

BY: MOTTI WILHELM

לזכות
הרה"ת הרב שלום דוב בער זוזגתו
מרת חיה מושקא שיחיו
לרגל יום נישואיהם - יום
הבהיר ראש חודש כסלו
ולזכות ילדיהם ברכה ליפשא, עליזה,
שיינדל, ומנחם מענדל שיחיו
שוחאט

FROM SHKLOV TO NEW YORK

THE EVOLUTION
OF THE
CHABAD SIDDUR

מקומה בשלמות,
דפים בשעת תפלתו.

ברוקלין (13), ג. י.

שש לכריאה

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תהלת

על פי נוסח הארז

כל תפלה ותפלה באה על
מבלי שיצטרך המתפלל לחפש



חוצאת

המרכז לעניני חנוכה

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שנת חמישה אלפים שבע מאות וחמשה

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Tehillas Hashem

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A Tehillas Hashem Siddur is a distinctive sign of any Lubavitcher home or shul. Open one, and you'll find it proclaims that it is “according to the Nusach of the Arizal, as established by the Alter Rebbe.” However, these ubiquitous Siddurim differ significantly from the Siddur originally authored by the Alter Rebbe. How did these changes occur? When did the Tehillas Hashem we know today first appear? This article traces the evolution of this quintessential Chabad text from Shklov in 5563 to New York in 5738 and beyond.

From its inception, one of the defining features of the Chassidic movement was the shift in *Nusach hatefilla* from *Nusach Ashkenaz* to *Nusach Arizal*. This change began in the times of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidus, and was strongly advocated by his successor, the Maggid of Mezritch. Yet, it would only be in the third generation of Chassidus that the first Siddur specifically designed for Chassidim was published, compiled by the Alter Rebbe.

The need for a new *Nusach* was explained by the Alter Rebbe himself in a short *maamar*, printed in *Sefer Maamarei Admur Hazaken Haketzarim*.¹ “Regarding the *Nusach hatefilla*: There are twelve gates; each *shevet* has its unique *Nusach* in davening through which our *neshamos* are elevated. The thirteenth gate encompasses all twelve, and every *shevet* can ascend through it. It is said that in the future, the twelve *shevatim* will enter Yerushalayim through twelve gates, each through their own. Just as this will occur physically in the future, so too, during *galus* this takes place in *avoda*. This concept is reflected in the *Nusachaos* in davening, through which *neshamos Yisroel* are elevated. Since all Yidden are intermingled and composed from several *shevatim*, and no one knows which *shevet* they’re from, the Arizal established a *Nusach* that is a compilation from Ashkenaz, Sefhard, and other *nuschaos*, in a manner that his *Nusach* is the thirteenth gate, through which all Yidden can ascend.”

Chassidim were not the first to daven according to the *Nusach* of the Arizal. Previously, *mekubalim* had davened with this *Nusach*, incorporating all the *kavanos* prescribed and taught by the Arizal. The *chiddush* of Chassidus was separating the Arizal’s *Nusach* from the *kavanos*, making the *Nusach* suitable for everyone.

But despite the fact that Chassidim changing their *Nusach* was well-established, and even engendered great opposition from *misnagdim*, no official Siddur was published with this *Nusach* for over two generations.

Compiling the Siddur

“When [the Alter Rebbe] sat upon his holy seat [began his *nesius*], he introduced awe-inspiring and innovative ideas...First, he clarified and elucidated the ways of *avoda* in a remarkable manner, based on his tradition from his holy teachers, and the additional wisdom and understanding granted to him by *Hashem Yisboreich*...as is clearly evident in his *derushim* and especially in his holy book *Likkutei Amarim*, known as the *Tanya Kadisha*.

“He also accustomed *anash* to daven in the holy *Nusach* of the Arizal, and some years later, published a special Siddur. This Siddur was meticulously crafted, with careful attention to the number of words, letter count, and precise vowel placement...The Siddur gained widespread acceptance, considered the finest among all versions. Even those accustomed from their youth to other *nuschaos*, came to respect and revere it.”²

With these words, Reb Chaim Meir Hillman, author of *Beis Rebbi*—the foremost comprehensive biography of the first three Rabbeim, describes the start of the development of the Alter Rebbe’s *Nusach*. In a footnote on this section, he records a tradition that when the Alter Rebbe compiled his Siddur, he had before him sixty Siddurim of various *nuschaos*, and “selected the ‘finest flour’ from among them all.” Later in *Beis Rebbi*³, the author quotes this same tradition in the name of the Tzemach Tzedek.

In a *reshima*⁴, the Rebbe Rashab writes that the Alter Rebbe worked on the *Nusach* for twenty years! “Each year

PAGE FROM A SIDDUR
NUSACH HA'ARI PRINTED
IN 5581, SEVERAL YEARS
BEFORE THE ALTER
REBBE'S NUSACH BEGAN
TO BE POPULARIZED.



he would arrange a different *Nusach*, until the twentieth time when it emerged refined, clarified, and purified.”

The new *Nusach* even caught the attention of the Russian authorities. After the Alter Rebbe was arrested, the officials asked him if the new *Nusach* meant that Chassidus constituted a new religion, which would have been forbidden under Czarist laws. The Alter Rebbe responded: “We daven in the *Nusach* that all Yidden daven with, and this forms the foundation of our *tefilla*. We only occasionally add words, *mizmorim*, and *pesukim* from Tehillim based on Kabbalah. This does not constitute a new religion.”⁵

In his *Reshimos*⁶, the Frierdiker Rebbe records that the Alter Rebbe’s *Nusach* had already spread among Chassidim already in 5543, sixteen years prior to this exchange in 5559. However, it wouldn’t be until 5563 that the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur would be published. What did Chassidim do in the interim?

“At that time, the *Nusach hatefilla* of the [Alter] Rebbe had already become widespread among the Chassidim in handwritten form. Some Chassidim incorporated the changes into their copies of the Shelah’s Siddur *Sha’ar HaShamayim*, as its text was more closely aligned with the Alter Rebbe’s *Nusach*.

More often, they would write the Alter Rebbe’s *Nusach* in the margins of their existing *Nusach Ashkenaz Siddurim*, which they continued to use for daily prayers,” the Frierdiker Rebbe writes in another *reshima*.⁷

The Siddur is Printed

In 5563, the Alter Rebbe sent his Siddur to be published in Shklov. In addition to the *Nusach hatefilla*, the Siddur included *halachos*, written by the Alter Rebbe. These *halachos*, though published before the Shulchan Aruch (which was mostly published after the Alter Rebbe’s lifetime), were authored by the Alter Rebbe after he had written the manuscript of the Shulchan Aruch. In a number of places, the Alter Rebbe rules differently in his Siddur than in his Shulchan Aruch, and since it was written later, these *halachos* are seen as *mishna acharona*—the final ruling.

The Siddur also incorporated *Seder Netilas Yodaim L’Seudah* and *Seder Birchos Hanehenin* detailing the *halachos of brachos*. A proper overview of these *halachic* essays is beyond the scope of the current article.

The Alter Rebbe was greatly *medayek* in every detail of the Siddur, even the order in which the *tefillos* were printed.

MAAMAR HAKOL KOL YAAKOV

In 5706, the Rebbe published ‘*Kuntres Toras Hachassidus*’ from the Frierdiker Rebbe, and included “*Shalshelas Kabbalas Toras HaChassidus*”—The chain of transmission of Chassidus, listing the Rabbeim, their family members, and their *seforim*. In the list of the Alter Rebbe’s *seforim*, the date of the Siddur’s publication is listed as 5563, noting Harav Avraham Dovid Lavut as the source. But the Rebbe then added a footnote with a *tzarich iyun*, a question.

The Rebbe notes that the *maamar* “*Hakol Kol Yaakov*” was printed as an introduction to the Siddur, and also printed in the 5566 edition of Tanya. He wrote:

“It is unlikely that this *maamar* was first printed in the Siddur and only later added to the conclusion of the Tanya during the Alter Rebbe’s lifetime (which would have been under his direction), only to be subsequently removed from the Tanya. A more plausible

scenario is that it was initially printed at the end of the Tanya. Later, when the Siddur was being prepared for publication, the Alter Rebbe instructed this *maamar* to be included there as an introduction, since it discusses *Krias Shema* and *tefilla*. Consequently, it was removed from subsequent editions of the Tanya after this point.

“However, this interpretation leads to one of two conclusions: either the Siddur was printed after 5566, or the first edition of the Siddur did not include this introduction (which seems somewhat improbable),” the Rebbe writes.

Nineteen years later, Rabbi Tuvia Blau wrote an article about the Siddur, and included the Rebbe’s *tzarich iyun*. When the Rebbe reviewed the article, he crossed out this paragraph, seemingly indicating that his conclusion was in line with Harav Avraham Dovid Lavut’s writing.

In fact, when a later printer made some changes that seemed minor, such as printing the text of *Ashrei* a second time before *U'va L'tzion* instead of a line noting that *Ashrei* could be found earlier, the Rebbe Rashab expressed great displeasure.

“...The publisher did not act properly by altering these aspects in several places, such as *Ashrei* before *Uva L'Tzion Goel*; *Baruch She'amar*, and *Pesukei D'Zimra* in *Shacharis* of Shabbos; as well as *Ashrei* before *Musaf*, *Kaveh*, *Aleinu*, etc. Although these changes do not affect the essential text of the *Nusach*, nevertheless they should not be changed, similar to the principle of ‘*Chayav adam lomar b'leshon rabbo*’ – one must speak in the language of his teacher. Additionally, there may be some reason behind this, as his [the Alter Rebbe’s] ways are beyond our understanding...”⁸

Another example of the consideration given to the “small details” of the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur can be seen in Likkutei Sichos⁹, where the Rebbe dedicated nearly a full *sicha* (!) to explain why the Alter Rebbe placed *Sefiras Ha'omer* at the conclusion of the Siddur.

Yet, despite the great effort invested by the Alter Rebbe, the printing capabilities of the time meant that every printed Sefer contained numerous mistakes. The Alter Rebbe noted some corrections, which were incorporated in later editions.

Two more editions of the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur were published in his lifetime in Kopust, with some differences between the editions.

Some decades later, Harav Avraham Dovid Lavut, a chosid of the Tzemach Tzedek and *rav* of Nikolayev, compiled the *sefer* Shaar Hakollel, which explains the changes made by the Alter Rebbe in his *Nusach*. In the introduction to his *sefer*, Harav Lavut, who was the Rebbe’s great-great-grandfather, writes about the three editions printed in the Alter Rebbe’s lifetime.

“This siddur was first printed during his lifetime in the year 5563, in Shklov, but it came out with many errors and omissions because it was printed from notes, and there was no properly printed siddur to copy from. It was printed twice during his lifetime in Kopust in an octavo format (a quarter-sized volume). In the first editions from Shklov and Kopust, the sections for *Kabbalas Shabbos*, the *Hilchasa Rabbata L'Shabbata* (an essay on *Hilchos Shabbos*), and ‘*V'Lakachta Solles*,’ as well as the laws of *Havdalah*, were not included. These pages were later printed separately...”¹⁰

These three editions were exceptionally rare, and even in the time of the Rebbe Rashab, hardly any copies still existed. When Harav Lavut was preparing his Shaar Hakollel, he was able to access one of the Kopust editions, but was unable to find any copies of the first, Shklov edition. He wrote to the Rebbe Rashab, asking if he had a copy, and the Rebbe Rashab responded: “Despite extensive efforts, I have been unable to acquire the first printed edition of the Siddur. However, I believe it is likely to be found in the library in Petersburg.”¹¹

Today, only a single copy is known to exist from among the three first editions of the Siddur. This copy is missing its title page, making it difficult to determine with certainty which of the three editions it represents. The Friediker Rebbe annotated its cover with the words, “Evidently the Shklov edition.”

This precious Siddur is currently in captivity in the Russian State Library. Ongoing efforts continue to reclaim it, along with other *seforim*, *ksovim* and *chafetzim*, with the goal of returning them to their rightful place, in the Rebbe’s library in New York.

The next known edition of the Alter Rebbe’s Siddur was published in Kopust in 5576, three years after the Alter Rebbe’s



1

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

2

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

1. IN THE SHKLOV EDITION AFTER THE WORDS “GADLU L’HASHEM”, A LINE NOTES THAT THE TEXT FROM ASHREI CAN BE FOUND EARLIER.

2. ON THE ONLY EXISTING COPY OF THE ORIGINAL SHKLOV EDITION WHICH IS MISSING ITS TITLE PAGE, THE FRIEDIKER REBBE WROTE: סידור אדמו"ר. כנראה דפוס שקלאוו THE [ALTER] REBBE’S SIDDIR. PRESUMABLY THE SHKLOV EDITION.

histalkus. This Siddur was published not only as a Siddur for daily use, but primarily as a collection of *maamarim* by the Alter Rebbe expounding on the words of davening. Aside from the Tanya, this was the first work of Chabad Chassidus to be published.

Known commonly as “*Siddur Im Dach*” (Siddur with Chassidus), this expanded work was so comprehensive that it required publication in two volumes.

Seventy Editions in Seventy Years

Over the following seven decades, dozens of editions of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur were released by various publishers across Eastern Europe.

The true number of editions is impossible to determine, as Siddurim were used heavily, on a day-to-day basis, and typically until they were worn out, when they were put in *geniza*. Consequently, there are countless editions of Siddurim, across all *nuschaos*, of which no copies remain extant today.

However, based on available information, including the mention of previous editions on later Siddurim's title page, there were at least 71 editions of *Nusach Arizal* Siddurim printed after the 5576 *Siddur Im Dach* until 5647.¹²

Some notable editions include:

Kopust 5582: Printed with the *haskama* of the Alter Rebbe's brother, the Maharil. The *haskama* speaks highly of the printer, stating: “He possesses both wisdom and knowledge. He personally heard numerous teachings from *Kvod Rabbeinu Nishmaso Eden* [the Alter Rebbe]. Moreover, he has in his possession numerous bundles of corrections written in his holy hand.” This statement serves to differentiate this printer from his predecessors, who were less meticulous and prone to making alterations, errors, and omissions. This edition is also mentioned in Beis Rebbi.¹³

Slavita 5587 and 5596: These Siddurim were considered to be accurately arranged for the most part, and the Tzemach

Tzedek used a Slavita Siddur. However, the printers did add to, and change things from, the Alter Rebbe's original *Nusach*. One such example can be found in Shaar Hakollel, where the author writes:

“During the time of the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch, these Siddurim were printed in Slavita. These editions included the *possuk* “וּפְדִיִּי ה' יִשׁוּבוּן” [in *Havdalah*]. The [Tzemach Tzedek] was asked whether this verse should be recited. He responded, “The Alter Rebbe was adamant about not including any references to sorrow or sighing on Motzei Shabbos.”¹⁴

Beis Rebbi mentions other notable editions. “In 5600, Reb Zalman Zelever printed [the Siddurim] with some additions, which he probably heard from our Rebbes. Reb Hillel Paritcher also printed them.” In a footnote, he includes a disclaimer: “All these additions are only in some *chidushei dinim* that they heard from our Rabbeim, but in the body of the *Nusach*, one may not add or subtract...”¹⁵

THE NAMES

Since there was no official title for the Alter Rebbe's Siddur, each printer chose his own title, resulting in a wide variety of names.

Some of these include: Ohr Hame'ir, Ohr Olam, Ohr Hatorah, Beis Yaakov, Geulas Yisroel, Hod V'Hadar, Hameir La'aretz, Zichron Yerushalayim, Chinuch Tefillah, Kesser Tefillah, Siddur im Likkutei Torah, Meah She'arim, Me'orei Ohr, Mo'ed V'Shabbos, Moreh Tzedek, Mincha Chadasha, Minchas Shabbos, Siddur Ha'Ari, Ovrei Orach, Kodesh Hilulim, Kol Yehuda, Siach Kodesh, Sfas Emes, Safah Berurah, Tefilas Yeshurun, Tefilas Kol Peh, and others.

Today, virtually all *Nusach Arizal* Siddurim are printed as ‘Tehillas Hashem,’ with few exceptions, such as the Torah Ohr Siddur, Siddur Shaar Menachem—compiled and edited by Rabbi Levi Bistritzky, Tefilos L'yemei Hashana from Shai Lemorah, and Siddurim with explanations. Two more recent editions are a Siddur for women titled Tehillas Noshim, and a Siddur published by Kehos in Eretz Yisroel titled Tefilah Sedura.



PAGE FROM THE FIRST PRINTING OF SIDDUR IM DACH, 5576.

Among the *seforim* held captive in Moscow is a Siddur printed in Vilna in 5628 that was part of the Rebbe Maharash's personal library. Rav Avraham Dovid Lavut was involved in preparing this edition, long before he published Shaarei Tefillah and its successor, Shaar Hakollel. Although this edition was executed beautifully, it contains many inaccuracies. Indeed, the margins of the Rebbe Maharash's copy contain hundreds of minor corrections.

In a brief overview of the primary editions of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur¹⁶, Rabbi Sholom Ber Levin, Chief Librarian of the Rebbe's Library, notes that "After the Alter Rebbe's *histalkus*, the Siddur was printed many times, but all these Siddurim contained changes, additions, and omissions. While some publishers made more extensive changes than others, the common thread was that they all introduced modifications." The sole exception, he notes, was the 5576 edition of *Siddur Im Dach*.

Siddur Torah Ohr

The year 5647 marked a turning point for the publishing of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur. In that year, Harav Avraham Dovid Lavut first printed his Siddur Torah Ohr, which was seen as revolutionary in clarifying the proper *Nusach* of the Alter Rebbe.

Harav Lavut worked for a number of years to clarify various details and nuances before publishing this Siddur. He first published an earlier edition of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur, titled 'Ohr Hame'ir' in 5644, in the famous Rom Publishing House in Vilna. He then continued editing, researching, and clarifying, authoring his work 'Shaarei Tefilla,' an earlier edition of his 'Shaar Hakollel' mentioned earlier.

In 5647, after completing Shaarei Tefilla, he printed it in Vilna as an addendum to the first edition of Siddur Torah Ohr. The author of Beis Rebbi, which was first printed in 5662, praised this edition for its precision.

"Not long ago, [the Siddur] was printed with great *hiddur* by Harav Hagaon Reb Avraham Dovid Lavut, the *Av Beis Din* of Nikolayev. He carefully edited the Siddur, based on the earlier editions that [the Alter Rebbe] himself had published, as well as from handwritten marginal notes in the Siddur that [the Alter Rebbe] had personally edited. He was very meticulous with every word and with the *nekudos*. He also ensured that the printing was of the highest quality, using large, bright, and clear letters to facilitate easy reading for all users. At the end of the Siddur, he included 'Shaar Hakollel,' in which he elucidates many of the Alter Rebbe's teachings and reveals their sources based on his research."¹⁷

In 5649, Harav Lavut printed the Torah Ohr Siddur again,

with more additions and corrections. Throughout this time, he continued working on authoring Shaar Hakollel, the final edition of his 'Shaarei Tefilla.' He concluded this work in 5650, but passed away a number of years later. It wouldn't be until 5656 that Shaar Hakollel would be printed. In the interim, Siddur Torah Ohr was printed twice more, in 5650 and 5652, due to its popularity.

Other editions of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur continued to be published by various printers in Europe, Eretz Yisroel, and the United States. There are at least 175 editions from before 5705 that we know of.

Der Rostover Siddur

The outbreak of the First World War in 5674 and the subsequent Russian Revolution in 5677 forced many Yidden to escape their homes and villages and become refugees in safer areas. The Rebbe Rashab himself left Lubavitch in 5676 and relocated to Rostov, and during the revolution, many other Yidden found themselves there as well.

The upheaval and chaos created a severe shortage in basic *seforim* such as Siddurim and Chumashim, and the Rebbe Rashab purchased a publishing house and founded the 'Ezra Print House' to assuage the need. He then printed two Siddurim—*Nusach Arizal* and *Nusach Ashkenaz*—for



FIRST PRINTING OF SIDDUR TORAH OHR WITH THE 'SHAAR HAKOLLEL'

the refugees.

The process was described in a letter written to the Rebbe in 5723 by Harav Yaakov Landau, who had served as the *rav* in the Rebbe Rashab's court:

“Initially, the Rebbe *Kodesh Hakadoshim*, had the idea to print the Siddur Torah Ohr. For this purpose, he sent me to Kharkov, where the manager of the Rom printing house, Mr. Berger, was residing at the time. I was to ask him to lend us the matrices for the Siddur Torah Ohr. [Matrices are molds used in printing to cast individual letters or whole pages of text –ed.] However, it turned out that he didn't have the matrices, and from him, I gleaned the idea of zincography [a printing process that involves using zinc plates to transfer images or text onto paper, an alternative to traditional typesetting –ed.]

“This idea found favor in the eyes of the Rebbe [Rashab]. We took a ‘Tefilas Kol Peh’ Vilna edition Siddur [an earlier edition of the Alter Rebbe's Siddur –ed.] and began to make changes by pasting in sections from the Torah Ohr Siddur. The pasting work was done by a man named Zalman Idel *a”h*.”

Reb Zalman Idel was renowned for his exceptional attention to detail. His meticulous approach to editing the Siddur was such that he wouldn't make any changes without first consulting the Rebbe Rashab. Due to Zalman's extraordinary precision, the Siddur became known among *anash* as the ‘*Siddur Hameduyak*,’—the precise Siddur, an expression found in the Rebbe's Igros Kodesh as well.¹⁸

Upon completion, the Siddur was printed in 20,000 copies, and the *Nusach Ashkenaz* edition was printed in 10,000 copies. Both of these Siddurim were given the name ‘Tehillas Hashem.’



THE TWO VARIATIONS OF THE ROSTOV SIDDUR, NUSACH ASHKENAZ AND NUSSACH ARI.

Over the following years, these Siddurim, which were also known as ‘*der Rostover Siddurim*,’ were reprinted several times in both the *Nusach Arizal* and *Nusach Ashkenaz* editions.

In his memoir on his life in Soviet Russia, Reb Meyer Gurkow writes about his saga with one of these editions, the one of Leningrad, 5684.

“At that time, publishers were not being licensed to print *seforim*. The Rebbe, a ‘wise man with an eye to the future,’ was keenly aware that Siddurim tend to get torn and wear out quickly. He had tasked R. Shimon Lazarov with obtaining a license to print a large quantity of siddurim. R. Shimon was the *rav* of one of the largest Chassidic *shuls* in Petersburg, located at 128 Jekobar St. The Rogatchover Gaon used to daven in this shul regularly when he lived in Petersburg. R. Shimon succeeded in printing these Siddurim but now the Siddurim lay packed away in R. Shimon's storage, and he had no one to sell them to. Making matters worse, R. Shimon had borrowed a large sum of money to cover the costs of the printing, and the lenders had already come knocking.”¹⁹

Reb Meyer goes on to describe how almost no one was interested in purchasing them—except for one wholesaler. Few could envision that a day would come when there would be almost no Siddurim to be found in the entire USSR, as predicted by the Frierdiker Rebbe.

Siddurim in America

In 5700, after being rescued from war-torn Europe, the Frierdiker Rebbe arrived on the safe shores of the United States. He immediately set about revitalizing Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America, urging them to expand their efforts in spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.

In a letter dated 25 Adar, 5701, addressed to the office of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, the Frierdiker Rebbe outlined a series of directives for their future activities. One of the key instructions was:

“It is essential for Agudas Chassidei Chabad to establish a system for printing books and writing of Chassidus. The first priority should be to print Siddurim with an accurate *Nusach*, similar to the ‘Tehillas Hashem’ Siddur from Rostov.”²⁰

Three months later, on Chof Ches Sivan, 5701, the Rebbe arrived in America following his own miraculous escape from the Nazis. Upon his arrival, the Frierdiker Rebbe tasked him with leading the effort to reprint the *Rostover Siddur*. The Rebbe began preparing the Siddur for publication, meticulously writing numerous edits and notes to correct typos and other details. (These edits and notes—most of which were not incorporated into the Siddur when it was eventually

published—were released sixty-six years later by Kehos in a booklet entitled ‘Hagahos L’Siddur Rabbeinu HaZaken.’)

However, in the meantime, the Frierdiker Rebbe made the decision to prioritize the printing of the Torah Ohr Siddur instead. This Siddur was printed later that year by Agudas Chassidei Chabad of America. Notably, this edition included a machzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which previous editions had not. While the Siddur itself was a copy of earlier versions of Siddur Torah Ohr, the machzor was copied from the Siddur Meah Shearim, a version of the Alter Rebbe’s *Nusach* that had been printed in Berdichev in 5673.

In their memoirs, the Shulzinger Brothers, who founded a printing company that printed many of the early works that Chabad published in America, recount the speed with which this Siddur was printed.

“When [the Frierdiker Rebbe] arrived in the United States, his secretary, who is now the Rebbe and leader of Chabad-Lubavitch Chassidim... approached us with a question: Could we print and bind within one week the Lubavitch Siddur, using a single copy in his possession? He requested one thousand such prayer books to distribute widely. We replied that we would do everything to fulfill this order by the requested date. I received the prayer book, and within a week, I delivered one thousand printed and bound Siddurim.”²¹

When the Siddur came back from the printer, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave a copy to the Rebbe as a gift. From that point on, the Rebbe used that copy of the Torah Ohr Siddur almost exclusively, and the distinct black siddur became an

indispensable and recognizable part of *tefillos*, *farbrengens*, and other events with the Rebbe.

The Frierdiker Rebbe then issued a letter to *anash* of America and Canada, urging them to use this Siddur.

“*Baruch shehechyanu v’higianu* to fill the great lack for Chabad Chassidim in our countries: a precise Siddur in the *Nusach* of the Alter Rebbe. For many years, the shortage of an accurate Siddur has been deeply felt, and many of *anash* have been distressed at having to daven using inaccurate versions.

“Now, through *chasdei Hashem*, we have succeeded in printing the Torah Ohr Siddur in its precise and original form. I hereby appeal to our friends, *anash* and the *talmidei hatmimim*, may Hashem bless them with life, to daven using this Siddur and to educate their children to do the same.”²²

Six years after Siddur Torah Ohr was printed, in 5707, the *Rostover Siddur* was finally reprinted with a few additions, such as an Alef Beis Chart and *brachos* for children to recite. This Siddur, like its predecessor, was titled Siddur Tehillas Hashem.

The “Other” Tehillas Hashem

Prior to the republishing of the Rostover Siddur, Kehos—founded by the Frierdiker Rebbe in 5702, with the Rebbe appointed to lead it—printed another Siddur. Although this Siddur also bore the name Tehillas Hashem, like the *Rostover Siddur*, it was significantly different from the latter, and bore the name ‘Siddur Tehillas Hashem *Hasholeim*.’

In a letter dated Chof Gimmel Teves, 5705²³, the Rebbe outlined plans for the new Siddur, writing:

“Currently in print... a Siddur is being prepared for the Talmud Torahs and schools (with all the *tefillos* in order, in large letters, etc.). However, due to the current circumstances, I do not know when it will be completed. My hope is that it will be finished within two to three months.”

As the Rebbe described, the Siddur was specifically designed for children, necessitating large, clear lettering and ensuring all the *tefillos* were presented sequentially, avoiding the need to flip back and forth through the pages. For this reason, the *Rostover Siddur* was not reprinted, as it featured small, cramped text and required turning pages to locate parts of the davening. Instead, the Siddur chosen for reprinting was *Siddur Seder Ha’avoda*, originally printed in Vilna in 5671.

Since this Siddur was not as *meduyak* as the *Rostover Siddur*, numerous corrections were made prior to its publication. Nonetheless, this was not a perfect effort. When questioned about certain discrepancies, the Rebbe responded,



FIRST EDITION OF THE ‘TORAH OHR’ SIDDUR PRINTED IN AMERICA. NOTE THE SYMBOL OF THE SHULSINGER BROTHERS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TITLE PAGE.

“The complete Tehillas Hashem Siddur is a photographic reproduction of an earlier Siddur, and there was not enough time to proofread it properly.”²⁴

This Siddur was later reprinted in Munich, Germany, in 5707, and multiple times in New York after 5711. The *Rostover Siddur* was printed several times in Kfar Chabad over the following decades, but not again in America. With the Torah Ohr Siddur only printed once more in 5706 in Shanghai, and the *Rostover Siddur* no longer available in the USA, the new Tehillas Hashem became the classic Siddur of Chabad Chassidim.

The Rebbe personally distributed the Siddur Tehillas Hashem on a number of occasions, such as *Yimei Hasefira* 5732, when the Rebbe sent a Siddur to children around the world who had offered *brachos* for his 70th birthday; Yud-Aleph Shvat 5736, when the first group of Shluchim²⁵ was sent to Eretz Yisroel—the Rebbe gave each man a Likkutei Sichos Chelek Yud Alef, and each woman a Siddur—and several other occasions. Many individuals, especially children, received a pocket-sized Siddur Tehillas Hashem in *yechidus* over the years. Another notable incident took place during the Yom Kippur War, when the Rebbe instructed to have a Siddur Tehillas Hashem printed in Fayed, Egypt, along with a Tehillim and a Tanya.

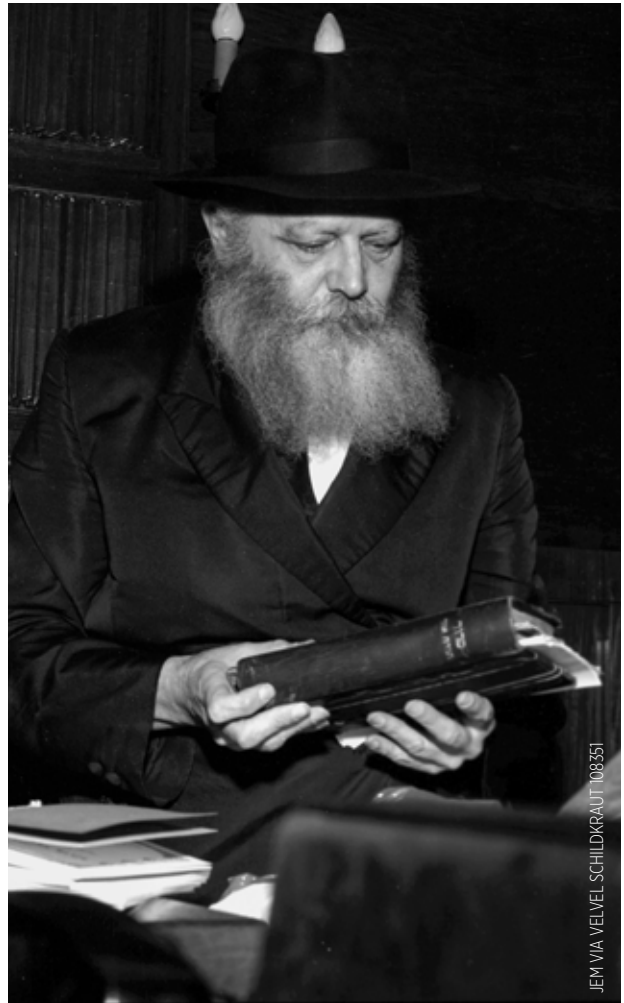
First English, Then Lashon Kodesh

This continued until the late 5730s. During this period, Rabbi Nissan Mangel was working on the first-ever English translation of Siddur Tehillas Hashem. Assisting him with editing the original Hebrew text was Rabbi Tuvia Zilberstrom, who was then a *bochur* in *kvutza*.

The team of two meticulously reviewed the entire Siddur to identify elements that required correction. This included checking words, *nekudos*, *marei mekomos*, *halachos*, and various other aspects. After compiling a list of possible corrections, they approached experts in *dikduk*, *nusach* and *halacha* to clarify what they could. Any questions that remained unanswered were then sent to the Rebbe for his guidance.

Most proposed changes were either accepted or rejected; however there remained a number of unresolved questions. The Siddur with English was printed in 5738, and some time afterward, the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Mangel, stating that there were many other matters he should be focusing on in his work with Kehos, and advising him to pause his editing of the Siddur.²⁶

In what Rabbi Zilberstrom describes as a “bold” move, the



JEM VIA VELVEL SCHILDKRAUT 008351

WHEN PRESIDENT ZALMAN SHAZAR VISITED THE REBBE ON PURIM 5731, THE REBBE ARRANGED THAT HE AND EACH MEMBER OF HIS ENTOURAGE RECEIVE A SPECIALLY EMBOSSED SIDDUR TEHILLAS HASHEM. AFTER HANDING SHAZAR A SIDDUR, THE REBBE HELD UP HIS OWN SIDDUR AND SAID THAT HE WILL BE USING HIS TORAH OHR SIDDUR, BECAUSE “IT’S BEEN 20 YEARS THAT I DAVEN WITH THE SHVER’S SIDDUR.”



THE FIRST EDITION OF TEHILLAS HASHEM PRINTED IN AMERICA IN 5705.

title page for this Siddur was prepared with the border design used in the Alter Rebbe's other *seforim*, and the page stated "As established by the Alter Rebbe, *Baal Hatanya v'Hashulchan Aruch*." The editors had no idea what the Rebbe's response would be, and they were thrilled when the galleys of the Siddur were sent back by the Rebbe with tacit approval for the new *shaar blatt*.

Before the Siddur was sent to print, the Rebbe requested that it be produced in a beautiful format, suitable to be given as a gift from a *chossan* to a *kallah*, or for similar occasions. To fulfill this request, the Siddur was printed with an elegant faux-leather cover.

After the English Siddur was printed, a new pocket-size edition was prepared by Rabbi Zilberstrom in Lashon Hakodesh as well. It included edited editions of the Alter Rebbe's *Seder Birchos Hanehenin*, the text of Haggadah Shel Pesach, and other additions.

To Rabbi Zilberstom's surprise, after publication, the Siddur remained in the Kehos warehouses, undistributed. He understood why some months later, when the Rebbe requested that pocket-size Siddurim be prepared for distribution to children at the Erev Shavuos farbrengen of 5739. These Siddurim were now ready for that purpose.

For the most part, these Siddurim remained without change for decades. On one occasion, the Rebbe addressed a needed change in a *sicha*:

On Tzom Gedalya, 5749²⁷, the Rebbe noted that in the

Siddur, there was only one *possuk* starting "Romemu" when the Sefer Torah is taken out of the *Aron Kodesh*, when really there should be two such *pesukim*: "רוממו ה' אלקינו והשתחוה לה' אלקינו קדוש הוא" and "רוממו ה' אלקינו והשתחוה לה' קדוש כ"י". Promptly, stickers featuring the second *possuk* were printed and distributed to be added to all existing Siddurim. Subsequently, all new editions have included both *pesukim*.



May all of our *tefillos*, together with those of *Klal Yisroel*, be answered in the best possible way, most importantly our prayers for the *geulah ha'amitis v'hashleima*.

A forthcoming sequel to this article will, with Hashem's help, take a deeper dive into the Alter Rebbe's Nusach itself. **T**

1. Page 581.
2. *Beis Rebbi* (Mayanotecha edition, Yerushalayim, 2019), p. 50.
3. *Ibid.*, chapter 27, footnote 14 (p. 243).
4. Printed in *Hasiddur* (Heichal Menachem Monsey, 2003), p. 13.
5. *Igros Kodesh Admur Hazaken* (Kehos, Brooklyn, NY, 2012), p. 220.
6. *Reshimas Vikuach Hagadol B'minsk* (Kehos, Brooklyn, NY, 2009), p. 14.
7. *Reshimas Divrei Yimei Admur Hazaken* (Kehos, Brooklyn, NY, 2010), p. 33.
8. Printed in Siddur Torah Ohr (Kehos, Brooklyn, NY, 2014) p. 498. In earlier editions, it appears on p. 232.
9. *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 22, Parshas Emor (1), p. 114.
10. *Sha'ar Hakollel*, p. 17.
11. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab*, Vol 1, p. 19.
12. For further reading on these editions, see *Hasiddur* p. 309.
13. Section 1, Chapter 27. (P. 245 in *Mayanotecha* edition).
14. *Sha'ar Hakollel*, 32;5. (P. 76)
15. *Ibid.*
16. Printed in *Hagahos L'Siddur Rabbeinu Hazaken* (Kehos, Brooklyn, NY, 2006), p. 5.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Igros Kodesh* volume 13, p. 326.
19. *Sefer Hazichronos Divrei Hayomim* (New York, 1977), p. 34. English edition translated by Rabbi Mendel Super (Brooklyn, NY, 2021).
20. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 13, p. 325.
21. The Shulzinger Brothers - The Printing Press and Publishing House (Yerushalayim, 1986).
22. *Igros Kodesh Admur Harayatz* vol. 6, p. 45.
23. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 2, p. 24.
24. *Igros Kodesh* vol. 3, p. 138.
25. Colloquially known as the *Shluchei Kodesh*.
26. *Kuntres Tomid Tehilaso Befi*, printed in *Teshura, Yonah Elimelech v'Esther Malka Zilberstrom* (Kfar Chabad, 2017), p. 38.
27. *Hisvaaduyos* 5749, vol. 1, p. 25.

THE FIRST EDITION OF TEHILLAS HASHEM TRANSLATED BY RABBI NISSEN MANGEL WITH THE ALTER REBBE'S SHAAR ON THE TITLE PAGE.

