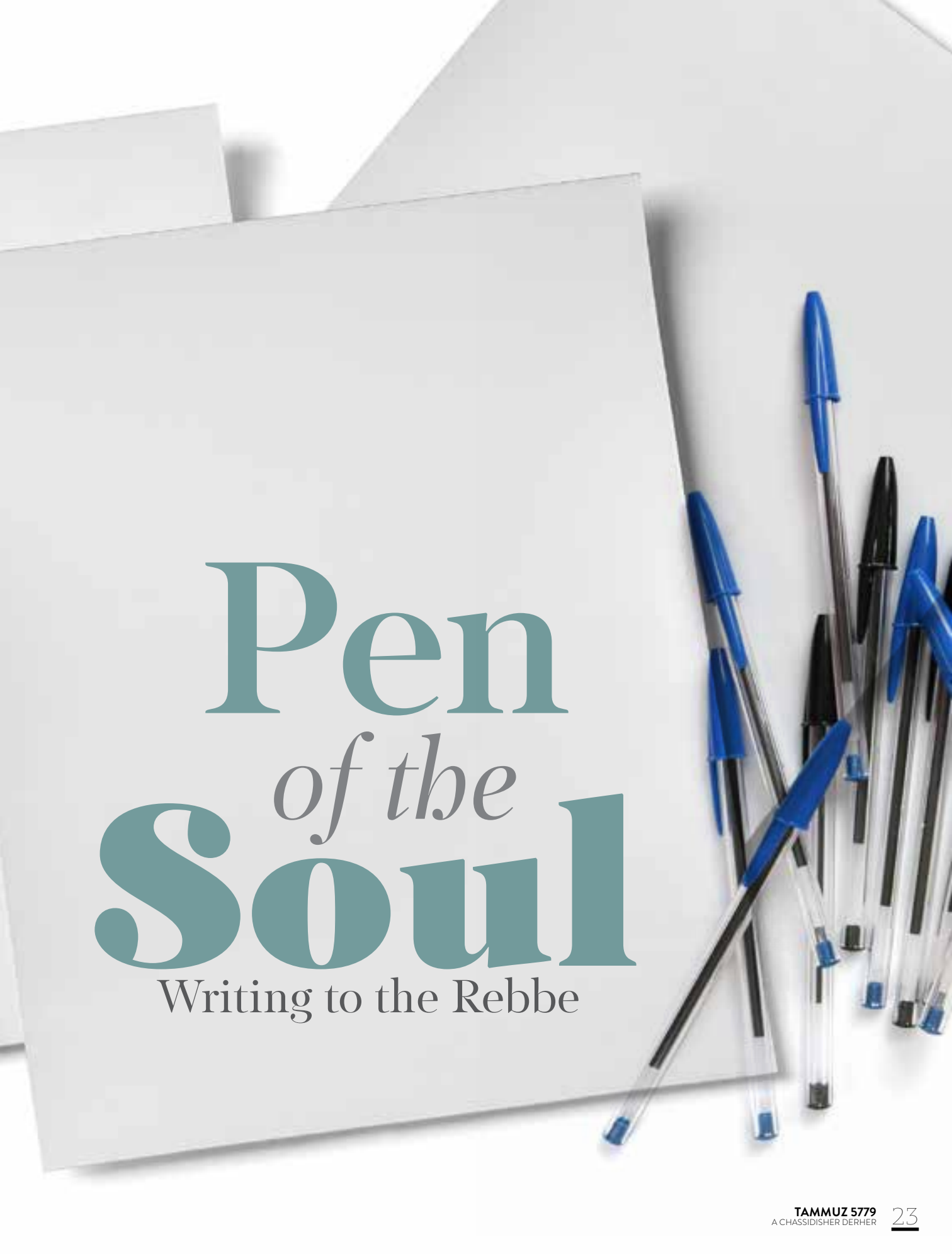


לזכות
שלוחי כ"ק אדמו"ר בכל אתר ואתר
להצלחה רבה ומופלגה בגו"ר

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' משה זלמן
וזוגתו מרת רבקה מרים
ומשפחתם שיחיו
גרינוולד
בית חב"ד, דאוונטאון לאס אנג'עלעס



13 ADAR 5731, V. SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 108395

A stack of white papers is shown, with several pens (blue and black) lying on the right side. The title 'Pen of the Soul' is printed in a large, teal-colored serif font, with 'of the' in a smaller, italicized serif font. Below the title, the subtitle 'Writing to the Rebbe' is printed in a smaller, dark grey serif font.

Pen *of the* Soul

Writing to the Rebbe

Throughout

Throughout the Rebbe's *nesius*, the primary avenue with which a person could personally communicate with the Rebbe was written correspondence. Even when *yechidus* was available, people were encouraged to keep their notes short and their conversations brief; additionally, opportunity for *yechidus* was reserved for rare occasions. And whereas *yechidus* was held in person and limited to people who could visit New York, people held long written correspondences with the Rebbe before ever meeting him even once.

So an individual's primary personal communication with the Rebbe would typically be through writing. When there was a concern, you would write a *tzetel* describing the issue and ask for a *bracha*; when you completed a project and wanted to report it to the Rebbe, you would write it up and send it in.

Anyone and everyone was welcome—and encouraged—to write to the Rebbe. The Rebbe read and answered letters from all over the world, and from people of all ages and lifestyles. As the years went on, the sacks of mail coming into 770 on a daily basis kept on growing and growing. It continues even more so today, as letters, emails, and faxes come in to the Ohel from around the world at all hours of the day and night.

One of the most important aspects of *hafatzas hamaayanos*, spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus, is to connect people to the source itself—to the Rebbe.

In 5709*, prior to the *histalkus* of the Frieddiker Rebbe, the Rebbe penned a fascinating letter to the legendary *mashpia* Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, where he writes to him on the topic of encouraging others to write to the Frieddiker Rebbe.

“...It is clear to you based on everything that you have seen, that the Rebbe's words and *brachos* are true... Your experience, and the experience of others, has shown that when one listened to the Rebbe it was good, and when one didn't listen, he had it bad... Someone who believes with complete faith—a faith that directs his entire being—that the outlook and *brachos* of a certain individual [i.e. the Rebbe] govern everything, and knows that his friend must make an important decision in any area in life, even a life threatening issue—if there is even the slightest chance that his friend will listen to him, then out of basic decency, *ahavas Yisroel*, *pikuach nefesh*, etc. he would chase after him and tell him: ‘Have mercy on yourself, your family, and all that is yours! Do not rely on your own judgement! Learn Chassidus, connect with the Rebbe, do as he says, and then you will succeed!’”

A Chossid knows that the Rebbe is the first and final address for everything he needs physically and spiritually; the one who shares our pain and who cares the most for our joy. Writing isn't only a means of requesting the Rebbe's *bracha* or giving him a report. Through the pen, a person connects his soul with the Rebbe. A Chossid understands that when the Rebbe receives his letter, the Rebbe will not only read what is written within the lines, but also what is written between the lines, what is really taking place in the heart and mind of the sender.



I Haven't Received Your Report!

In addition to asking for *brachos* when something is needed—which comes naturally for anyone who is aware of the tremendous power of turning to the Rebbe—a fundamental part of writing to the Rebbe is to report to him, in a detailed manner, on what one is doing.

In countless letters, the Rebbe asks for people to write about how they fared in *limmud haTorah*, *nigleh* and Chassidus, davening, and activities to influence their surroundings with the light of Chassidus. Just as well, the Rebbe asked for reports of good news in health, *parnasa*, and all material areas of life.

As the Rebbe explained it, there are several elements to this. The first is for the benefit of the writer himself: accountability. If people make it a practice of giving detailed reports to the Rebbe of what they learned and accomplished, this would motivate them to work to have things to report, and avoid having embarrassingly empty reports. The Rebbe told this to shlichim and public activists, and also to young *bochurim* in their teens. (If you think about it, this is astounding: The Rebbe's time was infinitely precious; yet he wanted to read about the nitty gritty of individuals' lives, simply as a method of motivation for Chassidim!)

In order for this to be effective, however, the reports need to be detailed. As the Rebbe wrote to an activist,

“When you write in a general manner, it doesn't add in your motivation, for when you suffice with a general description, the description need not change if the activities grow much greater, nor need it change if they become much smaller. On the other hand, when you know that you will need to write a detailed report... your entire approach is different.”¹

In addition to the benefit that the *writer* receives, the Rebbe also expressed many times that by reporting to him about their lives, Chassidim were fulfilling the precept of *ahavas Yisroel* to... the Rebbe himself. “Of all the letters I receive, very few of them contain information that brings me pleasure,” the Rebbe writes in a letter. “Hence, any letter in this vein is very precious to me...”² This is especially true about good news; but even if there isn't anything good to report, the very connection established through the letter is important.

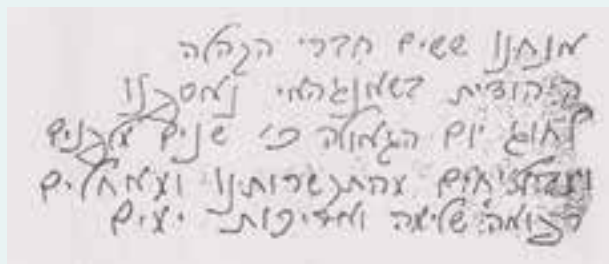
Don't Make My Mistake...

Rabbi Yehoshua Hadad, who was a shliach in Milan, Italy until his recent passing, studied as a *bochur* in Brunoy, France. He related:

“One year, as part of the celebration of Lag Ba'omer, we rented buses and brought about 200 Sephardic children to spend a whole day in the yeshiva in Brunoy. The children

Chassidim relate: In the year 5707*, the Frierdiker Rebbe commemorated 20 years since his release from prison on Yud-Beis Tammuz, 5687*. Being that he was not in the best of health at the time, our Rebbe orchestrated a campaign encouraging Chassidim from all over the world to send good wishes along with *besuros tovos* to the Frierdiker Rebbe to strengthen his health. Many of the telegrams that arrived in English and French were rewritten by the Rebbe in Lashon Hakodesh for the Frierdiker Rebbe to read and enjoy. (Some of these manuscripts can be found in "Tzaddik La'Melech" vol. 3 pg. 118.)

A telegram the Rebbe transcribed for the Frierdiker Rebbe:



אנחנו ששים חברי הקהלה היהודים בשאנגהאי נאספנו לחוג יום הגאולה כ' שנים מלפנים ומבטיחים מהתקשרותינו ומאחלים רפואה שלמה ואריכות ימים

We, sixty members of the Jewish community in Shanghai, gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the *yom hageula*. We pledge our *hiskashrus* and we wish you a *refua sheleima* and long life.

davened with us, ate with us and soaked up the spirit of the yeshiva.

"The *mashpia* and director of the yeshiva, Reb Nissan Nemanov, reported to the Rebbe about this event, and he shared with me the Rebbe's response. As I recall, the Rebbe implied that he regularly receives so much bad news—people constantly writing about problems with family, health or with livelihood—that he craved good news. And he chastised Reb Nissan for waiting an entire week before writing: 'It is a shame that you delayed so much when you have good news...'

"When Reb Nissan finished reading the Rebbe's letter to me, he said: 'One day you will be the Rebbe's shliach, and you will need to notify him about various events. Don't make my mistake. When you have something good to report, you must write immediately and let the Rebbe know.'

"I didn't take his instruction sufficiently to heart. There came a time, when I was the Rebbe's shliach in Milan,

"I stole a glance at the Rebbe's face and saw pure joy shining from his face. 'Why didn't I know about any of this until today?'"

that I created a special album about my Torah programs in five different places within the Sephardi community. I wrote down the names of all the children—193 in all—along with their mothers' names, teachers' names and the courses of study. When I presented this album to the Rebbe, he looked at it for a long while, reading every single name. As he was reading, I stole a glance at the Rebbe's face and saw pure joy shining from his face. When he finished, he asked me, 'Why didn't I know about any of this until today?'

"I tried to correct my error and send a monthly report to the Rebbe about my activities, but sometimes it happened that I got delayed. I then got a letter from the Rebbe: 'Your letter was received after a long break... and if your excuse is that you didn't write because there wasn't anything to write about, then that should suggest to you that... you have to work to have something to write about.'"

Lamenting the fact that people only realize the need to write letters when they're in distress and in need of a bracha, the Rebbe often referred to the quote of the Frierdiker Rebbe about "צרות-חסידים"—Chassidim who are only in touch when they have *tzaros*.

In fact, the Rebbe wrote on several occasions that if Chassidim would write when they had good news to report, Hashem would minimize the need to write letters in more desperate times. "I believe I've already told you or written in the past: If only *anash* would be accustomed to notifying [me] when there is good news to report. This way, Hashem would minimize the need to report other things like the one in your letter [i.e. sad news]. To be sure, even in the times of the Alter Rebbe there were complaints about people refraining from reporting good news. But let that not serve as an indicator of behavior for ensuing generations. For as we have seen, already then the Rabbeim vehemently protested this practice..."³

*Keep On Writing...
But Keep In Mind Who You're Writing To*

The Rebbe always urged people to continue writing and reporting their activities, whether or not they received answers (due to the extreme shortage of the Rebbe's time). When rumors were going around that the Rebbe had said

to stop writing, the Rebbe made sure to correct them. The Rebbe always assured Chassidim that their letters are not a burden on him, and the Rebbe's Igros are full of expressions indicating that he expected letters more often: "After a long intermission, I received your letter..."

Following the heart attack on Shemini Atzeres 5738*, immediately after Yom Tov the Rebbe insisted that all the sacks of mail that had arrived for him over the past few days be brought to him, so that he could begin reading and answering them—disregarding the doctors' directives to rest...

Although there was such an emphasis to continue writing frequently, when some people began to mistake writing to the Rebbe as the main objective and wrote things that were insignificant or even untrue—so long as they had what to write to the Rebbe—the Rebbe admonished this sort of behavior:

"There are those who believe that first and foremost, they must write letters to me, the more the merrier, without taking into account who is writing, what they have done, the subject about which they write, and so on. They are so desperate that at times they must tire themselves until they actually come up with something,

and worse—they think up what to write about, even if it's not a real thing, as long as they have what to write...

"Therefore, it is important that we be clear on this subject: Before writing a letter (regardless of to whom it is addressed), think twice if it is really necessary that it be written, or if it is merely a waste of time; both the time of the sender, as well as the time of the recipient..."⁴

Reports From Shluchim

There was a specific emphasis that shluchim report on their activities, just as any messenger would report back to their employer as a basic duty. When the Rebbe later sent "*bochurim shluchim*" in the 5730s*, he specifically asked them to appoint one *bochur* who would be tasked with reporting back monthly about their activities and studies.

Shluchim throughout the years were expected to send in regular reports to the Rebbe's secretariat, and some were told to give in detailed reports of their daily schedules, hour by hour!

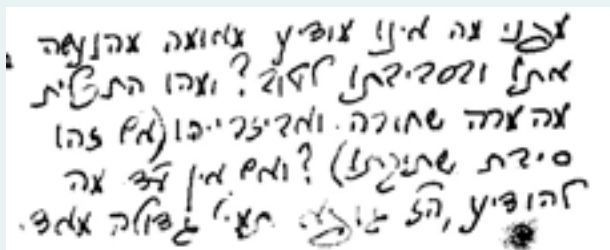


YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM113402

THE REBBE RECEIVES PA"NI, EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5748*.

Where Is The Good News?

This powerful message in *ksav yad kodesh* was written as a postscript to a *michtav klali-prati* sent to Reb Sholom Posner on 25 Adar, 5710* (the full letter appears in *Igros Kodesh* vol. 3 p. 258):



מפני מה אינו מודיע מאומה מהנעשה אתו ובסביבתו לטוב? ומהו התכלית מהמרה שחורה ואביזרייהו (אם זהו סיבת שתיקתו)? ואם אין ע"ד מה להודיע, ה"ז גופא תמל' גדולה מאד.

Why don't you notify [the Rebbe] at all about the good that goes on with you and in your surroundings? What is the purpose of all this despondent behavior, or a fraction thereof (if this is the reason for your silence)? And if you don't have what to write about at all, that, in its own right, is a very puzzling matter!



CHASSIDIM WAIT IN LINE TO GIVE THEIR PA"N TO THE REBBE, 24 ELUL 5741*.

What About An Answer?

Today, we don't have the merit to receive written answers from the Rebbe in the way we once did. But even before Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe would not always give written answers to the reports that were sent to him. In fact, as the years went on and Lubavitch grew, it was quite unusual to receive a personal response from the Rebbe.

When people complained about the fact that the Rebbe hadn't given a written response to their requests for *brachos*, the Rebbe pointed out that they were missing the point: the actual fulfillment of the *bracha* (see sidebar).

The same is true today. As the Rebbe famously wrote in a letter shortly after the Friediker Rebbe's *histalkus*, "If you will stand strong in your *hiskashrus* to him without paying attention to the arguments of the *yetzer hara*, and you will send your question to the Ohel, דער רבי, וועט דער רבי, געפינען א וועג ווי עס צו ענטפערן, the Rebbe will find a way to answer you..."⁵ During other times that Chassidim couldn't physically reach the Rebbe—e.g. in times of war and behind the Iron Curtain—they would write to the Rebbe with the certainty that he would find a way to come to their aid.



THE REBBE STANDS AT THE DOOR OF HIS ROOM TO RECEIVE PA"NIM, EREV ROSH HASHANAH 5749*.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 199309

Rabbi Asher Heber was a child during World War II, when the Rebbe lived in Paris. He relates:

“It was apparent that the Nazis might soon invade France, and my father was still undecided as to whether he should leave Paris. He had established a good business and was making a lot of money. He had to make a choice: to remain in Paris or emigrate to the United States with the entire family.

“As usual, whenever he had a problem and didn’t know what to do, he went to the Rebbe and asked the Rebbe’s opinion.

“The Rebbe said, ‘You are a Chossid. Send a letter or a telegram to my father-in-law.’ So my father said, ‘But there’s a war going on now! No letters are crossing the border, and I doubt there are any telegrams or telephone calls that can be made.’

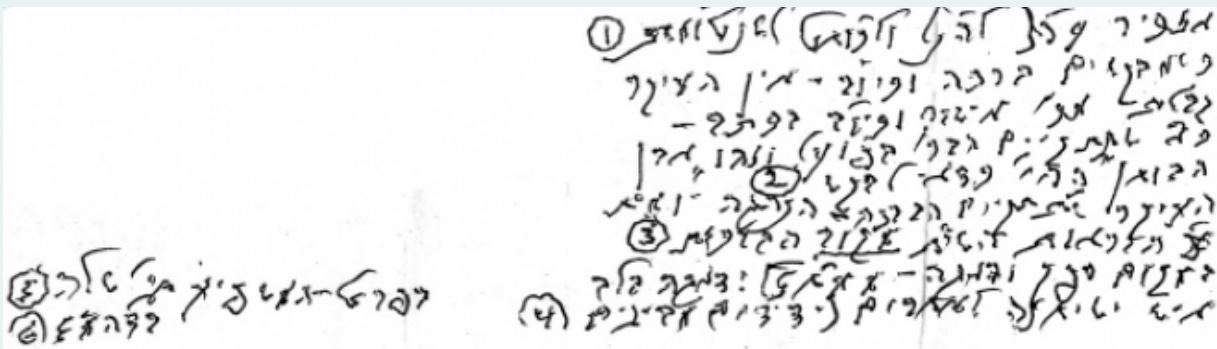
“As a Chossid,’ the Rebbe continued, ‘you should know that the Rebbe does not necessarily have to receive a telegram or a letter or a telephone call to know the question that you are asking, and you don’t necessarily have to receive a telegram or a letter or a telephone call from the Rebbe to know what the answer is.’

“As a Chossid you should know...you don’t necessarily have to receive a telegram or a letter or a telephone call from the Rebbe to know what the answer is.”

“Hearing that, my father went down to the local Western Union office and he announced that he wanted to send a telegram to Otwock, where the Frierdiker Rebbe was residing.

“The agent sitting behind the desk started laughing. He said, ‘Are you crazy? You can’t do that! It’s impossible! There’s a war going on. There’s no communication between Poland and France.’

“But my father insisted. The agent looked askance at my father, as if to say: ‘If you’re crazy enough and you want to try, we’ll attempt it.’ So my father formulated the letter, and he said, ‘This is what I want you to send.’



1) אזכיר עה"צ להנ"ל ולכוח"ט לשנטומ"ת [= על הציון להנזכר לעיל ולכתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה] 2) כשמבקשים ברכה וכיו"ב [= וכיוצא בזה] - אין העיקר קבלת מכ"תב] אישור, וכיו"ב בכתב - כ"א [= כי אם] שתתקיים הבר' [כה] בפועל וזהו "אבן הבוחן" ההי' כדאי לבקש 3) העיקר שתתקיים הברכה - הנהגה יומית ע"פ [= על פי] הוראות השי"ת [= השם יתברך] מקור הברכות 4) במקום ספק ודאגה - אמחז"ל [= אמרו חכמינו ז"ל]: דאגה בלב איש ישיחנה לאחרים [ידידים מבינים] 5) בפרט - המשפיע תל' שלה 6) בדהמ"ז [= בדיקת המזוזות]

1) I will mention the said request by the Tziyun [of the Frieddiker Rebbe], and a *bracha* for a *ksiva vachasima tova* *leshana tova umesukah*. 2) When one asks for a *bracha* and the like, the main point is not to receive a receipt of confirmation [etc.] in writing, rather that the *bracha* actually be fulfilled, and this determines if it was beneficial to make the request [in the first place]. 3) The fulfillment of the *bracha* comes primarily by conducting yourself each day according to the directives of Hashem, the source of *brachos*. 4) In a place of doubt and worry, Chazal say: "If one's heart worries, he should speak of it to others"—[meaning] knowledgeable acquaintances. 5. And specifically your *mashpia*. 6. You should check your *mezuzos*.

"As he awaited the answer, he continued to be very much in doubt whether he should go to a strange country and start all over again. Here he was established and successful. He really preferred to remain in Paris.

"The next morning he woke up with a clarity—although the day before he had been completely in doubt, completely in the dark as to what to do, he woke up with the clear realization and with no doubt in his mind whatsoever that the family must leave Paris and go to the United States. And that's exactly what we did. Our lives were saved because of that."⁶

It should be noted that regarding guidance on specific issues, the Rebbe gave us several avenues by which to receive our answer. (This applied even before Gimmel Tammuz, once the Rebbe started having less time to answer every specific question.)

With issues regarding *avodas Hashem*, the Mishnah says "*Asei lecha rav*;" medical concerns should be directed to a doctor (or more than one doctor); business advice should be discussed with close acquaintances who are well-versed in the subject ("*yedidim mevinim*"), and so on.⁷

The Rebbe also repeated time and again, that all the letters he receives are brought to the Ohel, the source of all blessings, and there is therefore no need to wait for an individual response each time for the *brachos* come regardless. (This was said publicly at farbrengens, as well as to many individuals who came to the Rebbe for "Dollars.")

In Your Own Language

There were no age limits as to who could write to the Rebbe. Rabbi Chaim Shlomo Diskin relates: "The one time of the year when people would join the Rebbe at the Ohel was the day before Rosh Hashanah and, in 5742*, I decided to go as well.

"I got there early in the morning, just before the Rebbe arrived, and I picked a good spot to stand—as close as possible to the Tziyun—from where I could see the Rebbe clearly.

"First he davened; then he opened the huge sack that he had brought with him and started pulling out letters one by one. He would read each letter very quickly, tear it and let it fall onto the Tziyun. He read hundreds of letters—one after the other, one after the other, reading each one,

tearing it and letting it fall. After a while, it seemed as if a cascade of paper was falling, falling, falling onto the Tziyun.

“Here he was, in his 80s, standing for hours on end, reading an endless stream of letters that contained all the troubles of so many Jews, letter after letter.

“As I was watching him, he pulled out a packet of papers—not white like the other letters, but colorful, like drawing paper—and started reading these colorful letters just as he did the others. When he tore them and they were falling before my eyes, I recognized from the big square letters and fanciful decorations that they were from children in kindergarten. A teacher somewhere must have told the kids to request blessings for the new year, and then sent all their scribblings in one packet.

“At that moment it occurred to me that just a second ago, the Rebbe might have been reading a letter from a poor person asking for livelihood, or another asking for recovery from a terrible illness, or a CEO asking for success in a business deal, and now he was reading a child’s letter and giving it the same treatment as the rest. He had such a feeling for children that their little hopes, wishes and requests mattered to him just as much as those of any person of stature.

“My wife was a teacher at the Yavne Chabad School in Kiryat Tivon. While she worked there, the teachers decided that the children should write letters to the Rebbe, knowing how seriously the Rebbe took these letters.

“One of the boys was especially interested, and he asked his teacher many questions. “Where does the Rebbe live?” She told him in the United States. “Does he sometimes come to Israel?” She replied that he never had.

“This boy decided, therefore, to send some of the land of Israel to the Rebbe. So, in his envelope, he included a handful of sand from the land.

“The teacher saw that this one letter was thicker than the rest, and she asked the boy what was inside. He replied that it was sand, a gift to the Rebbe. She was uncertain whether to mail it or not. She imagined the Rebbe opening the letter and the sand falling out, making a mess on his desk. But then she decided that it was not her place to scrap this boy’s gift, so she sent his letter along with the others.

“A short while later, the Rebbe’s answer arrived. This boy got the same blessing as all the other kids, but his letter also contained a postscript. The Rebbe had written, “P.S. Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness in sending me sand from the Holy Land.”⁸

Sometimes, people don’t even express what was on their minds in their letters, yet the Rebbe reads in between the lines and into their hearts. In *reshimos*, the Rebbe



IVAR 5730, MEMKEH SCHUKLER

relates in wondrous terms the story of the Rashbatz and the Tzemach Tzedek: On his first trip to Lubavitch, Reb Michel Apotzker gave him a *pa”n* to deliver to the Tzemach Tzedek, with the condition that he not read it. He could not hold himself in and took a peek—and both sides were completely empty. When he eventually gave the letter to the Tzemach Tzedek, the Tzemach Tzedek read the *pa”n*!

In our generation there are many such stories. “I had a student at Ohel Chana who was struggling with her personal issues,” Rabbi Raphael Aron of Melbourne, Australia, relates. “I encouraged her to write to the Rebbe, which she did. She wrote a very short, two-sentence letter



İYAR 5730, MEMKEH SCHMUKLER

which read something like, ‘Dear Rebbe, I’m having a very hard time. I don’t know if I want to stay here.’

“The Rebbe responded with a detailed, three-page letter! It was amazing—phenomenal really—because he wrote to her about things that she never mentioned in her letter, like for example, the divorce of her parents. He advised her to develop a separate relationship with each parent and not to get involved in their fight with each other. ‘You have a father and you have a mother,’ the Rebbe wrote. ‘They were your father and your mother before they were divorced, and they always will be.

“He had such a feeling for children that their little hopes, wishes and requests mattered to him just as much as those of any person of stature...”

Therefore, you have to nurture the relationship you have with each of them and dismiss the thought that your family is not the way you would like it to be.’

“This girl was just amazed by this letter, and she took his advice to heart. Her parents were feuding and fighting, and she was feeling very much compromised. And then the Rebbe showed her that despite of all that was going on she could continue to maintain a separate relationship with each of them. But what blew her away more than anything else was that she never confided with the Rebbe on any of this, so how did he know?”⁹

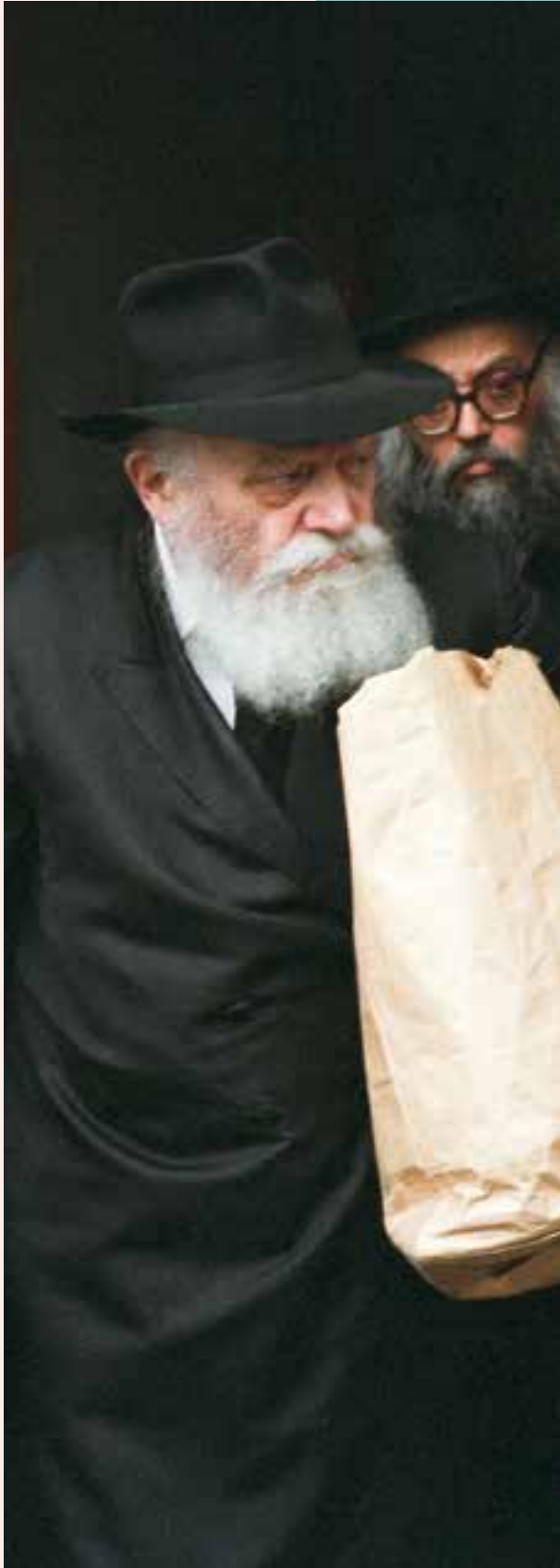
Stronger and Stronger

“The shepherds of Yisroel will not forsake their flock,” the Rebbe says. “They remain connected with them now exactly the way they were at the very moment, the very day following the *histalkus*.

“Therefore, we must hold steadfast onto the Rebbe’s ‘*kliamke*’ (doorknob); we must hold onto the open door. We go to the Ohel with our requests, we write *pidyonos*, we ask for *brachos*, and that the Rebbe should also give us the appropriate vessels to receive the *brachos* with.”¹⁰

Indeed, the numbers of people turning to the Rebbe for *brachos* and guidance continues to grow greater and greater. “This includes the idea of growth... as is emphasized in the *panim*: The Baal Hatziyun sees that the number of *panim* continue to grow year after year, and all of the matters that are written in the *panim* continue to grow, as well as the fulfillment of the *hachlatos*.”¹¹

1. Igros Kodesh, letter 4,785.
2. Igros Kodesh vol. 13, p. 164.
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 52
4. 27 Mar-Cheshvan, 5749
5. Igros Kodesh vol. 3 pg. 266.
6. My Encounter with the Rebbe, Living Torah disc 43, program 170.
7. See *sichas* Shabbos Parshas Beshalach and Motzei Shabbos Teruma, 5748.
8. *Here’s My Story*, “A Child’s Gift,” Erev Shabbos Vayechi 5776.
9. *Here’s My Story*, “Quantity or Quality,” Erev Shabbos Vayera 5777.
10. Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 5740.
11. 16 Shevat 5749.



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 4739

THE REBBE EXITS 770 FOR THE OHEL, HOLDING LETTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE OHEL, IYAR 5747*.

How To Write To The Rebbe

Preparations:

Before writing to the Rebbe, men go to the *mikveh* (see sidebar).

In the widely known letter the Rebbe issued ahead of the Frierdiker Rebbe's first *yahrtzeit*, he solicits those who had the merit of beholding the [Frierdiker] Rebbe's holy countenance, to dedicate time before they embark on the actual formulation of the words, to remember the times when they saw him, and relive those golden moments to the best of their ability.¹

There are certain accepted traditions among Chassidim when writing: To wash *negel vasser* before beginning to write; to wear a hat and jacket; to wear a gartel if married; and to write on a paper that doesn't have lines.



JEM 271283

Beginning To Write

The *pan*: *Pan* is an abbreviation for *pidyon nefesh*, “redemption of the soul,” and is given only to a Rebbe. When the Rabbeim would begin accepting *panim* in the early stages of their leadership, this was seen as a sign that they had taken the mantle of *nesius*. It is given together with money, referred to as *dmei pan*, which is given as the redemption of the soul.

Traditionally, the *pan* is written briefly and succinctly, with words that are chosen carefully. One should not describe outright one’s deficiencies; instead, ask for the correction of that area.² When you ask for a *bracha*, don’t ask halfway: ask for open and revealed *brachos*. Don’t ask for negative things for yourself,³ and certainly not for others. Two people who are writing to the Rebbe on the same day should not write about the same person.⁴

Panim are traditionally given on very special occasions: on a birthday, on Erev Rosh Hashanah, etc. and usually written by hand.

Then there are the regular letters and reports to the Rebbe. These are written as a typical letter with a date on top—something that the Rebbe was particular about—and over the years, they were often typed. This is the typical means by which people communicate with the Rebbe: sending reports, delineating situations and asking for advice, and so on. (People would often write letters to the Rebbe and enclose within it a separate page of their *pan*.)

There are a few directives to keep in mind when writing:

- The handwriting should be clear. The Rebbe said that as everything holy must be nice and beautiful, the same is true with this. Some Chassidim would spend hours rewriting their letter until it was completely clear.⁵
- People should generally write for themselves, as they are more comfortable to fully express themselves directly to the Rebbe, and things can be gleaned from between the lines.⁶
- When people asked for *brachos*, the Rebbe would often tell them that they should include their level and situation in Torah and mitzvos.
- When one has an issue that needs to be solved, he should create “vessels” to receive the *brachos*; namely, increasing in Torah and mitzvos.
- If one isn’t by the Ohel, the letter can be placed in one of the Rebbe’s *sefarim* with the intent of sending it to be read at the Ohel when possible.⁷
- There were several times that the Rebbe told people to look back at the copies of their previous letters to the Rebbe (where they could see how their lives had changed so drastically), indicating that Chassidim should keep a copy of their letters in their possession.

The Rebbe always encouraged people to write in the language they were most comfortable with. This refers both to the actual language—the Rebbe encouraged them to write in their native language (though the answers would be limited to the languages of the secretariat)—and



to the writing style. “Continue writing in the style of your own and not of others,” the Rebbe writes to one woman.⁸

“I will read your *pan* at the Tziyun. But I was shocked to read in one of your *panim*, ‘The informers should have no hope!’ Is this what you must use [a *pan*] for? Furthermore: for this the Rebbe my father-in-law should tear himself away from Gan Eden, and go to the Beis Din above to ask that... *Gevald* Reb....!”

The Nusach

Traditionally, the *panim* would begin with the following words:

אנא לעורר רחמים רבים ממקור הרחמים והחסדים האמיתיים ע"ד
מכניסי רחמים כמבואר בתשובת מהרי"ב ז"ל בעבור

“I am hereby asking to arouse great mercies from the source of true mercies and kindnesses, like the [angels who] bring our request for mercy [before Hashem], as is explained in the responsa of the Maharib.”

This is the version quoted in the Rebbe’s *reshimos*.¹⁰ The Maharib’s responsa is referenced because he discusses the appropriateness of asking one’s requests through a *tzadik*, and why it is allowed.

However, in a *sicha* from 5710*, the Rebbe said that if it were up to him, he would change this practice. The *pan* is not the appropriate place to be justifying why we can write to the Rebbe—“as is explained in the responsa of the Maharib”—and that it was also inappropriate to tell

the Rebbe where to arouse great mercies from—“from the source of mercies and kindnesses.”¹¹

Mikveh

“When was the last time you went to *mikveh*?” asked Rabbi Hodakov of the *bochur* standing in front of him. This was no random question to a random *bochur*. It turns out that the Rebbe had received a letter from this *bochur*, and the Rebbe had asked Rabbi Hodakov to hastily find out about this *bochur*’s “observance” of going to *mikveh*. As it turned out, he had not been to the *mikveh* in quite some time...

1. Igros Kodesh vol. 4, p. 143.
2. Igros Kodesh Admu”r Harashab p. 154.
3. Igros Kodesh letter 1,067, to a person wrote in his *pan* that he was ready to accept suffering instead of his son. After explaining that this was a terrible thin-g to write in *pan*, the Rebbe wrote that he would skip those lines when reading it.
4. See Igros Kodesh Admur Harashab p. 205.
5. Likutei Sichos vol. 39, p. 367.
6. See yechidus from 5734, published in *Hiskashrus*, issue 516.
7. Igros Kodesh vol. 4, p. 143.
8. Mikdash Melech vol. 3, p. 188.
9. Igros Kodesh letter 1,144.
10. Choveres 156.
11. Toras Menachem vol. 1, p. 39.