

ONE
MORIE
FRONT
— *Translating Chassidus* —

לע"ג
הרב החסיד השליח
ר' יוסף יצחק
בן הרה"ח ר' מאיר ע"ה
איטקין

נפטר ז' לחודש טבת ה'תשפ"ד
ת"נ צ"ב
נדפס ע"י משפחתו שיחיו

*Compiled by: Rabbi Levi Greenberg
Written By: Rabbi Zelig Katzman*



Ever since the Baal Shem Tov's encounter with Moshiach when he was charged with the task of *hafatzas hamaayanos*, our Rabbeim have worked tirelessly to spread the teachings of Chassidus to the widest possible audience.

One of the primary barriers between the teachings of Chassidus and its intended audience is that of language. Chassidus has traditionally been delivered in Yiddish and transcribed in Lashon Hakodesh, leaving those unfamiliar with those languages deprived of the richness of its teachings.

Additionally, in order for Chassidus to be properly translated, it is not enough to translate literally, as the depths of the concepts and their subtle implications often get lost in translation. Translating Chassidus requires a deep understanding of the concepts and the linguistic knowledge to accurately articulate them. This article lays out some of the Rebbe's teachings on this issue, the history of the translation of Chassidus and some of the Rebbe's key directives to those involved in this holy endeavor.

Moshe's Translation of the Torah

In the beginning of Sefer Devarim, the Torah recounts that on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, at the end of the Jewish people's 40 year sojourn in the desert "הואיל משה באר את התורה הזאת" (Moshe began explaining this Torah). Rashi comments on these words, citing the Midrash that the words באר את התורה indicate that Moshe translated the Torah into the 70 languages of the world.

The Rebbe poses an obvious question: Why was it necessary for Moshe Rabbeinu to translate the Torah for the Yidden into all of the world's languages at that time? Some meforshim propose that Moshe was worried that some Yidden didn't understand Lashon Hakodesh, and therefore he translated the Torah for them. However, this raises a different question: Why did Moshe wait till the end of the 40 years to do this? Why didn't he do it immediately following Matan Torah?

Other meforshim suggest that Moshe did this not for the people of his own generation, but rather for future generations, who would be exiled to other lands, so that wherever Yidden would come, they could study in that language. This

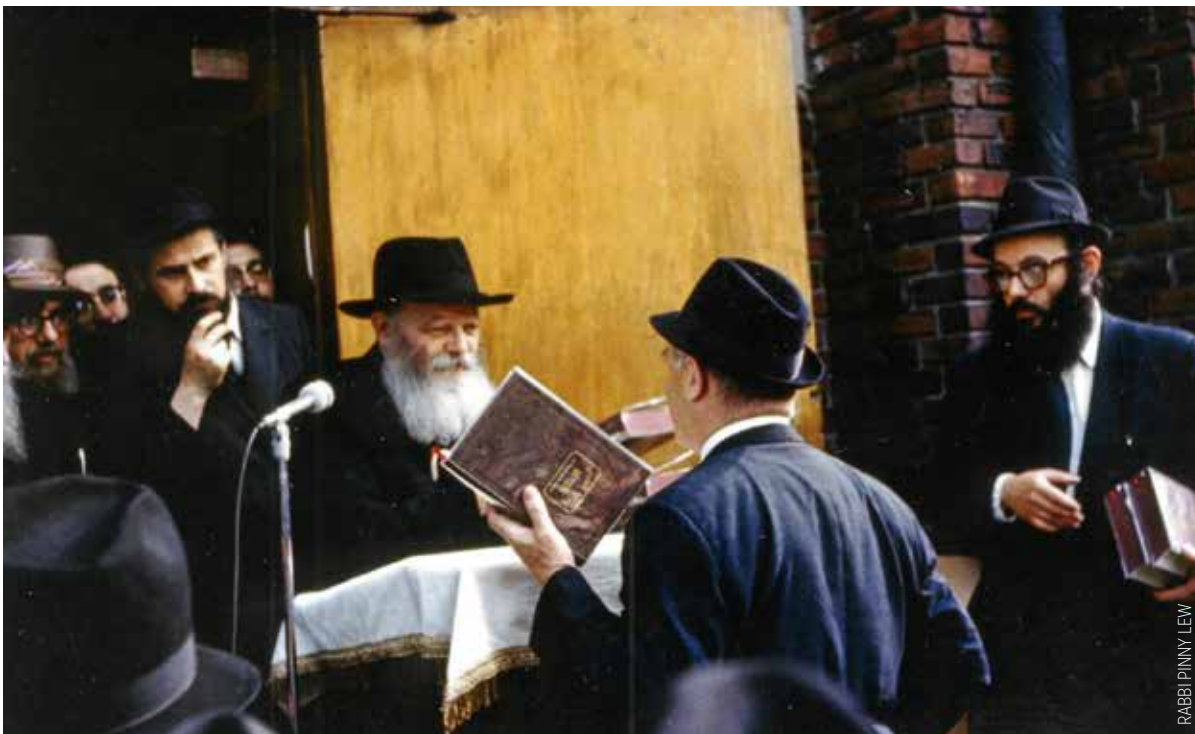
answer is not completely satisfactory, however: Why was Moshe concerned about this? He could have relied on the future leaders of the Yidden to take care of this problem when it arose...

The basic explanation: The Ramban writes that Lashon Hakodesh is the language "in which Hashem speaks." Thus, it follows that Torah Hashem should be studied specifically in that language. This would obviously be the case with Torah Shebe'ksav, which, as its name suggests, is defined by the way it's written, exactly as it was given by Hashem, no more and no less. Even regarding Torah Sheba'al Peh, there is room to say that the halachic definition of "דברי תורה - words of Torah" apply only to words spoken in Hashem's language.

This is why Moshe Rabbeinu—receiver and transmitter of the Torah—translated the Torah into 70 languages; to apply the same level of holiness to Torah taught and studied in other languages.¹

The Rebbe also gleans several lessons² from the Torah's language regarding Moshe's translation and shows their application to *hafatzas haTorah vehama'ayanos* in every time and place:

- The word הואיל denotes a beginning, which indicates



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES THE FIRST BILINGUAL EDITION OF TANYA ON THE FRONT STEPS OF 770, 16 SIVAN 5735.

that there is a continuation. This teaches us that in our mission of spreading Yiddishkeit, it is not enough to try once and then move on. Rather one must consistently toil and work to ensure that the words of Torah reach everyone.

- The word באר denotes thorough explanation. It is not enough to merely tell someone the words of Torah. One must ensure they understand it on their level, and if necessary — to translate it to another language.

On multiple occasions,³ the Rebbe pointed out the significance of the fact that the Frierdiker Rebbe's *yom hilula* occurs in the month of Shevat, highlighting the connection between Moshe Rabbeinu's initial translation of the Torah and the Frierdiker Rebbe's lifelong mission to bring Chassidus to all, including efforts to translate Chassidus to foreign languages. The Rebbe also stressed the *chiddush* of the Frierdiker Rebbe's work - the translation of *pnimiyus haTorah*, the Torah's deepest secrets. Up until his times the only translations of Torah were in its revealed dimensions.

Why Translate Chassidus?

When discussing the importance of translating Chassidus, the Rebbe provided several reasons for this work:⁴

- For the nations of the world: We are told that the non-Jews will serve the Yidden at the time of the future *geulah*, and moreover, they will be transformed and serve Hashem themselves. Therefore, their preparation for that time must begin now by studying the concepts in Torah that are relevant to them, including concepts of belief in Hashem etc. as explained in Chassidus,

through translating them into their language. [In another *sicha*⁵, the Rebbe cites this explicitly as one of the reasons for the translation of Shaar Hayichud V'haemunah into English, so that a non-Jew could understand the concept of *Achdus Hashem*!]

- For Yidden: Being that the *geulah* needs to come quickly, there is no time to wait for all Yidden to be able to learn and understand Chassidus (which is the preparation for Moshiach's coming) in Lashon Hakodesh, rather, we need to learn it with them immediately, in whatever language they understand.

The Spiritual Significance of Translation

The Rebbe also explained that the purpose of translating Chassidus is not only for the purpose of teaching Chassidus to people of all backgrounds. Another goal of this endeavor is to conquer the languages of the nations of the world and, by extension – those nations themselves.

The Gemara says in Gittin⁶ that the Roman Empire was a *מלכות שאינה הוגנת* (kingdom that is not legitimate) because *אין להם לא כתב ולא לשון* (they have neither their own script, nor their own language, but rather, they took them from other nations). This underscores how a nation's language is linked to its status and importance, and therefore, when we conquer the language of a country, we conquer its prestige, through which we spiritually transform the entire country.⁷

On another occasion⁸, the Rebbe underscored the fact that translating Chassidus into foreign languages is a great descent, as evidenced by one of the words for translation in Lashon Hakodesh - *העתקה*, which denotes departure and separation from its prior, sublime state. Nevertheless, we were instructed to do so in order to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus and bring Moshiach.

History of Translation

The earliest record of the translation of Chassidus into another language is an episode recounted by the Frierdiker Rebbe about his uncle, Reb Menachem Mendel (brother of the Rebbe Rashab). On one occasion he translated a chapter of Tanya into Russian and sent it to a gentile aristocrat, who was greatly impressed.⁹ There are also accounts of the Rebbe Rashab considering having the children's periodical



THE FIRST OF THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S KUNTREISIM, "KINYAN HACHAIM", PRINTED IN RIGA IN ELUL 5688 AND AGAIN A FEW WEEKS LATER IN THE UNITED STATES. THE SHAAH BLATT STATES THAT IT WAS GIVEN IN YIDDISH FROM THE REBBE HIMSELF IN ORDER THAT ALL UNDERSTAND.

האח translated into German for the benefit of the Jews there.¹⁰ These were isolated incidents, however.

A concerted effort to translate Chassidus began in the times of the Frierdiker Rebbe. The first record of this was recounted by the Rebbe himself¹¹, relating that the Frierdiker Rebbe once instructed to explain ideas of Chassidus to a certain gentile professor who expressed interest in deep concepts.

These efforts continued after the Frierdiker Rebbe left Russia. In a letter sent on Isru Chag Sukkos, 5689 from Riga to Rabbi Meir Munk of Berlin, the Frierdiker Rebbe writes: “This past Chodesh Elul I prepared a maamar called קנין” החיים¹², written in Yiddish, and I wish to have it translated into clear and understandable German, but [it] should nevertheless maintain the true intention of the maamar,

which is its soul...” The Rebbe goes on to ask whether Rabbi Munk could take this task upon himself or whether he can suggest someone who can.¹³

On the very same day, the Rebbe reached out to the chossid Reb Sender Reinin, requesting that he pursue the translation of Chassidus into a number of languages, and stressing the importance of accuracy in translation: “Regarding the translation of the maamar קנין החיים, it would be proper to translate it into French, English, Italian and Russian, and I would also like to have it translated into Eastern languages such as the languages of Yemen, Buchara, and Georgia, but each translation must be done by someone who is both proficient in the [specific] language and knows and understands the concept well, [to enable him] to transmit the spirit of the ideas with the proper

REB HILLEL TZEITLIN

One of the pioneers in the attempt to translate the Tanya was Reb Hillel Tzeitlin, ה"ר. Reb Hillel stands out as one of the most intriguing and multifaceted figures in the Chabad community during his time. Gifted with a brilliant writing style and a poetic soul, he dedicated his diverse talents to the dissemination of the ideas of Chassidus throughout pre-war Europe.

Reb Hillel was born in 5631 in the city of Karma, White Russia, to a Chabad family associated with the Kopust community. His exceptional intelligence became apparent early on, and he made significant strides in Torah learning from a young age. During his teenage years, however, he delved into foreign literature and ideologies, succumbing to the intellectual and social trends of the nineteenth century,

like many of his contemporaries. He strayed from Yiddishkeit and gained recognition as a writer within the circles of the Maskilim, contributing scholarly articles to secular publications on topics such as literature and philosophy.

Following the First World War, Reb Hillel experienced a reawakening of his commitment to Yiddishkeit. Utilizing his talents, he began to write extensively on Kabbalah and Chassidus, including several pieces on Chassidus Chabad. Notable among his works were the Yiddish translations of *Perek Lamed Beis* of Tanya in 5685 and later the *Igeres Hakodesh Siman Beis “Katonti,”* (before 19 Kislev 5699), the first extant translation of Tanya into Yiddish.

In the later years of his life, Reb Hillel formed a connection with the Frierdiker Rebbe, writing numerous articles on Chassidus at the Frierdiker Rebbe's request. At the onset of the Second World War, the Frierdiker Rebbe actively sought to secure documents for him to escape Europe. Regrettably, these efforts proved unsuccessful. Reb Hillel's life was tragically ended by the Nazis ש"ר when he was sent to Treblinka. As he boarded the train, he was reportedly wearing his Tallis and Tefillin, holding a *Sefer Ha'Zohar*. He perished in the gas chambers on Erev Rosh Hashanah 5703.



REB HILLEL TZEITLIN
IN HIS LATER YEARS.

chayus. Every translation must be edited by others, so that the ideas emerge clearly, for the work of translation is very difficult...¹⁴

Several years later, on 23 Sivan 5697, the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Hodakov, who was living in Riga at the time, about translating a letter of the Frierdiker Rebbe into German: “Being that this is the first attempt to translate Chassidus into German... [We] must be very careful in its publication, so that it should be as sophisticated as possible, and should be able to reach the widest possible audience, being that this is the ultimate purpose of translating it into another language”.

The Rebbe concludes: “If this beginning [effort] is successful, I hope that we can receive [the Frierdiker Rebbe’s] approval to translate and print some of the Kuntreisim into German, French etc.”¹⁵

The First Complete Yiddish Translation of Tanya

Following the Frierdiker Rebbe’s arrival in the US, he began to publish a Yiddish periodical called הקריאה

והקדושה, containing words of Torah and inspiration for the American Jewish community during the dark days of the war. Beginning in Iyar 5702, each issue featured a translated section of Tanya. The translator was Reb Aharon Levitt, editor of the publication, who wrote under the pen name Y. Segal. The first 33 chapters had been translated when והקדושה הקריאה ceased publication in 5705.

A complete translation of Tanya came later. It was produced by the chossid Reb Uriel Tzimmer¹⁶, and published by Kehot in two volumes. The first, in 5715, covered Likkutei Amarim. The second, in 5718, contained the remaining four sections of Tanya. This was the first translation of the whole Tanya into another language.

In its introduction, the publishers highlighted the shortcomings of translated works, noting that “Tanya is the foundation of Chassidus... Chassidim call it Torah She’bik-sav, being that each word is extremely precise. [Therefore] one must learn each word and understand it, each word containing hidden meanings. There are even sections in which one cannot ascertain the true meaning, being that the students of Chassidus disagree on the intent of the words. This characteristic of Sefer HaTanya makes it nearly impossible to translate the Tanya accurately, because even with great toil one cannot determine the intent of the original...”

“Notwithstanding all of this” the introduction concludes, “we have decided to acquiesce to the requests and publish this translation, to enable the masses who have difficulty with Lashon Hakodesh to study the Tanya”.

The Translation of Tanya to English

The translation of Tanya into English, a goal set by the Frierdiker Rebbe (as evidenced by a letter written to the Rebbe’s brother, Reb Yisroel Aryeh Leib, where the Frierdiker Rebbe asks him to look into this project¹⁹) finally came to fruition at the hands of Rabbi Nissan Mindel, mazkir to both the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rebbe.

The first volume, Likkutei Amarim, was published in 5722. Those years were marked by the intense “space race” between the United States and the Soviet Union, who were competing with each other to dominate space. The Russians had launched the first satellite to orbit the earth, and the world was spellbound. When Rabbi Mindel brought his translation to the Rebbe, the Rebbe said: “The world is abuzz with the news of the launch of Sputnik, but the truth is that they should be excited about the translation



THE REBBE'S EDITS ON THE INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE TANYA.

TESHURA BLOCK-WENGER 5776

of Tanya into English”...

The preface to this edition is signed by the Rebbe himself. It explains how the central idea of Chassidus—for a Jew to transcend the physical and see within it the absolute Unity of Hashem—is expressed in the idea of translation:

“The realisation of this purpose entails a two-way correlation: one in the direction from above downward to earth; the other, from the earth upward. In fulfillment of the first, man draws holiness from the Divinely-given Torah and commandments to permeate therewith every phase of his daily life and his environment—his “share” in this world; in fulfillment of the second, man draws upon all the resources at his disposal, both created and man-made, as vehicles for his personal ascendancy and, with him, that of the surrounding world. One of these basic resources is the vehicle of human language and communication.

“As the Alter Rebbe, author of the *Tanya*, pointed out in one of his other works, any of the “seventy tongues” when used as an instrument to disseminate the Torah and Mitzvot, is itself “elevated” thereby from its earthly domain into the sphere of holiness, while at the same time serving as a vehicle to draw the Torah and Mitzvot, from above downward, to those who read and understand this language.

“In the spirit of the above-mentioned remarks, the volume presented here—the first English translation of the *Tanya* (Part I) since its first appearance 165 years ago—is an event of considerable importance. It brings this basic work of Chabad philosophy and way of life to a wider range of Jews, to whom the original work presents a language problem or even a barrier. It is thus a further contribution to the “dissemination of the fountains” of Chassidus which were unlocked by Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, who envisaged Chassidus as a stream of “living waters,” growing deeper and wider, until it should reach every segment of the Jewish people and bring new inspiration and vitality into their daily lives.

“The translation of such a work as the *Tanya* presents a formidable task. As a matter of fact, several unsuccessful attempts have been made at various times in the past to translate the *Tanya* into one or another of the European languages. It is therefore to the lasting credit of Dr. Nissan Mindel that this task has been accomplished.

“Needless to say, translations are, at best, inadequate substitutes for the original. It is confidently hoped, however, that the present translation, provided as it is with an Introduction, Glossary, Notes and Indexes, will prove a very valuable aid to students of Chassidus in general, and

of Chabad in particular.”

It is important to note that in addition to the translation itself, there are many notes, references and explanations. All were reviewed and approved by the Rebbe, who edited them carefully, as is known. Some of these *hagahos* have recently been published²⁰.

The Translation of Tanya to Italian

In the 5720s another vista in the realm of *hafatzas hamaayanos* was opened with the translation of Tanya into Italian. The Rebbe viewed it as a triumph of Yiddishkeit over the challenges of Roman civilization.²¹ The following is a brief account of the process that led to it:

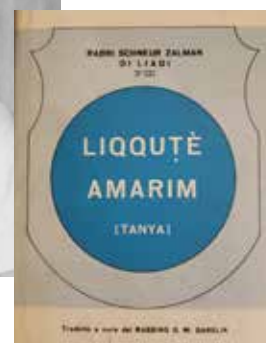
Reb Avrohom Sofer (Schreiber) was a descendent of the Chasam Sofer, a Talmid Chacham who had worked on publishing *kisvei yad* of many Rishonim, most notably the Meiri. Until World War II he resided in Italy, after which he emigrated to Eretz Yisroel. He maintained contact with his kin in his country of origin, and was concerned with the spiritual state of the Jews that remained there.

Rabbi Sofer developed a special relationship with the Rebbe, and praised the Rebbe as the greatest *boki* in the works of his illustrious ancestor, the Chasam Sofer. He became close friends with the Rebbe’s Shliach to Italy, Reb Gershon Mendel Garelik, who often hosted him when he visited the country.

Over the years, he merited to visit the Rebbe multiple times in *yechidus*, during which they would discuss the state of Italian Jewry.



RABBI LEVI GARELIK AS A YOUNG BOY.



THE FIRST PRINTING OF TANYA IN ITALIAN.

It is likely that during one of these meetings the topic of translating the Tanya into Italian was first broached, since Rabbi Sofer had experience in the realm of publishing. He suggested that the Rebbe hire a certain renowned writer by the name of Giorgio Voghera from Trieste, who was a traditional Jew, to execute the project.

The Rebbe appointed Rabbi Garelik to oversee the project. Rabbi Garelik began studying Tanya with Mr. Voghera.

The learning sessions were long and intense, as this was his first exposure to Chassidus.

Rabbi Garelik was in regular contact with the Rebbe's *mazkirus*, receiving detailed instructions on the project. Amongst other *hora'os*, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Garelik to show the professor the English translation of Tanya, in addition to studying with him in the original.

After many delays and much urging on the Rebbe's part,

REB AHARON LEVITT

Little is known about the life of Reb Aharon Levitt, editor of *הקריאה והקדושה*. His real name was Aharon Halevi Hirsh. He was born in Russia and later immigrated to the United States.

At a certain point, he encountered financial difficulties, which spurred him to change his name to Aharon Levitt (being a Levi). He sent a letter to the Frierdiker Rebbe describing his financial situation and his despair.

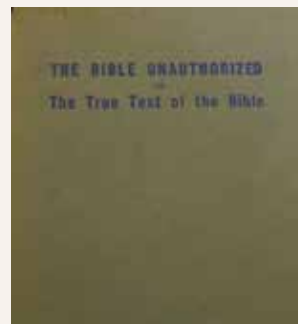
The Frierdiker Rebbe responded to him with a story, relating that in 5664 a chossid of his father, the Rebbe Rashab, experienced financial hardship. The chossid came to the Rebbe Rashab and poured out his heart, asking for assistance. The Rebbe Rashab told him:

"In Vienna there is a large wheel (the Vienna Ferris Wheel), with carts attached to it. Some of the carts go up, while others go down. Chazal tell us that the world is a spinning wheel (גלגל החומר). Naturally, someone who is at the top laughs and rejoices, but in truth he is merely a fool, since the wheel turns. Similarly, someone on the bottom who is crying is merely a fool, since that the wheel turns. Banish your sadness! Continue your business dealings and with Hashem's help the wheel will turn and return you to your previous state".¹⁷

Shortly afterwards, when the Frierdiker Rebbe founded *הקריאה והקדושה*, he appointed Reb Aharon as the editor. Although not associated with Chabad, he had prior experience with publishing Yiddish periodicals and would be able to attract a wide readership.

He wrote many articles under an assortment of pseudonyms, like *איש יהודי*, *בן ישראל* and *הרב מאיר* etc. In 5702 he authored a book called *The Bible Unauthorized*, which sought to show how the Torah foresaw various discoveries of modern science. It also contains much material on the Torah's outlook on Hashem, the neshama and our purpose in life.

In a letter, the Frierdiker Rebbe praises both the book and its author in glowing terms: "[Reb Aharon] came from Russia...all his life he studied *inyanei haskalah* in France, Germany and here [the US]...He was involved in writing a Sefer which is primarily a commentary on Sefer Bereishis with a lengthy introduction in English where he explains the concept of creation and Hashgacha Pratis. And when my son-in-law, Harav RaMa"m shlit" a Schneerson came [to America] I asked him to review the Sefer... Several months later my son-in-law HoraMa"m told me that it is written in an intelligent fashion... It will surely bring benefit to those who study it in their observance of *mitzvos maasiyos*."¹⁸



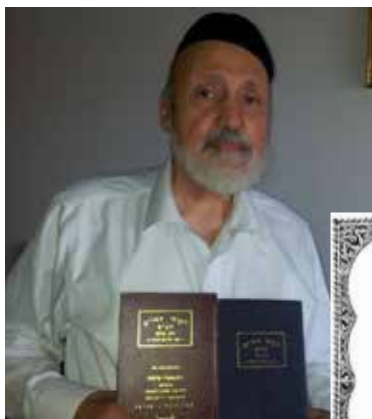
"THE BIBLE UNAUTHORIZED"

the project finally came to fruition before 19 Kislev 5728, when the translation of Likkutei Amarim was printed. Rebbetzin Garelik was coming to New York with her children to see the Rebbe, and they used the opportunity to personally deliver the Tanya, still unbound.

On the eve of 18 Kislev the Garelik family stood outside 770, waiting for the Rebbe to exit. When the Rebbe came out, the entire family recited *Shehechyanu*, as this was their first time seeing the Rebbe. The eldest son, Levi Yitzchok, who was selected to present the Tanya to the Rebbe, approached the Rebbe with trembling hands. As he handed the Rebbe the pages of the newly printed Tanya, the Rebbe smiled warmly and thanked him, and then proceeded to his car.

Several days later, on Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev, 21 Kislev, during the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke about the translation that had just been completed: “Being that this Shabbos comes in continuation to 19 Kislev, which is connected to Sefer HaTanya... It is appropriate to mention that just now—even before 19 Kislev—the Tanya was printed in Italian... It is known that through translating concepts of Torah into the 70 languages, those languages are refined and elevated... This is the reason why the Rabbeim worked to spread Chassidus in many languages, increasing *hafatzas hamayaanos*, through which Moshiach will come”.²² After the *sicha*, the Rebbe called up the young Levi Garelik, who had presented him with the Tanya, to receive a piece of cake.

The project continued for a period of time, with the complete Tanya published in Italian in 5739.



REB DOVID BUSKILA Z"l, WHO TRANSLATED THE TANYA INTO ARABIC, HOLDING TWO EDITIONS OF THE TANYA.

THE FIRST PRINTING OF THE TANYA IN ARABIC, PUBLISHED IN 5732. THE WORDS ON THE SHAAR BLATT ARE ARABIC IN HEBREW LETTERS.



The Translation of Tanya to Arabic

Morocco was one of the first countries spiritually “conquered” by the Rebbe’s Shluchim, and for many years was at the forefront of Chabad activities. Those active there on the Rebbe’s Shlichus merited to bring thousands of Jews to the light of Torah and Chassidus.

In 5732, Reb Leibel Raskin, the legendary Shliach to Casablanca, conceived of the idea to translate Tanya into Arabic, enabling the locals to learn Tanya independently, without limiting their access to infrequent shiurim.

Although it seemed far-fetched, he sent the idea to Rabbi Hodakov. The Rebbe approved, on condition that it would be an accurate and professional translation.

The translator who was chosen was Reb Dovid Buskila, supervisor of the Otzar HaTorah school network in Casablanca, who was beloved by the city’s Jews. He was fluent in both Lashon Hakodesh and Arabic, and seemed the best candidate for the job. For this purpose, Rabbi Raskin established a regular, in-depth shiur in Tanya with Reb Dovid. They worked through each line, plumbing the depths of the Alter Rebbe’s language.

In a remarkable *Sicha*²³, the Rebbe spoke about this translation, highlighting the uniqueness of translating Tanya specifically to this language: “In addition to the *hafatza* involved in translating Chassidus to other languages, this is also a way to conquer the 70 nations. It is implied in the Zohar that the nations of the world are split into two general categories: Eisav and Yishmael. The language of ‘Eisav’ being Russian and the like, and Arabic being the language of ‘Yishmael’. Until now no Chassidus was printed in Arabic... this was accomplished in recent weeks, when the Tanya was printed in Arabic—the language of ‘Yishmael!’”

Later, when Reb Dovid went into *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked him whether he knew the significance of his translation of Tanya to Arabic. The Rebbe immediately explained: “The important thing about the translation that you made is that it will break the *klipah* of Yishmael!”

The Tanya in Braille

In 5751, the Rebbe spoke about the fact that as we await the imminent coming of Moshiach, there was still one more front to which the teachings of Chassidus had not yet reached. “Chassidus has been disseminated to the furthest reaches,” the Rebbe said. “But Moshiach has not yet come.

Perhaps there was still one more area where Chassidus had yet to reach.”

The Rebbe continued that just a few days earlier, the first Tanya printed in Braille had arrived at 770. “Now, even people who cannot see, for the time being, can also learn Chassidus.”

The Rebbe said that whether or not this step was the last one needed to bring about the *geulah*, may Moshiach’s arrival be *teikef umiyad mamash*.²⁴

The Rebbe’s Guidelines for Translating Chassidus

Over the years, the Rebbe gave many directives to those involved in the translation of Chassidus, in addition to several *hora’os* in the *sichos*. The following is an overview of some of these instructions:

During the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Mattos-Massei 5748, the Rebbe requested that: “[Efforts should be made to] translate Chassidus in other languages, obviously in a precise translation, that the true meaning should not be changed, etc.”²⁵

The Rebbe also gave instructions to Reb Tuvia Blau in a letter from Kislev 5725: “The first volumes of Likkutei Sichos etc. should also be translated, but on condition that it not be a word-for-word translation...”

In 5720 the Rebbe received a translation of a *מכתב כללי* and the Rebbe commented on it: “[This is a] literal translation to the point that it alters the [intended] meaning [of the letter]!!”

Another directive of the Rebbe is that the translator of a *sicha* look up the references cited in the *sicha* before translating, presumably to ensure that he understands the *sicha* properly.

The Rambam on Translation

Many of these guidelines are rooted in the Rambam’s instructions concerning the translations of his own writings. Initially penned in Arabic, works such as the *Moreh Nevuchim*, *Shmonah Perakim*, *Igeres Techiyas Hameisim*, and others were translated by Shmuel ibn Tibbon from Provence, France. The Rambam corresponded with him, addressing questions on these works and providing guidance for his translation efforts.

The Rambam writes²⁶: “Whoever wishes to translate

from one language to another and to precisely translate word for word, in addition to maintaining the original order—will toil much and his translation will emerge unclear and mistake-ridden... It is not proper to do this. Rather, the translator must first understand the subject matter. Afterwards he should explain it... [Following this process] it is impossible that he will not change the order, translate one word with many words or many words with one, add and subtract words, until the matter is organized and well explained by the standards of the language to which he is translating”.

We can clearly see from the Rambam’s words that a literal, word-for-word translation of the original source will always be inaccurate. Therefore, a translation must convey the ideas clearly and coherently in the second language, while remaining fully faithful to the original meaning. **1**

1. Likkutei Sichos vol. 36 page 38–40.
2. Sefer Hasichos 5747 vol. 1 pg. 287.
3. The above paragraph is sourced in Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 1 pg. 802.
4. Likkutei Sichos vol. 29 pg. 283.
5. Toras Menachem vol. 54 pg. 241.
6. 80a.
7. Sichos Kodesh 5736 vol. 2 pg. 158-159.
8. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2 pg. 629 fn. 52.
9. Likkutei Sichos vol. 13 pg. 180.
10. Admorei Chabad V’Yahadus Germanyana pg. 145.
11. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2 pg. 629 fn. 54
12. Printed in Sefer Ha’Maamarim Kuntreisim vol. 1 pg. 1-30.
13. Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe vol. 16 pg. 240.
14. Ibid. pg. 241.
15. Admorei Chabad V’Yahadus Austria pg. 245-247.
16. For his remarkable life’s story, see “*Chossid and Man of the World*,” Derher Sivan 5778.
17. Igros Kodesh of the Friediker Rebbe vol. 5 pg. 117-118.
18. Ibid. vol. 9 pg. 5.
19. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayyatz vol. 13 pg. 454.
20. Teshura Block-Wenger 5776.
21. Igros Kodesh vol. 25 pg. 88.
22. Toras Menachem vol. 51 pg. 430.
23. Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 1 pg. 370-372.
24. Sefer Hasichos 5751 vol. 2 pg. 764.
25. Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 4 pg. 99.
26. Igros U’Teshuvos Ha’Rambam – Warsaw 5687.