

He'aros and Pilpulim

Every Jew's Obligation



מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' מרדכי זוגתו מרת ר' מושקא
ומשפחתם שיחין
గראיסבוים
סטאני ברוק, ניו יורק



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

What's the point?

One of the most enduring characters in Chassidic literature is that of the fantastically egotistical Torah scholar from the early time-period of Chassidus: *geonim* who imagined themselves greater than Moshe Rabbeinu (and found themselves questioning Hashem's judgement as a result)¹; hermits who could not comprehend why Eliyahu Hanavi would not appear to them²; and Talmudists who sincerely thought of Rashi as an inferior caliber scholar to themselves.³ Their self-worth was measured by their achievements and innovations in Torah-study, and as much as they studied, a true appreciation for *Elokus* and *avodas Hashem* was nonexistent.

For generations, many Chassidim scorned the notion of focussing on one's own innovations in Torah, viewing it as synonymous with leaving *Elokus* out of the picture, a relic of these self-absorbed scholars.

This attitude is alive and true today, in one form or the other. Many view *chiddushim* as the purview of the elite, of those who "know how to learn," of *roshei yeshivos* and *rabbonim* (and overconfident youngsters). Why waste time and energy on developing mediocre ideas that might not even be true when there are so many *real* things to learn? Isn't that an exercise of empty vanity?

The Motivational Factor

The Rebbe's attitude was different. His primary argument was simple: people study more when they know that they have to come up with something.

"In earlier generations, the *roshei yeshivos* world infuse their students with energy and gusto in the study of Torah," the Rebbe said. "Today, unfortunately, the *roshei yeshivos* do not infuse their students with sufficient enthusiasm in Torah, which

Perhaps ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL ENDEAVORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONESELF AS A CHOSSID IS TO FOSTER IN ONESELF CHASSIDISHE HANACHOS, A CHASSIDISHE OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

As we grow into adults, we develop a fundamental perspective on life from a variety of influences—parents, friends, teachers, books, experiences—and this determines our approach to everything we do, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Naturally, not all of one's viewpoints can trace their origins to Yiddishkeit, and altering them to become more in line with those of Torah is one of the most difficult, but still worthwhile, accomplishments that one can do. *חוֹשֶׁלִיט עַל הָלֵב*, the mind governs the heart, and when our head is in the right place, our emotions and actions follow.

Throughout the *nesius*, the Rebbe educated us, shifting our perspective on matters large and small. This shows itself most prominently in extremes; in the (relative) ease with which a Lubavitcher asks someone to put on *tefillin*, in the constant focus on Moshiach, and so on. There are so many areas where we can only wonder how life would be outside the Rebbe's influence.

But then there are areas where the Rebbe's viewpoint is so revolutionary, so different, that although we go through the motions and follow the instructions to the tee, it would almost seem that the Rebbe's fundamental outlook has yet to seep through.

is why other ways must be found to do so.

"When a student knows that every once in a while he will need to deliver a *chiddush* in Torah in front of his colleagues, this gives him more energy in his studies so that he won't be caught in front of his friends not knowing the material... These *chiddushim* should then be written, and *printed* in a special *kovetz*, in order to publicize it everywhere. Thus, these *chiddushim* will not remain in the yeshiva, rather *yagdil Torah v'yaadir*."⁴

"When the students are infused with the notion that they should discuss Torah among themselves and come up with new ideas, that itself gives them more enthusiasm in their studies: the very fact that they are empowered, and told that 'the time has come' for them [to innovate in Torah] gives them more enthusiasm. This is true even though their ideas may not always be fully true... Even if you will say that this is Torah-study for an ulterior motive, *shelo lishma; zol zein shelo lishma*, the main thing is that they will live with Torah, and eventually they will arrive at the *lishma*."⁵

As the Rebbe pointed out, this isn't a theory: it has been proven true whenever it's been tried.

Innovation as an Obligation

Beyond the practical considerations, there was also a deeper, philosophical issue at play.

A *bochur* in a non-Chabad yeshiva was once very despondent. He wasn't intellectually gifted like his friends, and he was beginning to come to the shattering realization that his life-long dream of becoming a *gadol* would never come to fruition, no matter how hard he tried. Broken-hearted, he wrote to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe replied with one line that would change his life: *אני נבראתי לשותך את קומי, I was created to serve*

FOR GENERATIONS, MANY CHASSIDIM SCORNED THE NOTION OF FOCUSUSSING ON ONE'S OWN INNOVATIONS IN TORAH.



*my creator.*⁶ It's not about finishing a certain amount of books or reaching a certain level of knowledge; it's not about what you accomplish—it's about your obligation to serve Hashem by studying Torah. Just as one must serve Hashem with the hand by performing *mitzvos*, one must serve Hashem with the mind by studying Torah.

The point of innovating in Torah is not to come up with the most brilliant idea, or to give oneself empty accomplishments. It is simply an extension of the obligation to study.⁷ As the Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya*, "Every Jewish person has the ability to innovate in both *halacha* and *aggada*, in both *nigleh* and *nistar*—and he is obligated to do so."⁸ This obligation applies every single day, as the *Zohar* states: "לֹא פשא לְהַבְּכָל יֹם וָיּוֹם, [one must] increase in the Torah every single day."⁹

If a person has the ability to innovate in Torah, the Rebbe says, and instead he chooses to study subjects in Torah that have already been revealed,

it is considered *bittul Torah!* "Even if he has already innovated in Torah today—three times!—he must increase and innovate even more, for every moment that there is an obligation to study Torah, there is an obligation to innovate in Torah."¹⁰

When one views *chiddushei Torah* in this context, as a selfless extension of our service of Hashem rather than a self-centered ladder of accomplishment, it becomes clear why the Rebbe urged every single person to do so, no matter the quality of their scholarship or brilliance of mind: Every single person has a part in Torah, and every person can be the *talmid vosik* whose innovations were included at Har Sinai.

Innovating in Chassidus

It seems that the first iteration of publishing *he'aros* in the Lubavitch world was in *Hatomim*, a periodical published by the Frierdiker Rebbe in Poland, where people were given the opportunity to ask and

“ON PAPER, THE EDITORS [OF HATOMIM] ARE OTHERS, BUT THE WORK IS ALL HIS [I.E. THE REBBE]...”

answer questions in both *nigleh* and Chassidus. For the first time, some of the most profound issues in Chassidus were being discussed on paper in plain language. [The official editor of *Hatomim* was Reb Shmuel Zalmanov, and for many decades, the Rebbe's level of involvement was anyone's guess, although many suspected that he was very involved. Recently, an entire cache of letters from the Friediker Rebbe to the Rebbetzin was discovered, and in one he writes, “On paper, the editors [of *Hatomim*] are others, but the work is all his [i.e. the Rebbe].”¹¹]

It would take many years before it would become popular on a broader level. Beyond the general uncomfortability that some had with *chiddushim*, they were particularly perplexed with the notion of people writing *pilpulim* and asking questions in the G-dly discipline of Chassidus.

But in fact, as the Rebbe explained, the only way to truly understand something is if one allows himself to ask questions. In a foundational *sicha* on the occasion of the Rebbe Rashab's birthday, the Rebbe said:

“A person may think, ‘How can I ask questions on the Rebbe? The Rebbe wrote the *maamar* in his own handwriting (as I can see for myself)—how can I raise (what seem to be) contradictions between this *maamar* and a *maamar* from an earlier Rebbe or a later Rebbe, or between this *maamar* and a passage in *Torah Shebiksav* or *Torah Sheba'al Peh*?!

“...[But the truth of the matter is that] the study of Torah must be *intellectual*... As long as you're afraid of contemplating it too deeply, lest you find something that you

don't understand [you cannot truly comprehend it]... Only through learning the *maamar* to the extent that you have questions, *that* is how you will arrive at the true understanding of the matter.”¹²

How To:

Over the years the Rebbe gave practical guidance on how to write *he'aros* and how to create a *kovetz*.

- **Ensure that the *he'aros* follow the *klalei halimud*:** The Rebbe often spoke about the fact that, unfortunately, *yeshivos* do not study the “rules of study” (*Klolei Hashas* printed at the end of *Mesechta Brachos*), where one finds practical guidance on how to approach study, and thus the *he'aros* sometimes don't make sense. One rule the Rebbe mentioned a number of times was that when one wishes to ask a question, the question must be strong; but when attempting to resolve a question, it doesn't have to be as airtight. On a number of occasions, the Rebbe pointed out that the

questions in the *he'aros* weren't solid enough to pass the test.

- **Be Original!** When the Rebbe fielded questions on Rashi (see below), he would urge people to think of original questions, instead of simply copying the type of questions the Rebbe had developed: why Rashi cites the name of the author or why Rashi provides two explanations, etc.
- **Don't get lost in technicalities.** The Rebbe's clearly preferred a question that was a “*klotz kashe*,” the common-sense question that people (and often *meforshim*) don't even think of asking. He would urge people to focus on these types of questions instead of technical *pilpulim*, and not to get lost in the technicalities of the subject.
- There were two phrases the Rebbe would often use (with variations): מ'שפאלת אַהֲרֹן וּמִעֲרְטָעֵר —*people are splitting a “hair” and forgetting the “head,”* i.e. the subject itself; מ'קְלִיבָת אַוִיכָן וּמִאַרְגָּעָסֶט —*people are focussing on the words (and technicalities) and forgetting the content behind them.*¹⁶

There are additional reasons one must specifically focus on innovation in Torah:

- **Your part in Torah:** Every *neshama* has a part in Torah that it must reveal to the world, as we say in davening every day וְתַחַלְקֵנוּ בְתּוֹרַת, give us *our* part in Torah. Now, in the last generation of *galus*, there is no time to wait for another *gilgul* to do so.¹³
- **Deeper Revelations:** Innovation reveals a level in Torah that is rooted in the *atzmus* of Hashem.¹⁴
- **Bringing of Moshiach:** Through innovating in Torah we bring about the true innovations of Moshiach's era, when, “A new Torah” will come from Hashem.¹⁵

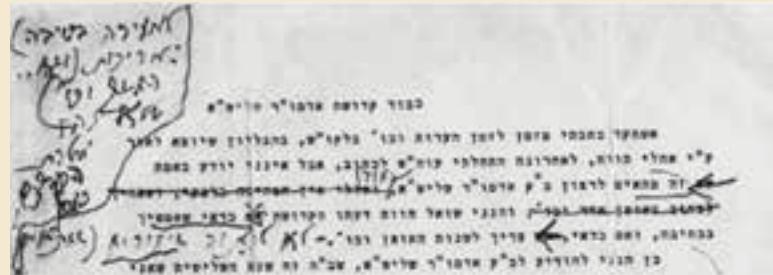
- **Try finding an answer:** In addition to asking questions, one should spend time trying to find answers, and the editors shoulder the responsibility in this matter as well.
- **Don't be afraid to write your name:** There were a number of times when the Rebbe urged people not to hide behind an anonymous title or pen name.¹⁷
- **The responsibility of the editors:** The editors have the responsibility for the content of the *kovetz*, and if there is an obvious answer to the question that is being asked, or if it was addressed by previous *meforshim*, the editors should make note of it in the *kovetz*. They have the responsibility to ensure that everything makes sense.¹⁸
- **What belongs:** The Rebbe said that the *kovtzim* are not a place for publishing *shiurim* (see sidebar).

The Rebbe's Involvement

In the history of Lubavitch, there were occasions when *maamarei Chassidus* were said at the behest of a great Chossid. The Alter Rebbe, for example, delivered certain *maamarim* for Reb Aizik Homiler; the Mitteler Rebbe wrote entire *seforim* for select disciples; and the Tzemach Tzedek said *maamarim* for Reb Hillel Paritcher. Obviously, the level of the Chossid to whom the *maamar* was directed had a certain effect on the style of the *maamar*.

But this phenomenon was limited to the greatest of the Chassidim, a handful over centuries. In the early years of the Rebbe's *nesius*, too, there was no official channel through which Chassidim could ask questions on the Rebbe's farbrengens, with the

When the *kovtzim* began coming out, people started using them to publish their *shiurim* (in addition to *ha'aros*). One of the early writers in the *kovtzim* asked the Rebbe whether he should continue.



"אשתקד כתבתי מזמן לזמן הערות וכו' בלקו"ש, בהגלוון שי"ל ע"י האלי תורה, לאחרונה התחתית עזה"פ לכטוב, אבל איןני יודע באמת אם זה מתאים לרצון כ"ק אדמו"ר שליט"א ואולי אין הכתיבה כדבוי ושותך לכטוב באופן אחר וכו', והנני שואל חוו"ד הקדושה אם כדי ממשיך בכתביה, ואם כדי, אם צריך לשנות האופן וכו'."

Last year, I occasionally wrote *ha'aros* on Likkutei Sichos, in the *kovetz* that comes out from Oholei Torah. I recently I began writing again, but I don't know if it is truly what the Rebbe wishes. Perhaps I am not writing as I should, and I should write differently. I am asking the Rebbe's opinion about whether I should continue writing; and if I should continue, should I change the way I'm doing it?"

The Rebbe circled the word "whether" [I should continue writing] and added the word, "כמובן," obviously."

Then the Rebbe added:

"לא לכטוב שיעורים (שמתאים לאמירה בישיבה): אריכות (וגם .. המשך וכו') שלא זהו מטרת הקובזים כמשמעותן."

Do not write *shiurim* (which are appropriate for delivery in a yeshiva): Long (and also a series), because that is not the purpose of the *kovtzim*.



As a result of their reinvigorated involvement in the Rebbe's Torah, *bochurim* were coming up with all types of questions and answers on the *sichos*, and they began printing their discussions on a page titled "*He'aros Hatmimim*." It was a simple page that was intended only for internal circulation among the *bochurim*.

After a few months, a group of *bochurim* took the initiative to gather all the *he'aros* that had been printed until that point and publish them in an official booklet, bearing the same name, "*He'aros Hatmimim*."

They sent it in to the Rebbe, and to their pleasant surprise, the Rebbe reacted very warmly to the idea, even giving them several specific pointers on the project:

The title of the *kovetz* should be *He'aros Hatmimim Vanash*, in order to include non-*bochurim*; the format should be like that of the *Likkutei Sichos*; and more. In fact, the Rebbe wrote that he would be covering 10 percent of the expenses from the "70 Fund," which was dedicated to the 71 new institutions established in honor of Yud-Alef Nissan. The *bochurim* were amazed that the Rebbe was considering this *bochurim-led* project as one of his 71 institutions!

In fact, the *rosh yeshiva* of 770, Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik, said at the time that, in his opinion, the reason the Rebbe resumed editing the *Likkutei Sichos* around that period—which he had ceased doing a few months earlier—was due to the *kovetz he'aros*.²⁰

Another *kovetz* was published the following year, and this time the Rebbe covered 20 percent of the project's cost. Following their success and the warm reception from the Rebbe, other *yeshivos* began following their lead.

But many people were hesitant to get involved. How can a Chossid have the *chutzpah* to ask questions on his Rebbe? The *yeshiva* in Morristown,

THE BOCHURIM WERE AMAZED THAT THE REBBE WAS CONSIDERING THIS BOCHURIM-LED PROJECT AS ONE OF HIS 71 INSTITUTIONS!

One of the *Mosdos*

The name of the *kovetz* was originally *He'aros Hatmimim*. The Rebbe circled the word *Hatmimim*, and wrote:

"לכארה שולל השתפות דכו"כ - אולי להוסיף "ואנ"ש" (או כי"ב) וכן בהפתח דבר
וכו."

This would seem to exclude the involvement of many. Perhaps add "v'anash," or similar. The same goes for the introduction."



They wrote that it would cost at least six-hundred dollars. The Rebbe replied:

10% השתפות מקרן ה'ע' (כשאר ע"א מוסדות).

10% will be given from the '70 Fund' (as with the other seventy-one institutions).

It wasn't written anywhere in the *kovetz* who the publishers were, and on the bottom of their letter the Rebbe wrote:

"יוזל ע"י חבריו מערכת."

Published by the Editorial Board."

The Rebbe also added:

"כדי שהפורט – כמו הלקו"ש.

The format should be like *Likkutei Sichos*.

for example, started its own *kovetz* in 5733. But rumors began circulating that the Rebbe wasn't happy about it, so they stopped. They soon received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary Rabbi Binyomin Klein, asking what had happened, and they resumed production.

Confusion still surrounded the issue, so when the *mashpia* of Morristown, Reb Meilach Zweibel, went into *yechidus*, he brought up these rumors to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said that, to the contrary, he was happy about the *he'aros*. The Rebbe went on to tell Reb Meilach that a certain *rav* had asked him a question on a *sicha*, and the Rebbe had sent him a copy of the *he'aros* where the very same question

had been asked and answered; "אֵין דָעַן שְׁאַלָּה אֵין דָעַסְתָּו דִּין עֲנַטְפָעַר—here is your question and here is your answer."

A *mazkir* would always bring the *kovtzim* to the Rebbe before Shabbos, and people who went into *yechidus* reported seeing them on the Rebbe's desk.

The Rebbe displayed his fondness for the *kovtzim* in other ways as well. They were tucked into his *siddur* during davening on Shabbos; on Friday night he would read them during the singing of *Lecha Dodi*; and on Shabbos day he would read them between *aliyos*. In order to see which *kovetz* the Rebbe was reading, the staff of the various *kovtzim* began printing them with different colored covers. If

the Rebbe was spending noticeably more time on a certain *he'ara*, it could be presumed that it might be a topic at the farbrengen.

Rabbi Sholom Spalter of the yeshiva in Morristown was one of the mainstays of the Morristown *kovetz* throughout the years. He relates: "One time in the beginning of 5743, the Rebbe sent the *kovetz* back to us, and he had edited two of the *he'aros* by hand! As you can imagine, this was a very big surprise for us; to the best of our knowledge, this was the first time the Rebbe ever made handwritten comments of one of the *kovtzim*.

"A few weeks later, the Rebbe again sent back the *kovetz* to the editors with a handwritten answer. This happened about 15 times over the next few years. Sometimes, the Rebbe wrote a number of lines with questions, answers or comments.

"Once, when the writer of the *he'ara* wrote about a question of the Shalah on a certain *possuk* and referenced the wrong *possuk*, the Rebbe reprimanded the editors; on the cover the Rebbe circled the word מערכת and wrote next to it עורכת או רק מעתקה twice. Meaning to say: Is this a job of editors who actually prepare the *he'aros* for publication or merely copy word for word from the writer?

"We felt unbelievable joy when we received the answers. It gave us the drive and push to continue publishing more and more *he'aros*."

The first time

As time progressed, several more *yeshivos* began publishing *kovtzim*, and more frequently. By 5740, the *yeshivos* of both Morristown and Oholei Torah were publishing *kovtzim* on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

It was around then that the *kovtzim* gained another level of prominence: They transformed from being merely scholarly journals to a major forum with which the Rebbe answered questions his Chassidim had in Torah study.

It started on Shabbos Chayeis Sara 5740. In the previous farbrengen, the Rebbe had discussed the weekly *likkut*,²¹ which was about the famous story of the Rebbe Rashab in his youth asking his grandfather the Tzemach Tzedek why Hashem hadn't revealed Himself to him as He had to Avraham Avinu, as it related to Rashi's explanation. The Rebbe asked a question on the explanation in the *likkut*, and concluded that the answer would come at the following farbrengen.

A group of *bochurim* from the yeshiva in Oholei Torah wrote a *he'ara* asking why the Rebbe had asked



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

להעירה בלקו"ש (ות"ח ע"ז) – מכמה טעמים טוב שיעשה כנהוג לאחרונה בכיו"ב, לכתוב לאחד הקובציז תורה שעוניים בכיו"ב, ותבהיר הדבר ע"י ולרביכם. וק"ל.

Regarding your comment on the *Likkutei Sichos* (and thank you for it)—for several reasons, it would be good if you followed the recent practice of submitting it to one of the *kovtzei Torah*, and the matter will be resolved with the help of the public, and for their benefit.



Don't be Afraid to Ask!

One should study Torah! And if you don't understand something [in the farbrengens], you should *b'feirush* ask! You can sign your name on it, and there's no reason to sign it as "one of *anash*" or "one of the *temimim*." You aren't slighting anyone [i.e. the Rebbe] by doing so—to the contrary, "from my students [I learned] more than from everyone else!"

the question, when it could easily have been answered in a certain way (as they explained). The following Shabbos the Rebbe addressed their *he'arot*: "A week passed, and I was happy to see that there were several people who were even coming with a complaint: How could you ask such a question on Rashi when there's an answer for it?!" The Rebbe smiled, and continued, "I said from the beginning that it's a question that could be answered, it's just that we

would answer it next week, because of the lack of time. So what's the surprise that it can be answered; the point of the question was to answer it!"

The Rebbe went on to say why their explanations didn't fit with the simple meaning of Rashi, and elaborated on the issue at length.

"This was the first time that the Rebbe publicly commented on the *kovtzim*, and it was very exciting for us all," says Rabbi Avraham Gerlitzky, longtime editor-in-chief of the *He'arot*

U'biurim of Oholei Torah. "But it was still in the context of a question that the Rebbe himself had posed at the farbrengens.

"A little while later, there was an ongoing discussion in the *kovtzim* between Rabbi Pinye Korf and myself regarding the *likkut* that had come out for Chanukah that year. We went back and forth for several weeks,²² and on Shabbos Parshas Bo, the Rebbe mentioned our discussion (and went on to explain how neither one of us was correct). This was especially surprising because it was a simple discussion between two individuals—it was a subject that had not been mentioned at the recent farbrengens—and yet the Rebbe himself weighed in and commented on it! After Shabbos, the Rebbe edited that *sicha* to be published in the following volume of *he'arot*."

In the following months, the Rebbe's involvement in the *kovtzim* became more and more frequent, and picked up pace in 5741. In the ensuing years, the Rebbe discussed hundreds of *he'arot*, on a vast range of topics. Rabbi Gerlitzky says, "A sixteen-year-old student of mine once wrote a question on *Likkutei Dibburim*. On the following Shabbos, the Rebbe spent a good half hour (!) discussing his question."

Chassidim felt that the Rebbe was almost like a *rosh yeshiva* interacting with his students, as he answered questions on the ongoing farbrengens or weekly *likkutim*, asked questions and left them for the Chassidim to answer, and even commented on various discussions and debates that were going on in the pages of the *kovtzim*.

New Heights

The Rebbe's involvement in the *kovtzim* continued steadily, but there is one episode that stands out even then, which may have been a precursor for

Major Topics

There were certain topics that merited extensive involvement from the Rebbe, many of which were formally published in *Likkutei Sichos*. The following is a small sampling:

- **The Kvatter:** One week, in the *kovetz* that was published for Parshas Beshalach-Yud Shevat 5741, Rabbi Moshe Wiener wrote about the *minhag* that a pregnant woman should not serve as a *kvatter*. The Rebbe spoke about it at the 15 Shevat farbrengen, and the following week there were more questions in the *kovtzim*. The Rebbe explained it the following Shabbos (*Yisro*), and there was a continued discussion in the *kovtzim*. A few months later, the Rebbe was *magiah* his *sichos* on the topic for a *likkut*,²³ and, again, questions were asked in the *kovtzim*, which the Rebbe answered at the farbrengen. This entire episode was especially unique since the entire issue had been raised *b'isarusa d'letata*, by a regular Chossid writing about a topic!
- **A letter in a Sefer Torah:** On Shabbos Parshas Chayeis Sara 5742, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of buying a letter in the *sefer Torah*, and that one thereby fulfills the mitzvah of writing a *sefer Torah* (according to some *poskim*). Over the following weeks, the Rebbe spoke about it again and it was discussed at length in the various *kovtzim*. On the second night of Chanukah, the Rebbe held a farbrengen, the bulk of which was dedicated to answering questions on the topic. The back-and-forth discussion continued over the following weeks in the *kovtzim* and farbrengens, and it was later published in several *likkutim* in *Likkutei Sichos*.
- **Sheva Mitzvos:** On Acharon Shel Pesach 5743, the Rebbe spoke about the obligation to teach non-Jews about the seven Noahide laws, something that the Rebbe would continue to expound on in much greater detail over the years to come. “After Shabbos,” Rabbi Gerlitzky relates, “I received a phone call from the Rebbe’s *mazkirus*: The Rebbe was asking that we should research the issue and find sources for the *sicha*. Following this directive, it became a major discussion in the ensuing *kovtzim*, and before Shavuos I received another phone call from Rabbi Groner: the Rebbe asked that all the *seforim* that had been mentioned should be brought to him. We put together a stack of *seforim*—from my house and from the yeshiva—and we brought them to the Rebbe. Sure enough, the *sicha* on Shavuos²⁴ for the *kinnus Torah* was about *sheva mitzvos*, and the Rebbe mentioned all of these *seforim*.
- **Relative Truth:** The *likkut* published for Shavuos 5743²⁵ discussed the eternity of every part of Torah, and that every single item in Torah was given to Moshe at Har Sinai. The Rebbe says there that even though there are opinions that certain areas of Torah were taken from outside sources (like the medical knowledge in *Gemara*), once the Rambam *paskened* that everything came from Moshe, it is impossible to learn otherwise. This sparked an interesting, though somewhat unrelated, question in the *kovetz* from Morristown: If one studies a viewpoint in Torah that was later proven to be unquestionably wrong to believe—like the notion that Hashem has an actual body, or that the *tzimtzum* is meant literally, or our case, that not everything in Torah is eternal—does studying such viewpoints constitute Torah learning? The writer proposed his own answer to the question, but at a following farbrengen, the Rebbe delved into the issue, revealing new depths into some of the most profound areas of Torah, all in response to a *he’ara* in a *kovetz*.²⁶
- **The Korban of Geirus:** The *likkut* that was published for Shabbos Parshas Mishpotim 5745²⁷ spoke about the *korban* that is brought as part of a *geirus*, and why the *geirus* is still complete without it. It was discussed in the following *kovtzim*, and later that year, when the newly-established Rambam cycle reached these *halachos*, the Rebbe instructed that the *likkut* should be reprinted *together with the he’aros*.

"I ASSUMED THAT SOME PEOPLE WOULD TRY TO FIND AN EXPLANATION FOR THIS... BUT, IN ALL OF THE KOVTZIM, I DID NOT FIND ONE PERSON WHO TRIED ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS!"

how things would develop in the years that followed.

On Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5744, the farbrengen went on longer than usual, and the Rebbe said that he would answer the questions on Rashi the following week.

No answers were published in the *kovtzim* that week. (Two people tried sending answers to the He'aros Ubiurim of Oholei Torah, but the editors decided against printing them, since the Rebbe had promised to answer the following week.) At the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke sharply about the fact that none of the *kovtzim* had proposed an answer.

"Being that there was a break between one farbrengen and another, I assumed that some people would try to find an explanation for this, which they would publicize for the benefit of the public in the weekly *kovtzim*. But, in all of the *kovtzim*, I did not find one person who tried answering the questions!"

After speaking bitterly about the fact that no-one seemed to be involved in the farbrengens, the Rebbe concluded by saying, "Next Shabbos, there won't be a farbrengen, and neither will there be in two Shabbosim and three Shabbosim from now. In four Shabbosim from now, *hut der Aibershter geholfen* that it will be Shabbos Mevorachim, so there will be a farbrengen. Do you want to take that away too?!"

And that's what happened. The next farbrengen was four weeks later, Shabbos Parshas Va'eira. During that time period the Rebbe farbrenged almost every week, so a break of a month without a farbrengen was a shocking occurrence.

At the long-awaited farbrengen, the Rebbe again asked questions on the Rashi and left them unanswered.

Rabbi Chaim Shaul Steinmetz, shliach in Sarasota, Florida, was a member of the *ma'areches* of Oholei Torah's He'aros Ubiurim in the early 5740s. He relates: "At the time, the Rebbe almost never edited the farbrengens, but he agreed to edit the questions of that week. We printed many copies of the edited *sicha* and spread them in the shuls of Crown Heights. (This practice continued later as well.)"

"People started writing *bli gvul*," Rabbi Gerlitzky says. "Hundreds of people submitted answers that week; men, women and children. Many of the answers were very similar to each other, so we organized the answers



COVER OF A KOVETZ HE'AROS PUBLISHED BY OHOLEI TORAH.

into different categories, and chose the ones that were written best, adding a note at the bottom with a list of people who had proposed similar answers."

"The following Shabbos," Rabbi Steinmetz says, "the Rebbe mentioned some of the answers that were offered, but rejected them on the basis that they were not in line with '*pshuto shel mikra*', the literal meaning of the *possuk*. The Rebbe answered the questions of the previous weeks, and asked a series of questions on another Rashi in Parshas Bo, on the *possuk* that says that the dogs didn't bark at the Yidden during *yetzi'as Mitzrayim*, and again, he left it unanswered. After Shabbos the questions were edited by the Rebbe and distributed."



"It was unbelievable: Wherever you went, walking down the street, in the store or in 770, everyone was discussing this Rashi. It took over the entire community, everyone was discussing the nature of dogs and how they bark... Everyone was excited and involved."

"The following week, Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, the entire crowd was waiting in suspense for the Rebbe to speak about the Rashi. Once again, the Rebbe said that the answers weren't in line with *p'shuto shel mikra*, and he provided the resolution. Again, he asked questions on a Rashi in Parshas Beshalach and left them unanswered."

That week, Rabbi Leibel Kaplan, shliach in Tzfas, was visiting from

Eretz Yisroel together with his young son Mendel. With his father's help, he wrote up his own answer to the question, and sent the paper to the Rebbe.

On Friday morning they received a fascinating note from the Rebbe. The Rebbe expressed his pleasure from the answer and instructed him to publish it in the *kovetz* (see sidebar). That Shabbos, when the Rebbe discussed the many answers that had been proposed, he mentioned that there were some points that fit according to *p'shat*, and thanked those who had proposed the answers (although they weren't fully sufficient). The Rebbe also told the young Mendel Kaplan to say *l'chaim*.

This exact system didn't continue after those three weeks, but from then on, whenever the Rebbe didn't finish answering the questions on Shabbos, the questions would be edited and published for the broader crowd to answer.

The New Style of Rashi Sichos

In 5746, the era of the *kovtzim* reached its apex. On Shabbos Vayakhel, the Rebbe addressed the question of Reb Velvel Rosenblum on a certain Rashi, and then he announced that, from now on, the Rashi *sichos* would follow a new *seder*.

"This time, we will speak about a Rashi that was already discussed in one of the *kovtzim*, where several questions were mentioned. From now on, this is how it should be: Before



The Rebbe's note to Mendel Kaplan:

"נהניתי במאד מקריאתו, ובפרט מהדיוק בהפרטים וכו' - ויציעו להדפס בא' הקובצ'ים
בצירוף הסברתו שלא יקשה מפרש"י טו, א: כל השירה כפולה."

I really enjoyed reading it, and especially the focus on the details—you should submit it for publishing in one of the *kovtzim*, where you should add your explanation as to how there would be no difficulty from Rashi 15,1: The entire song is doubled."

Shabbos, the crowd will propose one or more Rashis that require explanation.

"There are several advantages to doing it this way:

"It relieves me of the burden of finding a Rashi that hasn't been discussed yet.

"Additionally, this way we will be discussing a Rashi that the listeners

do not understand. Until now, it was possible that I would choose a Rashi that the crowd didn't find difficult, since the minds of people are not alike.

"The main thing: When the crowd proposes the Rashi to be discussed, it will enhance people's attention as they listen for the answers."

The Rebbe smiled and added, "I am not committing to speak about

every single question in Rashi that is brought up, and even when I do speak about a Rashi, I am not committing to resolving all the questions!"

The *kovtzim* then opened a new section, "*P'shuto shel Mikra*," and until the Rebbetzin's *histalkus* in 5748, the Rashi *sichos* were almost always based on questions of the crowd. After someone mistakenly asked a question on a Rashi that the Rebbe had already discussed (to the Rebbe's consternation at the farbrengen), the *kovtzim* also began printing a list of Rashis the Rebbe had already discussed in previous years.

Previously, over the years, the Rebbe would often tell Reb Yosef Waldman which Rashi he would be discussing on Shabbos.²⁸ But now that



it was chosen from one of the *kovtzim*, the Rebbe would ask to convey to Reb Yosef which *haeara* he was going to discuss. At times, the Rebbe was seen stopping on the way from his room to the shul holding a *kovetz* and showing Reb Yosef the precise page he'd later discuss.

Throughout the years, the Rebbe never ceased to fervently encourage more enthusiastic Torah study, and by extension, writing in the *kovtzei he'aros*. If fact, during the last "dollars" distribution to date, on 26 Adar I 5752, Rabbi Avraham Hecht came with his grandson to the Rebbe. When Rabbi Hecht mentioned that his grandson was studying in Morristown, the Rebbe told him: "You know that in

The Rebbe marks the Rashi that he would be discussing on Shabbos.

Morristown they put out *he'aros*; be sure to contribute to them!"¹

In the last *yechidus* that *bochurim* had with the Rebbe (as of now) in 5752, the Rebbe said:

"One must study all areas of Torah, and the entire Torah... especially through the study cycle of Rambam... and in addition to studying the *halachos* of Torah, one must toil in the *pilpul* and debate of Torah, to the extent that one innovates in Torah—true innovations, which are founded on the *klolim* of Torah, and become a part of Torah. This includes publicizing these innovations and publishing them. The study of Torah should be beyond any limitations, to the extent that the first thought that falls in one's mind in the morning is about Torah, and even when sleeping, one dreams about *pilpulim* in Torah!

"By increasing Torah-study, *nigleh* and Chassidus, and through spreading Torah, *nigleh* and Chassidus, *yafutzu ma'ayanosecha chutza*—this will speed up the coming of Dovid, King Moshiach, ultimately Moshiach himself, *teikef u'miyad mamash*."²⁹

For a detailed overview on the Rebbe's involvement in the he'aros and a collection of all the sichos in this regard, see: He'aros Ubiurim, Sefer Hayovel—Oholei Torah 5770; V'ha'er Eineinu B'Sorasecha—Morristown 5765. T

1. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 3, p. 184.
2. See Toras Menachem vol. 19, p. 45.
3. Hatomim vol. 1, p. 70.

4. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 2 p. 991.
5. Ra'd 4 Adar Sheini 5741.
6. Reb Yoel Kahn, *B'Darkei Hachassidim*, p. 189.
7. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5743 p. 1222
8. Iggeres Hakodesh Siman 26 (145,a).
9. Miketz 38,3.
10. See Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 1 p. 116-117; Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 1 p. 800-801.
11. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 15 p. 208.
12. Toras Menachem 5744 vol. 2 p. 576-577.
13. See Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 3 p. 1222.
14. See Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 2 p. 243.
15. See Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 1 p. 117
16. See e.g. Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 4 p. 292.
17. See e.g. Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 2 p. 426.
18. See Hisvaaduyos 5744 vol. 2 p. 825; Ibid vol. 3 p. 2082; Hisvaaduyos 5747 vol. 2 p. 717.
19. See 70, *A Time to Expand*, Derher, Nissan 5776.
20. See *The Written Torah*, Derher, Tammuz 5777,
21. Likkutei Sichos vol. 15, p. 129.
22. Vol. 31-35 *He'aros U'biurim*.
23. Likkutei Sichos vol. 22, p. 56.
24. Hisvaaduyos 5743 vol. 3, p. 1576.
25. Likkutei Sichos vol. 23, p. 33.
26. *Viho'er Eineinu* p. 109.
27. Later published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 26, p. 160.
28. See Derher....???
29. Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 1, p. 212-213