



לע"נ  
הרה"ת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה  
בן הרה"ת ר' יעקב יוסף ע"ה  
נלב"ע ח"י חשון, ה'תשע"ד  
ולע"נ  
מרת רבקה ע"ה  
בת הרה"ת ר' אברהם ישעי' ע"ה  
נלב"ע י"א סיון, ה'תשע"ד  
נדבת משפחתם שיחיו

# Guidance *for* life

Exploring  
**THE REBBE'S  
IGROS KODESH**

*In preparation of this article  
we were greatly assisted by  
Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook;  
Rabbi Chaim Greenberg; and  
Rabbi Shalom Ber Levine and  
his sefer Arodas Hakodesh.*

## An Ancient Tradition

The totality of Torah scholarship from throughout the generations has reached us in two forms: *sefarim* and *teshuvos*. *Sefarim*, or *chiddushim*, are works that explain, clarify, or expound upon an original text. These include the Chumash, Mishnah, Gemara, Rishonim, Shulchan Aruch, etc. *Teshuvos* and *igros*—responsa—are answers to people's questions.

Although their purpose is basically the same—explanations on various areas of Torah—their focus is very different. In *sefarim*, the author begins with a passage of Torah, a piece of Gemara for example, and works down from there; posing questions, proposing answers, ironing out contradictions, and expounding on the practical implications. It starts with the theoretical and (sometimes) comes down to the practical. Whereas with *teshuvos*, the starting point is a question, often an actual scenario: Can this *aguna* get married? The author then works up from there, searching the entirety of his Torah knowledge for relevant information on the topic, often quoting from many different sources. It starts with the practical world and culls from the theoretical.

For this reason, *teshuvos* are usually focussed on areas of scholarship that are most relevant to daily life. Unlike Tosfos, for example, a classic *meforash*, who will spend the same amount of time explaining a *sugya* about the abstract laws of *metzora* as a practical *sugya* about financial matters, in a *sefer* of *teshuvos* you will often find fifteen *simanim* dealing with the one subject, since it was especially relevant at the time.

These dual streams of scholarship have their roots in the earliest beginnings of Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu spent some of his day relaying Hashem's teachings to the Yidden, and the rest of the time he was

answering questions and providing practical Torah guidance for their disputes. Almost all of the *chachmei Yisrael* throughout the generations wrote both *sefarim* and *teshuvos*. The Rosh has *Teshuvos HaRosh*, the Rambam has *Teshuvos HaRambam* and *Igros HaRambam*, etc. In fact, many famous scholars have more *teshuvos* than *sefarim*. Others wrote *teshuvos* exclusively—the Geonim and Rabbanan Sevorai being the most prominent examples.

The Rebbe's *Igros* are a continuation of this tradition, and, like the classic *teshuvos*, many of the letters are focussed on practical *halacha* and *minhagim*. But it is not limited to that. Unlike the traditional *teshuvos*, the Rebbe's *Igros* address every single area of life.

Open up a random volume and you'll find directives to *askanim* throughout the world, be they Chassidim on the *vaad* of Kfar Chabad

or the heads of the Joint; dissertations in Chassidus and *nigleh*; *tikkunim* for various spiritual ailments, ranging from missing a day of Chitas to mistakes in *taharas hamishpacha*; and advice in all areas of life, from *shidduchim* to *parnassa* to learning. Then there's the diversity of the people. The Rebbe was in touch with people from across the spiritual and socio-economic spectrum: Jewish leaders and secular intellectuals; elderly Chassidim with deep inquiries in Chassidus, and undisciplined youngsters with doubts in religion; famous personalities at the highest levels of public discourse in Eretz Yisrael, and simple Russian *olim* who were having a hard time adjusting to the free world; bitter *misnagdim* looking for trouble, and energetic shlichim asking for guidance. One letter might be very practical, directing a Chossid whether or not to buy a house, while the next one is academic,



Y MINKOWITZ

giving short—and often difficult—*ha'aros* on a *sefer*; and the one after that might be a sharp letter about *Mihu Yehudi* or *askanus haklal*.

One can see how the Rebbe fills extremely different roles for the various people who were turning to him. A *tzadik* giving *brachos*; a loving father providing assurance and support—and sometimes also a sharp wake up call; a teacher elucidating the deepest concepts of Torah; a world leader pushing for change on the global stage. More often than not, the lines delineating these roles blurred. If you came to the Rebbe for practical advice on some issue or another, you would usually end up with the Rebbe's encouragement to learn and spread Chassidus.

Since *Igros* is printed by date, not by topic—which was the Rebbe's express directive (see below)—learning *Igros* is an experience like nothing else. A beautiful ride through every aspect of the human condition and through every type of Torah learning, with no indication of what's coming next.

As with *teshuvos*, the uniqueness of *Igros* lies in its practicality. This is where you can find the Rebbe's perspective on actual, real-world scenarios, on very human issues and doubts, often things that aren't addressed directly—or even indirectly—in *maamarim* and *sichos*.

The following is a small sampling from the first few pages of a single *sefer* of *Igros*, volume 15 (the original

letters should be consulted for context):

How should one write a *matzeiva*? (Similar to other *matzeivos* in the immediate vicinity.)<sup>1</sup>

Can an *upshernish* be pushed off? (It shouldn't be.)<sup>2</sup>

Should *k'nasim* be given to *talmidim* who are slacking off? (Depends on the student.)<sup>3</sup>

How can you prove that Torah is from Sinai? (Don't let "doubts" serve as an excuse to follow your *taavos*. [The Rebbe also answers the question in detail.])<sup>4</sup>

Should the central Lubavitch organization in Israel begin teaching *limudei kodesh* classes in secular schools? (No, it will be understood as a *hechsher* for them.)<sup>5</sup>

Should our school have a uniform? (No. It can only create issues.)<sup>6</sup>

I am not seeing results from my work spreading Yiddishkeit. (These thoughts are coming directly from the *yetzer hora*. Remove them.)<sup>7</sup>

## ***Uplifting and Empowering***

But perhaps the most fascinating aspect of *Igros* is the Rebbe's personal advice. On the one hand, the Rebbe's advice definitely isn't soft: the Rebbe is very clear on the fact that he has high expectations and won't let you convince yourself otherwise. People never got away with making excuses or blaming others for their problems. But that's exactly where the power of *Igros*

lies; instead of helping you grapple your way through your problems on your own terms, the Rebbe shows you a higher way of living, and empowers you to live up to it. The Rebbe never allowed anyone to wallow in self-pity and depression. He writes to people with utter seriousness about *responsibility* and *truth*, reminding them of the gravity and importance and value of living. Every person has a mission to fulfill, and every person has the power to succeed.

In response to a Chossid who was having problems in *parnassa*, the Rebbe writes the following (among other pieces of advice):

*...In regards to his physical parnassa, surely Hashem will help. In general, Chazal said that a person shouldn't be nispael [perturbed] from temporary hardship and lack, and how much more so is this true regarding Anash from the Soviet Union, who saw open miracles, and also saw that הקסם והבל הנכסים שקר הכסף והבל הנכסים, false is money and naught is physical possessions—surely they shouldn't be nispael at all...<sup>8</sup>*

Instead of dealing with his every worry, leading him out of his problems from the ground up, the Rebbe has a much stronger message—you are beyond having to worry about this at all!

At the same time, the Rebbe shows powerful empathy for the issues and challenges the person is dealing with. Two people could ask the exact same question, but they would receive very different answers. The Rebbe zeroed in on each person and used *his* life-story, *his* knowledge, *his* personal background in replying. And the Rebbe's deep concern and fatherly care pours forth from the pages.

In the following letter, the Rebbe addresses a person who clearly went through much hardship in his life.

*...We see manifestly that, to a great extent, the impression from events in a person's life depends on the person*

**The Rebbe was in touch with people from across the spiritual and socio-economic spectrum: elderly Chassidim with deep inquiries in Chassidus, and undisciplined youngsters with doubts in religion; bitter *misnagdim* looking for trouble, and energetic *shluchim* asking for guidance.**



himself—how hard he takes and registers them. Who is greater than the Rambam, whose life on the outside was full of pain, calamity, affliction and tragedy rachmana litzlan, much more than is normal—yet his outlook on life, as explained in his sefer Moreh Nevuchim, was very positive, very optimistic. On the other hand, we see many people who in their external life seem to be successful, yet only on rare occasions does one see any type of satisfaction in them.

*This difference is found in people's natural disposition. Toras Hachassidus [comes and] helps every single person in this regard...[emphasizing the importance of] 'Serve Hashem with happiness'...*

*...Obviously, the above is not chas veshalom [meant] in a way of mussar, and more so, it is difficult to say this to someone knowing what they have been through. I am merely coming to show you several things in Torah that can lighten your burden and calm your spirit, at least a bit, until the promise is fulfilled for you...that Hashem, who is good, will give good and shine His face to you in all that you need.<sup>9</sup>*

The Rebbe isn't telling this person that everything is okay. What the Rebbe is saying is that it is within his power to be happy. This is found all over Igros; the Rebbe uplifts people by sharing his deep belief in human potential and his fundamentally positive and optimistic view of life.

The Rebbe didn't allow people to get lost in endless inner arguments and self-reflection. Sometimes it is important to figure out your issues in order to deal with it, but you must never get stuck in the mud. The most lofty philosophical thoughts, the Rebbe writes many times, cannot create even a single deed.

In the following letter replying to someone who asked the Rebbe to give him a seder in learning—something you'll again see all over Igros—the

Rebbe shares with him the healthy approach to learning in general, in addition to pointing him to several sefarim.

## ***Who is greater than the Rambam, whose life on the outside was full of pain, calamity, affliction and tragedy rachmana litzlan—yet his outlook on life was very positive, very optimistic.***

First the Rebbe begins with some history:

*There is a famous possuk, "Hashem made man straight, but they looked for many calculations." For many generations, people learned Torah without much evaluation of how to set up their learning in a way that would be the most successful and the most correct according to the rules of chinuch, etc. וחדשים מקרוב באו, recently people began analyzing and adopting various curriculums and using different ploys.*

*But the results are the opposite of what one might hope for. Because in the earlier generations, people had a great thirst for learning Torah, without too much sophistication, with the result being that people knew tremendous amounts of Torah, both in quantity and quality. Whereas today, after these curriculums and rules were set up, there are less people learning, and they are less motivated.*

Then the Rebbe applies it to him:

*The same is true with learning Chassidus—the most correct derech is to not make too many calculations. Rather, one should learn and learn again, without constantly looking at the clock and evaluating how much*

*one achieved in the past hour. And when you "delve into it and delve into it again," automatically your mind and heart will become purified, and they will become proper vessels to receive the light of Chassidus; and the main thing—[to receive] the maor of Chassidus [Hashem].<sup>10</sup>*

There's no reason to evaluate what you're doing over and over again. You must simply work hard and put yourself into it. The Rebbe frees all types of people, in all areas of life, from being dragged down in over-evaluation and overabundance of caution, thus allowing them to throw themselves into their avoda.

As you read through more and more of Igros Kodesh, you start learning how to think about types of issues in life. A Chossid must be proud of his heritage, unrelenting in his focus on hafatzas hamaayanos, and firm in his resolve.<sup>11</sup> Parnassa must be worked for proactively,<sup>12</sup> but money should never be a source of stress.<sup>13</sup> Challenges are not to be feared, but expected in life, and overcome. Never get involved in avoidable fights;<sup>14</sup> quiet persistence is often more effective than open war.<sup>15</sup> Think less about yourself and your accomplishments and your issues, and focus on the work you need to accomplish. Approach your mission with ownership and responsibility,<sup>16</sup> but don't get caught up in immediate outcomes.<sup>17</sup> Above all, put your trust in Hashem, and you will find security, contentment and success.<sup>18</sup>

## ***The Writing Process***

In addition to offering a colorful journey through a vast assortment of subjects seen through the Rebbe's lens, Igros Kodesh also gives a tour of a huge portion of the Rebbe's life, and reflects the challenges and triumphs facing the Jewish nation in general and Lubavitch in particular.

Overall, Igros can be divided into two general parts: 1) Before the *nesius*. Most of these letters are either Torah correspondence with different people (most famously the Rogatchover), or *askanus* related to the Rebbe's work as chairman of Kehos, Merkos, and Machne Yisrael. The Rebbe was also involved with many of the Frierdiker Rebbe's projects, acting as his personal secretary during various periods of time. 2) After the *nesius*, when the focus turned to answering people's

questions, giving advice and *brachos*, and leading the Lubavitch movement world-wide.

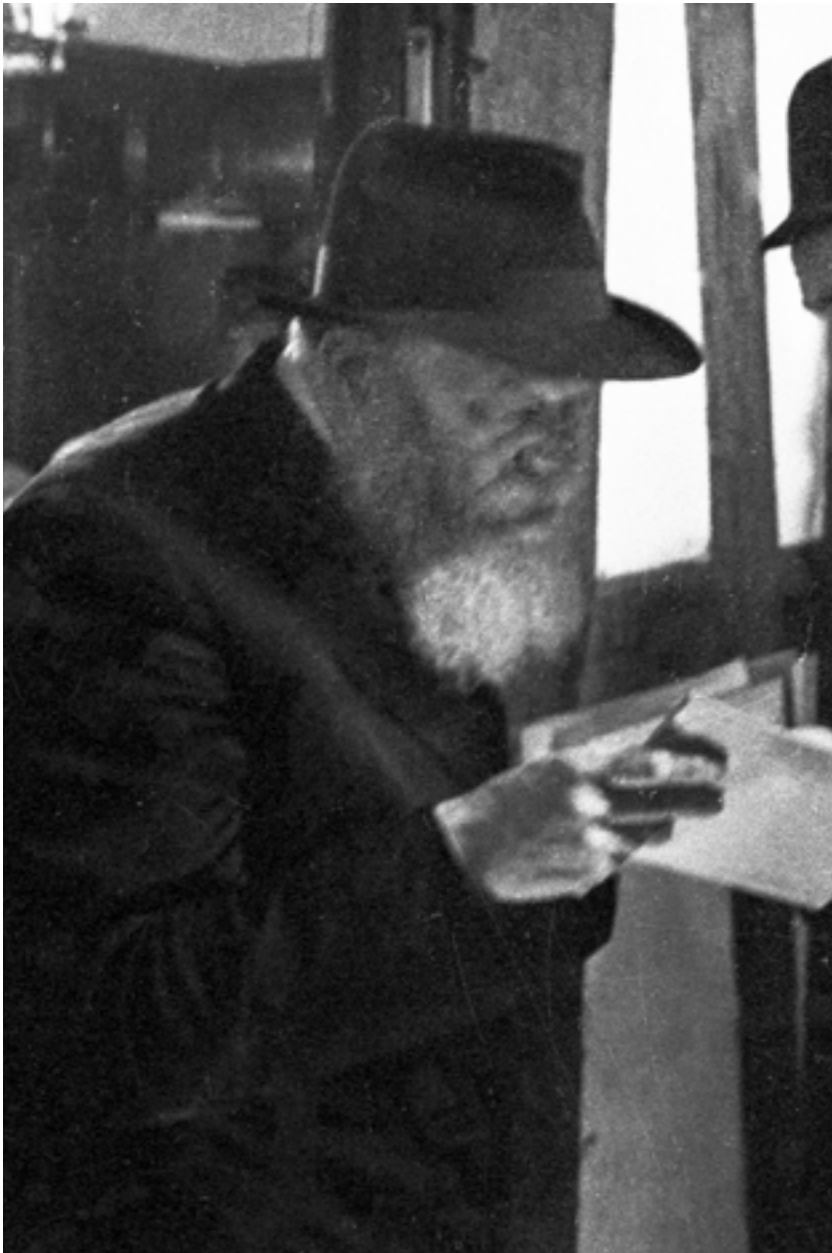
Concurrent with the changes in content, the way they were written changed as well. Until 5701 when he arrived in America, the Rebbe wrote all the letters himself (including four that we know of in French, when he was coordinating the Frierdiker Rebbe's escape from the Nazis and had to get past the censors). Once the Rebbe came to the United States

and got an official office, a secretary would usually type them up. After the *nesius*, in 5710, as the volume of letters increased tremendously, he relied mostly on two secretaries to draft the responses: Rabbi Moshe Leib Rodstein and Rabbi Nissan Mindel. But unlike ordinary public figures who receive voluminous amounts of mail but have very little to do with most of their correspondence—they rely almost completely on their staff to open the letters and answer them—the Rebbe answered all the mail himself. The secretaries' job was limited to the actual drafting of the letters. Occasionally, the Rebbe would write letters himself as well.

Rabbi Dr. Nissan Mindel described the process:

"The Rebbe always attended to his mail personally. He never authorized any of his aides to reply in his name. Because of the intimate and confidential nature of many of the letters addressed to him, the Rebbe would open all incoming mail himself, or have it opened in his presence. The replies, whether signed, mostly, by the Rebbe himself, or by his secretary, would likewise be dictated by himself and none other. Every outgoing letter, not omitting those on Secretariat stationary, would return to the Rebbe's desk for a final perusal before mailing.

"For all the rigorousness of the process, a great many letters succeeded in passing through the various stages in order to be mailed to their destinations. The amazing thing about it is that the Rebbe was able to dispose of this immense volume of correspondence in what was, comparatively speaking, a minimal amount of time. The process of reading and answering his personal mail took the Rebbe probably not more than five to six hours a week, about half the time of which was spent in two, sometimes three, sessions a week, dictating to his personal



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## He would sweep through a one or two page letter with extraordinary speed, missing nothing on, or between, the lines.

secretary—although this managed to keep the secretary busy for a goodly part of his working day!

“How did the Rebbe manage to dispose of so many letters in such a short time? Well, for one thing, he was an exceptionally fast reader. He would sweep through a one or two page letter with extraordinary speed, missing nothing on, or between, the lines. Then, putting that letter down and taking another one up, the Rebbe simultaneously dictated his response to the first letter point by point *seriatim*, or in order of importance, as he determined. Thus, while the secretary was racing against time, taking notes in his original steno “code,” (in Hebrew characters and words—because they can more easily be abbreviated and/or cast into acronyms and other time-and-space saving expedients), the Rebbe was already poised to reply to the next letter.”

Rabbi Moshe Leib Rodstein wrote most of the Hebrew and Yiddish letters, while Rabbi Nissan Mindel generally wrote in English or Russian, in addition to the more sophisticated Hebrew and Yiddish ones. The secretary would draft the letter using a *kopir*; thin, onion-like paper, so that two copies were made of each letter, in addition to the original (for a total of 3). One copy stayed with the secretary, and two were sent to the Rebbe: the original letter, which was to be sent to the person, and the second copy, which was for the archives. The Rebbe would check over the letter, editing it as necessary. If there were many edits, the letter was retyped, but if the editing was minimal it was sent as is. Fascinatingly, the Rebbe would almost

always painstakingly copy the edits he had made to the original letter onto the archive copy. When Igros was later printed, the archive copy was therefore able to be used as the final, completed version.

Most letters in Igros are signed by the Rebbe, but many are signed by the secretary “in the name of the Rebbe Shlit”a.” Addressing someone who felt hurt when he received a letter signed by a secretary, the Rebbe once explained: “*Obviously* I read all the letters that are sent to me and also *dictate the reply* [emphasis in original]. Regarding the signature: when the content of a letter requires this, meaning it pertains to *bakashos nafshiyos* or special content in *nigleh* or Chassidus—that is when I sign. Whereas the letter to you, which was mostly to acknowledge receipt of your letter...”<sup>19</sup>

As time went on, the amount of people asking for the Rebbe’s advice and *brachos* increased tremendously, eventually reaching sacks of mail a day. In 5709, shortly before the *nesius*, the Rebbe began writing letters which were *kloli-proti* (general-personal), a generic letter related to the *parshah* of the week or the time of year. Several copies would be made, all addressed to “מוהרר, Mr. [Blank]. When sending the letter to someone, the Rebbe would fill in the person’s name, covering over the *yud*, often adding several lines at the bottom, addressed to the specific person. This *kloli-proti* version be used for a few days, after which a new version was drawn up to be used for the next while. Later on, after the letters started being drafted by the secretariat, the Rebbe would indicate



REB MOSHE LEIB RODSTEIN.

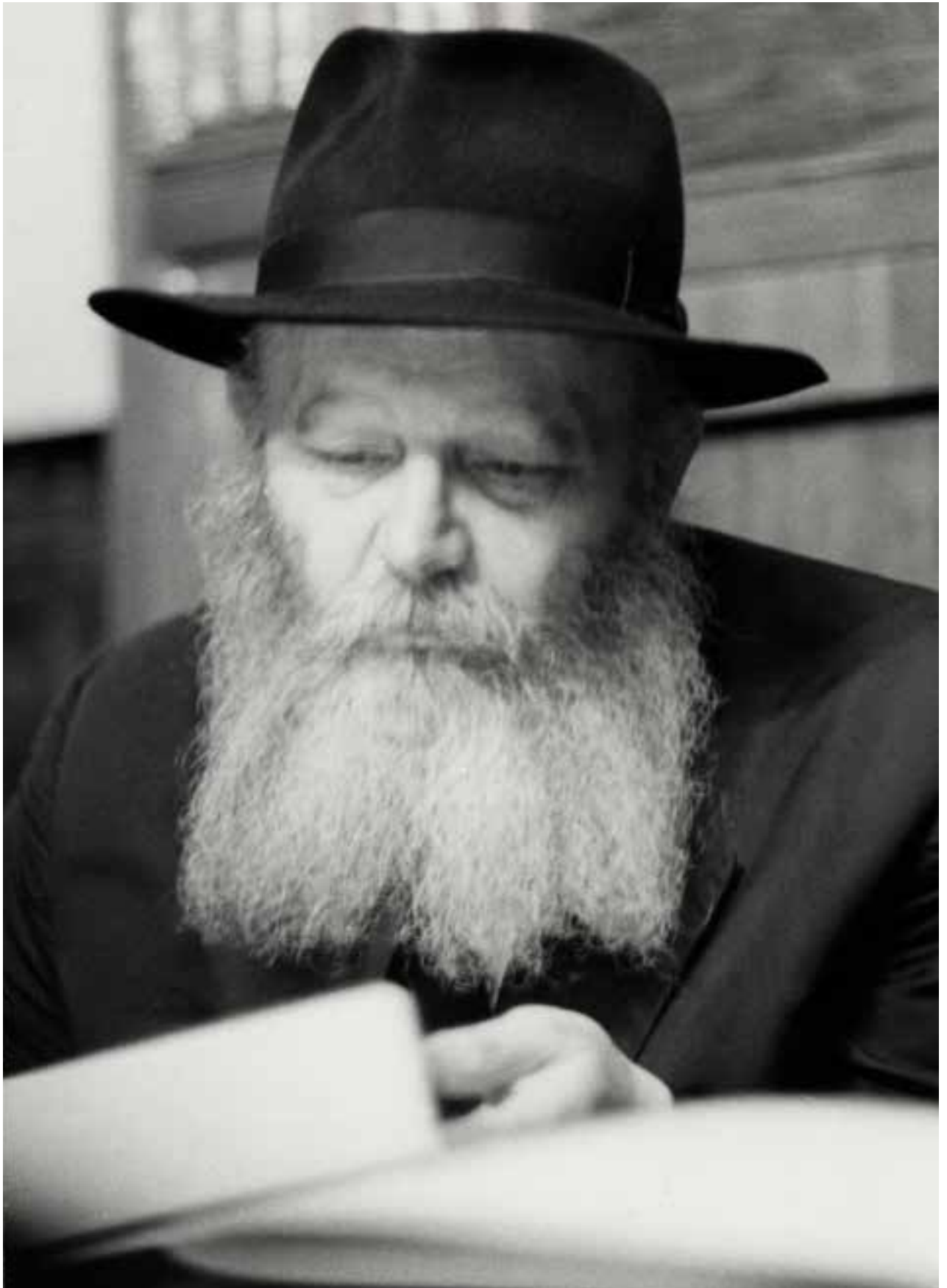
in writing which *kloli-proti* should be used, and in which language.<sup>20</sup>

The Rebbe also sent *michtovim klolim*, addressed to certain segments of the community, like *Nshei Ubnos Yisrael* or *Anash*, or, more often, to all Yidden across the globe. These letters, which are world famous for their precise style and profound message, is beyond the scope of this article and will be addressed on another occasion *iy”H*.

In 5711, the Rebbe began sending a standard letter for *simchos* and special occasions—births, upshernish, bar and bas mitzvahs, weddings, or birthdays—each personally signed. All the generic and standard letters were typed up by Rabbi Shalom Mendel Simpson, who also kept the secretariat archive.

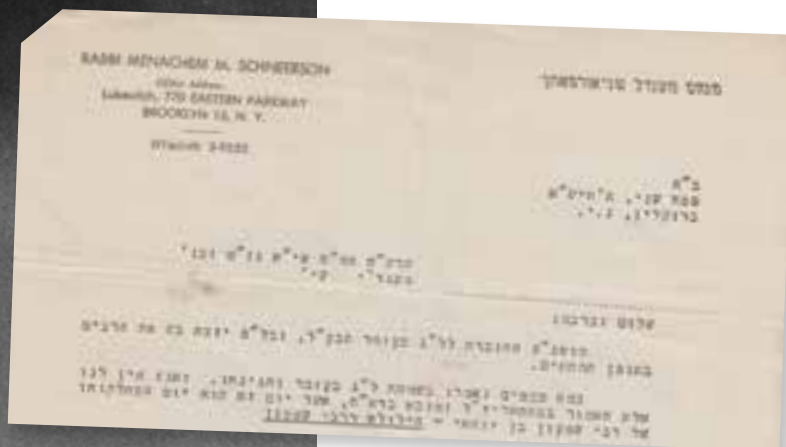
Rabbi Nissan Mindel wrote:

“I was so bold as to suggest to him that, in the case of certain outgoing mail, there might be a way to economize on the time spent at this task. I referred, by way of example, to such standard, or form letters, as Rosh Hashanah greetings, responses to request for the Rebbe’s blessings on happy family events, such as a Bar/Bat Mitzva, a marriage, birthdays,



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#### A MICHTAV KLOLI-PROTI.

and so on, which when taken all together, though this was not one of my tasks, could easily number several thousand over the course of the year. Now, if the Rebbe would authorize the ‘signing’ of such letters by means of a rubber stamp—a universally accepted practice—it would certainly save a good deal of his precious time.

“With polite acknowledgement of his secretary’s thoughtfulness, the Rebbe nonetheless rejected the idea out of hand, adding a reason, which, presumably, should have occurred to me in the first place. Indeed, I should have known that anything that smacked of “subterfuge” would be repugnant to the Rebbe. That went without saying. The Rebbe’s reason was simple: ‘How can I send prayerful wishes to a person in such an artificial manner, and how would that person feel if he or she received good wishes from his Rebbe in a letter that was signed, mechanically, with a rubber stamps?’ So that was the end of that.”

In the first years of the *nesius*, the Rebbe would sometimes personally give out letters for birthdays for *bochurim* when he came out to *mincha*.

In 5728, Rabbi Moshe Leib Rodstein passed away, leaving Rabbi Nissan Mindel the only secretary drafting letters. The Rebbe began writing many more letters himself—these were typed by Rabbi Simpson—but the bulk of correspondence slowly

shifted to *maanos*; instead of writing up full letters in response to people's questions, the Rebbe would write a very brief, answer on the letter itself, sometimes answering with a simple underline or arrow. The Rebbe would then give the letter to the *mazkir*, who would transmit the answer to the person, either orally or in writing (the Rebbe's *ksav yad kodesh* was never to be given out).<sup>21</sup> Due to the private nature of the correspondence, the Rebbe would sometimes tear off most of the letter before giving it to the *mazkir*, leaving only the name of the person and the *maane* itself. Similar to the *kloli-proti* letters, there were also *maanos kloli-proti* related to the time of year.

## Bringing the Letters to Print

Printing<sup>22</sup> the letters of the Rabbeim, and especially the Frierdiker Rebbe, was something the Rebbe was involved in throughout the years,

beginning long before the *nesius*. From as early as 5693 (a few years after the Rebbe's marriage), and possibly even earlier, the Rebbe would be sent a copy of all the Frierdiker Rebbe's letters which were '*tochni*', non-technical. The Rebbe catalogued all the letters and added an index with a short description of each one. From this archive, the Rebbe chose letters for printing in Hatomim, Kovetz Lubavitch, and various other *kuntreisim*, adding *marei mekomos*, *ha'aros*, and the like. In addition, the Rebbe published a *kovetz michtovim* (a collection of letters) about the importance of saying Tehillim, printed in the back of the Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak.

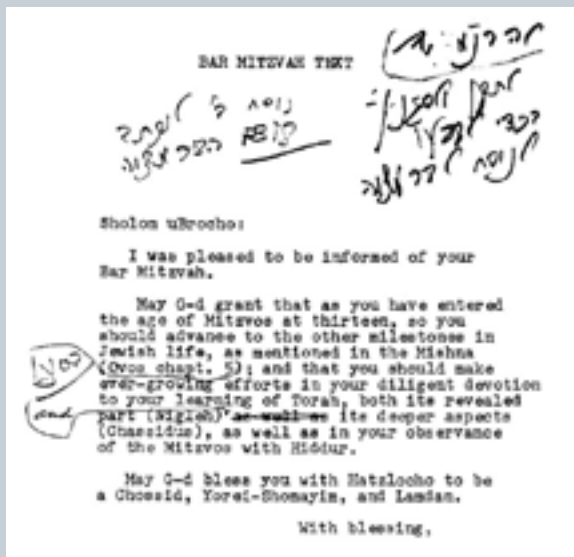
The Rebbe also worked on the Igros of some of the other Rabbeim. When the Frierdiker Rebbe decided to print in Hatomim the letters of the Baal Shem Tov, Maggid (and others of that era), which were found in the "Archive of Kherson," he wrote that

since the letters were very deep—the topics included practical Kabbalah, *tzirufei sheimos*, and the like—their preparation for print had to be given to someone "who is fit for this in his righteousness, fear [of Hashem], and prodigious knowledge in Torah." The Frierdiker Rebbe chose the Rebbe as the person fitting the description.<sup>23</sup>

In 5740, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Shalom Ber Levine to begin printing the Igros of the Alter Rebbe, a project which ultimately grew to include all the Rabbeim. The Rebbe was intimately involved at every stage of the process—in one *maane*, for example, the Rebbe instructed him to ask one of the librarians to find a booklet (*bichel*) of letters from the earlier Rabbeim "which was in the *shaffe* of my father-in-law the Rebbe." When Rabbi Levine gave the Rebbe a copy of the *kisvei yad* which would be printed in the *sefer*, the Rebbe wrote to him that "in general, the more [*kisvei yad*] the better."

One major question was whether to print the Igros by topic or by date. When he was preparing the first volumes of letters, Rabbi Levine presented various reasons for each option and asked the Rebbe what to do. The Rebbe instructed him to do it by date. This question came up again later as well—by the Frierdiker Rebbe's Igros, and again by the Rebbe's Igros, especially since the Rebbe's Igros had always been printed by topic in the back of Likkutei Sichos—and the Rebbe always answered that it should be published by date.

What makes this especially noteworthy is that this goes back to before the *nesius*, when the Rebbe was working on preparing the Frierdiker Rebbe's Igros to print with his guidance. In a long letter to the Rebbe<sup>24</sup>, the Frierdiker Rebbe explains at length why "in my personal opinion" printing letters in booklets



"To Hora[v]N[issan]"M[indel]

Fix and stylize it in order to make it the standard version for bar mitzva.

[Create] a second version for a letter before the bar mitzva.

by topic is “counterproductive,” listing three reasons:

“Many people do not want to even know about Chassidus...If such a person sees on the cover of the booklet that it explains the idea of *Toras Chassidus Chabad*, he will put it aside, since he doesn’t want to be a Chossid in general, and especially not a Chabad Chossid....Whereas, when there are many different topics...he will end up reading things that he wouldn’t have been interested in reading otherwise.”

Second of all, “a booklet that only covers one topic is heavy on the average reader. The same way that it is a positive for an intellectual person, it is a negative for a regular person... When there are different topics...a person has different things to read.

“There’s a third point here: beauty comes from mixing different colors. Certain topics are lighter, others are heavier, and it is better when they are mixed together.”

## Printing the Rebbe’s Letters

In the early years of the *nesius*, the Rebbe’s Igros weren’t officially printed anywhere, aside for the Teshuvos Ubi’urim section in Kovetz Lubavitch, and others scattered in various

publications, and they were a precious treasure passed hand to hand.

After the first few volumes of Lekkutei Sichos were published in *sefarim*, in the mid 5720s, selections of letters were printed in the back, categorized by *parshah* and theme—Bereishis would have philosophical letters about creation, and concepts of *emunah*, Lech Lecha about *bris mila*, etc. In the beginning, none of these letters came from the *mazkirus* archive; rather they were gathered by the Vaad L’hafotzas Sichos from collectors and private people who volunteered to give their personal letters for publication.

However, it came a point when it was becoming increasingly difficult to find new letters from private people, so the Vaad L’hafotzas Sichos asked Rabbi Shalom Mendel Simpson, who was in charge of the Rebbe’s archive, to provide for them letters for the upcoming sefer of Lekkutei Sichos (vol. 25).

Rabbi Simpson relates:

“I told them that I am not in charge of the letters—the Rebbe is the *baal habos*—and that without the Rebbe’s directive I would never give out a single letter. A few months later, I wrote to the Rebbe [asking if I should do it]. The Rebbe answered that if there are indeed such letters [which

are fit for print]—then I should show them to him. I gathered a folder of letters from 5718—thirty or forty letters—and went in to the Rebbe and gave it to him.

“The Rebbe took the folder, looked through it, and asked, ‘Why from 5718?’ I replied that this what I happened to pick up. The Rebbe looked through it some more, and asked, ‘Are there many more such letters?’ I answered that there are probably several hundred more. [I never imagined that there would be thousands of letters printed.]

“‘You should see to it,’ the Rebbe said, ‘to gather and take out all the letters that are in the file—if you need to, you should even hire people to help you—you should gather all the letters and see that they are published; and do so as soon as possible.’”

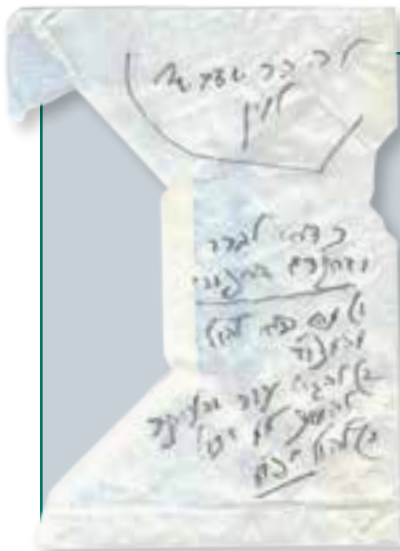
Subsequently, the Rebbe sent out the letters for print. But instead of sending them to the Vaad L’hafotzas Hasichos, as they had expected, the Rebbe sent them to Rabbi Levine, together with a lengthy *maane*:

To Rabbi Shalom Dovber sheyichye Levine

*It would be good to figure out, and as soon as possible*

1. What is worthwhile to print from the enclosed
2. To edit them and, primarily, to add sources, etc.
3. To publish it in actuality

Rabbi Levine—who, up until that point, hadn’t even considered printing the Rebbe’s letters as a set of Igros, since they had always been printed in Lekkutei Sichos—had no idea who had prepared the letters or why. When he found out that it had been collected at the behest of the Vaad L’hafotzas Sichos, he asked the Rebbe for clarity: were these meant to be printed as a new set of Igros Kodesh, or as part of Lekkutei Sichos? The Rebbe underlined the first option, and



The original Ksav Yad the Rebbe sent for Rabbi Shalom Ber Levine, initiating the publishing of the Rebbe’s Igros Kodesh.

להר"ר שדב שי' לוי  
כדאי לברר ובהקדם האפשרי  
(1) מה כדאי להו"ל מהמצו"ב ] = להוציא לאור  
מהמצורף בזה]  
(2) להג' עוד והעיקר להוסיף מ"מ ] = מראה  
מקומות וכו'  
(3) להו"ל בפו"מ ] = להוציא לאור בפועל  
[ממש]

# A Mysterious Name

Rabbi Levine relates:<sup>25</sup>

“Someone came into the library and brought a copy of the original letter that the Rebbe wrote to the Rogatchover Gaon, which came from his archive. It was written in 1925 [5685], when the Rebbe still lived in Dnepropetrovsk/Yekatrinoslav. We saw right away that it was the Rebbe’s handwriting. But at the end of the letter—in which the Rebbe asks some questions and explains his opinion about some subject in halacha—he signs at the end: ‘M. Gurary.’

I didn’t know why he used the Gurary name; I thought to myself that maybe he used the name for other things as well. Although the letter was written several years before the Rebbe’s chasunah, I thought that maybe the Rebbetzin would know.

So I called her up, told her the story of the letter, and asked for her thoughts.

“I never heard, so I don’t know,” she told me. “But I can ask the Rebbe. Wait a bit, I’ll ask him, and I’ll call you back.”

I was shocked. “I didn’t mean you should call the Rebbe and ask him,” I said. “I just asked if you remember that he used the name, that’s it...”

“It doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter...” she answered.

Fifteen minutes later she called me back and said, “I called the Rebbe.” He was in his room at 770 at the time and she was at home—she had called him at 770 just to tell him what I asked! I was shocked! I couldn’t believe it.

Then she tells me, “The Rebbe asked if you can please show him the letter.”

So that’s what I did. I wrote in to the Rebbe, asking him if he wrote this name just to avoid Russian censors. (If they would see a letter sent from a Schneerson they would stop it, so instead he signed “Gurary”. In Dnepropetrovsk at the time, there lived a Lubavitcher Chossid named Mordechai Gurary.) I asked if that was the reason, or there was another reason. The Rebbe confirmed that it was because of the Russian censors.

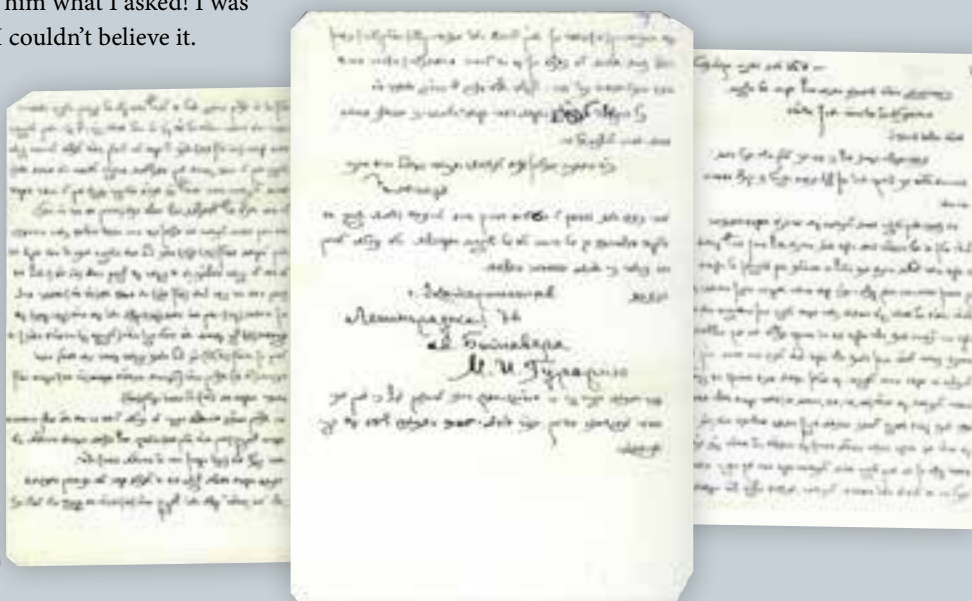
Since the Rebbe already told me to show him the letter, I garnered the courage to ask him: “If the Rebbe wrote to the Rogatchover, the Rogatchover probably answered the Rebbe. Does the Rebbe have the letters the Rogatchover sent, or other letters that the Rebbe wrote to the Rogatchover, that I could incorporate?”

The Rebbe replied: “*Lichapes b’ha’arkiyon*—Search the archives.” I didn’t really know what it meant: If he meant the library archives, obviously I had already checked. If he meant the archive in his house, why would he tell me to look there?

Probably it meant that it was in the house, but he didn’t have the time to look for it. He was saying: “When I have time, I will look for it.”

It wasn’t until after Gimmel Tammuz that an additional letter was found, and then printed in the Rebbe’s *Reshimos*.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASIDEI CHABAD



THE REBBE’S LETTER TO THE ROGATCHOVER GAON SIGNED ‘M. GURARY’.



“Nu,” the Rebbe answered, “*talmidei hayeshiva*—that’s not news. But what’s going on with the *yungelait*?”

for the sake of expediency, he should try finding someone to help him out, but on condition that “it shouldn’t be someone who ‘reveals secrets.’”

## Are They Learning the Letters?

In the middle of 5749, Rabbi Simpson brought the Rebbe a big package of letters for printing in the upcoming volume of Igros, volume 10. Suddenly, the Rebbe asked him, “*Vos tut zich? Der oilam tut in der briv? Mi’lernt di briv?* [What’s going on? Are people involved in the letters? Are they learning the letters?].”

Trying to be *melamed zechus* on the Chassidim, Rabbi Simpson said that he had heard that it is learned in the Morristown yeshiva.

“Nu,” the Rebbe answered, “*talmidei hayeshiva*—that’s not news. But what’s going on with the *yungelait*? Until this very day, I have not received a single letter from anyone asking a question, or writing a *ha’ara* about the Igros kodesh.” And the Rebbe then waved his hand signifying his disapproval.<sup>26</sup>

A little while later, volume 10 of Igros was printed, and Rabbi Simpson suggested that the *bochurim* do something to mark the event. Led by Rabbi Chaim Greenberg, the *bochurim* arranged an event on a grand scale to celebrate the occasion. They invited rebbes, rabbonim, and *roshei yeshivos* from all over New York to join, even publishing a *kovetz* with articles about the Igros from various public figures called *Lichvoda Shel Torah*. Speakers included Rabbi Yosef Wineberg; Rabbi Yoel Kahn; Rabbi Moshe David Steinwurtzel—rosh yeshiva of the Bobover yeshiva in New York; Rabbi Simcha Elberg, chairman of Agudas Harabbonim; Rabbi Boruch Laizerowski, *dayan* of the Bais Din in Philadelphia; and others. The event was successful beyond their



RABBI SHALOM BER LEVINE.

added that he should go back to Rabbi Simpson for many more letters.

It is important to realize just how rare this was for the the Rebbe to instruct on his own accord, *b'isarus d'liaila*, that a *sefer* of his own Torah should be printed. Often, Chassidim had to insist before the Rebbe agreed to edit his *maamarim* and *sichos*, or print his own *sefarim*; even Lekutei Sichos took years to become a set-in-stone project, and for some time it was on and off. Yet here the Rebbe initiated the entire project.

In one of the *maanos*, the Rebbe wrote that the new *sefer* was “connected to the preparations for Pesach—[and should be done with] *chipazon* (in a hurry)...” Rabbi Levine understood that the Rebbe was hinting that it should be ready for Yud-Aleph Nissan—less than a month away—and he threw himself into the project. On 25 Adar—only nine days later!—he managed to come up with the first manuscript for editing, and it was indeed printed by Yud-Aleph Nissan.

From that point on, Rabbi Levine worked on the Rebbe’s Igros Kodesh.

The Rebbe would review each *sefer* before it was printed in order to give his approval—and constantly urged him to publish it as quickly as possible. The Rebbe also encouraged Rabbi Levine to write introductions to the new *sefarim* of Igros, occasionally editing them as well.

## Keeping it Quiet

Throughout the publishing of Igros, the Rebbe put an emphasis on discretion, in two specific areas: The first was that private letters should never be published. In fact, when the first two volumes of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s Igros were almost ready for print, the Rebbe wrote a long *maane*: “An observation was made by some, that included [in the *sefer*] are private letters that are utterly unfit for print. It would be good to go over them again, and if he finds any letters like that, he should remove them...”

The second requirement was that those working on the letters should be discrete. When the Rebbe told Rabbi Levine to begin publishing the Frierdiker Rebbe’s Igros, he added that



estimations; 650 *sefarim* of Igros were sold on the spot.

Following the event, Rabbi Greenberg wrote a *du"ch* to the Rebbe describing their success, together with an album of pictures and a write up of the speeches.

The Rebbe wrote a powerful *maane* under Rabbi Greenberg's signed name:

כן יבשר טוב לעת"ל  
ובהוספה  
והזמ"ג  
דמרב"ם בשמחה  
אזכיעה"צ

So should he bring good tidings in the future

And with an increase

And the time is fitting

[Adar] when we increase in

happiness

*Azkir al hatziyun*

## The Tanya of Our Generation

In order to gain some possible understanding as to why the Rebbe decided—*b'isarus d'liaila*—to begin publishing Igros Kodesh, we bring excerpts from the introduction to Igros Kodesh volume 12:

From when the Alter Rebbe accepted upon himself the *nesius* of Chassidus Chabad, the idea of *yechidus* began. The Chossid would enter to the Rebbe in order to receive his guidance and directives on how to run all aspects of his life. As the years passed, the amount of Chassidim grew and grew, until it became impossible for every Chossid to have his own *yechidus*. That is when the “rulings of Liozna” were established, which limited travel to the Alter Rebbe and so forth.

A few years later, the Tanya was printed. In the *hakdama* the Alter Rebbe writes that the *sefer* includes “answers to many questions that all Anash in our country have constantly asked, seeking advice...

The responsibility of the *rav* is to counsel his students according to the directives, advice, and guidance of the Rebbe which are found in *Igros Kodesh*.

[This is necessary] because time no longer permits replying to everyone individually and in detail on his particular problem. Furthermore, forgetfulness is common. I have, therefore, recorded all the replies to all the questions...to serve as a visual reminder for each and every person, so that he will no longer press for admission to *yechidus* with me. For in these [responsa] he will find peace for his soul, and true counsel on every matter that he finds difficult in *avodas Hashem*..”

The same can be said, possibly, about the publishing of the Rebbe's letters. Over the course of decades, the Rebbe received many thousands of people into *yechidus*, giving them advice and guidance in *avodas Hashem*, activism, personal issues, etc. The Rebbe also invested much effort in writing letters to people at all corners of the earth. Like *yechidus*, these letters cover all areas of life; if you look in *Igros*, you will find a wealth of *horaos* and instructions in *halacha*, *avodas Hashem*, activism, personal life, etc.

In the past few years, as the number of Chassidim has grown and grown, personal *yechidus* has ceased; detailed letters are also not as common as previous years. The Rebbe spoke more than once that, in this time, one shouldn't ask many detailed questions, and instead he should ask his *'asei lecha rav*,' etc.



29 ELUL 5743, JEM via LEVI FREDIN 209341





THE LARGE EVENT CELEBRATING THE RELEASE OF THE TENTH VOLUME OF THE REBBE'S IGROS KODESH.

It is specifically now that we have merited that the Igros Kodesh have been published. Anyone who is interested in knowing the Rebbe's opinion on almost any topic in all areas of life, can find it in Igros. When you think about this, how this set of *sefarim* can teach you the Rebbe's opinion on almost any issue that will ever arise, you realize how important it is to learn these *sefarim* and read them at every opportunity. This is not only in regards to oneself, but in teaching others as well, as the Alter Rebbe concludes his *hakdama*: "As for him whose mind falls short in understanding the advice given in these *kuntreisim*, let him discuss his problem with the foremost scholars of his town, and they will elucidate it for him."

This fits with the Rebbe's abovementioned *hora'a*, that every question should be taken to a

*mashpia*—your *asei lecha rav*. From this it is understood that the responsibility of the *rav* is to counsel his students according to the directives, advice, and guidance of the Rebbe which are found in Igros Kodesh.

Until we merit the conclusion of the Alter Rebbe's words in his *hakdama*: May the Giver of Life to the living make us worthy to live to see the days when "no longer shall one man instruct the other ... for all shall know Me..." "for the world shall be full of the knowledge of Hasehm..."

The day when the *rav* and the *talmid* will learn together from the Torah and mouth of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. ⑦

1. Igros vol. 11 p. 3
2. Ibid 5
3. Ibid 6
4. Ibid 7-9
5. Ibid 26

6. Ibid 27
7. Ibid 30
8. Vol. 9 p. 338
9. Vol. 4 p. 261
10. Vol. 5 p. 89
11. See e.g. vol. 18 p. 66.
12. See e.g. vol. 16 p. 88
13. See e.g. Vol. 9 p. 338
14. See e.g. vol. 6 p. 250
15. See e.g. vol. 17 p. 340
16. See e.g. vol 10 p. 391
17. See e.g. vol. 14 p. 397
18. See e.g. vol. 6 p. 147; vol. 18 p. 408
19. 28 Tammuz, 5715
20. See introduction to Igros Kodesh vol. 3
21. See *hakdama* to *Avodas Hakodesh* by Rabbi Shalom Ber Levine
22. For this section, see *Avodas Hakodesh* of Rabbi Shalom Ber Levine part 3.
23. See *Yimei Melech* p. 405; 429.
24. Igros of the Frierdiker Rebbe vol. 15 p. 281.
25. Living Torah Program 276, "Letters from Youth".
26. Related by Rabbi Simpson at the *farbrengen* of Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5750.