

# Derher

A Chassidisher

שנת  
הקנאה  
העם

א חסידישער זערהער

## The Baal Shem Tov

PART II: HIS REVELATION  
AND LEADERSHIP

בשם אלהים  
אבותינו  
Chabad

The Rebbe's  
Pride & Joy



ELUL 5783  
ISSUE 134 (211)  
SEPTEMBER 2023

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A Chassidisher Derher (ISSN 26411059) (USPS 21880) is published monthly by A Chassidisher Derher Inc, 784 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11213.

Subscription price \$79.95 a year. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to A Chassidisher Derher, 784 Eastern Pkwy, Brooklyn, NY 11213.



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This magazine  
has been made possible

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' שלום וזוגתו מרת שרה  
וילדיהם ישראל, ריסא, חי' מושקא,  
אמונה מלכה, יעקב יהודה, ולאה שיחיו  
אייזיקוביץ

## TIMES THREE

The month of Elul is a time of introspection. A “*teshuvah*-wind” blows in the air, as the Frierdiker Rebbe describes it.

The Rebbe often quoted an instruction brought in *sefarim* that during the month of Elul, one should focus on *tefillah* and *teshuvah* more than the rest of the year. The Torah subjects studied during this period should also focus on arousal to *avodas Hashem*; like the *sefer* Derech Chaim and Iggeres HaTeshuvah. The Rebbe also added that it is important to learn “*avodah'dike*” *maamarim* during this month.<sup>1</sup> Even those who are generally more inclined to learn Torah diligently are supposed to focus more on davening and *avodas Hashem*, as brought in the *acharonim*.<sup>2</sup>

“This is not to say that we should learn less,” the Rebbe cautioned. “Only that we are to add in *tefillah* and *avodah* so much that it seems as though the learning is less. But in truth, we must increase in *limud haTorah* during Elul as well...”<sup>3</sup>

In this spirit, you will find an overview of the *sefer* Derech Chaim included in this issue.

Although Elul is a serious month, at the same time it is also *chodesh harachamim*—a time when Hashem’s mercy is bountiful and an opportune time for our *teshuvah* to be accepted.

In the famous *mashal* of the “*melech basadeh*,” the king

in the field, first told by the Alter Rebbe in Likkutei Torah, he writes that the king is “מראה פנים שוחקות לכולם”—he greets each one with a gracious and cheerful face.

Whatever *avodah* we approach during this month, remaining steadfast in our connection with the Rebbe holds us on the right path, as the Rebbe explains:

“The [Frierdiker] Rebbe says in a *sicha* that beginning from Shabbos Mevarchim Elul, the trepidation sets in.

“Nevertheless, as Chassidim we are not intimidated or afraid of anything, because we are not in this alone; we stand on ‘broad shoulders.’ No matter what *avodah* comes our way, we are not afraid [to tackle the task].

“And in this instance, when we are required to have fear [for the right reason], we will fulfill it; but as Chassidim always do—in a joyous manner. (Despite the fact that fear and joy may not seem compatible.) The *teshuvah* that we need to do for our misdeeds will be done in a joyous manner.”<sup>4</sup>

כתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה a  
Wishing you

**The Editors**

חמשה עשר באב ה'תשפ"ג  
שנת הקהל את העם

1. Igros Kodesh vol. 19 p. 432; vol. 21 p. 227

2. See Matteh Efraim 581:11

3. Shabbos parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech 5726

4. 2 Elul 5713.





# Completing The Job

## *The Finishing Touches*

There is a concept that a mitzvah is attributed to the one who finishes it. In other words, if someone begins to do a mitzvah, and for whatever reason he is unable to complete it, the *zechus* of the mitzvah goes to he who completes it.

For example, Rashi says regarding the bones of Yosef: “Moshe alone occupied himself in bringing them up.” Meanwhile, the rest of the Yidden were busy searching Egyptian homes for silver and gold according to Hashem’s command. It is clear that Hashem intended for this *avodah* to

be done by the Jews, while the *avodah* of dealing with Yosef’s bones was set aside for Moshe. Nonetheless, it was the Jews in the end who buried the bones of Yosef since Moshe had passed away by that time. They completed the mitzvah and therefore it is attributed to them.

## *Our Generation*

This is the great advantage of our generation of “*Ikvesa deMeshicha*” – the generation which will finally fulfill the very reason of creation.

As we know, the world was created

because Hashem desired a dwelling-place in the lowest realm. This was the mission of the Jewish people – to prepare this world for Hashem’s presence. The ultimate completion of this preparation is the coming of Moshiach, which will be brought about by our generation.

Understandably, the fact that the earlier generations did not complete this *avodah* does not mean they lacked the capability to do so. On the contrary – the work they did in *birur hanitzotzos* covered the majority of what needed to be





לזכות  
 החתן הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל שיחי'  
 ברוך  
 והכלה המהוללה מרת חנה רבקה תחי'  
 טייכטל  
 לרגל נישואיהן ביום ח"י אלול תשפ"ג  
 שיבנו בית בישראל בנין עדי עד  
 נדפס ע"י הורי הכלה  
 הרה"ת ר' יצחק וזוגתו מרת אסתר  
 שיחיו טייכטל  
 נאשוויל, טענעסי



done. Our generation, in the words of the Frierdiker Rebbe, must only “polish the buttons” in preparation for Moshiach. All we need to do is focus on the small things that make a difference, and because of this, the entire *avodah* of the Jewish nation throughout all the generations will be completed by and attributed to us.

### *The Last Month*

The same concept applies to the month of Elul, through which the *avodah* of the entire year is completed. Just like the seven days

of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur correspond to the days of each week from the previous year, so too the entire month of Elul reflects the months that come before it. Not only should this month be used to atone for the wrongdoings of the past year, but also any mitzvos that one did without the proper motivation can be done in Elul with a new energy.

During this month, a Jew can reach the level of doing mitzvos out of his own love for Hashem, rather than doing them because he is being told to

do it or because everyone else does the same. This will raise all the mitzvos he did throughout the year to this level, because a mitzvah is attributed to the one who completes it. The way he does this mitzvah in the month of Elul can affect and change the way he may have done it the whole year.

Through elevating the *avodah* of the whole year to the level attained in the month of Elul – “*Ani ledodi*,” we receive the “*Dodi li*” – Hashem’s blessing in all aspects of our lives. **T**

*Adapted from the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shoftim 5727*



# כתב יד קודש



לעילוי נשמת  
ר' מנחם זאב בן ר' פנחס ע"ה הרמן  
גלב"ע כ"ה אלול ה'תשנ"ט

ולעילוי נשמת זוגתו  
מרת חי' ריסא בת ר' מרדכי ע"ה  
גלב"ע יום א' דחג הסוכות ה'תשפ"ב

תנ"צ'בה'

נדפס ע"י  
משפחתם שיחיו

## WHERE IS THE TZADDIK?

An individual wrote to the Rebbe that he walked into a shul and asked one of the people there, "Where can I find a tzaddik?" The person told him that he is not a regular in this shul, and he is therefore not qualified to answer this question.

After having this experience, this individual asks the Rebbe—what is the meaning of this episode?

The Rebbe circled the words "the meaning" and added:

1. Teshura Avtzon - Simpson 5765



גדולה שאין לחפש צדיק  
 ביהודי שני, כ"א לחפש  
 ה"צדיק" שבנפשו (שהרי  
 השביעוהו (גם מלשון-שׁוֹבֵעַ)  
 תהא צדיק). ולגלותו בהנוגע  
 לפועל.

[There is indeed] great [meaning]: That one must not search for a *tzaddik* in **another** Jew, but instead should search within himself to find the "tzaddik" in his own soul. [We know that it exists within him,] (for he himself took an oath (and was also given the full ability [as the Hebrew word for oath can also mean] שׁוֹבֵעַ—satiated) to be a *tzaddik*). [It's up to him] to reveal it, and let it affect his everyday conduct.

גדולה- שאין לחפש צדיק ביהודי שני, כ"א לחפש ה"צדיק" שבנפשו (שהרי השביעוהו (גם מלשון-שׁוֹבֵעַ) תהא צדיק). ולגלותו בהנוגע לפועל.





THE REBBE SEES OFF THE GUESTS WHO ARRIVED FROM ERETZ YISROEL FOR TISHREI 5722.

# ELUL 5721\*

Presented below is part of the diary of Rabbi Efraim Yerachmiel Halperin, who traveled from Eretz Yisroel to be by the Rebbe for the first time.

In those days, traveling all the way to New York was no simple ordeal, and every moment by the Rebbe was especially cherished.

COMPILED BY: RABBI YANKY BELL  
WRITTEN BY: RABBI MENACHEM LAZAROFF

ע"י בנם	טור 'לעבן מיטן רבי'ן הוקדש לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת
ר' יקותיאל יהודה	ר' שמואל ב"ר יהושע אליהו ז"ל
וזוגתו מרת פעסל לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו	ואשתו מרת שרה ע"ה בת ר' יקותיאל ומרת לאה הי"ד
רוהר	ת"נ צ"ב ה'

## Arrival

This year, arrangements were again made for a charter flight<sup>1</sup> to transport Chassidim from Eretz Yisroel to spend Tishrei with the Rebbe, and I was determined not to miss out. On Monday, 23 Elul, after months of meticulous preparation and eager anticipation, the moment had finally arrived. At 3:15 a.m. I departed for the airport, on my way to see the Rebbe for the very first time.

After a brief stopover in Paris, our flight landed in New York at 7:15 p.m. As we approached the terminal, a heartwarming sight met our eyes. Many local Chassidim had come to the airport to greet us, and were standing on a balcony overlooking the terminal.

While we waited for our luggage to arrive, we joyously sang and danced together! After clearing customs, we headed straight to 770. When we finally arrived, we were met by a joyous welcome from Chassidim gathered there to greet us.

## Tuesday, 24 Elul

The first time I merited to see the Rebbe was at Mincha on Tuesday, 24 Elul 5721. Mincha with the Rebbe took place in the *zal* at 3:15 p.m. By 3:00, people were already lined up and a path was cleared from the Rebbe's room to his place.

The anticipation in the room was palpable as Chassidim eagerly awaited the Rebbe's arrival. At precisely 3:15, a hush fell upon the room as the Rebbe, wearing his *gartel*, walked briskly into the *beis midrash*, holding his Siddur Torah Ohr.

It is impossible to adequately convey the surreal, otherworldly experience of seeing the Rebbe for the first time. Despite all that I knew and heard about the Rebbe, nothing could prepare me for the feeling of awe and reverence which washed over me as I took in the Rebbe's majestic, holy countenance in person.

The Rebbe stood at the large table near the door, facing the crowd. Rabbi Hodakov closed the door of the *zal*, the Rebbe opened his siddur, leaned his hands on the table, and Mincha began.

For Shemoneh Esrei, the Rebbe turned to face the wall. When he finished Shemoneh Esrei, he took three steps back, and returned to his place as the *chazzan* said the words "Vene'eman Atah." After "HaKel Hakadosh," the Rebbe sat down and put his hand on his forehead in

concentration, following along in the siddur throughout *chazaras hashatz*.

*Tachanun* was omitted due to a *chosson* being present. During *kaddish yasom*, the Rebbe gazed upon everyone gathered in the *zal*. Then, after davening was complete, the Rebbe left the room for his study.

It was then announced that all of the *orchim* who came for Tishrei would have the opportunity to enter in for *yechidus* on Thursday night, 26 Elul.

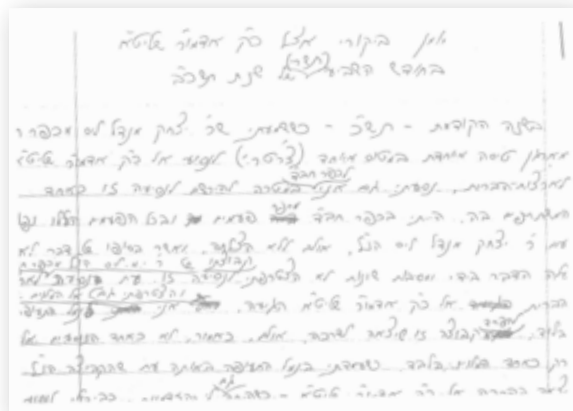
After being in the Rebbe's presence for Mincha, a special energy was felt in the room as the *bochurim* approached their evening studies with increased excitement and vigor. As a guest, this was but a small taste as to what it must be like to study here, in the Rebbe's orbit, fully immersed.

About fifteen minutes before Maariv, the room began to fill up again, packed with Chassidim.

The Rebbe's table was cleared of *sefarim*, and the room waited with the same anticipation as before to hear the sound of the Rebbe's door opening. At 9:30 p.m., the Rebbe walked into the room, this time holding his siddur and a Mishnayos as well. Somehow the Rebbe looked different from Mincha to Maariv. It's difficult to describe this in words.

The Rebbe stood at his place, and put on his *gartel*, making sure that it was even on both sides. The Rebbe then looked up towards the crowd, and opened his siddur. The Rebbe remained standing until after *Borchu*, and then sat down. The Rebbe's davening takes a long time and he looks into the siddur all throughout.

After Shemoneh Esrei, the Rebbe took three steps back, and went back to his place when the *chazzan* said 'Leila min kol birchasa.'



OPENING PAGE OF RABBI EFRAIM YERACHMIEL HALPERIN'S DIARY.



The Rebbe said *kaddish yasom* after Aleinu,<sup>2</sup> and for the first time, I had the privilege of hearing the Rebbe's voice, the שכינה מדברת from the Moshe Rabbeinu in our generation.

After that, the Rebbe said the Mishnayos and the *kaddish d'rabbanan*. As he left the room to the lobby, he noticed one of the older Chassidim. The Rebbe smiled at him and asked, "What brings you here?" The Rebbe then motioned for the Chossid to follow him into his office.

Thus concludes my first day by the Rebbe.

## A Moment In Time

On Wednesday, 25 Elul, Selichos began at 7:00 a.m., and Shacharis was at 8:30. Although the Rebbe does not daven Shacharis with the minyan, today he entered the room during *U'va LeTzion* and remained until the end to recite all of the *kaddeishim*.

After davening concluded, the Rebbe made a brief stop at his office before departing from 770 and heading home.

As I observed the Rebbe simply walk down the street, unaccompanied, a profound sense of excitement overwhelmed me. It struck me that to an uninformed observer from a distance, the Rebbe might appear as an ordinary, unassuming person. Little would they know that they were in the presence of a king, the *nossi hador* from whom

the entire world seeks advice.

## Thursday, 26 Elul

On Monday and Thursdays the Rebbe joins the *minyan* for *krias haTorah*.

The Rebbe always gets the third *aliyah*. Before the *bracha*, the Rebbe touches the Torah's *gartel* or his tallis to the spot where the *aliyah* begins, then moves it to where the *aliyah* ends and once more to the beginning, before kissing it.

Afterwards, the Rebbe turns his head slightly to the right, and says the *bracha*. During the *bracha*, the Rebbe lightly lifts up the Torah three times: at the beginning of the *bracha*, in the middle, and at the words *nosein haTorah* at the end.

After the *aliyah*, the Rebbe touches the spot where the *aliyah* ended with the *gartel* or tallis, followed by the beginning, and then again the end of the *aliyah*. Then the Rebbe recites the final *bracha* in the same manner as before.

After *kriah* the Rebbe returns to his place, and on his way back he touches the *paroches*. He then says Tehillim from a Sefer Tehillim which has been previously placed on his table, until the *chazzan* finishes *kaddish tiskabel*, after which he returns to his room.





## My First Yechidus

The highlight of a Chossid's trip to the Rebbe is entering for *yechidus*. Much intense preparation goes into this special moment, an opportunity to spill one's heart out to the Rebbe, each person in their own unique manner.

The Rebbe receives people for *yechidus* three times a week; on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. *Yechidus* starts in the evening, often continuing into the wee hours of the morning.

In most instances, each *yechidus* lasts for a few brief minutes or less. Occasionally, some prominent individuals merit to be with the Rebbe for longer spans of time, sometimes even a few hours.

Local residents and *yeshiva bochurim* who request a *yechidus* join a lengthy queue. After a considerable waiting period, often several months, they receive a written notification of their audience with the Rebbe. However, those of us who traveled from abroad for limited periods of time were given priority, ensuring that we could have a private audience with the Rebbe during our relatively brief stay.

I had the *zechus* to experience *yechidus* for the first time on Thursday night, 26 Elul 5721\*.

As part of the *hachana* for this momentous occasion,

I joined many of the other guests and traveled to the Friediker Rebbe's Ohel. We went right after Shacharis in one of the yeshiva vans.

When my turn arrived at 12:25 a.m., I entered the Rebbe's room and the first thing I did was place my appointment card from *mazkirus* on the desk. This is how I was to introduce myself to the Rebbe.

Then I gave the Rebbe a *pan* which contained my personal requests, along with a *pan* for my father. I also delivered a note on behalf of Reb Yaakov Winkler, and a *pan* on behalf of Reb Mordechai Zalman Segal. I then gave the Rebbe a note in which I requested guidance on how best to involve myself in *hafatzas hamaayanos*.

I also took the opportunity to hand in a letter which mentioned the request of Meir Freiman to join Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lod. Regarding this matter, the Rebbe told me that he already received a letter from Meir, and there are multiple pros and cons.

The Rebbe then remarked that Reb Mordechai Zalman Segal is probably Reb Chaim Shalom's brother.

As for the *panim*, the Rebbe said that he would mention them at the Friediker Rebbe's Ohel.

As for *hafatzas hamaayanos*, the Rebbe answered:

"About which you ask how to involve yourself, it has to be planned. Wherever you will be, convene a gathering

\* 5721-1961

with your friends to discuss it.”

Before I left the *yechidus*, the Rebbe gave me a *bracha*:

“May Hashem help that you toil in learning *nigleh*, Chassidus and in *avodas hatefilah*. *Ksivah vachasimah tovah*.”

I remained standing, rooted in place. The Rebbe partially stood up and again wished me a “*Ksivah vachasimah tovah*,” after which I departed.

After emerging from *yechidus*, I was escorted to a lively *farbrengen* in the *cheder sheini*, with many fellow Chassidim in attendance. This *farbrengen* lasted until the morning.

## Shabbos, 28 Elul

There is nothing like experiencing Shabbos with the Rebbe firsthand, a truly wondrous experience.

For Mincha on Erev Shabbos, the Rebbe arrived by *licht benchen*, at 7:00 p.m. Unlike throughout the week, on Shabbos the Rebbe entered the room from the south side, via the *cheder sheini*, and sat at his *shtender* near the door. After Mincha, the Rebbe returned to his room. Everyone else remained in the *zal*, and a *bochur chazzered* a *maamar*.

Afterwards, everyone went down to the big *beis midrash* (the “*shalash*,” which until last year was the place of the Sukkah), for Kabbalas Shabbos. I was fortunate enough to secure the perfect spot, right near the Rebbe. The Rebbe’s spot for Shabbos and Yom Tov davening was in the southeastern corner of the room. There was a rug spread out, covering the area with the Rebbe’s chair and *shtender*.

The Rebbe entered the room from the staircase to the left of his office. Everyone else used the regular entrance in order not to get in the Rebbe’s way.

At 8:00 p.m., the crowd split as the Rebbe walked through the room to his designated place.

The Rebbe stood throughout the entire davening. From my place, I was clearly able to see the Rebbe as he walked out, nodding and smiling at people, wishing them a “Gut Shabbos.” As the Rebbe left, the crowd began to sing “*Ufaratzta*,” and the Rebbe encouraged the singing with his hands. The singing of the *niggun* continued for long after.

The following morning, at 8:30, the Rebbe arrived in the *beis midrash*, and Tehillim for Shabbos Mevarchim began. At 10:00, the Rebbe briefly went to his office and returned at 10:30 for Shacharis wearing his tallis.



Again today I had a great spot right near the Rebbe. I noticed that during much of the davening, the Rebbe held the strings of his tallis. The Rebbe stood for the entire davening.

On Shabbos and Yom Tov, the Rebbe gets *maftir*. While reading many of the *pesukim* in the *haftarah*, it seemed that the Rebbe was holding himself back, but eventually the Rebbe broke out crying. The second half of the *haftarah* was read in a much lower tone that could only be heard by those in close proximity to the *bimah*.

As the Torah was returned to the *aron*, the Rebbe followed it with his holy gaze. Since today is Shabbos Mevarchim, a *farbrenge* was scheduled for 1:30 p.m. and many Chassidim remained in shul after davening to secure their spots.

At precisely 1:30 p.m., the Rebbe entered the room, which was packed with people.

The Rebbe proceeded to his place on the *farbrenge bima*, with many of the *eltere Chassidim* behind him. The Rebbe made *kiddush* quietly and the *farbrenge* commenced.

Throughout the *farbrenge*, Chassidim joyously sang and danced in their places, and the Rebbe vigorously encouraged the singing with his hands.

The Rebbe said three *sichos*, and a *maamar dibur hamaschil Atem Nitzavim*. When the Rebbe began delivering the *maamar*, everyone stood up and listened intently, eager to catch every word. After the *maamar*, the Rebbe addressed the newly established Chabad neighborhood in Yerushalayim. The Rebbe expressed that from this neighborhood the light of Chassidus would spread throughout Yerushalayim, then extend across Eretz Yisroel, ultimately radiating across the globe.

There was a spectacular sight during the second *niggun*. The Rebbe was encouraging the singing with his right hand when suddenly he stood up, bringing the entire room to their feet.

With great enthusiasm, the Rebbe began clapping and waving both of his hands. As the electric atmosphere spread throughout the room, the singing intensified and grew much louder.

At the end of the *farbrenge* the Rebbe started the *niggun* “*Ani Maamin*” and then “*Ki vesimcha seitzei’u*.” With this the Rebbe concluded the *farbrenge*.

As is customary after a *farbrenge*, the *chozer* Reb Yoel Kahan repeated the *maamar* that the Rebbe said. After *chazzarah*, we went upstairs to the regular *beis midrash*

for Mincha. After Mincha, the Rebbe went to his house. As the Rebbe left 770, many Chassidim gathered outside, and began singing “*Ufaratzta*.” The Rebbe encouraged the singing, and waved to the children that were there.

When Shabbos was over, the Rebbe returned for Maariv, which took place upstairs. After Maariv Reb Yochanon Gordon made *havdalah* and then the Rebbe returned home.

## Sunday, Erev Rosh Hashanah

Unlike the previous days, today’s Selichos with the Rebbe was held downstairs and began at 6:30 a.m. instead of 7:00. About an hour later when Selichos concluded, the Rebbe went upstairs to his office.

Shacharis took place in the regular upstairs *zal*, and the Rebbe entered the room wearing his tallis and tefillin. The Rebbe stood throughout the entire davening.

After davening, a *minyán* of *eltere Chassidim* gathered near the Rebbe in a half circle for *hataras nedarim*.

Once it concluded, the Rebbe said: “*Amen, ksivah vachasimah tovah*.”

A group of *eltere Chassidim* went to the Rebbe’s room to present a *pan kloli* on behalf of everyone. Afterwards, the Rebbe stood at the door of his room and all of the Chassidim passed by to deliver their personal *panim*.

Later on, the Rebbe, accompanied by many Chassidim, traveled to the Frierdiker Rebbe’s Ohel.

While I was standing at the *tziyun*, the Rebbe arrived and I quickly took a few steps back as the Rebbe approached. Reb Leibel Groner accompanied the Rebbe, holding paper bags with all of the *panim*, which he then placed on the wall next to the Rebbe.

Rabbi Groner placed a container on the Rebbe’s left and put in a candle which the Rebbe lit. Then the Rebbe began to recite Maaneh Lashon. When he got to the point where the *pan* is usually read, the Rebbe put on his glasses, and began to read the *panim*. After reading each *pan*, the Rebbe ripped it four times, and put it in a paper bag. When we returned to 770, the Rebbe was still in the Ohel, reading through every *pan*. I don’t know when the Rebbe left the Ohel. ❶

1. For the full story of the first charter flight from Eretz Yisroel, see “One Flight To Open The Floodgates,” *Derher* Elul 5774.  
 2. Yahrzeit of the Rebbe’s grandfather, Harav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky.





# THE BAAL SHEM TOV

PART II:  
HIS REVELATION  
AND LEADERSHIP

BY: RABBI LEVIK GOURARIE



לזכות ברכה ליפשא תח'ל  
לרגל יום הולדתה י"ז אלול

ולזכות מנחם מענדל שי'  
לרגל יום הולדתו ט' אלול

נדפס ע"י הוריהם  
הרה"ג הרה"ח ר' שלום דוב בער  
וזוגתו מרת ח'ל' מושקא שיחיו שוחאט



# The Baal Shem Tov's Hisgalus

The day of Chai Elul is a pivotal day in the development of the revelation of Chassidus, being the date of birth of both the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe. Additionally, on Chai Elul 5494\*, the Baal Shem Tov's holy light was ultimately revealed to the world at large.<sup>1</sup>

After years of inconspicuous wanderings and secret meetings with many hidden *tzaddikim*, all along posing as the simplest of men, the Baal Shem Tov openly revealed his true stature to the Jewish community in Podolya and the neighboring regions. He began openly teaching his Torah, performing miracles, and inspiring the masses.

For ten years, the Baal Shem Tov learned with Achiya Hashiloni in preparation for this great moment. Following this day, the world changed forever. The Jewish soul was awakened, and the people of Israel were set on track to ultimately merit the *geulah*.

The Baal Shem Tov was initially reluctant to become the public personality that was being demanded of him. The Alter Rebbe said that six years were taken off the Baal Shem Tov's life, for the six years that he continuously refused to reveal himself.<sup>2</sup>

Before his *hisgalus* (public revelation), the Baal Shem Tov was in his own world, where he learned the secrets of the Torah, reaching profoundly deeper into the incredible world of Torah, and where he steadily grew in his personal service of Hashem. Understandably, the Baal Shem Tov was hesitant to leave that all behind, even though there was much to be accomplished in the world through his going out of hiding, and his *hisgalus* was essentially the will of Hashem.

Eventually, Achiya Hashiloni promised the Baal Shem Tov that when he goes out into the world, he will retain the sublime levels of knowledge and amazing comprehension of Torah that conventionally comes through isolation.

We ultimately find these two advantages in Chassidus — both the prominent and apparent effect on the world, and the personal heights that one can reach in the inner echelons of divine connection.

The Frierdiker Rebbe compares the Baal Shem Tov's struggle to Moshe Rabbeinu's reluctance at the burning *sneh*: Moshe was also coming from a life of isolation and was instructed to reveal himself to the world.

Yet, it was Moshe who eventually brought the Torah down to this world — affecting the ultimate fusion of holiness together with a most palpable impact on the world.

Such would also be the case with the Baal Shem Tov and Chassidus.<sup>3</sup>



A PAINTING BY REB ZALMAN KLEINMAN ILLUSTRATING THE JOURNEYS OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV TO VARIOUS VILLAGES WHERE HE INSPIRED YIDDEN IN THE MARKETPLACE.



# Reb Odom Baal Shem's Involvement

In the years 5493\*-4\*, Reb Odom Baal Shem stepped down from his position as leader of the hidden *tzadikim* and actively worked to have the Baal Shem Tov take his place.

For inexplicable spiritual reasons, Reb Odom and the Baal Shem Tov were never to meet. Nevertheless, Reb Odom was very instrumental in persuading the Baal Shem Tov to reveal himself and assisted him in taking his place — revealing to him the vital secrets, and handing over the divine reins of leadership.

On the first day of the week of Eikev (presumably 5493\*), Reb Odom wrote a letter to the Baal Shem Tov, describing a fascinating story that occurred to him. Through this story, Reb Odom beseeched the Baal Shem Tov to agree to reveal himself:

Achiya Hashiloni had appeared to him on Shabbos, telling him to be ready to travel to Lvov right after Shabbos. After *havdalah*, the two set out with a holy mysterious wagon driver to the city of Lvov.

After a short ride, they arrived in Lvov. They entered a home, and Reb Odom took a hot drink. Achiya Hashiloni paced back and forth with his face aflame, and Reb Odom sat frozen in his place.

The door opened, and in walked a tall old man — Reb Eliezer, the father of the Baal Shem Tov. At Achiya Hashiloni's behest, even though he was no longer from this world, Reb Eliezer sat down.

Reb Eliezer told Achiya Hashiloni that his son, the Baal Shem Tov, keeps on disturbing his rest, saying that his teacher (Achiya Hashiloni) commanded him to reveal himself, and he really does not want to. The Baal Shem Tov had asked him to intervene and ask that he should not need to reveal himself.

Achiya Hashiloni responded to Reb Eliezer: “If your son asks again, tell him that he must reveal himself, because this is what was decided in the *Beis Din Shel Maalah*. Tell him that if he doesn't listen, there is no longer a purpose for him down in this world. The entire purpose of his descent into the world was for him to reveal himself and his Torah, and that the wellsprings of his Torah should be spread everywhere.”

“He then pointed to me,” Reb Odom continued in his letter to the Baal Shem Tov, “saying that ‘He, Odom, knows this entire story — why your son came to this world. With time I will allow my student Odom to reveal everything to him, and then he will see that I was right in asking him to go out into the world.’”

Achiya added that until the Baal Shem Tov reveals himself, he will not be able to see his face. At this point, Reb Eliezer disappeared and Reb Odom writes that he was left stunned and shocked by the



THE BAAL SHEM TOV



LETTERS FROM THE BAAL SHEM TOV DISCUSSING HIS HISGALUS, DISCOVERED IN THE KHERSON GENIZA AND PRINTED IN HATOMIM.

\* 5493-1733, 5494-1734

incredible occurrences.

Reb Odom continues in his letter to the Baal Shem Tov, that since Achiya Hashiloni was no longer able to meet the Baal Shem Tov, the responsibility to convince the Baal Shem Tov to begin his public journey was given over to Reb Odom.

With that, Reb Odom set out to find the Baal Shem Tov. He traveled far and wide, looking for friends and contacts, anyone who could tell him the whereabouts of the Baal Shem Tov. After a few months passed with no trace of the Baal Shem Tov, Reb Odom was just about to give up and head back to Ropshitz.

That night, Achiya Hashiloni appeared to Reb Odom and told him that there must be some reason that he and the Baal Shem Tov cannot meet. Instead, he suggested that Reb Odom put in writing everything that he needs to give over to the Baal Shem Tov and have his son find a way to get the pages to the Baal Shem Tov.

Reb Odom took a week and wrote down the special secrets for the Baal Shem Tov, and after being told by Achiya

Hashiloni that the Baal Shem Tov isolates in the mountains near Kitov, he sent his son to deliver the papers to the Baal Shem Tov.

This entire back and forth, the stories, the instructions from Achiya Hshiloni, the challenges, and the process of the writing, were all written in this same letter from Reb Odom to the Baal Shem Tov.

He also wrote in the letter the source of the Baal Shem Tov's *neshamah* as revealed to him by their teacher Achiya Hashiloni.

The *neshamah* was of a Jew in Tzefas who declined receiving *gilui Eliyahu* that was promised to him in exchange for telling what mitzvah he did on the day of his bar mitzvah, saying that that mitzvah was only for Hashem, and he would not tell for any reason.

As reward, Eliyahu came and taught him the secrets of the Torah for the rest of his life. After his passing, the *Beis Din Shel Maalah* decided that because not only was he a great *tzadik* but also kept his identity secret, no portion in *Gan Eden* would be enough for him. Instead, his *neshamah* would come down and usher in a new era of *pnimiyus haTorah* and revealed G-dliness down in this world.

Reb Odom concludes in his letter that he davens that the Baal Shem Tov will receive the holy papers and that he fulfills the instructions of their teacher. He adds that “even though I do not know you — I request that you should not decline because this is the will of Hashem; so what difference does it make to you? No matter what, you will be fulfilling the will of Hashem, especially based on the teachings of our teacher Achiya Hashiloni. In this revelation lies the *tikkun* [rectification] of the Jewish people and the *tikkun* of the world.”

One point that the Baal Shem Tov mentioned in a letter to Reb Odom — as a reason why he didn't want to be revealed, was the huge *machlokes* that he saw resulting from it.

The Rebbe explains that in this letter from Reb Odom, he addressed this issue and elicited by the Baal Shem Tov the idea of *hishtavus* (seeing everything equal) in the service of Hashem, telling him that since this is the will of Hashem, he should no longer hold back and should go ahead and share his light with the world.<sup>4</sup>

## The Baal Shem Tov Accepts

Reb Odom's son arrived in the mountains surrounding Kitov with the precious and holy pages in his possession. He searched for the Baal Shem Tov and was also unsuccessful in finding him.

Realizing that he too will most likely not meet the Baal Shem Tov, he decided to leave the papers under a rock in the

80	1	Wolf	Bramontze	10
81	1	Selomba	Isayevsyzya	10
82	1	Levulib		10
83	1	Frudicha	Widowa	10
84	1	Lejba	Ermanowicz	10
85	1	Lejba	Notkew Sige	10
86	1	Lejba	Krawiec dazy	10
93	1		Jarek	10
95	2		Balsam	10
97	1	Lejba	Balen gresszy	10
98	2	Lejba	Wolowyn	10
99	1	Lejba	Salamowicz	10
100	1	Balsam		10
101	1	Lejman	Notkew	10
102	1	Lejba	Stawinski	10
103	1	Stawinski	Wolowicz	10
104	1	Stawinski		10

A POLISH TAX CENSUS OF MEZIBUZ IN THE YEAR 5518 SHOWING “BAAL SHEM” AS OCCUPYING HOUSE #95.



ONE OF MANY PAGES FROM THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S SIDDUR IN WHICH HIS TALMIDIM WROTE DOWN THEIR NAMES AND REQUESTS.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

mountain range, with the belief that the Baal Shem Tov will eventually discover them.

As he was about to head back, he saw a non-Jewish shepherd trying to remove the hidden papers. Reb Odom's son shouted at the startled shepherd, telling him to leave the holy documents alone. He then told the shepherd that these were for the saintly Jewish man who isolates in these mountains, and if he ever sees him, he should show the holy man the papers that he left for him. For this, Reb Odom's son gave the non-Jew 50 Polish groshin.

The end of the story was recounted by the Baal Shem Tov, in one of the letters that he sent to his brother-in-law, Reb Gershon Kitover: The shepherd did in fact show the Baal Shem Tov where the papers were and told him the story behind them. The Baal Shem Tov gave the gentile another 50 groshin and instructed him to keep the entire story secret.

The Baal Shem Tov continues in his letter that "while the writings brought great pleasure to me, the stories in Reb Odom's letters made my hairs stand because I really do not want to be revealed, but I see that this is coming from above and that Achiya Hashiloni will not reveal himself to me until I do."

The Baal Shem Tov concludes, "I have therefore decided in my heart to reveal myself. I know for certain that there will be resistance and antagonism against this revelation but I have trust in Hashem that they will all scatter like straw before the *ruach hakodesh* of my holy teacher."<sup>5</sup>

The Rebbe explains that the Baal Shem Tov was not forced to be revealed, rather his friends and teachers worked to persuade him until he himself actually wanted to be *nisgaleh* and reveal the light of Chassidus to the world.<sup>6</sup>

## The Letters and the Hisglaus

The letter that Reb Odom had sent to the Baal Shem Tov is quoted in full in the aforementioned letter from the Baal Shem Tov to Reb Gershon Kitover.

Aside from the amazing history these letters present us, we can also learn from these letters the great level of *hiskashrus* that the Baal Shem Tov had to Achiya Hashiloni, and the profound impact he had on the Baal Shem Tov, as well as on Reb Odom. Additionally, they give us a peek into the greatness of Reb Odom and his unbelievable level of *bittul*.

While this letter is one of the main sources to



THIS PORTRAIT OF RABBI CHAIM SHMUEL YAAKOV FALK, ANOTHER 'BAAL SHEM,' WHO LIVED IN LONDON AT THE TIME OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV, HAS MISTAKENLY COME TO BE CONSIDERED A PORTRAIT OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV.

understand the background behind the Baal Shem Tov's revelation, in other letters from this period we see that the *hisglaus* was a complicated process and seemed to occur in stages. There are letters spanning the years of 5493\* and 5494\* where the Baal Shem Tov discusses his upcoming *hisglaus*.<sup>7</sup>

In a letter dated Tuesday, Emor [Iyar], 5494\*, the Baal Shem Tov writes that he had just recently been revealed (four months before his official *hisglaus* on Chai Elul) and that he was having a very difficult time from the opposition; so much so that he was unable to leave his house. He asked that Reb Gershon meet with him so that they can think of a place where he would be able to settle.

The Rebbe explains that the Baal Shem Tov's revelation came in stages and that although in letters it seems like the Baal Shem Tov was revealed earlier than Chai Elul (such as a letter from Vayeshev [winter], where the Baal Shem Tov writes that he will reveal himself the next day), we still accept the official version that the *hisglaus* occurred on Chai Elul.<sup>8</sup>

## Hisglaus

Where the actual *hisglaus* occurred and how it played out remains unclear, with many different opinions and versions describing how it happened.

\* 5493-1733, 5494-1734



According to one source<sup>9</sup>, the Baal Shem Tov was living and teaching in a village near Brody when one of Reb Gershon Kitover's students, who was unaware of the Baal Shem Tov's greatness, was miraculously led to stay at the Baal Shem Tov's home for Shabbos, though it was far from his plan.

As the Shabbos progressed, the Baal Shem Tov gradually revealed his greatness to this young man through *divrei Torah*, fiery davening, and otherworldly behavior.

After Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov told the young man to tell the group of "Chassidim" [the people inclined towards Kabbalah] living in the city, that there is a great light surrounding their town and that they should seek him out and bring him to their city.

The small group of Chassidim understood quite well that it was the Baal Shem Tov who they should be going to find, and they set out to bring him to town.

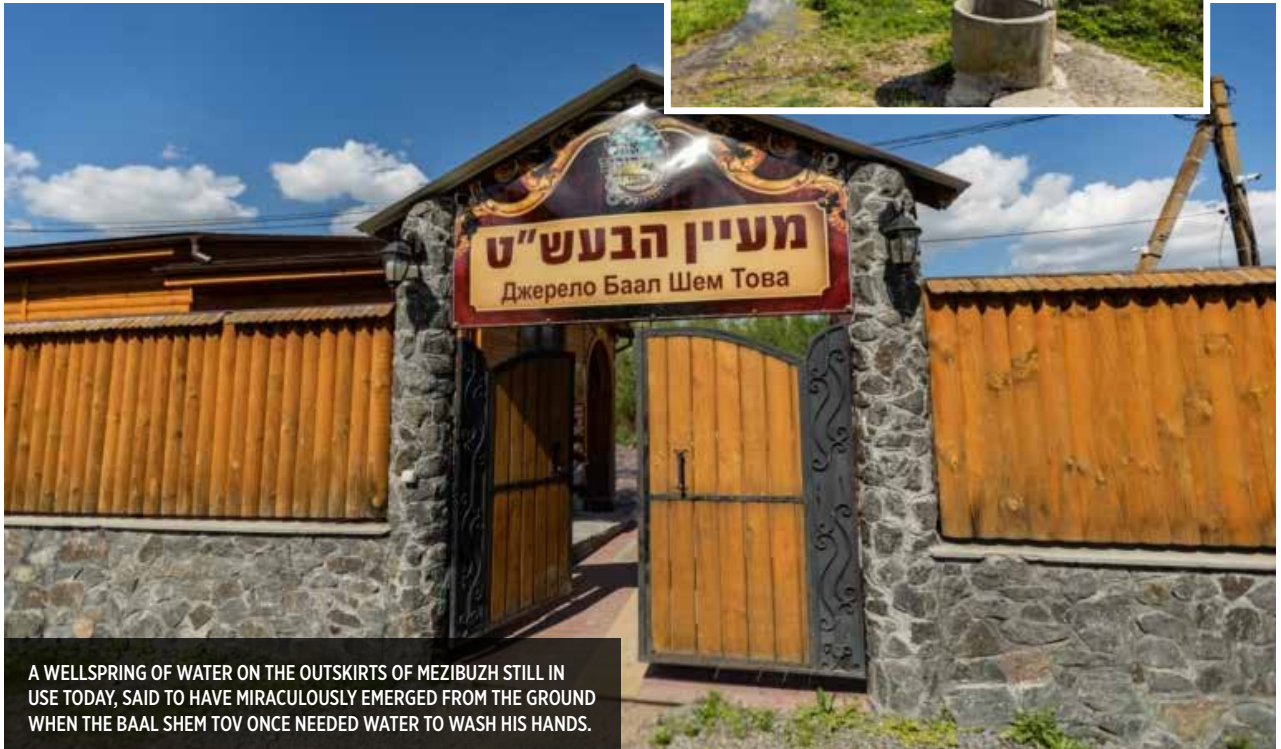
The Baal Shem Tov met them on the way to the city where they greeted him happily, fashioned for him a seat out of branches, and appointed him as their Rebbe and leader. The Baal Shem Tov sat down and began teaching them the secrets of the Torah.<sup>10</sup>

## The Baal Shem Tov's Travels

Following the Baal Shem Tov's revelation, he moved continuously. He traveled far and wide all across the Jewish settlement in Eastern Europe and beyond, inspiring, teaching, and sharing his divine light with the world.

The Baal Shem Tov had three primary goals in his many travels. The first one was to go around from town to village, *poritz* to landlord, releasing Jewish leaseholders from prison, paying up their debts, and returning them to their homes — assisting them with their physical needs.

Secondly, the Baal Shem Tov set out to inspire and uplift the simple folk all across the Jewish towns and villages, exciting them about their Yiddishkeit, encouraging them to study Torah and to love one another.



A WELLSPRING OF WATER ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF MEZIBUZH STILL IN USE TODAY, SAID TO HAVE MIRACULOUSLY EMERGED FROM THE GROUND WHEN THE BAAL SHEM TOV ONCE NEEDED WATER TO WASH HIS HANDS.

Third, the Baal Shem Tov would seek out scholarly Torah students among the yeshivos and houses of study, and teach them new secrets of the Torah, revealing to them the beauty and the wisdom of *pnimiyus haTorah*.

The Baal Shem Tov was not just the founder of the movement of Chassidus; he was the first to teach, classify, and reveal *Toras HaChassidus*. He educated the students that he gathered in the secrets of the hidden part of Torah, revealing the soul in every part of Torah, from Kabbalah all the way through *peshat*.

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes that the Baal Shem Tov journeyed to all the great yeshivos of his time, teaching Chassidus and *pnimiyus haTorah* to the *roshei yeshiva* and the *bnei Torah*. The Baal Shem Tov visited the great yeshivos in Brisk, Shtetl, Pinsk, Halusk, Minsk, and Smargon.

In his travels, the Baal Shem Tov gathered students and followers. The Rabbeim explained that while the revealed part of Torah is like water that people are drawn to, Chassidus is like a warming and enlivening fire that needs to be brought to people. This is why the Baal Shem Tov traveled to spread Chassidus and could not wait for students to come to him.<sup>11</sup>

Though there were some students who had previously learned Kabbalah, many were not learning it correctly. They were simplifying the Kabbalistic matters too much, painting a humanlike image, *chas veshalom*, of Hashem. They were going astray in the hidden and secret avenues of the Torah and were desperately awaiting a teacher and guide, capable of illuminating and explaining the secrets of the Torah correctly. In the Baal Shem Tov's teachings, he showed them the way and lit for them the road to the true understanding of *pnimiyus haTorah*.

The Baal Shem Tov met with many rabbonim and great Torah giants of his time, like Reb Chaim Rapoport of Lvov. Some eventually became close students of his, such as the "Toldos," Reb Yaakov Yosef of Pulnaah, while others remained staunch adversaries of his.

Among his adversaries, some respected and honored the Baal Shem Tov but did not become his students, while some respectfully opposed him and his *derech*. Unfortunately, there were also those who fought against the Baal Shem Tov in harsh and audacious ways.

## The Baal Shem Tov and the Simple Folk

The Baal Shem Tov spent time and energy, traveling to the yeshivos to teach and study, but this was not his main goal. Rather it was his visits to the simple and unassuming men and women that stood as his top priority. His affinity and care for the *poshute Yid* (the simple Jew), played a central role in the Baal Shem Tov's life and *derech*, and proved fundamental to his objective and approach.

The Rebbe explained that the Baal Shem Tov stands out from other *gedolei Yisroel* in the fact that most of his time was spent dealing specifically with the simple people, and only a smaller portion of time was allotted to teaching and learning with his prominent students.

During these visits, the Baal Shem Tov would not only try to inspire the simple *Yiddelach* to learn and love Torah. Most of the effort was to uplift them and assist them in their material needs, while simultaneously encouraging them to give thanks to Hashem and strengthen their connection to Yiddishkeit and their observance of Torah and mitzvos.<sup>12</sup>

The Baal Shem Tov specifically spoke in Yiddish so that he could be understood by everyone including the women and children. And while his Torah speaks about the loftiest of things, he also taught very simple day-to-day lessons, such as his famous teaching that anything a person sees in this world must also be a lesson in their service of Hashem.<sup>13</sup>

In response to a writer who questioned the Baal Shem Tov's proficiency and *ge'onus* in Torah, the Rebbe clarified why the Baal Shem Tov focused on and emphasized the labor of the heart and the art of prayer more than the study of Chassidus and the toil of the brain, which we find by the Alter Rebbe.

The Rebbe explains that this variance in their emphasis was based on their locale and their subsequent target audience. The Baal Shem Tov worked predominantly with the Jews in Ukraine and Poland, whose intellectual level at that time was diminished. In order to reveal the soul and the meaning within Yidden, Torah, and mitzvos to these communities, the main channel was via a Jew's heart and emotion. Thus, the Baal Shem Tov's emphasis was on feeling and prayer.

The Alter Rebbe, on the other hand, worked more



within the communities in Lithuania and Belarus, where the yeshivos were more established and there was a greater foundation of Torah. The Alter Rebbe therefore pursued their minds and their study, teaching Chassidus to them on an intellectual level.<sup>14</sup>

While the Baal Shem Tov would later settle in the city of Mezibuzh, he seems to have begun his revealed *nesius* on the road. There doesn't seem to be a fixed city where the Baal Shem Tov lived during these years, rather it seems like he was constantly in transit, visiting Yidden in the important cities, little towns, and remote settlements.

## The Miraculous Nature of the Baal Shem Tov

“The Baal Shem Tov, who there was none like him from the days of the ancient sages, so many miracles and wonders were seen by him that were unbelievable and supernatural. I heard from my grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, that the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid were able to see from one end of the world to the other, and were able to reveal things that they clearly saw to their students.” This is a quote from Sefer Hachakirah of the Tzemach Tzedek.

The Tzemach Tzedek continues: “They were capable of this due to the fact that the light that Hashem created on the first day of creation and was concealed in Torah was revealed to them. All these authentic miracles reveal Or Ein Sof, which is infinite.”<sup>15</sup>

The Baal Shem Tov's work inspiring the masses as a teacher of Chassidus came along with his occupation, as his name suggests, “Baal Shen” — caring for the Jewish people, performing miracles, writing *kameios* [amulets], and healing people that came to him or that he met through his travels.

It is these legendary travels and otherworldly stories of the Baal Shem Tov that have made the name Baal Shem Tov synonymous with amazing wonders and miracles.

The Rebbe explains that the miraculous and amazing stories of the Baal Shem Tov are not just a side component of the Baal Shem Tov but part and parcel of what he represented. The Rebbe proves this from the fact that we refer to miraculous and wondrous phenomena as “*Baal-Shemske*,” proving the innate connection between the Baal Shem Tov and the supernatural.<sup>16</sup>

The Baal Shem Tov revealed the true essence of everything; as such, in his mystical behavior and open miracles, he was revealing the true essence of the world, G-dliness, where nature cannot interfere.

This was especially brought out in the learning of Torah,

as we see several stories of the Baal Shem Tov's *ruach hakodesh*, where he saw the unseen through learning and looking in *sefarim*.

The Rebbe teaches that these miraculous stories and behaviors of the Baal Shem Tov taught and revealed that even in the darkest times of *galus* we remain a *mamleches Kohanim* (a kingdom of Kohanim). Hashem looks after us with *hashgacha pratit*, guiding our every step, allowing us to reach beyond the confines of physicality and material aches and strains, and behave in a manner of *lechatchila ariber*.<sup>17</sup> The Rebbe adds that in the Baal Shem Tov's life and conduct we can discover a glimpse and a foretaste of Moshiach's times.

## Mezibuzh

After years of traveling, the Baal Shem Tov eventually settled in the town of Mezibuzh, a beautiful, secluded town, locked in by passing rivers on three of its borders. Mezibuzh would become the home and the base of the Baal Shem Tov and his *chevraya kadisha* (holy congregation) for ten to twenty years after the Baal Shem Tov built his home and his *chatzer* (court).

There are several versions regarding when the Baal Shem Tov moved to Mezibuzh and what the reasons for moving there were. The years cited for the Baal Shem Tov's move range from 5500\* to 5508\*, and he remained there until his passing on Shavuot 5520\*. City documents that were discovered in the last few decades reveal in the records for 5501\* that the Baal Shem Tov lived there in a house provided by the community near the shul.

It was in Mezibuzh that the Baal Shem Tov and his close students, the *chevraya kadisha*, themselves a collection of the greatest rabbonim and *talmidei chachamim* of their time, would bask in the Baal Shem Tov's light, and learn the secrets of the Torah with their great Rebbe. This holy company of students numbered sixty.

The Baal Shem Tov would say a *shiur* for his *talmidim* in Gemara, with great genius and acuity. He would learn with them the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh, and other *rishonim* that gave insight to the *daf* that they were learning. The Baal Shem Tov would translate everything into Yiddish.<sup>18</sup> The Baal Shem Tov also taught Chassidus in its most original and emergent form. Many of these teachings of the Baal Shem Tov were shared in short pieces, as pointers, and were written down and later expounded upon by his students.<sup>19</sup>

It was with this *chevraya kadisha* that many miraculous stories occurred. Several exceptional visions were seen by this holy group of students, in which the Baal Shem Tov would visually teach many powerful lessons to them. In addition, many specific stories occurred with certain *talmidim*,



some in Mezibuzh, some through messengers, and famously, a large number of stories occurred on the road with those students whom the Baal Shem Tov had requested accompany him on his travels.

The Rebbe shared a beautiful story that showcases the immense *hiskashrus* that the *chevraya kadisha* had to the Baal Shem Tov and the belief they had in him. One Motzei Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov told them to go buy candles. (The Baal Shem Tov had a great affinity for light). Even though they were all still Shabbos'dig and not carrying money, they still - with full faith in the Baal Shem Tov - reached into their pockets to get the coins needed to buy the candles. Lo and behold, the money was right there and the candles were bought and lit.

Between the great students of the Baal Shem Tov we find of course his successor the Maggid of Mezritch; Reb Yechiel Michel Zlotchover; Reb Yaakov Yosef of Pulnaah, the Baal Hatoldos; Reb Menachem Nochum Chernobyler; the Shpoler Zaide; Reb Leib Sarah's; Reb Pinchos Koritzer; and Reb Volf Kitzes.

The group included also the Baal Shem Tov's son-in-law, Reb Yechiel Michel Ashkenazi, *Der Daitchel*; the Baal Shem Tov's son, Reb Tzvi; and his *sofer* who wrote his holy *kamei'os* and writings, also named Reb Tzvi; and many more.

It is also important to mention that the Alter Rebbe's father, Reb Baruch, his friend Reb Yitzchok Shaul, and the Alter Rebbe's uncle Reb Yosef Yitzchok, were also close to the Baal Shem Tov.

Although he settled in Mezibuzh, the Baal Shem Tov kept traveling all around the towns and villages, continuing to connect both with the rabbonim and Torah giants of his time, and with the simple folk — men, women, and children — inspiring them, showering them with love and care, and assisting them both physically and spiritually.



AN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE LOOK AT THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S SHUL IN MEZIBUZH. THE ORIGINAL BUILDING WAS DESTROYED BY THE NAZIS BUT AN EXACT REPLICA WAS BUILT ON ITS FORMER SPOT. THE RUINS IN THE FOREGROUND ARE OF THE 'BACH.'

# Toras HaBaal Shem Tov

The novel revelation of Chassidus that was discovered and taught by the Baal Shem Tov is beyond the scope of this historical biography, however we will take a quick look at the general outline of the Baal Shem Tov's Torah.

The Baal Shem Tov did not write any *sefarim*. The Torah that we have from him, most famously, the Kesser Shem Tov and the Tzavaas Harivash, are short *Toros* and *Verter* (pieces) written down and gathered by his students. Additionally, we have snippets of letters where we can see the Baal Shem Tov's ideas in his own writing.

For the most part, the Torah and *shitah* of the Baal Shem Tov are really only explained through the elucidations of his *talmidim*, predominantly by his successor the Maggid, and following him, as the Berditchever put it, “the Litvak” - the Alter Rebbe, took the “*smetene*” (fats) - the core, and further expounded on the Baal Shem Tov's Torah.

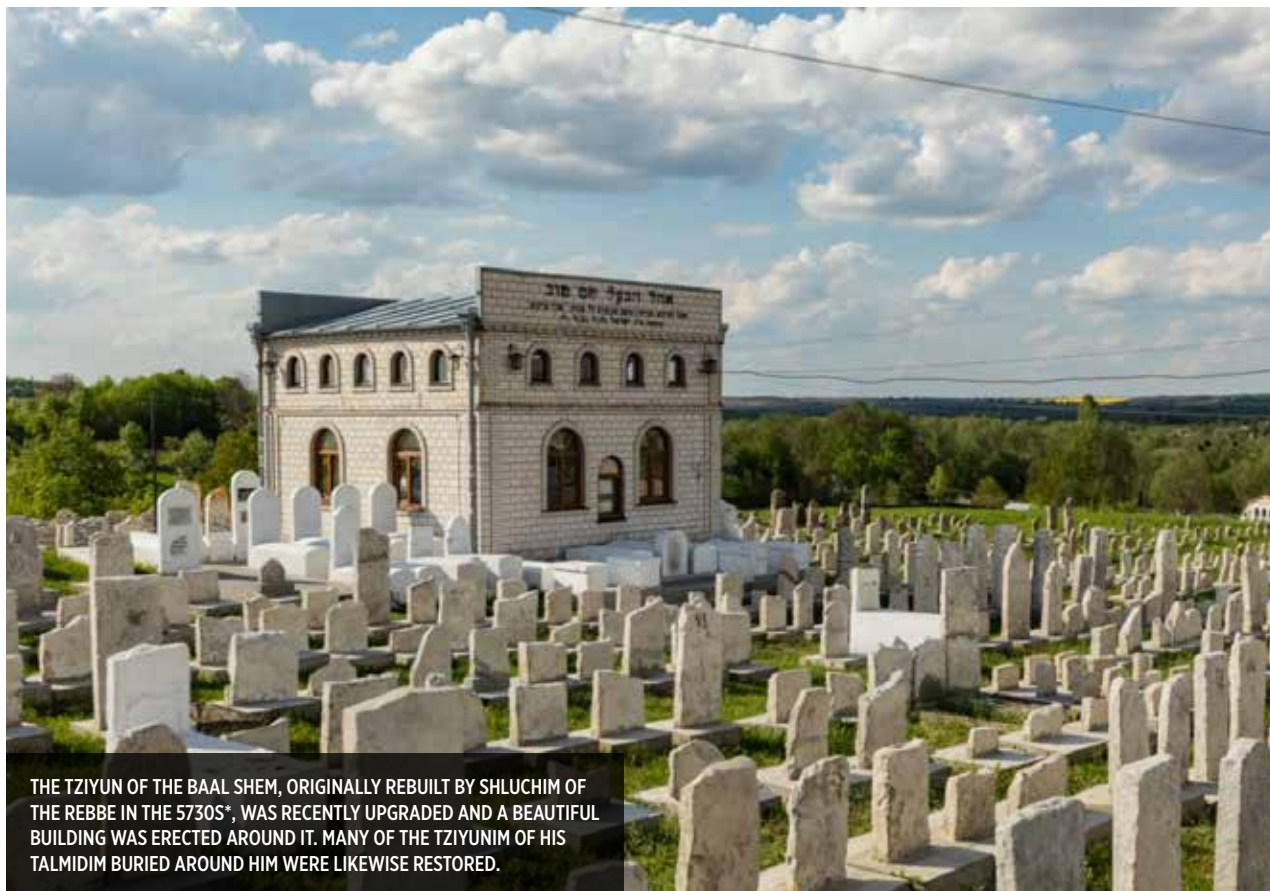
While the Alter Rebbe never learned by the Baal Shem Tov, and they did not really come in contact for heavenly

reasons, the Alter Rebbe considered himself the spiritual grandson of the Baal Shem Tov<sup>20</sup>. Chassidus Chabad is the direct continuation of Toras HaChassidus Haklolis [general Chassidus] — Toras HaBaal Shem Tov.

Some of the core ideas of the Baal Shem Tov serve as a base for Chassidus, and Chassidus Chabad in particular. These include: “*Lolam Havayah devarcha nitzav bashamayim*” — the world is recreated every moment with Hashem's power of creation; *hashgacha pratis* for every single creation and incident that occurs, even with the inanimate objects of the world, no matter how trivial; *etzem* is undividable; through Torah, mitzvos, and love of a fellow Yid we can reach the *Atzmus* of Hashem; and much more.

The Baal Shem Tov's emphasis on *simchah*, *ahavas Yisroel*, *bittul*, working with one's physical side instead of breaking it, working on one's *middos*, uplifting the sparks of *kedushah* — revealing the *kedushah* in everything and every place, all these themes stand as pillars of Chassidus from the revelation of Chassidus to this day.

But above all else, the statement that takes center stage and stands as the backdrop for so much of Chassidus Chabad, is the concept of *hafatzas hamaayanos*. The story is described



THE TZIYUN OF THE BAAL SHEM, ORIGINALLY REBUILT BY SHLUCHIM OF THE REBBE IN THE 5730S\*, WAS RECENTLY UPGRADED AND A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING WAS ERECTED AROUND IT. MANY OF THE TZIYUNIM OF HIS TALMIDIM BURIED AROUND HIM WERE LIKEWISE RESTORED.



by the Baal Shem Tov in a letter to his brother-in-law Reb Gershon Kitover.

The Baal Shem Tov relates: On Rosh Hashanah 5507\*, he experienced an *aliyas haneshamah*, with his soul passing through and seeing many divine chambers. Ultimately, assisted by his teacher Achiya Hashiloni, he arrived at Moshiach's chamber. There, he saw Moshiach learning Torah with all the *tana'im* and *tzaddikim*, including the *shivas haro'im* (the seven shepherds of the Jewish people), and they were all very happy when the Baal Shem Tov arrived.

The Baal Shem Tov asked Moshiach, "*Eimas assi Mar* — When is the Master coming?"<sup>21</sup> Moshiach replied: "When your study will become known and when *'yafutzu maayanosecha chutzah* — your well-springs will spread outward;' what I have taught you and you have grasped, and they will be able to do *yichudim* and *aliyos* [divine fusions and transcendences] as you do, then all the *klipos* will disappear and it will be a time of *ratzon* [G-dly will] and salvation."<sup>22</sup>

It is this statement of "*kesheyafutzu maayanosecha chutzah*" that established the work and study of Chasidus as the final step that will lead us to Moshiach. It is this goal and objective that the *nesi'ei Chabad* and the Rebbe in particular ingrained in the Chassidim as the final work to bring the *geulah*.

## The War Against The Frankisten

During the Baal Shem Tov's lifetime, and more intensely in the later years of his life, a new danger arose that threatened to destroy the Jewish people both from within and from outside — the Frankisten. Against the menace of the infamous Frankisten, the Baal Shem Tov and his students fought fiercely and bravely, until they defeated the conniving heretics.

After the demise of Shabsai Tzvi, secret groups of followers of his "*kat*" (cult) continued to exist on small and for the most part discreet levels all across Europe, and many *gedolei Yisroel* of that generation set out to fight the war against these secret followers.

In the early 5500s\*, they regrouped and created clout under the leadership of Yaakov Frank. Frank mixed ideas from Shabsai Tzvi together with Christian ideas of his time and fashioned around him an abominable gathering of heretics who were out to hunt innocent Jewish souls and erode the stability of the Jewish communities.



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

IN THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S SIDDUR IT IS WRITTEN מידו המלאה והרחבה הפתוחה הגדושה והרחבה, WITH A GIMMEL, AS THE REBBE MENTIONED MANY TIMES.

After accepting certain Christian beliefs, they found a listening ear from the church and the local Gentile, often antisemitic, city rulers and governments. They defamed the Jews and told lies and libels, until they convinced the priests and the municipalities to burn all the Gemaras and other *sefarim* that they claimed were an offense to them.

The *gedolim* of the time fought bravely against them and participated in debates, calling out their lies and their misconstructions of Torah. They pointed out the fallacies of their arguments, attempting to have them lose favor in the church's and rulers' eyes.

Among the rabbonim who participated in these debates were the Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim*. In Sefer Hashimush of Reb Yaakov Emdin, himself one of the great warriors against the *kat* of Shabsai Tzvi and Yaakov Frank, he lists Reb Yisroel Baal Shem as one of the rabbonim that fought against the Frankisten in the Podolieh region of Poland/Ukraine.

In addition to the debates, the Baal Shem Tov fought against the terrible decrees using several methods. Through davening, *aliyos haneshamah*, sending messengers, and through performing miracles, the Baal Shem Tov ultimately succeeded in thwarting their evil plan to burn the *Shas*.<sup>23</sup>

In the summer of 5519\*, Reb Chaim Rapoport of Lvov, Reb Yisroel Margalios of Yozlovitch, and the Baal Shem Tov, debated the Frankisten and won. The rulers sided with the Baal Shem Tov and the Jewish community and that day, 26 Tammuz, was celebrated as the day of the victory over the Frankisten.<sup>24</sup> The Rebbe Rashab explained that the spiritual victory over them had already taken place on Acharon Shel Pesach, when the Baal Shem Tov said that he would defeat them, yet the open and revealed



victory happened only later in the summer.<sup>25</sup>

Chof-Vov Tammuz was established as a Yom Tov that was to be celebrated every year, but since the following year was already after the Baal Shem Tov's passing, the celebration didn't really take off.<sup>26</sup>

The Frankisten were placed under *cherem* by the rabbonim of the time, and soon they fell apart, most of them converting to Christianity. Although it may have been the only solution, the *cherem* pained the Baal Shem Tov, because, as he explained, when the limb is still connected it can be revived, but once it's cut off there is no way to bring it back.

## The Baal Shem Tov's Passing

In the months leading up to the Baal Shem Tov's passing, on the first day of Shavuos 5520\*, there were signs from the Baal Shem Tov that he would be passing away shortly. In Shivchei Habaal Shem Tov, it is brought that the Baal Shem Tov's passing was connected to the strengthening of Shabsai Tzvi and his *kat*, and the Baal Shem Tov's fight against them.

The Rebbe quotes several times from the Rebbe Rashab in Toras Shalom about the Baal Shem Tov, that although he could have gone up to heaven just like Eliyahu Hanavi in a heavenly fire, he specifically wanted to pass away regularly and to be buried in the ground, to fulfill the *possuk* "V'el afar tashuv — and you will return to dust." The Rebbe explains that this expresses the Baal Shem Tov's idea of working with

the mundane and the worldly, uplifting it and revealing its innate holiness.<sup>27</sup>

On Lag Ba'omer before his passing, the Baal Shem Tov was in a very uplifted mood. He hinted at his upcoming passing, stating that in 18 days he would merit *Or Chozer*, a divine reflective light, and he will be returning his *ruach* to Hashem, and that *ruach* will bring another *ruach* until the coming of Moshiach.<sup>28</sup>

Before the Baal Shem Tov's passing, he told his students to sing the *Niggun Hisorerus Rachamim Rabim* of Reb Michel Zlotchover. He said that when this *niggun* will be sung by anyone with a real feeling of *teshuvah* awakening, "I will hear the *niggun*, and I will come and sing it with them and will awaken Heaven's abundant mercy for this person."<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the exact day of passing, there was confusion whether it was the first day of Shavuos or the second. The Rebbe proves from the fact that the Alter Rebbe said that the Baal Shem Tov passed away on Wednesday that the *petirah* must have been the first day of Shavuos, the sixth of Sivan.

The Rebbe said that the burial must have happened on the second day, when it is halachically permissible for Yidden to handle the burial. Hence, the Baal Shem Tov's passing was connected to both days of Shavuos, and this was the cause for the confusion.<sup>30</sup>

Shavuos and the Baal Shem Tov are strongly related, since the Baal Shem Tov revealed a whole new level of Torah that was not yet revealed to the masses, further merging and fusing the mundane with the spiritual, continuing and spreading the message of *Matan Torah* to even greater magnitudes.<sup>31</sup> **T**

1. Hayom Yom Chai Elul.

2. Likkutei Dibburim, vol. 3, p. 742.

3. Likkutei Dibburim, vol. 1, p. 190.

4. Sicha, Shavuos 5720.

5. HaTomim, issue 1, p. 14ff.

6. See above sicha, Shavuos 5720, se'if 12.

7. HaTomim issue 1, pp. 24-25.

8. Igros Kodesh, vol. 15, letter 5670.

9. From this point on, we follow the events according to the Shivchei HaBaal Shem Tov, while up until now we quoted mostly from HaTomim and the sichos of the Frieddiker Rebbe.

10. Shivchei HaBesht, p. 47. It should be

noted that the towns where the Baal Shem Tov lived before his *hisgalus* and at the time of his *hisgalus* vary according to different sources.

11. Sefer Hasichos, Kayitz Tof Shin, pp. 83-44.

12. Sicha Chai Elul 5745, Pg. 2920.

13. Toras Menachem 5742, Pg. 1399.

14. The Letter and the Spirit, pg. 459.

15. Sefer Hachakirah, 65:1.

16. Sicha, Shavuos 5742, p. 1564.

17. Likkutei Sichos, vol. 18, Shavuos 2.

18. Hayom Yom, 13 Cheshvan.

19. Toras Menachem 5748, vol. 1, p. 186.

20. Hayom Yom, 27 Iyar.

21. Based on a similar question posed by

Rebbi Yehoshua ben Levi, Sanhedrin 98a.

22. Beginning of Kesser Shem Tov.

23. Likkutei Dibburim, vol. 3, p. 770.

24. Sefer Hatoldos, vol. 1, p. 765.

25. Sefer Hasichos 5696, p. 140.

26. Likkutei Sichos, vol. 24, p. 345.

27. Likkutei Sichos, vol. 4, p. 1031.

28. Likkutei Dibburim, vol. 3, p. 742.

29. Sefer Hasichos 5703, p. 169.

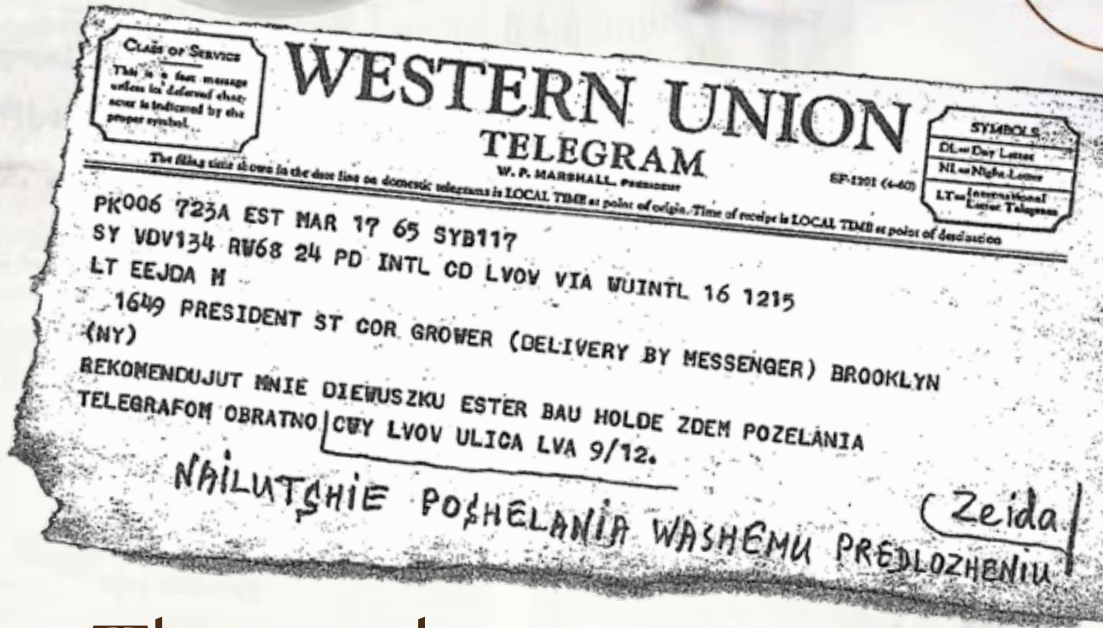
30. Toras Menachem, vol. 3, p. 148.

31. Two general sources for large parts of this article are the articles from Reb Shlomo Abish in Heichal Habaal Shem Tov, and HaMe'oros HaGedolim.



לעילוי נשמת  
 שיינא גאלדא ע"ה  
 בת יבלחט"א ר' מיכאל הלוי שיחי  
 גוטלייזער  
 נלב"ע כ"ח אלול ה'תשע"ו  
 תנ"צ'יה

נדפס ע"י זקניה  
 הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו מרת  
 לאה  
 ומשפחתם שיחי  
 שפאלטר



# A Pierce Through The Curtain

Written By: Rabbi Mendel Jacobs

Through years of persecution and hardship, the small community of Chassidim who remained stranded behind the Iron Curtain held steadfast in their Yiddishkeit and maintained a connection with the Rebbe, despite all odds. The telegram<sup>1</sup> presented here is testament to that. Constantly on alert to avoid the prying eyes of the KGB, this *bochur* from behind the Iron Curtain sent a telegram to the home of Rabbi Leibel Groner, seeking the Rebbe's guidance about whether to go ahead with a *shidduch* proposal.

The Rebbe responded with his holy handwriting in Russian, using English characters, and signed his name as "Zeida"—grandfather, so as not to cause trouble for the recipient by being associated with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

The *bochur* writes:

*Rekomendujut mnie diewuszkę Esther bas Holde zdem pozelania. Telegrafom obratno...* (They are proposing for me a girl, Esther bas Holde, we await your response. Telegraph back to...)

The Rebbe responds:

*Nailustshie poshelania washemu predlozheniu*

(Best wishes for your proposal.)

**Zeida**

1. Published in Teshura Raichik-Lerman, 5765.



MRS. JORDANA STOCKHAMER AND HER HUSBAND CONVERSING WITH THE REBBE AT THE SUNDAY DOLLARS OF 26 ADAR I, 5752.

JEM 058027

לזכות  
החתן הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק והכלה  
המהוללה מרת ח' מושקא שיחיו  
שיינער  
לרגל חתונתם ג' סיון ה'תשפ"ג שנת הקהל

ולזכות הוריהם  
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת שושנה ומשפחתם שיחיו

נדפס ע"י זקניהם  
ר' צבי אברהם וזוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו  
מארנץ



# The Four Extra Dollars

*Written By:*

Rabbi Shabi Soffer & Rabbi Tzemach Feller

*This story was related by Mrs. Jordana Stockhamer, an attorney living in Toronto, Canada.*

I met my husband in 1990 on an Israel Bonds mission, we got engaged in 1991 at Masada on another such mission, and got married several months later. On those Israel trips, a young rabbi named Rabbi Shmuel Butman accompanied our group. We decided a few months later to attend an Israel bonds conference in New York, and Rabbi Butman was there as well.

On Motzei Shabbos, Rabbi Butman told us: "I have a treat for you tomorrow, I want to take you somewhere. We're going to meet the Rebbe. There is a bus arranged that will pick you up, and it will be wonderful." I was initially hesitant, concerned about missing our flight home later on Sunday, but Rabbi Butman assured us we'd be able to get to the airport on time. And after all, this was an opportunity to meet with the Rebbe, and we'll get a *bracha* from him.

The day my husband and I went to see the Rebbe was March 1, 1992 — 26 Adar I 5752.

I walked outside the next morning expecting a coach bus, but instead we found a school bus waiting for us... I was again hesitant but my husband said, "Shmuel said it'll

be okay, so it'll be okay." We got on the bus, and of course traffic from Manhattan to Crown Heights was terrible, and it was getting later and later.

We finally pulled up to 770, and I saw a line stretching down the block and around the corner. I turned to my husband and said, "Do you see how long this line is? This is ridiculous! Get us a cab, we're going to the airport right now!" But Rabbi Butman said, "Don't worry about the line, I have another way in. We're going around the side." And we did; our group skipped the line and in no time we were on our way in to see the Rebbe.

As we approached the Rebbe, I saw that each person only had a moment or two to exchange several words before receiving a dollar from the Rebbe and being whisked along. So I turned to my husband and said, "Let's discuss this right now, what will we say? We should ask for a *bracha* for our marriage, that we should have beautiful children, and most importantly a *bracha* for our parents," I detailed. "And say it in Yiddish," I concluded. My husband was the son of Holocaust survivors and spoke fluent Yiddish. Our group looked as American as could be, so I said, "Speak in Yiddish, that will get the Rebbe's attention."



“The Rebbe appeared to be surprised, and all of a sudden everything stopped; it was just the Rebbe, my husband, and myself.”

Indeed, as we came face to face to the Rebbe and were already being whisked along, my husband began talking to the Rebbe in Yiddish. The Rebbe appeared to be surprised, and all of a sudden everything stopped; it was just the Rebbe, my husband, and myself. My husband asked for the *bracha* for our marriage, for children, and for our parents. The Rebbe gave us a beautiful *bracha* for our marriage, that we should have beautiful children, and that each of our parents should live until 120. Then the Rebbe handed each of us a dollar.

And then the Rebbe handed us four more dollars.

I didn't understand the significance at the time, but we took the extra dollars and were on our way — now we were focused on catching our flight! We got back on the school bus, and made it to the airport on time, returning to Toronto. I soon became pregnant with our first child, who was followed by two more, and life became very busy after that.

Ten years later, in 2002, I found out that I was pregnant again. The doctor recommended that I get an amnio (an amniocentesis; a type of prenatal test that can detect certain birth defects) since I was 40. I didn't feel it was necessary — we had beautiful children, and I was healthy. But my husband insisted; he asked lots of doctors and everybody said I should get this test. Only my mother was on my side, mentioning that since I bruise easily, perhaps it wasn't a good idea to get this test. In the end, the nurse called and said that the doctor had scheduled the test a week from next Tuesday, and I should let them know if I wanted to cancel.

So I told my husband, “I think we should speak to a rabbi.” So we went to one of our (not Chabad) rabbis, who told us, “Look, halachically, you can have an amnio, it's just that you need to be careful what you do with the information from

the test; you cannot abort if there's a problem. But what does she need it for ...”

This was about a week before the test was scheduled. Then I told my husband, “You know, I want to go to shul this Shabbos at Chabad Flamingo; maybe Rabbi Kaplan can speak to us on Sunday.” We came to shul, but Rabbi Kaplan and his wife Faigy weren't there that week — they had gone out of town for a wedding.

I was very disturbed and upset, and I sat there asking Hashem to help me, to tell me what to do. It came time for the sermon, and Rabbi Grossbaum — who was filling in for Rabbi Kaplan — got up and began speaking about the *parsha*. I wasn't paying much attention, but then I got my sign.

He began to say, “Some of you may know that the Rebbe used to hand out dollars to people on Sundays,” and he went on to tell a story of people getting dollars from the Rebbe. It was as if a lightbulb lit up. I thought, “We got four extra dollars, and I'm pregnant with our fourth child. I think there's a connection here.”

As soon as shul was over I ran to my husband and said, “Did you hear what the rabbi was talking about? We also went to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe gave us four extra dollars, and I'm pregnant with my fourth child. Those dollars weren't for our parents — they were for us. We're supposed to have four beautiful children. I don't need any doctor to tell me that, I don't need any amnio to tell me that.”

And my husband turned to me and said, “Wow, I think you're right! Monday morning, I want you to call and cancel the amnio.” And I did, and our fourth child — a daughter — was born happy and healthy. ❶

נדפס ע"י ולזכות

הרה"ת ר' יוחנן  
וזוגתו מרת לאה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
גאלדמאן

# PRACTICAL HORA'OS

A CLOSER  
LOOK AT  
SOME OF  
THE REBBE'S  
HORA'OS

## SPLITTING UP CLASSES

WRITTEN BY:  
RABBI TZEMACH FELLER



*The Rebbe addresses how best to maximize each student's potential. Adapted from a sicha of Purim 5732\*.*

For a child's development, it is crucial that they be enabled to grow to their full potential. As Shlomo Hamelech said, "חַנּוּךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל-פִּי דַרְכוֹ גַם כִּי-יִזְקִין לֹא-יִסּוּר מִמֶּנָּה" — Train a child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not turn away from it."

If the child is trained in accordance with his capacities, it guarantees that when he is older, he will not turn away. If some children in a class are able to learn at a more advanced level than their peers, we cannot be satisfied with allowing them to simply cruise along at the pace of the others — this would not satisfy their obligation of Torah study.

We see when it comes to reading the Megillah that "we suspend Torah-study and come to hear the Megillah."<sup>1</sup> Seemingly, isn't the Megillah itself part of the Torah? Why is listening to the Megillah reading referred to as "*bittul Torah*?" The answer is that it is not studied in depth but merely read, and as most people could be studying at a greater level, the obligation of Torah study has to be "suspended" for hearing the Megillah. From here we see that in general, if one is not studying at the level they're capable of, it does not satisfy their obligation of *limmud haTorah*.

Now, on the one hand, studying in a group is crucial. If everyone were to study alone, those who are more



assiduous would study more, and those who are less assiduous would study less. When learning in a group, on the other hand, the students motivate each other.

On the other hand, however, the larger the class is, the more likely it is that the aptitude of the students will not be on the same level, and so it is necessary to split the students into relatively small groups.

When it comes to studying *alef-beis*, the *halacha* is that the class size should be no more than 25 students (or 40 if there's a teacher's assistant). That's for *alef-beis*, where there really isn't much room for significant differences between individual students in terms of how in-depth the study is taking place.

The reason for this is not only in recognition of the limitations the teacher has in terms of educating and supervising, but also because when a grade is split into two classes — one studying at a higher level — there is an element of *kinas sofrim* [competition amongst scholars], whose purpose is not, G-d forbid, to demean anyone, but instead to increase the study level in *all* of the classes, as the students will aspire to advance. This cannot happen smoothly if all of the students are in the same classroom, so there should be two separate classrooms for the two classes.

Practically speaking: Very large classes are not ideal, and to have two classes in one space is also not ideal, so the classes should be split into two, with one remaining in the

current classroom and the other relocating to a separate space nearby.

This will be of benefit to *all* of the students. It is not the case that the students in the lower class are doing a favor to the students in the higher class [by not holding them back and by enabling them to reach their full potential]. Chassidus explains that when the waters were split on the second day of Creation, this did not only benefit the waters that were now supernal, close to Hashem, but also the waters that were now below benefited and were brought closer to Hashem than they were before the split: the yearning they had to ascend was itself something that brought them closer to Hashem.

In our case, this division into two classes will enable the lower class to recognize and actualize their own talents and bring them to their fullest potential, because they will yearn — not to study in one classroom or the other, but — to study Torah with great toil.

Ensuring that the classes aren't too big in quantity will make them increase in quality — and this will lead to more quantity as word gets out about the advanced level of learning that is taking place. This will lead to success far beyond even the additional effort that the students will invest. **T**

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1. Megillah 3a.



לעילוי נשמת  
מרת לאה בת הרה"ח ר' אליהו נחום ע"ה בלאק  
נלב"ע שבת קודש כ"ה אלול ה'תשע"ג  
ת"נ צ"ב ה'

נדפס ע"י  
משפחתה שיחיו

על  
מנוח  
אוריאל

# The Rebbe's Pride & Joy

Compiled by:  
Rabbi Yossi Katz

Written By:  
Rabbi Boruch Altein



# N'shei Chabad

Special thanks to Rabbi Yossi Alperowitz, Mrs. Sasha Alperowitz, Mrs. Sima Ashkenazi, Mrs. Riva Ceitlin, Mrs. Vivi Deren, Mrs. Rivie Feldman, Mrs. Leah Gniwisch, Mrs. Esty Grossbaum, Mrs. Sarah Kahanov, Mrs. Sarah Katzman, Mrs. Leah Kahan, Mrs. Shiffy Landa, Mrs. Cherna Light, Mrs. Reba Sharfstein, Mrs. Chani Shmukler, Mrs. Shterna Shpritzer, Mrs. Ester Sternberg, Mrs. Fradel Sudak and Mrs. Bluma Weinberg for their assistance in preparation of this article.

With the early history of N'shei Chabad we were assisted by "History of N'shei U'bnos Chabad, the Rebbe's Pride and Joy," printed by N'shei Chabad of Kansas City in conjunction with N'shei Chabad.

A very special thank you goes to the staff of JEM for sharing their interviews with Mrs. Feldman and Mr. and Mrs. Rader. זכות הרבים תלוי בהם.



he shul is packed with people, hundreds, even thousands of them. The cities they have traveled here from read like a global geography lesson, spanning the vast expanses of the United States and Canada — New York, Detroit, Cincinnati, Miami, Minnesota, Los Angeles, Montreal, Vancouver, and more — to locations across oceans and continents. They have come to hear the words of the *nossi hador* and garner guidance and inspiration for their holy work at home, each one in their own area.

Is it possible? Thousands of people fill every bench and bleacher in the grand downstairs *zal* of 770, yet there is not even a *minyán* present — for these devoted Chassidim are women and girls, every single one of them.

When was such a sight ever seen before — the *nossi hador* dedicating his time and focus in such a marvelous manner to the women of אנושי שלומנו, and not as an isolated incident, but multiple times every year?

Travel to every city with a frum community — you will find nothing which can compare. Our Rebbe, the *nossi hador*, launched a metaphorical revolution in the setting of women and girls within Yiddishkeit and Chassidus Chabad.

As the Rebbe explained in the *kuntres* "On the greatness of Jewish women" (Shabbos Parshas Bo & Beshalach 5752\*)<sup>1</sup>, the emphasis the Frierdiker Rebbe [and by extension, our

Rebbe] placed on the role of women in *avodas Hashem* is not as an also-had, but unique and fundamental. The qualities of women are essential to the fulfillment of our core mandate as Yidden: to create a *dira betachtonim* and bring the coming of Moshiach.

The vehicle through which the Rebbe launched this revolution is the renowned and storied organization of Agudas N'shei U'bnos Chabad (shorthand: N'shei). The riveting account of the Rebbe's launch of this organization is the subject of this article.

## A Simchas Torah Farbrengen

Simchas Torah day 5713\*, a mere year-and-a-half after the *kabbalas hanesius* on Yud Shevat 5711\*. The crowd of Chassidim filling the small (and as of yet, only) *zal* of 770 to the roof joyously participated in the Rebbe's farbrengen. Suddenly, as the Rebbe began the third *sicha*, an entirely new organization, one neither planned nor initiated by the Chassidim, saw its debut.

"The [Frierdiker] Rebbe would publish his *sichos* and letters in Yiddish," the Rebbe said, [unlike the previous Rabbeim, who did so exclusively in *Lashon Hakodesh*]. "One reason he gave was to allow women and girls the ability to access the content, thereby inspiring them in their service of Hashem. To strengthen this, the need has arisen to establish an association of Chabad women and girls, Agudas N'shei U'bnos Chabad..."

The Rebbe went on to ask that the new organization be





up and running by Shabbos Bereishis, just a few days hence — and of course, that is what indeed took place.

## The Israeli Connection

As it happens, the genesis of N’shei U’bnos Chabad began even earlier. In a letter dated 24 Sivan 5711\*, the Rebbe wrote to the *vaad hapoel* of Agudas Chassidei Chabad of Eretz Hakodesh (“Aguch”):

“In my view it is necessary to organize a special women’s division of Aguch... to organize both women who are Chassidim and all those who hold the spirit of Chabad dear to their heart and soul, to arrange activities for women generally. As is self-understood, this requires a unique approach and goals.”

In its own twist of events, the well-known Chossid, Reb Zushe Wilmowsky became heavily involved in launching this Israeli N’shei organization, predating the central *mosad*, with tremendous *hatzlacha*. Things moved quickly and on Sukkos 5713\*, just over a year later, the very first women’s conference of the Israeli N’shei U’bnos Chabad took place. As mentioned above, a few days later, on Simchas Torah 5713\*, the Rebbe launched the central Agudas N’shei U’bnos Chabad in America.<sup>2</sup>

## Auxiliary To No One

Successful organizations for frum women already existed at this point. In the early 5710s\*, most Jewish communities and organizations had a ladies’ auxiliary. This was an association of women who typically raised needed funds for the community or organization or assisted in some other way.

N’shei was different. As the Rebbe set out the new organization’s goals, N’shei existed to support women in their service of Hashem, both internally and reaching out to others. It did not serve to assist other, mainstream organizations.

In fact, one thing that was absolutely off the table during the early years of N’shei was active fundraising. In numerous letters and instructions, the Rebbe explained that raising its own funds would give the new organization an uncomfortable character and make it seem akin to the numerous ladies’ auxiliaries that already existed. Rather, the budget of central N’shei U’bnos Chabad in those years was covered entirely by the Rebbe!

This went on for many years. Eventually, the Rebbe wanted the organization to stand on its own feet and raise the funds

needed for their programs.

As can be expected, this new type of women’s organization required a fundamental shift of perspective. In a letter dated the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul 5714\*, the Rebbe writes to Reb Betzalel Wilschansky: “May it be Hashem’s will that a fundamental shift take place in the attitude of women of *anash* toward the entire idea [of N’shei U’bnos Chabad], for which purpose a fundamental shift must take place in the attitude of the men of *anash*. Apparently, it is not yet clear [to everyone] how essential the matter is....”

## Rapid Growth

In 5713\*, after the Rebbe launched the new *mosad*, the Rebbe directed Rabbi Yosef Weinberg (who was involved in the ladies auxiliary of the Lubavitch Yeshivos) to get the organization off the ground.

The Rebbe quoted from Kisvei Ha’Arizal that the generation of Jewish women who wandered through the desert with Moshe Rabbeinu was outstanding in many respects. One of the women’s greatest merits was that they refused to bow down to the Eigel HaZahav, the Golden Calf. “Amongst the rewards promised to these righteous women was that their souls would come down into this world in the generation preceding the coming of Moshiach.” Based on this declaration by the AriZal, the Rebbe felt that it was the perfect time to establish N’shei u’Bnos Chabad, an organization that would inspire its members to bring more Chassidishkeit into their own homes and bring closer other women to Yiddishkeit and Chassidus.

The Rebbe continued quoting the writings of the AriZal further, saying, “In this generation, and as part of [the Jewish women’s] reward, the husbands will follow the wives - *Talmidei chachamim nishmaim linishoseihem*.’ If you want to accomplish anything with the men, accomplish first with the ladies!”

The executive board of N’shei Chabad was made up of Rebbetzin Tema Gurary, Mrs. Miriam Popack, and Mrs. Sarah Kahanov. The first official meeting of N’shei Chabad took place at the Gross home in Crown Heights and mailings were done from their basement.

Initially, only a few women participated — in fact, the Rebbe acknowledged this reality in his *sicha* on Simchas Torah, encouraging the initial entrants to not be intimidated by small numbers and to trust that growth will indeed come.

Mrs. Reba Sharfstein, who started N’shei of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 5715\*, relates:

“My husband and I moved to Cincinnati in the fall of 1954, to teach. In a *farbrengen* during Shevat, the Rebbe spoke about women getting together to learn in general and especially about their mitzvos. Shortly afterward Reb Avrohom

Drizin, who would come regularly to Cincinnati to fundraise, visited and stayed at our house. He asked if we heard what the Rebbe said. When I said yes, he asked, ‘So what are you doing about it?’ I looked at him in shock and explained that there were only one or two other women who were even possibly interested. He simply said, ‘Okay, call them,’ and handed me the phone. So I did. I called one woman, she thought

of another woman, who then thought of another — so we started with five women. From that, it grew to hundreds.”

Throughout those formative years, the Rebbe regularly encouraged different women to launch or participate in N’shei chapters in their respective cities.

For example, on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5713\*, just days after the *sicha* launching the new *mosad*, the Rebbe wrote to Mrs. Rochel Cunin from the Bronx. He shared with her about the start of a new group for women to get together, learn *halachos* that are relevant to them, discuss matters relating to their children’s education, and learn about the weekly *sedra* and talks from the Frieddiker Rebbe. The Rebbe asks her if she can get together with other local women to launch a branch in her area.

A few days later, on 23 Cheshvan, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Shlomo Zalman Hecht in Chicago, following up on a conversation the Rebbe had with his wife, to see whether she had already started N’shei activities.

Numerous other such examples exist.

Multiple times, the Rebbe stressed that N’Shei is not limited to “certified Lubavitchers, nor dependent on which *nusach* the women daven, nor whether their husbands put on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin.” Rather, all those who agree that Hashem must be served not only emotionally, but also using one’s intellectual powers, are already included within the term “Chabad.” Indeed, on a number of occasions the Rebbe asked women from “outside” the Lubavitch community to get involved.<sup>3</sup>

On 26 Kislev 5713\* the Rebbe wrote to *anash* of Dublin, Ireland, expressing appreciation for their report regarding the launch of N’shei there, and pointing out that not every participant needs to be from a Chabad background — the core requirement is simply that they desire to become closer to Chabad. Additionally, the Rebbe noted that generally the speakers and lecturers for the chapter should be sourced from the participating women themselves, though it is of course alright if, when appropriate, a man would offer a class or the like.

On a similar note, on 25 Cheshvan 5713\*, the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Sholom Rivkin of S. Louis, Missouri, asking him to find ways to launch a N’shei chapter in his city, stressing that the official leaders must be women, though he and others can help keep the momentum going. Similarly, in a letter to N’shei of Tel Aviv on Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5715\*, the Rebbe noted that many of the participating women can lecture as well.

In 5713\*, the Rebbe asked Rabbi and Mrs. Bentzion Shemtov, then the pioneers of Chabad in London, along with other local Lubavitchers, to start a local N’shei chapter. Mrs. Fradel Sudak (daughter of the Shemtovs) was then a young girl. As she relates:

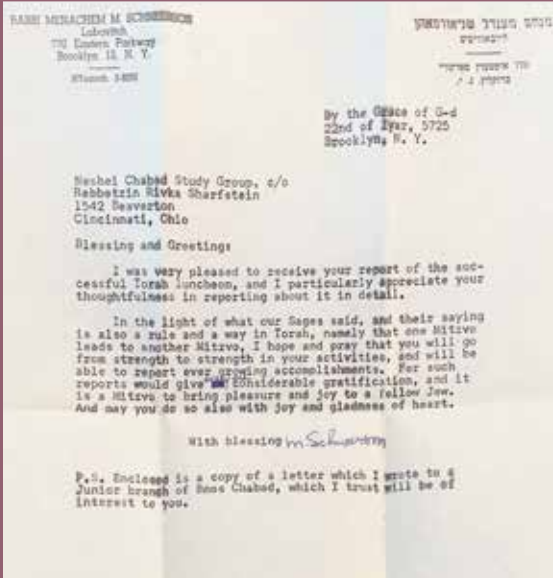
“At first, only about six to eight Lubavitch women would attend the regular meetings in each others’ homes, three



THE FIRST N’SHEI CHABAD CONVENTION WITH BNOS CHABAD PARTICIPANTS, HELD IN CINCINNATI, OHIO.

## A SPECIAL MITZVAH

Presented here for the first time is a beautiful letter from the Rebbe to members of N’shei Chabad in Cincinnati, Ohio, demonstrating how much the Rebbe appreciates the activities of N’shei Chabad, and the reports thereof.



of whom were older and the rest were new mothers. Yet, each woman invited her neighbors, and the group saw rapid growth. Whenever someone prominent traveled through London from New York, such as Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht or Rabbi Yosef Wineberg, who often served as the Rebbe's liaison for women's matters, the Rebbe instructed them to address the local N'shei."

Mrs. Sudak would originally babysit for those mothers who wanted to attend a meeting. Yet, after some time passed, she became the one to give the *shiur* in a Rebbe's *sicha*, despite her relative youth!

She recalls that the Rebbe instructed London N'shei to learn three items at each meeting: 1. Something from the weekly *parsha*; 2. *Halachos* that are relevant to women, and 3. Chassidus, achieved by recounting a *chassidische maaseh*.

London was one of the original branches — alongside Crown Heights, Brownsville, Montreal, Toronto, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Worcester and Pittsburgh, who laid the groundwork for the hundreds of branches and tens of thousands of participants in the years ahead.

## Opposition

The novelty of N'shei's groundbreaking work did give rise to some opposition.

In 5714\*, Mrs. Shula Kazen, living in Cleveland, Ohio, had just given birth to her son, when she received a letter from the Rebbe asking her to launch a local branch of the LWO (Lubavitch Women's Organization, i.e., N'shei). As she related, she was then contending with ill health and motherhood and did not feel up to stewarding the project forward. Yet, a surprising set of circumstances led to her connecting with a local Jewish woman who was active in the Cleveland Jewish scene and who dearly wished for a local branch of N'shei to be established; and indeed, that is what happened.

"At that time," Mrs. Kazen relates, "We had been publicizing N'shei activities in the local Jewish newspaper. Some criticized us for it. They felt that women's issues did not belong in a mainstream publication (due to *tznius* concerns). The Rebbe, of course, encouraged me to continue. 'In previous generations, Jews gave *matan beseiser* [charity inconspicuously]. But today, it's different,' he said. 'When it's published in a newspaper that Moshe has given a contribution, then Chaim, too, wants to give. If it's published that Bracha has given, then Sarah, too, wants to give.' Publishing good activities publicly encourages more to participate."

When Mrs. Kazen first started the organization, participating women began donating funds toward the activities. She took no pay for her work, but some community members suspected her of using the funds for personal needs.

Understandably, this deeply upset her.

She raised the issue with the Rebbe, and the Rebbe replied: "People always talk. You cannot stop others from talking, but you will succeed." The Rebbe advised her to encourage participants to put money into a large tzedakah box at each meeting.<sup>4</sup>

## Demographic Differences

N'shei U'bnos Chabad, the name the Rebbe gave the organization in his very first *sicha* on the topic, mentions two distinct demographics: women and girls.

N'shei of Montreal asked the Rebbe how to handle different demographics when the issues confronting them are not all the same. On 22 Cheshvan 5715\* the Rebbe responded: "Some issues and questions have a broad appeal and some are relevant to specific ages. Thus, some gatherings should be arranged for all members [of the branch] where broader matters are discussed... and additionally, individual groups can be formed for specific groups and ages — though the general meetings for all participants should occur often."

In a letter to Rabbi Zalman Kazen dated Yud-Gimmel Tammuz 5714\*, the Rebbe advised him to launch a separate branch for younger women (as sitting with older women might be unappealing for the younger aged women), but to ensure that this is done diplomatically.

From the above it is clear that N'shei U'bnos Chabad exists to serve girls and women of every age, each in their own way and working as one whole.

## Learning, Conventions, Publications And More

So, what was this new *mosad*, spearheaded by the Rebbe, going to do? What would be its primary activities?

On 28 Tammuz 5712\*, the Rebbe wrote to the earlier, Israeli branch of N'shei U'bnos Chabad and laid out the main tasks he saw the new association performing. The Rebbe divided these tasks into two sections:

1. On behalf of the participants themselves. These included:
  - a. Getting together regularly to learn about topics such as *parshas hashavua*, topics of each Yom Tov as it



approaches, relevant *halachos* and so on.

- b. Learning appropriate *maamarei Chassidus*, *sichos* or the like, that cover the fundamentals of Toras HaChassidus, its *minhagim* and *hadrachos* — thus strengthening the spirit and light of Chassidus in participants' homes.
2. On behalf of others. These included:
- a. To exert themselves, with great energy, for the good of others who are “closest” — i.e., on behalf of the *chinuch* of their own sons and daughters, and Jewish boys and girls in their neighborhood.
  - b. To lead a powerful campaign to strengthen Yiddishkeit in general, especially in the areas of *taharas hamishpacha*, *kashrus*, and an upstanding, kosher education.
  - c. To strengthen *mosdos* that provide an upstanding, kosher education. This is especially so by actively participating in all Chabad educational institutions in Eretz Yisroel, in particular by assisting with arrangements for food and accommodation, ensuring proper cleanliness and appropriate attire, and the like.

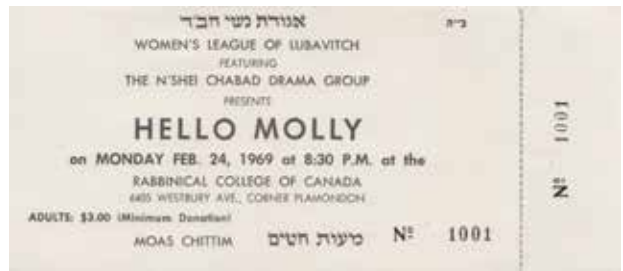
These same ideas, permuted perhaps into an appropriate form for every time and place, have been the bread-and-butter of N'shei branches the world over.

Most importantly, the purpose of N'shei is to do all the above *as a group*. In the *sicha* of Simchas Torah 5713\* the Rebbe emphasized the public influence a group of women working together has, above and beyond that of individuals. Firstly, new people will hear about the activities when done in a group, and secondly, they will be able to participate as well. Thus, N'shei U'bnos Chabad became a vehicle, not simply to strengthen the *avodas Hashem* of women themselves, but to become a key part of impacting the world and bringing Moshiach.

## Home-Life Balance

The Rebbe spoke often about a woman's role as “*akeres habayis*,” the mainstay of the home. How can a mother of growing children also become a prominent community activist? The Rebbe writes to a woman, “The housewife is, of course, limited as far as outside activities are concerned. Nevertheless, within the available possibilities, a great deal can be accomplished with good will and determination.”<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. Sima Ashkenazi of Kfar Chabad, Israel, relates how the Rebbe encouraged her to become more involved in the communal life of Kfar Chabad and its N'shei, even before her husband was appointed as its rav. In 5729\*, she was in *yechidus* and the Rebbe asked her about the *yiras Shamayim* of the women of Kfar Chabad. She wasn't sure what to answer,



AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE BY N'SHEI CHABAD IN MONTREAL, 5729\*.

and the Rebbe told her that *yiras Shamayim* is evident in two things: *tznius* and *taharah*.

The Rebbe instructed her to strengthen these two areas, and upon her return to Kfar Chabad, she should divide the town into sections, with regular classes on these two subjects in each area. The classes should be for all ages, for the old may have forgotten and the young may not have learned them properly.

Another area she got involved with was teaching in the girls' seminary.

As time went on, however, Mrs. Ashkenazi found it exceedingly difficult to balance both aspects of her life, her work in the community and seminary and serving as mother and wife. In a *yechidus* together with her husband, she asked the Rebbe about it. The Rebbe replied:

“The primary function of an *akeres habayis*, who is the ‘magnificent crown of the Jewish edifice’ (עטרת תפארת בית) (ישראל), lies in educating her children and matters of the home. Yet, if time allows, she should prioritize her seminary teaching, as it involves teaching students who will in turn teach others [i.e., continuing the cycle].”

At the end of the *yechidus* the Rebbe wished her *hatzlachah* in *hafatzas hamaayanos*. When she returned home, she arranged matters as such that she would be able to balance both roles.

On that note, Mrs. Leah Gniwisch of Montreal, Canada, tells how each year from 5723\* to 5734\* she led N'shei of Montreal in putting on a kosher musical performance for Jewish women and girls.

The performance was prepared with the highest quality in mind, necessitating months of hard work and many late evening practices by the women in the performance. The slack for all these late evenings was invariably picked up by their husbands, who would take care of the home and the children while their wives went to N'shei for the rehearsals. Despite the time and energy devoted toward the project, they felt that the impact was worthwhile and continued doing it, year after year.

One year, however, it was just too difficult. Most women



IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CONVENTION, EACH WOMAN FROM OUT-OF-TOWN WOULD STEP FORWARD TO SPEAK WITH THE REBBE AND HAND OVER THEIR LETTER. AS DURING A YECHIDUS, THE REBBE WOULD READ THEIR LETTER, OFTEN JOTTING DOWN NOTES AS HE REPLIED.

couldn't make the time to participate, and their husbands were not prepared to take up the slack.

The performance took place each year around Purim time, four weeks before Pesach (with the proceeds going toward helping with *maos chitim* needs). That year, about ten weeks before Pesach, Mrs. Gniwisch had a *yechidus*.

In the *yechidus* the Rebbe asked her if they would be having a play that year. She responded that unfortunately they would not be, as she couldn't get any women involved and their husbands were too worn out. The Rebbe looked at her and told her to go back and tell the husbands that they should do what they need to do, and she should put together the play. Indeed, that is exactly what happened.

## Conventions, Events, Initiatives

One of the major activities of N'shei U'bnos Chabad is the annual convention.

In 5716\* the Rebbe instructed N'shei to host a convention of the various different branches of N'shei U'bnos Chabad. It took place on Sunday, 26 Iyar, at the Riverside Hotel in

Manhattan. It was a very special affair — even Rebbetzin Chana, the Rebbe's mother, participated, along with over 300 other women.

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Karzanovsky read the Rebbe's letter written for the convention, followed by various speeches and reports from delegates of the different branches across North America. Finally, the delegates took on various resolutions that N'shei would perform over the coming year.

The highlight of the convention was the special *sicha* the Rebbe addressed to the delegates and women that evening in 770, and a special *yechidus* the women had with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe instructed that a journal be compiled with a detailed account of the convention and transcripts of the speeches, instructing that it be made as beautiful as possible.

In a *maaneh* from 14 Kislev 5744\*, the Rebbe gave a number of important directives for N'shei events. (This specific *maaneh* was in connection with the "Week of the Jewish Woman" — a special project of N'shei that year.) First, the Rebbe wrote that at all such events, the initial meeting should take place at the center of Chabad, in Crown Heights. Later events during the convention can take place elsewhere. As such, the best time to host such an event is when people are in Crown Heights anyway, such as during Yom Tov times.

As well, the Rebbe wrote, the primary and important



LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEL CHABAD

THE FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF N'SHEI CHABAD IN MANHATTAN, IN 5716\*. THE WOMEN STAND AS RABBI KAZARNOVSKY (FAR LEFT) READS THE REBBE'S LETTER TO THE CONVENTION. REBBETZIN CHANA IS STANDING FIRST TO THE LEFT OF THE PODIUM.



A JOURNAL IN ENGLISH AND YIDDISH PUT TOGETHER AT THE REBBE'S REQUEST WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONVENTION.

events should be accompanied by a special journal. It should include *divrei Torah* — especially ones that are timely — candle-lighting times (and times for *havdalah*), and sections describing N'shei U'bnos Chabad and its activities.

Finally, it would be extremely good — “נכון במאד” — for the journal to be made as beautiful as can be. This is so that women will desire to bring it home, use it to adorn the home bookshelf, and even gift it to friends.

These directives were reiterated multiple times at various N'shei initiatives. In general, the Rebbe always instructed that activities and events should be done in as beautiful a manner as possible.

The Rebbe would also emphasize the importance of producing sophisticated publications and PR, and hosting elegant events. For example, in a letter dated Rosh Chodesh Shevat 5712\*, the Rebbe wrote to Reb Zushe Wilmowsky reminding him to ensure that when promoting N'shei U'bnos Chabad in Israeli media, to be mindful that it be done in a

refined and elegant manner.

In general, the Rebbe was extremely involved in every aspect of the convention and N'shei. For years, the Rebbe would review and edit every item of writing used in N'shei activities, checking them not only for content, but even for simple grammatical errors. Everything had to be presentable and accurate.

The convention became an annual affair, occurring every Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan, growing larger and more elaborate each year. Eventually it extended to an entire weekend, with multiple events and activities, while Bnos Chabad would put on a grand production for the women.

The Rebbe instructed N'shei that each year's convention should have a unique theme. That first year they could not decide which theme to choose, so the Rebbe instructed them to submit a few options and the Rebbe himself chose the year's theme. In fact, this continued annually — the Rebbe would choose the theme the convention would feature — up until a certain point, when the Rebbe told the organizers to choose a theme on their own.

The convention *sicha* was one of the select times during the year when the Rebbe would specifically address the women in person in 770.

The *sicha* would take place after the convention participants made their way back to 770 from Manhattan. Mrs. Sternberg recalls the Rebbe instructing the women not to worry and rush back for the *sicha*, as he would deliver it whenever they arrive.

At first, the *sicha* took place in the Rebbe's room, as only delegates from the initial cities were in attendance. The crowd grew each year, until 5721\* when the location of the *sicha* moved to the small *zal*, and eventually to the downstairs shul of 770. After the *sicha* the women would have a chance to go up to the podium and speak privately with the Rebbe.

Mrs. Sternberg recalls how one year the Rebbe shared tremendous *brachos* with the women in attendance, and one woman was so overcome with emotion that she couldn't help but begin to sob. The Rebbe noticed and gave her one of his handkerchiefs, neatly folded and ironed, to dry her eyes.

## Mid-Winter Warmth Across The Nation

At one point during the early 5720s\*, a few women from the N'shei U'bnos Chabad central committee were brainstorming for ways to expand their activities and reach more Jewish women, to spread the teachings of Chabad and of



Torah and Yiddishkeit to ever wider circles.

As Mrs. Rivie Feldman recalls, the members of the committee decided that just like the yearly convention takes place in New York, perhaps they can spread out and bring the same idea to different cities where there are women who wouldn't necessarily come to Crown Heights. They'd put on a great program with quality entertainment and food and it would bring in women from all ages, affiliations, and walks of life.

They wrote to the Rebbe and asked for approval and *bracha*, which the Rebbe swiftly gave. Mrs. Miriam Popack was the prime coordinator of these conventions which took place in midwinter, unlike the central convention which was held Shavuos time.

The first midwinter convention took place in Boston in 5723\*.

As Mrs. Popack recounted, they took a school bus to Boston — in a snowstorm — one Sunday afternoon and hosted a small convention. But that small beginning led to years and years of successful conventions the world over, with women from every walk of life.

The Rebbe instructed that hosting the convention should be a community-wide effort, and that they should take place in a central location close to many other communities, to maximize its impact. Typically, Mrs. Popack would travel to the city to meet with the local community, many of whom were not necessarily part of the Chabad community, and convince them of how much the community stands to gain from hosting a convention. This project was enormously successful.

As mentioned, in addition to writing a special letter and often speaking about the convention during a *farbrengen*, the Rebbe would review the theme and make notes on the program and the speakers.

In later years, the Rebbe began giving Mrs. Popack a stack of dollars to distribute to the women who were traveling with her to the midwinter convention. At the convention in 5744\* in Columbus, Ohio, Mrs. Popack began distributing the dollars to the women who had traveled to the convention. It was a large delegation (perhaps 50 or so women), and as she was distributing them, other local women gathered to see what was happening. When they heard about the dollars from the Rebbe, they also requested a dollar.

Mrs. Popack explained that, unfortunately, she doesn't have any more dollars from the Rebbe to give. The other women got upset and asked her to please tell the Rebbe that they also want dollars, as they're also part of the convention. Mrs. Popack immediately called the *mazkirus* and explained the situation. The Rebbe's response<sup>6</sup> was that there was no intention at all of discrimination, *chas veshalom*. Due to the deep desire of these women to receive dollars from the Rebbe, she would be sent an additional \$200 to distribute, and if more was needed she should let the Rebbe know.

## Publications

In addition to the convention journals, the Rebbe encouraged N'shei Chabad to publish numerous works. These included *Di Yiddishe Heim*, published half in English and half in Yiddish; and the N'shei Chabad Newsletter. Both names were chosen by the Rebbe, and *Di Yiddishe Heim's* English section was even edited by the Rebbe for many years, until 5751\* when the Rebbe told Mrs. Rachel Altein — its English editor — that he doesn't have time and that he'll rely on them. Both publications featured a variety of articles and discussion pieces on Torah and the role of a Jewish woman.

Other noteworthy publications included: *Aura*, which was a beautiful coffee-table-like book about the role of Jewish women; *The Gift*, a beautiful book about Shabbos; a book collecting photographs of girls named Chaya Mushka; and *Outreach Challenge*, an anthology of how-to articles for *shluchim*, culled from the N'shei Chabad Newsletter. Mrs. Chana Piekarski and Mrs. Fruma Junik actually presented the book to the Rebbe on Rosh Chodesh Shevat 5749\*, in the Rebbe's home. When the Rebbe came to 770 to speak by the *Kinus Hashluchos*, the Rebbe carried it with him. When the Rebbe gave dollars, it was there on the table, and the Rebbe gave two dollars to Mrs. Piekarski and Mrs. Junik for writing the book and "for the book they are going to write."

In 5730\*, the young women's division, "Junior N'shei," had an idea to print a kosher cookbook — the first one in existence. The Rebbe encouraged the idea very much, and the *Spice and Spirit* cookbook was a great success.

In the 5720s\* and 5730s\* (and onward), N'shei of London, UK, was very active. In the mid-5730s\* they began hosting the main European N'shei convention, with hundreds of attendees and prominent speakers. The second convention's theme was *Roots*, all about our collective roots as a people and as individuals in Yiddishkeit, and the need to return to them and assist others in their journey. The theme was of course chosen by the Rebbe. It took place in 5739\* with over 500 attendees.

The Rebbe wrote a long, beautiful letter explaining the theme and the unique role of the Jewish woman, and on the Shabbos before the convention the Rebbe spoke on this theme at the *farbrengen*.

Mr. and Mrs. Bentzion Rader were dedicated Chassidim and activists in Lubavitch of London, and Mrs. Rader was one of the main organizers of N'shei London. Some time after the convention, the Rebbe wrote to her, asking her to help put together a book that would be called *Roots*, to present — in a most elegant manner — the work and activities of N'shei Chabad in Europe, through the conventions and various other activities.



Thus, “Roots” was another beautiful publication of N’shei U’bnos Chabad, based in Europe.

Around that time period, the Raders had been involved in publishing a book called Challenge, highlighting the work of Chabad and the Rebbe in general. In a *yechidus* some time afterward, the Rebbe asked the Raders to create an anthology for Jewish women.

Mr. Rader recalls how the Rebbe said, “If it’s a question of money, I would be prepared to participate in the venture.’ My wife, who is a very English lady, said to the Rebbe that that would be quite unnecessary, as she still has money left over from the European Convention which she had just organized. The Rebbe started to laugh and he said that this is the first time in the history of his organization that anybody ever had a surplus.”

This anthology became known as “Woman of Valor.”

At first, Mr. Rader sent the Rebbe the articles that were written for the book, as had been done with the previous books. The Rebbe wrote back and said it’s not necessary, as he can rely on his judgment.

Mr. Rader recalls, “Before the book was finalized, my wife and I were in *yechidus* when the Rebbe asked us, ‘What is happening with “Woman of Valor”?’ when will it be printed?’ I replied that it’s already at the printer, but they are only prepared to do it — at the price we want it for — if we order 10,000 copies, and they want to be paid in advance.

“The books were published by Lubavitch in England. I told the Rebbe that we can only do it if Rabbi Hodakov will agree to take 7,000 of those 10,000 copies and pay up front for them, and that we have an appointment with Rabbi Hodakov later on that day to discuss it with him. The Rebbe started laughing and said, ‘If you can persuade Rabbi Hodakov to take 7,000 copies and pay you in advance, you’re a better businessman than I even give you credit for being.’

“Anyway, we went to see Rabbi Hodakov later that day. I told him what we wanted, and — to my surprise — he said ‘Yes, we’ll take 7,000 copies.’ I told him that they needed to be paid for in advance, and he said to just ask Rabbi Krinsky for a draft or a check. So I wrote to the Rebbe that Rabbi Hodakov agreed to take the 7,000 copies and pay in advance, but I don’t think it had anything to do with my business acumen; I was sure that someone had spoken to him beforehand.”

Mr. Rader and his wife were in New York for Shabbos and the final proofs of the book had to be at the printer early the next week. The Rebbe hadn’t yet seen the articles, and Mrs. Rader said to her husband that she doesn’t feel like she can take the responsibility of publishing it without the Rebbe having seen what’s in it. So that Friday — which was a short, winter Erev Shabbos — she got the proofs together and gave them into the Rebbe.

About an hour or two later, Rabbi Klein phoned and said

that he had a message from the Rebbe. The Rebbe said he read it and wanted the details of who had written certain articles. Because Mr. Rader had written most of the articles, they had just put a list of contributors in the back.

Additionally, there was a drawing in the book of women of different age groups, and one of the women was wearing a mortarboard (a university cap and cape). The Rebbe said to have the mortarboard removed because people might think that a woman must go to university in order to be a woman of valor.

Apparently the Rebbe had read the book in an hour — something that would seem to be physically impossible.

## Dial-a-Friend

In 5737\* the Rebbe began to speak about the importance of *mashpi'im*. In that light, Mrs. Junik, who headed N'shei Chabad at the time, had the idea to appoint women in Crown Heights who would be block connectors. They would be in charge of organizing events on each block, such as *shiurim*, get togethers, and so on.

After the Rebbe spoke at the convention about having more children, women spoke of the difficulties involved. Mrs. Junik thought of putting together a list of women who were comfortable being called about specific topics related to raising a family. This idea would be called Dial-a-Friend.

Mrs. Junik wrote in the idea to the Rebbe but received no response. She decided to leave it.

Some time later, Rabbi Hodakov told her that the Rebbe wants to know what is happening with it. She explained that she received no response, to which she received the following *maaneh*: “כבר עניתי בהתוועדות עת רצון—I already answered during the propitious time of the farbrengen.” Mrs. Junik then realized that the idea to launch the initiative came after hearing the Rebbe talk about the importance of expanding our *peulos*, during the farbrengen on Shabbos. Needless to say, Dial-a-Friend was launched.

## Sifrei Torah for the Rebbetzin and Rebbe

In 5741\*, N'shei Chabad of Eretz Yisroel wrote a *sefer Torah l'zchus* the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin. This was received by the Rebbe with much attention and appreciation.

After 22 Shevat 5748\*, N'shei in America wanted to do something in honor of the Rebbetzin. Mrs. Junik suggested



ONE OF THE ORGANIZERS OF THE CONVENTION, MRS. SARA KAHANOV, PRESENTS THE REBBE WITH A PROGRAM.

writing a *sefer Torah*, and the Rebbe agreed. They asked the Rebbe if they should wait to finish it after the year or for Rosh Chodesh Kislev. The Rebbe responded, “ווי שניעל מעגלעך—As soon as possible.” The Rebbe also told them to start the *sefer Torah* in his home on President Street.

Nine months later, on Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5749\*, the *Sefer Torah* was ready for completion. Rabbi Groner told the women involved — a committee of four — that the Rebbe would give them dollars for the *sefer Torah*. The Rebbe was in his house, so they quickly rushed over. As they were standing in the kitchen, the Rebbe walked in through the back door and gave them a packet of hundred dollar bills with a huge smile, and wished them זאל זיין הצלחה רבה.

The Rebbe then went to daven Mincha. After Mincha the Rebbe said a *sicha* and asked that they be present — the





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THE WOMEN LOOK ON AS THE WRITING OF THE SEFER TORAH COMMENCES IN THE REBBE'S HOME DURING THE SHIVA OF THE REBBETZIN.



ROSH CHODESH KISLEV 5749\*, THE REBBE HANDS MRS. GOLDIE GANSBOURG, ONE OF THE ORGANIZERS, A PACKET OF DOLLARS IN THE KITCHEN OF HIS HOME.

*bochurim* had to squeeze to one side to make space. The Rebbe spoke about the great *zechus* of anyone who has any part in the *sefer Torah*, all the way to the one who made the “mantel.”

## Kabbalas Pnei Moshiach Tzidkeinu

In 5751\*-2\*, the Rebbe spoke very strongly about Moshiach. N'shei Chabad formed a special committee to think of activities they could do to help bring Moshiach. One item they came up with was a grand *melaveh malka l'kabbalas pnei Moshaiach Tzidkeinu*. The *melaveh malka* took place on the night of 28 Teves 5752\*, and it was a massive event, broadcast live around the world. Thousands of people participated, including many from outside the Lubavitch community, and the organizers merited to receive multiple special *maanos* from the Rebbe. Additionally, there were many responses to branches that participated via hookup, or made their own *melaveh malka* following their example.

During that period, the Rebbe responded warmly to several gestures of N'shei Chabad, expressing the anticipation in the imminent arrival of Moshiach. Around Kislev that year, they collected \$5000, commissioned a silversmith to fashion a beautiful silver tzedakah *pushka* in the shape of 770, and brought the money and *pushka* to the Rebbe by dollars as a participation in the 770 building campaign. The Rebbe was very encouraging. He answered *amen* to all of their *brachos* and gave each one of the organizers two dollars, wishing them “איר זאלט צוהיילן די גאולה—you should hasten the *geulah*.”

## The Fundamental Role Of The Jewish Woman

The Rebbe wrote a letter to the European N'shei Convention that took place in London on the theme of “Roots,” dated 15 Teves 5739\*:<sup>7</sup>

“In this life-saving work, the role of the Jewish woman is of crucial importance, since she is the Akeres Habayis, the foundation of the home... It is a dual process: actively pursuing one's own growth and development, and at the

same time working for the preservation and growth of our people, through spreading and strengthening Yiddishkeit...

“Finally, to pursue the analogy from roots... one does not look for flashing color and external beauty in roots, nor are the latter concerned with what some people might say about their external looks; roots do their work humbly and modestly, indeed for the most part hidden from view altogether. Such is also the work of true Jewish mothers and daughters....”

In multiple *sichos* and letters throughout the years, the Rebbe emphasized the fundamental and essential role women play in Yiddishkeit and in our mission on this world.

In a *yechidus* in 5713\* with N’shei Chabad of Worcester, Massachusetts, the Rebbe explained that women are naturally more compassionate, which is the way of Torah — דרכי דרכי — and is the best way to influence others to learn to love Torah, our mission in life.

On the note of Worcester, Mrs. Feldman shared a story where the impact of N’shei U’bnos Chabad shines for all to see:

“In 5727\* a midwinter convention took place in Worcester. On Motzei Shabbos they had a special speaker. They invited the mayor of the city to come and give greetings for the convention.

“The mayor came, and from all outward appearances one wouldn’t think he was Jewish. At the end of the speech he said, ‘I want to present the key to my city to the Lubavitcher Rebbe’ — he had a key prepared in a box with a dome of glass on it — ‘and I want you to tell the Lubavitcher Rebbe that I am one of his own, as my father studied in the town of Lubavitch.’ You could have heard a pin drop — what an impact!”

Over 6-13 Shevat 5752\*, the Rebbe spoke at length about women’s unique and essential characteristics. These *sichos* were edited by the Rebbe and published as a special talk on the qualities of women.

In it, the Rebbe explains that the Frieddiker Rebbe began working directly with women, unlike previous Rabbeim (who worked primarily with men and allowed the women to be impacted indirectly), due to the unique qualities of women, as they are the *akeres habayis* and can influence both their children and husband.

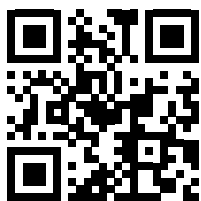
The Rebbe went on to explain that women take precedence, both in time and quality, from the very beginning. For example, at *Matan Torah*, women were spoken to first. They also did not sin with the golden calf, unlike the men. By the making of the *Mishkan*, once again women were the primary gifters (the men came alongside the women), and they performed the most complex task — weaving the goat hairs while still attached to the goats.

However, said the Rebbe, as we draw closer to the time of Moshiach, women become all the more essential. It was in

the merit of the righteous women of Mitzrayim that the Jews merited to leave Mitzrayim. The same applies to us leaving *galus* (especially since our souls are reincarnations of those who left *Mitzrayim*). Women truly feel the bitterness of *galus*, and so they will truly experience the joy of Moshiach, just as they did when leaving *Mitzrayim*, when they not only sang but played instruments and danced.

The Rebbe pointed out that not only are women essential in the leadup to Moshiach, but when Moshiach actually comes, the value and quality of women will far surpass men — as it says, נקבה תסובב גבר (Females will encompass males) and אשת חיל עטרת בעלה (Women will be the crown above their husband).

On Motzei Shabbos Bereishis 5713\*, the Rebbe addressed the first gathering of N’shei U’bnos Chabad and said: They [the women] have the mission of bringing warmth, light, and joy — true warmth, light and joy — into their homes. This is hinted to by the unique mitzvos of women: *neiros Shabbos Kodesh*, challah and kosher food, and *taharas hamishpachah*. (Interestingly, the *mitvzoim* for all these mitzvos were launched by addresses to N’shei U’bnos Chabad as well.) The Rebbe finished off: “You have the ability to make your home a Jewish home, a warm home, and a home filled with light...” **T**



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1. Sefer Hasichos 5752 pg. 299
2. See “Hapartizan” – biography of Reb Zushe Wilmowsky, p. 107
3. Igros Kodesh, 28 Marcheshvan 5713, 20 Cheshvan 5714, et. al.
4. See The Queen of Cleveland, Hasidic Archives 2023.
5. Teshura, Mintz - Tiefenbrun, 5781
6. Scan the QR code at the end of this article to see the full response.
7. Printed in “Return to Roots.”

# Timely Titles

By: RABBI MENDY GOLDBERG

לזכות  
משפחת קארנפעלד  
בורביינק, קאליפורניא

## DERECH CHAIM



The month of Elul, a solemn period of introspection preceding the profound *yomim nora'im*, heralds the time for *teshuvah*. An omnipresent theme throughout the preparatory activities leading up to Tishrei, *teshuvah* weighs heavily on the minds of all, occupying the focus of this transformative time. Central to this spiritual journey is the study of an essential guide to *teshuvah*, the soul-stirring *sefer*, *Derech Chaim*.

דרך חיים



*"Awake, you sleepers, from your deep slumber. Rouse yourselves from your lethargy and examine your deeds; remember your Creator and return through Teshuvah."*

Elul. The very name evokes a vibrant tapestry of potent imagery — the murmur of the “*teshuvah* breeze” that doesn’t just fleetingly waft through, but saturates the air, its ethereal fragrance permeating every mundane task and activity in the lead-up to Tishrei. It conjures up a spectacle of bustling townspeople, scurrying about in a flurry, fervently readying themselves to approach the benevolent king in the field, eager to behold a glimpse of his radiant, smiling countenance. The primal cry of the shofar, a clarion call to *teshuvah*, reverberates through the collective consciousness of the community, sparking a heightened sense of introspection and alertness.

Like seasoned merchants, the people audit the ledgers of their souls and take stock of their spiritual inventory, accounting for every thought, word, and deed. With solemn care, they meticulously calculate the deficits and surpluses on their internal balance sheet, evaluating the highs and lows of their personal journey throughout the year. Strategizing ahead, they recalibrate their tactics and chart fresh courses of action, all in pursuit of spiritual prosperity in the year to come. Not a single moment of this precious month is squandered; each tick of the clock is seized to reckon and rectify, to reflect and correct, thereby harnessing its fullest potential.

Already from the crack of dawn, the *beis midrash* pulses with activity as people converge on the shul to drench their spirit in divine service. Elul is no time for sleep — some rise early and others burn the midnight oil, every spare moment dedicated to the heartfelt seeking of their Creator. Inside the *beis midrash*, one can find tear-streaked individuals steeped in fervent recital of Tehillim, others engrossed in soulful prayer, and still others immersed in the impassioned study of Chassidus. Typically, the chosen Chassidic texts echo the theme of *teshuvah*, favored for imparting tangible lessons that resonate with personal *avodah*. Still today, the recommended studies for Elul include the third section of Tanya — Iggeres HaTeshuvah, and chiefly, the Mitteler Rebbe’s seminal treatise on *teshuvah*, Derech Chaim.



## OVERVIEW



**Derech Chaim** is the third volume in a series of works by the Mitteler Rebbe, collectively known as “Shaarei Teshuvah.” This fundamental work contains “words of reproach” which aim to stir the reader’s conscience towards his Father in Heaven, inspiring a complete *teshuvah* and offering an avenue for the soul to find solace through serving Hashem with unwavering sincerity for the rest of its days. As it explores the gravity of sin and the essence of *teshuvah* through the unique prism of Chassidus, Derech Chaim has established itself as a foundational text in this field.

Written in the Mitteler Rebbe’s characteristically expansive and intricate style,<sup>1</sup> the text delves deeply into the subject of *teshuvah*, occasionally branching into secondary and tertiary concepts that frequently arise. The main body of the book is divided into two primary sections: “Shaar HaTeshuvah” (The Gate of Repentance) and “Shaar HaTefillah” (The Gate of Prayer), supplemented by an additional discourse. Recent editions of Derech Chaim feature a variety of valuable enhancements, including a new typeset, copious appendices, and extensive annotations.

👉 **Hakdamah:** Like in many of his other *sefarim*, the Mitteler Rebbe sets the stage with a critical introduction, one that deserves recognition in its own right. Here, the introduction serves as a profound exposition on the essential principle of “fear of sin,” which stems from accepting the yoke of Heaven. Conversely, it identifies the root of all iniquity as *prikas ol*, the impudent shirking of heavenly responsibility. Throughout several pages the Mitteler Rebbe outlines various degrees of fear of sin, and digresses into a fascinating tangent regarding the principles of pursuing a livelihood, advising the correct approach to maximize Hashem’s blessing and succeed in business. Concluding the introduction, the Mitteler Rebbe veers into a pragmatic note, entreating the Chassidim to take heed of this book, not to merely skim it but to internalize its message. Recognizing the propensity of his community to overlook commonly

available texts and take them for granted, he encourages *anash* to designate specific study times to prevent the book from sitting idle and collecting dust on the shelf, and concludes this earnest appeal with his signature.

👉 **Shaar HaTeshuvah:** This 27-chapter section delves into the mystical dimension of *teshuvah* as seen through a Chassidic lens. It outlines several tiers of *teshuvah*, beginning with the most basic *teshuvah tata’ah* — the renunciation of sin alongside a renewed commitment to accepting the yoke of Heaven, and culminating with the most sublime *teshuvah ila’ah* — where the *neshamah* reunites with its Divine source. Each stage corresponds to a different level of the soul: *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah*, *chayah*, and *yechidah*, with this extended theme predicated on the structure of the morning blessing of *Elokai Neshamah*. Amidst this

extensive discourse, the Mittlerer Rebbe underscores the transformative power of the contrite tears shed during *teshuvah*, and the self-induced agony and distress upon realizing the extent of one's spiritual downfall; how far he has strayed and how low he has sunk. It is this poignant undercurrent which may evoke intense emotions and could be particularly jarring and emotionally triggering for some. (See sidebar "A Sore Subject.")

👉 **Shaar HaTefillah:** Spanning 71 chapters, this segment sheds light on the inner significance of prayer. It focuses on the composition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, elaborating on how each of its eighteen blessings correlates with different aspects of one's divine service.

👉 **Hinei Ksiv Domeh Dodi L'Tzvi:** A supplementary discourse comprising seven chapters, this treatise explores the innate, yet often concealed love every Jew harbors for Hashem during times of exile. It explains why this love is hidden, the manners in which it manifests, and how its concealment paradoxically paves the way for a heightened revelation. A recurrent analogy invoked throughout this section likens these dynamics to two distinct behaviors of a deer.

👉 **Maftechos L'Sefer Derech Chaim:** This compact section was curated by the Rebbe and includes an index of frequently occurring topics, a partial directory of named individuals, referenced works, and unusual terminologies, as well as a listing of the various editions of Derech Chaim.

👉 **Kitzurim L'Sefer Derech Chaim:** Retyped from a manuscript penned by the Friediker Rebbe, this portion presents his synopses of chapters from Derech Chaim. It remains an incomplete summary, as it encompasses only the first sixteen chapters along with several additional paragraphs on the initial two chapters.

👉 **Biur HaRav Hillel M'Paritch:** An in-depth interpretation and commentary on the introduction of Derech Chaim by Reb Hillel Paritcher, this study revolves around the themes of various levels of fear of



THIS EDITION OF DERECH CHAIM WAS PUBLISHED IN SHANGHAI IN THE MIDST OF WORLD WAR II.

sin and the different ways to earn a living and channel Hashem's material blessings in this world.<sup>2</sup>

👉 **Likkut Sichos v'Igros Kodesh:** This unique addition to the recent editions features a collection of excerpts drawn from various *sichos* and letters that mention or relate to Derech Chaim.

👉 **Mafteichos:** These comprehensive indexes map out the *pesukim*, *maamarei Chazal*, *sefarim*, parables, analogies, and unique expressions featured throughout the work. A convenient resource, this section only features in the most recent edition.



# BACKGROUND

The fascinating origin story for Derech Chaim was recorded in the sefer Ben L'Oshri<sup>3</sup> by Rabbi Yitzchak Huberman,<sup>4</sup> as follows:

Once, in the city of Zhuravitz, nestled in the region of Mohilev within the expansive borders of Russia, there was a well-known child prodigy, who had mastered all of *Shas* with *poskim*. Suddenly, he was overcome by a wave of skepticism; he abruptly forsook his studies of Torah, surrendering instead to the allure of secular literature, until the tendrils of heresy had burrowed deeply into his consciousness. His father, a sincere G-d-fearing man, attempted to steer him back on course, but his admonitions proved futile, his pleas fell on deaf ears.

One fateful midnight, the son approached his father and declared that he had come to the conclusion that the country of Russia was the most foolish of countries, the region of Mohilev was the most foolish in Russia, the city of Zhuravitz was the most foolish in Mohilev, his father's house was the most foolish in the city, and his father was the biggest fool in the household. Therefore, he decided to sever his familial ties and set off on a new course of life. He promptly vanished into the night, never to return, and journeyed to Berlin where he enrolled in prestigious universities. With the support of generous endowments from patrons of the enlightened '*maskilim*' he plumbed the depths of academia, utilizing his prodigious intellect to become proficient in every academic discipline.

After five years, the prodigy authored two books; one out-

lining potential illnesses of every organ, the causes, prevention strategies, and treatment procedures; and the second, a thesis on mathematics and engineering. Presenting his works to the eminent professors of Germany and France, he was met with admiration and praise for his depth and breadth of knowledge. In the wake of this acclaim, he resolved to return to his paternal abode, confident that his accomplishments would appease his father.

It was during this time that the Alter Rebbe had just been liberated from his Petersburg imprisonment, and news of his intellectual prowess spread throughout the world, his reputation amplified by his brilliant resolution of complex mathematical quandaries posed to him in Petersburg. Intrigued, the prodigy decided to divert his path to meet the Alter Rebbe and to seek his appraisal of his books. Arriving at the Alter Rebbe's city, he found himself in a study hall, its interiors warmed by two burning stoves amidst the winter chill. Communicating in fluent German, he found a conversational partner in Reb Mordechai Liepler, who was familiar with the language due to his dealings with German merchants in Petersburg. Upon hearing the prodigy's wish to meet the Alter Rebbe, Reb Mordechai relayed the request, and the Alter Rebbe consented.

Without ado, the prodigy laid out his works before the Alter Rebbe, eager for his scholarly evaluation. The Alter Rebbe picked up the volume on mathematics, perusing it with swift precision. On the fifth page, he paused, scribbled a note in the margin, and quickly skimmed the rest of the book. After he finished, he pointed out to the prodigy a critical error on the fifth page, a flaw that crucially impacted the validity of the subsequent content.

Startled by this revelation, the prodigy hastily offered his second book, the medical treatise, to the Alter Rebbe. After a brief examination, the Rebbe asked him which organ, if severed, would present the least danger. Without hesitation, the scholar identified the little toe. The Alter Rebbe, however, pointed out his error, explaining that the seemingly insignificant toe housed a vital nerve junction. Disrupting it could pose a threat far exceeding that of operating on a larger organ.

Overwhelmed by the Alter Rebbe's wisdom, the prodigy retreated to the study hall, pacing to and fro, absorbed in his thoughts. Noticing his turmoil, Reb Mordechai Liepler inquired about his distress. The prodigy, acknowledging his predicament, admitted that the Alter Rebbe was the only one



capable of providing the guidance he sought.

After hours of contemplation, he picked up one of his manuscripts, and tore it in half, feeding each half to the hungry flames of the stoves in the study hall. The flames consumed the pages, reducing his years of labor to mere ashes. An hour later, he subjected his second work to the same fate, wiping out all tangible traces of his former scholarly pursuits.

In the meantime, the Alter Rebbe extended an invitation to the prodigy, offering to mentor him if he agreed to stay. Accepting the proposition, the prodigy became the Rebbe's private student for a full year. During this period, even the Rebbe's son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, was not allowed to participate in their study sessions, despite his persistent pleas.

Later, the Alter Rebbe revealed to his son in confidence that this prodigy was the reincarnation of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya,<sup>5</sup> who had returned to the world three times in an attempt to complete his atonement, only to succumb to corruption on each occasion. This time, the Alter Rebbe was determined to not let him slip away. As a sign, the Alter Rebbe instructed his son to count seven weeks from that day. And so it was that at the end of the seven weeks, the prodigy abruptly passed away.

Subsequently, the Alter Rebbe studied with his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, teachings that would later form the work "Derech Chaim." Eventually, the Mittlerer Rebbe compiled these teachings and published them during his lifetime.

It is interesting to note that the *teshuvah* of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya is mentioned no less than seven times throughout Derech Chaim, a testament to his final and complete redemption.



Unlike some of the Mittlerer Rebbe's other *sefarim*, where the *maamarim* were initially delivered orally and only later transcribed, Derech Chaim was expressly written from the start. Nonetheless, themes from various chapters can be traced back to certain verbal deliveries of *maamarim*.

A unique feature of the Mittlerer Rebbe's Chassidus is that he authored comprehensive works focusing on specific themes, instead of solely addressing the weekly *parshah* or seasonal occasions. In addition, these works were often composed with particular Chassidim in mind, tailoring the material to their personal spiritual needs. However, while Derech Chaim was initially conceived for a specific individual<sup>6</sup>, its teachings are universally accessible and serve as guidance for anyone earnestly seeking to cultivate fear of God. In fact, the Frieddiker Rebbe once emphasized that "*avodas Hashem* necessitates an element of acute bitterness, which can only be

attained through studying Derech Chaim. I heard this from my father, the Rebbe Rashab, during a private *yechidus*, but it wasn't merely personal guidance; rather, it is advice that applies to everyone."

Indeed, the Rabbeim consistently encouraged Chassidim to study Derech Chaim. Generally, they recommended Elul as the optimal time for this study, given its association with the prevailing theme of *teshuvah* and self-improvement. As the Rebbe Maharash once told his son, the Rebbe Rashab, in a *yechidus*: "To effectively evaluate and understand your thoughts, words, and actions, as well as to recognize your strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies for improvement, it is essential to study Derech Chaim."

Furthermore, it appears that the study of Derech Chaim constitutes an essential step in the Chassidic process of an



THE SHAAR BLAAT OF THE MOST RECENT EDITION OF DERECH CHAIM

individual's *teshuvah*. For instance, during Reb Shmuel Gornem Esterman's first private meeting with the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe instructed him to first address the sins of his youth and study *Derech Chaim* before seeking further spiritual guidance. Similarly, in numerous instances, the Rebbe advised individuals seeking atonement and *teshuvah* for a specific sin to study *Derech Chaim*, particularly the first eleven chapters, and to review it so often that they know it by heart.

Over the years, numerous editions of *Derech Chaim* have been printed, some in remarkably challenging circumstances. Notably, one version was produced in Shanghai during World War II, published by "The Committee for Printing Chassidus by Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch – Shanghai."

In 5715\*, a new edition was released by Kehos, with substantial additions, including footnotes and indices, compiled by the Rebbe. Later, in 5762\*, Kehos published a further enhanced version featuring supplementary material and comprehensive citations, curated by Rabbis Elie Matusof and Gavriel Schapiro. Most recently, Kehos unveiled a redesigned edition with an improved layout and additional punctuation to aid its study. This edition also introduces new indices, annotations, and glosses that cross-reference the ideas discussed in *Derech Chaim* with those found elsewhere in Chabad Chassidus, produced by Rabbis Mendel Mishulovin and Chaim Elimelech Wilhelm. Additionally, it contains a preliminary synopsis of all 105 chapters, written by Rabbi Yisroel Olidort.

## A Word On The Title

*Derech Chaim* was famously dubbed "the *mussar sefer* of the Chabad Chassidus canon" on account of its incisively reproachful nature. This is reflected by its full title "Derech Chaim V'Tochachos Mus-sar Haskel" (The way of life and rebukes of moral discipline), which aptly conveys the penetrating impact of this sobering *sefer*. On a different note, in a letter, the Rebbe's father, Harav Levi Yitzchak, notes that the character of the Mittlerer Rebbe is reflected in the names of his *sefarim*, among them *Derech Chaim* which alludes to the Mittlerer Rebbe's uniquely vibrant spirit.



THE HAMAAYANOS VOLUME OF SELECTED MAAMARIM FROM THE MITTELER REBBE WITH HELPFUL COMMENTARY.

Another useful study aid is the Haamayanos volume of selected Mittlerer Rebbe's *maamarim*, published by Torat Chabad L'Bnei Hayeshivos, which includes several sections of *Derech Chaim*, such as Shaarei Teshuvah, the *drush* Hinei Dodi, and the *biur* of the *hakdamah* by Reb Hillel Paritcher, in an enhanced format with helpful commentary by Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Zalmanov. **T**

1. The Mittlerer Rebbe's Chassidus is generally known for its elaborate and expansive style, often likened to the gushing flow of a widening stream. While it may seem somewhat excessive, the Rebbe Maharash asserted that when studied properly one will realize how every word is meticulously chosen and contributes to the clarity of the text.
2. For more about the Chassidus of Reb Hillel Paritcher, see Derher Av 5783, "Timely Titles — Pelach Harimon."
3. Another version of this story appears in Shmuos V'Sipurim (Kahan), vol. 3, p. 254.
4. For more about this fascinating character and his works, see the article "Sipurei Harav Hatzaddik Reb Yitzchak Huberman Me'Ra'anana by Rabbi Yehoshua Mondshine" (originally featured in Kfar Chabad Magazine, currently available online on kramim.info).
5. For the complete narrative of the teshuvah of Rabbi Elazar ben Durdaya, see Gemara Avodah Zarah, 17a.
6. For the backstory of this individual, see the letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe that prefaces *kuntres* Pokeach Ivrim of the Mittlerer Rebbe (which can be found in Maamarei Admur Ha'emtzai — Kuntreisim, page 449).



## A Sore Subject:

Due to the intense and somber content of *Derech Chaim*, particularly in its discussion of grave themes concerning sin, the *sefer* has gained a reputation for being emotionally triggering. Here are several anecdotes which demonstrate this sobering aspect of the book, and how it deeply affected various Chassidim:

The *mashpia* Reb Shmuel Gronem Esterman held an intense and somewhat tumultuous relationship with *Derech Chaim*. His studies often stirred him so deeply that they incited overwhelming emotional outpourings, occasionally compelling him to abstain from it for extended periods.

During one such hiatus, the Rebbe Rashab requested that Reb Gronem teach his students *Derech Chaim*. However, Reb Gronem declined, respectfully stating, “I will teach them whatever the Rebbe wishes, but *Derech Chaim*, I simply cannot...”

Despite this, Reb Gronem resumed studying *Derech Chaim* himself, often weeping profusely while doing so. His sorrow was so intense that his tear-stricken eyes eventually required medical attention. After his surgery, the doctor cautioned him against crying as it risked permanently damaging his eyesight. Upon learning of his predicament, the Rebbe Rashab categorically forbade him from studying *Derech Chaim* further, or even merely opening the book. Heeding the Rebbe Rashab’s directive, Reb Gronem retired the well-worn, tear-stained *sefer* to a less accessible spot on his bookshelf, where it would remain out of sight. However, upon unexpectedly encountering the *sefer* once more, he was again overcome with emotion and burst into tears. To spare him further anguish, his family sent the *sefer* to a book-binder for re-binding so that the sight of the familiar red cover of the book should not trigger him.

Before Reb Gronem passed away, he went to his bookshelf to bid farewell to his *sefarim*, and carefully withdrew the *Derech Chaim*, giving it an affectionate parting kiss.



Reb Elchonon ‘Chonye’ Marozov also held an intense relationship with *Derech Chaim*, and was prone to tearful outbursts, which eventually drew the concern of Reb Michoel Bliner, who felt that Reb Chonye couldn’t sustain such raw emotional intensity. Thus, Reb Michoel approached the Rebbe Rashab and implored him to intervene.

The Rebbe Rashab summoned Reb Chonye and said, “Trust that what I am telling you should be considered as if you heard it directly from Hashem: know that your

sins have been forgiven, and you shall no longer study *Derech Chaim*.”



In a letter bemoaning the lack of commitment to maintaining proper study schedules in yeshiva, the Rebbe made reference to *Derech Chaim*: “It is difficult to elaborate on this so much, especially as this concept of *prikas ol* was already addressed at the beginning of *Derech Chaim*. Anyone who listens — or as the Frierdiker Rebbe emphasizes, ‘internalizes’ — what is stated there would find their hair standing on end.”



The Rebbe Rashab once asked his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe: “What does a Chassidisher yungerman study on Shvi’i Shel Pesach?” A copy of *Derech Chaim* lay on the table, prompting the Rebbe Rashab to follow up with another question, “Did you study *Derech Chaim*?” The Frierdiker Rebbe affirmed that he did, explaining that it was part of his nightly routine to study a small section of *Derech Chaim* before the bedtime Shema. The Rebbe Rashab acknowledged that while it is usually commendable to study *maamarim* that relate to personal development, there are occasions where it is more appropriate to embrace a mode of joy, particularly on Shvi’i Shel Pesach, a day that is regarded as a source of joy.



In 5714\*, an episode occurred where three students from Tomchei Temimim of Bedford and Dean committed a mischievous act of vandalism by overturning the secular library in the yeshiva. Upon learning of their actions, the Rebbe gave them a protocol for *teshuvah*, suggesting they study the first eleven chapters of *Derech Chaim*, among other things. On the first night of Pesach, during a *sicha*, the Rebbe referenced this rectification procedure, stating that although it was currently Nissan, they should start their protocol immediately, with the exception of the study of *Derech Chaim*, since its contemplative nature might lead to a somber mood, which is out of place during the joyous Pesach season. Nonetheless, the Rebbe stated that if the students felt inclined to undertake the study of *Derech Chaim* then, they could do so, as it is a worthwhile and blessed endeavor.

# A LEAF FROM THE BOOK

DERECH CHAIM — SHAAR  
HATESHUVAH  
Chapter 7

## Yiras Elokim:

A second reason a person will never lower himself to trivial pursuits is the shame and submission in his heart, which stems from a fear of G-d that surpasses the fear of sin. For although they are essentially the same — one fears sin because he fears G-d — we see that there are people who maintain a consistent fear of sinning but do not always hold a deep, conscious fear or awe of G-d in their minds and hearts.

This inconsistency could be due to their preoccupation with worldly matters such as making a living, or indulging excessively in permissible pleasures, like food or relations. Or, it might be that their fear of G-d simply doesn't match the level of their fear of sin.

For instance, you have simple laymen and women who exhibit fear of sin; they dread committing serious sins or transgressions like breaking Shabbos, murder or immorality, and are even apprehensive about committing minor infractions, considering them repugnant in their hearts. Despite this, their fear of G-d remains minimal, as is evident when they engage in wrongful acts such as financial fraud, lying under oath, slander, vulgar speech, and the like. All of this is due to a lack of fear of G-d.

פרק ז דרך חיים לו

מבחי' יראת חטא, שהוא המנגד לפשעים, שהוא המורד בפר"ע וקלות הלב שאינו חושש כלל וכלל כני"ל.

ובאמת רבים נבוכים בעיקר ענין זה, דיש הרבה בני אדם שרואין עצמן בכל מיני רע בלי העלם דבר וחצי דבר, אך אינו מרגיש כלל להצטער ע"ז, רק לפרקי' כשיתעורר ימצא עצמו מלא רע ירגז על נפשו ויפול בעוצב לפי שעה, ואחר רואו שאין לו תקוה חוזר להתקלקל ביותר, עד שיפול הנופל כ"ז מצד שיאמר נואש בנפשו כ"ז, ובאמת זהו רק עצת היצר שכונתו להפילו לגמרי, וצריך שיתחזק מאד ויאמר ללבו על כי אין יראת חטא בלבו מצאוהו והשיגוהו כל הרעות האלה, והיא מיעוט נתינת דעתו ולבו בכל יום ושעה על הלכות בקלות מעט מעט, והיינו מחמת טבע הוללות, או מצד טרדתו בעניני עצמו שוכח על יראת אלקים, שמחמת זה נתמעט יראת חטא, כי יראת חטא ויראת אלקים אחד הוא, והא בהא תליא, דמשום דאין פחד אלקים בלבו ע"כ אין בו יראת חטא, ומה שאין בו יראת חטא משום דאין בו יראת אלקים (וכמ"ש) על כי אין אלהי בקרבו, יראת אלקים, ע"כ מצאוני כר"י. ויש הרבה בני"א שמוסיפי' על המדה, ומיצר ודואג ביותר על כל אשר ימצא בנפשו רע, ויאמר שאין לו תקוה ויתייאש, גם אם אינו רק דבור ומח' בעלמא, ואשר לא ימצא מרגוע לנפשו בעבודה שכלב ומוח ועסק תומ"צ וכה"ג, הנה ודאי עפ"י דרך התשובה כל שיצר לבו יותר יותר יקובל לרצון, אך זהו על המעשה כפר"מ דוקא, אבל על המח' ובפרט בהעדר הטוב דתומ"צ ותפלה כ"ז אין יתרון הצער ועוצב זה מעלה כלל, כי אין זה רק מצד גופו שמעורב טר"י, והרע שבו הוא העוצב שימשיכנו לט"י דקליפה כידועי, אלא צריך שמיד שיצר לבו יתחזק בלבו לקבל עליו לבלתי ילך עוד אחר ההבל, ויהיה יראת אלקים תמיד בלבו כדי שיהיה בו יראת חטא תמיד וד"ל.

והסיבה הב', הוא הבושה וההכנעה שכלבו, שבא מצד יראת אלקים שלמעלה מיראת חטא, אע"פ שהכל א' כני"ל דמה שהוא ירא מן החטא היינו מפני שירא מאלקים, מי"מ אנו רואים שיש אדם שהוא ירא חטא וביראת אלקים אין לו השגה במוח ולב תמיד, כמו מצד טרדת פרנסתו (או מצד גסותו כדברים המותרים כתאות מאכל ומשגל כ"ז), או שאין בו יראת אלקים לפי ערך יראת חטא שבו, כמו גם הע"ה ונשים שיש בהן יראת חטא, שיראים לעשות איוה חטא ועון כחילול שבת ושי"ד ועריות, גם לעשות עבירות קלות יראו לנפשם וכוזר נחשבו בלבם, ועכ"ז יראת אלקים מעט מאד בלבם, כמו שעושי' עול וגול במר"מ ונשבעים לשקר ודבריה' להרי' ורכילות וניכול פה וכה"ג, והוא מצד מיעוט יראת אלקים. כי יראה זו נקי' יראת הרוממות, והוא בא מצד העבודה כלב ומוח עד שיתפעל ביראת

22) ראה תניא ספ"ו. וראה אגרות קודש ח"ד ע' שית' ובכ"ז.

20) וילך לא, י. 21) ראה תניא ספ"ו ובכ"ז.

# A LEAF FROM THE BOOK

DERECH CHAIM — SHAAR  
HATESHUVAH

Chapter 7

This kind of fear is called fear of exaltedness, a fear that emerges from deep contemplation and emotional investment in understanding G-d's greatness.

Yet, a person who doesn't engage his heart and mind in prayer or spiritual contemplation may not find much fear of G-d within him, only the natural innate faith of the soul that leads to a basic fear of G-d; that is, not to rebel against Him. And this fear of rebelling against G-d, through going against His visible will, is the opposite of the aforementioned mindset that has no concern for such rebellion.

This is the type of fear of sin that precedes the wisdom which endures. As it is said: "If there is no fear, there is no wisdom" — this is referring to the fear of sin; "and if there is no wisdom, there is no fear" — this means fear of G-d.

לו

שער התשובה

פרק ז

אלקים, ואיש שחסר נפשו מכל עבודה שכלב בתפלה מאין ימצא בו יראת אלקים כ"כ, רק בבחי' אמונה טבעית שבנפשו יהיה ירא אלקים דרך כלליותי, שהוא שלא למרוד בו, ויראה זו שירא למרוד לעשות היפך רצונו הנראה לעין עכ"פ, והו היפך בחי' פריע הנ"ל שאינו חושש כלל. והו הנכלל בכלל יראת חטא שקודמת לחמתו שהמתו מתקיימת וא"ל כו"י, וכמ"ש: אם אין יראה אין חכמה שהיא יראת חטא, ואם אין חכמ' אין יראה: היינו יראת אלקים כו' וד"ל.

(אך זה לא ימצא, שיהיה יראת אלקים ולא יהיה יראת חטא, דודאי יש בכלל מאתים מנה"י. ואנו רואים שאינו כן לפי ערך, היינו מה שימצא איש ירא אלקים בבחי' התפעלות יראה בתפלה, וגם בכל עת מצוא שעת הכושר כו', ואין בו יראת חטא כ"כ, עד שיכול להקל ראש לפרקים ולבא לידי פריע בכמה דברים לא טובים, הגם שאינו עבירות חמורות כ"כ כחילול שבת ועריות וכה"ג, אבל יפול בתאות הממון, שאינו נושא ונותן באמונה כ"כ, ואינו נקי כפים לגמרי, כי יעשה עול ואונאה, וכה"ג בשאי"ד שבינו לקונו, בהעדר מעשה הטוב, ובהרהורים לא טובים, ובכל מדות מגונות כגיאיות וגסות הרוח וכעס ונצחון והתפארות וכה"ג, לא ניוזו אפי' כמלא נימא כו', וכן במדת הקמצנות, שימניע צדקה וחסד לגמרי, ויהיה אכזרי לא ירחם, ורע עין וקנאי וכה"ג, וגם בהוללות ולצנות יתערב עם זרים. לבד תאוות היתר במאכל ובמשגל, ולחפזן מאד בכבוד המדומה, וכל חמדת תענוגי עוה"י, לא יסור מהם כמעט מאחד וכו', ואף שנשמר מכל רע ואיסור דאורייתא, מצד יראת אלקים ויראת חטא הוא, אבל אין זה לפי ערך התפעלי יראת אלקים שכלבו בעתים רבים, וזה פלא גדול לכאורה. ובהכרח לומר שאיש כזה שהוא במיעוט יראת חטא בכל הענינים אינו בכלל יראת אלקים כלל, שהרי מקרא מפורשי סוף דבר כו' את האלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור, דמשמע דהא בהא תליא, ואע"פ ששמירת המצות תלוי' באהבה, דאהבה שרש רמ"ח מ"ע ויראה שרש למניעת שס"ה לית'י, וכמ"ש: לאהבה את ה' ולעבדו, דהעבודה במ"ע תלוי' באהבה כו', ולפעמים אמר"י מה ה' שואל מעמך כ"א ליראה כו', משום דהיראה כוללת הכל, דהמצות ג"כ גזירת מלך היא, בקבלת עומ"ש דוקא"י וד"ל. וא"א לומר דמה שמתפעל ביראת אלקים בתפלה כמו שקר בנפשו ממש אחר שאין בו יראת חטא לפי ערך כנ"ל, שהרי ידוע שהתפעלות אוי"ר בתפלה נמשך מכח מ"ה שנק' חכמה שכנה"א, שבא מכח הנשמה האלקי' שהוא בבחי' עצמיות כהתפעלות אלקות, והוא אשר לב כל א' לפי שרש נשמתו מתפעל לבו ביראת

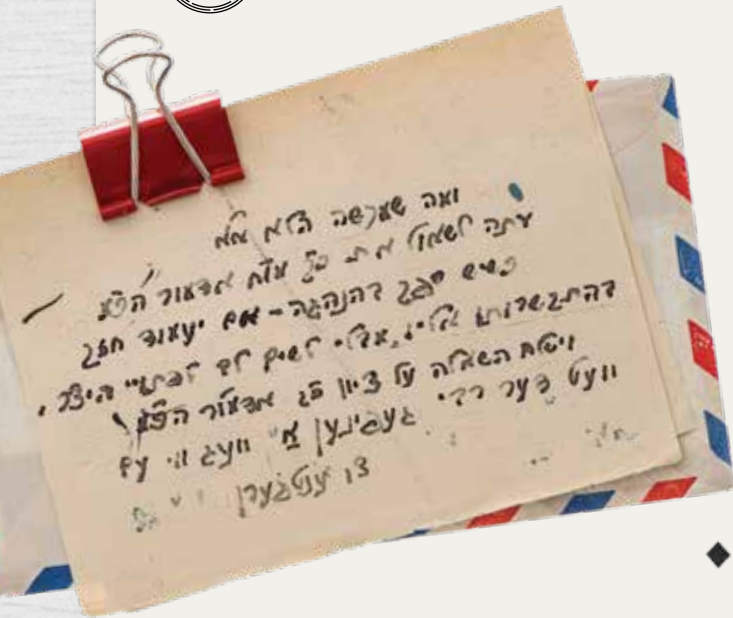
(28) ראה תניא רפי"ד. ובמ"ם והנהגת כ"ק אדמו"ר ז"ע שם.  
(29) עקב י"א, י"ג (בדילוג).  
(30) שם י"ב.  
(31) ראה תניא ריש סמ"א. קונטרס העבודה ע' 15.

(23) ראה תניא רמ"א.  
(24) אבות פ"ג מ"ט.  
(25) שם, ט"ו.  
(26) מנהגיו"ל לא. א.  
(27) קהלת י"ב, י"ג.





Story



לע"נ  
 הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' זוסיא בן הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' שלום ע"ה פוזנר  
 נלב"ע י"ב שבט ה'תשפ"ב  
 ולע"נ זוגתו מרת יהודית בת ר' שלום ע"ה

נלב"ע י"ד אלול ה'תשע"ט  
 ת"נ צ'ב"ה

נדפס ע"י משפחתם  
 הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת חנה ומשפחתם שיחיו  
 פוזנר

# דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG

## “Soon, soon”



AS TOLD BY  
**RABBI SHNEOR ASHKENAZI**  
 (RISHON LETZIYON, ERETZ YISROEL)

Over thirteen years ago I started broadcasting a weekly *shiur* on YouTube and, *baruch Hashem*, with time it grew to become one of the most-watched weekly *shiurim* in the world, with more than 50,000 viewers.

At the conclusion of the *shiur* I gave before Gimmel Tammuz 5782\*, I shared with the viewers that I will be traveling to New York to be at the Rebbe’s Ohel for Gimmel Tammuz and welcomed them to post in the comments section of the video or to privately send me their names and any requests they would like me to bring to the Rebbe.

Among the hundreds of messages I received that week, this is one that a Jew I never met, an astrophysicist named

Daniel, sent to me on WhatsApp.

*Rabbi, this is something I wanted to share with you for a long time, but now that I understand you are at the Rebbe’s Ohel, this seems to be the right time for it. I am not from a Chabad family. I watch your classes often, so you are my connection to Chabad and here is my story.*

*I am my parents’ eldest son and after my birth, they tried very hard to have more children. After seven years, the doctors told them there was no chance they would have any more children and that they should strongly consider adoption.*

*We lived in New York at the time (1990) and my father’s friend who was a Lubavitcher suggested he go to the Rebbe*



JEM 5083 VIA CHAIM BARUCH HALBERSTAM

DANIEL, ASKING THE REBBE FOR A BRACHA FOR TWO BROTHERS.

for dollars to ask for a bracha. My father took me with him to Brooklyn and I vividly remember waiting for a very long time in the line and thinking to ask the Rebbe for twins. But when we finally stood before the Rebbe all I could say was, "I want two brothers."

The Rebbe gave us a bracha. My father then asked when it would happen, to which the Rebbe replied, in English, "soon."

My father asked again, "When will it happen?" and the Rebbe said again, in English, "Soon, soon."

That month (!) my mother became pregnant, and my brother Eli Menachem was born on 21 Cheshvan 5751\*. My second brother, Yonatan Mendel, was born on 23 Iyar 5752\*.

We moved back to Eretz Yisroel and life was good, until tragedy struck. When Yonatan Mendel was 21 years old he was killed in a terrifying bus accident on his way to yeshiva. Baruch Hashem the family managed to cope with our grief through doing many good things in his memory.

Two-and-a-half years ago my brother Eli Menachem finally got married, but he and his wife have not yet been blessed with children. They are going through treatments but nothing is working. If I were able to, I would beg the Rebbe with the same words as the Shunamis woman did

to Elisha Hanavi: "אל אדני איש האלהים אל-תכזב בשפחתיך" — O man of G-d, do not fail your maidservant." I asked the Rebbe for a bracha for two brothers and now one of them was killed and the remaining one cannot have any children.

Rabbi, please mention my brother and his wife at the Ohel for a bracha for children!

On Erev Shabbos Gimmel Tammuz I brought Daniel's request together with the hundreds I received to the Ohel.

I had completely forgotten about this story until I received the following text on Friday, 20 Sivan 5783\*:

Baruch Hashem, there is good news: My brother and his wife gave birth to a sweet baby boy and he was named Be'eiri Yehonatan.

Thank you so much for davening on their behalf at the Rebbe's Ohel.

We should merit the final geulah "soon!" **T**

## YOUR STORY

Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing [stories@derher.org](mailto:stories@derher.org).



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# EREV ROSH HASHANAH

29 ELUL 5736\*

*Compiled By:* Rabbi Shabi Soffer



28 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREDIN VIA JEM 203631

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Over the years, the Rebbe would farbreng on the eve of Erev Rosh Hashanah.

The crowd stands in place as the Rebbe recites the *maamar* “Yom Tov Shel Rosh Hashanah.”





28 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 203622



28 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 203621



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After Shacharis the following morning, the Rebbe recites *hataras nedarim*.





29 ELUL 5736 YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM T39742

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For hours, the Rebbe stands at the entrance to his room to receive the *panim* of thousands who traveled from far and wide for the special occasion.



29 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 205923





29 ELUL 5736 YOSSI MELAMED VIA JEM 139745



29 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 203719





29 ELUL 5736 YOSSIE MELAMED VIA JEM 139744

Before the onset of Yom Tov, the Rebbe visits the Ohel. While entering the car, Rabbi Eliyahu Simpson approaches to hand the Rebbe his pan.

In the car, the Rebbe recites Tehillim.



29 ELUL 5736 YOSSIE MELAMED VIA JEM 23123



29 ELUL 5736 YOSSIE MELAMED VIA JEM 23127



29 ELUL 5736 LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 203790



Customarily, Erev Rosh Hashanah would be the only time, aside from Yud Shevat, that Chassidim were at the Ohel with the Rebbe.



29 ELUL 5736





# Letters

A forum for readers to send their feedback, add to, or ask any questions about articles. Submit your letter to [feedback@derher.org](mailto:feedback@derher.org).

Submissions may be slightly modified by our editorial staff before publishing.

## The Rebbe's Takanah Regarding Mashke

Thank you for the recent Tammuz issue which was packed with valuable content. I particularly enjoyed the comprehensive overview on the Rebbe's *kuntreisim*, as well as the unique style of the highlights from 5752\*.

I would like to clarify a point in the *yoman* of Tammuz 5751\* (pg. 11).

The article mentions that at the Shabbos Parshas Chukas farbrengen, the Rebbe instructed that on Yud-Beis Tammuz "farbrengens should be organized... with an emphasis on saying *l'chaim*." Yet, in the various *hanachos* of the farbrengen, it appears that the Rebbe strongly emphasized quite the contrary: "בקשר לחג הגאולה י"ב-י"ג תמוז, כדאי ונכון לסדר התועדויות... אלא שביחד עם זה צריך להיות ההגבלות בקשר לשתייית משקה, אשר הגבלות אלו חדורות, לאמיתתו של דבר, עם למעלה מהגבלה - כידוע ההגבלות מה שאין צורך ואסור לשתות, כמ' דובר כמ"פ עד"ז באופן כללי ובאופן פרטי וכו'. ישנם כאלו המחזיקים עצמם ל"שפיץ חב"ד" וחושבים שהגבלות אלו אינן שייכות אליהם - הנה לזה יש להדגיש, שאדרבה: הכוונה היא דוקא אליהם..."

The Rebbe stresses that during the farbrengens the participants must be careful to adhere to the limits of drinking *mashke*. The Rebbe goes on to admonish those who think that the restrictions do not apply to them because they consider themselves "*shpitz Chabad*."

It is in continuation to this that the

Rebbe explains the true meaning of "*shpitz Chabad*" – one who occupies himself with *hafatzas hamaayanos*, as was mentioned in the article.

On this note, it is interesting to point out that on a number of occasions the Rebbe mentions being careful with drinking *mashke* in connection to Yud-Beis Tammuz.

For example, on Yud-Beis Tammuz 5725\*, the Rebbe told the story of Reb Michael Dvorkin, who, upon hearing the news of the Frierdiker Rebbe's release, took a "*sotkeh*" – a very small bottle of *mashke* – and the Rebbe continues "און" "האט ניט חס ושלום געטרונקען *chas veshalom* drink it), rather he danced with it, while singing the *niggun* "*Nyet Nyet Nikavo*."

Another example is Yud-Beis Tammuz 5747\*, when the Rebbe stressed that at the farbrengens no one should "*chas veshalom* transgress the greatest command and warning of *nesi doreinu*... חס ושלום זאל... ער ניט זיין אין א גדר פון היפך פון א ניכטערע (one should not *chas veshalom* be in a non-sober state).

May we merit to see Moshiach now *bepoel mamash!*

**Mendel Kramer**  
NEW HAVEN, CT

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## Open Siddur

I wanted to thank you for the special article “Shabbos with the Rebbe” in the last issue. On page 31 (in the box on the top right of the page) is brought that one Motzei Shabbos in the 5730s\* there was no *havdalah* candle so the *mavdil* skipped the *bracha* and the Rebbe wasn’t happy:

“After the *mavdil* finished drinking the wine, the Rebbe left his siddur open on the table and went to his room. Moments later he returned with a *havdalah* candle...”

I checked the original article “Shabbos Mite’n Rebbe’n” printed by Vaad Hatmimim in 5775\* and there it doesn’t mention that the Rebbe left the siddur open on the table when he went to his room.

It’s important to be meticulous when talking about the Rebbe’s *hanhagah*, especially when it was done in public, since every single *tenuah* of the Rebbe was *betachlis hadyiuk* with *mekoros* in *halacha* and Kabbalah.

The Rebbe spoke strongly in the *sicha* of Shabbos Parshas Ki Sisa 5724\* regarding not leaving a *sefer* open when leaving the room. He bemoaned how in previous generations, even by young children learning in *cheder*, it was obvious that when one stops learning and leaves the room they should close the *sefer* they were using, whereas today people are not *makpid* about this. This causes them to have a general lack of sensitivity to the *kedushah* of *sefarim* to the extent that when a page of a *sefer* is lying on the floor, numerous people can just walk by without paying any attention to it!

It should be noted that on numerous occasions the Rebbe himself, while entering or leaving the shul in 770, would personally go and close open *sefarim* or

pick up papers of *kedushah* (or *l’havdil* trash) from the floor.

Thank you again for the incredible article.

**Levi Broner**

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

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## The Rebbe’s Kapitel Niggun At Farbrengens

*Yasher koach* once again for your beautiful magazine.

On pg. 40 of the Sivan issue you write: “Right after the Rebbe made *kiddush*, the *niggun* composed on the Rebbe’s *kapitel* would be sung after the first *sicha*.”

This should be corrected to “**before** the first *sicha*,” as this niggun was sung (as you wrote) just after the Rebbe made *kiddush* (or drank from the *becher*, in years that he made *kiddush* in his room) and was *to'em* from the *mezonos*.

**Rabbi Yossi Alperowitz**

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