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לזכות החיילים בצבאות ה'  
**מנחם מענדל** בן ח' מושקא שי'  
לרגל יום הולדתו **בז' מר-חשון**

**אסתר הגי' רחל** בת ח' מושקא תח'  
לרגל יום הולדתה **בי"א מר-חשון**

**שמעון** בן ח' מושקא שי'  
**שיינא** בת ח' מושקא תח'

יה"ר שיגדלו חי"לים בצבא **כ"ק אדמו"ר**  
מתוך שמחה, בריאות והרחבה



# NOTHING *is* impossible

## AN INTERVIEW WITH RABBI NISSEN MANGEL

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Well known today as a prominent Chabad Chossid and rav, Rabbi Nissen Mangel is originally of Polish Chassidische descent and a survivor of the Holocaust. After losing his father and being separated from his mother, he arrived at a Litvishe Yeshiva in England and eventually ended up in Tomchei Temimim of Montreal. It was there that he gained an appreciation for Chassidus and a connection to the Rebbe.

**This article has been collected from various anecdotes shared by Rabbi Mangel on multiple occasions, as well as interviews with *A Chassidisher Derher*.**

MY ENCOUNTER  
with the  
REBBE

In preparation for this article, we were greatly assisted by two interviews with Rabbi Mangel conducted by Jewish Educational Media's "My Encounter with the Rebbe" project, selections of which are included below. We extend our thanks to Rabbi Elkanah Shmotkin, Rabbi Yechiel Cagen and the My Encounter team for making them available to us.

**A**fter miraculously surviving the horrors of the Holocaust, Rabbi Mangel arrived as a young bochur in London, England together with his sister. There he enrolled in Yeshivas Netzach Yisroel where he excelled in his learning.

In an effort to help his mother leave Czechoslovakia and come to Canada, Reb Nissen emigrated to Canada where he eventually joined Tomchei Temimim of Montreal.

Coming from a background of Polish Chassidish Jews, Reb Nissen was not originally a Chabad Chossid and at first kept to himself and refrained from exploring Chabad Chassidus. With time, however, the yeshiva environment intrigued him. Inspired by the mash-pi'im Reb Volf Greenglas and Reb Moshe Eliyahu Gerlitzky, Reb Nissen adopted a Chassidish lifestyle.

The Rebbe took special interest in Reb Nissen from the very beginning, when he began visiting the Rebbe. Throughout his numerous correspondences with the Rebbe, it becomes apparent that the Rebbe carefully guided his direction in life and served for him quite literally as a "fatherly figure."

Taking notice of his informational and editorial abilities, the Rebbe appointed Reb Nissen to undertake many publishing projects under the auspices of Merkos Linyonei Chinuch. Perhaps as a consequence of the work he did, Reb Nissen merited to have an especially close relationship with the Rebbe.

## A Mouthpiece For Chassidus

It was my first visit to the Rebbe. Yud-Beis Tammuz 5712\*. I stood amongst the bochurim at the farbren-gen. Suddenly, the Rebbe looked in my

direction and asked a fellow bochur from Montreal, "Who is this bochur?" He told the Rebbe my name and the Rebbe handed me a big piece of marble cake.

In my first yechidus a few days later, the Rebbe asked me a number of questions about my learning. "Do you learn Shulchan Aruch every day?" "I learn it from time to time, and before Yomim Tovim," I answered. The Rebbe told me to start studying it every day and then inquired further: "Are you learning Tanach?" "No," I replied. The Rebbe instructed me to start learning Tanach. "Do you learn *dikduk*?" Again, I had to respond that I was not, and again he advised me to start learning it.

In that same yechidus, the Rebbe also spoke to me about trying to bring other Yidden I meet closer to Yiddishkeit. "Your approach should be the same as of the Baal Shem Tov," the Rebbe said. "How did he draw other Yidden closer to Hashem? He did not immediately tell them to do this or that. Rather he did them a favor: When he saw that someone had a problem, whether a financial issue or something else, the Baal Shem Tov tried to provide what was needed. Once you help someone *begashmius*, he will be much more receptive *beruchnius*. So instead of telling someone you meet about Torah and davening, first stop; listen, befriend him, invite him for a Shabbos meal. Then you can continue with tefillin, Shabbos observance, and kashrus."

The discussion turned to my return trip to Montreal. I couldn't afford to travel by train, let alone by plane, so I had come by bus and planned on returning the same way. "In that case," the Rebbe told me, "you can stop along the way." He listed several cities in Upstate New York, before continuing: "Wherever the bus stops, go to the local shul. Speak there and relay some Chassidus."

In my mind I wondered how I, a nineteen-year-old yeshiva student, could pull off a mission like that. "Don't worry," the Rebbe assured me, as if reading my mind. "Tzach will arrange it for you. Somebody will pick you up at the bus stations; you just need to speak." With that, the yechidus ended. A few hours later, Reb Dovid Raskin of Tzach called to get my itinerary. He arranged for me to speak at shuls in Albany and Utica where Rabbi Brikman picked me up and brought me around.

In a later yechidus the Rebbe asked me whether I am accustomed to visit shuls during the time of *shaleshudis* on Shabbos to relate words of Chassidus. I responded that I wasn't. When the Rebbe asked me why that is, I explained that the other bochurim don't go. Many of them had a much broader knowledge of Chassidus than I did. Those bochurim didn't go, so I never saw it as a requirement.

"Tell me," the Rebbe said, "if you see a thousand dollars on the street and nobody bothers to pick it up, you also won't pick it up? You should go to shuls every Shabbos and *chazzer* Chassidus." Starting the first week after



RABBI NISSEN MANGEL AS A CHILD BEFORE THE WAR.

I arrived back in Montreal, I began to visit a shul every Shabbos afternoon to share words of Chassidus and I continued to do so for years to follow.

In a letter to Reb Volf Greenglass the Rebbe wrote that he was shocked to hear from Hatomim Nissen Mangel that none of the *bochurim chazzer* Chassidus in shuls. The Rebbe instructed Rabbi Greenglass to see to it that every *bochur* goes out on Shabbos to *chazzer* Chassidus.

A few years later, the Rebbe asked me in *yechidus* if I am accustomed to learning the weekly portion of Likkutei Torah. I responded that I don't, but since I need to *chazzer* Chassidus in a *shul* each week—at that time the Likkutei Sichos had not yet been published—I extract a question, an answer and some discussion in the middle from a *maamar* in Likkutei Torah and that is what I convey.

Inside, my heart was pounding. Both Reb Peretz Mochkin and Rabbi Greenglass inculcated in us that when *chazzering* a *maamar* in the *yeshiva* it ought to be *divrei harav*, word for word. Here, I was “admitting” to the Rebbe that for the purpose of *chazzering* Chassidus in the shuls I would extract a theme from the weekly Likkutei Torah, and give it over. I explained that there was nowhere I could read a *vort* that was ready to repeat in a *shul* as is.

The Rebbe, while nodding his holy head, said “Very good.” I was relieved. I understood that when teaching Chassidus to others, it is acceptable for me to use my own words.

(It is interesting to note that two weeks later when the weekly *sicha* was given to the Rebbe, for the first time the Rebbe edited it as a *likkut*, for the purpose of relating Chassidus in the *shuls*—*תוכן עניינים ברא"ח לחזור בבתי*—*כנסיות*. Later, these weekly *likkuteim* became the first volumes of Likkutei Sichos.<sup>1</sup>)

The next time I was in *yechidus*,

the Rebbe suggested that I learn the weekly portion of Likkutei Torah each week, and that I should learn it five times!

“I don't mean that you should say it like Tehillim,” the Rebbe said. “You should know every word and understand it. Except when it says to look in other *sefarim* (Zohar, Kisvei Arizal etc.), that you don't need to know, but the *maamar* itself you should know thoroughly.”

Finishing my five-fold quota was not an easy task, especially since the Rebbe told me that it should be outside of the designated times of *seder hayeshiva*. Many times I would stay up learning until three or four o'clock in the morning.

Several weeks after the Rebbe gave me this instruction, I merited to enter *yechidus* once again. It was the week of Parshas Va'eschanan, and the Likkutei Torah was extraordinarily long. The Rebbe asked me how the learning was going and I said, “*Zayer shver*—very hard.” The Rebe smiled and told me to continue.

## The Toil Begins

Before Rosh Hashanah in the early years of the *nesius*, the Rebbe would send many individuals a *michtav kholi-proti* (standardized letter addressed to people individually) with a *bracha* of *kesiva vachasimah tovah*. Before or after his signature the Rebbe would often add a personal note to various recipients in his own *ksav yad kodesh*.

In the letter I received ahead of Rosh Hashanah 5720\*, the Rebbe wrote to me that “the time has come that you should start looking for a *shidduch*.”

Up until that point I had received many suggestions, but I didn't pursue them. Since the Rebbe wrote me this note, I began putting thought into the prospective *shidduchim* offers that



ONE OF THE WEEKLY LIKKUTIM WITH AN EDITED SICHA OF THE REBBE FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHARING IN SHULS.

came my way.

At one point, I was presented with seven unique *shidduchim* suggestions. I was without a father, my mother was thousands of miles away in Yerushalayim, and I was completely unsure how to proceed. The offers kept coming back to me and I had nobody with whom to consult.

I decided to travel to New York to go into *yechidus* and ask the Rebbe. When I handed the Rebbe my *tzetel*, the Rebbe took a pencil—as he usually did—and marked each of the names with “no.” The Rebbe negated all seven of them.

“I have a suggestion for you.” I was sure the Rebbe was going to suggest a *shidduch* for me, for that was the topic of discussion. The Rebbe continued, “I would like you to work for me,” and gave me two proposals, Likkutei Torah and the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch. Clearly, the Rebbe had something entirely different in mind.

The Rebbe went on to explain that there were many printing mistakes in the Likkutei Torah available at the time and it was also missing *maareh mekomos* and content that was removed by the censorship. The



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RABBI MANGEL RECEIVES A DOLLAR FROM THE REBBE.

Shulchan Aruch had *maareh mekomos* on the side, but most of the sources were missing. The Rebbe asked that I take on the project, and choose one of the seforim to start with.

I was already quite familiar with Likkutei Torah because I had learnt it five times as the Rebbe instructed me. On the other hand, I had never been through the Shulchan Aruch in its entirety, so I told the Rebbe that I'd like to start with that.

This is how I began my work for the Rebbe on various publishing projects. I considered it a special *zechus* and privilege that I merited for many years to come.

The Rebbe asked me to send him a report once a week on the progress I had made. This continued for the subsequent years.

After a few weeks of working on the *maareh mekomos* and *ha'aros* on the Shulchan Aruch, I had another *yechidus* with the Rebbe where I presented a sample of my work. My method was: I cited the source for the *din* in the Gemara, followed by the Rambam, and continued to bring all the later *poskim* until the *posek acharon*, the final opinion.

The Rebbe told me I should do it exactly the way the Alter Rebbe did it.

The style of the Alter Rebbe was only to cite the *posek acharon*. I redid the work, and continued this way for the rest of the Shulchan Aruch.

The next time I was in New York the Rebbe asked me to show him my work, which I did. The Rebbe seemed to be happy with it.

After reviewing my work, the Rebbe asked: "How do you work?" I responded by describing that many days I start early and work through the whole day, and—becoming so excited and involved in the work—I can continue working through the night only stopping before *chatzos* the next day in order to *daven* again. In other words, I often worked in shifts of 18 hours or more.

The Rebbe told me that that was not the right way to work, because after several days of working 18 hours, I will become so tired that for the next few days I wouldn't be able to work at all. "Just work from morning to evening, and then *layg zich tzu*—lay down, go to sleep and you'll start again the next day."

The Rebbe constantly urged me to produce faster. After my wedding, I was in *yechidus* when the Rebbe told me, "All four *chelakim* of the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch with all the

*maareh mekomos* and *ha'aros* can be finished within one year."

I thought to myself: The Rebbe is fluent in all of *Shas*, *Rambam*, *ris-honim*, *acharonim* and so on, so when the Rebbe reads the *din*, immediately he knows where the source is. Hence, for the Rebbe it is possible to finish the task in merely one year. I, on the other hand, need to look for the source of each *halacha* and therefore it takes me much time. It is like saying that a person can jump to the moon.

Of course, I didn't dare say this to the Rebbe. I just looked up and asked: "Mamash?"

"Why don't you emulate the Minchas Chinuch's style?" the Rebbe said. I explained that when searching for a source of a specific *halacha* it can often take me many hours until I find the correct one.

"You will see many times," the Rebbe said, "the Minchas Chinuch will discuss an entire *pilpul* without concluding it and then he writes: 'I don't have time to go any further; we will return to it at the right time.'" The Rebbe told me to do the same. I don't need to finish every *halacha* on the spot; if I can't find something, I can return to it later.

At one point after my *chasunah*, the Rebbe asked that every Motzei Shabbos I should bring him my work from the past week. This served as an incentive for me to get the job done sooner. Until then I had sent reports through the *mazkirus*, but bringing it to the Rebbe myself was entirely different.

Reb Yoel Kahn and Reb Aharon Chitrik would also come to the Rebbe's room at the same time as me, as they would report on the progress of projects they were working on. We would stand at the Rebbe's door immediately after Maariv and wait for the Rebbe to enter. After I gave the Rebbe the work that I did, I would use the opportunity to ask the Rebbe various questions

about things that I was learning and the Rebbe would answer me.

These weekly *yechidusen* continued for seven weeks, from Pesach until Shavuot 5722\*. I didn't spend much time talking, especially since the Rebbe hadn't made *havdalah* yet. Having the *zechus* to enter the Rebbe's room each week gave me an impetus, and I did the work at a faster pace.

Another thing that the Rebbe often tasked me with was to answer people's halachic questions. The process was: The Rebbe would give the question that he received to Rabbi Hodakov to pass on to me. I would address the person with the answer to their question (usually I would mention that the Rebbe asked me to write to them), then I gave it to Rabbi Hodakov, and once the Rebbe approved it I would send it to the person.

## On A Personal Level

Although I "worked" for the Rebbe, my relationship was purely of a Chossid to his Rebbe. Not only was the work not a contradiction to the personal connection, it enhanced it. As a result of the work that I did, I was *zoche* to correspond with the Rebbe more often than most people, including the above mentioned Motzei Shabbos *yechidusen* for seven weeks in a row. There were others that were given jobs by the Merkos office, but every task that I was given came directly from the Rebbe. The Rebbe told me on three occasions that he wanted me to work for him!

Although when he first asked me to work for him, the Rebbe told me to arrange payment with Rabbi Hodakov, I could never bring myself to do this. For the first two years of work I did before my *chasunah* I worked without pay.

When the *shidduch* with my wife was suggested, the Rebbe agreed that we should meet, and when we were ready to get engaged the Rebbe gave his *haskama* and *bracha*.

When my family was in Czechoslovakia we were quite well off financially *baruch Hashem*. Here in America on the other hand, I had absolutely nothing. Although I never discussed my experiences in the Holocaust with the Rebbe, in *yechidus* two weeks before my wedding the Rebbe asked me if I received any stipend from Germany. Anyone that survived the

### THE MANUSCRIPTS WILL PROTECT

Many times when I was learning as a *bochur* in Montreal, my mother asked me to come visit her in Yerushalayim. Whenever I asked the Rebbe if I should go, the Rebbe never allowed it. Once, my mother insisted very strongly that I should come, and she even wrote directly to the Rebbe. At the time I had not seen her in 15 years. The next time I was in *yechidus*, the Rebbe told me: "Since your mother wants so strongly that you should see her, she should travel to London and you should meet her there, but you should not go to *Eretz Yisroel*."

After our oldest child was born, my mother requested that I should come visit her with my wife and child. This time the Rebbe said that I can visit her in Yerushalayim. At the time, though I did have a lot of *sefarim* that I needed for my work, we did not own much furniture. All the money that my wife earned went straight to rent and other expenses.

Before we left, it was Friday when I asked Rabbi Hodakov if we could have a *yechidus* to ask the Rebbe for a *bracha*. Rabbi Hodakov said, "Don't you know

that there's no *yechidus* on Friday." Later in the afternoon I received a call from him saying that we can indeed go into *yechidus* before the Rebbe goes out to daven *Mincha*.

My wife was nervous that the silverware we received as gifts for our wedding could get stolen while we were away. There were new tenants who had moved into our building and she was afraid that they might break in.<sup>2</sup> She asked me to ask the Rebbe for a *bracha* that nothing be taken.

I did not want to cause the Rebbe heartache by sharing the details of who had moved into the building, so in our *tzetel* I asked for a *bracha* that when we return everything in our apartment should be untouched.

When the Rebbe read this in my note, he closed his holy eyes for a few moments and became very serious. He then opened his eyes and said, "What do you have in your apartment? A lot of *sefarim* and writings from your work. The *sefarim* and your *kesavim* will be a protection for everything to be alright in your apartment." I felt that the Rebbe was looking straight into my apartment at that moment.

war was eligible to receive money from the German government, but to qualify they had to be suffering from physical and emotional trauma such as nightmares, sleeping issues, or other effects. *Baruch Hashem* I had no such issues and I wouldn't claim anything that wasn't true.

That very day, I had received my only check from Germany totaling merely \$387 dollars and I said this to the Rebbe. The Rebbe told me: "A *chasunah* is expensive, buy whatever you need and I will pay for it." Although I was indeed lacking funds, I did not want to ask the Rebbe to cover any of it.

One week before my wedding, I went into *yechidus*. During the *yechidus* I asked the Rebbe what I should do after the *chasunah*. The Rebbe said again that I should continue to work for him. "Tell me how much you are owed for your past work, and you will be paid. If you ask more than you owe we will forgive you, if you ask for less you will forgive us. Speak to Rabbi Hodakov and he will pay you. You should also discuss how much you would like to be paid in the future."

On the morning of the wedding Rabbi Hodakov came over to me. He said: "The Rebbe gave strict instructions that Nissen Mangel cannot go to the *chupah* until he makes arrangements for his payment. How much do we owe you?" he asked. I had worked for the Rebbe for many hours a day over two years, but I did not want to be paid anything. I said, "I borrowed \$700 from the Merkos for a shliach that needed money,<sup>3</sup> if Merkos will forgive the loan that will suffice."

He then asked me how much I would like to be paid going forward. I said that I have no say, and "whatever you will suggest, I will accept." Rabbi Hodakov offered me two dollars an hour and I agreed. The money I made was not even enough to cover the rent, but I was happy.

There weren't offices in 770 as there are today, so I worked from home. Often people would call me with questions in *halacha* and the like, and whenever they called I deducted the time on the phone from my paid hours.

When I was in *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked me how it was going. I said

that everything is well, but because I deduct so much time answering *shailos* I am not earning much money. I asked if I could be paid a fixed salary instead. The Rebbe told me to speak to Rabbi Hodakov, which I did.

Several years later, when I already had a few children, *baruch Hashem*, the Rebbe asked me how I was doing financially. I was quiet. The Rebbe told me, "Go to Merkos and ask for a substantial raise." "Merkos has money, there is no need to *zhaleve* (be frugal)," the Rebbe emphasized.

## Pursuing Outside Circles

When I came to the Rebbe from Montreal for Yud-Beis Tammuz of either 5715\* or 5716\*, I wanted to stay for a few weeks until the end of *bein hazmanim* (summer-break) and participate in Merkos Shlichus. But when I expressed this to the Rebbe in *yechidus*, the Rebbe said: "No, you should go to Lakewood to be *mekarev* the *bochurim* to Chassidus."

The yeshiva in Lakewood very much opposed the Rebbe's view and the teachings of Chassidus. Of course it was not easy for me there, but since I was on the Rebbe's shlichus I knew that I received special *kochos*.

During lunchtime, I sat down at one of the tables and began to engage with the *bochurim* in a *pilpul* on the subject of *hamachlif parah bechamor* which they were then learning. After I finished discussing the idea according to *nigleh*, I began to explain it according to Chassidus. I also discussed with the well known *rosh yeshiva* the *sugya* that he was learning and he enjoyed the conversation.

When I returned to New York I went into *yechidus*, and the Rebbe asked me how it went. I handed the



RABBI MANGEL RECITES A MAAMAR AT HIS KABBOLAS PONIM AS DISTINGUISHED RABBONIM AND GUESTS LISTEN IN.

Rebbe a *duch* where I wrote all that I had accomplished during my time in Lakewood. All while reading through the report, I saw a broad smile on the Rebbe's holy face.

The following Tishrei, when I came to the Rebbe for Sukkos, Rabbi Hodakov called me to his office. He said the Rebbe told him that he had seen me at the farbrengen and asked: "What is Nissen Mangel doing here? He needs to be in Lakewood!"

I said to Rabbi Hodakov that I had not been by the Rebbe for the entire Tishrei, I only came on Erev Sukkos, and I was only at one farbrengen; now you want me to go to Lakewood? Rabbi Hodakov answered that this is



AT RABBI MANGEL'S WEDDING, THE REBBE'S LETTER IS READ BY REB DOVID RASKIN.

## I WILL BE THERE ברוחי ובנשמתִי

In 5721\* with the Rebbe's *bracha* I became engaged to my wife Raizel. Although my mother had left Czechoslovakia in 5712\*, the Rebbe did not give his *bracha* for her to come to America for many years. Instead we would meet in London. Now, the Rebbe gave his *bracha* for my mother to come to America for the *chasunah*.

Before the wedding, my *kallah* and I were going to enter *yechidus*. A year earlier the Rebbe had stopped being *mesader kiddushin*. When my mother told me that she wanted to ask the Rebbe to make an exception and be *mesader kiddushin* for me, I said that surely the Rebbe will not agree so why put the Rebbe in a situation where he has to say no.

As a good Jewish mother she insisted that I was a special *bochur* and surely the Rebbe will agree. I said: "I will only take you to the *yechidus* on condition that you will not ask the Rebbe to be *mesader kiddushin*." She agreed.

My mother, my *kallah* and myself went to *yechidus* together. The Rebbe spoke with my mother at length, and showered us with *brachos*.

When the *yechidus* was over, we all walked backwards towards the door. When we all passed the door

and the *yechidus* was technically over, my mother walked back towards the Rebbe's desk. Because she promised not to ask in the *yechidus*, she kept her word, and instead she came back alone for a "new *yechidus*" and now asked the Rebbe to be *mesader kiddushin*.

The Rebbe said to my mother: "I also really want to, but how can I differentiate between the *bochurim*?" "But for such a special *bochur*..." my mother said (a good *Yiddishe mamme*). The Rebbe continued: "I know, I know more than you know. Although I won't be there in body (בגופי), I will be there ברוחי ובנשמתִי—with my spirit and soul."

Hearing those words, my mother was very satisfied and left the room.

In the years that the Rebbe was *mesader kiddushin* the order of things was that Rabbi Hodakov would notify the Rebbe when the *chupah* was ready to begin and the Rebbe would come out. Because the Rebbe said that he will be there in spirit and soul, we decided to do two things.

Firstly, I asked Reb Dovid Raskin (who helped me with many of the preparations for the *chasunah*) to ask Rabbi Hodakov to notify the Rebbe when the *chupah* was about to begin. Secondly, I arranged for the Rebbe's letter to be read under the *chupah*. This was the first time the Rebbe's letter was read at a *chupah* and this custom continues ever since.



what the Rebbe wants; so of course I followed. I asked how long I was to be there for, and he told me that the Rebbe instructed that I should remain there until Shemini Atzeres.

This time when I arrived the yeshiva was empty since the *bochurim* had left for Yom Tov. Those that were there were the *kolel yungerleit*. At night we would celebrate *simchas beis hashoevah*. While the *rosh yeshiva* was there I shared some thoughts in *nigleh*

and after he left I farbrenge with the *yungerleit* and discussed Chassidus with them.

On Leil Hoshana Rabba I was sitting in the *beis medrash*. After I had almost finished Tehillim, a yungerman from the kolel came over to me and asked if I would please go to his apartment and learn some Tanya with him. Although I was exhausted from farbrenge until the wee hours of the morning each night, I agreed. After all,

this was the purpose that I was sent to Lakewood for, to teach Chassidus.

The fellow explained that he did not want to learn in the *beis medrash* since the *rosh yeshiva* was there and if he was caught learning Tanya he would be in big trouble.

After we studied together for several hours, my new friend explained: "I have been trying to find a *shidduch* for many years already. I went to many *gedolim* for a *bracha*, but still did not

## TANYA

Not long after my wedding, Brooklyn College was seeking to advance their Jewish studies department and they recruited me to lecture there. They asked me to teach Jewish philosophy. I thought to myself that I would teach Tanya, but I wrote to the Rebbe asking which *sefer* I should lecture in.

The Rebbe replied to use *Shaar Hayichud Vehaemunah*. I think that the reason for this is that it is more philosophical than Tanya in general, which is more psychological. Thus the topics we would cover would be *yesh me'ayin*, continuous creation, *hashgacha pratis*, and the like.

At that time, there was no English translation of Tanya in print. In order to give my class, I needed to have something in English, so I asked the Rebbe what to do. The Rebbe replied that I should make a translation! Accordingly, I translated *Shaar Hayichud Vehaemunah*, and the lecture series began.

It was very successful. I personally know of people who began keeping Shabbos as a result of these lectures. The students were completely secular, but learning about *yesh me'ayin*, how *Hashem* is continuously recreating everything, and about the idea of *ruchnius*, had a really profound effect on them.

What is interesting is that, at the end of the semester, the Rebbe instructed me to publish my translation. I had done a rough translation for the lectures, so I decided to go over this work from the beginning. Each chapter that I finished I sent to the Rebbe, on which the Rebbe made some corrections. I learned from the Rebbe's corrections and notes the Rebbe's exceeding desire to remain faithful to the original,

and not to take editorial liberty in a translation.

Translating Tanya is not easy; sometimes a sentence goes on and on, and it's very hard to break it up. It often repeats *chulu* (כולי - etc.) several times in the same sentence. For someone who is not familiar with the Hebrew text, it might seem ponderous. Once, in a very long sentence, I left one "chulu" out of the translation, but the Rebbe put it back in.

There are other examples as well. The word דומם, from צומח חי מדבר, דומם צומח חי מדבר, literally means "silent," but the conventional translation is "inanimate." I translated it in its conventional meaning "inanimate" and in parentheses added "silent." The Rebbe, however, changed the order—"silent" and in parentheses "inanimate." The obvious reason for this is that the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that even דומם has a *nefesh*, so the term inanimate is less accurate.

Another example is the word גזי, which I translated as "radiance." The Rebbe changed it to "glow," but he wrote a question mark after it, as if to give me leeway to accept or reject his translation. I wrote back that in this context the word "glow" doesn't go so well in English, so we left the translation "radiance." Chassidic scholars will surely discern from this the profound difference between "glow" and "radiance."

I translated the words בוצינא דקרדוניה as "dark light," but the Rebbe corrected it to "a light from the darkness." There were other insightful corrections as well. After the fifth or sixth *perek*, the Rebbe said that it was no longer necessary to continue sending him my translation. "Now I can rely on you," he said. This translation was eventually incorporated into the bilingual English translation of the Tanya.

find a match. Finally, when I went to the Rebbe. The Rebbe told me to learn a *perek Tanya* each day and I will find a *shidduch*. *Baruch Hashem* today on Hoshana Rabba I got engaged. As *hakoras hatov* I wanted to learn not one, but three *perakim*.”

The next morning the *bochur* gave me a letter that I brought with me and gave to *mazkirus* that day. After Yom Tov when I entered *yechidus*, the Rebbe had a broad smile and said: “The yungerman was not scared to learn *Tanya*?” I said that he was scared, and so he asked me to come to his house to learn with him.

## Translating The Siddur

After I finished translating the *Tanya*, the Rebbe told me that now it was time to start the siddur. Here, the Rebbe said that I am now familiar enough with the style that he desires, and I no longer need to send in constant reports. Instead, I finished the whole siddur and then sent it into the Rebbe for approval.

There were a few things that the Rebbe changed. One thing that the Rebbe corrected was on the first page. It included the *possuk* of *Torah Tzivah, Modeh Ani*, and the first section of *Shema*. This page was actually not in the Alter Rebbe’s siddur, it was added by the Rebbe.

On the top of the page was written: “*Katan misheyas’chil ledaber aviv melamdo*—when a child begins speaking, his father should teach him,” followed by three dots. I changed the three dots to a colon. My thought was that it was referring to both the *possuk* of *Torah Tzivah* as well as *Modeh Ani* and the first section of *Shema*. The Rebbe corrected this, saying that a child who has just begun to speak is

not capable of saying the entire page.<sup>4</sup>

There were no other corrections, and the Rebbe made a big arrow—meaning that it is accepted and can go to print.

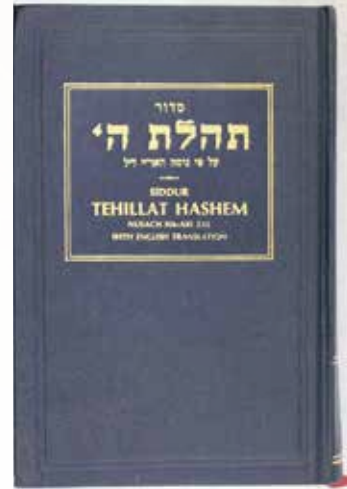
## The “Impossible”

I was once invited to give a series of lectures at Oxford University. After receiving the Rebbe’s *bracha*, I accepted the invitation. A day before I was scheduled to travel to England, I received a note from the Rebbe labeled *mahir* (timely). I asked the *mazkir*, “Is this a task that I can carry out right away?” The reply was that it was not. I knew that if I couldn’t fulfill what the Rebbe wanted until after I returned, the matter would occupy my mind over the whole trip and only distract me from what I was doing.

Upon my return I learned that the Rebbe had written that he wanted the entire *machzor* of both Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur translated into English, printed, bound, and ready for use for the upcoming *Yomim Noraim*.

It was then in the middle of *Chodesh Tammuz*, leaving two and a half months until the finished product was to be not only translated, but printed, bound and on the shelves. The *machzor* contains so many unique and difficult *piyutim* and *yotzros*, it was a huge job that I was sure would take many months if not years. I wrote to the Rebbe that “this is impossible.” The Rebbe replied “בזמן הזה שום דבר א”א— Nowadays nothing is impossible.”

Not knowing how, I quickly got to work. When I translated the siddur I started with a first translation, then my wife and I edited it several times until we were ready with the finished product. Each round of editing meant having it typed and printed, and then



THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SIDDUR TEHILLAS HASHEM BY RABBI MANGEL, 5738\*.

edited for multiple mistakes. Here, there was certainly no time for editing. I wrote the first draft, my wife typed it and sent it straight to print.

Reb Tzvi Hirsch Gansburg of Empire Printing Press told me that he will have at our disposal for this project three shifts of eight hour workers, printers available for printing day and night, and that I can bring the manuscripts anytime. Indeed, that is what we did. And it was used that Yom Tov...!

*Baruch Hashem*, as the Rebbe said nothing is impossible, the result was excellent. There was only one graphical mistake in the entire work.

It was clearly an absolute open miracle from the Rebbe and truly “impossible.” 1

1. See *The Written Torah*, Derher Tammuz, Elul 5777.

2. See “Crown Heights” Derher Cheshvan 5777.

3. Merkos had a loan fund for *anash* where it was possible to borrow up to \$200, while for those who worked for the Merkos office the maximum was \$700. The shliach had already reached his \$200 limit, so he asked me if I could take a further loan for him.

4. It is interesting to note that this page was added originally to the Siddur Tehillas Hashem by the Rebbe.