

Derher

A Chassidisher

א חסידישער דערהער

MIHU YEHUDI

a HOLE in my HEART

*The Rebbe's Fight for
Giyur KaHalacha*

**The Deepest
Depths, Even
for the Simple**

THE PARADOX OF THE
ALTER REBBE'S SIDDUR



TEVES 5785
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MIRACLES UPON MIRACLES

As we've been doing over the past few months, this magazine includes an overview of the month of Teves, 5750 in the Rebbe's presence 35 years ago. Throughout the month, the Rebbe spoke many times; at farbrengens, at *sichos* during the week, or with people who came for a *bracha* at dollars. There are so many beautiful ideas conveyed in these talks, and it would be impossible to cite them all in one short article. Everyone is encouraged to read them as they've been printed in various mediums, but here we'll quote one interesting thing:

The month of Teves includes a fast day—Asara B'Teves, which the *Novi* calls a “*yom ratzon*”—a favorable day before Hashem. It is a time when Hashem is closer to His people and more open to fulfilling their requests.

The Rebbe explained that this year, the day garners even more significance: The years has been accepted by Jews around the world as a “year of miracles,” based on

its *roshei teivos* of תהא שנת נסים; implying that Hashem's conduct throughout this year is supernatural—above and beyond the ordinary. The word “*nes*” (miracle) is connected with the phrase “אָרײַם נסִי”—I will raise my banner over the mountains.

Mountains already symbolize a higher level than the ordinary, rising high over the earth. Flying a “*nes*,” a banner over the mountain top symbolizes an even higher level. To put it in perspective: this year is a year of miracles that continuously ascend way above the natural order, breaking through one level after another.¹

Reflecting on the Rebbe's words 35 years later, let us hope that we will indeed see all of Hashem's miracles manifest in our reality today. May the Jewish people and the entire world experience supernatural salvation with the coming of Moshiach now!

The Editors

יום הבהיר י"ד כסלו ה'תשפ"ה

1. Audio recording of the Rebbe's sicha, 10 Teves 5750.

DERHER HONOR WALL

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OF BENEFICIARIES OF A CHASSIDISHER DERHER.

A Chassidisher Derher Visionary

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נוספת על התודה ברכת מזל טוב, על שזכה בענין חשוב כזה, להיות מן המזכים את הרבים, להאיר בע"ה את נפשם באור
"...דברי ב"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר שליט"א, ולהתעורר עי"ז לתורה, לעבודה ולגמילות חסדים
(ממכתב יום ד' י' לחדש מנ"א תשנ"ה)

"In addition to thanks, I would like to add the blessing of 'mazel tov' for your merit in taking part in
such an important project, bringing merit to the masses, illuminating their souls with the light of the
words of my father-in-law, the Rebbe Shlita, inspiring them to Torah, Avoda, and Gemilus Chasadin..."

(THE REBBE'S LETTER, 10 MENACHEM-AV 5703)

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Wishing you all

ברכה והצלחה רבה, בכל מכל כל!

Thank you for bringing the teachings of Chassidus and the Rebbe's message to so many around the world, every day. Your impact is felt and inspires action—paving the way for the Geulah now!

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נדפס ע"י הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל
וזוגתו מרת רבקה שיחיו מינקאוויץ
בנם ובנותיהם
מאיר שלמה, חיה מושקא,
זעלדא רחל, וחנה שליט"א

Life After Yaakov

IN HONOR OF 60 YEARS SINCE THE REBBE INTRODUCING
HIS REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING
RASHI, 5725—5785, THIS MONTHLY COLUMN FEATURES AN
ADAPTATION OF ONE OF THE REBBE'S "RASHI SICHOS."

COMPILED BY: RABBI MENDEL VOGEL

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעַ
עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וְגו' (מז, כח)

וַיְחִי יַעֲקֹב: לָמָּה פָּרְשָׁה זֶה סְתוּמָּה? לִפִּי שְׂבִינִין
שְׁנַפְטָר יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ נִסְתָּמוּ עֵינֵיהֶם וְלִבָּם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִצָּרַת הַשְּׁעָבוּד, שֶׁהִתְחִילוּ לְשַׁעֲבָדָם... (רש"י)

And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years.

"And Yaakov lived: Why is this parshah closed up (i.e., doesn't start at the beginning of a paragraph)? Because, when Yaakov Avinu passed away, the eyes and hearts of [B'nei] Yisroel were 'closed' due to the misery of bondage, for they (the Egyptians) commenced to enslave them..." (Rashi)

Rashi's commentary raises some questions:

1. In Parshas Va'era (6:16), Rashi writes that *"as long as one of the shevatim was alive, there was no bondage"*—contrary to what is implied by Rashi's words here, that the suffering of slavery began *"when Yaakov Avinu passed away,"* even while the *shevatim* were living?

2. How could the *Yidden's* enslavement have begun during Yosef's lifetime? Yosef ruled the land of Egypt, and without him, *"No one may lift his hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt"*?!

3. What is Rashi's intention with the words *"the eyes and the hearts of [B'nei] Yisroel were 'closed'"*? We can understand that slavery affects the (emotions of the) heart, but what does it have to do with one's eyes?

In truth, the questions answer each other: Rashi is not saying that the *actual* enslavement began with the passing of Yaakov, only that it *appeared* to the *Yidden* that the first stage of enslavement had begun—hence the reference to their *eyes* (which—as per the dictum *"the heart follows the eyes"*—led them to *feel* that way as well).

But what made it appear so?

We see that Yaakov's passing caused a certain distancing between Yosef and his brothers—as evidenced in a *possuk*—later on in the *parsha*:

וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־יֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אָבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יִשְׁתַּמְנוּ יוֹסֵף וְגו'... (נ, טו)
מֵהוּ וַיֵּרְאוּ? הֲכִירוּ בְּמִיתָתוֹ אֶצֶל יוֹסֵף, שֶׁהָיוּ רְגִילִים לְסַעַד עַל שְׁלָחָנוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף וְהָיָה מְקֻרָּב בְּשִׁבְלֵי כְבוֹד אָבִיו, וּמִשְׁמַת יַעֲקֹב לֹא קָרָב (רש"י)

"Now Yosef's brothers saw that their father had died, and they said, 'Perhaps Yosef will hate us...'"



“What does it mean that ‘they saw’? They recognized his (Yaakov’s) death in Yosef, for they were accustomed to dine at Yosef’s table, and he was friendly toward them out of respect for his father, but as soon as Yaakov died, he was no longer friendly toward them.” (Rashi)

If this was true about Yosef, then how much more so with regard to the inhabitants of Egypt: They had honored and respected Yaakov because of the tremendous *bracha* he brought to Egypt with his arrival (the famine ended, and the waters of the Nile rose). As a result, they treated his family with honor and respect as well. This changed after Yaakov’s passing; they didn’t treat the *Yidden* with the same degree of respect as before.

The *Yidden* interpreted this change in attitude as an effort to gain control over them.

But wouldn’t Yosef protect them? Well, since Yosef had clearly distanced himself from his family, they feared that he wouldn’t visit them in Goshen anymore, inquire as to how they were faring and see what he could do to help them. They wouldn’t be able to rely on Yosef to save them, and they would be defenseless against their hostile neighbors.

Watching all this unfold before their eyes led the *Yidden* to feel “the misery of bondage, for they (the Egyptians) commenced to enslave them.”



The *avoda* of Yosef and of the *shevatim* were very different. The *shevatim* remained secluded from the world. Like their forefathers, they were shepherds, and able to spend their days removed from the hustle and bustle of city life, connecting to Hashem with no distractions.

Yosef was the opposite extreme. He was fully involved in

worldly affairs, first as manager of Potifar’s household, and, ultimately, as ruler of Egypt. Yet even in the midst of all of this, Yosef remained completely connected and one with Hashem.

In *galus Mitzrayim*, the *Yidden* could no longer afford to stay secluded from the world, since the whole purpose of going into *galus* is to refine the world. There needed to be a fusion of both types of *avoda*.

This fusion existed as long as Yaakov was alive: During Yaakov’s lifetime, the Torah that the *Yidden* learnt was able to influence the mundane aspects of their lives as well. Even in Mitzrayim, they were able to have “*וירחי יעקב*”—life in its truest form, guided by the Torah.

After Yaakov passed away, however, this fusion disappeared—Yosef and his brothers drifted apart.

Takeaway:

The way to ensure that these last moments of *galus* are lived in the best way *b’gashmiyus* and *b’ruchniyus*—“*וירחי יעקב*”—is by continuously increasing in one’s Torah learning, and learning in a way that it influences the mundane aspects of one’s life as well. One should increase set times in the day for learning *nigleh* and *Chassidus*—and especially *halacha*—as well as to increase in teaching others (including teaching non-Jews, *l’havdil*, about the *mitzvos* which pertain to them).

(Sefer Hasichos 5749 vol. 1, p. 170)



Compiled By: Rabbi Levi Greenberg (OH)
Written By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

לע"נ
האישה החשובה מרת
חסיא בת ר' איסר ע"ה
ניו
נלב"ע כ"ה טבת ה'תשפ"ג
ת"נ צ"ב

נדפס ע"י נכדה
הרה"ת ר' יואל וזוגתו מרת
ריקל ומשפחתם שיחיו
ניו

Does He Hear Us?

At the farbrengen of Yud-Tes Kislev 5744, the Rebbe called on everyone to insert two phrases into their daily davening: “*Hareini Mekabel...*” and “*Ach Tzaddikim...*” (as detailed in the previous issue).

In the edited version of the *sicha*, the Rebbe cites the Rambam, Hilchos Tefilla (1:2), that it is incumbent upon a person to pray to Hashem when a need arises. In our instance: when a new situation arises (instability abounds around the world), it is necessary to add a new prayer as well.¹

As was common practice in those days, an individual Chossid commented on the Rebbe's words by submitting a written note to the “Kovetz Ha'aros” published by Tomchei Temimim of Morristown—citing further proof for this position from an idea written by the Shelah.²

As it turned out, that issue of the Kovetz Ha'aros was not published in time, and in the meanwhile, the Rebbe quoted from the same section of the Shelah at the next farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Va'era.³ Seeing this, the editors of the Kovetz wrote to the Rebbe that they plan to publish that section of the Rebbe's *sicha*, along with this individual's comment. On the transcription of the *sicha* that they gave to the Rebbe, the Rebbe added a full paragraph, published here in the Rebbe's holy handwriting.⁴

The idea cited from the Shelah as quoted by the Rebbe at the farbrengen:

Question: Chazal say that Hashem never dismisses the *tefillos* of the community. How is it

then that all the Jewish people ask many times daily for the *Geulah* and it still hasn't arrived — after some 1,554 years [at the time of his writing]?!

The Rebbe then cited a portion of the Shelah's answer: Although we don't see the fruition of every prayer in this physical world, the prayer is accepted by Hashem, and achieves spiritual accomplishments in higher worlds, which for us Yidden (who prioritize the *neshama* and spirituality over the body and the physical), is the most important aspect.

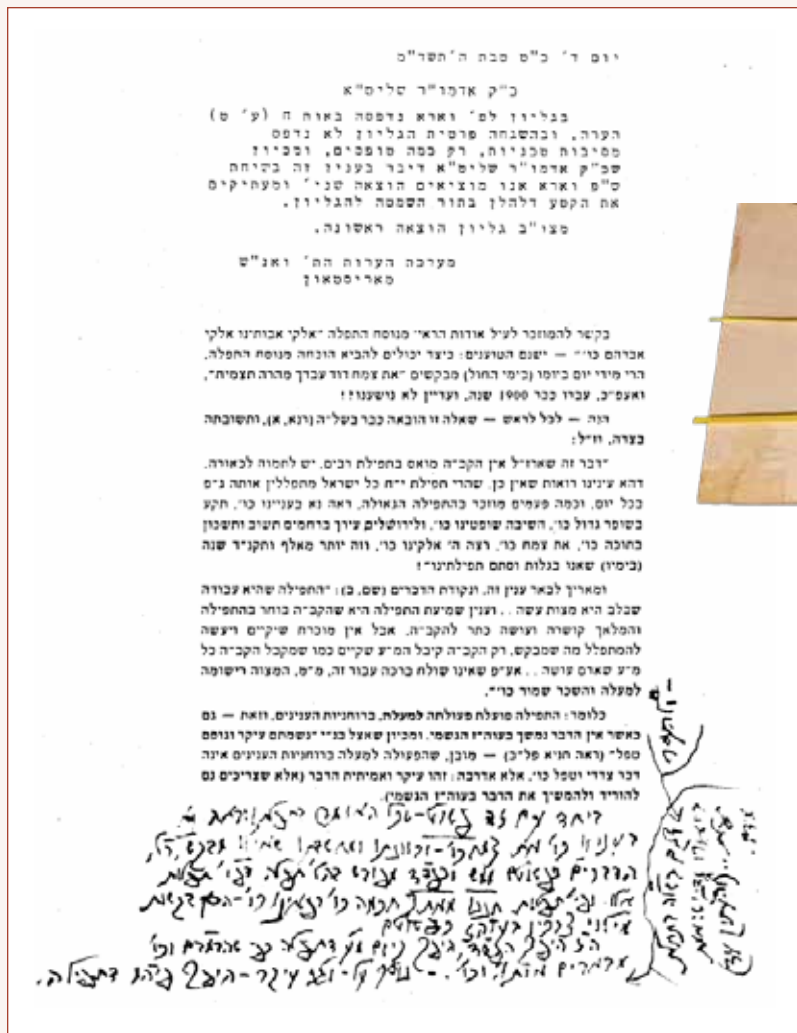
On this section of the transcription, the Rebbe added in his holy handwriting:

ביחד עם זה פשוט — שכל האומר בתפלתו: ראה נא בענינו
כו' את צמח כו' — וכוונתו ומחשבתו שאינו מבקש, ר"ל,
הדברים כפשוטם ממש וכפס"ד מפורש בהל' תפלה דפי'
תפלות אלו ותפלות חננו מאתך חכמה כו' רפאינו כו' — הם
בקשות מילוי צרכיו בעוה"ז כפשוטם

ה"ז היפך הפס"ד, היפך קיום מ"ע דתפלה כפי שהרמב"ם
וכו' מבארים אותה וכו'. — נוסף על — וג"ז עיקר — היפך
פיה"מ דתפילה.

ולהעיר דגם בשל"ה בתחילת ביאורו מדגיש: אמת תפלת ..
(להעתיק עד) מידם.

[אמת תפילת רבים נשמעת, אבל אין הענין שיעשה הקדוש
ברוך הוא כל בקשתם ממש, רק עושה מדוגמת הבקשה
וממנה, כי בכל יום ויום יש גאולה, דהיינו כשבה אחת בין ע'
זאבים אי אפשר לה להתקיים, וכל יום ויום עומדים עלינו
לכלותינו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם].



AFTER THE REBBE'S CALL TO ADD 'HAREINI' AND 'ACH TZADDIKIM' TO THE DAILY TEFILLOS, TZIVOS HASHEM PRODUCED A LARGE STICKER WITH THIS TEXT TO PLACE IN THE SIDDUR. FROM THEN ON, THE REBBE KEPT THIS STICKER (WITH THE BACK LINER) BOUND TO THE INSIDE COVER OF HIS SIDDUR AS SEEN IN THIS PICTURE OF THE REBBE'S SIDDUR.

[Although it may be true that we don't always see the results of our *tefillos* in this physical world,] at the same time it is **obvious** that anyone who says while davening, "*Re'eh na ve'anyeinu...* (see our suffering)"; "*Es Tzemach...* (the growth [of Dovid, i.e. Moshiach, should sprout forth speedily])," and his thought and intention is not to request, *r"l*, these things in **actual** [physical] reality, as is clearly **ruled** in Hilchos Tefilla, that the meaning of **these** requests and [others, like] the *tefillos* of "*Chaneinu me'it'cha chochma...* (grant us wisdom)"; "*Refa'einu...* (heal us)," is intended as requests for actual fulfillment of one's needs —

Then [he is acting] contrary to the Halachic ruling [of what davening is], and contrary to fulfilling the actual mitzvah of *tefilla* as explained by the Rambam and other [codifiers], etc. In addition—and this too is a most important point—this is contrary to the actual meaning of the davening.

It should be noted that even the Shelah [himself], at the beginning of his explanation, asserts [that we must see

some manifestation of the fulfillment of prayers even in this physical world]. As he states [here the Rebbe indicates that the typist should copy the entire section from the Shelah]:

It is true that the prayers of the community are accepted by Hashem, but that doesn't mean that Hashem must fulfill their entire request literally. He might fulfill some sort of the request, or something similar to it. [For example, we ask Hashem every day for the Geulah, and] every day there is a [quasi] "redemption." [The Jewish people are like] a sheep amongst seventy wolves with no chance of survival. Every day [our enemies] arise to destroy us, and Hashem saves us from their hands. **1**

1. Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 2, p. 679.

2. Inyanei Tefilla, p. 250a.

3. Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 2, p. 781. The Rebbe's handwritten note was inserted in that transcription.

4. First published in the sefer "*V'Ha'er Eineinu B'sorasecha*," p. 190.

טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן הוקדש לזכרון
ולעילוי נשמת
ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל
ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר'
יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד
תנ"צ'ב'ה

ע"י בנם
ר' יקותיאל יהודה
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם
שיחיו
רוהר



A YEAR OF MIRACLES

Teves 5750

As we continue our journey through 5750—“Shnas Nissim”—the year of miracles, the month of Teves brings a unique flavor. Although Teves can be perceived as an ordinary month with fewer Yomim Tovim and special dates, this year, the atmosphere is full of excitement. Jews worldwide, and Chassidim in particular, prepare to celebrate 40 years of the Rebbe's *nesius* next month on Yud Shevat.

Already since last Yud Shevat, the Rebbe has been citing the *possuk* “נתן ה' לכם לב לדעת ועינים לראות ואזנים לשמע”—after 40 years in the desert, Moshe Rabbeinu tells the Jewish people that Hashem has finally given them a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear. In other words, it is only after 40 years that one truly understands the teachings of his Rebbe.

It was a special time to be in the Rebbe's presence. This, of course, is in addition to the fact that no day with the Rebbe is “ordinary”. The sichos, the farbrengens, the Rebbe's words during dollar-distributions, are fascinatingly insightful. Let's explore.

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SAM SHLAGBAUM VIA JEW 308412 (14 TEVES 5750)



Farbrengens

The month of Teves begins during Chanukah. In the year 5750, the first Shabbos, 2 Teves, was the final day of Chanukah, and the weekly Shabbos farbrengen was dedicated in large part to this theme. The Rebbe spoke about the lesson from the miracle of Chanukah—that a small amount of oil lasted eight days. The oil itself, however, was ordinary oil, and it was enough for at least one day, even according to the natural order. This teaches us that within nature itself, Hashem always gives us what we need to fulfill the mitzvos and do our *avoda* of spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.

“There was a time,” said the Rebbe, “like in the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, when the Chassidim were poor and destitute and could barely afford the few *kopeks* it would cost to buy copies of the *maamarei Chassidus*. To accommodate this situation, the Mittlerer Rebbe made sure to send his *maamarim* in installments so people wouldn’t have to shell out more than they could afford at once. In other words, Hashem gave them the means to do what they had to do, though it was on a smaller scale.

“Today however, we live in a time when there is so much more available to us. The [Frierdiker] Rebbe told us that our job is to spread Chassidus to the whole world, and we certainly have the capacity to do so. Especially in this country [the United States], where we’ve been blessed with unparalleled abundance; there’s enough food to eat, clothes to wear, and large homes, affording us the peace of mind we need to do our *avoda* well.

“The [Frierdiker] Rebbe himself came and lived in this country for ten years, watching some of his Chassidim live with abundance, and he used the material abundance for further spreading Chassidus. We must follow his example...”¹

Towards the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe called for a farbrengen (a “Chassidishe Melaveh Malka”) to be held by Chassidim as a continuation to this farbrengen, and then asked that the following be publicized:

Whoever did not yet have a chance to give their children Chanukah Gelt (or has not given enough Chanukah Gelt) should decide now, on the final day of Chanukah, to rectify this in the next few days.

[It should be noted that the next day, on Sunday 3 Teves, the Rebbe went to the Ohel, and after davening Maariv upon his return, he notified that there would be a distribution of dollars for Chanukah Gelt.]

During a *niggun*, the Rebbe turned to the Scharf boys and handed a piece of cake to the middle boy, then one to the older boy, and asked where the youngest one was, who was seen at the last farbrengen. Then the Rebbe turned toward the bleachers, where a large group of guests were standing, and the singing subsided. The Rebbe said, “There is a group of guests here, boys and girls; let them say *l’chaim*!” Once the children started saying *l’chaim*, the Rebbe added, “And the local children should join them too, increasing the joyous atmosphere.” The singing continued, and the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing with both his hands.

Will There Be a Farbrengen?

On the next Shabbos, preparation for Yud Shevat could be felt as the Rebbe spoke about the *possuk* of “וְהָיָה לָכֶם” and the upcoming milestone of forty years. The Rebbe also spoke about the need to increase in *ahavas*



SEVENTH DAY OF CHANUKAH, ROSH CHODESH TEVES 5750.



THE REBBE RECEIVES MAFTIR ON ASARA B'TEVES.

Yisroel and *tzedakah*, as well as an increase in Torah study “*b’shufi*”—in abundance, by both yeshiva students and lay people.

On Thursday of the following week, on 14 Teves, the Rebbe went to the Ohel and delivered a *sicha* after Maariv upon his return.

The Rebbe addressed what was on many people’s minds: Would there be a *farbrengen* on Yud Shevat? It had been almost two years since the Rebbe stopped *farbrengen* during the week, but perhaps an occasion of this magnitude would bring change.

The Rebbe said:

“We find ourselves within the thirty-day period before Yud Shevat, the *yom hahilula* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe. It is therefore an appropriate time to discuss some things about the day.

“The *farbrengen* of the *yom hahilula* will take place, as has been the practice in recent years, on the preceding Shabbos. On the following Sunday [9 Shevat], and most certainly on Monday, the *yom hahilula* itself, we will visit the *tziyun* of the *baal hahilula*.

“It would be appropriate for everyone to utilize this day by traveling to surrounding communities (based on each person’s choosing), in the spirit of *נתנו לה' לְכָם לֵב לְדַעַת* [i.e. with the added strength of

the culmination of forty years of the Rebbe’s teachings -ed.], to share a few words with the locals about the Parsha, and certainly some words of Torah from the *baal hahilula*, especially the *maamar* that he published for the day of his passing [Basi L’Gani]. These words should inspire them to action, following in the ways of my father-in-law, the Rebbe...”

The following Shabbos, Parshas Vayechi—Chazak, 16 Teves, the Rebbe mentioned the old *minhag* practiced in many communities that on Shabbos Chazak, the *gabbaim* make a *kiddush* for all the congregants in celebration of completing a complete *sefer* of Torah.

“For some reason,” the Rebbe said, “we don’t see this practice today. Perhaps they rely on me, because I *farbreng* on Shabbos Chazak, so they suffice with that. But there is enough time after this *farbrengen* for the *gabbaim* to make a *kiddush*, especially in light of what we’ve been speaking of throughout this year—the importance of gathering Jews together on Shabbos to speak words of Torah...”

Towards the end of the *sicha*, the Rebbe spoke about the need to celebrate the coming of Moshiach by dancing with one’s feet. With that, the Rebbe stood up and began singing his father’s *Hakafo*s Niggun, clapping his hands to all sides for a long time.



KIDDUSH LEVANA, 12 TEVES 5750.

On Wednesday, 20 Teves (*yahrtzeit* of the Rambam), the Rebbe went to the Ohel and when he returned, he went to his home on President Street where he davened Mincha and Maariv. The Rebbe then delivered a *sicha* about the Rambam and about the daily study of Rambam, highlighting the importance of continuing this study diligently and drawing lessons from that day's *shiur*.

On the following Shabbos, 23 Teves (the day before Chof-Daled Teves, *yahrtzeit* of the Alter Rebbe), the Rebbe spoke about increasing in *limud haTorah*: Coming from the *yahrtzeit* of the Rambam, we must enhance our daily study of Rambam (whether three *perakim*, one *perek*, or Sefer Hamitzvos), and our commitment to studying the works of the Alter Rebbe—the Tanya and the Shulchan Aruch. The Rebbe called for reinstating the age-old tradition of Chassidim studying one *perek* of Tanya before beginning Shacharis every morning.

Of course, the Rebbe spoke about the upcoming *yom hahilula* of Yud Shevat—40 years and continuing the preparations.

A New Era

In honor of the upcoming milestone Yud Shevat, a major breakthrough came to pass in Lubavitch: With the Rebbe's consent, the first *sefer* of the Rebbe's Torah bearing the name "Toras Menachem" was published. It was a collection of the Rebbe's *sichos* on the teachings of his

father, titled "*Toras Menachem—Tiferes Levi Yitzchok*."

On Wednesday evening—the night of 28 Teves, birthday of the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, members of Vaad Hanachos B'Lahak gave the Rebbe the *sefer*, and the Rebbe responded by circling the date (28 Teves) with his holy handwriting and wrote: נת' ות"ח ודבר בעתו והזמ"ג" (It was received, thanks. It is an appropriate and opportune time to mention this at the Ohel on this very date).

The next day, the Rebbe went to the Ohel with the *sefer* in hand.

Also, on Wednesday evening, a community wide meeting was held, organized by Tzach (Lubavitch Youth Organization), discussing appropriate preparations for the upcoming great and holy day of Yud Shevat. Each participant received a card to write in their *hachlatos* in connection with this milestone, to be given to the Rebbe.

Dollars Distribution

This month saw a broad array of visitors who came to see the Rebbe, receive his blessing, and a dollar for *tzedakah*.

On Sunday, 10 Teves, the Rebbe was visited by the chief rabbi of Warsaw, Rabbi Menachem Joskowicz. The rabbi told the Rebbe about the various activities he administers there, including daily minyanim, a *mikvah*, and so on, and the Rebbe said, "Poland was once the

major nerve center of Yiddishkeit around the world. See to restore its old glory!”

When Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov passed by, the Rebbe said, “We must see to bring the [good results] from the satellite into fruition.” Rabbi Shemtov did not immediately understand, and the Rebbe explained, “I mean the Chanukah satellite” [Chanukah Live].

On Sunday, 17 Teves, the Rebbe was visited by the Debreciner Rav. The Rebbe told him, “You are a *posek* who rules in halacha. Chazal say that ‘*Dvar Hashem*—this refers to halacha’ and they also say that ‘*Dvar Hashem*—this refers to the *keitz*’, the end date for Moshiach’s arrival. We see that these two ideas are connected.” The *rav* made some motions with his hands, and the Rebbe said, “Why are you moving your hands around? The time for Moshiach’s coming is long overdue. You must write a halachic ruling in one of your *seforim* that Moshiach must come. This is a serious matter!”

One of the bochurim introduced Mr. Chaim Schneerson from Leningrad to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe spoke with him in Russian, saying that he must uphold the “Schneerson” heritage, with its characteristic unwavering strength, in matters of Torah and mitzvos.

Right after Mr. Schneerson, Rabbi Yosef Aharonov, the administrator of Tzach in Eretz Yisroel passed by the Rebbe. The Rebbe asked him if the people from Russia who had just passed by had any connection with him. Rabbi Aharonov answered that the other *bochur* brought Mr. Schneerson, and the only connection they have is that they passed by at the same time. The Rebbe said, “Do you

have a branch of Tzeirei Agudas Chabad in Leningrad as well? It would be a good idea!” With a smile, the Rebbe gave him a dollar, saying, “This is for a good beginning. *Besuros tovos*.”

The Rebbe was also visited by the Radoshitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Dovid Aharonchik, who is a descendant of the Lelover dynasty. The Rebbe said to him: “May you have long years in your reign, going from strength to strength in all matters of Torah and mitzvos. You probably know that Lelov is renowned for *ahavas Yisroel*. You must show a living example in this regard; however good it’s been till now, let it increase many times over.”

Rabbi Aharonchik told the Rebbe that he has been sending pamphlets about Yiddishkeit to the non-frum schools in Eretz Yisroel for seven years now, and although he’s written to the Rebbe about it, he hasn’t yet received an answer. The Rebbe responded, “You should send material to the *frumme* schools as well.” The Rebbe added with a smile, “*Ahavas Yisroel* applies to them too; I don’t need to tell you that...”

Throughout the month, the Rebbe often distributed dollars in the evenings as well, after Maariv.

On 20 Teves, the Rebbe distributed dollars after Maariv in his home, and was approached by a delegation of activists who were working on rebuilding Yiddishkeit in Poland: the philanthropist David Chase, Mr. Ronald Lauder, and Rabbi Yechezkel Besser. Mr. Chase told the Rebbe about the various programs that they were orchestrating, and the Rebbe told the group that it was his opinion that they should deal primarily with the elderly people. For the young people, there doesn’t seem to be any future, and it would be worthwhile to try and persuade them to move to other countries.

Difficult Times

There were a few sad occurrences during this month in the Rebbe’s presence. The first was on Motzei Shabbos 17 Teves, when an elder Chossid, Reb Eliyahu Nochum Shklar, was tragically killed by a passing car while on his way to the Colel Chabad Melaveh Malka.

The next day after distributing Sunday dollars, the Rebbe went to the *mikvah* and on the way, he looked with pain toward the large crowd gathered for the *levaya*. Before the Rebbe’s car pulled away, the Rebbe turned and looked towards Brooklyn Avenue, where Reb Eliyahu Nochum’s *aron* was due to come from.



CHIEF RABBI OF WARSAW, RABBI MENACHEM JASKOWICZ VISITS THE REBBE.



Another tragic occurrence happened with the daughter of Reb Zushe Rivkin from Kfar Chabad (wife of Rabbi Aharon Dov Halperin), who was gravely ill. On Sunday evening, 25 Teves, the Rebbe distributed dollars after Maariv, and Reb Zushe asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for his daughter and a guarantee (“*havtacha*”) that she would get better. The Rebbe responded, “Only Hashem can guarantee.” Reb Zushe persisted that “A tzaddik can decree and Hashem will fulfill,” and the Rebbe responded, “*Besuros tovos...*”

The next morning at the end of Shacharis, Reb Zushe arrived and recited *kaddish* for his daughter, who had sadly passed away. The Rebbe gazed at him throughout.

That afternoon, the Rebbe participated in two *levayos*. The first was of Mrs. Chaya Posner, wife of longtime Pittsburgh shliach Rabbi Sholom Posner. The Rebbe came out wearing his winter coat and followed the *aron* down Eastern Parkway, crossing Kingston Avenue and stopping in the service lane near the subway entrance. The Rebbe watched as all the cars of the funeral procession drove away, and then remained standing in his place for another 24 minutes, gazing intently straight down the road where all the cars had driven. The Rebbe didn’t say a word; he just stood there in place as many Chassidim stood around him. At one point, Rabbi Groner mentioned to the Rebbe that all the cars from the procession were already gone, but the Rebbe didn’t flinch.

Eventually the Rebbe returned to 770, washed his hands outside the door, and then went into his room. About 15 minutes later, the Rebbe came out again, this time for the *levaya* of Reb Zushe’s daughter.

The Rebbe’s face was extremely serious. The Rebbe followed the *aron* across Kingston Avenue again, all the while looking towards Reb Zushe. As soon as all the cars of the procession were out of sight, the Rebbe turned around and went back to 770.

The atmosphere during Maariv was, understandably, quite gloomy. The crowd did not sing when the Rebbe entered and exited the shul, and the Rebbe’s face was very serious.

May Hashem comfort all mourners and bring an end to tears, with the coming of Moshiach.

Didan Notzach!

Boruch Hashem, there were also some very joyous moments this month!

On Tuesday 19 Teves, the Rebbe went to the *mikvah* in the morning, something he would generally do only if he was planning to make a trip to the Ohel.

At around 2:30 in the afternoon, the news arrived at 770 that a verdict had been rendered in the court case against the Rebbe (which came in continuation to the victory of Hei Teves), completely in the Rebbe’s favor.



THE REBBE IN CONVERSATION WITH REB ZUSHE RIVKIN.

LEVY FREIDIN VIA JEM 223292 (26 ELUL 5749)

The Rebbe did not go to the Ohel. Instead, the Rebbe joined the crowd for Mincha at 3:15 p.m and Maariv at 5:30. The Rebbe's face was glowing as he encouraged the singing strongly, and a joyous atmosphere was felt in Lubavitch. Chassidim farbrenged and danced throughout the night.

The Zechus of Crown Heights

Throughout the month, the Rebbe offered various responses to the letters he received. Below is a selection:

An individual wrote to the Rebbe that he bought a new home in the Crown Heights neighborhood, and the Rebbe replied:

“ויהא כל זה בהצלחה וזכות דהשכונה דכ”ק מו”ח אדמו”ר מסייעת, אזכיר עה”צ.”

“May all of this be successful. The merit of the [Frierdiker] Rebbe's neighborhood adds good measure. I will mention this at the Ohel.”

One of the bochurim, Boruch Kahana, wrote to the Rebbe that he is involved with writing the Beis Chayeinu publication (a description of the goings on in the Rebbe's presence), and he is asking for a bracha that his writing should not disturb his learning in yeshiva. The Rebbe underlined the words “not disturb” and added:

“ואדרבה, אזכיר עה”צ”

“On the contrary [it will only help your learning]. I will mention this at the Ohel.”

An organization called “Tel Tapiyos” wrote to the Rebbe that they would like to arrange a trip of 40 *rabbanim* from Eretz Yisroel to travel to the Rebbe in honor of Yud Shevat—40 years, and the Rebbe replied:

“ארבעים רבנים לצאת מאה”ק?!”

“40 *rabbanim* to leave the Holy Land?!”

When an individual wrote to the Rebbe about plans to travel to the Rebbe in a way that was not fully in line with the law, the Rebbe responded, “כפשוט מופרך—This is obviously out of the question.”

Reb Yaakov Katz, the rosh yeshiva of Tomchei Temimim in Kfar Chabad, sent the Rebbe a report about his work, and the Rebbe replied:

“אזכיר עה”צ להצלחה בחינוך התלמידים וכו’ והזמ”ג, כנתינת כח דחנוכה, להוסיף בנר מצווה ותורה אור מיום ליום.”

“I will mention you at the Ohel for success with educating your students, etc. It is an opportune time to increase in ‘mitzvos [which are] the lamp and Torah [which is] the light, as the Yom Tov of Chanukah invigorates us to do.”

Thus concluded a month of great preparation in this special year of Nissim. Next month, we will explore the great milestone of Yud Shevat—celebrating 40 years of the Rebbe's *nesius*. ❶

1. Transcript (R”D—unedited) of the farbrengen.

THE DEEPEST DEPTHS, EVEN FOR THE SIMPLE

The Paradox of the Alter
Rebbe's Siddur

By: MOTTI WILHELM

In the preparation of this article, we were greatly assisted by Dayan Levi Yitzchok Raskin, who graciously provided an advance copy of his upcoming work on the Alter Rebbe's Siddur, and by the articles in 'Hasiddur', edited and compiled by Rabbi Gedalia Oberlander, as well as a shiur on the Alter Rebbe's Siddur on the occasion of Chof Daled Teves–200 years given by Rabbi Oberlander, who offered much additional assistance.





סידור

תהלת ה'

על פי נוסח האר"י ק"ל

כל חפלה ותפלה באה על מקומה
מבלי שיצטרך המתפלל לחפש הדפים בשע



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סידור

תהלת ה'

נוסח האר"י ק"ל

לזכות

עליזה תחי' שוחאט

לרגל יום הולדתה - כ"ב טבת

ולזכות הוריה

הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער וזוגתו מרת חיה מושקא

ולזכות אחיותיה ברכה ליפשא, שיינדל,

ואחיה מנחם מענדל שיחיו

In our previous article (Kislev 5785), we explored the history of the publication of the Alter Rebbe's *nusach hatefilla*. In this second installment, presented in honor of the Alter Rebbe's *yom hahilula*, Chof-Daled Teves, we will take a closer look at the *nusach* itself: Why the Alter Rebbe composed a *nusach*, what sets it apart, and how it seamlessly blends Halacha, Dikduk, Kabbalah, and Chassidus—revealing the *nusach* as a remarkable creation in its own right.

Today's Chabad bookshelf features a comprehensive collection of *sifrei tefilla* for various occasions. There are Chabad *Selichos* and *Machzorim*, a Lubavitcher *Tikun Leil Shavuot*, and even a Chabad-published *Kinos* for *Tisha B'av*. While one might view the Chabad *Siddur* as another such text—a compilation of *tefillos* following Lubavitcher Chassidic *minhagim*—in truth, it holds a distinct position. The *Siddur* represents the culmination of the Alter Rebbe's two-decade scholarly endeavor, during which he carefully curated, analyzed, and refined the text to develop a masterfully constructed *nusach*.

To properly understand the novel contribution of the Alter Rebbe's *nusach*, we need to take a step back and understand the formation of the *nusach hatefilla* from their inception.

The Rambam teaches¹: "It is a *mitzvas aseh* to *daven* every day, as the *possuk* states: 'Va'avadtem es Hashem Elokeichem.' *Mipi hashmuah* it was learned that this '*avoda*' is *tefilla*, as the *possuk* states: 'Ul'ovdo b'chol levavchem.' The *Chachomim* said, "What is the *avoda* of the heart? This is *tefilla*."

While the obligation of *tefilla* is *midioraisa*, a different picture emerges regarding the *nusach hatefilla*. The Rambam continues: "The number of *tefillos* is not prescribed in the Torah, nor does it prescribe a specific formula for *tefilla*. Also, according to Torah law, there are no fixed times for *tefilla*."

Accordingly, one who was eloquent would offer many *tefillos*, and one who was less so would *daven* when and how he was able. "This was the ongoing practice from [the time of] Moshe Rabbeinu until Ezra," the Rambam says.

The Formation of Nusach

So, when was a *nusach* established for *tefillos*?

The Gemara in Brachos² states: "*Anshei Knesses Hagedola* instituted for the Jewish people *brachos* and *tefillos*, *kedushos* and *havdalos*." The Rambam spells out the process in more detail. He writes that after the Yidden were exiled in the days of Nevuchadnetzar, they became scattered among various nations, and their children grew up speaking a mix of languages, losing their fluency in *Lashon Hakodesh*. This made it difficult for them to express themselves fully in *tefilla*. "When Ezra and his *beis din* saw this, they established eighteen *brachos* in sequence...so the *tefillos* could be set in the mouths of all."

The extent of the *takana* of *Anshei Knesses Hagedola* is a subject of debate, even among the *Rishonim*. Some, such as the *Rashba*,³ explain that *Anshei Knesses Hagedola* merely instituted a framework for *tefilla*. This included the theme of each *bracha* in *Shmoneh Esreh* and an outline of other *brachos* and *tefillos*. The exact wording of each *bracha*, however, was left to the individual. On the other hand, the Rambam quoted above seems to imply that *Anshei Knesses Hagedola* instituted the full text of the *tefillos*.

Regardless, the text of the *tefillos* did not remain static, but underwent many changes as time passed. Some of these were due to changes in circumstances—such as the *bracha* for *Yerushalayim* changing to a *bracha* for the **rebuilding** of the holy city after its destruction during the *Churban*. In addition, over the passage of time, various *tefillos* and *piyyutim* were added, some to the daily davening, and others for Shabbos, Yom Tov, other dates on the calendar, or lifecycle occasions.

During the era of the *Geonim*, the first "*siddurim*"—complete *nusachos* for all occasions—were authored. Some of the *siddurim*, such as *Siddur Rav Amram Gaon*, and *Siddur Rav*



PAGE FROM A 1200-YEAR-OLD, 4-INCH-LONG SIDDUR FROM THE PERIOD OF THE GEONIM. HOUSED IN A MUSEUM IN ERETZ YISROEL, IT IS THE OLDEST SIDDUR IN EXISTENCE.

Saadya Gaon, survive to this day, while many others have been lost. Several *Rishonim* also compiled *siddurim*, including one attributed to *Rashi*. The *Rambam* in *Mishneh Torah* also compiled the text of the *tefillos*.

As Yidden spread across Europe and the Middle East, settling in diverse locations, distinct *nuschaos* emerged in each region, each developing its own nuances and characteristics. The process of diversification continued for several centuries.

Later, as travel became more frequent and long-distance communication more reliable, the trend began to reverse. Communities and *rabbanim* gained the ability to connect with one another, leading to a gradual streamlining of *minhagim* and *nuschaos*. This increased connectivity reduced the splintering of smaller groups and their unique practices.

The invention of the printing press significantly accelerated this unification process. It marked the near-end of individually commissioned hand-written *siddurim* and the reliance on a few manuscript copies in each location. Instead, uniform printed *siddurim* became widely available, further standardizing the text of *tefillos* across different communities.

With some exceptions, such as *Nusach Italia*, which still exists to this day, most Yidden were davening either *Nusach Ashkenaz*—for Yidden in Northern and Eastern Europe, or (a variation of) *Nusach Hasefaradim* for those in the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa and the Middle East. Today, this

nusach is more commonly known as *Nusach Edot Hamizrach*. It is not to be confused with *Nusach Sefard*, which will be discussed below.

Counting Each Letter

In the year 5330, the light of the Arizal began to shine in the holy city of Tzfas. He taught the secrets of Kabbalah in an unprecedented manner, and his primary disciple was Rav Chaim Vital.

The Arizal taught many *kavanos hatefilla*, showing how each sentence, word, and even letter in *davening* has a deep *Kabbalistic* meaning. In many of these teachings, recorded by Rav Chaim Vital, the Arizal explained how the number of words or letters in a specific *tefilla*, or specific phrases, aligned with the *Olamot Ha'elyonim*, and the specific *madreiga* to which each *tefilla* corresponded. These precise word counts complemented earlier efforts by *Chachmei Ashkenaz*, such as the Rokeach, who were also *medayek* in the exact number of words in *tefillos* and *brachos*.

However, the Arizal did not author or compile a *nusach*. When the *Kisvei Arizal* specified that certain *tefillos* should contain particular word counts, multiple textual variations could satisfy these requirements. Similarly, while the Arizal provided specific annotations in works like *Shaar Hakavanos*, these were commentaries on existing texts rather than a



FIRST EDITION (FROM THE YEAR 5554) OF THE SIDDUR OF REB SHABSAI RASHKOVER, A TALMID OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV. IT PREDATES THE ALTER REBBE'S SIDDUR BY ALMOST 10 YEARS. THE REBBE CONSIDERED THIS SIDDUR AUTHORITATIVE IN DETERMINING THE ARIZAL'S NUSACH.

definitive *nusach*, leaving room for various interpretations and applications.

Another detail that left room for confusion was that while the Arizal generally preferred *Nusach Hasefardim*, there were places where he preferred *Nusach Ashkenaz*.⁴ All these factors left considerable uncertainty as to what was the proper “*Nusach Arizal*.”

Over the following generations, the Arizal’s students and their students composed *siddurim* that followed his *Kabbalah*. Some of the more famous “*Siddurei Ha’arizal*” included the *Siddur Mishnas Chassidim*—authored by Rav Emanuel Chai Ricchi, an Italian *rov*, *mekubal* and *paytan*;⁵ *Siddur Reb Yaakov Koppul*—authored by Rav Yaakov Koppul Lipshitz, a *mekubal* who lived in Mezeritch; and *Siddur Reb Shabsai Rashkover*⁶—a *mekubal* and *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov.

While these *siddurim* were faithful to the *Kisvei Ha’arizal*, they varied in *nusach*, incorporating variations only where the Arizal had not specified a preference.⁷ Some of the *Siddurei Ha’arizal* were chiefly *Nusach Hasefardim*; others were mainly *Nusach Ashkenaz*. Even in the same *siddur*, one could find a *tefilla* in *Nusach Hasefardim* and then one in *Nusach Ashkenaz*.

At some point, several printers attempted to accommodate both *Nusach Ashkenaz* and *Nusach Hasefardim* in their *siddurim* by presenting one as the primary text and the other in parentheses.⁸ This practice led some people to recite both versions, resulting in a *nusach* that might be described as “*kilayim*” (hybrid).

It was from these efforts that *Nusach Sefard* emerged. *Nusach Sefard* is an umbrella name for the *nusach* used by

Chassidim, a middle ground between the two above-mentioned *nuschaos*, while attempting to remain faithful to the Arizal’s teachings. This *nusach* is not uniform, with variations existing between different *siddurim*. Some *siddurim* lean more toward *Nusach Hasefardim*, while others tend more toward *Nusach Ashkenaz*. This diversity has persisted until today; one can find textual differences between the many editions of *Nusach Sefard*.

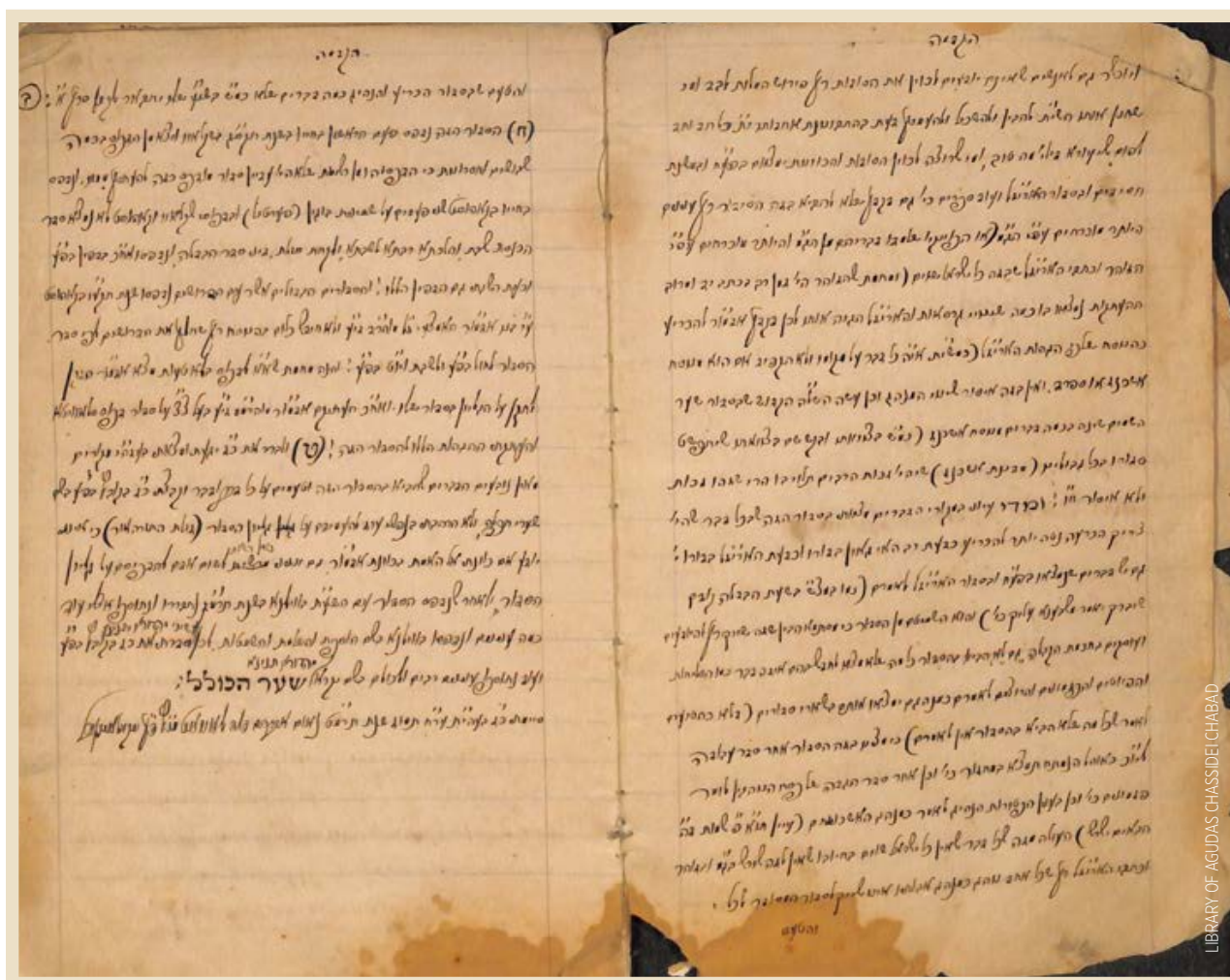
The Alter Rebbe’s Formulation

It is against this background that one can begin to understand the great need for the Alter Rebbe’s *nusach*. As Chassidim continued to spread, and with it, more Chassidim switching to *Nusach Arizal*, the urgent need increased for a curated and accurate *Nusach Arizal*.

This groundbreaking edition of the *siddur* needed to harmonize multiple considerations beyond the Arizal’s teachings. It had to align with halachic requirements as established by the *Shulchan Aruch* and *poskim*, conform to the rules of *dikduk*, and address various other scholarly considerations.

Tradition has it that the Alter Rebbe spent twenty years curating this *nusach*,⁹ and did so by carefully analyzing sixty different *siddurim* of various *nuschaos*.¹⁰ Chassidim counted the creation of this *nusach* among the “ten *zechusim* of the Alter Rebbe.”¹¹

“The Rebbe, Harav Reb Shneur Zalman z”l, author of the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and *Tanya*, compiled this *siddur* according to the Arizal’s *nusach*. He included only what



MANUSCRIPT OF THE CLOSING PAGES OF THE INTRODUCTION TO REB AVROHOM DOVID LAVUT'S "SHAAR HAKOLLEL," WHICH HE COMPLETED SHORTLY BEFORE HIS PASSING AND WAS PUBLISHED POSTHUMOUSLY.

was authentically received through the Arizal's writings and aligned with the halachic conclusions that the *poskim* derived from the *Gemara*. He carefully crafted the words to contain their mystical significance while deliberately omitting explicit explanations of these mysteries and *kavanos*, making it accessible to all, including those who comprehend only the simple meaning of the words... He did not insist on following either *Nusach Ashkenaz* or *Nusach Sefard* exclusively," Harav Avrohom Dovid Lavut writes in the introduction¹² to his *Shaar Hakollel*.

In a biographical sketch of the Alter Rebbe,¹³ Harav Shlomo Yosef Zevin described the *chiddush* of the *nusach*

in the following words: "Few *siddurim* are truly the work of authors; most are the product of printers and publishers. Authors typically confined themselves to providing commentaries or following an established *nusach*—whether Ashkenaz, Sefard, or similar traditions. The Rav, however, meticulously edited and scrutinized every sentence, word, and letter in the *siddur*. Beyond embedding Kabbalistic *kavanos*—which were not meant for everyone—the very *nusach* itself evokes profound spiritual feelings of sanctity, grandeur, radiance, and beauty."

The praise for the *siddur* didn't only come from Chabad Chassidim. In a short essay written by Harav Boruch



THE TWO WORKS
PUBLISHED BY
REB AVROHOM
CHAIM NA'EH
ON THE ALTER
REBBE'S SIDDUR.



Mordechai Klein, a Hungarian *rav* who emigrated to the USA in 5670, and is described as being “far from any Chabad influence,”¹⁴ he writes that he chose to daven from the Alter Rebbe’s *siddur*, “which had all textual errors removed and was edited with the utmost precision.”¹⁵

Even more emphatically, Harav Avrohom Chaim Na’eh directly confronted those who tried to limit the *siddur*’s scope by claiming it was designed exclusively for Chassidim. He rejected attempts to use this argument to explain away halachic differences between the Alter Rebbe’s *siddur* and others.

“This is mere conjecture without substance or merit. How could Chassidim require different halachic rulings from the rest of the Jewish people regarding the laws of *tzitzis*, *tefillin*, Shabbos, and similar matters? Moreover, it is well known that the Alter Rebbe composed the *siddur* with simple people in mind—which is precisely why he omitted *kavanos*, *yichudim*, and *Sheimos* from the *tefillos*, as explained in the introduction to *Shaar HaKollel*...In addition, certainly, his aspiration was that the entire world should become Chassidim!”¹⁶

Highlighting the Uniqueness

Despite the acclaim for the *siddur*, it was 84 years before the first work on the *siddur* was published, namely *Shaar Hatefilla* by Harav Avrohom Dovid Lavut—a precursor to his *Shaar Hakollel*.

“Let us praise him, for he was the first to set his heart to creating annotations and commentary for the words of the [Alter] Rebbe in the *siddur*. And it is truly lamentable that the *geonei anash* in the earlier generations, who were close to the time of the Rebbe, did not arise to follow in his footsteps in elucidating the *siddur* and the Shulchan Aruch, for then we would certainly have merited extraordinary insights and a true understanding of the underlying reasons,”¹⁷ Harav Avrohom Chaim Na’eh wrote a generation later.

Harav Na’eh himself authored two works on the *siddur*, *Piskei Siddur* on the *halachos* in the *siddur* in comparison to the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, and *Kuntres Hasiddur* to clarify and correct various details in the *nusach* of the Torah Ohr Siddur—which was considered the most accurate edition of the Alter

Rebbe's Siddur.

Since *nusach* is a specialized field, and is not as widely discussed as *halacha*, it was only in the past 20-some years that additional works on the *siddur* have been published. These are *Hasiddur*,¹⁸ a compilation of articles and documents related to the *siddur*; *Shaarei Tefilla U'minhag*—a two-volume work by Harav Mordechai Shmuel Ashkenazi, *rav* of Kfar Chabad;¹⁹ and *Siddur Rabbeinu Hazaken*—a comprehensive work on the Alter Rebbe's Siddur by Dayan Levi Raskin of London, first published in a single 800-page-volume,²⁰ and soon to be released in an expanded three-volume edition.

We will now explore several examples that highlight some of the unique features of the Alter Rebbe's *nusach*, drawing on the works mentioned for a glimpse into the masterpiece that is the *siddur*.

Precision in Halacha

With regard to *brachos*, one of the *halachic* requirements is that it must have an expression similar to the conclusion of the *bracha* **near** the conclusion ("מעין החתימה סמוך לחתימה").²¹ The Alter Rebbe was careful that this should be maintained in every *bracha* throughout *davening*. One striking example of where he modified the *nusach* to adhere to this *halacha* is in the *bracha* of *Boneh Yerushalayim* in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

The *bracha* in most *nuschaos* concludes with "ובנה אותה", "בקרוב בימינו בנין עולם וכסא דוד עבדך מהרה לתוכה תכין", which disrupts the principle by inserting a phrase about *Malchus Beis Dovid* before concluding "ברוך אתה ה' בונה ירושלים". Therefore, the Alter Rebbe rearranged the order, placing "וכסא דוד עבדך", "ובנה אותה בקרוב בימינו בנין עולם", **before** "מהרה בתוכה תכין", thereby ensuring the *halachic* principle is precisely followed.

The Alter Rebbe followed the same meticulous approach in the *bracha* of *Yotzer Hameoros* in *Birchas Krias Shema*. In the standard *nusach*, the words "אור חדש על ציון תאיר", "יוצר המאורות", immediately before the *chasima* (conclusion), "מעין החתימה סמוך", disrupting the *halachic* requirement of "לחתימה." The Alter Rebbe therefore omitted this line, so that one recites "לעושה אורים גדולים כי לעולם חסדו" just before the conclusion which speaks of the *Me'oros*.²²

Precision in Kabbalah

The Arizal not only taught the *kavanos* of various *tefillos* but also revealed the precise number of words in each *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* and other sections of the *siddur*, showing how each detail aligns with the *kavanos*. In *Shaar Hakollel*, Harav Lavut references many of these teachings to explain



the specific *nusach* chosen by the Alter Rebbe.

The Alter Rebbe was meticulous in adhering to the authentic teachings of the Arizal, rather than simply following what was printed in various editions of *Siddurei Ha'Arizal*. One example of this precision appears before the *bracha* of *Ahavas Olam* in *Birchas Krias Shema*, where the Alter Rebbe specifies, "Even on Shabbos and Yom Tov, we say *Ahavas Olam* and not *Ahava Rabbah*." *Shaar Hakollel*²³ explains that the Alter Rebbe explicitly rejected the *nusach* of *Ahava Rabbah*—despite generally avoiding instructions on what **not** to say—because in certain printed versions of the Arizal's Siddur, it states to say *Ahava Rabbah* on Shabbos and Yom Tov. The Alter Rebbe, therefore, found it necessary to clarify that this directive does not originate from the Arizal.

Precision According to Chassidus

"*Toras Emes* was in his mouth, and the precise *dikdukim* of words align perfectly with the desired *kavana*."²⁴ It is with

these words that the Maharil, the Alter Rebbe's brother, describes the depth hidden in plain sight in the *nusach*.

At times, the *kavanos* and deeper meanings are discernible only to those well-versed in *Kabbalah*. Other times, the words align perfectly with the teachings of Chassidus, and the correlation becomes transparent. Sometimes, this nuance can be seen in something as subtle as a punctuation mark.

One such example is *Baruch Sh'eomar*. Some *nuschaos* read "יחיד חי העולמים. מלך משוכח ומפואר עדי עד שמו הגדול" — placing the pause before *melech*. Thus, the phrase reads "a King, whose Name is praised and glorified forever." In the Alter Rebbe's *nusach*, as recorded by the Tzemach Tzedek,²⁵ the pause is placed after *מלך*, with that word part of the previous phrase.

A seemingly minor change. But when learning Chassidus, this subtle modification is illuminated in a new light. In several passages in *Likkutei Torah* and *Torah Ohr*,²⁶ the Alter Rebbe explains that the word *melech* refers to the level of *malchus*, and the entire *chayus* of the world—חי העולמים—emanates from that level, the last of the *sefiros*.

Precision in Dikduk

In *Birkas HaMazon*, we see an example of the Alter Rebbe's precision in *dikduk*. In most Ashkenazi *siddurim*, the text reads: שבכל יום ויום הוא הטיב הוא מטיב הוא ייטיב. This describes Hashem's ongoing kindness, but the formulation presents grammatical challenges. Since it is describing ongoing good—שבכל יום ויום—how can the next words be הטיב, which is in the past tense?

In some earlier versions of *Nusach Sefard*,²⁷ a more grammatically coherent version is offered: בכל יום ויום הוא מטיב לנו; הוא הטיב לנו. This splits up the phrase, with the words בכל יום ויום connected to הוא מטיב לנו—in the present tense.

The Alter Rebbe's approach is characteristically nuanced. While preserving the framework of *Nusach Ashkenaz*, he introduces a critical modification: "הוא. הוא מטיב לנו בכל יום ויום." forming a new sentence to eliminate the previously noted grammatical awkwardness.

Precision in Meaning

To illustrate the Alter Rebbe's meticulous attention to the meaning of the *tefillos*, we turn to a letter from the Rebbe²⁸ that discusses why the Alter Rebbe substituted the words "ועל המלחמות" found in "ועל הנסים"—which appears in many *nuschaos*—with "ועל הנפלאות".

"Concerning what you wrote about the reasoning behind the Alter Rebbe's version of "ועל הנפלאות" instead of "ועל" the *המלחמות*" found in some *siddurim*.

"There is a well-known story attributed to the Tzemach Tzedek (cited in *Beis Rebbe* chapter 27), that when the Alter Rebbe established the *nusach* of his *siddur*, he had sixty different *siddurim* in front of him.

"Indeed, in several *nuschaos*, the phrase 'ועל הנפלאות' is found. (*Avudarham*, the *Siddur* of Yaavetz, and the *Siddur* of Eretz Yisrael, Syria, Turkey, and Egypt, as noted by Rabbi Gagin in his book *Keser Shem Tov*, among others.)

"The Alter Rebbe chose this particular *nusach* for several straightforward reasons:

1. The phrase "ועל המלחמות" — "and for the wars" is difficult to understand on its own; the main point is lacking. It would need to say 'the victory of the wars' (הנצחון המלחמות) or something similar.
2. The *girsas* of the Razah (Rabbeinu Zerachiah HaLevi) and his explanation (as cited in the *Siddur* of Yaavetz) of "ועל התשועות (שנעשו) על המלחמות" — "and for the deliverances (that were achieved) through the wars," is also not clear. If so, it should have said "ועל הפורקן" — "and for the deliverance (that was) from the troubles" and the like.
3. The Sephardic *Siddurim* replace "מלחמות" with "נחמות", which also doesn't quite fit, as comfort does not seem to fit in the context. The complexities of interpreting the phrase "ונחמתא" in the *Kaddish* are well known, as referenced in the Tur, *Orach Chayim siman* 56.
4. In my humble opinion, this is a clear proof for the Alter Rebbe's *nusach*: In *Haneiros Halalu* we mention "niflaos" twice, while in *Al Hanissim*, not even once?! One can also learn from that context, where we see the phrases for *nissim* and *yeshuos*, that it should be so in *V'al Hanissim* as well.

Precision in Nikkud

The original *nusach* of the Alter Rebbe was extremely precise in the *nikkud* of every word. However, this was especially hard to maintain, magnified by the complicated printing process of the time. Already in the time of the Maharil, when asked about *diyukim* in *nikkud* and such, he responded, "I am unable to answer you, as not all editions are similar."²⁹

When compiling the *Siddur Torah Ohr*, Harav Avrohom Dovid Lavut expended much energy to correct all the *nikkud*,



FIRST EDITION OF THE LUBAVITCHER MACHZOR PRINTED BY MERKOS IN 5709. THE SHAAR BLATT DESCRIBES THE NUSACH AS BEING “ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM OF CHASSIDIM WHO DAVEN WITH THE SIDDUR OF THE ARIZAL IN THE ALTER REBBE’S NUSACH.”

and his *Shaar Hakollel* has many examples where he points out the correct *nikkud* for a word. Harav Avrohom Chaim Na'eh published his edits to the Siddur Torah Ohr in *Kuntres Hasiddur*, noting places he disagreed with Harav Lavut.

On that note, it is worth quoting Harav Zevin’s words on how much weight Chabad Chassidim gave to even one small *nekuda* in the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur.³⁰

“Every word, letter, or punctuation mark—even the most minute point in this *siddur*—is a law that shall not be transgressed. For beyond clarifying and refining the text according to the intended *kavana* of the Arizal, he carefully considered the arrangement of words to establish [them] according to true grammatical precision.

“Chabad Chassidim, for example, would not say ‘*mashiv haruach u’morid hageshem*’ (with a *kamatz* under the

Gimmel), but rather ‘*u’morid hageshem*’ (with a *segol* under the Gimmel), because this is how it was printed in the Rebbe’s Siddur (in all other *siddurim*, ‘*hagoshem*’ is printed with a *kamatz*), not because the Rebbe explicitly wrote to read it with a *segol*, but because this is how the Gimmel is specifically vowelized in his *siddur*.

“And might this be a printing error? Absolutely not. The *siddur* was printed three times during the author’s lifetime, and on the margins of the *siddur* from which the author himself prayed, he marked and corrected everything he found requiring correction. His grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, later transcribed these corrections to his *siddur*, and subsequently, Rabbi Lavut of Nikolayev printed them in the ‘Torah Ohr’ *siddur* (this edition is considered by Chassidim as the definitive, carefully corrected version of the Rebbe’s Siddur), and no correction regarding ‘*hageshem*’ appears there. This demonstrates that the *segol* is genuinely a *segol* and must not be altered. To such an extraordinary degree do Chabad Chassidim adhere to their authoritative *siddur*.”

The Siddur for Each of Us

These examples are but a drop in the ocean of the depth to be found in the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur—encompassing *Halacha*, *Kabbalah*, *Chassidus*, and *Dikduk*.

This depth and brilliance highlights the remarkable paradox of the Alter Rebbe’s *nusach*. While fully grasping the wisdom contained within requires years of intensive study and knowledge across a wide range of subjects, the Alter Rebbe specifically arranged the *siddur* in such a way that even someone who never studied these subjects can use it to daven in the best manner possible.

In a *hadran* delivered in 5704, the Rebbe stressed this point, saying it brought out the true greatness of the Alter Rebbe.

“Consider the extraordinary stature of the Alter Rebbe—we know absolutely nothing about it! And yet—and this is his true greatness—he was concerned for every single Jew, and did not include Hashem’s names with different *nekudos* [*al pi Kabbalah*]—because he was concerned that simple Jews ‘*veln zich durch dem farshrekn*’—would become frightened by this!”³¹

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Despite the meticulous *diyuk* the Alter Rebbe invested in the *siddur*, there was one area he left open-ended, sparking significant debate.

In the original *siddur* published by the Alter Rebbe, there is a notable omission: the customary *selichos* recited on fast days, as well as the *piyutim* traditionally recited during the *Yomim Noraim*, are not included. Yet, the Alter Rebbe did not entirely ignore these sup-plications. In the *tefillos* of Yom Kippur, following the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Musaf* and the *Seder Avoda*, a brief note in parentheses states: “כאהל הנמתח כ’ תמצא” — For the *piyut* “*K’ohel Hanimtach*” refer to the *machzor*.

In other words, the Alter Rebbe recognized the recitation of certain *piyutim* but chose not to include them in his *siddur*. This naturally raises the question: why did he omit them? And if there are additional *tefillos* beyond those printed in the *siddur*, what exactly does that encompass?

In *Sha’ar Hatefilla*, and later in *Sha’ar Hakollel*, Harav Lavut offered his explanation:³² “[The Alter Rebbe] also did not include in the *siddur* any section of davening in which he found no need to change anything, such as *selichos*, *pizmonim*, and *piyutim*. Those who wish to recite them according to their custom will find them in other *siddurim*. (This is contrary to the mistaken belief that anything omitted from the *siddur* should not be recited.) ...The takeaway from this is

that anything which is not universally obligatory—lacking a direct source in the Gemara, Zohar, or the writings of the Arizal, and instead rooted in individual customs—is not suited for a *siddur* intended for all.”

In other words, Harav Lavut explained that the *siddur* was intended to be universal, containing only *tefillos* that are an absolute *chiyuv*. For additional recitations tied to various *minhagim*, each person could—and indeed should—follow their community’s customs.

As proof, he pointed out the note in *Tefillas Yom Kippur* and further observed that at the end of the *Haggadah*, the Alter Rebbe wrote: “Those who have the custom to recite *pizmonim* should not interrupt with them between the *bracha* [at the conclusion of *Hallel*] and the *bracha* on the [fourth] cup.” This demonstrates that the Alter Rebbe acknowledged the recital of *pizmonim*, even if he did not include them in his *siddur*.

When the Rebbe Rashab received Harav Lavut’s *Siddur Torah Ohr* with the *Sha’arei Tefillah*, he sent him a letter³³ with several critiques. One of them addressed this topic.

“Regarding what you wrote about *selichos*, *piyutim*, and *pizmonim*: I heard from a reliable source who heard from the elder R’ Binyamin Chaim of Ladi (who remembers the [Alter] Rebbe and was seven years old at the time of his *histalkus*). He knows clearly that in the [Alter] Rebbe’s *beis knesses*, they did not recite *selichos* or the full *Avinu Malkeinu* on a *ta’anis tzibur*. According to my opinion, those *pizmonim* that were not included in the *siddur* should certainly not be recited.”

In contrast, Harav Lavut later took a starkly different position in *Sha’ar Hakollel*, in the section discussing *Pesach*. In *Shulchan Aruch*, the Alter Rebbe instructs to recite a section of the *Haggadah*, beginning from *avadim hayinu*, on *Shabbos Hagadol*. However, in his *siddur*, the Alter Rebbe does not mention this custom. From this omission, Harav Lavut extrapolated that the Alter Rebbe’s opinion was not to recite *avadim hayinu* on *Shabbos Hagadol*.

The Rebbe Rashab sharply disagreed with him on this point as well. During a *Shabbos* meal attended by Harav Yaakov Landa, who served as the *rav* of the



HARAV YAAKOV LANDAU, WHO SERVED AS RAV IN THE REBBE RASHAB’S CHATZER, AND LATER WENT ON TO SERVE AS CHIEF RABBI OF BNEI BRAK FOR OVER 50 YEARS.

Rebbe Rashab's *chatzer*, the Rebbe Rashab discussed various additions and omissions that had been made in the *Torah Ohr Siddur* by Harav Lavut, expressing his displeasure. He especially disapproved of the fact that Harav Lavut had included the *yehi ratzon* to be recited after the *Parshas Hanesi'im* in the month of Nissan.

When Harav Landa asked whether one should refrain from saying the *yehi ratzon*, the Rebbe responded: "Ah! Who says it?! Just because the Alter Rebbe did not include a note in the *siddur* stating, 'Up to here you recite on Shabbos HaGadol,' does that prove we shouldn't say *avadim hayinu* on Shabbos HaGadol? And just because it says, 'refer to the *machzor* for *K'mareh Kohen*,' does that mean one must say everything in the *machzor*? It's actually the opposite! On Shabbos HaGadol, *avadim hayinu* should indeed be recited, whereas the *Yehi Ratzon* should not be said!"³⁴

Nonetheless, the Rebbe, in *Hayom Yom*,³⁵ recorded the *minhag* to recite the *Yehi Ratzon*, writing: "After reciting the *Nesi'im*, the *Yehi Ratzon* printed in the *Siddur Torah Ohr* is recited, and the Kohanim and Levi'im also say it." After *Hayom Yom* was printed, Harav Landa wrote to the Rebbe to relate his

conversation with the Rebbe Rashab on the topic. The Rebbe responded³⁵: "All the practices that I printed in '*Hayom Yom*' were included according to the instructions of my father-in-law, the [Friediker] Rebbe. Before printing, they were again reviewed by him (and there were some that he ordered to omit, saying they were not instructions meant for the public)... We also saw, several times, my father-in-law, the Rebbe, reciting the '*Yehi Ratzon*'..."

Similarly, regarding *Selichos* and *Piyyutim* for the *Yomim Noraim*, the Rebbe recorded the Friediker Rebbe's instructions about which *Piyyutim* to recite on each date. These instructions were initially printed in appendices to the published booklets of the Friediker Rebbe's *Maamarim*. Later, *Kehos* produced dedicated *sifrei tefilla* compiling these specified *tefillos* and *piyyutim*—first publishing a *Machzor* for the *Yomim Noraim*, and subsequently a *Selichos*.

This explains why neither the *Machzor* nor the *Selichos* specify that they follow the Alter Rebbe's *nusach*, as no such *nusach* exists for these *tefillos*. Instead, they are described as being "*al pi minhag Chabad*," or "according to the custom of those who daven *nusach ha'arizal*."

1. Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Tefilla, Perek 1, Halacha 1.

2. 33a.

3. Chiddushei Harashba, Brachos 11a.

4. Such as in *Shaar Hakavanos – Inyan Nusach Hatefilla*, p. 331, where Rav Chaim Vital writes, "And such is the *nusach* of the *Ashkenazim*."

5. *Shaar Hakollel* notes that the *nusach* of the *siddur* was not compiled by Rav Emanuel Chai, who only authored the commentary, which was then published with a *nusach* chosen by the printers.

6. The Rebbe referred to this *siddur* as "The most authoritative to determine the Arizal's *nusach*." [Toras Menachem 5742 vol. 2, p. 910.]

7. *Shaar Hakollel* (2019 edition), *Hakdama*, p. 16.

8. *Hasiddur*, p. 66.

9. *Reshima* of the Rebbe Rashab, printed in *Hasiddur*, p. 13.

10. Beis Rebbe section 1, p. 167, quoting the

Tzemach Tzedek.

11. *Likkutei Dibburim* (2021 edition), vol. 4, p. 1379).

12. Page 18 in the 2019 edition.

13. <https://www.daat.ac.il/he-il/hasidut/toldot/plaaim.htm>

14. *Hasiddur*, p. 63.

15. Ibid.

16. *Piskei Hasiddur, Hakdama*. Printed in Ketzos Hashulchan vol. 7–9, p. 1515.

17. Ibid, p. 1516.

18. Edited by Rabbi Gedalia Oberlander and Rabbi Nochum Greenwald, and published by Heichal Menachem Monsey, Monsey, NY, 2003.

19. Vol. 1 published by Mayanotecha, Kfar Chabad, 2013. Vol. 2 published posthumously, Kfar Chabad 2021.

20. Published by Kehot, Brooklyn, NY, 2004.

21. See *Pesachim* 104a, and *Shulchan Aruch Harav Siman* 473, se'if 9.

22. See Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch Siman* 59, se'if 6.

23. Page 23.

24. *Sheeiris Yehuda* (2008 edition) *Orach Chaim, Siman Yud Tes*.

25. *Hagahos* printed in *Siddur Torah Ohr*, p. 482.

26. See *Torah Ohr*, 40c.

27. *Temunot Tehinot Tefilot Sefarad*. Venice, 1524. Incidentally, this was the edition of the *Siddur* that was used by the Arizal.

28. Printed in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 10, p. 315.

29. *Hasiddur*, p. 35.

30. *Sofrim V'Seforim – Poskim, Perushim, Chiddushim*, p. 27.

31. *Hadran Al Hashas Chof Daled Teves 5704* (Kehot, Brooklyn, NY, 1994), p. 15.

32. *Sha'ar Hakollel, Hakdama*, p. 18.

33. Printed in *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab* vol. 1, p. 17.

34. *Hasiddur*, p. 93.

35. *Hayom Yom*, Rosh Chodesh Nissan

35. *Igros Kodesh* vol 2, page 146.

Let's Talk About Eretz Yisroel

THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE REBBE'S TORAH

PART 4 Embrace the Solitude

COMPILED BY:
RABBI MENDEL MISHOLOVIN

WRITTEN BY:
RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

Special thanks to the Enduring Peace think-tank, JEM and Sichos in English.

לזכות
החיילת בצבאות ה'
שיינא שתחל'
לרגל יום הולדתה ג' טבת

נדפס ע"י הוריה
הרה"ת ר' חיים אפרים וזוגתו
מרת ח' מושקא שיחי
גאלדשטיין

In honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan 5732, Yitzchak Rabin, Israel's ambassador to the United States, traveled from Washington D.C. to New York to convey birthday greetings to the Rebbe on behalf of Israel's president, Zalman Shazar. He was accompanied by Yehuda Avner, a member of his staff. At approximately 4:00 p.m., they entered the Rebbe's room for a *yechidus* that lasted for 45 minutes.

(The following quotations from the Rebbe are based on the oral accounts of Prime Minister Rabin and Ambassador Avner years later.)

Towards the beginning of the *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked Ambassador Rabin: "Don't you feel alone as the representative of the Jewish state among the 120 countries and peoples represented in Washington?"

The premise of the question was based on the *possuk* in Parshas Balak. When Bilam sought to curse Bnei Yisroel, Hashem thwarted his plans and forced him to bless them instead. Bilam stated: (Balak 23:9)

כִּי מֵרָאשׁ צָרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ וּמִגְבָּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ הֵן עִם לְבָדֵד יִשְׁכֵּן וּבְגוֹלִים לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב.

"For from their beginning, I see them as mountain peaks, and I behold them as hills; it is a nation that will dwell alone, and will not be reckoned among the nations."

The fact that the Jewish nation is described as one "who will dwell alone" in the blessings that replaced Bilam's intended curses, implies that this solitude is not an anomaly. Our solitude among the nations is the reason we have survived thousands of years in exile, scattered throughout the world, far from our homeland, often under the worst circumstances possible.

"Is it by choice or by force that Israel dwells alone among other nations?" the Rebbe asked.

It is a combination of both. Our dedication to learning Torah and observing Mitzvos has separated us from our neighbors by choice, ensuring we never assimilated. In

MR. YITZCHAK RABIN
IN THE OFFICE OF
MAZKIRUS BEFORE
MEETING WITH THE
REBBE IN YECHIDUS,
NISSAN 5732.



addition, persecution isolated us from the rest of the nations and allowed us to outlast everyone else as well. Both these positive and negative forces preserved our nation throughout history.

“This is the natural state of the Jewish people. It will always walk alone in the world. It will always be a part of history, but pursue its own narrative in history... One does not need to be a mystic to acknowledge that this is the historical reality of the Jewish people throughout the whole of its chronicles. We have always dwelled alone, and the State of Israel will not change that Divine reality.”



Over the past century, many misguidedly believed that the creation of a Jewish state was the best way to “normalize” the Jewish people and resolve the age-old problem of antisemitism. However, the Torah emphatically declares that the Jewish people are destined to be “abnormal” in comparison with the rest of the nations; emulating other nation-states is against our nature and will certainly not earn us popularity.

History has proven that even when Jews tried to live non-Jewish lifestyles and adopt non-Jewish attitudes, it did not change the natural state of Jewish solitude. Bilam was the only non-Jewish prophet recorded in Torah, and the nations of the world never forgot his prophecy about us. Often, when Jews tried hard to become like everyone else, their neighbors saw them as duplicitous, since Jews were always meant to be “a nation that dwells alone,” separate and different. Running away from our unique identity earns us the ridicule and mockery of the nations, while embracing our unique identity earns us their respect and admiration.

The consistent double standard Israel is subjected to on the world stage is a source of eternal chagrin for many. Trying to overcome this challenge by enthusiastically embracing the moral priorities of the nations whose “legitimization” we seek is futile because our solitude, which stems from our

connection to Torah, not only impacts our personal lives, but has a direct influence on the Jewish possession of Eretz Yisroel.

The Navi Yechezkel declared: (Yechezkel 33:24)

אָדוּד הָיָה אַבְרָהָם וַיֵּרֶשׂ אֶת הָאָרֶץ.

Avraham was one, and he inherited the land.

The Midrash explains that the idea that “Avraham was one” means that he was alone in the world in his conviction and dedication to Hashem while everyone else was against him. One of the messages of the *possuk* is that to successfully possess the divine land of Eretz Yisroel, one must embrace and live by the ideas, principles, and morals of Hashem’s Torah, especially when it comes to maintaining security in the land, even at the expense of global solitude.

Throughout the past 75 years, many policies adopted by Israel’s leaders were motivated by the misguided belief that “normalization” is possible, that redemption from almost two thousand years of exile means becoming accepted as part of the family of nations through adopting their perspectives and beliefs. It failed because, as Torah clearly states, it is impossible to undo the solitude that is our divine destiny.

Torah is not just a collection of rules we must follow. It is the divine blueprint of reality from which we learn the proper attitudes we must have as a society to understand what is happening in the world around us and respond accordingly.

Our moral priorities and worldviews must be shaped by the Torah of Truth, the divine ideals that have preserved us since the beginning of our existence and are the only ones that will ensure our security in our homeland.

With this in mind, we will continue in future installments by exploring the Torah principles that provide a clear path to security, prosperity, and respect from all humanity. **T**

Primary Sources: JEM: *Faithful and Fortified: Israel’s Prime Ministers: Yitzchak Rabin* (<https://jemtv.page.link/phmY>); 20 Av 5724, *Toras Menachem* vol. 40, p. 310; *Letter to Lev Bykovsku, Chanukah 5737; The Letter and the Spirit* vol. 2, p. 415.

HOW CHASSIDIM LEARNED NIGLEH

By: Rabbi Mendy Greenberg

In the preparation of this article, we were
greatly assisted by Rabbi Shmuel Super.

The Bochur Who Only Learned Chassidus

On Chai Elul 5658, a year after Tomchei Temimim was established, the first group of Talmidim came to visit the Rebbe Rashab.

Over the previous year, this group of eighteen hand-picked *Temimim* had been studying in Zhembin under the guidance of the *mashpia*, Reb Shmuel Gronem Esterman. The new yeshiva was still very much an experiment, and the ideas we take for granted today—like the two-thirds *nigleh*, one-third Chassidus ratio—weren't set in stone. In fact, each *bochur* was pretty much learning *nigleh* on his own.

When the Rebbe Rashab saw the group, he was overjoyed. "I can hardly find the words," the Frierdiker Rebbe later wrote, "to describe the incredible joy my holy father, the Rebbe, experienced when he saw the *talmidim*. The change in them was so obvious, not just in how they acted, but even in how they looked."¹

During their visit, the Rebbe Rashab took the opportunity to clear up some confusion regarding the role of the yeshiva. Apparently, some *bochurim* had gotten the idea that their primary focus in this uniquely Chassidishe yeshiva should be

learning Chassidus—and they spent many hours immersed in *maamarim*, while letting *nigleh* fall by the wayside.

In a letter, the Rebbe Rashab explained that their approach was mistaken. The foundation of Torah learning is in *nigleh*, and studying only Chassidus is not sufficient—just as a person needs bread, not just wine, to live.

But in that same letter, the Rebbe Rashab made another crucial point—it's not just about learning *nigleh*, but about *how* you learn it:

"When a person reflects on the fact that Torah is truly Hashem's Wisdom and Will, they will avoid distorting its true meaning. Their focus won't be on stubbornly pushing their own interpretation even when they realize it's incorrect. Instead, their goal will be to uncover the true meaning and intention of Hashem's Torah."²

When Chassidim Criticized the Rogatchover

In those days, there were two main approaches to learning *nigleh*. Some focused intensely *al asar*—delving deep into the *sugya* before them, trying to understand it from every

possible angle. Others took a broader approach, known as *pilpul*. They would hop from *masechta* to *masechta*, connecting different concepts and ideas and attempting to build new structures by cross-referencing sources. The first approach was generally associated with Lithuania, the second with Poland.

Chabad Chassidim were firmly planted in the former.

The Frierdiker Rebbe once shared a story about a group of young *lomdim* who were learning together, each coming up with complicated *pilpulim*, trying to impress each other with their brilliance. One of them was especially proud of his *leshitasei* (finding the logical throughline of the various opinions) of Rabba, connecting a topic from *Eruvin* with a topic from *Kesubos*.

Nearby, some Chabad Chassidim were learning as well. At first, they remained silent, despite the fact that they didn't quite agree with this approach. But when the *yungerman* began explaining his "brilliant" *leshitasei*, one of the Chassidim couldn't hold back any longer and responded, "It's bad enough that you're tormenting the Tannaim and Amoraim with your *chiddushim*; but why must you drag Rabba in iron chains from Eiruvim to Kesubos?"³

In fact, this criticism was even leveled—though quietly—at the Rogatchover Gaon.

After the Rogatchover passed away, an article was published by Reb Hillel Tzeitlin⁴ describing the *lomdus* among Chabad Chassidim in his youth in Rogatchov, and their perspective on the Gaon.

"The great Chabad *lomdim* were known for their ability to dive deep into the essence of the *sugya*. Others, on the other hand, were more focused on mastering the breadth of Torah—spanning Bavli and Yerushalmi, Rishonim, Acharonim, and Poskim.

"I remember the great Chabad *lomdim* in my town once discussing the greatness of the famed Rogatchover Gaon. As they spoke in admiration, one of them quietly remarked, 'But when it comes to learning *al asar* (on the current page), he's not so *ay-ay-ay*...'

"What they meant was that, while the Rogatchover was unmatched in his encyclopedic knowledge and his ability to weave together pieces from the Bavli, Yerushalmi, Tosafos, Rif, Rosh, and especially the Rambam, he wasn't as focused on the type of deep, precision learning that was so prized in Chabad. For them, learning *al asar* meant dissecting a *sugya*, word by word, going deeper and deeper until you reached its very root, and then growing an entire structure from that root—branches, leaves, and all."

This approach to learning, Reb Hillel argues, was a perfect reflection of the Chabad approach to learning Chassidus.

"This stemmed from the Chabad approach of deep, profound meditation in understanding *Elokus*, bringing that same focus to Gemara and its *meforshim*. Because of this, they didn't put as much emphasis on being sharp or knowing a lot of information. What really mattered to them was depth. They felt that the Rogatchover Gaon's brilliance in Bavli, Yerushalmi, and Rishonim didn't always have the focus needed to thoroughly delve into the issue..."



PORTRAIT OF THE
ROGATCHOVER
GAON.



BOCHURIM ENGAGED IN DISCUSSION OUTSIDE YESHIVAS
TOMCHEI TMIMIM IN OTWOCK. CIRCA 5697.

However, he concludes, their criticism in this instance was misplaced. “They were completely wrong about the Rogatchover’s genius. In reality, he had an amazing ability to combine profound understanding with vast *bekius* as well.”⁵

Infiltration to Lubavitch

Despite the prevalence of the classic Chabad approach expressed in Reb Hillel’s article, Tomchei Temimim soon began attracting *bochurim* from all sorts of Yeshivos, and some were inclined to learn with the other approach.

The Rebbe Rashab was very concerned about this ‘infiltration,’ and penned a clear response to it in Kuntres Eitz Hachayim. Needless to say, this approach came to a swift end.

What did the learning in Lubavitch look like? The following account was penned by Reb Shmaryahu Sasonkin, who arrived at the Yeshiva several years later.

“In Lubavitch, learning was all about getting to the core of the *sugya* to come out with a clear conclusion in halacha. Since the focus was always on figuring out the practical halacha, they stayed away from extra *pilpul* that didn’t directly help with that. Instead, they focused only on what was necessary to understand the *sugya* properly.

“We would go from the earliest Rishonim all the way to the latest Acharonim. First, we would learn through the *sugya* with Rashi and Tosafos. Once we had a solid grasp of it, understanding the differences between them, we would move on to the Rif, Ran, or Nimukei Yosef, followed by the Rosh. After doing so thoroughly, learning the Tur, Beis Yosef, and Shulchan Aruch was much easier—it felt like a review of what we had already covered.

“The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch served as the guiding

light for those learning halacha, especially Orach Chaim and Yoreh De’ah (wherever the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch is available). We would also learn Acharonim such as Pri Megadim, Ketzos HaChoshen, Nesivos HaMishpat, and others.

“Once we had fully mastered the *sugya*, the *teshuvos* of the Geonim were like an enjoyable dessert; we would delve into the *teshuvos* of the Noda B’Yehuda, the Chasam Sofer, Rebbe Akiva Eiger, the Tzemach Tzedek, and others, enriching our knowledge and sharpening our understanding further. In my days, there were a good number of *bochurim* who were exceptionally gifted, so there was no difficult *sugya* in Gemara or Halacha that wasn’t clarified in depth.

“This method of learning suited the *bochurim* well. Most *bochurim* in Tomchei Tmimim came from *yeshivos* where the *roshei yeshiva* were true *geonim* whose goal was to deeply penetrate the *sugya*. Most *bochurim* were Chabad Chassidim themselves, who naturally loved the “*al asar*” style of learning, and this was also true of those who came from the *yeshivos* in Kremenchug and Amtchislav, even though those *roshei yeshiva* were not Chabad Chassidim.

“In Kremenchug, the rosh yeshiva was the renowned *gaon*, Reb Yitzchok Zev Zuckerman, known as ‘the Gadol,’ and in Amtchislav it was the *gaon* Reb Elchonon Wasserman. Both of them avoided excessive *pilpul* and taught their students with their clear and brilliant minds, ensuring the *sugya* was understood with clarity.

“However, some students from other *yeshivos*, where the focus was purely on creating new *chiddushim* and engaging in excessive *pilpul*, managed to slip into Lubavitch. The moment this ‘foreign spirit’ entered the Beis Midrash, the Rebbe Rashab sensed it. He strongly opposed it, issuing sharp warnings to distance oneself from this foreign style of learning.

“He explained that when the sole purpose of study is to invent new ideas, there is no proper focus on understanding the true meaning of the halacha. As a result, these students often didn’t even know the actual halacha itself, because their desire to innovate prevented them from truly engaging with the subject. The Rebbe Rashab pointed out that the Zohar says that learning in such a way strengthens the forces of the *sitra achra*. If a halachic decision is based on such baseless *pilpul*, it is spiritually damaging, even dangerous.

“True *pilpul*, the Rebbe Rashab said, can only happen after one has fully understood the clear, straightforward halacha. But if one starts with *pilpul* before properly understanding the *sugya*, that *pilpul* is bound to be false.

“By the time I arrived, this approach had already been eradicated, thanks to the Rebbe Rashab’s powerful words.



נשי
ובנות
חב"ד

SEVENTE

N'SHEI
U'BNOS
CHABAD

COMPILED BY:
RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (OH)

WRITTEN BY:
MENDEL ZAKLIKOVSKY

The Jewish People have a special connection to Rosh Chodesh, the start of the lunar month. Indeed, we say in *tefillas musaf* of Rosh Chodesh "ראשי חדשים" — "לעמך נתת" — Rosh Chodesh was given to *your* people, to the Yidden.

In a *sicha* delivered on Rosh Chodesh Tammuz 5731 to Beis Rivkah graduates and summer camp staff, the Rebbe explained the unique connection that Jewish women share with Rosh Chodesh.¹

THE GIFT OF ROSH CHODESH

At the very start of our history as a nation, we were in the midst of journeying through the desert. Our faith and belief in Hashem were put to the test already then. When Moshe seemed to have delayed his return to the Jewish camp after ascending Har Sinai to receive the Torah, the Yidden were swept into the *chet ha'egel*, a much regretted misdoing that had long-standing repercussions.

Who had the fortitude and the faith to stand strong in the storm and not flinch as the winds of *avoda zara* raged? The Jewish women. *N'shei u'bnos Yisroel* had the courage to proclaim that the singular entity that a Yid can rely on is Hashem, and only in him do we put our trust.

As a reward, Hashem gave the Jewish women the gift of observing Rosh Chodesh. A man's connection to Rosh Chodesh is seen, for the most part, in his *tefillos*, while the woman's connection to Rosh Chodesh is expressed by the custom of abstaining from various *melachos*; the sanctity of the day is also expressed in action.

לע"נ
מרת רחל לאה בת הרה"ח
הרה"ת ר' ניסן ע"ה
פעוונזער
נלב"ע כ"ו טבת ה'תשע"ג
תנ"צ'בה'

נדפס ע"י
משפחתה שיחיו

RETURN OF THE CHILDREN

In Musaf of Rosh Chodesh, we say that Rosh Chodesh is “*zman kapara l'chol toldosam*,” a time of atonement for all the descendants, especially the children, of the Jewish people.

This too is strongly connected to the *avoda* of the Jewish women. For how can we effectuate this *kapara* for our children? Through a robust and heartfelt education in the Torah way.

This is mostly dependent on the mother, the *akeres habayis*. Specifically, the mother has the ability to instill within her children the pride and strength to remain steadfast in their Jewish belief, and to remain committed to Torah and mitzvos.

It is through this that we become proper receptacles for “*kapara l'chol toldosam*,” full atonement for our children.

This connection of Jewish women with Rosh Chodesh wasn't just for a short period of time. It was given to them as a reward for all generations, and remains applicable until today!

This cannot be just because one particular group of women stood strong in their belief at a critical moment. Such behavior would not be enough to forge an eternal connection between Rosh Chodesh and *n'shei u'bnos Yisroel*. There must be a unique and inherent quality that exists within Jewish women throughout history that would explain the eternal gift of Rosh Chodesh.

APPLIED FAITH

Every Jew believes in Hashem. Indeed, all of Yiddishkeit is based on the idea that a Yid has a pure untouchable belief in Hashem that will never disappear. Although a Jew always endeavors to understand and comprehend his inherent belief—however much the human mind is capable of understanding the greatness of his Creator—the core is always the pure unshakable *emuna* of a Yid.

This *emuna* is embedded deep in the heart of every Yid, and always remains whole and complete in the deepest recesses of the Yid's heart. It is possible though, that notwithstanding its existence, it may not have any effect in real life.

This is illustrated in the story of *chet ha'egel*: the Jewish people are referred to as *ma'aminim bnei ma'aminim*, believers the children of believers, but this inherent belief didn't stop them from forming a golden calf and treating it as *avoda zara*.

The reason is simple: In the essence of the Jew, faith is pure, but when it comes to affecting real change in one's life, the inner faith does not always have a practical effect.

Now we can understand the inherent quality of the Jewish women, a quality that did not just exist in the *dor hamidbar*, but lives on in the hearts and deeds of Jewish women today.

Their feeling of *emuna* didn't just remain in their hearts, but affected their day-to-day actions as well. It brought out the firm resolve not to back down in the face of hardship, not to let the *emuna* be overrun by challenges, but to stand up proudly in the face of those who challenge our Yiddishkeit—at any point in time, and anywhere in the world. **1**

1. Printed in Likkutei Sichos vol. 8 pg. 315.

MIHU YEHUDI

לעילוי נשמת
יעקב בן אייזיק ע"ה
נלב"ע ח' טבת ה'תשע"ז

ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

נדפס ע"י בנו
הרה"ת ר' אלכסנדר וזוגתו
מרת חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו
קאלער

By: RABBI MENDY
GREENBERG

a HOLE *in my* HEART

*The Rebbe's Fight for
Giyur KaHalacha*

מירדו יר

כהנא
נחח:
אל חכר

JERUSALEM POST

12 PAGES
Weizman on road safety page 4
★
Spain and Israel page 12

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STILL STALLING

ference of the International Association in Gene- great progress future

'Who's a Jew' amendment becomes law

Jerusalem Post Knesset Reporter
The Knesset last night adopted the amendment to the Law of Return, 1950, by a vote of 51 to 14 with no abstentions. The amendment, passed during a heated session, punctuated often by outbursts of heckling, defined "Who is a Jew" for the purposes of the Law of Return, 1950, by descent.

The House was perturbed when Yisrael's Rabbi Menahem Porush, a prayer book current among Reform Jews, and spat upon it in a sermon. Rabbi Porush called the Reform Party anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist and anti-God. He accused the National Religious Party of assisting Reform Judaism to take root in Israel through the law, because it would recognise conversions not performed according to Halacha. He also accused the Conservative and Reconstructionist movements of being anti-Jewish.

WARR
Rabbi Porush which would insist on hal create two cla under the Law the Marriage



דנימין שלי

THE OPENING SHOT

Sir Patrick Geddes was a wealthy Scottish biologist, sociologist, and pioneering town planner who supported the Jewish people and was an early enthusiast for the Zionist cause. So, when a new up-and-coming town was to be built near Yaffo—soon to be famous as Tel Aviv—he was asked to design the city.

This designer of Tel Aviv raised his children devoid of any religion; he taught them to worship “humanity” and seek the betterment of society, regardless of race or creed. So, when his granddaughter Ann began a relationship with an Israeli named Binyamin Shalit, the family did not oppose the match. When Binyamin finished his studies in Scotland, they returned to Eretz Yisroel together and started a family.

The problems began when Binyamin came to register his son in the government records. The law required a person to report his “religion” (Jew, Muslim, Christian etc.) and “ethnic group” (Arab, Jew etc.). Binyamin chose “nothing” for his son’s religion—he and his wife considered themselves atheists—and Jewish for “ethnic group.”

The registration officer refused. According to the directives of the Ministry of Interior, the designation of a Jew followed halacha; if one was not “religiously” Jewish, he could not be registered as “ethnically” Jewish either.¹

Shalit was deeply offended. He was an officer

serving in the Israeli Navy; his children were being raised as part of the Jewish nation, and his wife was from a Zionist family. Her grandfather had even designed Tel Aviv! How dare the government not consider his children part of the Jewish people?

The story began to make headlines. Soon, it had reached all the way to the High Court.

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

The question of Jewish identity was always a hot topic of debate. According to law, every Jew had the right to immigrate to Eretz Yisroel and receive automatic citizenship. But who is a Jew? That was left undefined.

In 5718, Interior Minister Yisrael Bar-Yehuda gave a directive that “Anyone who declares in good faith that he is a Jew, should be registered as a Jew.” There was an immediate uproar. The Mafdal—the National Religious Party representing the Modern-Orthodox element in Eretz Yisroel—hotly objected and left the coalition. They would have no part in a government that rejected a basic premise of Judaism.

In light of the crisis, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion decided to write to fifty “Chachmei Yisroel”—leading *rabbanim* as well as well-known intellectuals—asking for their opinion.

In his letter, he asked what should be done when the mother is not Jewish but “both parents agree to register their child as Jewish.” He intentionally phrased his question this way instead of directly asking ‘Who is a Jew,’ because the son of

ONE OF THE MANY NEWSPAPER ARTICLES CARRYING THE STORY OF BINYAMIN SHALIT AND HIS FAMILY, MAKING WAVES THROUGHOUT THE LAND.

בנימין שליט נגד שר הפנים פסק הדין שיינתן היום ע"י תשעת שופטי בית המשפט העליון יסיים שלב נוסף במערכה על „מיהו יהודי”

יובהר להם כי אינם, כפי שאין
הנריהם, שייכים לדת כלשהי. אם
יחפצו להינשא לפי חוקי הדת ה'
יהודית, יתנו חייבים להתנייך. אבל
ילדינו הם ילדי הארץ של היום.
בחינוכם נכללים כל ערכי התרבות
והדת היהודית שעיזבו עם זה, כפי
שהם משתקפים בחינוך החילוני בי'
מדינה. חינוכם לא יכלול כפיית דפוסי
אמונה ופולחן המיוחדים לדת משה.
הם יחזקו את זהותם כיהודים ויחזקו
את זהותם כיהודים ויחזקו את זהותם
כיהודים ויחזקו את זהותם כיהודים

— מאת יוסף צוריאלי —

חיות כיהודי, עפ"י ה'
לאום, ולא על יסוד ה'
דת. זו היתה בקשתה
של משפחת שליט מחי'
מ"י בית המשפט הגבוה לצדק,
שמנוי הוגלה הדפשה. ינחם

Ben-Gurion—who was himself a declared secularist—had married a non-Jewish woman. Apparently, he hoped to find a loophole to have his grandchildren recognized as Jews.

His hopes were dashed, however. The overwhelming majority of respondents—including many of the non-*rabbanim*—asserted that halacha should be the sole basis for defining Jewish identity.

The Rebbe was among the respondents. In his letter to Ben-Gurion, the Rebbe wrote that the question pertains not only to children being registered as Jews but to anyone who wishes to declare themselves Jewish.

“My opinion is absolutely clear,” the Rebbe replied, “according to Torah and the tradition handed down through the generations, declarations of intent hold no validity and cannot alter reality. According to the Torah and the enduring tradition of our people, a Jew is someone who is born to a Jewish mother or who has converted according to the precise guidelines of conversion, as detailed in the *seforim* of *piskei dinim* of the Jewish people from generation to generation, up to the Shulchan Aruch.”²

Within a short time, a new Interior Minister rolled back Bar-Yehuda’s changes and reverted to the halachic definition—but the law itself was never clarified. It was clear that the issue would arise again. And it did, with the Shalit case.

THE LEGISLATION

At first, the High Court refused to hear the case. It was too controversial; they recommended that the government simply delete the “ethnicity” clause in registration. But the government refused and pressured the High Court to issue a ruling.

In the winter of 5730, the High Court ruled with a narrow majority in Shalit’s favor. They didn’t determine whether or not his children were Jewish; they simply claimed that the current law gave the parents, not the bureaucrats, the right to determine a child’s status.

As expected, the ruling created a massive uproar; non-Jews were being recognized as Jews! The issue was widely reported in the newspapers and the government realized it needed to establish a definition that would be enshrined in law.

Knowing the touchy nature of the subject and the brittle state of Israeli politics, Prime Minister Golda

Meir wanted a law that would be acceptable to the Mafdal (the other religious party, Agudas Yisroel, was not part of the ruling coalition and therefore mostly irrelevant). After some deliberation, they settled on a text. It said, “A Jew is someone born to a Jewish mother or who has converted according to halacha.”

Shortly before the final vote, the Justice Minister made a minor change; he removed the term ‘according to halacha.’ Including the term ‘halacha’ would over-complicate matters; they would then be forced to determine who determines halacha, and it would offend Reform and Conservative Jews who don’t observe halacha—and who were major donors to Israeli causes. “I do not want to establish halachic



IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE ISRAELI SUPREME COURT, THERE IS A FOLDER CONTAINING THE LETTER SENT BY PRIME MINISTER BEN-GURION TO FIFTY “CHACHMEI YISROEL” AND RETYPED COPIES OF THEIR RESPONSES. PRESENTED HERE ARE THE OPENING PAGES OF THE PRIME MINISTER’S LETTER AND THE REBBE’S RESPONSE.

rules,” he said. “Anyone who comes with a conversion certificate from any Jewish community will be accepted as Jewish.”

The Mafdal made no protest. With all facts considered, it seemed to be a victory. The secular Israeli government had largely accepted the halachic approach. True, the final clause would allow for Reform and Conservative conversions, but that seemed to be a non-issue. Non-halachic conversions were not permitted within Eretz Yisroel, and immigrants with such conversions from the Diaspora were almost non-existent. It could have definitely been much worse.

When the law passed in the Knesset on 11 Adar 5730, the Mafdal celebrated. It was a *heseg dati*, a religious triumph.

THE PURIM FARBRENGEN

At 3:30 a.m. on Motzei Purim morning that year, the streets of Kfar Chabad were unusually active; despite the late hour, streams of people were heading towards the new yeshiva building. For the second time in history, the Rebbe’s farbrengen would be broadcast live from New York, and five hundred people gathered to listen.³

Sicha followed sicha, and niggun followed niggun. But then, as morning broke, the Rebbe began speaking with unusual emotion.

The Rebbe opened with a story from Tanach.

In the days of Ezra and Nechemia, the Persian king Koresh announced that the Jewish people were permitted to return to Eretz Yisroel. After seventy

years of exile, Yidden would be allowed to rebuild their homeland.

The response was disheartening. Many Jews had become comfortable in their new homes; the thought of embarking on a difficult journey to a destroyed region wasn’t very enticing, and they chose to remain behind. When Ezra arrived in Eretz Yisroel, he found a small, scraggly group of immigrants, doing their best to scrape by. Many of them had married local, non-Jewish women.

Ezra desperately needed to grow the Jewish community. But instead, he did something shocking. He called a general gathering where he read from the Torah and inspired the people to return to Yiddishkeit—and told them to send away their non-Jewish wives. And they did.

“These women,” the Rebbe noted, “were already in Eretz Yisroel and they already had Jewish names; that’s the perfect opportunity! Find a way to make it work!” They should have been incorporated into the Jewish community! But Ezra looked into the Torah and saw that halacha said otherwise. So he didn’t argue. Neither did the husbands. And, neither did their wives.

For a full hour and a half, the Rebbe spoke passionately about the unprecedented travesty of the new law, which tore down the division *bein Yisroel la’amim*, between the Jewish people and the other nations. The Rebbe spoke with unusual intensity, explaining the terrible consequences of the law and calling for it to be changed.

It was the first “*Mihu Yehudi*” sicha.

It is difficult to overstate how painful an issue this was to the Rebbe. For then on, *Mihu Yehudi* was a staple of every farbrengen. After hours of *sichos* and *maamarim*, the Rebbe would launch into an impassioned *sicha* about the recent events surrounding the issue, going on and on, sometimes for over an hour, from the depths of his heart, expressing his profound pain and disappointment that it hadn’t yet been corrected.

Even at the Lag B’Omer parade that year, standing before the children, the Rebbe spoke forcefully about *Mihu Yehudi*. Later that evening, the Rebbe held a surprise farbrengen to finish speaking about the topic, because the time constraints of the parade didn’t suffice. On several occasions, the Rebbe stated that he could not allow a single farbrengen to pass



ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS REPORT ON THE AMENDMENT.



without mentioning the topic.⁴

Chassidim related in the name of the Rebbetzin that there were several issues which turned the Rebbe's beard white—and one of them was *Mihu Yehudi*. The Rebbe once expressed himself that “*Mihu Yehudi hot mir gemacht a loch in hartz*, it created a hole in my heart.”⁵

A FIFTH COLUMN

A visitor in *yechidus* once argued to the Rebbe that the government could not adopt halacha as the guiding principle of the land. It would seem uncultured and backwards—we are living in the twentieth century! “They would say we are a theocracy!”

The Rebbe's answer was fascinating. “And if they won't say that?” the Rebbe asked. “Will you be able to change the reality that Hashem is in control of the world? In Greek, that's the definition of ‘theocracy’!”⁶

The Rebbe didn't argue whether a “*medinat halacha*” (state run according to Halacha) was good or bad. The Rebbe said that *it was the reality*. Hashem is the ruler of the world, and He included in it unmalleable divisions; as we say in *havdalah*, *bein kodesh l'chol*, *bein or l'choshech*, *bein Yisroel la'amim* (between holy and mundane, between light and dark, between the Jewish people and the other nations). There is no reality in which blurring those divisions will bring positive results; it's simply impossible and unnatural. The Torah is the blueprint for creation;

following the blueprint will bring success, and rejecting the blueprint will bring disaster.⁷

For the first time, the Israeli government had enshrined in law that they reject halacha. In Eretz Yisroel, the day of rest is Shabbos and the army serves only kosher food—but now, when it came to the foundation of Yiddishkeit itself, the government had declared, “*Ein lanu chelek be'Elokei Yisroel*” (we have no part in the G-d of Israel). It was an unprecedented travesty.

Many of the proponents of the law claimed that it would have a positive effect. Eretz Yisroel's population needed to grow, and laws that hinder immigration would hurt the country. They accused those who advocated against the law of lacking in *ahavas Yisroel* and not caring about the Jewish people's future. They also pointed out that according to the halachic definition of a Jew, a terrorist born to a Jewish mother and Arab father would be considered Jewish, while a heroic Israeli soldier born to a Jewish father would not. It seemed ludicrous!

The Rebbe pointed out that those last arguments were laughable. Of course, Jewish murderers must be held accountable while righteous gentiles should be celebrated—but it has no bearing on whether they are Jewish or not.⁸ To say that rejecting non-halachic conversions shows a lack of *ahavas Yisroel* is equally ridiculous, because those people are not Jewish in the first place! Being a Jew is a *religious* status, and

therefore subjected to *religious* standards; a political government deciding ‘Who is a Jew’ is simply foolishness.

There were clear and obvious problems with the non-halachic approach. With this law, Eretz Yisroel would be left very vulnerable. The newspapers reported that there was a Nazi living in Eretz Yisroel somehow under the auspices of the Law of Return. There was a missionary with the last name Goldberg, born to a Jewish father, who used the Law of Return to further his missionary activities.⁹ Fixing the law would, quite literally, protect Eretz Yisroel’s borders.

Moreover: The government had included another clause granting the right of return to anyone with a Jewish grandparent; there was no need to be Jewish at all. Thousands of well-meaning individuals could now immigrate alongside a Jewish family member. Granted, they were not enemies. But who were they? What would be their identity? What would happen if their home country found itself in conflict with Eretz Yisroel. Which side would they take?¹⁰

These new immigrants wouldn’t be fully accepted by society. Eretz Yisroel is a very traditional country, and many people would understand that these are not Jews. The laws of marriage and divorce follow halacha and are controlled by the Chief Rabbinate; this meant that new immigrants would be allowed to come, but not to marry! How welcome would such an immigrant really feel?¹¹

It was simply an act of injustice. These immigrants were being fed a web of lies—that they would be accepted into Israeli society, or that their Reform conversion was qualified—only to discover later, after investing their blood and sweat in their new homes, that they weren’t worth the paper they were written on.

It would also have a disastrous effect on the

country. Eretz Yisroel is a land surrounded by enemies; its people sustain themselves with the knowledge that they live in the Jewish homeland, given to them by Hashem in the Torah. Overwhelming the country with immigrants who don’t share those values would undercut the idealism that helps it survive.

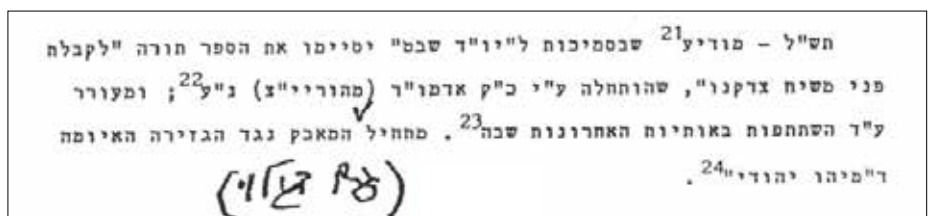
Ultimately, the Rebbe said, the Jewish people are Hashem’s *Am Segula* (special people); as Rashi explains, we are like a treasure of precious stones and pearls. Precious stones and pearls, the Rebbe pointed out, are always few and far between. The Jewish people are a small nation, and making Eretz Yisroel awash with non-Jewish immigrants would not change that reality.¹²

HANGING ONTO CHAIRS

Much of the Rebbe’s criticism was directed towards the Mafdal, the National Religious Party which remained part of Golda Meir’s government (and the subsequent ones) while this law remained in effect. At that time, they held 12 seats in the Knesset, and five of their members served as ministers or deputy ministers. It was staffed by religious Jews, many of whom had a connection to the Rebbe. Their leader was a *musmach*, Dr. Yosef Burg, who was married to a descendent of the Alter Rebbe and had visited the Rebbe in *yechidus*.

Some fifteen years earlier, their party had left the government in protest when Bar-Yehuda tried to include gentiles as Jews, but this time they remained silent. Each silence, of course, came with an excuse, and many of the Rebbe’s *sichos* would dwell on those.

Once, for example, Golda Meir threatened to remove marriage from the auspices of the chief rabbinate and establish civil marriage if they insisted on



IN THE “SHALESHELES HAYACHAS” (BIOGRAPHIES OF THE RABBEIM) PUBLISHED AT THE BEGINNING OF HAYOM YOM, IT IS WRITTEN THAT IN THE YEAR 5730 THE REBBE “BEGAN HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TERRIBLE DECREE OF MIHU YEHUDI.” THE REBBE ADDED A PARENTHESIS AFTER THE WORD “BEGAN”—(גם) “ALSO PUBLICLY”. I.E., THE REBBE PRIVATELY FOUGHT AGAINST THE DECREE BEFOREHAND.



SOVIET IMMIGRANTS ARRIVE IN ERETZ YISROEL, 5731.



A MEETING OF THE 'MAFDAL' KNESSET MEMBERS IN 5734.
DR. YOSEF BURG IS SEEN THIRD FROM THE LEFT.

giyur kahalacha. The Rebbe laughed at the suggestion; civil marriage wasn't a possibility because the Muslim and Christian religious authorities would never allow it—and the government was always careful not to offend them.¹³ In fact, it was quite ironic; the government would never dare legislate “Who is a Christian,” or “Who is a Muslim”; it was obvious that religious matters be left to religious authorities. But somehow the Knesset (with its collection of Muslims, Christians, Communists and what-not) felt itself worthy enough to determine “Who is a Jew.”¹⁴

The Rebbe once retold a cynical line that was said by one of their representatives, a play on the *possuk* “*Hashamayim Kis'i v'ha'aretz hadom raglay*” (the Heaven is my seat and the earth is my footstool): “*Hashamayim?* Should I care about Hashem? *Kis'i!* I care about my seat! *Ha'aretz?* Should I care about the *shtachim* (the Jewish people's hold on the territories)? *Hadom raglay!* My position is more important!”¹⁵

The term *heseg dati* which they initially used to describe this law was derisively repeated by the Rebbe countless times. It became almost synonymous with “*chilul Hashem*.” Whenever there was a development in Eretz Yisroel that contravened halacha, the Rebbe would say, “and now we have a new *heseg dati*...”

Ultimately, these politicians were forced to drag their beliefs in the dirt in the hope of retaining their seat at the government table. “What type of chair is it?” the Rebbe said, “It's not a chair that a person sits on—it's a chair that sits on the person! Usually, the person is in control of the seat, but in this instance, the chair is gaining full control over their person.”¹⁶

VAAD L'MAAN SHLEIMUS HA'AM

After the Six Day War in 5727, Kfar Chabad hosted its first famed Bar Mitzvah for children of fallen soldiers.

It was a very impressive event. It was attended by top members of society, had a wonderful Chassidic atmosphere, and was a profound experience for the children.

One distinguished newspaper correspondent was deeply touched. Yehuda Paldi had grown up as a *yeshiva bochur* in Hungary, but the Holocaust had shaken his *emuna*. Now, after attending the event, he found himself on a plane to 770 and on a journey that would bring him back to Yiddishkeit. Reb Yehuda, or Harav Paldi as he soon became known, became very devoted to the Rebbe's causes. When the issue of *Mihu Yehudi* arose and *Vaad L'maan Shleimus Ha'am* was established, the Rebbe suggested to Reb Efroim Wolff that Rabbi Paldi stand at its helm.

The Vaad wasn't officially a Lubavitch institution; the Rebbe wanted the fight for *Mihu Yehudi* to be a Klal Yisroel endeavor, not associated with a specific group. The Vaad drummed up support among other organizations like Agudas HaRabbanim in America and Agudas Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel, and worked hard to keep the issue on the front burner.

Rabbi Paldi's right hand man was Rabbi Yitzchok Yehuda Holtzman, currently the Vaad's director.

“Rabbi Paldi was a professional,” says Rabbi Holtzman. “He knew exactly how to use every opportunity to draw attention to *Mihu Yehudi*.”

RABBI PALDI

Rabbi Paldi dedicated the rest of his life to tirelessly campaigning for *giyur kahalacha*.

One incredible moment occurred at the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen in 5737. After speaking about *Mihu Yehudi*, the Rebbe announced that present was a Jew who deals with this issue with *mesirus nefesh*, and asked that he say a few words; “As the local *minhag* is to announce, ‘*git men dem vort tzu Reb Chaim Yehuda...*’” In a scene that rarely repeated itself, the Rebbe handed over his microphone to Rabbi Paldi.

During his speech, Rabbi Paldi made subtle hints regarding the monetary burden that the committee was carrying. When he finished, the Rebbe said, “It seems that he is a *greener* (an uncomfortable immigrant) and therefore only hinted about the money,” so the Rebbe reminded everyone about the importance of giving *tzedakah* to the cause.

On 26 Cheshvan 5743, Rabbi Paldi passed away, and his *matzeiva* included, “He dedicated his life for Yiddishkeit, and especially for *Mihu Yehudi*.”

When the Rebbe saw a picture of the *matzeiva*, he commented that *Mihu Yehudi* had a negative connotation; if the *rabbanim* would deem it halachically permissible to change it, the Rebbe recommended “*giyur kahalacha*” instead.



RABBI PALDI SPEAKS AT THE REBBE'S FARBRENGEN, 20 KISLEV 5737

“One time, for example, we prepared an elaborate presentation in the Knesset to show how Reform rabbis perform intermarriages alongside priests. In those days, videos were generally only shown in movie theaters, but we invested immense efforts to show the Knesset a video of a Jew and gentile marrying under the auspices of a rabbi and priest. The images shocked everyone, including the most left-leaning members of the parliament.

“We once orchestrated a collection of one million signatures to present to the government supporting the call for *giyur kahalacha*. We once held a massive rally at the Binyanei Ha’uma, attended by the Gerrer Rebbe, protesting the law. Most importantly, we pushed and pressured politicians of all parties to take on this cause; to present bills to change the law, and to pressure the Prime Minister to support them.”

WHEN NOBODY CARED

Reb Shmuel Chefer, another member of the Vaad, was once part of a delegation to obtain the signature of an elderly *Poilisher* rebbe on a statement regarding *Mihu Yehudi*. To see him, they needed the approval of his son, who later became rebbe himself.

“We came to the Beis Midrash where the son was giving a shiur, and asked for permission to meet with his father, the rebbe. He lifted his head, rolled his eyes, and said, “There’s no need; it’s not *unzere fleish*.”¹⁷ It was of no concern to him, because it would not affect his own community.

This essentially reflected the stance of many *frum* Jews at the time. *Poilisher* Chassidim were apathetic because there was minimal risk of it affecting their own insular communities; *misnagdim* were in the time-period where they began opposing anything that came from the Rebbe, and the Mafdal party argued that the situation could have been far worse.

It would soon become evident that the “minimal risk” was a falsehood.

Reb Yisroel Grossman was the Rosh Yeshiva of Karlin and Tomchei Temimim in Kfar Chabad. He was once scheduled to do a *siddur kiddushin*



1. AN APPEAL TO RABBANIM WORLDWIDE TO PROTEST THE DECREE OF "MIHU YEHUDI" SIGNED BY DOZENS OF JEWISH LEADERS IN ERETZ YISROEL, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE VAAD.
2. A NOTICE PUBLICIZING ONE OF THE MANY RALLIES HOSTED BY THE VAAD L'MAAN SHLEIMUS HA'AM.

when he received an anonymous note, advising him to check the *yichus* of the *chosson*, a student in a *chasidishe* yeshiva in Meah Shearim. The note sounded absurd, but it kept bothering Rabbi Grossman until he called the *chosson's* father and asked to speak with him.

Even before the conversation began, the father burst into tears. During the war years, he quickly admitted, he had hidden with a non-Jewish family. One of the daughters wanted to marry him, and out of loyalty or gratitude, he could not refuse. They moved together to Eretz Yisroel and settled in Meah Shearim. He was too ashamed to reveal her origins, and so she never converted. The *chosson* was a *goy*.¹⁸

During many *sichos* of *Mihu Yehudi*, the Rebbe hinted to this (or perhaps a similar) story. "*Ba dir in Yeshivah lernen goyim!*" (you have non-Jews studying at your yeshiva), the Rebbe cried out.¹⁹ How could you say it won't affect you, if even Meah Shearim had a gentile Yeshiva *bochur* unbeknownst in its midst? An open door policy for non-Halachic converts would—over time—create an unmitigated disaster for *yuchsin*, one which would ultimately affect everyone.

That disaster wasn't long in coming.

THE TRAIN CONVERSATION

Reb Shloimke Maydanchik was a legendary *chosid* in Eretz Yisroel. Always with a bright smile and a witty saying, he was a key activist in all the Rebbe's endeavors, beloved by politicians, *rabbanim* and simple people; he was the mayor of Kfar Chabad, and all



A MILLION SIGNATURES PROTESTING THE DECREE BEING PRESENTED TO PRIME MINISTER YITZCHAK SHAMIR. LEFT TO RIGHT: REB ZUSHE WILMOWSKY, REB BERKE CHEIN, REB SHMUEL CHEFER AND REB BERKE WOLFF.



REB SHLOIMKE MAYDANCHIK IN HIS TRAIN CONDUCTOR UNIFORM SPEAKS WITH MR. MOSHE SHARETT ON A VISIT AT Kfar CHABAD.

the while, also a full-time train conductor.

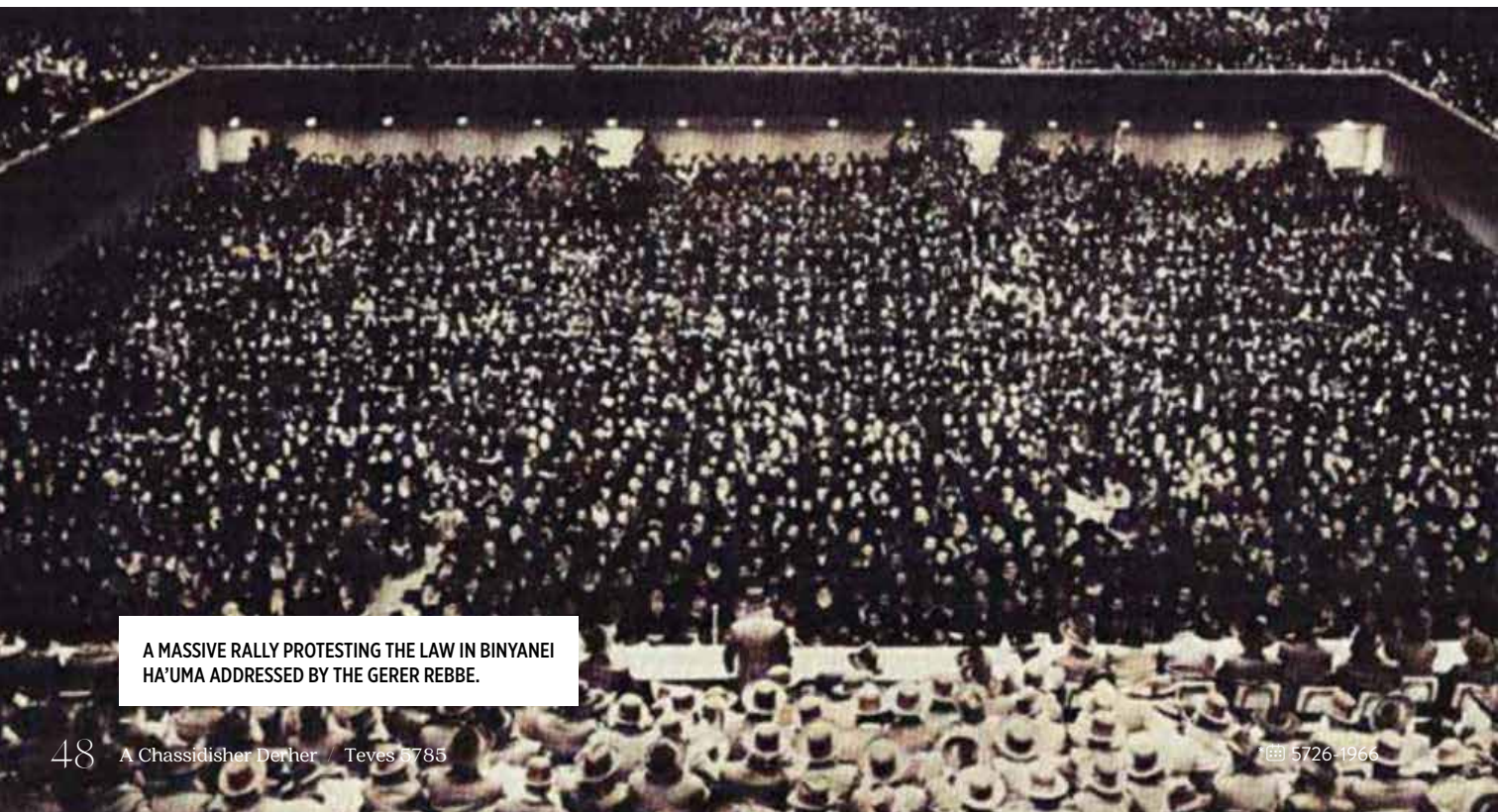
One day, Reb Shloimke was given a new assistant, a recent immigrant from Russia. Reb Shloimke was Russian himself, and as they chatted in their native tongue, the new assistant told him the story of his wife's conversion:

When they first arrived from Russia to Vienna (where many of the new immigrants were processed), he mentioned to the official that his wife was not Jewish, and the official replied, "No worries; let's just record her as Jewish, so we won't have issues later..."²⁰

This was one of the earliest indications of a controversy that became known as "*Giyurei Vienna*."

Beginning in 5726, a very slow trickle of Jews had begun to emerge from the Soviet Union, but as the Rebbe's campaign for *Giyur Kahalacha* began, the trickle became an overflow. Over the next few years, tens of thousands would arrive in Eretz Yisroel, and the question of Who is a Jew became more relevant than ever.

News began to trickle to Eretz Yisroel that non-Jewish immigrants were undergoing conversions during their short stay in Vienna. But who was behind those conversions? Nobody seemed to know. The Vaad L'maan Shleimus Ha'am began to investigate, and many of their reports to the Rebbe



A MASSIVE RALLY PROTESTING THE LAW IN BINYANEI HA'UMA ADDRESSED BY THE GERER REBBE.

are published in the *Yimei Temimim* series.

At first, they were claimed to be under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate. When Chief Rabbi Unterman published a denial, claims were made that there were local *rabbanim* involved. Everything seemed very suspicious. New immigrants reported going through a conversion process they themselves didn't understand, and some—like the wife of Reb Shloimke's assistant, skipped the process altogether.

It quickly became evident that the Rebbe's warning was coming to fruition. Immigrants with non-halachic conversions—which the Mafdal had claimed were almost non-existent—were now arriving in massive numbers.

THE PRESSURE CAMPAIGN

As the early 5730s progressed, the Mafdal politicians began to feel the heat. As the only religious politicians in the government, they held the key—by threatening to leave the coalition, they could compel Golda Meir to support *giyur kahalacha*, or at least demonstrate their own personal commitment to Torah with a refusal to be a part of such a travesty.

They didn't appreciate the limelight, and neither did Golda Meir or the rest of her government. Until then, Chabad was very popular in Eretz Yisroel. Many politicians and leaders

A KEY VOTE

One key moment in the fight was when an amendment was proposed by Knesset member Shlomo Lorincz of Agudas Yisroel to put "*kahalacha*" back into the law. The vote was scheduled for the eve of Rosh Chodesh Av 5732.

Mafdal was under tremendous pressure from the entire Jewish world to vote for the amendment, but Golda Meir insisted that they adhere to their coalition agreement to support the government's decisions. The day before the vote, Mafdal held a marathon twelve-hour meeting to decide what to do. Knesset member Professor Avner Shaki, who served as Deputy Minister of Education, presented a ruling from the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Unterman that they were obligated to vote for the amendment. In response, several other members sought a ruling from the Sephardi Chief Rabbi Nissim, who permitted them to abstain.

Ultimately, eleven of Mafdal's twelve Knesset members abstained, but Avner Shaki voted for the amendment. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported, "His defection was considered a moral victory by the amendment's supporters. Dr. Shaki and Herut's Menachem Begin drank a vodka toast after the vote, the vodka sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York."

The government and Mafdal responded ruthlessly. They quickly fired him from his position, and he was removed from the party list before the next elections.

He was evicted from his government-owned apartment, and he lost his car and driver. But he became an immediate hero among the amendment's supporters.

Dr. Shaki had never before visited the Rebbe, but he was now invited to come for *yechidus*. The Rebbe showed him much attention for his courage, and supported him for many years.

His removal from power had an interesting post-script.

Dr. Shaki was convinced that his political career was over, but the Rebbe didn't agree. The Rebbe told him that his "step away" from politics was like taking a step back before jumping a great leap. He would ultimately return, and reach even higher than before.

Incredibly, he was asked to return to the Mafdal in 5744, and in 5748 he was elected to lead the party.



PROFESSOR AVNER SHAKI VISITS THE REBBE FOR DOLLARS.

CHAIM BARUCH HALBERSTAM MA. JEW 2620



THE KNESSET HOLDS A VOTE ON THE ISSUE OF MIHU YEHUDI, 5743.

enjoyed visiting Kfar Chabad and also coming to the Rebbe for *yechidus*. Just three years earlier, the entire country had read front-page reports about the Rebbe's calming messages before the Six Day War. But now, Chabad was taking a real stance on issues they didn't like. They began to threaten to stop funds that were helping Chabad in Eretz Yisroel grow.

In the *sichos*, the Rebbe addressed the threats—and laughed at them.

"I was born and raised in a Communist country," the Rebbe reminded them, "and as the eldest son of the Chief Rabbi of Yekaterinoslav, I would occasionally need to spar with the Yevsektzia, who liked to harass, insult, and offend and so on. But I wasn't *nispoel* from them, and I won't be *nispoel* now either. In fact, no matter how hard they try, they will never achieve the Yevsektzia's level of diabolical creativity..."²¹

During one Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe revealed that things were so far gone that a new 'threat' had arrived: "Since I '*koch zich*' (am passionate about studies) in Rashi, and they say I introduced a new approach to learning it and it is very meaningful to me, someone—who based on his age should have a white beard and is considered a leader—threatened that if I continue to raise the issue of *Mihu Yehudi*, he will refute my explanations of Rashi!"

Hearing the outlandish threat, the entire 770

burst out laughing, and the Rebbe continued. "I also laughed when I first heard this, but later I realized it was not a joke; he actually meant it! But at least, I'll have some benefit—to refute my explanation, he will actually have to learn Rashi..."²²

THE LATER YEARS

Sadly, as the years progressed without the correction of the law, more and more non-Jews immigrated to Eretz Yisroel. Meanwhile, the government became occupied with a new "achievement" — giving away land to the Arabs.

From the late 5730s, when the Camp David accords began to take shape, the Rebbe's *sichos* about Eretz Yisroel pivoted towards *Shleimus Haaretz*. The issue of *Mihu Yehudi* was still mentioned by the Rebbe many, many times, but it didn't occupy the same central place it had in the early 5730s.

In later years, the Rebbe instructed Shluchim to avoid the issue altogether. The Reform movement and Jewish Federations were using *Mihu Yehudi* as fuel in their fights with some Shluchim; local Jewish newspapers would argue that "Chabad doesn't think you are really Jewish." In a *sicha*, the Rebbe said that it was not the role of Shluchim to fight the wars of Yiddishkeit in Eretz Yisroel. There are many good and necessary things, the Rebbe explained, but as the



ONE OF THE LAST PUBLIC MENTIONS OF MIHU YEHUDI WAS TO REB SHMELKEH HALPERT AT DOLLARS IN 5750. PICTURED HERE, REB SHMELKEH SPEAKS WITH THE REBBE ON 26 ADAR I 5752.

(Russian) saying goes, “*pan tu pan, no nye moi*, the master is a master, but not mine.” A shliach has one responsibility: to spread Yiddishkeit in his hometown *b’darkei no’am uvidarkei shalom*.²³

There were even instances where the Rebbe specifically told Israeli politicians to focus on *Shleimus Haaretz*. When Cabinet Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein came to see the Rebbe by dollars, the Rebbe spoke to him at length about *Shleimus Ha’aretz*. When he raised the issue of *Mihu Yehudi*, the Rebbe smiled and responded, “For you, it’s better not to be involved in *giyur kahalacha*. Leave that to others. Your job is to make sure that *af shaal*—not a single inch—is relinquished, not spiritually and not physically.”²⁴

One of the last mentions of *Mihu Yehudi* was in a conversation with Reb Shmelkeh Halpert, a Knesset Member from Agudas Yisroel. When he mentioned the thousands of non-Jews who had arrived from the former Soviet Union, the Rebbe replied, “Lots of things have since happened, and כיון שנשמעה נשמעה,”

referring to the Rambam’s statement that Eliyahu Hanavi will identify who is a Kohen or Levi, but not those who have a problematic status like a *mamzer*; those are considered “lost” into the Jewish people.

The Rebbe continued:

“*Zei velen dos fardinen*, they will gain, because Eliyahu Hanavi will come to be *mekarev*, not the opposite; *mamleches kohanim v’goi kadosh* refers to every Yid.”²⁵

However, the *Vaad L’maan Shleimus Ha’am* had the Rebbe’s clear directive to continue the fight. “Instead of fighting in the Knesset,” says Rabbi Holtzman, “the Rebbe told us to continue the fight through pressuring the Chief Rabbinate. The fight is not over; today, when the country is flooded with non-Jews registered as Jews, everyone can see how true were the Rebbe’s holy words—calling for *giyur kahalacha*.” **1**

1. Manitoba Law Journal 53, 1970, “WHO IS A JEW?”

2. Igros Kodesh vol. 18, p. 209.

3. Yimei Temimim vol. 4, p. 354.

4. Toras Menachem vol. 70, p. 9.

5. As heard from Reb Shmuel Chefer.

6. Toras Menachem vol. 62, p. 354.

7. Toras Menachem vol. 60, p. 400.

8. Toras Menachem vol. 59, p. 388.

9. Toras Menachem vol. 71, p. 234.

10. Toras Menachem vol. 59, p. 386.

11. Toras Menachem vol. 59, p. 383.

12. Toras Menachem vol. 61, p. 37.

13. Toras Menachem vol. 69, p. 168.

14. Toras Menachem vol. 69, p. 68.

15. Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 1, p. 417-8.

16. Toras Menachem vol. 75, p. 327.

17. Interview with Menachem Zigelboim, 23 Iyar 5767.

18. Ki Karov Magazine issue 46, p. 9.

19. Toras Menachem vol. 65, p. 76.

20. Yimei Temimim vol. 5, p. 66.

21. Toras Menachem vol. 66, p. 378.

22. Toras Menachem vol. 68, p. 411.

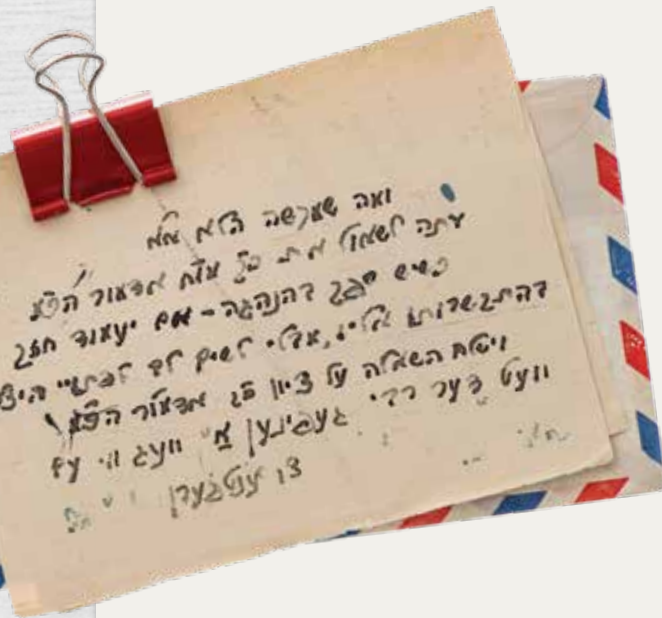
23. 24 Teves 5749.

24. 21 Cheshvan 5750.

25. 2 Shevat 5750. For explanations on the application of this ruling, see Kovetz Ha’aros Boston, 11 Nissan 5750 p. 17.



Story



לע"נ
הילדה התמימה אלטא מינא ע"ה
בת יבלחט"א הרה"ח הרה"ת
ר' ישכר שלמה ומרת שיינא שיחיו
טייכטל

תלמידת בית רבקה חברה בצבאות ה' זכתה
לקירוב מיוחד מכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו
נקטפה בדמי ימיה ביום ש"ק, פרשת ואלה
שמות כ"ג טבת ה'תש"נ
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

נדפס ע"י
משפחתה שיחיו

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

The Timely Photo



AS TOLD BY
REB PASI WOŁOSOW
(Toronto, ON)

For the past seven years, I've run a real estate investment company specializing in commercial real estate. But in the winter of 5783, the real estate market took a turn for the worse.

One of the properties we had purchased was struggling. We tried to get creative and try different ideas, but nothing we did could move the site in the right direction.

In the middle of Elul 5783, we realized it would be best for the company to take the property off our books, even at a substantial loss. We needed to act quickly and on the

25th of Elul, I listed the property for sale.

After Shacharis that morning, I approached a *chassidisher* Yid whom I deeply respect and asked him for a *bracha*. "Pasi," he replied, "although every Jew can give *brachos*, it would be best to receive a *bracha* from the Rebbe. I can write a letter to the Rebbe on your behalf and send it to the Ohel."

I gave him my name and my mother's name, thanked him, and headed out to make final arrangements for the property. Shortly afterward, he sent me a message that



he had written the letter to the Rebbe and assured me everything would work out for the best.

At around 2:30 p.m., I noticed a post in my family's WhatsApp chat from my brother-in-law, Zalmy Lowenthal, who runs CKids International. It was a photo—which I had never seen before—of me receiving a dollar from the Rebbe on the 25th of Iyar, 5750. Along with it, Zalmy shared an audio clip in which I could hear my mother telling the Rebbe that my third birthday had just been the day before on Shabbos and that my *upshernish* would be on Erev Shavuos. The Rebbe then gave me a second dollar for my birthday and a third dollar for my *upshernish*.

Zalmy had received the photo from Reb Zalmy Ceitlin at JEM, who does a tremendous job finding individuals in photos with the Rebbe. By *hashgacha pratis*, he had just found my picture and shared it with Zalmy, who passed it along to the family.

Seeing this previously unknown photo of myself receiving the Rebbe's *bracha* filled me with a powerful sense of reassurance. It felt like the Rebbe was reaching out to remind me that he was with me and that everything

would work out for the best. Someone had just asked for a *bracha* at the Ohel on my behalf, and within hours, I saw a picture of me with the Rebbe that I never knew existed.

With refreshed trust in Hashem and confidence that the Rebbe was guiding me every step of the way, I threw myself into disentangling ourselves from the business crisis we were in. Amazingly a potential buyer came forward almost immediately, and miraculously we sold the property two weeks before our deadline.

Although the sale caused us a significant financial loss, it was the best outcome we could have hoped for under the circumstances. But more importantly, a year later, I can see how this experience steered us to a different and better path. **1**

YOUR STORY

Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing stories@derher.org.

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' חיים צבי וזוגתו מרת
חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו
לזרוב

COMPILED BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (OH)
WRITTEN BY: RABBI TZEMACH FELLER

P I N P O I N T S

STORIES OF THE REBBE'S
REACH AND IMPACT AROUND THE GLOBE

NETANYA



On Pesach Sheini, 5751, a Yid from Netanya came to the Rebbe for Dollars. The Rebbe told him, “Netanya’ means that Hashem gives his *bracha* there. That is the name of the place.”¹

Throughout the years, the Rebbe showed care and attention to the Jewish community and the *shluchim* in Netanya, Eretz Yisroel, a coastal city nestled between Tel Aviv and Haifa. From the city’s elected officials to its *meshgichim* to *n’shei Chabad* and *shluchim* in the city, here is a sampling of the Rebbe’s care and guidance to the city of Netanya.²

THE MASHGIACH

The earliest recorded letter of the Rebbe to one of Netanya’s inhabitants was sent in the summer of 5715. The letter was to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Chen Tov, who, as part of his work for the Moatza Datit—the Religious Council—was responsible for overseeing *kashrus* in the city. Rabbi Chen Tov lived a fascinating and difficult life—he was born in Haditch, lived for a time in Uzbekistan, later fled to Afghanistan when the Communists came to power, and eventually settled in Eretz Yisroel.

In his letters to the Rebbe, Rabbi Chen Tov described the travails of his life, and the Rebbe responded, quoting the Frierdiker Rebbe’s statement that the purpose of memoirs is that the situation that the person is recalling should be vividly seen by the one remembering, and have its desired effect. The Rebbe continued, “May it be Hashem’s will that the recollection of these travels—and among them, your *yechidus* with the Rebbe, *nessi Yisroel*, which you write about—should awaken within you additional inner strength, so that all those who see you will recognize that you are a Chabad chossid.”

The way to achieve this, the Rebbe wrote, is to learn much Toras HaChassidus, follow in its ways and its *minhagim*—and most importantly among those is to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus.³



REB SHMUEL YOSEF PINDRIK

Reb Shmuel Yosef Pindrik was a *tomim* in Lubavitch, and then served as a *shochet* in Poltava, before leaving Russia following the Second World War. He moved to Kfar Chabad, where he was appointed as *shochet* by the Friediker Rebbe, and in 5715, he moved to a senior home in Netanya with the Rebbe's direct involvement. As a Chabad chossid, he brought the light of Chassidus to those with whom he came into contact, and he merited to receive the Rebbe's guidance and encouragement on many occasions.

When he moved to the city, the Rebbe wrote to him, "May it be Hashem's will that it be in a good and auspicious time, and that you will use the opportunity you have been granted to spread Chassidus—its guidance and its customs—among people who otherwise wouldn't know about it and in pleasant, peaceful manners, not only in the [senior] home in which you live but throughout the city."⁴

After Reb Shmuel Yosef organized a *simchas beis hashoeiva* farbrengen for seniors, the Rebbe wrote, "May Hashem grant that you recognize the greatness of the fact that you were chosen to be a channel to bring Chassidus and its customs in your area to hundreds of Jewish people... If you continue in the future to do this pleasantly, but with proper assertiveness, the success will certainly increase as well."⁵

In 5716, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Shmuel Yosef, instructing

him to give his neighbors *matzah* in the Rebbe's name, and informing him that the Rebbe would cover the cost through a special fund. "It is worthwhile to use this opportunity to explain that *matzah* is the Food of Healing and the Food of Faith which, by a Jewish person, healing and faith are interconnected."⁶

As Reb Shmuel Yosef continued in his efforts to be *mekarev* the local community, he wrote to the Rebbe that people had begun visiting him to talk about Yiddishkeit and Chassidus, and that he didn't know how to act in such situations. The Rebbe reemphasized that he should be pleasant but assertive. "We are *mekarev* every Yid, as it says in Perek 32 of Tanya and elsewhere; this *kiruv* also includes bringing them under the wings of the *Shechina* in keeping with their understanding and their situation—which sometimes requires that you not demand forcefully that they change from one extreme to the other in a moment." The Rebbe went on to say that on the other hand, it should be made clear that the same Torah applies to everyone, but that because of the "weak health of the person's soul," right now we're discussing doing a certain mitzvah—but there are others, in which this person is also obligated.⁷

Reb Shmuel Yosef passed away in 5723. He did not have biological children, but he merited to bring many Yidden closer to Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.



REB SHMUEL YOSEF PINDRIK.



RECHOV CHABAD

As Chassidim around the world celebrated the Rebbe's 70th birthday on Yud Alef Nissan 5732, Oved Ben-Ami—Netanya's longtime mayor and one of the city's founders—sent a telegram of good wishes and *brachos* to the Rebbe. The city had honored the Rebbe and the Chabad movement by naming one of the city's streets "Rechov Chabad—Chabad Street."

The Rebbe wrote to the mayor, "...This is a fitting expression of the recognition and affinity that Your Honor and the residents of your city feel towards the activities of Chabad in the area of education and in spreading the holy values of our nation, in our Holy Land and in the diaspora, out of a triplicate love: the love of Hashem, love of Torah, and love of our fellow Jews—which are all one—and this is the foundation of the outlook of the world of Chassidus in general and Chabad in particular."⁸

RABBI YISRAEL MEIR LAU

In 5739, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau was elected to serve as the Chief Rabbi of Netanya. After his election, he wrote to the Rebbe. The Rebbe replied with a letter of blessing and guidance for Rabbi Lau's new position.

The Rebbe encouraged Rabbi Lau to focus on guiding

the city's youth. "As has been said many times, working with [even just] one young man or woman is also a form of working with the multitudes, for in the near future, they will establish a Jewish home, and any added good influence in the one who establishes the home [the future husband – ed.] and the foundation of the home [the future wife – ed.], will have fruitful results in the way the home is conducted, and in the way their children and descendants are educated for all time..."⁹

SHIFRA U'PUAH

In 5744, the Rebbe wrote to the women who directed Shifra U'Puah—an organization to help women who had recently given birth—in Netanya. The letter was dated Motzei Shabbos, Chof Kislev, and the Rebbe drew lessons from the timing — between Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah.

The Rebbe encouraged them to add to their work, in a way of "*Mehadrin min Hamehadrin*," as Chanukah teaches us. The Rebbe concluded by blessing them with much success in their *avoda* of *gemilus chassadim*—and the Rebbe added the word "*avodas*" in his holy handwriting.



THE CHABAD HOUSE

After the *histalkus* of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka on Chof-Beis Shevat 5748, the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to establish new institutions named after her. On Yud-Aleph Nissan 5748, the cornerstone was laid for the central Chabad House in Netanya.

As construction continued throughout the summer, the financial burden of the building costs began to weigh on Chabad's operating budget, and the situation soon reached a breaking point.

Rabbi Menachem Wolpe, the city's head *shliach*, wrote to the Rebbe about the financial difficulties. As he waited for an answer from the Rebbe, Rabbi Wolpe met with Rabbi Yosef Aharonov, the director of Tzach in Eretz Yisroel, and asked for his help. While they were meeting, they got a phone call with a *maaneh* from the Rebbe. "Certainly, what was said recently about building [referencing what the Rebbe had recently spoken declaring 5749 as "*shnas habinyan*—a year of building"] has reached you. I will mention it at the Ohel."

"The feeling I had was that the Rebbe was saying, 'You know that I told you to build—keep building, and everything will be okay,' Rabbi Wolpe expressed.

At one point, Rabbi Wolpe's father, Rabbi Yitzchok Zeev Wolpe, visited the Rebbe for Dollars, and asked for a *bracha* on his son's behalf that they merit to complete the building very soon. The Rebbe gave an extra dollar and said, "Presumably, he will immediately affix a *tzedakah pushka*; there should be a large *tzedakah pushka*."

They kept building.

Today, there are more than a dozen Chabad *mosdos* in Netanya, serving thousands of Yidden, each in their own way. **1**

1. Beis Chayenu issue 86.
2. Much of the content of this article is from the *teshura* published in honor of 50 years since the founding of Chabad in Netanya.
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 11, p. 80.
4. Ibid., p. 232.
5. Ibid., vol. 12 p. 52.
6. Ibid., p. 362.
7. Ibid., vol. 14 p. 9.
8. Ibid., vol. 27 p. 389.
9. From a letter to Rabbi Lau dated 15 Cheshvan 5740, published in the above *teshura*.



RABBI MENACHEM WOLPE,
HEAD SHLIACH TO NETANYA.

Letters

A forum for readers to send their feedback, add to, or ask any questions about articles. Submit your letter to feedback@derher.org.

Submissions may be slightly modified by our editorial staff before publishing.

Ramban's Teacher

I want to give a huge *yasher koach* to the Derher and the Vaad Hatmimim for all your good work in giving bochurim Chassidishe *lachluchis* and fostering *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe. I especially enjoyed the “Luminaries — Personalities in the Rebbe's Torah” section of the Derher which was published throughout last year, citing the lessons that the Rebbe learns from the lives and teachings of many of our Tanaim, Amaroim, Rishonim and Acharonim.

It should be noted that much of the extensive work that the Rebbe did in Kehos in the 5700's was publishing literature on the history of the Jewish people from Avraham Avinu until the time of the Acharonim.

The Rebbe was very involved in the publishing of the six-volume set called Our People, which was the first Jewish history book for the English reader. The booklet “Forty Centuries — Milestones in Early Jewish History,” and a timeline of outstanding events in Jewish history appeared in the back of the Young Scholar's Calendar that the Rebbe published in the years 5703 and 5704.

It would be amazing if, at a future opportunity, the Derher could publish an article about these special initiatives of the Rebbe.

I want to point out that in the “Luminaries” column of the Elul 5784 magazine, a mistake crept in about the name of the Ramban's Rebbe in Nigleh. In *Shem Hagedolim* it says that the name of his Rebbe was Reb Noson Ben Reb Meir.

Hatzlacha rabba,

Mendel Mishulovin
MORRISTOWN, NJ

Amazing Miracle of the Rebbe

In the Derher magazine for the month of Av 5784 (Issue 146), in the *Leben mitten Rebbe'n* section, a *yoman* was published from the month of Av 5749 that included a description of how my father-in-law, Rabbi Boruch Kahane, asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for a Yid from his *mitvzoim* route who was injured in a robbery-related shooting. Recently, my father-in-law shared the story again, and I would like to share with the Derher readers this miraculous story in all its details:

During his years as a *bochur* near the Rebbe, my father-in-law would do *mitvzoim* in the Pitkin Avenue area, only five minutes from 770. Although previously it had been a predominantly Jewish area, it had become crime-ridden and the Jewish residents

moved away from that neighborhood. This did not stop Rabbi Kahane and his friend from fearlessly going there on *mivtzoim* where many Israeli emigrants and Persian Jewish store owners dealt primarily in gold and diamonds.

Rabbi Boruch Kahane relates:

On Erev Shabbos, 3 Menachem Av 5749, we were unusually half an hour late getting to our *mivtzoim* route. When we reached Pitkin Avenue, we saw that something was very wrong. The area was swarming with police cars and ambulances.

From some Israeli businessmen who were at the site, we heard that half an hour earlier, there had been an armed robbery in a gold and jewelry store owned by a few Persian Jews whom we knew.

We realized that if we had come to our route at the time we usually got there, we could have been present when the robbery happened, *chas v'shalom*.

Two robbers, their faces covered, had entered the store, one holding an ax and the other a gun, and demanded from the store owners to give them gold. It seems that the store owners did not fulfill their request quickly enough, and one robber began an attempt to smash open the glass counter with his ax but without success. At this point, the other robber began shooting. A non-Jewish worker at the store was immediately killed, and the Jewish store owner was hit with two bullets: one in his neck and one in his kidneys.

The Jewish man was taken to the hospital in critical condition. We immediately called the Rebbe's *Mazkirus* from a nearby phone and gave the name of the Jewish person to Rabbi Binyonim Klein as we were told by his friends at the site — Korush Panai ben Molok.

We were very down about what had happened, but we continued our *mivtzoim* at the other stores on our route. At one of the stores we visited, we were told that the Jew had died from his wounds... When I heard this, I was very broken, and the whole Shabbos, I was very agitated and couldn't find any *menuchas hanefesh*, as I had known him well and put on Tefillin with him weekly for close to two years.

On Sunday morning we found out that what we had been told was incorrect and that the man was alive. I decided straight away to go by the Rebbe by the Sunday Dollars and ask for a *bracha* for him.

As I waited in the line I repeated over and over in my mind his name and my request for *refuah sheleima* for him so that when I would get in front of the Rebbe I wouldn't get mixed up and not be able to actually say it. When I got to the Rebbe, I said (in Yiddish) "*Refuah sheleima* for Korosh Panai ben Molok," but before I finished saying his name, the Rebbe straight away said, "Amen" which surprised me...

So I told the Rebbe, "He was shot," to



which the Rebbe said in shock, “Ah?”

The Rebbe's *mazkir*, Rabbi Leibel Groner, repeated what I had said, and the Rebbe asked, “*Vos iz zayn nomen* (what is his name)?” I repeated his name, and the *mazkir* told me, “Say his Jewish name!” I told the Rebbe that I don't know it and then the Rebbe told me, “*Az du vest vissen, zolstu gebben in Mazkirus* (when you find out, you should give it to the *Mazkirus*).”

I did more research by asking his friends and family members and found out that his Jewish name is Yitzchok ben Malka. In those years following Sunday Dollars, the Rebbe would go to the Ohel, and before the Rebbe left, I managed to write a *tzetel* with the details and his Jewish name and give it to the *Mazkirus*. On this note, the Rebbe answered, “*Azkir al hatziyun* (I will mention it by the Ohel).”

This Jew was in a coma in a critical state, but miraculously he managed to stay alive in such a state for a month. After a month, his situation improved a bit, but he still remained in a coma. At that time, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe giving a report on his

state and asking for a *bracha* that he should have a supernatural miraculous *refuah shleima*. On this, the Rebbe answered “*B'dikas hatefillin v'hamezuzos*” — that we should check his tefillin and mezuzos — which we relayed to the man's family.

Some time later, two months after the incident, the man suddenly woke up from his coma. After a period of rehabilitation, he got better and subsequently moved to California.

A few months later, I was invited to a wedding of one of the Jews from my *mitzvot* route, and I told all the people at the table where I sat about this miraculous story.

One of the people at the table suddenly stood up and told everyone: “You should know that the story he told is exactly as it happened! I am the doctor who treated him, and he had no medical chance of surviving that. It was a miracle!”

The doctor added that his friends had brought to the hospital a dollar from the Rebbe and had placed it under his head that it should be there all the time.

This is the story of the Persian Jew, Korush Panai ben Molok - Yitzchak ben Malka.

Mendel Brandwine

BERLIN, GERMANY

CORRECTION

In a previous issue (Kislev 5785), in the article titled “The Starodub Affair” (p. 37), one of the photos featured was erroneously captioned as Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Neimark. The photo actually depicts Rabbi Asher Zev Werner. We apologize for the mistake.



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