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ולזכות הוריה
הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער זזוגתו מרת חיה
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ולזכות אחיותיה ברכה ליפשא, שיינדל,
ואחיה מנחם מענדל שיחיו





RABBI LEIBEL POSNER

SPIRITUAL CHILDREN

Rabbi Leibel Posner shares recollections of the first years of Lubavitch in America, precious moments with the Frierdiker Rebbe, and early interactions with the Rebbe.



I was born on 11 Nissan 5688* in Eretz Yisroel. My father, Reb Sholom Posner, learnt in Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch during the last year-and-a-half that it was open. When it moved to other locations, he traveled along. While he was in Rostov, he got engaged to my mother and they traveled to Eretz Yisroel in about 5685* where they married. They stayed there for a few years and my father worked as a *shochet* and other things, and that is where I was born. Shortly afterwards, in 5690*, at the Frierdiker Rebbe's instructions our family moved to America.

In 5690*, during his visit to the U.S., the Frierdiker Rebbe agreed to see women in *yechidus*. My mother, Mrs. Chaya Posner, took her children, Zalman (age 3) and me (age 2) along to the *yechidus*. Things were very difficult at the time, *parnasa* was tough, and yet, when she was in *yechidus* for a brief moment, she simply asked, “*Voss vet zein mit di kinder?*” What kind of Yidden will these children grow up to be in America?

As my mother used to tell it, “The Frierdiker Rebbe leaned his holy head on his holy arms, then he lifted his holy head and said, ‘*Zei vellen gantz zein*—they will be “whole” – complete.’ He reassured her about our future as Yidden.

Ten years later, in 5700*, when the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived to settle in America permanently, our family was living in Chicago.

I vividly remember the time leading up to the Frierdiker Rebbe's arrival in the early days of World War II, the fear of what would be and the tireless efforts of Chassidim living in America at the time. For example, I recall a meeting that took place in our house on Shemini Atzeres 5700* concerning the rescue efforts. Being that it was a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, one of the Chassidim made a phone call on Yom



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE CIRCA 5690*.

Tov.

It was not like today when it is simple to travel anywhere at any given time. Unfortunately, we were unable to travel to New York to greet the Frierdiker Rebbe, although we knew about every detail and it was the topic of discussion day and night.

I arrived in New York in Cheshvan of 5701* when I was 12 years old, and began learning in Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. Shortly thereafter I merited to enter *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe along with my brother. The Frierdiker Rebbe gave us a *bracha* that we should be successful in our learning.

Warm On The Bus

That same year, when a class for us opened in 770, my brother Zalman and I left Torah Vodaas to learn in Tomchei Temimim. The yeshiva consisted of 20 *bochurim* and two classes, the “younger class” and the “older class.” We learned in the room that later became the Merkos office (*mazkirus*). We were the only *bochurim* from out-of-town.

A few months later, on 11 Nissan 5701*, I became bar mitzvah. *Yechidus* used to take place on Sunday,

Tuesday, and Thursday nights starting at 8:00 p.m., so we arranged to go into *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe on Thursday before our scheduled Sunday departure back home for Pesach.

On that Thursday at 10:00 p.m., Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson told us that since the Frierdiker Rebbe was tired, we should go in for *yechidus* another night. We said that we planned to travel and couldn't go another night. He said, “So you'll go in on Motzei Shabbos.” There wasn't usually *yechidus* on Motzei Shabbos but since Rabbi Simpson said we would go in then, we figured an exception would be made this time.

On Motzei Shabbos, Rabbi Simpson, who lived in Boro Park, did not show up in 770. We waited for a while and then we called him. He said that he was not coming and that we should speak to Reb Shmuel Levitin. We went to Reb Shmuel and told him the situation, and he sent us to the other *mazkir* of the Frierdiker Rebbe. A few minutes later the *mazkir* called us back and told us to go into the Frierdiker Rebbe's room ourselves. “What? To go by ourselves?” we asked. He said, “Yes, just go upstairs and knock on the door.”

In those days the upstairs of 770 wasn't locked the way it is now. My

brother and I had a little argument over who would knock because neither of us had the temerity to knock on the Rebbe's door. Zalman ended up doing it because he was older. The Frierdiker Rebbe was sitting at his desk with a *sefer*. When we entered he gave us a large smile which made us feel more at ease. We walked over to the desk.

Reb Zalman Posner related: The Rebbe asked us, "Mit vos fort ir? - How are you traveling home?" I replied, "By bus." The Rebbe asked how long it would take to get home, and I said twenty-four hours.

Reb Leibel continues: The Frierdiker Rebbe asked us, "S'iz varem afen bus?—Is it warm on the bus?"

We thought maybe we didn't hear right because the Rebbe didn't speak so clearly, so he asked again, "S'iz varem afen bus?" We said yes.

"Vos is vegen davenen?" We said we would daven on the bus.

He asked, "Mit tefillin oichet?" We responded that we would daven on the bus with tefillin.

The Frierdiker Rebbe continued, "Everything must be measured according to the time and place. In the current time and place we are satisfied with you, but you should know that when your father learned in Lubavitch it was *gor andersh* [completely different]."

When he said the word "*gor*" he

stretched out the word for a long time and made a sweeping motion with his hand and head.

"*Ir zolt nit kuken af di kinder fun di street*—You should not look at the children of the street."

[Later when we repeated the *yechidus* to Reb Shmuel Levitin he corrected the word *street* to the Yiddish word "*gass*." We responded that the Frierdiker Rebbe had used the English word "*street*," not "*gass*."]

The Frierdiker Rebbe then said, "You are my children. You are the physical children of your parents and you are my spiritual children." Afterwards we discussed the *seder* of the bar mitzvah celebration, what day to make it on, and so on.

My brother and I would only go home for Pesach, and we'd stay for two or three weeks. During our visit home for Pesach of 5702* we arranged *mesibos Shabbos* and the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions it in a letter dated 12 Nissan 5702*. He also wrote to us to *chazzer* Chassidus in shuls, and that is what we did.

During that Pesach, our father told us to go and get tested in our learning by Rabbi Rubenstein who was the rav of the Bnei Ruven shul in Chicago. I was 14 at the time and my brother Zalman was 15 and a half. We were tested by him and he was very impressed with us.

S'HUT GEHERT FUN MOYL

I remember the Frierdiker Rebbe once sent a message to Reb Zalman Gurary to relay to the talmidim that his father (the Rebbe Rashab) couldn't stand next to someone that "*s'hut gehert fun moyl*" (literally "hearing from the mouth," referring to bad breath). The Rebbe said that bochurim should brush their teeth and if necessary they should rinse their mouths with salt water. He also said that they should be clean and dressed properly.

On another occasion, the Frierdiker Rebbe also told Reb Zalman that when he far-brengs with us, we should say *l'chaim* on tea or on lemonade, and Hashem should help that it will have an effect like saying *l'chaim* on *mashke*.

When the Igros Kodesh of the Frierdiker Rebbe was released years later, I found a letter written to Rabbi Rubenstein dated 12 Nissan saying that he should test us and added: "*ויהנה מהם הנאה גדולה*—and surely you will derive great pleasure from them." At the time, we had no idea that the Frierdiker Rebbe wanted him to test us.

After my family moved to Pittsburgh in 5703*, my brother and I were planning to travel home for Pesach as we had done in previous years. But our teacher, Reb Zalman Gurary, "gave us over the head": "What? You're going home? Moshiach is coming soon and you will never have been by the Rebbe for Pesach?!"

At that time, the campaign of *l'alter l'teshuvah l'alter l'geulah* was in full



RABBI LEBEL POSNER (SECOND TO THE BOTTOM ROW, SECOND FROM THE RIGHT) AS A 14-YEAR-OLD BOCHUR IN 5702* WITH THE STUDENTS IN 770.

swing. The Frieddiker Rebbe was urging Yidden to do *teshuvah* to hasten the imminent *geulah*, excitement and anticipation were in the air. So we wrote a letter home stating that we wanted to stay in New York for Pesach. My father responded, “You want to keep all of the *olam haba* for yourselves? What about your parents? What about *kibud av v’eim*?” So we went home.

When we got home, my father told us another reason he wanted us home. In Pittsburgh there were people who said that Lubavitchers were good *frum* people but they didn’t know how to learn well. My father wanted us to come home to speak to people in Torah so that they would see that Lubavitcher *bochurim* can and do really learn. Later, after seeing the above letter, we understood that this was also what the Frieddiker Rebbe wanted.

At the Frieddiker Rebbe’s table

I don’t remember my first farbrengen with the Frieddiker Rebbe although I have a memory of the farbrengen that took place on Chai Elul 5701* when the Frieddiker Rebbe spoke about the *kol koreh* of *l’alter l’teshuva l’alter l’geulah* for the first time. The Frieddiker Rebbe was *mech-abed* Rabbi Rubenstein, the rabbi of the Bnei Reuven shul in Chicago by asking him to read the *kol koreh*. The farbrengen took place in the upstairs *zal*.

One Shabbos at Mincha during the year of *aveilus* for the Frieddiker Rebbe’s mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, the Frieddiker Rebbe called over the *gabbai* Reb Berel Chaskind and said that the *chazzan* should start to say *kaddish* right after *hagbah* and continue until the *sefer Torah* reaches the *aron kodesh*. The *chazzan* seemed to not fully understand and said *kaddish* quickly.

After Mincha the Frieddiker Rebbe again called over Reb Berel and explained again how it should be done. That is when this *minhag* began.

In the late 5700s*, the *hakafos* on Simchas Torah were held in the Frieddiker Rebbe’s apartment. On Simchas Torah morning, my friend Zelig Sharfstein and I wanted to join *hakafos* there. The stairs opened up to the hallway



A SERIES OF LETTERS FROM THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE TO VARIOUS RABBINIM IN CHICAGO IN THE DAYS BEFORE PESACH 5702*, REGARDING THE “SONS OF REB SHOLOM POSNER”.

which was unlocked but chained shut so we couldn't enter. Just then Reb-betzin Chaya Mushka walked by.

We asked her to let us in and she said, "It's late, almost *kriah*!" When we told her that we had missed *kriah* downstairs, she unlatched the chain and let us in. We had missed *hakafos* but merited to be there for *kriah* and to witness the Frierdiker Rebbe receiving *chosson Bereishis*.

Chabad was very small then and there was always plenty of room in those days. One Friday, when the Frierdiker Rebbe was saying *kaddish* for his mother, he wanted a *minyan* for Mincha early in the afternoon on a Friday. Believe it or not, it was actually a challenge to find a *minyan*.

Once Reb Berel Chaskind asked my brother Zalman and myself to build the Frierdiker Rebbe's sukkah. In order to access the porch where the sukkah would be built we had to walk through the Frierdiker Rebbe's room. So we went to the Frierdiker Rebbe's room and knocked on the door. The Frierdiker Rebbe looked at us questioningly and we pointed to the sukkah porch. After we finished building it, we had to walk through the Frierdiker Rebbe's room again to get out. This time, his face was down towards his desk and he didn't look up at us.

I recall one farbrengen with the Frierdiker Rebbe when the Chassidim were singing the *niggun* "*V'chol karnei resha'im agade'a teromamna karnos tzaddik*." Whenever they got to the part of "...*karnos tzaddik*," there was one man (Rabbi Dovid Stockheimer, father-in-law of Rabbi Mordechai Mentlick, Rabbi Moshe Pinchas Katz and Rabbi Avrohom Ziskind) who would point to the Frierdiker Rebbe. This made the Frierdiker Rebbe laugh.

I am reminded of another time the Frierdiker Rebbe laughed: Once at a farbrengen there was an enormous

THE GENERATIONS OF OLD ARE SUPERIOR

A special porch was built upstairs in 770 for a sukkah for the Frierdiker Rebbe, as the elevator couldn't be used on Yom Tov. (One of the considerations when 770 was purchased was that the building had an elevator for the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was wheelchair-bound.)



The sukkah was small, barely accommodating 10 people, so during farbrengens the *bochurim* would take brief turns being inside and listening.

When it was my turn, the Frierdiker Rebbe was telling a story: When he was a child he attended a farbrengen. At the farbrengen there was a *shochet* who cried out, "Once upon a time there were *shochtim* who were G-d-fearing and *talmidei chachamim*, but who am I?" Then there was a *melamed* who cried out, "Once upon a time there were teachers who were G-d-fearing scholars, but what am I?" And there was an old Chossid sitting there who said that when he was a child he was at a farbrengen where a *shochet* and a *melamed* were crying that they were insignificant in comparison to their predecessors.

At this point the Frierdiker Rebbe burst out laughing. Every generation laments that we are nothing in comparison to previous generations and that nowadays there are no Chassidim left. People have felt that way throughout history, but the truth is we have a shining future and we will keep going and keep growing!

chocolate cake on the table. At the end of the farbrengen the Frierdiker Rebbe told Rabbi Simpson to distribute slices of cake. So Rabbi Simpson sliced a small sliver and put it on a plate. The Frierdiker Rebbe said, "*Tov ayin hu yevorach*—One with a good eye is blessed." In other words, give bigger pieces of cake. So Rabbi Simpson cut a very big piece and offered it to Reb Avraham Pariz, a skinny Chossid who hardly ate at all. The sight of him being offered a huge slice of chocolate cake caused the Rebbe to laugh.

Before Purim 5708*, Rabbi Hoda-kov called me to the office (which he shared at the time with the Rebbe,

later this was the Rebbe's room), and said that the Rebbe wants to send me on a "*shpatzir*." The Rebbe sent me to visit cities in the New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware areas spreading Yiddishkeit. Before I went on this shlichus I was *zoche* to *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe. At the *yechidus* the Frierdiker Rebbe said, "*Bai yenem darf men zehn di maalos un nisht farzen di chesronos*—We must see the *maalos* in others but not overlook the *chesronos*."

"Chassidim say that in the Torah there are various letters, big letters and small letters. We must see the *maalos* of another in big letters and the *chesronos* in small letters. Travel safely."

These are words which a person can live with his entire life. It is the core principle with which we look at another Yid.

I took what was called the “milk train” - the train would stop in every local station. I took with me a sample of everything that Kehos had to sell and it fit into one briefcase. (Imagine nowadays traveling with a sample of everything that Kehos sells!) I traveled through New Jersey and returned to New York for Purim and then traveled through Delaware and Pennsylvania, arriving in Pittsburgh in time for Pesach.

When I returned after Pesach, I entered *yechidus* once again to give a report of what I had done during the trip. The Frierdiker Rebbe asked me what was next. I said that I was learning *shechita*. The Frierdiker Rebbe said: “Do you know how to *shitel a chalef*?” I said yes and he agreed that I should do it.

This was apparently the first trip of its kind, sort of a pilot project. That summer Merkos Shlichus as we know it began, with pairs of *bochurim* going out during the summer.

An Early Connection

The first time that I saw the Rebbe was on the day he came off the boat, Chof-Ches Sivan 5701*. The Frierdiker Rebbe sent a group of prominent Chassidim to welcome the Rebbe, and we (the *bochurim*) waited to greet him in 770. When the car arrived at 770 we ran to greet him. Each of us gave a personal *shalom aleichem*.

After that first time, we didn’t interact with the Rebbe very often. We were careful not to bother him unnecessarily and only turned to him for important matters. One would engage in conversation with the Rebbe in

regards to matters related to Merkos, *mesibos Shabbos*, Shaloh, or other outreach activities, but not arbitrarily.

[As an aside, I will relate this story that happened some years later: It was shortly after the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe and before the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*, when I returned from out of town, I went into the Rebbe’s room. When the Rebbe extended his hand and said “*Shalom aleichem*,” I responded “*Aleichem shalom*” but kept my hands at my sides. The Rebbe extended his hand once again. Again I responded “*Aleichem shalom*,” without extending my hand. The Rebbe smiled and said: “*Yoh, an akshen!*” (I.e., I stubbornly acted as a Chossid does by not shaking the Rebbe’s hand.)]

One of the first things printed by Merkos in the early 5700s* was a *bentcher*. The *bentchers* arrived in a small truck that stopped to unload in the *shalash*, which in those days was an open driveway. In the meantime it started to rain.

One of the *bochurim* who was helping to bring in the boxes, Yitzchok Flohr, had no coat, so the Rebbe told Yitzchok to use his coat. The Rebbe at that time had a light gray gabardine coat and Yitzchok took it off the coat rack and wore it. When we finished schlepping, he hung it back where he had taken it from. The Rebbe told Yitzchok, “*Fundestvegen, a makif darf men hoben an eigeneh*,” which in

simple terms meant, “You ought to get yourself your own coat.” But I think the Rebbe was alluding to something deeper. A person can’t just rely on the Rebbe but must do his own *avodah*. Borrowing *makif*, meaning inspiration from one’s surroundings, is not enough.

I remember once, when the Rebbe entered the *beis midrash* in 770 on a Shabbos, 37 minutes after *shkiah* and wanted to daven Maariv. We were standing around the *bimah* discussing this and I said: “There are three minutes left until the time,” as we used to wait until 40 minute after *shkiah* to daven Maariv after Shabbos. The Rebbe turned to me and said: “*Noch a machmir*—another stringent one.”

Don’t Complain

One day Rabbi Hodakov called me from the *beis midrash* to come into the Merkos office. When I entered, the Rebbe was there with Rabbi Hodakov and Reb Leizer Pinchas Weiler. Reb Leizer Pinchas was a tzedakah collector who would travel around spreading Yiddishkeit. At the time, he was visiting Philadelphia and wanted to arrange a *mesibos Shabbos* there. I was called into the room to be asked to run it.

It was a Thursday night. They



AT A DINNER FOR TOMCHEI TMIMIM ON 7 ADAR II 5703*, THE GABBAI REB BEREL CHASKIND HOLDS THE MICROPHONE FOR THE FRIERDIKER REBBE.

decided to advertise in the Morgen Journal in Philadelphia that there will be a *mesibos Shabbos* at a specific time and location. In the announcement they wrote: "A young rabbi from New York will be coming to run it." I said, "I am not a rabbi, I am a *bochur*. It should say that a *yeshiva bochur* will be coming."

The Rebbe said, "*Oib nit b'po'el iz dos b'ko'ach. Un oib s'iz nit b'ko'ach toig takeh nit.*" (If you're not a rabbi yet, at least you are potentially. And if it's not true in potential either, that's a problem...)

Before I left, I went into Merkos to receive the funds for the trip, and the Rebbe told me to bring back with me a copy of the ad in the Morgen Journal.

When I arrived in Philadelphia, I asked Reb Leizer for a copy of the newspaper ad. When I opened it, I saw that it read: "A young **Reb**bi from New York will be coming".

After Shabbos, I returned to New York and reported to the Rebbe. I said that many children joined, and I showed the Rebbe the ad. When the Rebbe saw it, he laughed and said: "You see, one ought not argue. You did not want the title rabbi, so you became a Rebbe."

One day, our *melamed*, Rabbi Zalman Gurary, decided that it was not dignified for Temimim such as ourselves (ages 12-15) to be playing ball in the *shalash*, the courtyard of 770. So we did other things during recess but did not play ball. All of a sudden, one day, an upstairs window opened and the Rebbetzins were laughing and raining down balls on us. From that day on ball-playing became kosher again in the 770 driveway.

About 40 years passed and I was in Israel with my wife, Tirtza. We were visiting Reb Reuven Dunin in Haifa and while we were there we met Yankel Smith, who learned with us in 770 back then, when we were

bar mitzvah age. He was not from a Chabad family. He told me that when the ban on ball-playing was issued, he decided to leave 770 and go to a different, non-Chabad yeshiva, because he enjoyed ball-playing and was not willing to give it up. He met the Rebbe in the hallway and the Rebbe asked him, "I heard you are leaving yeshiva. Why?" Yankel answered that he was leaving because ball-playing was now forbidden. The next day, the Rebbetzins threw the balls out the window and Yankel Smith decided to remain in the yeshiva.

Chief Rabbi Herzog

In 5709*, Shavuot fell on Friday and Shabbos. That year the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog, was in Crown Heights. He was staying on S. Marks, between New York and Nostrand. He davened at 310 Crown Street, which is now Bais Rivkah but was then the Crown Heights Yeshiva. It was difficult for him to walk back and forth to Crown Street so many times, so he requested of the Rebbe to make a *minyan* Mincha for him at Lubavitch Yeshiva on Bedford and Dean which was much closer to where he was staying.

The problem was that no *bochurim* wanted to go to the minyan. The Frieddiker Rebbe would farbreng on the second day of Shavuot at Mincha time and no bochur wanted to miss the chance that he might be given permission to enter the farbrengen. (It was hard in those days for *bochurim* to get into farbrengens.)

So the Rebbe gave a *pekudah* that no *bochur* would be allowed to attend the Frieddiker Rebbe's farbrengen until Mincha is finished at Lubavitch Yeshiva. We went and arrived early. Before Mincha I *chazzered* the *maamar* that came out for that Shavuot. When



REB LEIBEL (CENTER OF TOP ROW) WITH HIS FAMILY IN PITTSBURGH. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE YEAR 5710* AT THE BEHEST OF THE FRIEDDIKER REBBE WHO REQUESTED THAT FAMILIES OF CHASSIDIM. SEND THEIR PHOTOS

we came to 770, we went upstairs and of course the door to the farbrengen was locked. We waited to try and get in. The Rebbe himself got up from his place between *sichos* to unlock the door and allow entry for *bochurim* who had gone to make that *minyan*.

Afterwards, the Rebbe wanted to hear everything that had happened from beginning to end. I told him that I stopped *chazzered* the *maamar* in the middle when Rabbi Herzog came for Mincha. The Rebbe said that I should have finished it. He also asked me about the *drashah* that Rabbi Herzog gave and I reported all the details. The Rebbe obviously understood that to his father-in-law it was important that Rabbi Herzog be properly respected and helped, and thus it became the Rebbe's priority too.

The Military Officer

In the late 5700s* I had a *chavrusa* with Reb Chaim Friedland. He was the son-in-law of a local businessman named Ben Horowitz. Through Reb Chaim I became acquainted with Ben's son, a young man aged 21 or so. During the war this young man



REB LEIBEL (SEVENTH FROM RIGHT) WITH REB ZALMAN GURARY'S SHIUR IN 770 IN 5702*.

enlisted in the army, and because he was very smart he joined the military intelligence corps. In six months he learned Japanese and climbed the ranks as an officer.

I wanted to bring him closer to Yiddishkeit and so Reb Chaim invited him to his house while I was there. We got to know each other and began to talk regularly. Once, we made up to meet at his home at 8:30 in the evening, and we spoke until 1:30 in the morning.

At one point, I felt that I reached a place where I couldn't continue engaging with him the same way and that I needed to change my approach. So, I went to the Rebbe and told him about my relationship with this individual. I asked that the Rebbe suggest a new approach that I can use.

The Rebbe told me that the strategy I was using was not correct, and instead I should adopt the following attitude.

The difficulty in conveying concepts of faith to another stems from the fact that belief is not something that one can see with his eyes although, specifically today, science allows a perfect illustration for belief in Hashem.

The physics of an atom, for example, shows that the root and existence of every object is energy, and energy is not a substance. The Rebbe ran his hand along the edge of the desk and

said that this appears to us as something solid, a "continuity" (using that word in English). But modern science tells us that there really is more space than matter. Clearly, logic states that specifically things which we can see with the eye are not accurate, and this idea stands—to the point that one who does not believe so is considered to be one that does not speak logic.

"One of the rules of physics is that one can not imagine something which they do not know of its existence. For example," the Rebbe said, "there is an elephant and there is a subway. The elephant is in Africa, and the subway is in New York. One can imagine that the elephant is in the subway because he knows of the existence of each of them. But one who does not know what an elephant is, or what a subway is, cannot imagine."

Later in the conversation, I asked the Rebbe if I could bring this young man to him. The Rebbe agreed. I said I will bring him on condition that I can be in the room during their conversation. The Rebbe agreed to this too.

I suggested to the *bochur* to come meet the Rebbe and he agreed. The conversation lasted three hours. I don't remember exactly what the Rebbe said. The Rebbe spoke in Yiddish and the *bochur* spoke in English. When there was a need I translated. When I would say a word that was not precise, the Rebbe corrected me and said:

"That was not my intent" and would say the correct word.

When the meeting ended and the young man went home, I stood near the Rebbe's door when the Rebbe said to me: "Ah, it has already been so many times that I wanted to bring him to the Rebbe (referring to the Friediker Rebbe) and it didn't work out."

One day, the Rebbe asked me: "What is with that fellow? Has he begun putting on tefillin?" The Rebbe asked since he agreed during the meeting that he will begin to lay tefillin. I replied that I will find out.

I called and the fellow told me "No." When I told the Rebbe, the Rebbe said, "But he promised that he would." "He says that he didn't," I said. "He says that he only committed to thinking about the idea."

Unfortunately the ending of the story is not the brightest. In the summer of 5710* I went home to Pittsburgh and stayed there looking for a job. One day I received a call from Rabbi Hodakov saying that the Rebbe wants me to travel to Los Angeles. In Elul I returned to New York, and the Rebbe told me to depart to Los Angeles on Chai Elul and to work with Reb Shmuel Dovid Raichik.

During that conversation the Rebbe asked me how that young man is doing and I said that I will find out. I went to his house, and his mother told me that he is in Los Angeles. I went back to the Rebbe and said that he is in Los Angeles and because I am traveling there I will make a point to meet him.

Between that time and Chai Elul, I became engaged. When I went to Los Angeles I had a hard time reaching my friend. Eventually I got on a phone call with him and we made up to meet at a certain time and place. When I came there, he was nowhere to be found and I did not manage to meet him during my trip.

One year later, I met his cousin and asked about him. I found out that unfortunately he had disappeared. Only then did I understand why the Rebbe pushed me so much to meet him.

Originally, 770 had a small *minyan* and the *gabbai* was Reb Meir Roth, a *Poilisher Chossid*.

After Reb Berel discussed his questions with the Friediker Rebbe, the Friediker Rebbe asked him if there was anyone else with him who wanted to ask something. Reb Berel said, “Meir Roth is here,” and Meir came in to speak to the Friediker Rebbe. He told the Friediker Rebbe that they had asked his son-in-law the Rebbe to farbreng and he refused. The Friediker Rebbe picked up the tablecloth and uncovered some dollar bills that were on the table. He took three dollars and handed them to Reb Meir, saying, “This is for the *kiddush*. If the *eidem* [son-in-law] will know that I’m giving money for the *kiddush*, he will farbreng.”



Reb Meir kept one dollar himself, gave one to Reb Berel and the third to another person, with the understanding that one of them will sponsor the wine, one will sponsor the *mezonos* and one will sponsor the cutlery and paper goods for a whole year. From then on the Rebbe started to farbreng every Shabbos Mevarchim.

Not every farbrengen was about the *parsha*; sometimes the Rebbe discussed different topics, especially when there were special guests.

One time a world class chess player and local of Crown Heights, Shmuel Reshevsky, attended the Shabbos Mevarchim farbrengen. That week the Rebbe spoke about learning a lesson in *avodas Hashem* from everything in the world, including that which at first glance seems not to be so. “Also from chess we can learn a lesson in

[illegible]

avodas Hashem,” the Rebbe said and continued to explain the details of its significance.

At a farbrengen of Shabbos Mevarchim Tishrei, Reb Nochum Ber Denburg joined. He was an older Chossid and businessman from Montreal. He was a simple Jew and would say a lot of Tehillim. His occupation was in the clothing industry. At that farbrengen the Rebbe spoke about dry cleaning clothing, discussing the entire procedure. After every few steps the Rebbe paused and asked: “Reb Nochum, is this correct?” The Rebbe learned a *hora'a* in *avodas Hashem* from every part.

* 5701-1941, 5705-1945, 5751-1991, 5708-1948

would take *chosson Bereishis* because it is longer. The Rebbe explained the answer at length.

The Histalkus

On Shabbos Yud Shevat 5710* I came to 770 at 8 o'clock in the morning. When I arrived, I saw Reb Sholom Ber Eichorn (a *mashbak* of the Friediker Rebbe) pacing back and forth with a very serious expression on his face. I asked if everything was okay, and I immediately understood what had happened.

Sunday morning was the *levaya*. Beforehand, I went with Reb Bentzion Sacolik and a few *bochurim* to dig the *kever*. We specially dug wide at the bottom and narrow at the top so that Chassidim could stand around during the *kevura*.

After we dug, I went back to 770 for the *levaya* which left 770 at approximately 12:00 p.m. I merited to be one of those who carried the aron from 770 through the crowds to where the car was waiting on Brooklyn Ave. There were four small stools in the vehicle, one at each corner of the aron. The Chassidim sitting on these stools would place their hand under the aron, and in this way “carry” it all the way to the cemetery. Three older Chassidim were seated inside; Reb Shmuel Levitin, Reb Berel Rivkin, and Reb Yisroel Jacobson. The fourth seat was empty. The Rebbe stood there by the open door of the car and sought “*An eltere Chossid*” to come take the fourth seat, but due to the crowding it was impossible for anyone to get through. Suddenly, the Rebbe said to me: “Leibel, go in,” so I sat down.

When we came back to 770, we all tore *kriah* and sat *shiva* in the Friediker Rebbe’s room for half-an-hour.

Wedding

As mentioned before, in Elul 5710* the Rebbe sent me to California. Before I left, the Rebbe told me to bring the just-published Kuntres Chai Elul to California. At that time, I asked the Rebbe to make me a *shliach mitzvah*. The Rebbe replied, “What greater shlichus can there be than to bring a *maamar*?” Still, he gave me two nickels and two dimes. I asked him if I could exchange them for other coins. The Rebbe replied, “But not for coins of lesser value!”

Before departing to California, I became engaged to my wife Tirtza Freimark. After I proposed to Tirtza and she accepted, as we stood under the Williamsburg Bridge together I dropped a nickel into the payphone to call the Rebbe and ask for his bracha.

The following night, we had *yechidus* together and the Rebbe asked: “When two people marry, what is the reason for the great joy? The logical reason is that marriage ensures the continuation of generations. But if that’s so, then a wedding reminds us of our mortality, which is not a happy thought.” The Rebbe quoted a Zohar that says that in heaven each soul is divided into two. Both halves are sent down separately in two different bodies, male and female. At the wedding we rejoice at the reunion of the two halves of one soul.

On Yud Shevat 5711*, when the Rebbe accepted the *nesius*, I was in California on shlichus. The wedding was going to take place at the end of Shevat and I needed to be in New York at least two weeks before the wedding for final preparations. Yud Shevat was three weeks before the wedding and I wanted to come a week earlier to be at the farbrengen, but the Rebbe wanted me to remain in California to farbreng there. I told the Rebbe (during a telephone conversation) that

I needed to come to New York to have a *kapote* made. I wanted to use this as an excuse to come to New York earlier, but the Rebbe saw right through it. He said, “*Nu, vet der shnyder neiyen shneller*—the tailor will just have to sew faster.”

I didn’t argue further. We got married on 30 Shevat 5711* and the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin*. Our wedding was the first place he went (other than to 770 and the Ohel) since the *histalkus* of the Friediker Rebbe a year earlier.

Before the wedding, I went to the Rebbe and asked him to be *mesader kiddushin*. He said that this is up to the kallah’s side. I replied that I was asking on their behalf as well, and he consented. At the *chupah* we asked the Rebbe to say all of the Sheva Brachos as well, which he did, and that became the established practice by all of the chupahs at which the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin*.

The wedding was in Washington Heights. The Rebbe asked to be notified via telephone the moment that he would need to leave to make it on time. The Rebbe was going to take a car service. Obviously, we did not want the Rebbe to travel in a cab, so we arranged with Reb Sholom Ber Goldschmidt to drive the Rebbe. He had a car and would wait at the phone in 770 to hear from us. Half an hour before the *chupah* the Rebbe was notified and Reb Sholom Ber brought him to the hall.

During the *kabbalas panim*, I sat at the head of the table and when the Rebbe entered I stood up. My father said: “Don’t move away!” Of course I listened to my father, but still I was not going to sit right near the Rebbe and I sat at the corner of the table.

In a letter to his brother, Reb Berel Baumgarten a”h shared further about Reb Leibel’s Kabbolas Ponim.

The Rebbe then asked: “Where will

the *chupah* take place? The roof opens or it will be outside?” When one of the family members said that it will be inside, the Rebbe seemed very unsatisfied and said: “The *chupah* will be inside?”

Reb Leibel’s father, Reb Sholom, immediately agreed that the *chupah* should be outside. The *mechutan* argued though; he said that the locals are not used to such things, it is very cold outside and other arguments to justify having it inside. The Rebbe said: “My wedding was also in the winter. The *chupah* was under the sky, and *baruch Hashem* I am happy with the *shidduch*.” When his father-in-law began to argue back again, the *chosson* motioned to him that he should stop.

Reb Eliyahu Simpson then said that it was probably too late to attain the necessary permit. The Rebbe hinted that this was not necessarily the case. Reb Sholom stood up to go and speak with the managers. It was difficult for him to pass through since people had crowded around to hear the Rebbe. After about five minutes Reb Sholom returned saying that everything was in order, and they had even arranged the right canopy and poles. The Rebbe said: “*Halevai* it was so easy to persuade the people with *bechira chofshis* as it was to persuade them.”

After this, the Rebbe asked the *mechutan* where he was from, and he responded that he came from Germany. The Rebbe said: “Germany gave us a lot of Torah, and much *gedulah*.” He then sighed and said: “And a lot of tragedy. The Torah had its effect on many places, in Eretz Yisroel, Babylon, Persia, Germany, France, Poland, Russia, and now in America. Now the world is ready [for the coming of Moshiach].”

Then the Rebbe said: “Since the *histalkus*, I have not left the house of the Frieddiker Rebbe other than to go home and to the Ohel. This is the



THE REBBE CONVERSES WITH REB SHOLOM POSNER AT THE KABBALAS PONIM OF REB LEIBEL POSNER ON 30 SHEVAT 5711.

JEW 286928



THE REBBE UNDER THE CHUPPAH

POSNER FAMILY

first time that I have gone somewhere, for the wedding of your daughter, a *simcha*. Because *simcha* breaks through all boundaries, Hashem should bless us that the *simcha* should break our boundaries, and included in boundaries is the gate around the holy *Tziyun*, and we should celebrate many *simchos*.”

When Reb Leibel went to cover the *kallah* with the veil, the Rebbe went into a *dveikus* and instructed that a *niggun* be sung while he prepared himself in the manner that he would before reciting a *maamar*. However, the *shushvinin* came and walked the *chosson* to the *chupah*. The Rebbe went out with only a *kapote* and *gartel*, and did not wear a coat.

The Rebbe recited the *birchas eirusin*, and after the *kesubah* was read,

the Rebbe recited *sheva brachos*. When the Rebbe came to the words “*Sos tasis vesagel haakora*,” his eyes filled with tears. Then the Rebbe continued in a smooth and beautiful tune, until reaching the words, “*yishama barei Yehuda u’vechutzos Yerushalayim*,” when he paused again as his holy eyes filled with tears.

After the *chupah*, when everyone went back into the hall, the Rebbe spoke again for a while with the *mechutan*.

Thus, Reb Leibel and his wife merited that their wedding was the first one where the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin* after accepting the *nesius*. T

1. The sicha was edited by the Rebbe for the sefer *Yemei Bereishis*, p. 337.