MY FIRST VISIT

Sukkos 5736 by the Rebbe

As told by

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Simchas Torah 5786 – 50 Years

B"H.

SUKKOS 5736

I traveled B'H to the Rebbe for the first time, on the day after Yom Kippur 5736.

My father (sheyichye) and I flew from London with Laker Airways and arrived in New York at about 8pm on the 11th of Tishrei. A number of Lubavitchers flew with us and one of them (Shaya Shtrocks) had his brother Yossel come to the airport to pick him up, and he had room for us too. On the way in, Yossel informed us that the Rebbe had already gone to the Ohel, davened Mincha and Maariv and gone home, so we would not be able to see the Rebbe that day.

We dropped off our suitcases at the Dubravski's, where we were staying, and went to 770 to daven Maariv.

The big Shul downstairs was big and quite different than what I had expected - only the Rebbe's place was familiar to me, from the pictures I had seen. Nevertheless, it was exciting to finally see 770 for the first time.

Outside 770 it was hard for me to see anything. A string of lights, set up for a Chuppah, curbed my visibility. An announcement was made over the loudspeaker: "Reb Yosef Amar iz mechubad mit Brocho Achrito," and I heard the renowned singer, Joe Amar, begin to sing.

The next day, Yud Beis Tishrei, I wanted to go Mikve before seeing the Rebbe for the first time, so at around 2:45, I went to Yankels Mikve (Karastirer). Yankel was there grumbling, "Er Vill Gain Finef mul a Tug in Mikve Darf Ich Im Gaiben Finef Hantecher," (He wants to go to Mikve five times a day so I have to

provide him with five towels!), but he took our money and we were able to go.

Waiting for the Rebbe to come in for Mincha, (in those years, until 5748, the Rebbe would not come out for Shachris on a regular weekday), my friends told me: "the Rebbe has worried about you for a whole night, go stand in a place that the Rebbe can see you." I moved to the front (not the front of the Shul, just where the Rebbe could see me as he was walking in) and as the Rebbe arrived I saw him for the first time; he looked different than any pictures I had seen, his face was serious yet radiant.

The Rebbe went to the front of the Shul and touched the Poroches before going up to his Bima to daven Mincha. I was so happy to have the Zchus of davening with the Rebbe that I davened slowly and carefully. To my embarrassment though, I had not yet finished Shmona Esrei when the Chazan already started his repetition, and I thought; how dare I Daven longer than the Rebbe? (It was the first and last time that ever happened.]

After Mincha concluded the Rebbe descended from his Bima and walked to the Oron Hakodesh to touch the Poroches on his way out. As he turned to his left to leave, the Rebbe gave a glorious smile to Levi Yitzchok Freidin, who was officially photographing the Rebbe that year for the first time. As the Rebbe smiled I noticed the mood changed in 770; everyone seemed to be in good spirits in seeing the Rebbe happy.

While passing the Bima the Rebbe stopped near one of the tables and spoke to someone. Immediately there was a mad scramble as everyone tried to get close to hear what the Rebbe was saying. Within a few moments though, the Rebbe left and I heard people repeating that the Rebbe had asked a bochur (who was photographing him) how much Tanya he knew by heart. (The

Rebbe actually spoke about this eight years later, on Chof Cheshvan 5744.)

That evening, there was Yechidus for guests who had come to the Rebbe - it was the last time there was Yechidus between Yom Kipur and Succos. My father asked Rabbi Binyomin Klein if we could go in to Yechidus as well, to which he retorted: "you just came and you already want Yechidus!" (Years later, I heard that the Minhag by all Rabbeim was that first one heard Torah and then one went in to Yechidus.)

Because of Yechidus, Maariv would be late (usually just before Chatzos at 12:45), so my father did not allow me to stay up that late to daven Maariv with the Rebbe.

Thursday, Yud Gimel Tishrei - Yortzeit of the Rebbe Maharash

Arriving at 770 for the bochrim's Minyan at 9:30, I heard people saying that the Rebbe might not come in time for the Minyan's Krias Hatorah, because after Yechidus (in those years), the Rebbe would usually come at 1pm. The bochrim speculated that since the Rebbe would be going to the Ohel, Lekovod Yud Gimel Tishrei, he would probably come at noon - and they were right.

When the minyan reached Krias Hatorah at 10:00, they waited for a minute or two. It seemed to me that they waited out of respect, not that they actually expected the Rebbe to come then.

Most of the guests who had come benched Gomel in that Minyan, but Yossi Tiefenbrun told me that if I waited, I could bench Gomel in the Rebbe's minyan. So I went out and did not hear Krias Hatorah, so there would be a Minyan who did not yet hear Leining. I then left 770 with my father and went down Kingston Avenue to eat breakfast.

We returned to 770 at noon and went into the Gan Eiden Hatachton for Krias Hatorah with the Rebbe. Realizing that there were too many people though, Rabbi Groner decided to make Krias Hatorah in the small Zal instead.

Someone had a baby daughter, and he was called up 'Bimkom Kohen'. As usual, the Rebbe was called up for Shlishi, after which, those who had to Bench Gomel went up to the Sefer Torah. My cousin Naftali Cohen benched Gomel first and I went up next. Because it was the first time in my life that I was benching Gomel I said it from a Siddur, and, in the middle of the Brocho, I suddenly felt strong eyes staring at me; I looked up and saw the Rebbe looking straight at me.…

I cannot describe the fear and dread that came over me as I met the Rebbe's eyes. The word "Shegmolani" is hard enough to pronounce, and especially in such a situation. I probably repeated the word six or seven times because of my fear of the Rebbe looking at me. Finally, the Rebbe lowered his eyes and I looked back into the Sidur. It was then that I understood the meaning of the words "Vearkevosov Da Leda Nakshan - his knees were knocking together" – my knees were mamash knocking together.

Naftoli Cohen was honored with Hagba. He picked up the Sefer Torah, showed it to the Rebbe, and then started to walk back with the Sefer Torah open in his hands. The Rebbe signaled with his left index finger that he should put the Sefer Torah back onto the Bima, (Yossi T. told me someone from behind gave him a push) and he put the Sefer Torah down.

Later that day, the Rebbe went to the Ohel and only returned after dark. Rabbi Groner, who was in the year of Aveilus for his mother, was Chazzan for Mincha, and afterwards, the Rebbe went to his room and then a short farbrengen was announced.

Yossi Tiefenbrun told me that I could stand next to him during this Farbrengen. He had a good place, at the end of the middle table and right opposite the Rebbe. My father sat near me at the middle table and as the Shul started to fill up, my father quipped: "Well, is it starting to look like the pictures now?"

The famous signal, "shh" was heard, indicating that the Rebbe was coming in. As he arrived at his place and sat down, the Rebbe nodded to Reb Yoel Kahn - who was on his right – to start the Maamor niggun. An elderly man, from a row behind the Rebbe, got up and began conducting the Niggun. I turned to someone next to me and asked who the man was, and was told it was Reb Hendel Liberman (Reb Mendel Futerfas' brother), who always conducted the Nigunim. I remembered hearing about it, and that once he decided to stop conducting and the Rebbe motioned to him to continue.

After the Maamor nigun, we heard the Rebbe's clear voice begin: "Basukos Teishvu Shivas Yomim." [The Maamor was subsequently Mugoh by the Rebbe.]

After the Maamor I was told to say Lechaim to the Rebbe, so I lifted up my cup and I saw the Rebbe nod in my direction. Because I wasn't sure if the Rebbe had nodded to me, I waited, and then the Rebbe nodded again. Still, I wasn't sure and kept waiting. The Rebbe smiled and somehow I felt it was to me. [Of course, everyone turned around to see to whom the Rebbe had smiled.]

During the Farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about going out of town during Chol Hamoed to be Mesameach other Yidden and emphasized that guests from different countries – especially from Eretz Yisroel – should go and show that Yidden are Baal Habayis over the whole world and are therefore comfortable wherever they are.

The Rebbe asked for some Freileche Nigunim to be sung and signaled for people to whistle. After two or three Nigunim, Yossi Tiefenbrun remained standing with his eyes closed, whistling alone (as everyone else had stopped already) with all his Koach, and the Rebbe looked at him and smiled.

Towards the end of the Farbrengen, the Rebbe said that all the Tankisten should get dollars to give out to everyone, so I took the opportunity of going up to the Rebbe. It wasn't easy doing, and when I finally got there, everyone had received dollars, so after the Rebbe gave me dollars and I moved on, an older Bochur told me, I should just take one for myself and give the rest to him.

Then the Rebbe said that, as a Hachono for Succos, we should sing Ki Besimcho, and the Rebbe stood up and clapped. Then he gave the Mezonos to Reb Moshe Yeroslavsky for Hachnosas Orchim and the Rebbe sang Ki Besimcho again and left.

On **Friday Erev Succos**, my father and I went to Tzach office to speak to Rabbi Kastel, to sign up for a place to go for Simchas Beis Hashoeiva as the Rebbe had requested last night. As soon as we walked in, Rabbi Kastel greeted us with: Sholom Aleichem, so you've come to get a place to go to on Succos. I was surprised, but he said, why else would you come here on Erev Yom tov? He put us down on the list to go each night of Chol Hamoed. We subsequently went to Great Neck, Long Island, and other places I do not recall at present.

(One of the nights of Succos, R' Yisroel Shemtov שי' was the driver, and Rabbi Mentlik OBM was also in the car. Rabbi Mentlik said Sholom Aleichem to my father, and by way of apology, he said: Here in 770 we say Sholom Aleichem and Tzeischem Lesholom at the same time…).

On **Yom Tov**, every time the Rebbe came in and out of Davening they would sing, generally the famous Nigun Simcha the Rebbe would start during Ato Horeiso.

In the middle of Maariv (1st night Yom Tov) there was a little bit of a commotion, and I heard people whispering that Meir Friedman fainted. I looked over at the Rebbe at that moment, and I saw the Rebbe had closed his eyes (it was in the middle of Mi Chomocha), in my young mind I thought, the Rebbe is now Davening also for this person who fainted. The next day, Meir Friedman was given Hagbah, and I heard people commenting, they gave Hagbah to the one who fainted last night…

During Shachris, Yossi Tiefenbrun guided me up front, quite close to the Rebbe, I noticed the Rebbe did not sit down the entire Davening. (Later I asked my father if he got a place to sit, and he said he did, but he didn't actually sit, because the Rebbe was standing the entire Davening). When it came close to Krias Hatorah, Yossi said to me, let's go close to the Bima, we'll hear the Rebbe say Haftorah. During Haftorah he lifted me up for a moment, and I was able to see the Rebbe quite close, as he was saying Haftorah.

That afternoon, we came to 770 about 15 minutes before Mincha, and we saw the Rebbe from a distance walking along Eastern Parkway towards 770.

Before Maariv **2nd night Yom Tov**, the Olom began singing Al Hasela, and here came a big surprise. When the Rebbe came in, instead of the singing quietening down and Maariv beginning, the Rebbe put his Siddur down on his Shtender, turned around to the Olom and began clapping vigorously. Everyone began excitedly jumping up and down according to the beat of the Nigun, which continued for a few minutes until the Rebbe turned to Mizrach to begin Maariv. The happiness was evident on everyone's face, and

as Yitzchok Goldstein remarked to me right then: Just like Simchas Torah!

That night as we went back to the Dubravsky's for Seudas Yom Tov, we saw their Succa full to capacity, for Reb Mendel Futerfas' annual Simchas Beis Hashoeiva Farbrengen. At first just the tables were full, but later more and more people came in and there was standing room only for them. Rabbi Leibel Groner also came in, and was offered a seat which he demurred, to which Reb Berel Dubravsky sheyichye retorted: Der Kovod Iz Nit Far Dir (the honor is not for you)! at which point Rabbi Groner immediately sat down.

It was a freileche Farbrengen, which Reb Osher Sosonko commenced by making Kiddush on Mashke, after which Reb Mendel told him, דו דארפסט דאנקן דעם אובערשטן אז דו האסט דער זכות אז דו קענסט מאכן קידוש אויף משקה. (Thank Hashem for the Zchus you can make Kiddush on Mashke, [my father didn't enjoy that comment too much…]).

At some point during the Farbrengen, Reb Mendel mentioned that he saw the Rebbe encouraged the singing of Hu Elokeinu with both hands (usually the Rebbe would signal to sing with one hand). Reb Mendel also sang Ato Bechartonu in Russian.

Rabbi Itche Meir Gourarie mentioned that when he was by the Rebbe before Yom Tov to give the Rebbe some Lulovim, the Rebbe asked him, "why are the guest Bochrim not learning?" The Rebbe added, I would have mentioned this at the farbrengen, but why does the whole world have to know what is happening here.

Sometime during the Farbrengen it started to pour, and everyone quickly Benched and left the Succa, and from then on it rained on and off for most of Succos. Especially during Chol Hamoed, it was hard to eat, everyone dashed in and out of the Succa for a bare

minimum, while it continuously poured, (more of that later IYH).

The next morning 2nd day of Succos, we got up earlyish to Bench Esrog on the Rebbe's Daled Minim, and then joined the Rebbe's Minyan for Davening. I had never seen an Esrog big as the Rebbe's, and it also had a Pitum. When the Rebbe held it, it filled his entire hand and more. After Halel, it was time to say Hoshaanos, someone (probably Dr. Seligson) took the Sefer Torah out of the Oron Hakodesh, and then closed the Poroches, and Rabbi Leibel Groner went over and reopened it.

The Rebbe went first in the circle around the Bima after the Chazan, and then the Rebbe went back to his Bima and faced the Olom, waiting for everyone to finish going around. The Chazan probably did not realize the Rebbe was waiting, and when he was ready, he called out the last Posuk: Lemaan Daas. The Rebbe immediately turned to him, and with his left hand holding the big Esrog, made a questioning gesture. The Chazan immediately stopped, and when the rest of the Olom finished going around the Bima, the Rebbe turned back to face Mizrach, and himself began to sing Hoshioh. The Rebbe nodded his head in rhythm with the song, for a few times, and when the Rebbe stopped, everyone called out the last Posuk Lemaan Daas.

When it was time for Krias Hatorah, I asked Yossi Tiefenbrun if he wants to go near the Bima again, to hear the Rebbe say Haftorah, and he said no, he has a reason he wants to stay near the front. During Krias Hatorah, people at the front noticed the Rebbe was reading a new Sefer with a grey cover very intently, and one or two Israeli Bochrim went as close as they dared to try to see what Sefer it was. One of them was finally able to see, it was Frenkel's Rambam, which had come out not too long before.

When the Rebbe was called up for Maftir, I saw Yossi climb on to

the Rebbe's Bima, and with great joy he showed me a leaf of a Hadas. He told me: during Halel I noticed a leaf fall off the Rebbe's Lulav, so I decided to retrieve it during Maftir. Seeing that, I asked a young boy who was there to look if there is another leaf, the boy told me he was scared to go up, in case the Rebbe would see him, so I looked at the Rebbe, but he was looking at the Haftorah he was reading, so I assured him the Rebbe was not looking, and the boy got me another leaf...

Motzei Yom Tov the Rebbe Davened Maariv upstairs in the small Zal, and after Maariv someone made Havdoloh. I didn't think much of it, until at the end of Havdoloh the person said the Brocho Leisheiv BaSucca, when I realized the person making Havdoloh was outside in the Succa and speaking in to the window, to which my father began laughing, until someone motioned to him to be quiet, because the Rebbe is here.

As mentioned, it rained almost continuously during the entire Chol Hamoed. One (or more) of the days of Chol Hamoed, the line to Bench on the Rebbe's Esrog began downstairs in the big Shul, went up the stairs, through the two hallways, out through the front door and towards the front part of the big Succa, where Rabbi Meir Harlig was standing in a plastic coat, someone had put a garbage bag over the the place he was standing, so he shouldn't get so wet. While we were waiting on line, my father asked me to get him something, and when I came back up to find him, he was in the front hallway, and I saw the Rebbe had just arrived from home, and had stopped in the hallway to give a poor man some Tzedoko, he had one glove on and one glove off, to be able to take out some Tzedoko from his pocket.

The rain was so bothersome, someone had written to the Rebbe asking if it was not a sign that Hashem is displeased with us, as

stated in the Mishna, to which the Rebbe replied: Since the Brocho for Succa had already been said that day, it was a sign that the Farbrengen(s) should take place inside the house, with more tranquility. (Likutei Sichos Vol. 14 p. 433). On Shmini Atzeres, I finally saw the sun again.

Hoshaana Raboh

On the night of Hoshaana Raboh, we went to 770 to say Tehillim with the Rebbe, the Shul was quite full at 1:00 when the Rebbe came in. Before the Rebbe came in, Rabbi Leibel Groner took the microphone, and gave a number of instructions in connection with Hakofos and Simchas Torah.

After Tehillim, they began singing the words of Halelu with the song of Ashreinu, and the Rebbe encouraged the singing. (It was being said, in the name of Rabbi Chodakov, that this song would be sung before the Frierdiker Rebbe when the Frierdiker Rebbe was not in a happy mood, and therefore the song should be put to words now...).

After the Rebbe left, Rabbi Dovid Raskin took the mic wanting to say a few words, but he hesitated, because the Olom was still singing the song the Rebbe had just encouraged. After a few minutes he announced, that some people had suggested, since the Rebbe put great emphasis on going to different places and being Mesameach, surely the same should be done here, and some people went into the big Succa to farbreng. At 5:00 am the Rebbe left 770 to go home, and as the Rebbe was leaving he looked into the Succa and saw the people Farbrenging in the rain, and said: לפום צערא אגרא (according to the pain, so is the reward).

Hoshaana Raboh morning it was quite pushy by Davening, and as my father told me afterwards, he went round the Bima for

Hoshaanos 10 times: 7 like you're supposed to, and another 3 to get out…

After Davening the Rebbe gave out Lekach to those who did not get on Erev Yom Kippur, and because of the rain, the Rebbe gave Lekach next to his room instead of next to his Succa.

Shmini Atzeres

We had been told it was important to grab a place for Hakofos before Yom Tov began, so together with a few friends, we grabbed a place on a bleacher which was closest to the Rebbe's Davening Bima, we were told later, it was the most dangerous place in 770 – between the Russians and the Frenchies…, but we were a little closer to the Russians. While we were waiting for the Rebbe to come into Maariv, a Russian young man entertained us English kids with some amusing stories…

When the Rebbe came in to Maariv, everyone was quiet, and after Rebbe reached his place and put his siddur down, he turned to the Olom and began to sing a Nigun (Zol Shoin Zein Di Geula) without words. The roar of the crowd as everyone joined in the singing was most impressive to me, and I felt how the atmosphere was different, even than a Farbrengen. The Rebbe stood and clapped, encouraging the Nigun, and then Maariv began. After Maariv the Gabai announced that Hakofos would begin at 9:30, and the Rebbe left. Rabbi Blesofsky invited my father to make Kiddush in his Succa, and I joined him. There were two sons of his there, one of them proceeded to make Kiddush on Mashke, while the other chastised him for doing so, saying it's against the Rebbe's Rotzon, to which the first countered that Shmini Atzeres is different. (If I remember correctly, their father refused to get involved in his son's discussion).

At 9:30 the Rebbe entered for Hakofos. (I don't remember if they were singing when the Rebbe came in, but there was definitely excitement in the air. I remember Rabbi Groner standing near the Rebbe's place, before the Rebbe entered, smiling with happiness as he spoke to someone.) The Rebbe was honored with saying the first and last Posuk of Ato Horeiso, and then proceeded to Hakofos. The Rebbe was always honored with the first Sefer Torah of the first and last Hakofoh, and the Rebbe's brother-in-law the Rashag with the second. They both were holding small Sifrei Torah, which is easier to dance. When the Rebbe reached out and put his arm on the Rashag's arm to dance (Lubavitch style), the crowd began singing the famous Hakofos Nigun, it was awesome. After the Rebbe went back to his place for the five middle Hakofos, the Rebbe continued to encourage the singing from there.

Different groups were honored with a Hakofoh, to which they would struggle to reach the Bima in the middle of the Shul.

I heard an announcement: *Iz Men Mechabed Ale Frantzozer Mit A Hakofoh* (all Frenchies are honored with a Hakofoh)... I blinked! One moment they were there, the next moment they were gone! All 200 of them! They landed in the middle, all at once! Near me I see one lone person, minus a hat, minus half his jacket, missing one shoe, he bent down, picked up two Tzitzis from the bench on which he was standing, and put them into his pocket! (I later heard, the whole group landed on top of one Bochur, who had to be given oxygen by Reb Leibel Bistritzky, from the two large green oxygen tanks that were standing ready next to the Bima).

During every Nigun, the Rebbe stepped forward from his Shtender, a few steps towards the middle of his Bima, and from there the Rebbe encouraged the singing. The Hakofos were over around 10:45.

Shmini Atzeres morning, Shachris was at 10:00 as usual, I don't recall anything extraordinary during Davening. My father OH did tell me that during Yizkor he noticed the Rebbe was crying. Today the sun finally appeared, and BH we were able to eat comfortably in the Succa.

Simchas Torah

Simchas Torah night, we came to 770 early to catch a place for the Farbrengen. My father sat me down next to him, at a table directly opposite the Rebbe.

The Rebbe came in, sat down at his place, his Becher was filled and he proceeded to make Kiddush quietly. As the Rebbe concluded making Kiddush, I noticed the Rebbe went further down, and I realized the Rebbe had not actually been sitting during Kiddush, but did not stand up completely, so that everyone would not have to stand.

During the Farbrengen the Rebbe explained some Pesukim of Ato Horeisa, and other Sichos. At one point, the Rebbe asked a Nigun of Sfas Hamedina with words in Sfas Hamedina, be sung. The song "From 770 we go marching out" was begun, but the Rebbe did not react, as if they were not singing, so everyone stopped singing. While people (Bochrim) were thinking what to sing, the Rebbe called out to Chazan Berel Zaltzman: Zaltzman, Zing Epes Oif Rusish (song something in Russian), and he began a song with the words Mi Chabadniki. The Rebbe encouraged the singing by saying his head from right to left.

Now they still had to sing a song in English, so the Rebbe announced: Vu Zainen di Madrichim Fun Di Machnos (where are the camp counselors)? And the Bochrim began "Just one Torah just one Shabbos" (TTTO Yankee doodle). The Rebbe began clapping so

fast, I could hardly say the words (especially, since I was not American, I didn't know the tune, the words I did know), and one of the older Chasidim at the table (who probably did not know either) prompted me, come on, sing! (They were saying, a day or two later, that some guest ladies (wearing trousers) in the Vaiber Shul were singing Yankee doodle…).

After the English song, the Rebbe asked a French song with French words be sing. And even though the Alter Rebbe was against Napoleon and the French, nevertheless now it should be sung. Then the Rebbe looked towards his right, where Abuchatzera was (with a huge hat) at the head of a group of Frenchies, and encouraged him and them, with strong shakes of his head, and they sang the French national anthem.

Next the Rebbe asked they a song in Mamme Loshon (Yiddish), and they sang Zol Shoin Zain Di Geula, and after that the Rebbe requested they sing a song in Loshon Hakodesh, which אם כל השפות (the mother of all languages) and they sung Ein Adir, which the Rebbe encouraged, especially at the end when they repeated the verse מפי קל יבורך ישראל over and over.

At the end of the Farbrengen, Rabbi Mordechai Teleshevsky rose, to announce the order that will be, between Farbrengen and Hakafos. He began with the usual announcement Sha Shtiler! I didn't notice what the Rebbe signaled, but I saw Rabbi Groner gesticulating strongly, telling him to get up onto the table. He did so reluctantly, and wanted to begin announcing, when the Rebbe told him: צום ערשט זאג לחיים (first say Lechaim). Rabbi Teleshevsky said Lechaim, and the Rebbe says answered him with a smile. Then Rabbi Teleshevsky announced again Sha Shtiler, so the Rebbe told him: Zog Drai Mol Azoi Vi Kol Nidrei (say it three times like Kol Nidrei) [Rabbi Teleshevsky was the Chazan for Kol Nidrei]. So

Rabbi Teleshevsky repeated Sha Shtiler three times. Then the Rebbe told him, say it 3 times, each time raising your voice. Nu! Azoi vi Kol Nidrei! So Rabbi Teleshevsky did so. The entire time this was going on, the Rebbe was smiling broadly. After saying Brocho Achrona, the Rebbe began singing the tune of "Ivadyemen Nye Utonim" (without the words), first once by himself, and then a second time and made a motion with his hand that everyone should join, and then the Rebbe left.

About 45 minutes after the Farbrengen, the Rebbe came in for Hakofos. Tonight they sold Atoh Horeiso, and it took about 2 hours until the actual Hakofos began. The Rebbe himself was honored with saying the whole Ato Horeiso the first time, and then the first and last Posuk the second and third time, after which the Rebbe recited the Posuk Uforatzto three times, and everyone repeated each time. During Ato Horeiso, different people went over to talk to the Rebbe.

Again it was an unbelievable sight to see the Rebbe dancing with his brother in law, and then the Rebbe encouraged the singing during the other five Hakafos. Any group that was honored with a Hakofo, also got to start the Nigun. Of course there were the traditional songs which were sung every year, like Al Hasela and Vechol Karnei (and maybe others). What was amazing was how everyone would follow the beat of the Rebbe's hand clapping, both in starting and stopping, and also in tempo. With the song Vechol Karnei, there was one part, Hey Oivov, where the Rebbe would begin clapping very fast, and everyone would be singing / screaming: "Aiy aiy aiy" for about a minute or so… it was very exciting, and very new to a boy who grew up in England. [Just as a by the way, it was chilly outside, so I was wearing a sweater, and BH I did, because where I stood high up on the bleacher, next to the Kingston Vaiber Shul, the AC was blowing very strongly on to me,

until I remembered hearing I could turn it, and I pointed the slats away from me. Of course someone told me I shouldn't close them, because the crowd needs the AC, and I showed him I hadn't closed them, just pointed them in another direction].

At the end of Hakofos, as the Rebbe was leaving I happened to glance away for a moment, when Danny K. screamed to me, look! I looked at the Rebbe who had just got on top of the table, (seemingly he had stepped onto a crate that was underneath), and with a mighty swing of his arm, he jumped off the table on to the floor, (those tables are quite high), and continued encouraging the singing as he went out. His poor brother in law didn't find it so easy, and needed the help of Rabbis Groner and Klein to climb over the table…

After the Rebbe left, people were not in such a rush to leave, even though it was quite late around 3:30 or so, and circles of dancing broke out all over the Shul. I noticed my father dancing, red in the face, he seemed to be very inspired… I joined some dancing too, but I was very interested in what was going on. I noticed what I think were groups of Frenchies, singing "Im Atem Meshamrim Neirot shel Shabat", (it was only a year since Mivtza Neshek had begun). Then I noticed a French Bochur from a Chasidishe family, who said quite a bit of Lechaim, he tried to grab the bottle of 96 that Reb Leibel Bistritzky was holding, but R' Bistritzky held on tight and wouldn't let him. Another Bochur was returning what he had imbibed… and Reb. Leibel Bistritzky held onto him gently yet firmly, then gave him water, and helped him lie down on a bench. The French Bochur who was quite tall, bent down to dance with R' Yisroel Shemtov, who had let down his beard, (I hardly recognized him), it was funny to see them dancing together. The Bochur then sat down next to Rabbi Leibel Groner, and started spilling his feelings, though he kept on confusing Rabbi Leibel Groner with Reb

Dovid Raskin… In the middle of all this my father came running back to 770 to look for me, he had already gone halfway home before he realized I wasn't with him. He later told me, Reb Leibel Bistritzky had given him a taste of the 96 proof…

Simchas Torah morning, we got to Shul a little late.. And we had to catch up Davening, so we came into the Rebbe's Minyan while they were selling Ato Horeiso, which again took a long time. It was quite emptier than last night, and BH I was able to find a place to stand quite easily. In the middle of Ato Horeiso, I think the Rebbe was saying a Posuk, Reb Osher Sasonkin appeared, with his Talis over his Kasket, and singing loud one of his favorite Charitonow Nigunim… Immediately a Bochur slapped his hand over his mouth, and proceeded to escort him out of the Shul. Reb Osher tried to struggle a little, but to no avail.

After Ato Horeiso was over, the Rebbe was given a small Sefer Torah, and he proceeded through the pathway of tables to the dancing area. BH I was able, quite easily, to reach forward and touch the Sefer Torah while the Rebbe was holding it. This time, when the Rebbe danced with the Rashag, it was different, that you could mostly only see the Rebbe's Talis, and hardly see his face, though the Rebbe was making motions with his head to encourage the singing.

After the Hakofo, was Krias Hatorah. In those years, everyone would crowd round the Bima, and try to catch the Baal Kore's attention, so he would be called up. I tried, but being too short and too young, I was not noticed, but I decided to join the Aliya anyway, after kissing the Talis that was flying around, after having touched the Sefer Torah.

I went back towards the front, and I noticed on the Rebbe's Davening Bima, a boy of around 15 or 16 years old, wearing a Talis

on his shoulders, he must have been a Sefardi, and the Rebbe motioned to him with his finger he should go to the Bima and get an Aliya. It was strange to hear the Frierdike Rebbe being called up, as well as hearing the Rebbe's full name. When the Rebbe went up for Choson Breishis, I noticed he was holding the Atzei Chaim with his Talis, and he left enough space between him and the Baal Kore, enough for another person to stand there. After Davening was over we rushed home to eat, because before Shkia there would be another Farbrengen.

After eating we Davened Mincha in the Ksav Sofer Shul. (My father commented to me that these people probably had fixed places at the Farbrengen, so they were not in a rush to get to 770, and they were taking their time to start Davening).

When we got to 770 it was quite late, not long before the Rebbe entered (I think the Farbrengen started around 6:45), and my father was not sure that he would be able to get me a place next to him, so he suggested I should try to get a place by myself. I went up onto the Farbrengen Bima, and I managed to get on to a bench behind, to the Rebbe's right.

Standing behind the Rebbe, I was able to notice a number of details which I would not have seen from the front. After washing his hands, the Rebbe wiped his hands on a large colorful towel, and wiped meticulously between his fingers until they were all completely dry. He then put the towel over the right armrest of his chair, where it remained for the entire duration of the Farbrengen. I noticed that even though the Rebbe would keep his hands under the table while he spoke, nevertheless he gesticulated with his hands the entire time. For instance, as he was speaking about Eretz Yisroel, he mentioned that they surrounded Chevron, and as he said this, he made a surrounding motion with the index finger of

his right hand, under the table. I also noticed that he placed his left foot behind his right foot, and that was there for the entire of the Farbrengen. During the singing he would tap with his left foot, as it was situated behind his right foot.

The Farbrengen was quite Freilech, the Rebbe motioned to a number of people to say Lechaim, and also encouraged the singing quite a lot. The Rebbe motioned to R' Yisroel Kok of Kfar Chabad to say Lechaim a number of times. Then the Rebbe took a plastic cup, filled about a quarter of the cup with water from his glass pitcher, and handed it to Rabbi Leibel Groner to fill with wine, and then Rabbi Groner handed it to R' Yisroel Kok. After drinking this cup, R' Yisroel Kok stood up and said loudly to the Rebbe: there are Yidden in Eretz Yisroel who say they will not put on Tefilin, until the Lubavitcher Rebbe will come to Eretz Yisroel… The Rebbe reacted with a big smile, and motioned with his hand that R' Yisroel should sit down. There was a person to my right, on another bench to whom the Rebbe motioned he should say Lechaim. After he said Lechaim once, the Rebbe motioned with two fingers that he should say Lechaim a second time. After the second time, the Rebbe motioned with three fingers he should say Lechaim a third time. After that the Rebbe motioned with four fingers, he should say Lechaim a fourth time.

At one point the Rebbe was clapping very strongly encouraging the singing, and in the middle of clapping he quickly straightened his tie and continued clapping. A minute later the Rebbe was nodding Lechaim to his right, and he raised himself upwards for a moment while turning to his left to answer Lechaim on that side. (This reminded me of the story of Shovuos 5715 which we had heard from Rabbi Sudak not too long ago).

Around 12:35 the Rebbe gave the sign to sing the Maamar Nigun,

and said a Maamar beginning with the words Bayom Hashmini Atzeres Tihye Lochem. After another short Sicha, and singing the Alter Rebbe's Nigun, (during the Alter Rebbe's Nigun, the Rebbe leaned his forehead on to his hand while his elbow was on the table – they say it's very unusual for the Rebbe to do that), the Rebbe proceeded to Bench. After putting the cup down (after Uvenei Yerushalayim) the Rebbe wiped his hands for quite a while, on the colorful towel which was hanging over his right armrest. After benching, the Rebbe moved towards the wall where he Davened Maariv. Then the Rebbe made Havdoloh for everyone. After Havdoloh the Rebbe gave everyone Kos Shel Brocho. I went over to get Kos Shel Brocho, which I immediately drank. Afterwards I felt bad why I didn't save it but I really did not have anything to save it in. I did notice some people had small medicine bottles into which they saved the wine they got from the Rebbe. My father also went over for Kos Shel Brocho, and because he wanted to get Kos Shel Brocho for a few people, he took an empty bottle of wine so the Rebbe should pour into there. I think he asked for three people so the Rebbe poured in four times into the bottle. I later heard the Rebbe would sometimes pour four times, corresponding to the four letters of the Shem Havaye. After we got Kos Shel Brocho we did not stay, but we went home. The next day during the afternoon the traditional Kinus Torah took place. After the Kinus Torah, Rabbi Mentlik OH gave out pieces of the Chala and some water, which the Rebbe had given him to give out to anyone who participated in the Kinus Torah.

During Chol Hamoed, the Rebbe notified that on Isru Chag he would be going to the Ohel. This notification changed plans for a number of people. Our tickets were booked for the day after Isru Chag, and there was absolutely no way we could change it, if we would have stayed we would have forfeited the entire ticket. My father asked Rabbi Chodakov during Chol Hamoed if there was

any way we could have Yechidus before we left, but this now seemed impossible. (On a day the Rebbe went to the Ohel, there was no Yechidus). When the Rebbe came back from the Ohel, he Davened Mincha and Maariv and then went home. Some people were speculating, if there is a chance for a Farbrengen because the Rebbe had been to the Ohel on such an unusual date, so after Maariv the Rebbe sent out a directive, that anyone who would have stayed for a Farbrengen, should now stay for the Kinus Torah…

The next day some people suggested to my father that we should stand outside the Rebbe's room (this was not usually done in those years, and only became customary later), and maybe the Rebbe would bless us, or even give us a coin, as had happened in the past. After Mincha, my father and I, and one of two others who also have to travel that day, stood outside the Rebbe's room and waited for him to come upstairs. As soon as the Rebbe entered the hallway, Rabbi Groner whispered something to the Rebbe, meanwhile in the doorway of the Zal, some Bochrim climbed on top of some benches to see what would happen.

When the Rebbe came up to us, the Rebbe stopped and said: איר זאלט פאָרן בשעה טובה ומוצלחת, זאל זיין א הצלחה'דיקע יאָר און א תורה'דיקע יאָר. (You should travel in a good and auspicious time, it should be a successful year and a Torah year). My father said, when the Rebbe said Hatzlochodike Yor, the Rebbe looked him in the eyes. I noticed, when the Rebbe said A Torah'dike Yor, the Rebbe looked straight at me.

This is the sum-up of my first visit to the Rebbe that I merited 50 years ago לאויוש"ט, may these Brochos and experiences continue to inspire us, and may we be Zoche to be reunited with the Rebbe very soon, with coming of Moshiach right Now.