

ENCOUNTER ONE

5729

It is now eleven years since I have been personally visiting the Rebbe Shlita, mostly with Roselyn, my wife.

I very well recall our very first private appointment with the Rebbe - our first 'Yechidus.' We asked Rabbi Chodakov, the Rebbe's personal secretary at what time we were due to see the Rebbe. He replied "Chatzos - midnight!" To an Englishman eight or even nine o'clock at night was very late for a conference, but midnight?! It seemed absolutely crazy.

Today, when I am offered an appointment at 2.00am I reply, "why am I so lucky to have such an early Yechidus?"

This being my first visit to '770,' I had plenty of advisers on protocol. Our dear friend, Rabbi Shemtov was our chief sponsor. I took particular note of his instructions such as, "don't shake hands with the Rebbe; don't sit down," and so forth.

On entering the Rebbe's Sanctum we were amazed to see the Rebbe coming forward to greet us, his hands outstretched.

"Oh," says I. "I am sorry, but Rabbi Shemtov said that I must not shake hands with the Rebbe."

"Never mind," answered the Rebbe smiling and with a lovely twinkle in his eye, "we won't tell Rabbi Shemtov!" He shook hands with me and then invited me to sit down.

"Oh dear, no" says I, horrified. "Rabbi Shem Tov told me that on no account must I sit down."

"You may sit down the first three times," said the Rebbe.

So I did - thinking to myself - it had taken me forty years to get to America, I don't expect I will ever come a second time, never mind a third time! Well now, Boruch Hashem, I have already crossed the Atlantic fifteen times and seen the Rebbe privately over forty times. So - needless to say - I now stand in the Rebbe's presence, and do not shake hands.

Oh - I am a real Chossid now, and am well and truly at home at '770' where people trample on my feet with relish, and push me with their hard elbows. Mind you, I am becoming quite expert myself at this. On the other hand, it is an amazing and unbelievable sight to see the hall jammed TIGHT with people and not an inch to spare. Then the lookout gives the signal that the Rebbe is on his way. A sudden hush falls on the assembly and as if by magic there is formed a large clearway through which the Rebbe passes on his way either to the platform during a Farbrengen or to his own special place during a Shul Service.

Incidentally, the Rebbe never keeps his Congregation waiting at K'rias Shema or at the Amidah. After the services on Shabbos and Yom Tov the Rebbe wishes everyone, "Good Shabbos" or "Good Yom Tov" very quietly. A pathway is again miraculously cleared for him and I normally start a nigun so that the Rebbe is 'played out' with a happy tune.

To my eternal surprise and astonishment, but also gratification, the Rebbe has continued to bestow upon me much honour. Once I was tempted to ask him why he treated me so remarkably well, when in fact I had done nothing much to merit such favours. The Rebbe replied that it was not for the work that I had done, but for what I was going to do.

Many years later, I asked the Rebbe again why I was so favoured and recalled what he had said to me on a previous occasion - that it was for the work I was going to do and not for what I had done. The Rebbe smiled and said, "the same applies today."

This year we arrived at '770' from England, at about 7.00pm. Rabbi Chodakov informed me that the Rebbe would be addressing the Annual N'Shei Chabad (Lubavitch Women's) Conference in about half an hour's time in the large hall, after which it was proposed that the women and girls from out of town only would form a line past the Rebbe, who was sitting alone at the table on the platform

flanked by Rabbi Chodakov and Rabbi Groner. They would be allowed just a couple of moments to speak to the Rebbe.

Rabbi Chodakov suggested that after the file-past of women and girls had finished, we could then 'tag along' and say Shalom Aleichem to the Rebbe.

We rushed 'like mad' to get to the hall before 8.00pm. There were about 500 women and girls present and ALL were anxious to speak to the Rebbe. So, although only the out-of-town ladies were supposed to file past, all the 500 insisted upon joining the queue. Instead of waiting an hour for our turn, we waited seven hours until 3.00am! We enjoyed an unforgettable experience.

We were the last in the line. There were now three girls ahead of us. Each would hand to the Rebbe a letter - four or five pages long, which took the Rebbe four or five minutes to read. Then, without any hesitation, he replied to the girl, "You must continue to do this; or that." "Stay in College." "Rabbi Chodakov will loan you \$250 to finish the course." "Pay back when you are able." "Go to camp this year and take this group and that course." She was tremendously pleased and uplifted when she moved away. The girl immediately before us burst into tears - with joy, she said - on going to see the Rebbe for the first time.

Then it was our turn. "Why did you not come the day before Shabbos and have another Farbrengen?" (I later told Berel Futerfas that the Rebbe made a joke about coming for Shabbos Mevorchim. He said that the Rebbe does not make jokes and is now preparing for next year's flight to arrive in time for that Shabbos.)

The Rebbe asked me whether we Farbreng in Manchester. "Yes, every Shabbos Mevorchim" said I.

"Oh, you will have to change your name to Kfar Chabad!"

We were staying at the flat above the Kolel and adjoining the back of '770' in Union Street. This belongs to the Rebbe. "Where are you staying?" he asked us.

"Union Street."

"Ah good - Shalom, Unity."

Once more I was invited to join the Rebbe for the Yomim Tovim meals together with about a dozen or so other men. Obviously this is a very great honour. Enjoyable, dignified, but oh, so tense! After all, we are dining with our own Royalty. The Rebbe makes Kiddush, quietly. We all follow suit, each one in a subdued voice. Then we all wash. The Rebbe is served first, of course, but he will not commence eating until after everyone is seated and served; even the boys who were acting as waiters. I once asked a boy to exchange the portion of tongue I was given, for chicken. It took about seven minutes. It seemed like seven hours - all waiting for me to be served.

The Rebbe eats very slowly indeed, and sees to it that he finishes the course last. No one would eat after the Rebbe has put down his cutlery. Therefore he is always watching and ensuring that all have eaten before he lays down his knife and fork. There is no talking or even whispering during the actual courses, which consist of the usual Yom Tov dishes - fish, soup, chicken or meat, fruit, then drinks.

At the Yechidus subsequent to the first meal I had ever attended, I told the Rebbe that I was very disappointed with the atmosphere at the dinner. So quiet. So still. So tense. I said, "You should tell the Chassidim to make the Rebbe 'freilech.'"

He agreed and said, "Yes - **you** must tell the Chassidim to make the Rebbe freilech."

So now I feel a special responsibility for trying, in between the courses, to enliven the proceedings, singing Nigunim and telling a joke or two - all with the Rebbe's permission, of course. It is a bit embarrassing to have to force oneself to break the uncanny silence. Although the Rebbe speaks to me normally in perfect English, he insists that I speak in Yiddish so that all will understand.

I am always given the honour of bentsching at one of the four meals. This means that I have to drink the whole goblet of wine and make a Brocha Achrona whilst everyone remains seated and quiet.

At the meals this year B.H. the atmosphere was happy - like a family party! The Rebbe asked me to sing a Nigun after the first course on the first night of Yom Tov. I did so, but when the Rebbe asked me to sing another one I had to be diplomatic. Fetter Hendel normally led the Nigunim and I did not want to hurt his feelings. The previous year, the Rebbe asked him to sing a tune which he did, but without the words. The Rebbe said "No words?! - Give him a Siddur!" So Fetter Hendel started again, once more without words, although he had a Siddur in his hands.

During the meal we discussed Manchester problems and I recounted what I had said to Rabbi S. who asked me what was the problem about putting up a building. All one needed was money.

"Oh," said I, "anybody could put up a building with money. The cleverness is to do it without money."

"So, how did you manage?" asked Rabbi R.

"With the Rebbe's Brocha" I replied.

All were delighted with this answer because, as I pointed out to Rabbi R., one had to do what the Rebbe instructed and it would be crowned with success. (Incidentally, if I personally would have always done what the Rebbe told me I would have had many great successes - I was good at telling others to take heed of the Rebbe's advice.)

Rabbi R. then pointed out that from certain Seforim we could learn that we did not need a Farbrengen on Shovuos. "Good," said the Rebbe, "then we will have a rest."

"Oh no," says I. "We will not let you off!" This caused much laughter and Rabbi R. said, "You must come more often."

The Rebbe intervened and said "everyone has his zeman for coming and as you daven Rosh Hashanah at the Omud for so many years, you can not come at that time." The Rebbe then paid me some very nice compliments.

On the first day of Yom Tov I was surprised that 'Hoaderes Vehoemuna' was not sung. I therefore mentioned to the Rebbe that in Manchester we always sang this nigun at Shachris. "Every Shabbos?" asked the Rebbe. "No" I replied, "only Yom Tov."

"Why not every Shabbos?"

"Oh dear" I said, wiping my forehead and thinking of how many members we would lose if we took an extra ten minutes over the davening. The Rebbe came to my rescue by saying "OK, only on Yom Tov."

Next day we did sing this during Shachris - the first time for a few years. At the next meal I thanked the Rebbe, who said that I should have mentioned it before, and we would have sang it the first day too. And I will receive commission for this (This would come in useful as a bargaining counter for an extra Farbreng!)

After Tikun Leil Shovuos, at 3.00am the first night of Shovuos, the Rebbe said a Maamer - a 45 minute deep and penetrating talk on Chassidus, extremely tough and difficult - for me at least. After the Rebbe had left at 3.45am Reb Yoel then repeated the Maamer from memory. It is uncanny - like a human tape recorder.

After every Shabbos and Yom Tov Farbrengen there is a "Chazora" - a repetition. I have strayed into the Shool at 1 o'clock in the morning after the end of Shabbos and found about 50 boys listening to Reb Yoel repeating all the Sichos and Maamer from the days' Farbrengen. Many pull him up and correct him and/or help him out. One of the boys is at the same time writing it all down in a special shorthand of his own, and by Monday the whole Farbrengen is already in print.

This does not refer to a mid-week Farbrengen like Yud-Tes Kislev, when the Rebbe uses a microphone and all the proceedings are recorded on tape.

On the second day at 8.00pm we had the Shovuos Farbrengen. There is a long platform at one end of the large hall. The Rebbe sits alone at the table surrounded by about 100 Rabbonim. In the well of the

hall the Baalei Batim sit at tables surrounded by tier upon tier of benches on which stand the boys, reaching almost to the roof. Something like a large auditorium. About 1000 people are normally present and on special occasions even double that number. The Rebbe wishes everyone "Lechayim" and during the course of the Farbrengen, one takes the opportunity of saying "Lechaim" to the Rebbe on numerous occasions. The Rebbe will say a Sicho, a 20/30-minute talk on the Sedra, then a Nigun and more Sichos. Normally a Maamer is also said by the Rebbe where everyone stands and listens enraptured and quiet for the 40 minutes duration.

The Rebbe gave a strong Sicho about bringing up children, who are our guarantors for the Torah. The parents were not accepted as guarantors, only the children. Torah is "Toras Emes" - truth - which cannot be changed or altered - it is a truth. A parent uses his own so-called 'ideas' and does away with a Mitzvah. Years later, the son takes away two more - and he uses his 'so called' head.

Parents have to teach their children from a few weeks old. When the mother sings a Yiddisher lullaby to a baby, and even before the child is conceived - by keeping Taharas Hamishpocha. Then they know the child will be perfect, and in turn will be a perfect father and then grandfather. It is up to the women!

During the Farbrengen the Rebbe asked me why was I 'unemployed'? I had not said "Lechayim" for a while.

Once the Rebbe handed me a large plateful of cake and a bottle of wine. "What should I do with these?" I asked.

"You will soon see..." said the Rebbe.

A moment later I was practically mobbed and just managed to salvage a few pieces of cake for my wife.

This Farbrengen took seven and a half hours and ended at 3.30am when the Rebbe gave out Kos-Shel-Brocha - wine from Havdola - to everyone who filed past him with a glass. This took another hour or more for our 'poor Rebbe.' During this Farbrengen we had visits from Mayor Lindsey, who was seeking re-election as Mayor of New York, and also some of the other candidates.

On the Sunday after Shovuos was held the usual Kinus Hatorah from 4.00pm - 10.00pm when Roshei haYeshivos and other prominent speakers addressed us and gave Pilpulim. The Rebbe is not present at these functions. I am generally asked to speak - which I did for 10 minutes. I recalled the boys who used to learn at '770' when the Rebbe had only the small upstairs Beis Hamedrash. It was much too small. And now, 10 years later, the huge Shul was also much too small. Now Avrohom and Shmuel, Nachman Sudak and Faivish Vogel amongst many hundreds like them were spreading Lubavitch doctrines and working for Judaism all over the world. I had asked the Rebbe for a brocha - not to be a "Tzorris Chossid" and write only when in trouble - all I wanted was to write to the Rebbe good news every couple of weeks.

I then told the moshul (parable) of people who lived at the source of a river did not realise the blessings and benefits which the river is giving during the thousands of miles of its flow to the sea. Same with the Rebbe. Here in Brooklyn the boys did not realise that thousands of miles away, the 'river' was flowing stronger and larger than ever, bringing upon so many thousands of people and families untold blessings.

My Yechidus was the following night, Monday at 8.30pm. The Rebbe said that I must not tell anyone about this special Yechidus, as all would want the same. When we 'came out' at 9.45 (Maariv should have been at 9.30) **only** about 150 boys were waiting for us and knew about this Yechidus!

When we had entered, the Rebbe rose and told Roselyn that it was nice to say to her Sholom Aleichem again, for the second time, and asked her to be seated. She sat, with paper and pencil in her hand, ready to write down the vital points which would arise.

I was hoping that she would not do a repetition of the previous year when, after one and a half hours of Yechidus, all Roselyn had written on the pad was "the Rebbe said that the Farbrengen was made especially for her" - that was all she had written down!

I told the Rebbe that so far I had a wonderful time socially, and now it was time for a business discussion. The Rebbe asked Roselyn whether she had given permission for me to leave her and eat on Yom Tov with the Rebbe. When Roselyn answered in the affirmative the Rebbe said he hoped she did not mind. Roselyn replied that as the Rebbetzen had made this sacrifice, so could she and was pleased to do so.

The Rebbe said that his Rebbetzen had made this sacrifice for 40 years and Roselyn replied “biz 120!” The Rebbe smiled appreciatively. In fact, during the whole one and quarter hours the Rebbe was laughing and smiling.

I told the Rebbe about my speech at the Kinus haTorah the previous day, about not wanting to be a Tzorrus Chossid.

“Did you not give a moshul as usual?” asked the Rebbe.

I was surprised because I do not remember ever having given a moshul before. The Rebbe gets to know everything! So I told him what I had said about people living at the source of the river who could not appreciate what was happening many hundreds of miles away. The Rebbe liked it.

I reported about the many complaints I was receiving from people who had no replies from the Rebbe to their letters. I said, Lehavdil the Queen of England has a private secretary who acknowledges her letters. The Rebbe said it was not for a Chassid! But yet, he was looking for some Nusach that would satisfy not only his correspondents, but also himself. We discussed business and family, Lubavitch and communal problems. I realised it was now 9.30pm so I said, “the Rebbe will want to daven Maariv.”

He replied, “Well, ess shteit in Shulchan Oruch!”

“Yes,” I remarked, “but not to daven at 9.30pm - it could be 3.30am like the other night.”

“Yes,” said the Rebbe, “that is so, but it was getting a little ‘tight’ for Sefirah.” He advised me to come for my next Yechidus at my usual time in the early hours of the morning so that no one would be jealous.

The Rebbe said he had received an anonymous letter from Detroit, with B.H. on the top, telling the Rebbe to go back to Lubavitch and not to interfere with people in America and pester them to do Mitzvahs. I remarked that it was a good sign to get such a letter. The Rebbe agreed.

I told the Rebbe about the Lubavitcher who phoned Bernard Perrin in Manchester at 2.00a.m and me at 7.00a.m with a grus from the Rebbe. “Ah,” says the Rebbe, “he was keeping ‘770’ hours.”

When we mentioned Avrohom, the Rebbe said he always addresses him as HaRav Avrohom in his letters.

The Rebbe asked if I liked the apartment in Union Street. I replied that it was ideal, especially as it was only seconds away from ‘770’ and I wanted it for every Shovuos.

After this Yechidus I realised that I had not asked the Rebbe for a Farbrengen for the following Shabbos. **And** there was another Shabbos after that one too.

Boruch Hashem, since I have been coming to ‘770’ there has **always** been a Farbrengen on every Shabbos that I have been present. P.G. I hope this will continue. But, if one wants something, than one must ask for it. I asked the Rebbe once, last year, and he replied that he was “not prepared.” I said that the Rebbe should just sit on the top table and we would all sing nigunim and make the Rebbe freilech.

“How can I sit on top without saying anything?”

“OK” I said, “You might manage a couple of Sichos.” In the event, he spoke for five hours at the Farbrengen.

Also, last year, my wife and I met the Rebbe outside ‘770,’ he touched his hat to Roselyn and asked her if she was enjoying Yom Tov in spite of my leaving her for the Rebbe’s table. I thanked him for the previous Farbrengen which I said was most enjoyable. The Rebbe replied, “It was my pleasure!”

Always the perfect gentleman is our Rebbe! I requested another Farbrengen and the Rebbe told me to have a good rest on Shabbos, since he had heard that some wives were actually complaining that we had too many Farbrengens which spoiled their Shabbos dinners, and so forth. In view of these remarks, there would be **no** Farbrengen on Shabbos.

A lengthy correspondence ensued (not through the Post Office) in which I pointed out that I was resting **every** day and the Farbrengen was the only time I could hear the Rebbe saying a word of Torah. Besides which, all those people had come on the plane from England especially to hear the Rebbe. One Farbrengen on Shovuos was definitely not enough.

I really should have had pity on the Rebbe and given him a rest, but a Chossid should have no rachmonus when it means a word of Torah from the Rebbe.

Anyway, I was lucky and I prevailed - to the utter dismay of 40 Yeshiva Bochurim from Newark, and of Moishe Feller of Minneapolis who had been told by the office at '770' not to come as there would not be any Farbrengen on that Shabbos and they therefore stayed at home.

Now, here once again this year, I had the same problem. In addition to which all the boys at '770' were driving me crazy to ask the Rebbe for a Farbrengen. Under no consideration would they ask themselves although they wanted it so badly and some boys even walked the six miles from Boro Park especially to be present. They said they could not have the cheek - but poor me - I had to be the scapegoat. Well, as I wanted the Farbrengen too, I had no option but to ask.

So, I wrote to the Rebbe asking for two Farbrengens. (By this method, of writing and leaving the letter in the Rebbe's box in the office, I normally receive a reply on the same day.) The Rebbe replied that he himself had to open and read all the letters addressed to him and which were very confidential. All this took a long time. He, therefore, had no time to prepare a Farbrengen.

I wrote back saying that in view of the enormous amount of correspondence which the Rebbe received, would I not be doing him a favour by not writing so often (every two weeks or so) and making more work for the Rebbe. (Once I had complained to the Rebbe that he never replied to my letters (from Manchester) and I had to write again. "Oh," said the Rebbe "it was worth it as I had another nice letter from you because of that.")

I pointed out that the Rebbe had said that my Zeman (time) for coming was Shovuos. In the social and business department I was doing very well indeed, exceedingly well. I fully expect the same again in the 'learning' department - *talmud Torah Keneged Kulom*. I think the Rebbe will agree that one Farbrengen is not really a sufficient injection for 12 months. As Brochas normally go in three's (*birkas Kohanim*) so do Farbrengens. I wanted two more. I wrote the story about Winston Churchill who, when asked how much preparation he required for an hours talk replied "I can start right away!" For 20 minutes talk? - "I need an hour!" For three minutes address? - "I need a week's preparation." So, Lehavdil our Rebbe does not need any preparation for a five hours' Farbrengen. B.H. there **was** a Farbrengen that Shabbos.

It was a freilech Farbrengen and all the boys congratulated me - and straightaway started nagging for another one for the following Shabbos. During the Farbrengen the Rebbe wished me Mazel Tov on the birthday's of my grandchildren Yossi's and Yente Chaya's and told me to take a bottle of vodka and make a Farbrengen in London; not at Lubavitch House, but at Shmuel's house. The children were to be the *ikur orchim*. After they had finished their share of the vodka, everybody else could then partake of the drink. (This subsequently took place - the children sat 'on top' about 40/50 people were present, and I told stories about the Rebbe.)

An interesting Sicho was the one about Bikurim. The Rebbe said that this referred to an unusual and unexpected business deal and Maaser had to be paid on this immediately.

After Havdola I was at the door of '770' when the Rebbe was leaving - I was alone - everybody else had fled when the Rebbe approached. I held open the door for him and wished him "Good Voch." The Rebbe smiled and wished me the same and asked if "I was Tzufrieden (happy)?" "Yes," said I, and (thinking about the following Shabbos) "so far so good!!" After having said this, I was terribly ashamed of my boorishness and chutzpah. The following day, I decided that I had to apologise for my

lack of good manners and sent a contrite and sincere letter of apology to the Rebbe, and hoped for another Farbrengen...

The day after this, the Rebbe received a brand new Cadillac from a wealthy follower who has often received - and is still receiving - the beneficent and successful advice of the Rebbe in his business problems. He sends a new Cadillac to the Rebbe every year.

We were shown the new Library and sumptuous offices next door which we do hope the Rebbe will make use of - and soon. Although we always refer to Lubavitch House as '770', this building is now only a small part of the five or six huge buildings in Eastern Parkway, owned by Lubavitch. I am not referring to our numerous schools and Yeshivas in New York. One new Yeshiva is costing \$3 million.

The following day, I saw Rabbi Chodakov in his own private office and I could not get a word in edgeways. The telephone was ringing continuously - from Israel, England, Australia, besides 'local' Canadian and USA calls. The general office is even worse - there are three telephones. A young man wanted to see the Rebbe - "earliest was four months, but could he write?" A man had arrived from Uruguay with his son. He only wanted to **look** at the Rebbe. "His wish could be granted at Mincha." A Yeshiva boy brought in an old man at 7.45a.m. and showed him a pair of Tefillin and said "**these** are Tefillin." He helped the old man to put them on. The man made the Brocha and recited Shema. The boy thanked the man, the man with tears in his eyes, thanked the boy.

We were delighted to receive a phone call from the Rebbetzen inviting us to come and see her. This was a great honour which we accepted with alacrity.

Roselyn and I arrived at 8.00pm and enjoyed an extremely happy two hours with Rebbetzen Schneerson. Tea and delicious cake were served. The Rebbetzen agreed that it was 1) most important to make the Rebbe freilech, especially at the Yom Tov 'tisch.' 2) If you want a thing badly, like a Farbrengen you must ask for it. It is so obvious - she intimated that there would be a Farbrengen on the next Shabbos too! She also said that she was in the next room during the Yom Tov meal, and heard how we were enjoying ourselves.

She told Roselyn to be careful when walking at night and "is she not frightened of the Coloureds?" I made a joke about them not touching us because we are not Americans - like the Maggid who was preaching in a Shul and all the Congregation were in tears with emotion because of what he was saying. Only one man remained unperturbed. Afterwards, when asked why he answered, "Well, I am not a member of this Shul!"

Before we left we discussed the family and various other matters - and also told a few more jokes. A very pleasant evening indeed. I hope the Rebbetzen enjoyed herself as much as we did.

The weeks were soon passing and it was now time for our second Yechidus. It was to be at approximately 2.00am, but we did not go into the Rebbe's room until 5.45am. The time taken for Yechidus varies from one minute to three hours so it is hard to ascertain the exact time one is due in.

Whilst we were waiting we met Mr. Yehuda Paldry, an Israeli journalist, who had broken his leg 20 years ago. After three operations it was decided that nothing further could be done for him and he 'walked' leaning heavily on a very big, thick stick. He had been coming to see the Rebbe for three years now. On Motzei Shovuos, whilst he was receiving his Kos Shel Brocha, bent double over his stick, the Rebbe asked him why he still walks with a stick. He should now leave it behind. Mr. Paldry smiled and the Rebbe said it was not a joke. "You don't need a stick." So, now he walks fine and without a stick. The men and boys who saw him previously walking laboriously with a stick still cannot believe it. This is Mr. Paldry's own story and he is keeping the stick as Exhibit 'A' for a constant reminder.

A boy going in before us used to be a first class Hippy and a drug addict. He has now been at the Yeshiva at Kfar Chabad for 12 months!

On entering the Rebbe's room I said that since the last Farbrengen, I had received a windfall - Bikurim. I went to pay the agent of our landlord (of the flat on Union Street) and he refused to take my money. So I am bringing all the rent money to the Rebbe as Bikurim.

The Rebbe confirmed that the Sicho the previous Shabbos, on Yossi's birthday, **was** for Yossi ("who bears my father-in-law's name" said the Rebbe) as he was a "*ben chomesh leMikrah*" - that means, continued the Rebbe, that he would be six P.G. next year. So - we must bring him with us next Shovuos and stay again at the flat in Union Street.

The Rebbe said that he now wanted to ask **me** a question. Why-after 800 years-all this time, no-one has asked questions on Rashi until 1966/7/8. I told the Rebbe that we have never had such a *Godol Hador* who could answer such questions on Rashi. Also, never one who could ASK such questions on Rashi. I reminded him of his promise to have these Rashi Sichos put into print for posterity. I put in an aside about a Farbrengen on Shabbos.

"Ah," says the Rebbe, "you are smuggling in a Farbrengen!" - "But if you will ask a question about Rashi, then I will answer it on Shabbos."

We discussed problems still left over from the previous Yechidus. Lubavitch, Shechita Board, Shul and so forth. Plenty of humour too. I remember a few years ago, that Rabbi Shem Tov went to Brooklyn on our plane from Manchester without asking permission from the Rebbe. Rabbi Shem Tov kept away from the Rebbe. He was afraid. I asked the Rebbe "not to be angry with him as it was my fault."

"Ah," says the Rebbe, "then I have two people to shout at now!"

I also recall when Avrohom, many years ago, wanted to grow a beard, he asked the Rebbe if he could do so. I have since asked many people to guess what the Rebbe answered and **not** one has ever got the right answer. He replied, "You must ask your **mother**."

We left the Rebbe's room at 6.30am and we were not the last. I took Roselyn home, returned and davened. At 9.40am I saw the Rebbe leave for home - he'd been at Yechidus since 8.00pm the previous evening!! No food, no drink, no pause. And as fresh now as at 8.00pm the night before.

Another example of the Rebbe's attitude is when I complained to the Rebbe of the woman who interrupted her work on Friday evening to light the Shabbos candles. The Rebbe replied, "at least she had fulfilled a Mitzvah."

After davening, I started on the Rashi questions. Now, instead of "is there a Farbrengen tomorrow, Shabbos" (50 boys have already arrived from Newark), everyone was asking, "What is your Rashi Kashi?" I was most annoyed with all of them. They fussed and congratulated, but when I pointed out that **everyone** should send in a Rashi question - all became afraid again. They were good at giving me advice, which I ignored.

I took a hint from Zalmon Shimon's Shiur, which I had attended during the week. In this weeks' Sedra, Bahaloscho - third Possuk, it says that Aaron did what G-d commanded him. So what? Do you expect him not to do so? Why does Rashi say "*shelo shono*?" Zalmon Shimon explained that Aaron, who was the High Priest for 39 years, lit the candles with the same warmth on the thirty ninth year as on the first year. I did not like this explanation. At the subsequent Farbrengen the Rebbe said that he had spoken about this on a previous occasion for around 2 hours and that I should ask the "boys".

Yitzchok Sufirin, who had addressed us all so well for 20 minutes on the plane, and helped with the *benching* and *Tefilas Haderech*, suggested that I asked the Rebbe his opinion on 'Mesanercho' Chapter 11, verse 36.

At the Farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke for one and a half hours on this, in relation to Israel too. G-d does not have to 'Kumu' - get up and fight. He confounds their deliberations. They will ultimately destroy themselves. We must not return one inch of Eretz Yisroel to the Arabs.

There was a special Sicho for me too. "*Tzaischem l'sholom*," go in peace and come again in peace. (Next year P.G.) Also it is no use coming to see the Rebbe once a year and that is all. We had plenty to do when we were away from the Rebbe. He gave me a wonderful smile and said; "Now it depends on you."

The Farbrengen always started punctually - normally at 1.30pm. Shool finishes 12.00 noon (from 10.00am.) I once arrived at 1.33pm and the Rebbe was already sitting on the Platform; he gave a signal as if to say why did I come so late.

After Havdola, I again held open the door of '770' for the Rebbe and said "Good Voch, everything is now perfect, except for one thing."

The Rebbe was pleased and said it was a better reply than the previous week. And what was that "except for one thing?" I replied, because we were going home on the following day and leaving the Rebbe.

"Tomorrow! That is another day and I will see you again. In any case, Moshiach may come and everything will be changed."

Our buses left the next day from '770' and the Rebbe came outside to see us off. Someone asked me why the Rebbe gave me so much *koved* (honor)? Did I give plenty of money? Work hard for Lubavitch? What was the secret?

I replied: "*Men darf machen dem Rebbe Shlita freilech.*" - That's all - "in every possible way!"

TRY IT. JUST FOR ONCE!

(To be continued Bezras HaShem Yisborach)

R'SHNEUR ZALMON