

THE RIGOROUS PROCESS OF CHAZZARA AND HANACHA IN EACH GENERATION



תורת רבינו והוצאתה לאור We were also assisted by the kovetz .published by the Vaad Talmidei Hatmimim Throughout the history of Chassidus, the spoken teachings of the Rabbeim have been learned and retained through a two-step process, which, over time, developed a lexicon of its own.

First there was chazzara (repeating), when a chozer (repeater) would chazzer (repeat) the Rebbe's teaching for the benefit of the listeners. A chozer would chazzer the teachings as accurately as possible – which, depending on the Rebbe, could last up to several hours at a time.

Then came the next step, hanacha (transcribing), when a maniach (transcriber) would write a hanacha (transcript) of the Rebbe's teachings.

In this article series, we examine the history, development, and experience of this nearly impossible endeavor. In part 1 (published in the Adar I edition), we focussed on the history of chazzara and hanacha by the earlier generations of Rabbeim; in this article we focus on the history and process of chazzara in our generation.

It was the first night of Shavuos 5712, a Thursday night. After spending the night saying Tikkun Leil Shavuos in the small *zal* upstairs in 770—then the main shul—most Chassidim had left for the mikveh. Suddenly, the Rebbe walked into the near-empty shul. "*Vu iz der olam*?" [Where is everyone?], he asked.

"Everyone is in the mikveh," someone answered.

"Yoel is in the mikveh too?" the Rebbe asked.

Reb Yoel Kahn, though a young bochur in his early twenties at the time, was almost-singlehandedly responsible for the chazzara and hanacha of the Rebbe's farbrengens. The Rebbe, who always tried to ensure that a chozer was present when he said Torah—even for sichos to small audiences



which were occasionally held in his room—wanted to make sure that Reb Yoel would be present for what was about to happen.

But as it were, he too was in the mikveh then.

"Ah!..." the Rebbe sighed.
But the Rebbe didn't wait,
and after taking off his coat,
he sat down in his place and
instructed the crowd of about
fifteen people to begin the *maamar*niggun. Meanwhile, a messenger
immediately ran to the mikveh to
let everyone else know.

"I was already at the door on the way out," Reb Yoel writes in a letter, "and when I heard the news, I obviously ran like a *meshuge* to 770. I arrived in the *zal*, and I saw the Rebbe saying Chassidus with only three *minyanim* of people surrounding him." (The crowd had doubled by the time Reb Yoel arrived.)

After the *maamar* ended, the *chozrim* and *bochurim* sat down for *chazzara*, and although so few people had managed to be there by the entire *maamar*, it went very well. After davening later that morning, on Friday, Reb Yoel *chazzered* the *maamar* for those who had missed it, and again in the evening before Kabbalas Shabbos.

After Shavuos, the Rebbe followed up on the *maamar*, asking a certain Chossid in *yechidus*, "What's with the *maamar* of *fartug* [dawn]? Did they *chazzer* it?"

The Chossid answered in the affirmative.

"Who *chazzered* it?" the Rebbe asked.

"Yoel."

"But he wasn't there?"

"He came right away", the
Chossid answered.

"When did they *chazzer* it?" "Immediately following the *maamar*."

"But it was already well into the morning; when did they sleep?" the Rebbe asked with a chuckle.

"Nu," the Rebbe continued, "and those who weren't there, did they also hear *chazzara*?" The Chossid replied that there had indeed been another *chazzara* after davening, and again after Kabbalas Shabbos.

The Rebbe had much satisfaction from these words, and said, "I am not informed of good things. That the *maamar* was *chazzered* three times—such [good] things I am not told." ¹



Part I: An Unprecedented Challenge

While the institution of *chazzara* and *hanacha* was a mainstay of Chassidic life from times of the Alter Rebbe and on, with the onset of *dor hashvi'i*, it took on a whole new meaning.

Firstly, the Rebbe didn't write any of his own *sichos* or *maamarim*. Therefore, unlike in most previous generations, when the *manichim*'s role was only secondary, while the Rabbeim transcribed their *maamarim* in their holy handwriting, now it became the sole responsibility of the *manichim* to transcribe the Rebbe's Torah. Although it was assumed that the Rebbe wouldn't be writing the *sichos*, the fact that he wouldn't be writing his *maamarim* came as a surprise.

In fact, in the first few days after the Rebbe delivered his first *maamar* on Yud Shevat, 5711, it didn't even dawn on the Chassidim to write a *hanacha* at all.

On the Sunday after Yud Shevat 5711, Reb Yoel was in *yechidus* for his birthday. As he was about to walk out, the Rebbe motioned for him to come closer. "Vos hert zich mit di Hanochos?" [What's going on with the Hanochos?]

"I assume this means the sichos," Reb Yoel responded, "since the maamarim will probably be in writing."—I.e. that the Rebbe would give them out in writing.

[At the time, any indication that the Rebbe wouldn't write his *maamarim* was viewed as part of

his reluctance to accept the *nesius*, not as a change to the practice of the preceding Rabbeim. That's why Reb Yoel was "pushing back" on the idea of writing his own *Hanochos*.]

The Rebbe smiled, and said, "What's the problem, can you not make a *hanacha*?"

"Epes, not so much."

The Rebbe smiled broadly. "And from Shabbos?"—I.e. do you recall the *maamar* Hayosheves Baganim?

"Even worse."

"Vos, azoi fil mashke genumen?" ["Why? Did you take so much mashke?"] the Rebbe asked. "That's probably just an excuse. If you try, you'll be able to write both [Hanochos] well."

Reb Yoel said, "Nevertheless, maybe *biksav*?" [Maybe the

Rebbe will give the *maamar* in writing?]

The Rebbe smiled, and replied, "Nu, I will see. You put in what you have, and if I have time, I'll try giving it out in writing."

After the yechidus, Reb Yoel prepared a hanacha of the maamar and submitted it to the Rebbe for hagaha.

Interestingly enough, it was a long while before they heard any developments about the maamar. Weeks and months passed, and it wasn't coming out, not in the Rebbe's own ksav nor as an edited version of the hanacha. On Yud-Alef Nissan, when the Rebbe went to the Ohel, he took the maamar-typed up and covered with his hagahos—with him, and recited it at the tziyon. That evening, he finally gave the maamar to be printed, and instructed that it should be done by Yud-Gimmel Nissan—only two days away-a gargantuan task in the pre-computer days of printing. But the Chassidim put themselves to the task and the maamar was out on time.2

In addition to the fact that the responsibility to transcribe the Rebbe's words now rested solely on the *chozrim* and *manichim*, the



COVER OF THE FIRST PRINT OF THE MAAMAR BASI L'GANI 5711.

job itself got much harder than in previous generations. Whereas the chozrim of old could focus on memorizing a single maamar, discussing a single general topic, now they were memorizing full farbrengens, with dozens of topics, often shifting from the parshas hashavua to a hadran on Gemara, to an explanation on Rashi, to a sicha on shleimus ha'Aretz—all in addition to the maamar! Furthermore, these farbrengens were much longer than those of any the previous Rabbeim, often lasting four, five, six, and even seven hours.

And there were times that the *chozrim* had to memorize two, three, or even *four* farbrengens in a row.

"The most intense situation of chazzara (during the years I was present) used to happen when Shemini Atzeres-Simchas Torah fell out on Thursday and Friday," veteran chozer and maniach Rabbi Dovid Olidort, says. "There was a farbrengen Thursday night, before hakafos on the night of Simchas Torah; another farbrengen on Friday, for seudas Yom Tov; and another two farbrengens the next day, on Shabbos Bereishis. So we had to halt kop [keep track] of four farbrengens at the same time, to remember what was said, and at which farbrengen it had been said, without mixing them up."

Part II: History

In the Beginning

The story of *chazzara* and *hanacha* in *dor hashvi'i* begins shortly after the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, when a



REB ZUSHE WILMOWSKY, 'THE PARTIZAN', AND HIS SON LEVI STUDY A NEWLY RELEASED LIKUT.

young Israeli *bochur* wrote up a short summary of the Rebbe's farbrengen of Shabbos Mivarchim Sivan 5710. "I wrote it purely for myself," Reb Yoel Kahn relates³. "The idea of publicizing it didn't even cross my mind." At the time, the Rebbe was adamantly refusing to accept the *nesius* upon himself, so for someone to go out and start

publicizing his *sichos* seemed to be out of the question.

"A few days later," Reb Yoel continues, "I happened to mention these notes to Rabbi Berel Chaskind. He got all excited and said, 'We must give this to [the Rebbe, who was then called] the Rama"sh!' I personally was very nervous about such a move, since I figured that the Rebbe would

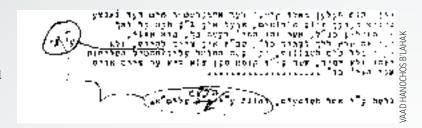
refuse to recognize the *reshima* and ban its distribution. But I was a young *bochur* and Rabbi Chaskind was a prominent Chossid."

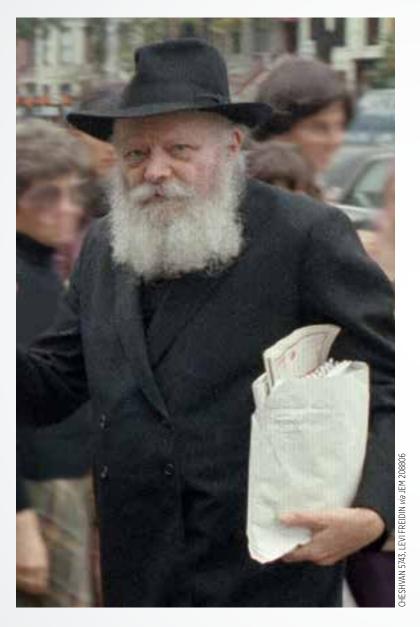
Reb Yoel was overruled, and Rabbi Chaskind brought it to the Rebbe and said, "The *yungeleit* are asking if this can be printed."

Surprisingly enough, the Rebbe was fine with the idea, commenting, "This could have been done before, too." (I.e. publicizing these sichos implies nothing about the Rebbe's nesius and could have been done before the Frierdiker Rebbe's histalkus as well.) He also agreed to edit the reshima, but not as a Rebbe looking over his Torah and giving it his stamp of approval, rather to simply help in writing and ensure its accuracy.

From then on, Reb Yoel began transcribing the *sichos* every week.

However, even after the Rebbe had given his approval and was editing sichos, the manichim were always walking a fine line. On the one hand, they wanted to print and publicize the Rebbe's sichos, but on the other hand, they were constantly nervous that if they did anything that would imply that they viewed the sichos as the Torah of a Rebbe, they would immediately lose the Rebbe's approval. In fact, when they printed the very first sicha, they printed it with a byline stating that it was "transcribed by one of the listeners, edited by "כ"ק שליט"א. When the Rebbe saw this, he first changed it to "the Rama"sh", then deleted the entire line, and instructed them to immediately send all printed copies to geniza and reprint the sicha without the





byline. For this reason, they made sure that it was all done very unofficially, with the *sichos* being printed on a primitive typewriter with no cover page, and only a few copies being sent around.

This was all in Sivan of 5710. For the next few weeks, Reb Yoel ran the operation pretty much on his own, *chazzering* the sichos, transcribing them, and keeping track of the expenses.

After Tisha B'av, Reb Yoel asked a few more *bochurim* to join the Vaad L'hafotzas Hasichos, and they split up the various tasks: copying the *sichos*, helping Reb Yoel write, overseeing the finances, and keeping in touch with Anash.

Although in the beginning the distribution of the sichos were more of an unofficial, under-thetable affair, this slowly changed. After Tishrei, the Rebbe himself began sending copies of the sichos to various people, sometimes even pointing out which parts to focus on. In one letter, the Rebbe writes, "Surely you will find an answer to several of your questions [in my introduction to several of the kuntreisim and] in the transcription of Shabbos Bereishis and and Parshas Lech Lecha. which are included here."4

Around the same time that *Hanochos* started being written, *chazzara* began happening after each farbrengen, generally led by Reb Yoel as well. (After a farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5711, when the Rebbe saw the *bochurim* and Anash doing *chazzara*, he said with a smile, "*Dos zainen ale hungerike*."—They are all hungry.)

Only after Yud Shevat 5711, when the Rebbe asked Reb Yoel to write a hanacha of the maamarim Basi Legani and Hayosheves Beganim, was it the first time that the Rebbe's Torah came out with his own shaar blatt and with the title אינ"כ שליט".

Chazzara and hanacha continued for the most part in this same fashion in the years that followed. Reb Yoel would continue in his capacity of chief chozer throughout the years, working with a constant cycle of bochurim and yungeleit who were involved in the farbrengen and assisted in chazzara. For the first decade or so of the Rebbe's nesius, Reb Yoel was also the chief maniach, though this task would later shift to other people, each of whom wrote for various stints of time. Most notable of these are Rabbi Dovid Feldman, who began writing in 5736 and ultimately wrote for eighteen years, and Rabbi Simon Jacobson, who began in 5737 and wrote for over sixteen years.

The *Hanochos* of the Rebbe's *sichos* and *maamarim* eventually came to fill some two hundred volumes in Yiddish and Hebrew, and constitute the largest collection of *Hanochos* written



TEAM OF MANICHIM PREPARE THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE REBBE'S FARBRENGENS.

from memory in the history of Chassidus, and probably the world.

The Rebbe's Copy

Although it wasn't necessarily known to the public, the Rebbe constantly inquired about the situation of chazzara and Hanochos. Very early on in the nesius, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Moshe Groner to begin keeping a binder of the Hanochos for him. The Rebbe's Hanochos were the original copies; the Hanochos were first written on a typewriter then copied on a stencil, but the Rebbe would receive the original. Reb Moshe would collect the Hanochos and place them in binders; in the front, he would write an index of all the farbrengens and sichos of the year.



THE MANICHIM WOULD OFTEN WRITE SHORTHAND NOTES OF THE FARBRENGEN IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS, WHICH THEY LATER USED IN TRANSCRIBING THE FULL-LENGTH HANACHA. REB YOEL'S NOTES OF THE FARBRENGEN PURIM 5718.

As mentioned above, in the first years of the *nesius*, Reb Yoel was doing all the *chazzaros* and transcribing all the *Hanochos* himself; an overwhelming job, and sometimes he couldn't keep up. In his index, Reb Moshe would write *chasser*—missing—next to the farbrengens or *sichos* for which there was no *hanacha*.

Now, although Reb Yoel didn't always complete a full *hanacha*, he would always write brief notes of the farbrengen for himself. Often, he would go back and write a *hanacha* based on these notes, which he would submit to the Rebbe. Reb Moshe Groner related that the Rebbe himself would sometimes ask him to push Reb Yoel to make up the past *Hanochos*—though this was never to be done in the name of the Rebbe.

New Blood

As the years wore on, the Rebbe gave Reb Yoel more and more responsibilities, including writing the Sefer Haerkim and working in the yeshiva. At the same time, the farbrengens were happening more often and lasting longer hours; it was getting more and more difficult for Reb Yoel to keep up.

In 5726, the Rebbe himself got involved.

"On the night before Yud Shevat," Rabbi Leibel Schapiro relates⁵, "we were sitting together and fabrenging in the small *zal* in 770. Around midnight, Rabbi Binyomin Klein walked in and said that Rabbi Hodakov wanted to see three bochurim— Ephraim Piekarski, Shlomo Zarchi, and me. In those days, when Rabbi Hodakov called someone in,

the feeling was that this was something initiated by the Rebbe himself, so this came as a big shock.

"When we came in, Rabbi Hodakov said to us, 'The Rebbe is asking: are you ready to get more involved in *chazzara*?'

"We all answered, 'Of course.'
Rabbi Hodakov asked, 'Can I
write this to the Rebbe?' and we all
answered in the affirmative."

The following night, on Motzei Yud Shevat, was the Rebbe's main farbrengen. After the farbrengen, these bochurim were informed that the Rebbe was surprised that they hadn't gone up to to say *l'chaim*. [It was standard procedure in those days that anyone who wanted to say a *l'chaim* to the Rebbe for some type of occasion, would approach between the *sichos* with a bottle of *mashke*; the Rebbe would pour a bit in his cup and the rest was distributed to the crowd.]

They were then informed that since they hadn't gone up by Yud Shevat, the Rebbe wanted them to go up the following Shabbos. Meanwhile, before Shabbos started, Rabbi Hodakov added a fourth person to the group, Sholom Ber Levitin.

"That Shabbos," Rabbi Schapiro continues, "we went up to the Rebbe to say *l'chaim*, and speaking in a hushed tone, as one speaks before the Rebbe, we said that this was in connection to the *chazzara*.

"'Vos?' the Rebbe said.

"It was clear that the Rebbe wanted us to say, loudly and clearly, exactly what it was that we were taking upon ourselves. The first *bochur* said, loudly this time, that this was in connection

to helping in *chazzara*, followed by the second *bochur* and the third and the fourth.

"Each of us then returned to our places. The Rebbe turned to Reb Yoel, the head *chozer*, and said, 'Either you should go to them, or they should come to you.'

He began approaching us, but the Rebbe stopped him, saying "It must be בעליתו של בעלים", and we immediately went to stand next to Reb Yoel. The Rebbe then told us to say *l'chaim* on a full cup of *mashke*, after which he said that our fathers should also say *l'chaim*. Rabbi Piekarski's father, who was the only father present, said *l'chaim*, and the Rebbe said to him 'Yaffe koach haben mikoach ha'av.' [The strength of the son is greater than—and, as Chassidus explains, comes from—the father.]

"With all the excitement, and after a full cup of mashke, it wasn't easy to focus and follow the following *sichos* in a way that I could later chazzer them. All I remember is that the Rebbe spoke about the Slav, and that it's a fat bird... My friends also had a difficult time focussing, and, ultimately, it was left to Reb Yoel to chazzer that farbrengen... However, from then on, we got involved in chazzara and transcribing the Hanochos, which were written based on Reb Yoel's chazzara and with his guidance."

"For the following months", Rabbi Schapiro said, "we didn't have any reaction from the Rebbe to our work, and we weren't sure if the Rebbe was satisfied with it. Until the following episode:

"In a *hanacha* of Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5727, we wrote



CHASSIDIM TAKE NOTES DURING THE REBBE'S FARBRENGEN. MANY OF THESE PERSONAL HANOCHOS WERE LATER USED TO CREATE THE FULL HANACHA.

that Yitzchak was 'blind.' In a later farbrengen, the Rebbe said that such language "shnaidt mir in di oieren" [grates on my ears], and offered alternate ways of saying it. Although this wasn't quite positive feedback, we were very excited that the Rebbe had acknowledged the Hanochos that we—a few young bochurim—had written, and this gave us the incentive and excitement to continue."

Personal Hanochos

This period, beginning in the early 5720s and continuing for the next fifteen years or so, marked the rise of *Hanochos pratiyos*, personal transcriptions that Chassidim would write for themselves.

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, today a shliach in Ann Arbor, MI, wrote many personal *Hanochos* and also collected from others. When he went to the Rebbe for his final *yechidus* before going out on shlichus, in 5736, he gave the Rebbe a binder of *sichos* from 5732-5735 that hadn't previously been published. The Rebbe asked him several questions about the *Hanochos*—whether he had written them only from his memory or he had gotten help from others, and

whether Reb Yoel had reviewed them—and gave him a "yasher koach gadol," adding that it is a davar tov, a good thing, and will surely be of benefit. After speaking about the shlichus, the Rebbe returned to the subject of the sichos, giving him another yasher koach and thank you.

"From this story," says Vaad Hanochos B'Lahak's Rabbi Chaim Shaul Bruk, "one can see how important the *sichos* were to the Rebbe. This was a *yechidus* before going out on shlichus, yet the Rebbe started it and finished it on the subject of *Hanochos*, and the Rebbe thanked him three times!"

the *Hanochos* began coming out consistently and reliably, immediately after the farbrengen. Like many *bochurim* of that era, Rabbi Dovid Feldman had been writing short *Hanochos in Loshon Hakodesh* of the farbrengens in letters back home to Eretz Yisrael, and later on began writing unofficial *Hanochos* in *Lashon Kodesh*. In 5736, he joined Vaad Hanochos Hatmimim, and, from Shabbos parshas Mishpatim, complete *Hanochos* came out after

every single farbrengen, always within a few days.

Rabbi Leibel Groner related that when the Rebbe first saw a copy of the new *Hanochos*, it was on a Tuesday morning. "These are from this Shabbos?!" the Rebbe asked, with surprised satisfaction. "Ah!"

Rabbi Simon Jacobson would ultimately take over the Vaad Hanochos Hatmimim which produced *Hanochos* in Yiddish, and Rabbi Dovid Feldman headed the Vaad Hanochos B'Lahak which produced *Hanochos* in Hebrew. From this point on, with official *Hanochos* coming out promptly every week, the personal *Hanochos* no longer had a purpose and they mostly stopped circulating.



RABBI SIMON JACOBSON AT WORK AT THE OFFICES OF VAAD HANOCHOS HATMIMIM.

Part III: The Process

What it Takes

What exactly does it take to be a *chozer*? The Frierdiker Rebbe gives a very general description: "[A *chozer* is] a *baal kishron* [talented], with a quick grasp; a clear speaker with a smooth tongue." Although it is tempting to think of a *chozer* as someone

with just a photographic memory, it involves much more than that; a *chozer* needed to have a good understanding of the *maamar* in order to repeat it.

But beyond the basic qualities required of every *chozer*, each *chozer* was different.

Some are described as having especially photographic memories.

Reb Nochum *chozer*, the first and primary *chozer* by the Tzemach Tzedek, relied almost entirely on his brilliant memory, since he wasn't much of a *maskil* in Chassidus. Before he was appointed to the position by the Tzemach Tzedek, he did *chazzara* for the Mitteler Rebbe. During the *maamar*, the Mitteler Rebbe would sometimes exclaim 'sha sha!'. and in his *chazzara*, Reb Nochum *chazzered* every word—including the 'sha sha's and the coughs.6

Others who didn't have such good memories made up for it with effort. Rabbi Nochum Shmaryahu Sassonkin writes that in the Rebbe Rashab's times, "there were some talmidim who were very talented, had very quick grasps, and would pick up the maamar very well. Yet the primary chozer was Reb Shileim, because although he wasn't blessed with a memory like theirs, he exerted tremendous and extraordinary effort in listening to and focusing on the maamar. He ultimately knew the maamar better than everyone else."7

Sometimes the requirements for a *chozer* depended on the style of the specific Rebbe. The above mentioned Reb Nochum, for example, was the only one who could do *chazzara* by the Tzemach Tzedek for the simple reason that he was the only one who knew all the Zohars and Midrashim being quoted.⁸ Reb Moshe Shlomo, the primary *chozer* by the Mitteler Rebbe, is described as being capable of *chazzer*ing lengthy *maamarim* word for word, both because of his unique ability and because "he was accustomed to the Mitteler Rebbe's style of speech."

By the Rebbe's sichos it was crucial to really understand what was going on, says Reb Dovid Olidort, chozer and maniach for many years. "There was once a young boy who had a photographic memory and was able to remember the farbrengen word for word. He came to a few



chazzaras but he did not add to the chazzara. A person who doesn't understand what was being said could not add to the process. For example, there were often detours in the sichos, and if you missed even a few words or failed to realize their significance, you were likely to miss where the Rebbe came back to the original point, and you would lose the train of the whole sicha. It was most important to actually understand the sicha."

But still, many people with different types of minds were involved in *chazzara*; and far from being a hindrance, it actually helped.

"Different *chozrim* were better in different areas," says Rabbi

Simon Jacobson of Vaad Hanochos Hatmimim. "Some people excelled in remembering the content and flow of ideas; others were proficient in remembering exact words and phrases, often, word for word; others remembered the unique phrases of the farbrengen; and others remembered the structure and build-up of the sicha. Some people were able to remember the content of the farbrengen, and others only the words. In order to put together a full farbrengen, each of these areas is necessary. During chazzara, each chozer would contribute his part."

Chazara is a very intense, personal process, and it works differently for every person; just as there isn't just one way to learn, there is also not just one way to *chazzer*. Rabbi Jacobson shared the process he developed over his many years of *chazzara* and *hanacha*:

"The first key step in any chazzara was to be in a state of total absorption, total concentration on what the Rebbe has to say—and not on understanding what the Rebbe was saying. It's counterintuitive, but the more you understood, the less you remembered. When you're busy trying to understand, you're like a wet sponge: you're fitting it into your framework of ideas that you've built up in your mind—and you cannot absorb. Instead, you



have to be a dry sponge, focussing solely on what the Rebbe has to say; absorbing not processing.

"The second point is that you would have to constantly review the farbrengen, over and over. Memory begins to fade the moment you hear the ideas for the first time. So you have to keep reviewing the ideas -- making, in effect, a copy of a copy of a copy of what was heard. You end up remembering not the original but how you remembered the original. Personally, I would chazzer each sicha during the niggunim—sometimes in my mind and sometimes to someone nearby. Then I would review the farbrengen again walking home after the farbrengen; and then, during the sedua, I would chazzer



REB YOEL KAHN STANDS AT HIS REGULAR PLACE DURING THE REBBE'S FARBRENGEN.

the entire farbrengen several times (together with some other *chevreh*). In total, I probably reviewed it seven or eight times by the end of Shabbos. One of the main pitfalls in the process is overconfidence. You think you retained the material already—but you didn't. And you can't just say, 'I'll just do quick review of what the Rebbe said'; you have to do it in detail.

"Finally, the third key point is that you have to build a mental roadmap of the farbrengen. Ideas that flowed smoothly from one point to the next were like traveling. When the Rebbe would move to a new idea, or to a tangential point, you needed to make a mental signpost marking the point where a "turn" was made.

"Let's say the Rebbe is speaking about Shabbos mevarchim Kislev, and the *sicha* begins, "Today is Shabbos mevarchim Kislev, the Shabbos that blesses the month of Kislev, and Kislev is the month of the *geulah* of Yud-Tes Kislev...' You immediately see the flow and direction where the Rebbe is going; clearly, the subject is going to be Yud-Tes Kislev.

"But then, suddenly, the Rebbe says, "and on Yud-Tes Kislev the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison in Russia"—and starts speaking about Russia today. You had to immediately figure out if the topic of the sicha was now Russia, or if it was a sidepoint in a sicha about Yud-Tes Kislev. If it was a sidepoint, you would immediately make a mental signpost that by the subject of Russia, the sicha went off into a side discussion. Then, when

the Rebbe got back to the original subject of Yud-Tes Kislev, you had to make another signpost that here was where the Rebbe returned.

"Keep in mind I wasn't doing all of the above—the total absorption, the constant reviewing, and the mental map—for five minutes. I was doing it for hours, and it was very difficult work.

"A critical component for remembering the farbrengens successfully was motivation: knowing that the stakes were high; we were responsible for saving the Rebbe's words for posterity. This farbrengen is happening only once, never to be said again, so if I didn't remember it, it will forever be forgotten. Imagine Moshe Rabbeinu comes off Har Sinai to share divine words, words that you'll hear once and only once, and you're the only person there—it's a major responsibility to remember it. I didn't think to myself that 'Reb Yoel is going to remember,' because, who knows, maybe he didn't hear this part so well. What I remember and put down on paper will forever be remembered as what the Rebbe said. This gave me the energy and motivation to really discipline myself and focus."

The Experience

The job of a *chozer* and *maniach* began much before a farbrengen; they had to make sure to be there. Now, obviously, all Chassidim made sure to be at every single farbrengen, but while a regular Chossid might sometimes leave on Merkos Shlichus, or for a family *simcha*, but for a *chozer* or *maniach* this wasn't an option.

"One time," Rabbi Brook says,
"[Rabbi] Dovid [Feldman] had
to go to Eretz Yisrael for a family
member's wedding, and he was
forced to miss one single Shabbos.
It was a whole *iberlebnish* for
him—what should he do? How
can he miss the farbrengen? (Reb
Yoel ended up writing the *hanacha*that week.)"

But the real work began at the farbrengen itself.

Each chozer and maniach had a set place from where they could hear and see the Rebbe well; Reb Yoel Kahn stood on the Rebbe's right, next to the farbrengen bima, Rabbi Jacobson stood directly across, and Rabbi Feldman was on the Rebbe's left. While the Rebbe was speaking they were utterly focussed on absorbing the Rebbe's words, and during the niggunim they would review the sichos in their mind.

After the farbrengen was over, each person returned to their house for *seudas Shabbos*, where they would conduct private *chazzaros* with *bochurim* or with other *chozrim*. Then, a few hours after Shabbos, everyone would congregate back in 770 for the official *chazzara*, which would take place in the downstairs shul, right under the Rebbe's farbrengen *bima*. Reb Yoel, who was usually the main person speaking, would begin *chazzering* the farbrengen.

Every once in awhile, someone would jump in to correct him— 'Wait! You missed this point!' 'The Rebbe said it differently!'—and full on arguments would sometimes ensue. All the while, the *manichim* were assiduously taking notes for later. *Chazzara* lasted for a couple



REB YOEL KAHN CONDUCTS THE CHAZZARA, AS REB DOVID FELDMAN SITS TO HIS LEFT TAKING NOTES, LATER USED IN TRANSCRIBING THE FULL HANACHA.

of hours, although it was shorter than the farbrengen itself since there were no breaks for *niggunim* and the like.

When *chazzara* was over, the *manichim*'s job was just beginning. The following day, some *manichim* would spend some time carefully studying the sources that the Rebbe quoted in the *sichos* and *maamarim*, and then it was time to sit down to write. After they finished the *hanacha*, which usually took a few days, it was then passed on to someone else for editing and adding *marei mekomos*.

Every *maniach* had a different writing process, but one thing they all agree upon: in the days following the farbrengen, when the *hanacha* had to be completed—and especially in the later years, when it had to be done by Tuesday for the Rebbe's *hagaha*—there wasn't much time to sleep.

Part IU: The Rebbe's Involvement

Although it was always the responsibility of the *chozer* to grasp, remember, and *chazzer* the *maamar*, the Rabbeim offered various levels of assistance. For example, in the years of Tomchei Temimim, the *chozrim* would *chazzer* the *maamar* before the Rebbe Rashab after Shabbos. He would correct their mistakes, remind them of points they had forgotten, and answer questions on difficult areas. This also happened by the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Moreover, the Rabbeim sometimes repeated the same *maamar* several times in order to give people a chance to catch on. Sometimes this was on the Rebbe's own initiative, but often the *chozrim* would request it because

they hadn't gotten it right the first time.

However, by the Rebbe the seder was very different. Like many other concepts of chazzara and Hanochos in dor hashvi'i, this was something Reb Yoel had to learn on the job. Once, in the early days of chazzara, before the Rebbe officially took upon himself the nesius, Reb Yoel realized that he had forgotten an entire section of the farbrengen. When he mentioned this to Rabbi Leibel Groner, he replied, "Let's ask the Rebbe." But when they went in and made their request, the Rebbe wasn't happy. "Tzvei

mol farbrengen?" [You want me to farbreng twice?] he asked.

In the end, though, the Rebbe agreed. He put on his hat—as this was before the kabbalas hanesius, the Rebbe wasn't wearing a hat when they came in—became very serious, and began repeating the part that they had forgotten. Reb Yoel later said that he was so stunned by the whole episode that he promptly forgot, once again, everything the Rebbe said. Luckily, Rabbi Groner was there and helped him remember. Needless to say, never again did the chozrim ask the Rebbe to repeat a farbrengen.

There were also no chazaros in the Rebbe's presence. Instead, there was an open channel to ask questions in writing. These questions were usually answered promptly, often within hours, with the Rebbe sometimes even writing "mahir" [urgent] on the answer.

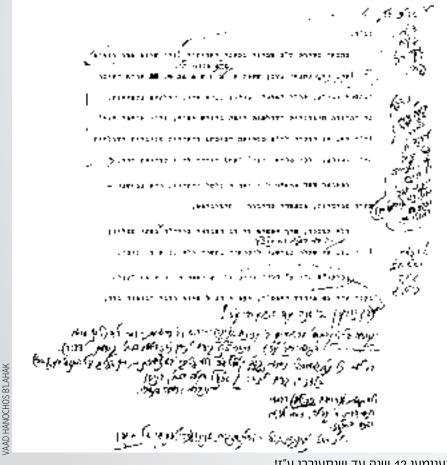
Rabbi Dovid Feldman relates: "When we'd just started writing the Hanochos in 5736, on my first or second week, we had a question about how to write a certain part of the farbrengen. I went over to the Vaad Lehafatzas Sichos [who put out the weekly Likutei Sichos and were veterans in the Rebbe's Torah] and asked them my question."

"M'darf fregin," they replied. [You have to ask.]

"Ask?", I said. "Whom should I ask?"

"Ask the Rebbe!" they replied. "What?! I should ask the Rebbe?!" I was probably twenty years old at the time. Instead, I asked them to ask the Rebbe on my behalf. "No," they told me. "This has always been the seder. The person who writes the hanacha is the one that asks the Rebbe."

"When I realized I didn't have a choice, I wrote my question into the Rebbe, which was regarding a seeming contradiction between the sicha the Rebbe had said on Shabbos and one previously printed in Likutei Sichos. In addition to writing a lengthy maane answering the question, the Rebbe wrote "גענומען 12 שנה 12 ע"ז שנתעוררו ע"ז [It took 12 years until this was realized!"] From the time the sicha in Likutei Sichos was printed, in 5724, until we



גענומען 12 שנה עד שנתעוררו ע"ז!

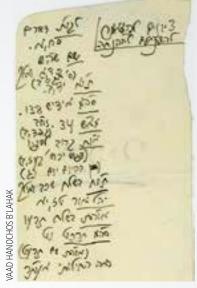
THE REBBE'S KSAV YAD ON A QUESTION FROM REB DOVID FELDMAN.

asked the question, in 5736, noone else had realized the issue.

"This was my welcome from the Rebbe to the world of hanochos..." These answers weren't for their personal enjoyment, of course, but for inclusion in the hanacha. Rabbi Feldman describes how it would work. "After we asked our question, the Rebbe would generally write a very short, succinct answer. It was then our iob to rewrite the answer in the style of the sicha and put it into the hanacha. If we were still unsure whether we had gotten it right, we would give it in to the Rebbe again. He would usually fix or add to the piece some more, sometimes adding only a couple of words, but other times adding many ha'aros."

In the original *Hanochos*, it is easy to tell if the Rebbe added something to the *sicha*. In a regular *sicha*, on the bottom of every single page, the words *hanacha bilti muga* are printed; but if the Rebbe added a *haara* or corrected a paragraph, the *bilti muga* stamp is removed.

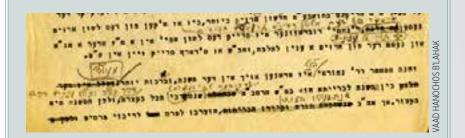
The Rebbe would help the manichim in other ways as well, and occasionally gave them a yair nesiv, a list with references to sources that discuss the major points he had spoken about (references to Chassidus for a maamar, and to other sefarim for a nigleh sicha). This practice was especially prevalent by the Basi Legani maamarim and the hadranim. Also, if anyone else asked the Rebbe questions on the farbrengen—and he replied—the Rebbe would immediately send the manichim a copy of the answer.

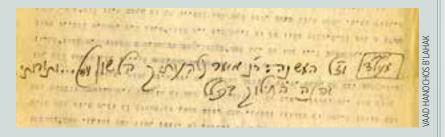


"YAIR NASIV" TO THE MAAMAR BASI L'GANI 5729.

Training

In previous generations, when the Rabbeim would give out their maamarim week by week as they were being recited, the written maamarim were often slightly different than how they were said. Aside for usually being shorter, they were also a slightly different style. For example, in writing, the Mitteler Rebbe's maamarim are generally based around quotes of





you look at the early hagahos of 5710/5711, you'll see that the Rebbe put tremendous time and effort in the hagaha", says Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook. "Some of the sichos have so much editing that there is not a question in my mind that if the Rebbe would have written them himself, it would have taken him less time and been less complicated. It seems to me that the reason the Rebbe chose to do it this way, spending so much time on hagaha instead of just writing it himself, was in order to teach the early manichim how to write a sicha for the future.

"The famous hadran from Chof Av 5710 is a good example. Reb Yoel wrote the entire sicha in Yiddish, exactly how the Rebbe said it, including the Mishna and Gemara. On that piece of the sicha the Rebbe noted "מעל"ד [look] on the other side of the paper", where he showed Reb Yoel how it should be written instead. First quote the Mishna as it's written, then quote the *Beraisa* as it's written, then, and only then, is the proper place for the Rebbe's questions and answers to begin, 'Vihnei..."



PREPARING THE SICHOS.

the Alter Rebbe's words. (Though, because there are no quotation marks in the *maamar*, and the Alter Rebbe isn't mentioned by name, this is invisible to the eye.) However, when he would say the *maamarim*, it was more in his own words, as can be seen from the single *sefer* of *Hanochos* that we have of his *maamarim*.¹⁰

Now, this is only when the Rabbeim wrote their own *maamarim*; but *Hanochos* are transcripts of what the Rebbe said and they must stay loyal to his words. Yet here too, there is a difference between the written word and the spoken. In fact, if the Rebbe wrote on a *sicha* or *maamar* that it was a *hanacha milulis*—a



ALTHOUGH THIS SICHA OF YUD SHEVAT 5714 WAS NOT PREPARED FOR HAGAHA, THE REBBE NONETHELESS REVIEWED IT, AND COMMENTED FOR THE MANICHIM "קיצור" - SYNOPSIS; NOT [FULL] TRANSCRIPTION



word-for-word transcript—it was not meant as praise, because the Rebbe didn't want the manichim to just write a word-for-word transcript of the sichos; they would obviously not read very easily. Over the years, the Rebbe trained the manichim in the art of translating a spoken sicha into writing, both through giving them specific pointers in maanos and through the *hagahos* on the *sichos*. (Not all Hanochos shared the same rules. If it was going to be edited by the Rebbe and printed as an official sicha, more work was required to get it ready, whereas bilti muga Hanochos required less preparation.)

But in addition to clearing up questions and getting things clear, the *Hanochos* served another purpose as well.

Completing the Farbrengen

Farbrengens, by nature, were time-limited, and there often wasn't enough time to cover everything in the allotted time. It was a fairly typical occurrence to hear the Rebbe say that "because there is little time, we will speak briefly," or "we will cover only the general points," and even, on a more humorous note, "in order not to tire out the crowd. we will speak with brevity." In fact, there were times when, as it came towards the end and there was still much to complete, the Rebbe would note that time was running out, and start speaking

When

Vaad Hanochos B'Lahak submitted the sicha of 17 Tammuz 5743, the Rebbe gave them three pointers: to quote pesukim and maamarei Chazal exactly as they're written, even when the Rebbe deliberately quoted them partially or a bit differently at the farbrengen; there should be sources for every single topic; and that all the sources should be at the bottom of the page, not in brackets inside the hanacha.

In the Rebbe words:
"Edit it, so that the words of
the pesukim and maamarei
Chazal are exact. Most
marei mekomos are missing.
All the marei mekomos
should be at the bottom of
the pages."

at breakneck speed, often double the speed of the beginning of the farbrengen.

However, there were many times that there simply wasn't enough time to complete everything, and in such a case, the Rebbe would generally postpone something for the following week (as often happened with the explanation on Rashi), when he would go back and complete the topic.

Occasionally, though, the farbrengen was completed another way—through the *Hanochos*. After the farbrengen, the Rebbe would send out a lengthy *maaneh*, finishing off the explanation in a *sicha*, which was then rewritten and inserted into the *hanacha*.

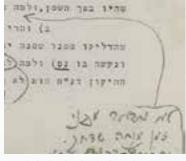


Often this was because the *manichim* asked the Rebbe to complete the explanation, but occasionally this was on the Rebbe's own initiative.

In effect, the written Hanochos—in addition to being transcriptions of the farbrengens were another channel for the Rebbe to transmit his Torah.

Part U: The Rebbe's Edited Torah

During the first year following the *histalkus* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Rebbe edited many of the *sichos* as they were being written, and this continued with the *maamarim* of Basi Legani and Hayosheves Beganim. After Yud Shevat, the Vaad Lehafotzas Hasichos, under the leadership of Reb Yoel, decided to reprint



IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM THE MANICHIM, THE REBBE WRITES "לא נתבאר" - THE [ANSWER] WAS NOT EXPLAINED BECAUSE IT WAS TIME FOR MINCHA. THE REBBE THEN GOES ON TO COMPLETE THE MISSING LINK IN THE SICHA, THEREBY COMPLETING THE FARBRENGEN THROUGH THE HANACHA.



the sichos of the previous year as official sefarim. They started with the summer of 5710, reworking the sichos, retyping them, and adding marei mekomos. They submitted them to the Rebbe for hagaha, and it was published as Sefer Hasichos 5710. However, although they prepared more material, the Rebbe didn't edit it. The Rebbe also held off on editing the new sichos he was saying at the farbrengens, and for the vast majority of the Rebbe's nesius, only a small percentage of the sichos and maamarim were muga.

This brings up a key point about the Rebbe's Torah. The Alter Rebbe and the Rebbe are similar in the fact that they are the only Rabbeim that didn't write the vast majority of their maamarim; but there are a few key differences between them. Besides for the fact that the Alter Rebbe said extremely brief maamarim whereas the Rebbe farbrenged for hours, there is perhaps an even more important distinction: as a rule, the Alter Rebbe edited the maamarim that were put out under his name, while the Rebbe generally did not. This, the Rebbe explained countless times11, was because he simply didn't have the time to do so, what with all the issues and challenges he was dealing with in the Jewish nation as a whole, and with individuals in particular. This put even more responsibility on the manichim of the farbrengens,



since they couldn't rely on the Rebbe to correct them.

After Basi Legani and Hayosheves Beganim 5711, the next *maamar* to be edited was Basi Legani 5712, which was released on Chof-Hei Adar of that year. In 5713, no *mugadike maamar* was coming out. After a couple of months, the elder Chassidim realized it wasn't coming out and began begging the Rebbe to edit it so that at least one *maamar* a year—the Basi Legani—would be *muga*. The Rebbe answered that he was too busy and didn't have time.

The *seder* in those years was that anyone could approach the Rebbe during the farbrengen and request a *bracha*. At one of the farbrengens at the time, in the upstairs *zal*, Reb Moshe Dubinsky stood in line to approach the Rebbe.

When it was his turn, the Rebbe asked him, "Nu?" [What are you asking for?]

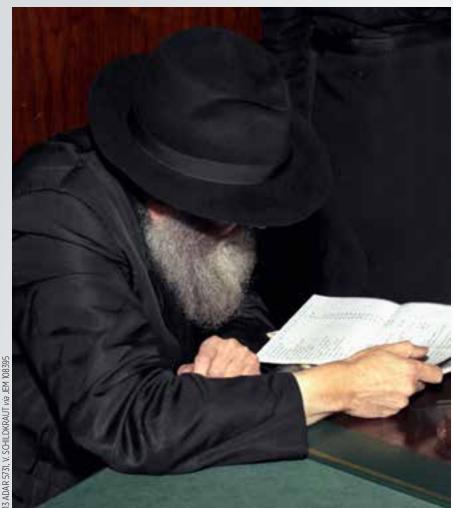
"Dem *maamar*," he replied.

"The *maamar*" was such a

"The maamar" was such a hot topic at the time that no explanation was necessary. The Rebbe immediately answered, "In di ershte drai maamarim¹² bistu shoin klor¹³?" [Do you know the first three maamarim perfectly?]

"Yuh!", he said. [Yes!]
The Rebbe didn't react.

Eventually, the Rebbe gave out the edited *maamar* on Rosh Chodesh Shevat the following year, in honor of Yud Shevat 5714. When the final printed version



arrived, the Rebbe gave a copy to Rabbi Hodakov and asked him to give it to Rabbi Dubinsky, saying, "Er iz doch fun [di] vos hub'n mishtadel geven m'zul dus magia zain!" [He is one of those who endeavored that it should be

edited!1

However, the status remained pretty much the same over the following years: Aside from the occasional *maamar* or *sicha*, it was quite rare for something to be edited by the Rebbe.

That's not to say that it never happened; throughout the years, there are many parts of *sichos* that the Rebbe edited. Sometimes this was when the Rebbe spoke about a new mivtza or initiative—like *mivtza Tefillin* during the Six Day War. Sometimes it was when it was an especially important or vital topic—like Kuntres Inyana Shel Toras Hachasidus; and sometimes other reasons were involved. (For example, the brachos on Erev Yom Kippur were always edited.) Some of these sichos were prepared for hagaha on the Rebbe's request. But often, this was because of the manichim, who would take every opportunity possible to send in a sicha for editing, hoping that the Rebbe would agree.

As the years went on, more of these "random" *sichos* began coming out *muga*. When the

Rebbe began saying *sichos* to children—in the 5730s—he would often edit them. The *sichos* on Assara B'Teves, which began in 5738, were also edited. Overall, the Rebbe was agreeing more and more often to edit *sichos*.

But, for the most part, the Rebbe did not edit full farbrengens, and even edited *sichos* were relatively rare, and edited *maamarim* were even more of a rarity.

There were three exceptions. The first was in the year following the histalkus of the Frierdiker Rebbe, as mentioned above. The next was in 5725; when the Rebbe began farbrenging every week following the histalkus of his mother, Rebbetzin Chana. But while the weekly farbrengens lasted a full year, the editing lasted only a few weeks. The same happened in 5738, following the events of Shemini Atzeres: the Rebbe began editing the weekly farbrengens, including the maamarim, but it only lasted a couple of months.

All of the above is only regarding full farbrengens or sichos printed as such. The Likutei Sichos, collections of sichos which were edited by the Rebbe, were published on and off beginning in 5718, and from 5736 were published almost every single week. However, this didn't include *maamorim*, and it also didn't include full farbrengens or even full sichos.

In 5746/5747 everything changed, both in regards to the *maamarim* and the *sichos*.

In honor of the *siyum sefer Torah haklali* which was written by

Beis Rivka in 5746, the maamar להבין ענין כתיבת ס"ת – תש"ל was given to the Rebbe for hagaha.
But after editing the maamer, the Rebbe changed the pesach davar to say that it was being released in honor of Shavuos. This was seen as a sign that the Rebbe would begin editing new maamarim for the yomim tovim and yomei dipagra. From then on, a maamar would be prepared every so often for hagaha and submitted to the Rebbe, and he would usually edit it.¹⁴

In the ensuing years, muga'dike maamarim came out at a rapid pace. Whereas the maamarim that were edited in the first thirty-six years of the Rebbe's nesius filled only a single sefer, the ones edited from 5746 onwards filled another five

Regarding the sichos: From 5746 and on, the Rebbe edited the weekly farbrengens; eventually alternating the editing so one week would be in Hebrew and one week in Yiddish for the Kfar Chabad magazine and Algemeiner Journal respectively. Often (and especially in the first couple of years), these edited sichos included a large share of the farbrengen but not the entire thing - the Rashi sichos, for example, were usually not edited - and whatever was left out was printed as "hashlamos". These edited sichos were later printed in the ten-volume set of sefer hasichos, and constitute the largest collection of edited farbrengens we have from the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's Torah is a world unto itself. Not only in a physical sense—the Rebbe's Torah fills dozens and even hundreds of volumes—but on a deeper level

as well. No matter what subject or style of Torah you're looking for, you'll find it all there: profound philosophical reflections on the role of a person in the world (often in the televised farbrengens); complex nigleh pilpulim and hadranim on Shas (often in Likutei Sichos); concise, beautiful points in avodas Hashem (often in the Pirkei Avos and Rambam sichos); geshmake inspiration and urgings about hiskashrus and avoda (all over); and on. Every person, whether advanced Torah scholars or early beginners, baalei nigleh or baalei Chassidus, the philosophically bent and the practically minded, can find their niche and geshmak in the Rebbe's Torah, that part of

the Rebbe's Torah that speaks to them.

However, in order to really understand the Rebbe's worldview, to fully get how a Chossid must view himself, his avodas Hashem, even a maamar Chassidus—it takes investment. To learn the Rebbe's sichos, koch in the maamarim, attain an *enjoyment* in the Rebbe's farbrengens.

The Rebbe spent 11,000 hours—a total of over a year!—delivering his farbrengens, and countless more editing them. (Some calculate that it took

seven hours to edit a single *sicha*.) Let us do our part to somewhat justify that work. **①**

- 1. Letter of Reb Yoel.
- 2. Yemei Bereishis p. 415.
- 3. Kfar Chabad issue 567.
- 4. Igros Kodesh vol. 4 p. 74
- 5. Kfar Chabad Magazine issue 1512.
- 6. Sefer Hasichos Kayitz 5700 p. 101.
- 7. Zichronos of Rabbi Nochum Shmaryahu Sassonkin.
- 8. Divrei Yemei Hachozrim p. טו.
- 9. Ibid p. '.
- 10. Hakdama to Sefer Hamaamorim 5677 (תקע"ז).
- 11. See, for example, Igros Kodesh vol. 5 p. 313; Igros Kodesh vol. 6 p. 164.
- 12. Or, in di andere.
- 13. Or, kenstu shoin?
- 14. Pesach dovor to Toras Menachem-Sefer Hamaamorim Melukat.



5 TISHREI 5748, V. SCHILDKRAUT via JEM 149240