokeinu* was not sung during Musaf, until the Rebbe spoke a sharp *sicha* about how

he shouldn't need to remind Chassidim about basic things, including to sing *Hu Elokeinu*.⁶ From then on *Hu Elokeinu* was sung every week."

After reciting the *yom* Tehillim and concluding davening, the Rebbe would stand in his place, turn to face the crowd, adjust his *tallis* and listen to the *gabbai's* announcements. Only after the *gabbai* would finish, would the Rebbe leave the shul for his room.

"In my years in 770," relates Rabbi Wilhelm, "a regular Shabbos Shacharis would finish around 12:15.



THE REBBE AS CHAZAN

Several times a year, on a *yahrtzeit*, the Rebbe would lead the *tefillos* as a *shliach tzibbur*. Occasionally, these *yahrtzeits* would fall out on Shabbos, and Chassidim would have the great *zechus* of hearing the Rebbe lead the davening in a special Shabbos tune.

"The tune that the Rebbe used on Shabbos was generally very simple," recalls Rabbi Blesofsky. "For those familiar with *neginah*, the Rebbe's tune was Nikolayev style, rooted in the history of the Rebbe's childhood town. Although the Rebbe would add his own twists to these existing tunes. One memorable part of davening was *Lecha Dodi*, the Rebbe would lead the crowd in a simple yet beautiful tune, stanza by stanza."

As noted in the article, there was generally no singing during davening in the early years. When the Rebbe was *chazan*, he rarely sang—or started—any *niggunim* as well.

One of the exceptions was on Shabbos Chof Av 5723*. The Rebbe was *chazan* for Shacharis and he started reciting "*Kel Adon*." Suddenly, when he reached the words "*pe'er v'chavod*," the Rebbe began singing the words to the tune of *niggun Shamil*. The Rebbe continued singing until the end of the *piyut*.

Noteworthy is that the last time the Rebbe was *chazan* on Shabbos (*le'eis ata*), on Shabbos Vov Tishrei 5752*, he led the entire davening, both Friday night and Shabbos day, in a weekday tune.

Shacharis on Shabbos Mevarchim could have finished later, up to around 1:00. On those Shabbosim people would become very anxious, as it would leave less than a half hour between Shacharis and the farbrengen!”

On a Shabbos when there was no farbrengen, the Rebbe would return to his room for a period of time, often until two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and then walk home (or to the library). The *bochurim* would escort the Rebbe home on Shabbos day as well.

“On one particular Shabbos day that I had the *zechus* of escorting the Rebbe, it was raining heavily outside,” recalls Rabbi Glitzenstein. “When the Rebbe came to the doorway of 770 he looked around and, noticing the rain, lifted his coat collar and began walking home. On Shabbos the Rebbe customarily walked slower than usual and this time was no different. I followed behind together with another *bochur*, and when we came near the Rebbe’s house we watched the Rebbe climb the steps from afar.

“We saw the Rebbetzin open both of the front doors for the Rebbe. The Rebbe entered and through the glass doors we noticed the Rebbe shaking off the rain in the front hallway. Suddenly the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin both turned and looked at us for a few seconds that seemed to last an eternity. I will never forget that moment...”

FARBRENGEN

If you ask a Chossid to encapsulate Shabbos with the Rebbe, he will undoubtedly respond with a single pointed answer: the Rebbe’s farbrengen. The farbrengen was both the highlight of Shabbos, and it was also something that weighed on everyone’s minds the entire day; whether it meant scrutinizing the Rebbe’s motions to determine if there would be a farbrengen or scrambling to secure a good spot immediately after Shacharis.

No article can adequately describe the Rebbe’s farbrengens. Farbrengens were the setting at which the Rebbe taught us everything we know, where he addressed the world and revitalized world Jewry. During farbrengens the Rebbe lifted participants to a new world, bringing heaven down to earth in a real and tangible way. This is all in addition to the tremendous amount of history associated with the Rebbe’s farbrengens, spanning many different periods and settings.

Thus, we will present a very general overview, as just a small taste of these timeless moments, without going into too many details.

“The best way to describe the farbrengens on Shabbos with the Rebbe is ‘*gilui Elokus*,’” says Rabbi Raskin.



THE TABLE THE REBBE USED FOR SHABBOS (AT THE WALL OPPOSITE THE REBBE’S DESK) AT WHICH THE REBBE ATE ALL THE SEUDOS ON SHABBOS AFTER THE REBBETZIN’S HISTALKUS.

IN THE PICTURE WE CAN SEE THE REBBETZIN’S CANDLESTICKS, A NIGHT LAMP, EATING UTENSILS AND A THERMOS.

“Whether it was the *sichos*, the *niggunim*, saying *l’chaim* to the Rebbe, or seeing the Rebbe standing up and dancing—we were transplanted to a different world during the farbrengen. In a very literal sense, after the farbrengen it would take me time to land back in reality, *poshut b’gashmiyus*.”

“In my years in 770, Shabbos for a *bochur* was about one thing: to be at the farbrengen,” recalls Rabbi Spiegel. “Being present at the farbrengen was no easy task, it meant concentrating and focusing on the Rebbe’s words for hours straight, all while standing in a physically cramped space; it was a literal *avodah*. I remember many times feeling the need to rest after a farbrengen, as it took a lot of mental strength to be properly present at the Shabbos farbrengen.”

“It’s important to note that the farbrengens on Shabbos were different than the farbrengens during the week,” relates Rabbi Blesofsky. “The farbrengens during the week were more public and official, the Rebbe would speak to the world. At the Shabbos farbrengens there was a smaller crowd and the atmosphere was less formal and more personal; the Rebbe was more ‘with the Chassidim,’ so to speak.”

In the summer of 5705*, while the Frierdiker Rebbe was spending time at a health resort in Morristown, he instructed the Rebbe to begin farbrenging with the Chassidim. From then on, the Rebbe farbrenged every Shabbos Mevarchim throughout the years, with no exception!⁷

Occasionally, the Rebbe would farbreng on other weeks during the month, in honor of a special occasion or a *yoma d’pagra*.

“The farbrengens in the earlier years had a very



THE REBBE PERUSING A SEFER (PRESUMABLY A LIKKUTEI LEVI YITZCHOK) DURING A MOTZEI SHABBOS FARBRENGEN IN 5740.

special tone to them,” relates Rabbi Blesofsky. “The *olam* was smaller, and the atmosphere was more intimate. We would also sing slower *niggunim*; some *niggunim* would be sung regularly every week.”

In addition to the monthly Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengens, there were different *tekufos* in the frequency of the Rebbe’s Shabbos farbrengens throughout the years.

In the year following the *histalkus* of the Rebbe’s mother, Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe farbrenged every week. In the 5730s* and 5740s* as well, there were periods that the Rebbe farbrenged every week. Following the *histalkus* of the Rebbetzin on Chof-Beis Shevat 5748*, the Rebbe began farbrenging every week until Parshas Vayakhel 5752*, the last Shabbos before the events of Chof-Zayin Adar.

One *tekufah* in the Shabbos farbrengens began after the Rebbe had a heart attack on Shemini Atzeres 5738*. From then on, the Rebbe farbrenged on Motzei Shabbos, when a microphone can be used. Although this lasted for about 30 months—until Motzei Shabbos Shemos 5740*—the Rebbe expressed that the Motzei Shabbos farbrengens were an exception due to abnormal circumstances; and when he resumed farbrenging on Shabbos day, he similarly expressed that it was just a return to the regular schedule.

“After Chof-Beis Shevat 5748* the Rebbe moved

to his house,” Rabbi Raskin relates. “Before the first Shabbos, which was a Shabbos Mevarchim, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Piekarski if it was halachically permissible for him to farbreng, as it was still during *shiva*. Rabbi Piekarski answered that if the Rebbe doesn’t farbreng it would be considered ‘*aveilus b’farhesya*’ which is forbidden on Shabbos. Sure enough, the Rebbe came to 770 for Shabbos and held a farbrengen.

“The next few weeks the Rebbe stayed home for Shabbos and there was no farbrengen. The week after *shloshim* was Shabbos Mevarchim Nissan, and there was a farbrengen. The Rebbe continued to farbreng for a few weeks, until Pesach. Those few farbrengens seemed to be an exception to the Rebbe’s general farbrengen schedule, and after Pesach we weren’t sure what the *seder* would be. The Shabbos after Pesach was also a Shabbos Mevarchim (Iyar), so there was obviously a farbrengen, but before the next Shabbos we really didn’t know what to expect.

“Ultimately, the Rebbe farbrenged that week, and continued to farbreng every single week without exception until Shabbos Vayakhel 5752*, the last Shabbos before Chof-Zayin Adar. I remember hearing that the Rebbe told Rabbi Groner: ‘פון יעצט אן ביז משיח, וועט קומען, גייט מען פארבריינגען יעדער שבת, און דאס וועט זיין לעילוי נשמתה’—from now on until Moshiach will come, we will farbreng every Shabbos, *l’ilui nishmas*

the Rebbetzin.

“With the farbrengens becoming weekly, the style of the farbrengens also gradually changed: The Rebbe stopped saying *maamarim*, explaining Rashis and Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, and all-in-all the farbrengens got shorter.

“Also, the weekly farbrengens changed the entire Shabbos atmosphere in 770. Now that there was a guaranteed farbrengen every week, groups began to arrive to spend Shabbos in 770. It became like a Shabbos package—they would be at the farbrengen on Shabbos and receive a dollar on Sunday morning. For Chassidim as well, the new schedule changed their week: Chassidim would almost never leave for Shabbos. Even if someone traveled he would always try to make sure to be back in 770 for the Shabbos farbrengen.

“On Shabbosim when the Rebbe would farbreng, as soon as the Rebbe would leave the shul after davening, pandemonium would erupt and the shul would experience a total makeover. Bleachers would be set up and everyone would be running to and fro trying to grab the best place possible.”

On weeks that no farbrengen was scheduled (in earlier years), different methods were created to determine if the Rebbe would be holding a surprise farbrengen. On many occasions, especially on a Shabbos in close proximity to a special day, the Rebbe would farbreng, often without advance warning before Shabbos.

Both when the farbrengens were held in the small *zal* upstairs and in the large shul downstairs, the Rebbe would sit on the south side facing north, and Chassidim would crowd around below. In the small *zal* three long tables would protrude from the head table where the Rebbe was seated, and in the big *zal*, in addition to the many tables that protruded from the Rebbe’s farbrengen *bima*, thousands more Chassidim would crowd around on bleachers constructed from 770’s benches.

The Rebbe’s chair would be moved from his davening place to the farbrengen *bima*, and his silver *becher* would be rinsed and placed by the Rebbe’s place. A small platter with cake would sit on the Rebbe’s left, and a silver napkin holder would sit somewhere on the table as well. A small wrist watch would also be placed at the Rebbe’s place by Reb Berel Junik (which the Rebbe would glance at occasionally). In earlier years there would be an additional glass cup on the Rebbe’s table, together with a bottle of half-and-half soda (or a pitcher of water).

Reb Meir Harlig was in charge of providing the cake and the wine for the farbrengen, which he would bring to 770 on Erev Shabbos.⁸ The honor of sponsoring the



Read More About the Rebbe’s Farbrengens!

For a general overview of the history of the Rebbe’s farbrengens, the topics discussed at the farbrengens, the various methods Chassidim created to determine if the Rebbe would farbreng, and more, see “*A Taste of Reality*,” A Chassidisher Derher, Tammuz 5778.

For a schematic of the Rebbe’s farbrengens in the large *zal* downstairs, see A Chassidisher Derher, Nissan 5777, pg. 45.

For a detailed overview of the *sichos* discussing Rashi, see “*Revolution in Rashi*,” A Chassidisher Derher, Tishrei 5775 (part one) and Shevat 5775 (part two).

For a detailed overview of the Rebbe’s *biurim* in Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, see “*Interpreting the Depth*,” A Chassidisher Derher, Av 5781.

To read about different topics discussed at farbrengens and their connection to Moshiach, see “*What We’re All About*,” A Chassidisher Derher, Tammuz 5779.

Ultimately, the best way to get a taste of the Rebbe’s farbrengens is by learning them from the original Sichos Kodesh or Toras Menachem.

farbeisin for the *farbrenge* was sold on Shabbos Bereishis, as one of the “mitzvos” customarily auctioned off at the beginning of the year.

Also on the Rebbe’s table were several *sefarim* that the Rebbe would glance in during the *farbrenge*; a Chumash and a Likkutei Levi Yitzchok.

Throughout most of the years, the scheduled time for the *farbrenge*s was at 1:30 p.m. Until the 5730s* the Rebbe would enter the *farbrenge* in silence, and in later years Chassidim began to sing as the Rebbe took his place at the head table.

The Rebbe would enter the *farbrenge* wearing a *gartel* and holding his *siddur*. When the Rebbe reached his place he would sit down, open the *siddur*, clean out the *becher* with a napkin and move the *becher* to the side towards the *sar hamashkim* (Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik, and after his passing in 5748*, Reb Berel Junik). Many times, before passing the *becher* to be filled by the *sar hamashkim*, the Rebbe would pour some wine into the *becher* from a small bottle he brought with him to the *farbrenge*.

As the *sar hamashkim* would fill the Rebbe’s *becher*, the Rebbe would take several pieces of cake from the platter and place it on the table in a napkin.

Until the 5730s* the Rebbe would only make *kiddush* during the *farbrenge* if it was Shabbos Mevarchim. From then on the Rebbe began making *kiddush* at every Shabbos *farbrenge*, in earlier years standing and in later years rising slightly during the *bracha*. Some Chassidim note that in the later few years the Rebbe would make *kiddush* in his room earlier and would recite *seder shalosh seudos* before drinking from the *becher* at the *farbrenge*.

“Everything at the *farbrenge* had a *seder* to it,” relates Rabbi Spiegel. “Right after the Rebbe made *kiddush*, the *niggun* composed on the Rebbe’s *kapitel* would be sung after the first *sicha*.”

“After Chof-Ches Nissan 5751*, and as the Rebbe began speaking more and more about the imminent arrival of Moshiach, Chassidim began singing the *niggun* with the words ‘*Es kumt shoin di geulah*’ as the Rebbe entered the *farbrenge*.”

Throughout the years, the build of the *farbrenge* would vary from week to week. As the years progressed, the *farbrenge*s became more structured: the first two (or three) *sichos* would be about the special lesson learnt from the week and the time of year. Then would be a *maamar*, then questions on Rashi, Likkutei Levi Yitzchok, Pirkei Avos (in the summer), Hilchos Beis Habechira (during the three weeks) and Rambam (after the launch of Takanas HaRambam in 5744*). In



THE REBBE DAVENS MAARIV AT HIS SHTENDER ON THE *FARBRENGE* BIMA, AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE *FARBRENGE* OF MOTZEI SIMCHAS TORAH 5752.

the subsequent *sichos*, the Rebbe would answer these questions.

The weekly *farbrenge*s from 5748* and on consisted of anywhere between two to seven *sichos*, though usually there were around three.

“One highlight of the *farbrenge* was during the later part of the *farbrenge*—the *chalukas hamashke*,” relates Rabbi Blesofsky. “It was a chance for anyone to receive a bottle of *mashke* from the Rebbe for a specific *farbrenge* or a *peulah* that he was organizing.”

“In the earlier years, people would simply approach the Rebbe during the *farbrenge* with a bottle of *mashke* and the Rebbe would pour them some *lchaim* from the bottle. As the years progressed, a *seder* was made that the *mashke* bottle had to be submitted to Rabbi Groner before Shabbos and Rabbi Groner would bring the bottles to the *farbrenge*.”

“In my years, the *mashke* bottles would be kept under the table during the *farbrenge*, and as the *chalukas hamashke* would begin, the bottles would be placed on the table near the Rebbe. Each bottle had a rubber band and a note attached to it with the relevant information. The Rebbe would call up each person, pour some *mashke* into his cup, and the recipient would make an announcement about why he is receiving the bottle of *mashke*. At times the Rebbe would give instructions to distribute the *mashke* in a specific place, etc. This distribution often went on for quite a while!”

MINCHA

In the earlier years, even on a Shabbos when there was a farbrengen, the Rebbe would daven Mincha in the *zal* upstairs. In later years the Rebbe would daven Mincha with the Chassidim downstairs.

Beginning in Adar 5746*, in an effort to make it easier for the Rebbe, his davening *shrender* would be set up on the farbrengen bima, near the Rebbe's chair.

During this *tekufah*, the Rebbe would sometimes take a seat at the farbrengen table during Mincha, facing the crowd. Many Chassidim fondly remember the special *tziyur* of the Rebbe sitting and facing the crowd during davening.

When the farbrengen would finish early, the Rebbe would head home after Mincha and the crowds of Chassidim would accompany him outside, before heading to their own respective homes.

After the farbrengen, many Chassidim would group together to review the farbrengen, in a practice called "*chazara*." Although the central *chazara* would be held on Motzei Shabbos, small groups of Chassidim would begin reviewing the farbrengen right away.

"After the farbrengen," remembers Rabbi Spiegel, "people would return home to grab a bite or to rest until Maariv. Remember, many Chassidim had barely eaten the whole day!"

On a Shabbos when there was no farbrengen, the Rebbe would return to 770 for Mincha about a half hour before *shkiah*.

During the summer months, the Rebbe would stay in his place after Mincha and say Pirkei Avos, either from his siddur or from specially enlarged copies. Several times during the early years of the *nesius* the Rebbe said a *sicha* after Mincha.

"Shabbos afternoon in 770 after a farbrengen (or if there was no farbrengen) was quiet," relates Rabbi Raskin. "Reb Osher Sasonkin would make a seder *niggunim* in the downstairs shul. In later years during the summer weeks, many people would participate in a special *sefer niggunim* and *chazoras dach* led by Reb Yoel Kahn and others.

MOTZEI SHABBOS

Maariv on Motzei Shabbos would take place in the upstairs *zal*, unless there was a big crowd present. The Rebbe would usually enter as soon as Shabbos was over, glance at the clock, and begin Maariv.

The Rebbe would daven this *tefillah* in his usual weekday spot, immediately upon entering the *zal* from

WHERE IS THE HAVDALAH CANDLE?

One Motzei Shabbos in the 5730s* there was no *havdalah* candle, and the *mavdil* skipped the *bracha*. Chassidim were immediately able to tell that the Rebbe wasn't happy.

After the *mavdil* finished drinking the wine, the Rebbe left his *siddur* open on the table and went to his room. Moments later he returned with a *havdalah* candle, one that had been given to him by *anash* of London sometime earlier. The candle was lit and the Chassidim made the *bracha* "*Borei me'orei ha'aish*." Only afterwards did the Rebbe return to his room.

the lobby on the left.

After davening the Rebbe would remain in the *zal* until after *havdalah*, though not being *yotzei* himself from the communal *havdalah*. During *havdalah* he would gaze at the person reciting *havdalah* and answer "*la'Yehudim*," and "*amen*." Only after the *mavdil* would finish reciting the *bracha acharona* and the *gabbai* would finish his announcements would the Rebbe return to his room.

After the communal *havdalah* in the *zal*, the Rebbe would make *havdalah* for the Rebbetzin. After Chof-Beis Shevat the Rebbe would make *havdalah* in his room.

On a Motzei Shabbos seven days after the *molad* the Rebbe would recite *kiddush levana* outside 770, on the service lane. (Occasionally, when the sky was cloudy on Motzei Shabbos, the Rebbe would recite *kiddush levana* later in the week.) ①

1. See *Shabbos at The Library*, Derher Sivan 5776.
2. See *Honor In Place*, Derher Teves 5776
3. See *sichas* Leil Simchas Torah 5715.
4. Techayenu issue 8 pg. 107.
5. See Ketzos Hashulchan, notes to Badei Hashulchan, sec. 85:2.
6. Matos-Masei 5740, Sichos Kodesh vol. 3 pg. 655.
7. See Chabad.org/2849311. Shalshelas Hayachas (Hayom Yom) 5710.
8. See *A Life in Beis Chayenu*, Derher Teves 5777.

TIMELINE

EREV SHABBOS

LEIL SHABBOS

SHABBOS DAY

In later years, the Rebbe kindles Shabbos candles around 25 minutes before *shkiah*.

In earlier years, the Rebbe stays in 770 until 8:00-10:00 pm and then departs for home (or the library). In later years, the Rebbe resides in his room.

The Rebbe receives the *aliyah* of *maftir*, and recites the *haftarah*.

An hour before Shabbos, the Rebbe visits his home, returning to 770 shortly before Shabbos. When the Rebbe and Rebbetzin spend Shabbos in the library, the Rebbe visits the library.

After Kabbalas Shabbos, the Rebbe leaves the shul, wishing Chassidim on his way out "A Gut Shabbos."

The Rebbe arrives in 770 before 10:00, followed by an escort of *bochurim*. On Shabbos Mevarchim the Rebbe arrives at around 8:00.

Until 5738, the Rebbe enters the shul for Mincha a short while before Shabbos. Beginning in 5748, the Rebbe davens Mincha at 3:15.

Chassidim sit down to study the new *likkut* that was published for Shabbos.

On Shabbos Mevarchim, the Rebbe enters the shul for Tehillim at 8:30; usually a smaller crowd is present.

Around an hour after *shkiah* (or a bit earlier, in some years), the Rebbe enters the shul for Kabbalas Shabbos.

A pair of *bochurim* escort the Rebbe to his home, following behind at a distance.

Shacharis begins at 10:00, or around a half hour later on Shabbos Mevarchim.



SHABBOS AFTERNOON

On Shabbosim when there is a farbrengen, the Rebbe enters the shul at 1:30 (or earlier, in the earlier years). The farbrengens vary in length and style; some weeks the farbrengen goes for only two hours and some weeks it can go almost until *shkiah*.

Following Shacharis, the Rebbe returns to his room. On Shabbosim when there is a farbrengen, the shul undergoes a total transformation in preparation for the farbrengen.

On a summer week, if the farbrengen ends early, the Rebbe goes home after the farbrengen (and Mincha), returning to 770 in time for Maariv. During this time, small groups of Chassidim participate in *chazara* of the farbrengen.

On Shabbosim when the Rebbe does not farbreng, the Rebbe stays in his room for several hours, and leaves for home (or to the library) in the mid or late afternoon.

On weeks when there is no farbrengen, the Rebbe returns to 770 before *shkiah* for Mincha.

After the farbrengen the Rebbe davens Mincha. In earlier years the Rebbe davens upstairs with a small crowd. In later years the Rebbe begins davening Mincha downstairs as well. Eventually, the Rebbe begins davening Mincha on the farbrengen *bima* itself.

The Rebbe enters the shul for Maariv promptly when Shabbos is over.

MOTZEI SHABBOS

The Rebbe remains in the *zal* for *havdalah*, and makes *havdalah* himself later.

On weeks when *kiddush levana* is recited, the Rebbe recites *kiddush levana* outside 770.

A large *chazara* takes place in 770 led by a team of *chozrim*. Chassidim interject with comments and corrections and the "*manichim*" (transcribers) jot down notes from the *chazara* to be further transcribed during the week.