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MAY WE MERIT

# Mugedike Maamarim!

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A CONVERSATION WITH  
RABBI CHAIM SHAUL BROOK

INTERVIEW BY:  
RABBI MENDY GREENBERG



מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות  
לכ"ק אדמו"ר בקשר עם יום הבהיר  
י"א ניסן מאה ועשרים ושתיים שנה

נדפס ע"י

הרה"ת ר' שלום דוב בער וזוגתו מרת חיה  
מושקא וילדיהם ברכה ליפשא, עליזה,  
שיינדל ומנחם מענדל שיחיו שוחאט

It was Simchas Torah חג־טו"ב. A heaving mass of people crushed around the 'shvil,' the narrow pathway leading from the Rebbe's *bimah* to the center of the shul.

The moments surrounding *hakafos* were known among Chassidim as an *eis ratzon*. People clamored for the opportunity to approach the Rebbe and request a special bracha, or even just to wish the Rebbe, "*Derleben iber a yohr*," that they should be *zoche* to experience the exalted *hakafos* with the Rebbe again next year.

*Bochurim* would usually hang back. Speaking directly to the Rebbe seemed to be the purview of older chassidim or *balebatim*; *bochurim* tended to stay in the background. But on this occasion, one *bochur* approached the Rebbe.

For several years, chassidim had been living with the '*kuntreisim*,' new *maamarim* released by the Rebbe for every *yoma d'pagra*. The *maamarim*, "*hanachos*" transcribed by Reb Yoel of *maamarim* from earlier years, would be carefully edited by the Rebbe and released for the special date. Chassidim around the world waited for the new *kuntreisim* and *koched* in them greatly. Hundreds of *bochurim* committed them to memory.

But suddenly, it had all come to a halt. Since Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe had not returned any of the *maamarim* that had been submitted.

To this *bochur*, it was unthinkable. As the Rebbe carefully reached the bottom of the staircase on the way to the first Hakafah, he approached.

"*M'zol zoche zein tzurik tzu di muggedike maamarim.*" May we once again merit that the Rebbe edit *maamarim*.

For a moment that seemed like an eternity, the Rebbe gazed at him. And then the Rebbe said "Amen."

The next *yoma d'pagra*—Chof Cheshvan—a *maamar* was released.



Over the last few years, *Derher* has produced articles that cover many aspects of the Rebbe's Torah; Reshimos (Tammuz 5775), Igros (Tammuz 5776), Farbrengens (Tammuz 5778), Likkutei Sichos (Tammuz & Elul 5777), Hayom Yom (Cheshvan 5776), the Rebbe's Haggadah (Nissan 5779), Rashi Sichos (Tishrei & Shevat 5775) and much more. One topic remained to be discussed: the Rebbe's *maamarim*.

In honor of the great and holy day of Yud-Aleph

Nissan, a day focused on enhancing and deepening our *hiskashrus* with the Rebbe, we present the first of a two-part series, discussing the Rebbe's *maamarim*.

The *maamarim* are central to the Rebbe's *nesius*; from the Alter Rebbe to our day, the *maamar* was the primary medium through which the Rebbe's Torah was transmitted to the chassidim.

A *maamar* is not just a formalized '*drasha*.' It is *Divrei Elokim Chaim*, the 'Words of the Living G-d'; when a Rebbe recites a *maamar*, the *Shechinah* is "*mida-beres mitoch grono*," (speaks through his voice) a direct transmission of *Elokus*. During a *maamar*, the chassidim would rise and the Rebbe would bind his hand with a handkerchief to 'bind' himself to *Olam Hazeih*.

To begin the story of the Rebbe's *maamarim*, we approached the *bochur* from that Simchas Torah night, Rabbi Chaim Shaul Brook.

Today, Rabbi Brook stands at the helm of Vaad Hanachos B'Lahak, which oversees the publication of much of the Rebbe's Torah. Over the past thirty-five years, Rabbi Brook has been responsible for the collection, preservation, and publication of the Rebbe's *sichos* and *maamarim* in hundreds of volumes.

Most relevant here is Rabbi Brook's personal involvement in the release of the *kuntreisim*—for which he approached the Rebbe that Simchas Torah.

The task of preparing *maamarim* for the Rebbe's *haga'ah* rested on the shoulders of the Rebbe's *chozer*, Reb Yoel Kahan *a"h*. It was also a much larger effort, however; a *maamar* needed to be selected, studied, rewritten, footnoted, edited, given to the Rebbe for *haga'ah*, typed again, published, and disseminated. The work needed to proceed at a quick pace, and the writers, editors, and publishers needed to work in concert. One of the individuals working closely with Reb Yoel to help each *kuntres* come to fruition was Reb Chaim Shaul.

As we began exploring the vast subject of the Rebbe's *maamarim* for this overview, we sat down for a wide-ranging conversation with Rabbi Brook. A second article will, *iy"H*, follow in an upcoming issue, taking a deeper look at the unique style and *tochen* of the Rebbe's *maamarim* themselves.

May we be *zoche* to to hear new *maamarim* from the Rebbe, "*Torah chadashah mei'iti teitze*," *b'karov mamosh*.

*A Chassidisher Derher*

# Basi L'gani

The story of the Rebbe's *maamarim*, of course, begins at the farbrengen of Yud Shevat 5711, when the Rebbe delivered the inaugural *maamar* Basi L'gani.<sup>1</sup>

In the early years, the Rebbe did not allow recordings of farbrengens, and for decades, the recording of that farbrengen was not made public. When it emerged in the late 5740s, it created quite a stir.

I wanted to play it for Reb Yoel and see his reaction, but he never seemed to agree. One day, after nudging him for a while, I just slipped the audio cassette into a player as he worked on a new *maamar* for *haga'ah*, and pressed play.

Hearing the Rebbe's voice from 40 years earlier, Reb Yoel's ears perked up. He stood up, began listening, and was hooked. When one side of the cassette came to an end, he told me immediately, "*drei iber*, turn it over." He listened to the entire *maamar*, from start to finish. It was transporting him forty years back. He commented that the speed and tone of the audio didn't properly capture the Rebbe's voice; it wasn't exactly as it had sounded then.<sup>2</sup>

One thing that we all immediately noticed from the

recording was the accuracy of the *hanacha*; it seems to be almost exactly word-for-word. After Reb Yoel listened to the recording, I asked him to explain: how is the transcript so perfect?

At first, Reb Yoel dismissed me. "We were younger, we had better heads," he said. But after a bit more nudging, he gave a taste of what happened after the Rebbe said that *maamar*.

"Right after the farbrengen," Reb Yoel said, "we reviewed the *maamar*. The next morning after Shacharis, we reviewed the *maamar* again. On the way to the yeshiva building at Bedford & Dean for breakfast, we reviewed the *maamar*. Every waking moment until Shabbos was occupied with reviewing the *maamar*. We must have repeated it twenty times."

Reb Yoel would often share another story from that farbrengen.

After the Rebbe left, the crowd was dancing with tremendous enthusiasm. From his spot among the *bochurim*, Reb Yoel looked to see what Reb Elya Simpson was doing. Reb Elya was one of the elder Temimim who had seen 'Lubavitch of old'; he had even served as a *chozer* for the Rebbe Rashab. What was his reaction to the *maamar*? Reb Yoel noticed that he too, was springing up and down, dancing like a young man. This made a big impact on him; for the *bochurim* to dance was natural, but seeing the effect the *maamar*



RABBI CHAIM SHAUL BROOK, AS A BOCHUR, RECEIVES LEKACH FROM THE REBBE ON 6 TISHREI 5751.

\* 5711-1950, 5740s-1980s, 5751-1990

had on the elder chassidim made a big impression. It was clear that he was very moved, seeing that there was a hemshech to the Rebbeim, and that Lubavitch would continue to thrive.

## Basi L'gani on the Table

The night before Yud Shevat, an interesting story took place. Late that evening, the Rebbe called Reb Moshe Groner to his home; a Jew was in the hospital, and the Rebbe wanted Reb Moshe to visit him and ensure that he was receiving the medical care he needed.

When the Rebbe stepped out of the room to take a phone call, Reb Moshe glanced around the dining room and noticed many *sifrei Chassidus*—from all the Rebbeim—open on the table, along with notes written by the Rebbe. They were open to all the sources the Rebbe would cite the next evening, in the *maamar Basi L'gani*.

When I first heard that story from Reb Moshe Groner, it made quite an impression on me, and I ran to share it with Reb Yoel. He confirmed the story; “Yes, I heard it from Reb Moshe that very night, in 5711.” Of course, they didn’t yet know that these would be the sources for the *maamar*.

The notes that he saw were never found, but we do have numerous similar notes from other *Basi L'gani maamarim*, listing the sources the Rebbe would quote in the *maamar*. Many of these are published in ‘Toras Menachem–Basi L'gani.’ On occasion, the Rebbe would send the notes to Reb Yoel—sometimes even before the *maamar* was said.

In one unique instance, Rabbi Groner writes in his diary that he watched the Rebbe write out one such *reshimah*—but later, the Rebbe gave him an entirely different one to give to Reb Yoel. The Rebbe had apparently written one for Reb Yoel, and another to keep for himself.

## The Rebbe's Kuntreisim Series

Reb Yoel had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe in honor of his birthday the week after Yud Shevat, and the Rebbe asked him about the *hanachah* of the *maamar*

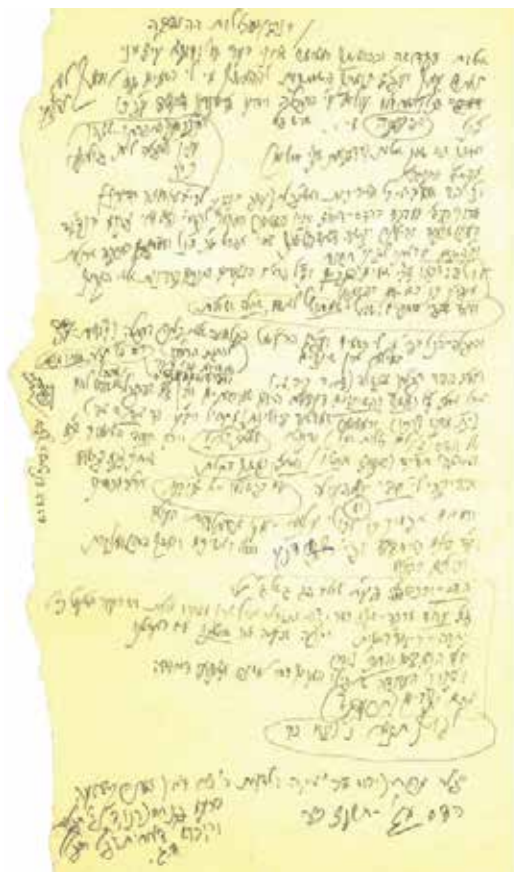
*Basi L'gani*. Reb Yoel was puzzled; he had been expecting a *ksav* from the Rebbe. All the Rebbeim with the exception of the Alter Rebbe had written their own *maamarim*, and there was no reason to assume the Rebbe would be different.

“And what about the *maamar* from Shabbos (Hayosheves B'Ganim)?” Reb Yoel said that the kabbalistic parts were difficult to understand, and it was difficult to hear (the Rebbe cried during the *maamar*).

With a smile, the Rebbe asked him, “*Vos, tzu fill mashke genumen*, did you say too much l'chaim?”

In the end, the Rebbe said that Reb Yoel should compose *hanachos*, “and we’ll see.”

Reb Yoel sent in *hanachos*, but didn’t hear anything back for three months. Then, late on Yud Aleph Nissan afternoon, after the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, Rabbi Hodakov called Reb Yoel and gave him the Rebbe’s edits. That morning, the Rebbe had brought the pages to the Ohel and read the entire *maamar* there, word-for-word. Only then, did the Rebbe approve it for publication.



THE REBBE LISTS FOR REB YOEL THE SOURCES QUOTED IN THE MAAMER OF BASI L'GANI 5729.

VAAD HANACHOS BLAHAK

The *maamar* also came with a request. “If possible,” Rabbi Hodakov said in the Rebbe’s name, “Please have it ready for Yud Gimmel Nissan.” This seemed like an impossible task, but somehow, they made it happen; by Mincha time on Yud Gimmel Nissan, the *maamar* was ready for distribution. In those days, that was considered miraculous.

This was the first time the Rebbe’s name was published with the title of “*Admor*,” on an official *shaar blatt* of Kehos. The rush to print is evident in the somewhat sloppy front page; it is clearly a copy of a *kuntres* of the Frierdiker Rebbe, with the Rebbe’s name somehow pasted on top of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s name, in a different font.

It is also clear from the front page that chassidim assumed the Rebbe would continue editing every *maamar* (by that time, the Rebbe had already delivered four new *maamarim*): like the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *kuntreisim*, this *kuntres* was numbered; the letter Alef is stamped on the top left-hand corner, indicating that more similar *kuntreisim* were to come. In the end, only *Hayosheves Baganim* followed in the series; Reb Yoel continued writing *hanachos*, but the Rebbe did not edit them. The next *mugedike* maamar was *Basi Lgani* 5712. The next year, in 5713, even *Basi Lgani* was not edited by the Rebbe.

The result was that the Rebbe’s Torah, for the most part, went unpublished. The Rebbe farbrenged every Shabbos Mevorchim and *Yoma D’Pagra*, and there was enough to fill volumes upon volumes, but it was unthinkable to publish the Rebbe’s Torah without his personal *haga’ah*, as the Frierdiker Rebbe had done for his own *sichos* and *maamarim*.

## The Dollars Line At Farbrengens

The following story took place sometime later, in early 5714. I heard it from Reb Yoel, but he did not remember the exact date.

In those days, it was very common to approach the Rebbe at farbrengens. In fact, it was a bit out of control; “You know how the dollars line looks,” Reb Yoel said, “that’s how the farbrengens looked during the niggunim—there was a line of people waiting to approach the Rebbe; one wanted a bracha for a birthday, another for a simcha, another for an ill person, and so on. As each person would approach, the Rebbe would say ‘nu?’

and the person would make his request.”

At this farbrengen, Reb Moshe Dubinsky joined the line. When his turn came, the Rebbe said “nu?” to which he responded, “*Der maamar*.” He didn’t need to say another word; the Rebbe – and the crowd – understood exactly what he wanted, that the Rebbe should be *magiah maamarim*, at the very least, the *Basi Lgani maamar* of that year.

“*In di ershte drei bist du klar*, are you well-versed in the first three *maamarim*?” the Rebbe asked him.

“Yes,” he responded.

The Rebbe didn’t respond, and Reb Moshe moved on.

On Rosh Chodesh Shevat that year, the Rebbe suddenly gave out *Basi Lgani* from the year before. When it arrived from the printer, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Hodakov to give a copy to Reb Moshe Dubinsky, “because he was among those who were *mishtadel* that the *maamar* should be *mugeh*.”

For me, this story is very important. Most people on the line at the Rebbe’s farbrengens were there for their personal needs. One chossid, however, was there with a request for something that was of no personal benefit for him; he simply wanted the *maamar*; like the Alter Rebbe would say, “*ich vil mer nit az dich alein*.” This chossid made an impact.



THE FIRST TWO  
MAAMORIM OF THE  
REBBE AS THEY WERE  
PRINTED IN KUNTREISIM  
WITH THE NUMBERS  
א, ב AT THE TOP.

VAAD HANACHOS BLAHAK

We later discovered that the Rebbe had begun transcribing some *maamarim*: a synopsis of *Ki Sisa 5711* and the beginning of *Vekibel Hayehudim 5711*, but neither were ever completed.<sup>3</sup> There are instances where the Rebbe wrote out entire *maamarim* in shorthand—like *Basi L'gani 5713, 5717, 5720, and 5735*—but those were clearly not for public consumption.

There are several letters in *Igros* that indicate that the Rebbe wanted very much to be *magiah* more of his Torah, but it was simply not possible due to the incredible demands on the Rebbe's time.<sup>4</sup> The Rebbe once told Reb Avraham Pariz, "A Yid's heart is being cut open, his blood is being spilled, and he asks for a bracha—and I should be occupied with publishing Chassidus?"<sup>5</sup>

## Reb Moshe's Binders

Despite the fact that the *maamarim* and sichos were not being edited and released on a regular basis, they were being carefully compiled. Each year, Reb Moshe Groner would collect everything that Reb Yoel had typed, and present it to the Rebbe in a binder.

The Rebbe was very attentive to this collection. When *maamarim* were missing, the Rebbe would ask Reb Moshe to arrange for Reb Yoel to write a *hanachah*,

without telling him that it was a directive from the Rebbe.

The Rebbe would also write comments on the *maamarim*, such as what the *maamarim* were based on—in those years, usually *maamarim* from the Rebbe Rashab, many of which were not yet in print. Those comments appear in the footnotes of *Toras Menachem* in bold type. There were occasionally other comments as well. When *Lecha Dodi 5714* was edited by the Rebbe and published in 5739, the Rebbe wrote—in somewhat of a '*himmeldike*' comment—that his own *maamar* was, "*kanireh*, seemingly," based on the *maamar* from תרפ"ט.<sup>6</sup>

These binders—which Reb Moshe prepared through 5720—were the basis for all the *Sifrei Maamarim* we began to publish in the late 5740s.

Of course, the editing process included several more steps; the editors would review available recordings, learn the *maamar* the Rebbe had referenced, add footnotes, and polish the language (Reb Yoel would sometimes write three pages without a single paragraph break). They would also correct *pessukim* and *maamarei chazal* which Reb Yoel would record as the Rebbe had said them [the Rebbe would usually slightly change the wording of each posuk, because *Torah Shebiksav* is meant to be read from within a sefer—ed.]. Nonetheless, the final version was, by and large, the product of Reb Moshe's binders.



AT THE KABBOLAS PONIM OF HIS SON, ON 3 ELUL 5713, REB MOSHE DUBINSKY IS SEEN STANDING BETWEEN THE REBBE AND THE CHOSSON.

# The Maamar—A Distraction?

Most are familiar with the special setting in which the Rebbe would say a *maamar*. Thousands of chassidim sing a soul-stirring niggun and rise to their feet. The Rebbe begins the *dibbur hamaschil* with a special tune.

That's not what happened during the first year of the *nesius*. That year, the Rebbe would open with a short *sicha*—usually about the *maamar* of the previous Rabbeim upon which this *maamar* would be based—and then transition directly into the *maamar*. On Yud Shevat 5712, this *seder* changed for the first time; the Rebbe asked for a niggun to be sung, and then began the *maamar* directly.

In the early years, the *maamar* would be delivered at the farbrengens's start. The Rebbe once explained that before delivering the *maamar*, it was difficult to focus on the farbrengen; the Rebbe called it a “*machshavah zarah*” of sorts. Unlike *sichos*, in which the Rebbe was not necessarily *medayek* in every word, the *maamar* “is not only the *arum* of Torah, but Torah itself,” and he is *medayek* “not only in the general *tochen* but in every

detail and every word.”<sup>7</sup> Delaying the *maamar* would therefore create an interference with the farbrengen.

The Rebbe gave this explanation in 5713, and over the years, the *seder* changed; the *maamar* was generally in the middle of the farbrengen, sometimes even at its end. Nonetheless, vestiges of this concept remained. For many years, it was considered inappropriate to approach the Rebbe at the farbrengen until after the *maamar*; after the *maamar*, the Rebbe would seem more at ease. This ‘rule’ was still in effect with regard to Shabbos farbrengens when I arrived to learn in 770 in late 5745.

## The First Maamar K'Ein Sicha

Anyone who studies the Rebbe's farbrengens will notice that often, instead of the regular *maamar*, the Rebbe said a *maamar* “*kein sicha*”—the content of a *maamar*, delivered in the form of a *sicha*.

This began in an interesting way. Shabbos Zos Chanukah 5713 was not Shabbos Mevorchim, and the Rebbe didn't follow the normal ‘*seder*.’ Instead, the farbrengen was long, and very *avodadik*. The discussion centered around a *maamar* of the Tzemach Tzedek. At the beginning of the *sicha*, the Rebbe repeated a segment of the *maamar* and elaborated on it, then repeated another *ois* of the *maamar* and elaborated further, and so on.

Before the Rebbe began the first segment, he noted that this was a *maamar*, but that he would say it in a way that “will be more comfortable for you, and you won't need to stand up.” That was, in essence, the first *maamar kein sicha*.

The second such *maamar* was *Lecha Dodi* 5714, during the surprise Farbrengen in honor of the Rebbe's 25th wedding anniversary on Yud Daled Kislev. Several more followed over the next few years. The pattern soon became clear. Whenever the Rebbe held a farbrengen on an unusual date which wasn't a Shabbos Mevorchim or major *Yoma D'Pagra*, the Rebbe would deliver the *maamar kein sicha*.

This became far more common in the early 5720s, and in 5725, when the Rebbe began holding a Farbrengen every week, this became the normal *seder*. Between the two Rashi *sichos*, the Rebbe would deliver a *maamar kein sicha*. Regular *maamarim* were reserved for Shabbos Mevorchim and special dates. The next



THE REBBE'S TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MAAMAR "KI SISA" 5711.



year, the *maamar kein sicha* became common on Shabbos Mevorchim as well, and regular *maamarim* were delivered only on special occasions. This became the normal *sefer* for the next twenty years, until the Rebbe stopped saying regular *maamarim* altogether after Tishrei 5746.

I don't purport to understand the Rebbe's *ruchnius-diker* matters, but on numerous occasions the Rebbe expressed his disappointment about Chassidim's lack of interest in *maamarim*.<sup>8</sup> Later, when I was involved in the *kuntreisim*, we did our best to make sure that the *maamarim* were studied and memorized by as many *bochurim* as possible.

Interestingly, the Rebbe said regular *maamarim* during the Motzei Shabbos farbrengens that were held in the years after the heart-attack. I once noticed that there were only two full years of regular *maamarim*—5712, before the Rebbe began saying *maamarim kein sicha*, and 5739, when most farbrengens were held on Motzei Shabbos.

## Who Defines What a Maamar Is?

After the Rebbe had a heart attack, the Rebbe said a 22-minute *sicha* from his room on Motzei Yom Tov, and an even longer one on Motzei Shabbos Bereishis. The Rebbe was *magiah* those sichos, and during the process, the Rebbe instructed that something be added to “the *maamar*.” Reb Yoel suddenly realized what he thought was a short segment of Chassidus in the middle of the *sicha* was actually a *maamar*!

Normally, a *maamar kein sicha* was easy to identify. The Rebbe would begin with a *posuk*, and continue with an explanation of chassidus that sounded like those in a *maamar*. I have many *yomanim* from the 5720s which note that the Rebbe also held a handkerchief during the *maamar kein sicha*; that was definitely the case in my years in 770. There was another identifying factor. The Rebbe's brother-in-law Rashag would stand up, whenever he would hear the Rebbe start a *dibur hamaschil*.

Sometimes the distinction was less clear; like the *sichos* from the Rebbe's room, and the Shabbosim in 5725 where the Rebbe seemed to continue the Rashi *sicha*, only to transition into speaking a few words about the week's Likkutei Torah at the end. When



AN EXCERPT FROM THE WEEKLY PUBLICATION “BAIS CHAYENU” WITH A YOMAN REPORTING ON WHAT CHASSIDIM THOUGHT WAS A NEW ‘MAAMAR K'EIN SICHAS’ SAID BY THE REBBE.



THE REBBE RECITES THE SICHAS ON THE NIGHT OF 15 SHEVAT 5752.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Shagalov and Rabbi Seligson compiled a *mafteach* with all the Rebbe's *sichos* and *maamarim*, they asked what to do about those *sichos*, and the Rebbe wrote "*b'chol safek, lihachmir*"—when ever in doubt about whether something is a *sicha* or *maamar*, designate it as a *maamar*.

In the early years, these were often written down in the *hanachos* as *sichos*. In the *farbrengens* of early 5725, which the Rebbe personally edited,<sup>9</sup> the *maamarim* are all included as *sichos*. But as time progressed, it became clear that the Rebbe regarded them as *maamarim*. Even in 5725, as they were being published as *sichos*, the *manichim* would often refer to those sections as *maamarim* in their correspondence with the Rebbe.

These matters were overlooked in the early years for the simple reason that the Rebbe blessed us with a never-ending stream of new *sichos* and *maamarim*, and the *manichim* could barely keep up; there simply wasn't enough time to deliberate about what was a *sicha* and what was a *maamar*.

Now, when we are able to pay proper attention to every *sicha* and *maamar*, we make sure to publish them correctly. That's why, in recent years, people have noticed that *sichos* are suddenly being released as *maamarim*; some examples are the *sicha* of "*viyeird miyam ad yam*" from Yud Beis Tammuz 5733, the first *sicha* of Rosh Chodesh Elul 5742, and others.

I once found a letter in Igros that was very illuminating. On Shabbos Hachodesh 5717, the Rebbe said a regular *maamar* and also a *sicha* which began with the same *possuk*. In a letter to Rabbi Yolles that week, the Rebbe writes, "as it was explained in the *maamar* during the *farbrengen* yesterday..."—and it's clearly referring to the [*maamar kein*] *sicha*!<sup>10</sup> Two *maamarim* during a single *farbrengen* is usually considered extraordinary, but if you factor in the *maamar kein sicha*, it actually becomes more commonplace.

Reb Sholom Charitonov once argued to me that even the *biurim* on the Rebbe's *kapitel* from the *farbrengens* of Nissan 5732 should have been published as *maamarim*. Interestingly, there were some instances when the opposite took place. On Motzei Chamisha Asar B'Shevat 5752, the Rebbe said an entire *biur* in chassidus regarding the *shiva minim* with his eyes closed, and everyone considered it a *maamar*, but the Rebbe wrote that it should be printed as a *sicha*.

## The Big Shock

On Yud Tes Kislev 5746, a *maamar* was expected as usual, but the *farbrengen* went on and on without it; at the very end, the Rebbe seemed to 'sneak in' a short *maamar kein sicha* in just a few short minutes.

No *maamar* on Yud Tes Kislev was quite a shock. When Yud Shevat came around, everyone was convinced that there would be a *maamar* as usual; the alternative was unthinkable. But, as we know, *lo machshivosai machshivoiseichem*. The Rebbe began the fifth *sicha* with the words, "*Oif Basi Ligani Achosi Kallah...*"

There were no more *maamarim* until the night of Bedikas Chametz 5749. The Rebbe turned around to say a *sicha*, but unbeknownst to us, he had wrapped his hand in a handkerchief under his siddur. Today, it's very visible on the video, but I was there, and we didn't notice anything. Suddenly, the Rebbe turned to Rabbi Groner and said, "*Der niggun*." He immediately began singing the *maamar niggun*.

It was such a shock in Crown Heights that they set off the alarm that was usually reserved for Erev Shabbos.

In those days, the Rebbe had begun saying *sichos* on special evenings, and many people had phone lines to WLCC that they would call to stay informed. When the Rebbe would leave the Ohel, a message would be posted (the bochorim driving behind the Rebbe had a beeper button they would push as the Rebbe's car drove out of the cemetery). Another message would go out when the Rebbe reached Atlantic Avenue and Eastern Parkway, another when the Rebbe arrived, and another when Mincha began. But this time, they didn't rely on people calling; they set off the alarm in the entire *shchunah* to alert people to call in.

One more special *maamar* like this took place on the night of Erev Shavuos. That was the last time the Rebbe said a *maamar* with the special *niggun*.

## The Big Argument

I once found a bulletin from Tzach that was posted before Yud Alef Nissan 5717, asking chassidim to unite in an "*ichud ruchni*" in honor of Yud Alef Nissan by learning "all five of the Rebbe's *maamarim*" which were *mugah*: The first three Basi L'ganis, Hayosheves Biganim 5711, and Mayim Rabim 5717. The Rebbe wrote on it,

“*re'eh Tanya reish Perek Hei.*” The word *ichud* means a regular unity, but the Rebbe said that it was far more—in the words of the Alter Rebbe, “הוא יחוד נפלא שאין יחוד, כמוהו ולא כערכו נמצא כלל בגשמיות להיות לאחדים ומיוחדים ממש מכל צד ופנה, a wondrous, singular union, which has no parallel anywhere in the material world—to become completely one and unified from every side and angle.”

In those days, there were only five *mugedike maamarim*, and for the next thirty years, not much changed. On unique occasions, the Rebbe would edit *maamarim*. Sometimes, these were *maamarim* which were associated in a *ruchniusdiker* way with important world events, like *Mayim Rabim 5717* during the Sinai Campaign, or *maamarim* the Rebbe said on special occasions, such as the surprise *farbrengens* that sometimes took place in the 5730s. Usually, this came without prior knowledge; the Rebbe would simply edit the *hanachah* that had been submitted, and send it out to be published. On occasion, however, Reb Yoel would prepare a special *maamar* for *hagaha* as well.

In 5746, after five years with not a single *mugedike maamar*, we got a surprise, *m'lemaalah*. A few hours after Shabbos *Mevorchim Kislev* had ended, the Rebbe took the draft of that week's *maamar*—a rough version that would circulate in 770 before the formal *hanachah* was released—and was *magiah* the entire thing. Afterwards, as was common in those years, the Rebbe edited it a second time. There are question marks which remain in the *maamar* from the Rebbe's first *haga'ah*—once it was *mugeh*, nothing was added or removed.<sup>11</sup> There was literally dancing in 770 when it happened; every single *bochur* knew that *maamar* by heart.

Later that year, shortly before *Shavuos*, *Beis Rivkah* held a *Hachnosas Sefer Torah* for one of the *Sifrei Torah Haklolim*. In the hope that the Rebbe would edit a *maamar* in its honor, Reb Sholom Charitonov prepared the *hanachah* of *Lehavin Inyan Kesivas Sefer Torah*, which the Rebbe had said at the *siyum* of the *Moshiach Sefer Torah*. Shortly afterward, the *maamar* was returned, *mugah* from the Rebbe.

That wasn't it. The Rebbe had also torn off the introduction, which said that it was in honor of the *Hachnosas Sefer Torah*, and instead wrote, *Likras Chag HaShavuos*.

Why did the Rebbe change the introduction?

Some theorized that the Rebbe wanted to avoid favoring one *mosad* over others. Others argued that the Rebbe was indicating his desire to publish *maamarim* for *Yomim Tovim*, as the *Frieddiker Rebbe* had done in his later years.

Reb Yoel was opposed to the latter approach. “The *Frieddiker Rebbe's Chassidim* were spread throughout the world, so he sent *kuntreisim*. In his later years, the *kuntreisim* were because he was no longer saying *maamarim* at all. But the Rebbe is saying *maamarim* [*k'ein sicha*] almost every Shabbos!”

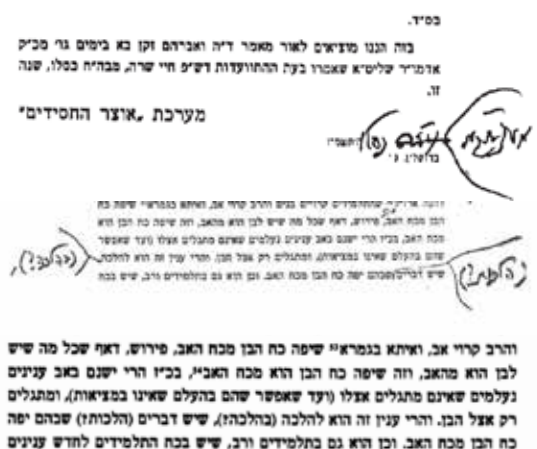
Rabbi Hirshel Notik argued that they should at least try and submit a *maamar* for the next *yoma d'pagra*.

Reb Hirshel's main role was typist of the Rebbe's *farbrengens*; he would—and still does—prepare the rough transcript of the Rebbe's words which were later edited into a proper *hanacha*. He would work closely with Reb Yoel, and he happened to have a *Yud Beis Tammuz maamar* ready from ten years earlier when the Rebbe had requested that the three *maamarim* of *Yud Beis Tammuz 5736* be integrated into one *maamar* for *haga'ah*. At the time, the work was submitted to the Rebbe very late and the *haga'ah* didn't happen. Now, he decided to submit it to the Rebbe again.

When the *maamar* was released in time for Shabbos *Yud Beis Tammuz*, it generated incredible excitement. At the time, I was in *Gan Yisroel Detroit*, and we immediately drove the forty-five minutes from *Kalkaska* to a *Fedex* store in *Traverse City* which had the newest technology, a fax machine, to receive the *maamar*.

When the Rebbe again was *magiah* a *maamar* before *Rosh Hashanah*, we understood that this would be a new *seder*.

These *maamarim* were not plain *hanachos*. When



THE REBBE CROSSED OUT THE DATE 'EREV ROSH CHODESH KISLEV' AND INSTEAD WROTE IN 'MOTZEI SHABBOS MEVORCHIM KISLEV', WHICH WAS THE TIME HE WAS MAGIHA THIS MAAMAR. WHILE EDITING, THE REBBE MADE SEVERAL QUESTION MARKS DUE TO THE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES OF WRITING CERTAIN WORDS. THE QUESTION MARKS STILL REMAIN IN THE FINAL PRINTED VERSION.

Reb Yoel prepared a *hanachah* for the Rebbe's editing, he wasn't just typing words that the Rebbe had said during a *maamar* in previous years. The Rebbe made it very clear that *sichos* and *maamarim* needed to be carefully composed and reworked. If the Rebbe wrote on a *hanachah* that it was "literally word-for-word," that was not a compliment.

When the Rebbe said a *maamar*, sometimes he would leave something unsaid, or elaborate more on one concept than another. When Reb Yoel prepared it for the Rebbe's *haga'ah*, he was to incorporate ideas from other *maamarim*, and write it in a more thorough fashion. When this wasn't properly done, the Rebbe would note it in his edits.

## When I Disappeared from 770

The new *sefer* began about one year after I arrived to learn in 770. At the time, I was deeply involved in the project to publish *Sichos Kodesh*, spearheaded by Rabbi Gershon Eichorn and Rabbi Yoske Greenberg. I did everything that it entailed—printing, editing, schlepping boxes to the binder in Boro Park—whatever was necessary, I did it.

When the project ended, we were left with a significant archive of *maamarim*, so we decided to publish a *Sefer Maamarim* for the first time. Rabbi Eichorn was still involved, but since he was still dealing with debts from *Sichos Kodesh*, *Sefer Maamarim* became my financial responsibility.



THE FIRST TWO VOLUMES OF THE SET OF THE REBBE'S MAAMARIM THAT WERE PRINTED BY 'VAAD KISVEI KODESH'. THIS WAS THE FIRST PROJECT OF ITS KIND TO PUBLISH ALL OF THE REBBE'S MAAMARIM FROM 5711 IN A NEAT FORMAT WITH SOURCES.

To publish the first three volumes, I borrowed seventy thousand dollars. I laugh about it now; I was a *bochur* without a penny to my name, and somehow, we accomplished amazing things. In the middle of 5748, we rented a basement on Montgomery Street, purchased two computers and a printer, brought in all the necessary *seforim*, created a comprehensive archive of all the Rebbe's *maamarim*, and "Vaad Kisvei Kodesh" was born.

It was a big secret. There were all sorts of *vaadim* and *manichim* who claimed the rights to print the Rebbe's Torah, and many thought that it was inappropriate for *bochurim* to take on such a responsibility, so we made sure that nobody knew about it. Only Rabbis Gershon Eichorn, Naftali and Moshe Marinovsky, Arik Raskin, Yisroel Shimon Kalmenson, Dovid Olidort, and a few others knew about the project.

My friends noticed that I had suddenly disappeared. In the merit of another job—being one of the *shomrim* near the Rebbe's room every Friday night in 770—I was allowed access to all the *tefillos* in the Rebbe's home, and the rest of my day was spent in our basement. I wasn't seen in 770 from Shabbos to Shabbos. I told one of my best friends that I had taken a job in my brother's business in Manhattan, but that lie only lasted until he was on a *Mivtzoim Tank* in Manhattan, and knocked on my brother's door looking for me. The secret continued until the first *seforim* arrived in Tishrei 5749, and for the first time, we had a real *sefer* of the Rebbe's *maamarim*.

Today, *bochurim* ask how much they will get paid per hour, but that's not how it worked in our day. The *bochurim* worked for the cause, and felt extremely privileged to be involved in publishing the Rebbe's Torah. I didn't make a cent; when I needed money for basic expenses, I would shnorr ten dollars from my married brother to buy some food and so on. This was totally normal and was the case for the seven years of my involvement in the Rebbe's Torah as a *bochur*.

## Reb Yoel in Our Apartment

Reb Yoel knew what we were doing, and once visited to research some *maamarim*. After spending some time in the basement, he suddenly realized he was in Gan Eden! Until then, he was working on the *maamarim* in random locations, and Reb Hirshel Notik would assist him, but he was a *yungerman* who also needed



THESE CANDID PHOTOS SHOW RABBI CHAIM SHAUL BROOK ASSISTING REB YOEL AS HE TRANSCRIBES THE REBBE'S MAAMORIM AND PREPARES THEM FOR THE REBBE'S HAGAHA. CIRCA 5751.

to earn a living. Here he had a ready desk, seforim, computer, and all the Rebbe's *maamarim*—and a group of bochorim, with all the time in the world, excited to help him. What more could he have asked for?

We became his team. Our goal was to give him everything he could possibly need to prepare another *maamar*. We would type his handwritten papers, find *mekoros* for him and help him prepare footnotes. We would bring food for him to eat, cigarettes to smoke (he stopped smoking later in life), and anything else necessary. On occasion, he would sleep in our basement as well.

We knew that the Rebbe was willing to be *magiah maamarim*, but if it were all left to Reb Yoel, he wouldn't be able to keep up the pace; in earlier years, there were instances when the Rebbe was willing to be *magiah* and the *hanachos* were simply not ready in time. We were determined to make sure that wouldn't happen.

When it was time to prepare a *maamar*, we would lay out all the *maamarim* from that date. After several hours of deliberation, he would choose four or five. Then he would spend an entire night learning the *maamarim*, writing notes, and deciding which to work on.

Reb Yoel was a unique personality. Most people need a break after concentrating for an hour, but he was the opposite—he would lose his train of thought if he took a break. As a result, he would sometimes work on a *maamar* for twenty, thirty or even forty hours straight; we would take turns going to sleep, but he would stay at it for as long as he was physically able.

In general, sometimes he lived in what seemed to be a bit of a different world, and we would try to bring him back to earth. A *maamar* could take somewhere

between thirty and sixty hours. Sometimes, after many hours of work, he would say, "I'll come back in the morning"; 'Morning' is a very vague time-frame, so I would call his home and knock on his door and make sure to bring him back as quickly as possible. We never let up, but he appreciated us all the same; he knew that we only had good intentions and that, as a result, he was able to work at a far faster pace than before.

After the *maamar* was ready with the Rebbe's *hagahos*, we would take the papers to Empire Press and make sure it was typed and prepared for publication as quickly as possible. When it was finished, we would take the galleys and bring them to Reb Yoel's home to proofread. When it was published, we would fax it to all the yeshivos and make sure that *bochorim* reported on who and how many *bochorim* learned it *baal peh*, so we could bring the Rebbe *nachas ruach*. It was common to bring a report of two, three, or even four hundred bochorim who had learned it by heart.

Between the new *kuntreisim* and the *Sifrei Maamarim*, our entire lives were consumed with the *maamarim*.

## To Pick a Date

In Nissan of 5747, I happened to be standing in the *Mazkirus* office when Rabbi Groner came running in excitedly; "the Rebbe named the *kuntres* 'Kuntres Yud Aleph Nissan'!"

This wasn't something to be taken lightly. When the *kuntreisim* began, they were prepared only for dates on which the Frierdiker Rebbe had released *kuntreisim*. Chassidim knew that the Rebbe was often wary of *chiddushim*, and preferred to do things as they were

done in previous years. Using the Friediker Rebbe's dates was, therefore, a good basis. Now, however, they had asked the Rebbe whether to call the next *maamar* Kuntres Chag HaPesach or Kuntres Yud Aleph Nissan, and the Rebbe chose "Yud Aleph Nissan."

A new date was a minor cause for excitement. In 5750, the Shabbos Chazon *maamar* was very delayed, so we included an option in the *pesach dovor* that it be published for Shabbos Nachamu instead. When the Rebbe returned the *hagahos*, he indicated that we should determine the date. Reb Yoel immediately chose Shabbos Nachamu—because that was a new date, which would give us the ability to offer that date next year.

One example of how the Rebbe focused on this matter took place before Chof Beis Shevat 5751, when we submitted a *hadran* and a *maamar* for the Rebbe's *haga'ah*. The Rebbe returned it with a question: "*Hakuntres deshtaked?*" The Rebbe wanted to see the *kuntres* of the year before, to see whether we had similarly released both a *hadran* and a *maamar*.

I ran home, where I had a hole-punch binder with all the *kuntreisim*, and brought the last year's *kuntres* to Mazkirus. The next day, the Rebbe returned the *maamar* with his edits, crossed out the line about the previous year's *kuntres*, and returned my hole-punched *kuntres* as well.

## The Last Ten Maamarim

Throughout the years of the *kuntreisim*, there were several periods when the Rebbe didn't return the *maamarim*, such as between Chanukah and Yud Alef Nissan 5747, and Cheshvan through Teves 5749. Some individual *maamarim* were skipped as well, perhaps because the Rebbe didn't have time to be *magiah* them. But this general *seder* continued uninterrupted until suddenly, on Chai Elul 5751, the Rebbe wasn't *magiah* the *maamar*.

There was a *kuntres* on Rosh Hashanah, but again, nothing for Shabbos Shuvah, Sukkos, or Simchas Torah. On Hoshanah Rabbah night, Rabbi Groner called me in and gave over a message from the Rebbe: "*M'hot upgeredt m'vet mer nish magiah zein*. It was agreed that there won't be any more *haga'ah*...." I asked him what the Rebbe meant; I recalled no such previous message. "These were the Rebbe's exact words," he replied.

I was shocked to my core. I decided that I needed



THE REBBE CHOOSES THE TITLE "KUNTRES YUD ALEPH NISSAN" FOR THE MAAMAR.

to do something. So, at Hakafof the next evening, as the Rebbe came down the stairs, I gathered the courage (after a little bit of l'chaim) to ask the Rebbe for a bracha, "*M'zol zoche zein tzurik tzu di muggedike maamarim*." The Rebbe looked at me for a moment, and then said, "Amen." The next *yoma d'pagra*—Chof Cheshvan—a *maamar* was released.

In the months between Simchas Torah and Chof Zayin Adar, we merited to receive another ten *maamarim*, culminating with *Kuntres Purim Katan* with *V'Atah Titzaveh*. May we be *zoche* to "*Torah chadashah mei'iti teitze*," to hear new *maamarim* from the Rebbe, *b'karov mamosh!* <sup>1</sup>

1. For a full yoman of that evening, see *Leben Mitten Rebbe's*, *Derher Shevat* 5780.
2. This is common for the recordings from the early years, and is usually corrected on JEM's Ashreinu platform.
3. These are published in *Toras Menachem* vol. 3, pp. 257 & 283.
4. See *Igros Kodesh* vol. 5 pg. 313, vol. 6 pg. 164, vol. 8 pg. 257.
5. For a similar story regarding Sichos, see *Derher Cheshvan* 5779, pg. 45.
6. *Toras Menachem*—*Drushei Chasunah* pg. 312.
7. 12 Tammuz 5713; *Toras Menachem* vol. 9 pg. 40.
8. See 11 Nissan 5723 (*Toras Menachem* vol. 36 pg. 260), Simchas Torah 5732 (*Toras Menachem* vol. 66 pg. 115), Mikeitz 5735 (*Toras Menachem* vol. 79 pg. 28) and *Vayeshev* 5744 (*Toras Menachem* vol. 2 pg. 667).
9. Published in the *hosafos* of *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 5.
10. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 14 pg. 530.
11. *Sefer Hamaamarim Melukat* vol. 1 pg. 318.