

A Chassidisher
Derher

א חסידישער דערהער

לכשיפוצו מעיינותיך חוצה

Wellsprings Unleashed

THE REBBE'S REVOLUTION
OF PRINTING THE WHOLE
OF CHASSIDUS

Didan Notzach!

YOMAN - TEVES 5747

A Staunch Soldier

RABBI YAAKOV YEHUDA HECHT



TEVES 5778
ISSUE 64 (141)

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Derher **Editorial**

So much has been written about the Yom Tov of Hei Teves; the meaning behind the trial, the eternal impact of the victory, and it's special relevance for us today. (See Derher, Hei Teves 5777 supplement magazine.)

There is, however, one interesting point that the Rebbe seemed to reiterate quite a few times in *sichos* at the time of the court case: printing Chassidus.

The Rebbe pointed to the unparalleled increase in printing Chassidus that has taken place in recent years as a major milestone in *hafatzas hamaayanos chutza* and called for even more *kesavim* to be published.

While discussing the topic at one *farbrengen*, the Rebbe divulged that the notion of limitlessly printing Chassidus is not so simple: How can we go ahead and print these *maamarim*, which were hidden for so many generations, especially when the Rabbeim themselves didn't print them?

Quoting the famous *mashal* of the Alter Rebbe about the ill prince who needed the crown jewel to be ground, the Rebbe explained: By constantly printing new *maamarim*, we ensure that people are excited and eager to learn more Chassidus. Even if only one Yid learns a new *maamar*, the printing and exposing of the new *maamarim* was well worth it.

The Rebbe concluded: But even if people won't learn from the new *sefarim*, we will still continue to print more and more, in the spirit of the *possuk*: “וכאשר יכאשו וכן ירבה וכן יפרוץ”—As much as they afflict them, so did they multiply and so did they gain strength...” In other words, the printing will carry on and will only increase!

Chassidim could sense the Rebbe hinting to the fact that the recent trial was a *kitrug*, much like that of the Alter Rebbe's time, invoked by the Rebbe's immense dissemination of Chassidus, especially in print.

In the spirit of Hei Teves, the story of the Rebbe's bold undertaking to print the entirety of Chassidus is brought to you in this magazine.

In the aftermath of the victory, the Rebbe explained that this occasion must call for even more efforts in *hafatzas hamaayanos chutza*. Let this story and all the other articles in this magazine encourage us all to heighten our efforts in this area, and may this lead to the promised result of קאתי מר—the coming of Moshiach now!

The Editors

חג הגאולה, י"ט כסלו ה'תשע"ח



TEVES: A PARADOX?

The nature of the month of Teves seems paradoxical:

On the one hand, Teves can be considered a month of goodness, for several reasons:

- Its very name—“טבת”—includes the word טוב—good.
- Teves is the tenth month and the number ten has special significance in many areas. Particularly, the Torah says regarding the designation of *ma'aser beheima*, “The tenth will be sanctified.”
- One of the few references to this month in Tanach is in

the Megillah—“Esther was taken to King Achashveirosh in the tenth month, the month of Teves.” Chazal explain that the significance of this month is that “it is the month when bodies derive pleasure from each other.” The simple meaning is that in the cold winter months, people enjoy the shelter and warmth of other people’s company. But on a deeper level, Chassidus explains that Hashem’s “guf” i.e. His very Being (*yesh ha'amiti*) derives benefit from

the physical “guf” i.e. human beings (*yesh hanivra*). With this “pleasure,” they join and become one—“Yidden and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* are one.”

On the other hand, this month also has the opposite element as well:

The 10th of Teves is a fast day, commemorating the beginning of one of the greatest calamities in our history: the siege of Yerushalayim, which ultimately led to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* and to *golus Bavel*.

The way our calendar is set today, Asarah B'Teves never occurs



לעילוי נשמת
הו"ח אי"ר ר' חיים ב"ר יעקב ז"ל
נפטר עש"ק לאחר הדלקת הנרות,
עשרה בטבת תשל"ד
ומרת דינה בת ר' חיים משה ע"ה
נפטרה כ"ג אלול תשמ"ה
גריזמאן
ת"נצ"ב'ה
נדפס ע"י ולזכות נכדם
הרה"ת ר' חיים וזוגתו ביילא מינדל
שיחיו
ובניהם, מנחם מענדל, חי' מושקא,
לוי יצחק, חנה דינה ומשה אליהו שיחיו
גריזמאן



on Shabbos. However, due to the severity of the tragedy for which the fast was instituted, if it were to occur on Shabbos, the fast would not be postponed and we would have to fast on Shabbos (similar to Yom Kippur, as opposed to the other fasts).

In truth, though, there is no contradiction between them—they are simply two stages of the same master plan:

The first few days of Teves are during Chanukah, when we light the menorah—symbolizing the transformation of the negative to overwhelming positivity.

Similarly, the siege of Yerushalayim led to the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, which led to *golus*, but will ultimately lead us to the final and **complete geulah**. Though it seems like anything but good, the true purpose and goal of Asarah B'Teves is to eventually lead to the ultimate good.

As a matter of fact, this day is even referred to as “עצם היום הזה – this exact day/the essence of this day,”¹ similar to Yom Kippur. When Moshiach comes, the “essence” of this day will be revealed, and, as the *navi* describes it: “The fast of the tenth [month] shall become occasions for

joy and gladness, happy festivals in the House of Yehuda.”² The *simcha* that comes from this transformation is even greater than the straightforward nature of most *Yomim Tovim*, as the famous *mashal* of Shlomo Hamelech states, “כיתרון האור מן החשך—Light is much more appreciated [after the] darkness [that precedes it].” **7**

(Adapted from *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayechi* 5749)

1. Yechezkel 24:2.

2. Zecharia 8:19.



לעבן מיט'ן רבין

לזכות
החיילים בצבאות ה'
מנחם מענדל שיח'י
לרגל ה'אפשעקניש' שלו
י"ג טבת, ה'תשע"ח

ולזכות אחיו
מרדכי זאב שיח'י
לרגל יום הולדתו ה' טבת

נדפס ע"י הוריהם
הרה"ת ר' יצחק דובער
וזוגתו מרת שיינא מושקא שיח'י
גלאסנער



SPIRITED SINGING AND DANCING IN FRONT OF 770 UPON THE
ARRIVAL OF THE NEWS "DIDAN NOTZACH!" HEI TEVES 5747.

KFAR CHABAD MAGAZINE

Didan Notzach

TEVES 5747



In the past we have written extensively about many aspects of Hei Teves—the history, the celebration, and its relevance to every Chossid. (See the Hei Teves supplement published in 5777.) We now present a vivid description of the “*shivas yemei hamishteh*”—the seven days of celebration that occurred after the very first Didan Notzach.

TUESDAY, 5 TEVES – DIDAN NOTZACH!

At 11:00 a.m., Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky was notified by the federal court that Judge Sifton had issued a verdict in connection with the *sefarim* case and that he should come to the courthouse to receive a copy. At approximately 11:40 a.m., the

news reached the *bochurim* in the upstairs *zal* of 770 that the verdict had been in our favor and it was an unconditional victory. *Didan Notzach!*

The jubilant shouts of *Didan Notzach* by a handful of *bochurim* quickly developed into a joyous celebration that engulfed *adas hachassidim* throughout the world. The news spread like wildfire, and students in the various *mosdos* in Crown Heights, *anash*, and *shluchim* rushed to 770 to participate in the festivities.

The jubilant shouts of Didan Notzach by a handful of bochurim quickly developed into a joyous celebration

Arriving back at 770, Rabbi Krinsky entered the Rebbe's room with the 41 page verdict and inquired if there would be a *farbrengen* in honor of the *simcha*. The Rebbe answered "*M'darf zich meyashev zein*" (the matter still needs consideration), and instructed him to notify the Rebbetzin of the news and to call the lawyers to thank them for their efforts in the case.

Enthusiastic dancing and singing filled 770 and the streets of Crown Heights. Mitzvah tanks drove around with the joyous tune of "*Didan Notzach*" blaring from the loudspeakers and the large circle of dancers in front of 770 continued to grow. *L'chaim* flowed freely and everyone greeted each other with wishes of "*Mazel Tov!*" and "*Gut Yom Tov!*"

The celebration reached a fevered pitch when it was announced that the Rebbe would daven *Mincha* in the main shul downstairs and the Tishrei platform was hurriedly constructed. [In those years, the Rebbe would ordinarily daven *Mincha* in the small *zal* with the *bochurim*, and the platform in the downstairs shul was only set up for Tishrei and special days. This change in routine was very special.]

The Rebbe entered the shul and distributed coins for *tzedaka* to the many children in attendance, as the large crowd joyfully chanted "*Didan Notzach! Didan Notzach!*" over and over.

While the crowd sang *Ashrei*, the Rebbe requested a Chumash—an indication that there would be a *sicha* after *davening*—and a second *shtender* and microphone were set up on the platform. Chassidim around the world were notified



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

SOME OF THE PRICELESS SEFARIM OF THE LIBRARY THAT WERE STOLEN.

of this development, and they all called in to WLCC for the hookup. (Shluchim from California who were on a flight at the time, arranged for the *sicha* to be transmitted through the airplane phone line).

The Rebbe spoke for close to 35 minutes, highlighting the relevance of the lessons of the daily *parsha* (*sh'lishi* of *Parshas Vayigash*) to the events that had transpired. Yosef Hatzaddik reminds his brothers that the terrible experiences of the 22 years following his sale into slavery were orchestrated by Hashem for a purpose. Even during a time of terrible concealment it is imperative to be mindful that this is a *shlichus* from above to attain greater heights.

The Rebbe compared the victory to the release of the Alter Rebbe from prison on Yud-Tes Kislev, which ultimately ushered in a new era of the teaching and dissemination of Chassidus. The false claim of the opposing side that "Lubavitch is not active" must result in our increased efforts in the work of *hafatzas hamaayanos*.

The Rebbe concluded with a call to action to intensify efforts in the campaign of the *sheva*



mitzvos b'nei Noach and to establish many more Chabad Houses.

Mitzvah tanks were quickly organized in response to the Rebbe's call for increased *hafatzah*. Meanwhile, many hundreds of Chassidim continued arriving from around the world.

Agudas Chassidei Chabad organized a grand *farbrengen* after *Maariv*. Rabbi Krinsky shared that after *Mincha*, the Rebbe instructed him to call the lawyers and share with them some points of the *sicha* and to thank them again. Rabbi Avrohom Shemtov recounted various details of the case and

said that the Rebbe expressed to the lawyers that every step of the court case should be handled professionally (*melubash b'teva*).

Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik connected the victory to the daily Hayom Yom and Rabbi Moshe Hecht suggested that a Megillas Hei Teves be published, just as the story of Yud-Tes Kislev had been recorded by the Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. Following the speeches, the benches were removed from the main shul and the celebrations continued unabated until daybreak, with the



Wellsprings Unleashed

THE REBBE'S REVOLUTION:

PRINTING THE WHOLE
OF CHASSIDUS¹

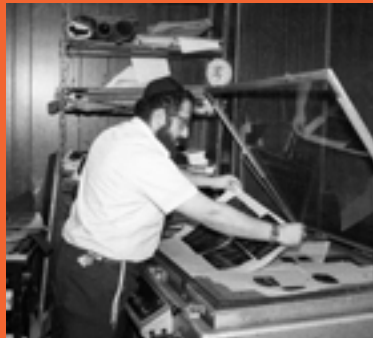
We were greatly assisted in the preparation of this article by Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook, director of Vaad Hanachos B'Lahak; Rabbi Eliyahu Matusof, senior editor at Otzar HaChassidim; Rabbi Dovid Olidort, senior editor at Kehot Publication Society; and Rabbi Gavriel Shapiro, senior editor at Otzar HaChassidim. זכות הרבים תלוי' בהם.

We also drew many resources from the book "Kehos" by Rabbi Zushe Wolf.

KEHOS PUBLISHERS AT WORK
AT THE PRINTING PRESS.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 198876



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 193293



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 193308

With every successive generation, Chassidus has been spread in an increasingly growing manner.

One of the most important approaches to making Chassidus accessible for every person—to the *chutza*—was to write it down, thus making it available far beyond those who heard the *maamar*. The Torah of the Rabbeim was either written by them or transcribed by others and publicized far and wide in the form of *haatakos*—hand made copies.

Taking these fundamentally un-revealable treasures and spreading them to the masses comes with tremendous danger, and the Rabbeim risked their lives in doing so. When a page of Chassidus was seen floating in the streets, the Maggid nearly passed away from the Heavenly *kitrug* that ensued; the Alter Rebbe would have been *nistalek* if not for the sacrifice of his daughter, who gave her life in his stead; and the list goes on.

Yet, there was one area that was generally left untouched, and that was to officially publish the *maamarim* in *sefarim*. As we will see, the Rabbeim did do so to limited degrees, but the vast majority of Chassidus remained unpublished. The “*Chassidus hanidfas*”—the Chassidus that was published, and thus accessible to anyone who was ready to pay for it—could fit on a single shelf. In order to learn any other *maamar*, one needed to locate it in one of the *bichelach chassidus*—the binders of handwritten copies that were copied and collected by Chassidim. In addition to the fact that these were often full of mistakes and could only be read by a trained eye, many people simply had no access to them. The fact that today one can purchase a library of Chassidus in addition to a library of *nigleh* is revolutionary—a revolution that the Rebbe personally initiated and oversaw, primarily in the last few years before Gimmel Tammuz.

Printing the Tanya

The first significant publishing of Chassidus Chabad occurred in תקנ"ז, with the printing of the Tanya. At first, the Tanya was copied by hand in the thousands, but as copies were made from copies that were made from copies, more and more mistakes crept into the text (as the Alter Rebbe notes in his *hakdama*). Additionally, the *misnagdim* took advantage of this and started deliberately adding mistakes of their own.

The Alter Rebbe agreed to send the Tanya to print, but although it made waves in the Jewish world, it came with a heavy cost.

In a *sicha*, the Tzemach Tzedek said that just as Avraham Avinu put his very life on the line to spread the truth about Hashem, so, too, the Alter Rebbe had real *mesirus nefesh* to spread Chassidus. He almost lost his life because of a *kitrug* (when his daughter, Devorah Leah, took his place instead).

"Yet, he put his holy soul in danger to put the Tanya in writing—the *Torah Shebiksav* of Chassidus. The danger continued until תקנ"ט, when in addition to the danger to his soul, his holy body was put in danger, and he suffered deathly pains for fifty-three days, for the fifty-three *perakim* of Tanya..."²

The Tanya was to be the only Chassidus published in the lifetime of the Alter Rebbe (with a few *maamarim* printed together with the תקס"ה edition). Several *manichim* (the Maharil, the Mitteler Rebbe, Reb Pinchas Reizes, etc.) wrote *hanachos* of the *maamarim*, but these were only publicized in handwritten form.

With the *nesius* of the Mitteler Rebbe in תקע"ג, everything changed. The Mitteler Rebbe was the first of the Rabbeim to write down his own Chassidus, and he also published many *sefarim*, both the Torah of his father as well as

his own. In fact, this level of publishing would not be rivaled until the establishment of Kehos, in 5702. It's not that the Mitteler Rebbe had an easier time publishing his *sefarim* than the Rabbeim before or after; on the contrary, his *nesius* was an especially difficult time for the Yidden, and the Chassidim and *beis harav* were very poor—worse than in any other generation. This is in addition to the difficulties of publishing at the time: it was full of hassle, complicated, and time-consuming. Yet, in the fifteen years of his *nesius*, the Mitteler Rebbe printed an astonishing amount of *sefarim*.

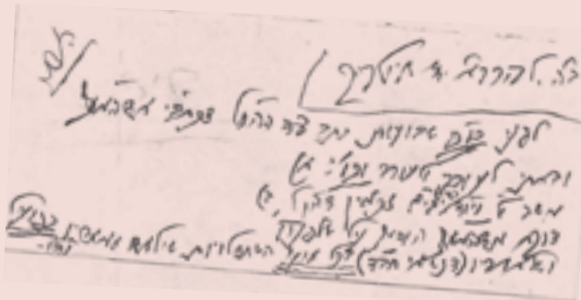
Unlike the Alter Rebbe, who gave the actual job of publishing the Tanya to other people, the Mitteler Rebbe was very involved in the printing. In fact, in order to enable even the poorest Chassidim to purchase the *sefarim*, he wrote them in a way that they could be split into separate *boigen*—eight-page sections.



FIRST PRINT OF SEFER HATANYA, SLAVITA 5556.

In addition to the danger to his soul, his holy body was put in danger, and he suffered deathly pains for fifty-three days, for the fifty-three *perakim* of Tanya...

The Rebbe spoke about the Mittlerer Rebbe's unique involvement in publishing many times, noting how he personally arranged that even people who weren't ready to spend more than a few pennies—and even those who couldn't digest more than a few pages at a time—could still learn Chassidus.⁴ This is a *ksav yad kodesh* written to a senior editor in Otzar Hachassidim, Rabbi Aharon Chitrik:



ב"ה. להרר"א שי חטריק

מהיר

לפני כו"כ [כמה וכמה] שבועות כתב על דבר ההוצאה לאור
דכתבי אדהאמ"צ [אדמו"ר האמצעי]

ובאתי לעורר ולעורר וכו':

(א) אשר ט' ויו"ד כסלו ימים זכאין דהנ"ל,

(ב) דוקא אדהאמ"צ [אדמו"ר האמצעי] הוסיף על שלפניו
ושלאחריו (דנשיא חב"ד) בכל מיני השתדלויות שילמדו
מאמרי בפועל וד"ל [ודי למבין]

Boruch Hashem. To Rabbi Aharon *sheyiche* Chitrik
Rush

Many weeks ago you wrote [to me] about
publishing the writings of the Mittlerer Rebbe

I am now reminding you, and so on:

1) That Tes and Yud Kislev are special dates of [the
Mittlerer Rebbe]

2) The Mittlerer Rebbe specifically went beyond the
nesiei Chabad before him and after him, [exerting]
all types of effort that his *maamarim* should
actually be learned. *Veda"l* [=this is sufficient for
someone who understands].

It should be noted that this sign-off—*Veda"l*—was a
special phrase used by the Mittlerer Rebbe very often
in his *maamarim*. (See Sichas Motza'ei Shabbos Yud
Shevat 5737.)

He also personally wrote to the Chassidim to
arrange a system whereby they would purchase
one *boigen* at a time for only six *kopkes* each.
Over a period of a few years they would be able
to purchase the entire *sefer* and have it bound
without any major expenses.³

The Chassidus published over that time
period made up the bulk of the Chassidic
library until Kehos was established over a
hundred years later.

The Tzemach Tzedek was the most prolific
writer among the Rabbeim—the Rebbe
Maharash said that his writings filled about
sixty-thousand notebooks (eight pages each)!—
but he didn't publish any of his own *sefarim*.

There was one watershed publishing done
by the Tzemach Tzedek—the printing of Torah
Or and Likkutei Torah. This two-volume
set would become the essential *sefarim* of
Chassidus (often referred to as the *chassidishe
parsha*). The Tzemach Tzedek had worked on
these *maamarim* of the Alter Rebbe for thirty
years, editing them and adding his notes and
hagahos. After many years of painstaking work
(and the Tzemach Tzedek's deliberation about
printing his own *hagahos*) the Likkutei Torah
went to print in תר"ח.⁵

The following story, quoted and explained
by the Rebbe numerous times, should suffice to
give us a bit of an idea as to what this printing



FIRST PRINT OF LIKKUTEI TORAH, ZHITOMIR 5608.

symbolized: The year תר"ח was known as a year of a *ketz*, a final date for when Moshiach was supposed to arrive. Alas, the year came and went and Moshiach did not come. The Rebbe Maharash asked the Tzemach Tzedek how it was possible that Moshiach did not come. The Tzemach Tzedek replied that Likkutei Torah was published!

The Rebbe Maharash proclaimed, “But we want and need Moshiach *l’mata mei’asara tefachim!*...”⁶

As far as publishing, that’s where it more or less ended. It is difficult to know what happened during the *nesius* of the Rebbe Maharash,⁷ but it seems that the only Chassidus of the Rebbe Maharash that was printed is Likkutei Torah L’Gimmel Parshiyos, published in the year following his *histalkus*. Not a single *sefer* of the Rebbe Rashab was published during his lifetime, nor was anything printed by the Frierdiker Rebbe until he left Russia in תרפ”ו.

This doesn’t mean that people didn’t have access to their Rebbe’s Torah, of course; *bichelach* of the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab (and the previous Rabbeim) were copied from one person to another, and spread near and far, but they lacked the accessibility of print. From תר”ח until תרפ”ו, a period of eighty years, almost no new *sefarim* were published by the Rabbeim, with the exception of some reprints.

The Rebbe discussed this on more than one occasion, even expressing that the fact that more Chassidus was not published in previous generations was something he could not understand.⁸

A New Era

After the *geula* of Yud-Beis Tammuz, the Frierdiker Rebbe began a new initiative of publishing Chassidus. The Rebbe pointed out that this could not be simply attributed



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE WRITING AT HIS DESK.

to the fact that the Frierdiker Rebbe was now free from Communist Russia, because (as we have seen above) the publishing of Chassidus had been limited long before the days of Communism. Rather, the *geula* of the Frierdiker Rebbe on Yud-Beis Tammuz marked a new era in *hafatzas hamaayanos*, just as the redemption of Yud-Tes Kislev began an entirely new stage in the *hafatzas hamaayanos* of the Alter Rebbe.⁹

Chassidus was published in a number of different formats. First, the Frierdiker Rebbe began periodically publishing his *maamarim* and *sichos* in a series of *kuntreisim*—pamphlets (whereas the Rabbeim had previously only given their *maamarim* to be hand-copied). During his *nesius*, hundreds of *maamarim* and *sichos* of the Frierdiker Rebbe were published and publicized in this manner. Additionally, the Frierdiker Rebbe established the Hatomim periodical, where many letters and *kesavim* of the Rabbeim were published for the first time.

From the beginning, the Rebbe (to whom the Frierdiker Rebbe once referred as “my minister of intelligence”) was intimately involved in matters related to print. Hatomim, for example, did not carry the Rebbe’s name, but as the Frierdiker Rebbe told the Rebbetzin in a letter: “The editors on paper will be others, but all the work is his...”¹⁰ (It is interesting to note that the vast majority of Chassidus published by the Frierdiker Rebbe, even before he came to the United States, was printed after the Rebbe’s *chasuna*.)

The *geula* of the Frierdiker Rebbe on Yud-Beis Tammuz marked a new era in *hafatzas hamaayanos*, just like the redemption of Yud-Tes Kislev.

The Frierdiker Rebbe also wrote thousands of letters, many discussing matters of *avodas Hashem*, and he put the Rebbe in charge of organizing all his letters that were applicable to the public. Even when the Rebbe lived in a different location from his father-in-law, he was sent a copy of every letter of this kind. The Rebbe wrote an index of these letters, and began publishing them in various formats.

The Establishment of Kehos

After a harrowing journey through war-torn Europe, the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in America on 9 Adar II 5700, followed by the Rebbe on 28 Sivan 5701. The arrival of the center of Chassidus in the *chatzi kadur hatachton*, the “lower” half of the globe, represented the culmination of the *geula* of Yud-Beis Tammuz, and all matters of *hafatzas hamaayanos* rose to an entirely new level.¹¹ The project of translating Chassidus into other languages, which the Frierdiker Rebbe had previously begun on a limited scale, now took off, signifying yet another transformative *chiddush* in *hafatzas hamaayanos*.¹²

The Frierdiker Rebbe established Kehos—Lubavitch’s first publishing house—in 5702 and placed the Rebbe at its helm. Shortly thereafter, the Frierdiker Rebbe established *Sifriyas Otzar Hachassidim*, a library and editing team that was specifically dedicated to publishing the Torah of the Rabbeim, with the Rebbe as editor-in-chief.

After so many decades without new *sefarim* of Chassidus, *sefarim* were suddenly being published one after another (in addition to the many *sifrei nigleh*, English books, and *siddurim/machzorim*). The Rebbe took a two-pronged approach:

- **Reprinting old *sefarim*:**
In addition to the *sefarim* printed by the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe, and the Tzemach

JEM102279



THE FRIERDIKER REBBE REVIEWS A NEWLY PUBLISHED EDITION OF THE HATOMIM JOURNAL.

Tzedek themselves, there were several more works of the Rabbeim published by other, non-Lubavitcher Chassidim. Within a few years of the establishment of Kehos, the Rebbe had put the basic *sefarim* of Chassidus back into circulation by arranging for them to be reprinted in inexpensive overseas print houses (in countries such as China and Germany).

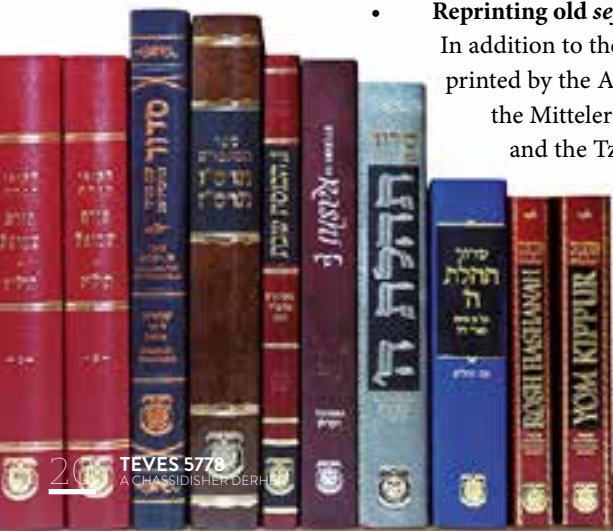
- **Publishing new *sefarim*:** In addition, many works of Chassidus were published for the first time ever, including newly printed *sefarim* of the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe Rashab, and the Frierdiker Rebbe.


When Kehos published its first catalog after seven years of publishing (5702-5709), almost two hundred publications had come out!

How a Sefer Should be Published

In addition to the fact that *sifrei Chassidus* were being published for the first time ever—in itself a revolution—another, quieter revolution was taking place.

One of the things the Rebbe did as editor-in-chief of Kehos was set the standards and guidelines as to how a *sefer* of Chassidus should come out in print. For the first time ever, *maamarim* began coming out with footnotes to *pesukim*, *maamarei Chazal*, and Kabbalah; footnotes to other places in Chassidus where an idea was discussed; and so on.





Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht (known to many as “Yankel” or “JJ”) was a man of many colors. He was lively and vivacious; many fondly recall his fiery speeches and entertaining style. He was dependable and a natural leader; he carried the weight of many institutions and responsibilities. And he was also genuinely kind and gracious. The many people whom he helped attest to his boundless care for his fellow Jew, and his constant readiness to help anyone in a tough situation.

But beyond all this, there is one characteristic that those who knew Rabbi Hecht remember most about his persona and very fulfilling life. It is his service, his dedication and his love for the Rebbe, which knew no bounds.

Always at the forefront of the Rebbe’s activities, Rabbi Hecht served in many different roles, often all at the same time, and he merited to receive a vast range of directives and special *kiruvim* from the Rebbe.

In the next few pages, we will attempt to portray just a sample of the fascinating relationship.

A STAUNCH SOLDIER

Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht



לזכות
הרה"ת ר' יצחק ישראל
וזוגתו מרת רחל בריינא
בניהם ובנותיהם
מנחם מענדל, שרה רבקה,
חנה פרימט ריקל, יהושע דוד
שיחיו
מאגאלניק



KOS SHEL BRACHA, MOTZAEI PESACH 5739.
YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM 126183



REB YEHOASHUA HECHT, PATRIARCH OF THE HECHT FAMILY.

OASIS IN AMERICA

Yaakov Yehuda Hecht was born in תרפ"ד in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Being an observant Jew in the United States was not easy nor common in those days, but in the home of Reb Yehoshua and Sara Hecht, Yiddishkeit was a way of life. Young Yankel and his five brothers were brought up as proud Jews, and received an authentic Yiddish *chinuch* from their father, a prominent activist in the Jewish community. After attending Yeshiva Chaim Berlin elementary school, the Hecht boys enrolled in Yeshiva Torah Vodaas.

At that time, Reb Yisroel Jacobson, who was a prominent Chossid, lived in New York, where his home served as a stronghold for Chabad activities in the United States. The oldest Hecht brother, Shlomo Zalman, began learning Chassidus with Reb Yisroel, and Yankel and his younger brothers followed in his footsteps. When Yankel was sixteen years old, the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived in America and established Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim. This was a turning point for him. Not long afterwards, he



A YOUNG JJ HECHT.

transferred to Tomchei Temimim and dedicated his heart and soul to the Frierdiker Rebbe.

SOMEONE'S WATCHING

Immediately after his arrival, the Frierdiker Rebbe declared that "America *iz nit andersh*, is no different," and began plans to rebuild Yiddishkeit in America. When the Rebbe arrived just over a year later, the Frierdiker Rebbe tasked him with leading Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch, Machne Yisroel, and Kehos.

One of the earliest programs of Merkos was the Mesibos Shabbos gatherings, where Jewish children would gather on Shabbos afternoon to say *brachos* and *pesukim* and to strengthen their Yiddishkeit together.

As a young *bochur*, Yankel volunteered for the Mesibos Shabbos programs and dedicated himself to the education of the many Jewish children he encountered. His talent in connecting with the youth stood him well, and over the years he impacted countless children and strengthened their Yiddishkeit. After a short period of time, he was put in charge of the entire operation.

The work of Mesibos Shabbos in those years was of immense importance. In those early days before the launch of *mitzvot*, etc., this was the main vehicle of *hafatzas hayahadus* in America. Although its impact may not have seemed so global at the time, the Rebbe felt otherwise. During a *farbrengen* in those early years, the Rebbe said, "My father-in-law, the Rebbe, is starting with Mesibos Shabbos, and with that he will take over the world!"

In the merit of his work, Yankel received special *kiruvim* from the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rebbe, and he merited to enter into *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe on a number of occasions.

One of his earliest experiences was on Rosh Hashanah 5702, a few short months after the Rebbe arrived in the US. On Yom Tov afternoon, Yankel gathered a few Jewish children in the courtyard of 770, *davened* with them, told them stories, and gave out candies. (This was before the Rebbe began the Mesibos Shabbos program.) All the while, the Rebbe quietly stood on the porch and observed him. Little did Yankel know that the Frierdiker Rebbe, too, sat near the window and watched his little "event" take place.

After it was over, the Rebbe called Yankel and told him to come with him. He led him up the stairs to the second floor of 770, and ushered him into the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yechidus* room.

The Frierdiker Rebbe sat at the table wearing his *shtreimel*, reciting Tehillim from a *sefer* before him. "As we walked in," Rabbi Hecht later related, "the Frierdiker Rebbe looked up and gave me a *bracha*. I was so startled and so overcome with emotion that my entire body shook and I couldn't make out a single word."

Another special *kiruv* he received in those years was from the Rebbe:

YANKEL GATHERED A FEW JEWISH CHILDREN IN THE COURTYARD OF 770, DAVENED WITH THEM, TOLD THEM STORIES, AND GAVE OUT CANDIES. ALL THE WHILE, THE REBBE QUIETLY STOOD ON THE PORCH AND OBSERVED HIM.

HIDDEN MIRACLES

Rabbi Hecht once related a personal story of salvation that occurred to him as a young *bochur*:

During World War II, all divinity students, including *yeshiva bochurim*, were initially exempt from the military draft. However, at some point they decided that *yeshiva bochurim* should be drafted, and they decided that I would be the first one who would prove that *yeshiva bochurim* would do just fine.

My father hired a lawyer who traveled to Washington and fought the case, but ultimately we failed; they refused to exempt me, and I was summoned for the physical examination prior to being drafted.

Before going, I went into *yechidus* to ask the Frierdiker Rebbe for a *bracha*. I gave a *tzeitl* to the Frierdiker Rebbe, and he looked up and said, “*Der Aibershter zol helfen*, may Hashem help you that your salvation will come in a natural form, but if it needs to be *l’malah miderech hateva*, above nature, then let it be so.” With that, the *yechidus* concluded.

I arrived at the examination office, and they sent me from doctor to doctor, each checking me from top to bottom. The eye doctor, the nose doctor, all the doctors gave me an A. I was in perfect health. Each time I received an A, I became more and more worried.

I finished all the doctors, and my report was perfect; I realized that I might very soon be carrying a gun off to war...

There was just one more stop. The psychiatrist.

He began to ask me questions.

“What do you do?”

“I’m a *yeshiva bochur*; I study Torah.”

“Do you go out with girls?”

“Girls!? I told you, I’m a *yeshiva bochur*!”

“Do you go to the movies?”

“Movies!? It’s *avoda zara*, how could I ever do such a thing?”

He went on and on, until he concluded, “You’re nuts!”

He marked my report with an F4, which meant total failure, and I was released.

My father and I came back for *yechidus* to say thank you. As we entered the room, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave us a broad smile and said:

“*Ein baal haness makir b’nisso*, you don’t understand the miracle that happened to you. You should know what type of miracle that was.”

And then he said with a *niggun*, “*Loisei niflaos; gedolos—levado*. The *Aibershter* does great miracles. But their true greatness, only He knows.”

Due to the Frierdiker Rebbe’s frail health, his *farbrengens* and *tefillas* were held on the second floor, and only a select group of people were allowed to participate. One year before *hakafos*, the Rebbe called Yankel, ushered him into a side room on the second floor, and a few minutes later brought him inside the room where the *hakafos* were being held.

“For me,” Rabbi Hecht would relate years later, “the most special moment was when, after *hakafos* concluded, the Rebbe thanked me for being *lebedik*. I understood that I had brought the Frierdiker Rebbe a lot of *nachas*.”

RELEASE TIME

In 5702, the Frierdiker Rebbe began another campaign to save the Jewish children being educated (*r”l*) in the public school system. Under the auspices of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, a daily after-school Talmud Torah was launched, and scores of Jewish children would arrive each day after school to learn about Torah, mitzvos, and Yiddishkeit. Within some time of working in these schools, Yankel was promoted to principal of the Crown Heights division, and later, of the entire operation.

In 5703, a new program was started. New York State law allows children to attend one hour of religious instruction during the school week, and the Frierdiker Rebbe asked that this law be utilized to teach Yiddishkeit.¹ Every week, *bochurim* and girls would take children out of school on Wednesday afternoon and learn Torah with them. Yankel began working as a volunteer for the Released Time program, and he was phenomenally successful.

Within a few short years, Released Time had over two thousand children enrolled in their programs, and by the year 5710 there were more than ten thousand children participating! The program, which continues to this



A YOUNG JJ HECHT LEADS A RELEASED TIME CHAPTER.

day, was a first step for many children; from there, they enrolled in Jewish day schools, and made leaps and bounds in their Yiddishkeit.

Over the following years, Yankel continued his work as the principal of the Talmud Torah. In Shevat 5705, he married his wife, Chava (Lasker). After their wedding, Rabbi Hecht's father Reb Shea was in *yechidus* with the Frierdiker Rebbe, and he mentioned that his son, Reb Yankel, "*toigt zich ois in mein gesheft*, he is successful in my business." Yankel had helped his father each Friday as well as during summer vacation, and seeing his success, his father wanted him to continue working for him.

The Frierdiker Rebbe replied: "*Er toigt zich besser in mein gesheft*, he is even better in my business." It was around that time that Rabbi Hecht was appointed to be the head of the entire Released Time operation, which was called "Shaloh (שיעורי לימוד הדת)," and run under the title "NCFJE – National Committee for Furtherance of Jewish Education."

As the head of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch, the Rebbe was intimately

involved in everything concerning this program. Throughout those years, it remained under the Rebbe's close care, and was run with the Rebbe's direct involvement. In fact, it was Rabbi Hecht's activities in these programs on behalf of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch that largely facilitated the close connection he had with the Rebbe. In the years before the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, Rabbi Hecht was in and out of the Rebbe's room on a regular basis, constantly working, consulting, and reporting to the Rebbe.

After a couple of years of heading this vast operation, certain challenges arose, and at one point Rabbi Hecht was nearing despair. When he wrote this to the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Frierdiker Rebbe answered him in a letter that "through your involvement in saving the *neshamos* of thousands of Jewish boys and girls in Shaloh, you are fulfilling the purpose for which your *neshama* came down into the world, and it is a great merit for you and your family."²

RABBANUS

In addition to all of his responsibilities, Rabbi Hecht served

"THROUGH YOUR INVOLVEMENT...IN SHALOH, YOU ARE FULFILLING THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH YOUR NESHAMA CAME DOWN INTO THE WORLD, AND IT IS A LARGE MERIT FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY."

as the rav of a community, as well. He began his post in 5708, when the members of a prominent shul in East Flatbush approached him and asked him to serve as their rabbi.

Reb Yankel was quite young at the time, and he was involved over his head in Mesibos Shabbos and Shaloh, where he was able to utilize his talent in dealing with children; he didn't feel that the offer was something he should accept.

Others, however (the Rebbe included), encouraged him to take the post. With the guidance and *bracha* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, he took the post.

Rabbi Pinchas Feldman, the Rebbe's shliach to Sydney, Australia, relates that when he asked the Rebbe how he should conduct himself regarding a rabbinical post in Sydney, the Rebbe said that he should speak to Rabbi Hecht who happened to be visiting Australia at the time for his son's wedding; he would be able to give him a "*breitkeit and shtetl*—a proper rabbinic confidence" in his *rabbanus* and in general.

In the years before the Frierdiker Rebbe's *histalkus*, whenever Rabbi Hecht needed to deliver an important speech, he would ask the Rebbe for a novel idea to give over. The Rebbe would say, "*Nem a pencil*, grab a pencil to write it down," and would

WHEN CLIMBING THE GATE

On Erev Rosh Hashanah 5717, when Rabbi Hecht came to the Rebbe to give a *pan*, he asked the Rebbe what to do about *tashlich*: For several years he had a program of Tehillim recital for his community on the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah. Now, taking part in the program himself would mean forfeiting the chance to join the Rebbe for *tashlich*. However, his absence may cause the program to become a social gathering, instead of the serious nature of reciting Tehillim on Rosh Hashanah.

The Rebbe replied that it is a “good idea,” and that he should remain with his congregation. Regarding *tashlich*, he should recite it near a running faucet in the shul, and during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, he should go to a natural body of water and recite *tashlich* a second time.

Tashlich with the Rebbe that year turned out to be quite monumental. It was pouring rain, and when they arrived at the Botanical Gardens, the gate was closed. The Rebbe climbed over the large gate into the garden, and everyone else, hundreds of younger and older Chassidim alike, followed suit. Later that week when Reb Yankel came to the Rebbe to receive *lekach*, the Rebbe told him, “When I climbed over the gate, what was I thinking about? That I told you to stay at your shul during *tashlich*.”

immediately proceed to give him a Torah thought to speak about.

During the later years of his life, the demographics changed and the population of his shul dwindled. Being a very well-known and beloved figure in the wider Jewish community, he received numerous offers to become the rabbi of various prestigious shuls in other locations. But Rabbi Hecht wasn't one to abandon his shul. As per the Rebbe's clear instructions,³ he remained with the small congregation and tended to all their needs for the rest of his life.

DEEP ROOTS

The connection between the Rebbe and Reb Yankel began immediately after the Rebbe arrived in the United States. Rabbi Hecht would relate that from the moment the Rebbe stepped off the boat, he was captivated by his personality.

“He made a powerful impression on us. I would always try to have some sort of connection with him, and the

Rebbe reciprocated. I felt like the Rebbe's child.”

“I used to tell the Rebbe that I was his Chossid,” Reb Yankel would say, “before the Rebbe was Rebbe.”

In those early years, Rabbi Hecht would sometimes drive the Rebbe to the public library to make copies of various documents and pictures. Once, after returning from spending many hours with the Rebbe at the library, Rabbi Hecht received a phone call from the Rebbe.

“Did you go to *mikvah* today? Do you have a *gartel*?”

Rabbi Hecht answered in the affirmative.

“So please come over.”

When he arrived, the Rebbe told him that Professor Abraham Joshua Heschel was writing a book about the Baal Shem Tov, and he asked the Frierdiker Rebbe if he could see the Baal Shem Tov's *siddur*.

“Normally,” the Rebbe said, “I wouldn't have dared touch the Baal Shem Tov's *siddur*. But since the [Frierdiker] Rebbe asked me to show it



RABBI HECHT DELIVERS A SPEECH IN THE SHUL WHERE HE SERVED AS RAV.

HECHT FAMILY



The Obedient Peasant

Reb Zev Kitzes was once traveling with his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov. Their journey took them to Berdichev, where they arrived on a Friday afternoon with a few hours to spare before Shabbos.

They made their way to the house of Reb Lieber, the local rav. When they arrived they discovered that he wasn't home, so they asked his wife where he could be found.

"He is currently in the marketplace where they sell animal fodder," she replied.

They made their way to the market to meet him. When they arrived, they noticed that he was standing deep in thought. They approached him to introduce themselves and said, "Today is Erev Shabbos." Their words jolted Reb Lieber back to reality and, seeing his honorable guests, he greeted them warmly and invited the pair to follow him home.

When they arrived, he offered them a dish of roasted meat, which was customarily eaten on Erev Shabbos. After concluding the snack, he asked them if they would like to join him in the bathhouse. Agreeing to accompany their host, they made their way to the bathhouse to wash up in honor of Shabbos.

Reb Lieber had a weekly practice that when he exited the bathhouse he would go into a nearby store and buy a glass of beer.

This week was no exception.

He entered the store accompanied by his guests and requested beer for himself and for his guests. He told the owner not to worry if they didn't pay, because he would take care of it.

Instead of serving his customer, the store owner began to cry bitterly. "Woe is to me," he lamented. "Earlier today a Russian

peasant came into my store, drank more than he could handle, and then collapsed onto the floor and died! What should I do? I am terribly afraid that I will be accused of murdering him.

"Please help me," he concluded bitterly.

Reb Lieber, however, simply repeated his request for a drink for him and his guests.

The shopkeeper realized that he wouldn't receive any answer or advice until he brought the beer, so he hurried to do so.

After they finished drinking, Reb Lieber asked the frightened man what had happened. Once again he repeated the story.

"Where is the man now?"

The shopkeeper led him into the room where he had hidden the body and dragged the corpse out from under the bed.

Reb Lieber turned to the Baal Shem Tov,

who had been standing there throughout the entire exchange, and said, "Show your supernatural strengths!"

"I am not a resident of this town," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "I can't do anything without your explicit permission."

Reb Lieber, the rav of the city, immediately gave the Baal Shem Tov full authority to do as he pleased.

The Baal Shem Tov lifted up one of the dead man's legs and told him in Russian, "Here is not your place to die."

The dead peasant quickly got up and walked out of the shop. He continued some distance down the road and laid down on the ground for good, this time in a place where he wouldn't be a potential liability for any Yidden. **T**

(Otzar Sippurei Chabad vol. 14, p. 135.)



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

Dedicated in honor of
our dear children
Yechiel, Mindy, and Leah
By their parents

“I think I can get that for you...”

AS TOLD BY MRS. Yael NEUMANN AND MRS. LEAH SHEMTOV (STAMFORD, CT)

Mrs. Yael Neumann:

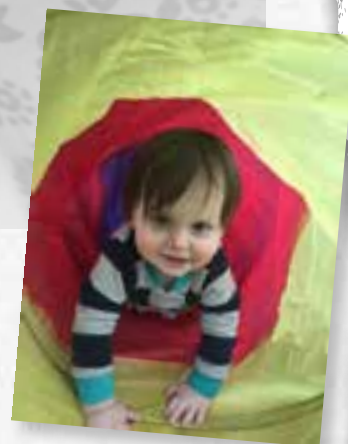
My husband and I were blessed with the birth of our daughter Aviva in the spring of 5769. We were delighted with our little girl, and I very much wanted to grow our family with more children. Years passed, and I started to fear that I was running out of time to have more children.

A visit to a specialist during the winter of 5775 confirmed my fear: the doctor told me that I would never again be able to have children. I was devastated. Adding to my grief was knowing that Aviva longed to have a sibling. She asked almost constantly, and she never gave up hope that the answer would change.

As I gathered Aviva's baby things to pass on to cousins one hot August day that summer, I found myself once again in tears. All at once, as if prompted from Above, I resolved to submit to the will of Hashem and trust in His choices for my life. I chose to focus my energy on loving my husband and daughter rather than wallowing in my sadness. I let go, and I immediately felt a release followed by a level of confidence and freedom I had not experienced in over a decade.

Mrs. Leah Shemtov:

On Gimmel Tammuz 5775, my family travelled to New York to visit the Ohel. We settled down in the tent to write



our *panim*. After completing her *pan*, my five-year-old daughter Rivkah asked me if I would like to know what *bracha* she was requesting from the Rebbe. She proceeded to tell me that she was requesting a *bracha* for her friend Aviva's mommy to have another baby.

Somewhat taken aback, I asked her how she knows that Aviva wants another baby.

"When I was playing with Aviva, she told me that she wants a sister or a brother," she replied. "I told her that I think I can get that for you. Not for sure, but I think."

I was touched at the pure sincerity of my five-year-old and I commended her for thinking of her friend at such a special time. Later I related the cute episode to Mrs. Neumann and she was touched.

Mrs. Neumann:

A few weeks later, I started having strange symptoms. Confused, I called my doctor to figure out what was happening. After a brief conversation, she suggested that I should take a pregnancy test. "But you said that it's impossible!" I replied incredulously.

"I did, but I've been wrong before," she responded.

The next morning's test confirmed that a miracle had transpired. I was expecting a child!

My doctor was shocked. She said that in her thirty-five years of experience as a reproductive specialist, she had never seen someone with a profile like mine conceive naturally, and only a few succeed with multiple rounds of medication and intervention.

On 6 Nissan 5776, I gave birth to a healthy baby boy. We named him Asher Yisroel. Asher from the word *ashreinu*, in thanksgiving to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for the miraculous gift we merited to receive, and Yisroel for my husband's uncle who passed away on the same day, just hours before my labor began. ❶

YOUR STORY

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



Havdalah Motza'ei Yom Kippur

Dear Editors,

As I was turning the pages of the Tishrei magazine, I came across the beautiful pictures of the Rebbe from Motza'ei Yom Kippur over the years in the “moments” column [Issue 61 (138) Tishrei 5778, pp. 62-69].

Captioning one of the pictures, the editors write “The Rebbe returns to his room to make *Havdalah*, emerging moments later to the outdoors for *kiddush levanah*.”

Although it is correct that the Rebbe would come back out shortly after for *kiddush levanah*, it seems that the Rebbe would not make *Havdalah* right away. Rather, the Rebbe would make *Havdalah* later on after he returned home.

This is evident from the fact that the Rebbe would leave 770 to his home still wearing his *kittel* and tallis. In Sefer Haminhagim (p. 59) the Rebbe writes that our *minhag* is to make *Havdalah* while wearing the *kittel* and tallis, whereas the Rebbe's note by *kiddush levanah* only mentions wearing a *gartel*. One can see when looking closely at the picture on p. 68 (in the same article) that the Rebbe is wearing his tallis under the coat as he walks towards the car.



Although this may have changed after Chof-Beis Shevat 5748, when the Rebbe no longer went home to make *Havdalah*, it is interesting to note that in the years 5749 and 5752 the moon was covered and *kiddush levanah* did not take place on Motza'ei Yom Kippur. That leaves us with 5750 and 5751. In those years the Rebbe recited *kiddush levanah* with his *kittel* and tallis also, so it is quite likely that the Rebbe made *Havdalah* only afterwards.

Also, it seems from the *yomanim* of 5750 and 5751 that there was only a short amount of time between when the Rebbe left shul after *Maariv* and when he came out for *kiddush levanah*. It is questionable if that left enough time for *Havdalah* (and *V'yiten Lecha* in 5751, as it was Motza'ei Shabbos), in addition to everything else.

On the same topic, one can see in the video of Motza'ei Yom Kippur 5749 that the Rebbe smiles broadly while standing at the *shtender* before leaving the shul. The story goes that someone called out, “There is no *levanah*.” When hearing this, Reb Sholom Ber Levitin shouted out in response, “There is a *levanah*, but you can't see it.” The Rebbe smiled broadly.

Mendy Greenberg
Wasilla, Alaska

”

Mr. Pinchas Kalms

Dear Editors,

The content of the article about Mr. Kalms and his correspondence with the Rebbe

["Guidance From the Rebbe," Issue 60 (137) Elul 5777] sheds so much light on a wide variety of subjects; it is fascinating and well-written. The Eretz Yisroel story powerfully illustrates *kabbolas ol* and *bitul* to the guidance of the Rebbe.

Thank you very much!

Hatzlacha Rabah!

Yossi Kagan
Brooklyn, NY



First and Last Possuk

Dear Editors,

Yasher ko'ach gadol for your beautiful Tishrei issue, and particularly for your article describing Simchas Torah with the Rebbe ["Uniting, Uplifting, Transcending," Issue 61 (138) Tishrei 5778].

Nevertheless, two corrections should be made on p. 43:

On Leil Shemini Atzeres, the Rebbe said the first and last *possuk* of all three rounds of *Ata Hareisa*, not just the first and third rounds.

Also, the arrangement concerning the proceeds was that on Simchas Torah night the proceeds went to Tomchei Temimim, and on Simchas Torah day they went to Merkos. On Shemini Atzeres there was no bidding at all.

Yossi Alperowitz
Bournemouth, England



"In one of the Sefardishe countries"

Dear Editors,

Thank you for the very interesting article about the Rebbe's revolution in Morocco ["The Building of an Empire," Issue 61

(138) Tishrei 5778]. As one who spent two years on shlichus as a *bochur* in Casablanca (8 Kislev 5743 - MarCheshvan 5745), it brought back good memories of Morocco and its special shluchim.

As the editors pointed out, much of the article is based of the *sefer Toldos Chabad B'Morocco* and the memoirs of Reb Michoel Lipsker, and there is certainly much more to say about the Rebbe's shluchim and *hafatzas hamaayanos* in Morocco. Obviously, the article serves as a short overview of a period spanning almost seventy years during which a number of shluchim spent time in various cities in Morocco and tens of thousands of Yiddishe children received *chinuch al taharas hakodesh* as a result.

If I may, there is one very important milestone in the history of the shluchim's work in Morocco that was not mentioned in the article. That is the grassroots for the Rebbe's global *takanas limud* Harambam that took place when I and seven other *bochurim* were on shlichus in Morocco in 5744.

Our *kevutza* of shluchim included: Dovid Kahanov, Danny Kaye, Shimon Mockin, Arki Deitch, Shea Morosov, Binyomin Serebransky, Zalman Blumenfeld, and myself.

It was just after Yud-Tes Kislev 5744 when we received a copy of the *hanacha* from the Rebbe's *farbrengen* that had taken place on Shabbos Vayeishev, 21 Kislev. The Rebbe had said a *sicha* in continuation to the annual Siyum Hashas that was conducted at the Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengen* two days earlier. Here the Rebbe declared that the time had come to begin studying the *sefer halachos* of the Rambam, Mishneh Torah, in a similar fashion. Maybe because it was mentioned passively and without much detail, no one present at the *farbrengen* acted upon this directive right away.

When we learned the *sicha*, we took it to heart. We were in a country where

the Rambam had lived and there was no more appropriate a place to launch such a campaign. We turned to Rabbi Leibel Raskin, *a"h*, and Rabbi Shlomo Matusof, *a"h*, asking them if they thought it was a good idea and they very much approved, so we got right to work.

As the Rebbe had spoken, we planned to apportion the Rambam in the same way Shas was divided: each set of the 83 *halachos* in Rambam would be taken by another person or group of people, thereby finishing all fourteen *sefarim* as a team effort. We decided to start on Yud Shevat with the goal to collectively finishing the entire Mishneh Torah by Yud-Aleph Nissan.

We headed to Reb Shlomo Eidelman's Colel Avreichim where we asked each of the *yoshvim* to take upon themselves a part of the Rambam. It is important to remember that in those days thousands of Jews lived in Morocco, many of them big *talmidei chachamim*. We approached *rabbonim*, *melamdin*, and many others in the community and asked everyone to take part. The chief rabbi of Morocco, Rabbi Yedidiah Monsonogo, responded excitedly to the proposal, remarking that he had a *kevius* in Rambam every Motza'ei Shabbos. Rabbi Binyamin Gordetzky, the representative of the Rebbe to Europe and Africa, also joined in, and within two weeks every part of Rambam was pledged for. Everything was divided up, besides *Hilchos Shluchin V'shutfin*, which we, the "shluchim" studied together as a group.

We sent a detailed *duch* to the Rebbe, and in the beginning of Adar we received a letter *kloli-proti* beginning with the words, "Your letter and that which was included was received, *v'tach*." It was not a regular occurrence that a group of *bochurim* would receive a response to a *duch* like that and we were now sure that we had done the right thing and given the Rebbe *nachas*. A large *siyum* was arranged and all in all it was a very big *kiddush shem Lubavitch*.

On Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe made a *hadran* on Rambam. A few days later, at the Acharon Shel Pesach *farbrengen*, the Rebbe announced, "It's been several years now that I've been waiting for someone to take up the idea of dividing the *sefer* of Rambam as well, until finally they actually did so in one of the Sefardische countries of Africa. The entire *sefer* was divided amongst many students, and collectively they completed the entire *sefer* in close proximity to the Rambam's birthday this year."

The Rebbe went on to explain the difference between Shas and Rambam, and why Shas can be learned individually whilst Rambam needs to be learned by each person in its entirety.

It was at that historic moment that the Rebbe launched "Mivtza Rambam," a moment that would change the lives of Chassidim forever.

Lazer Avtzon
Brooklyn, NY

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