

A Letter ADDRESSED TO All

לעילוי נשמת
מרת לאה בת הרה"ח ר' אליהו נחום ע"ה
בלאק
נלב"ע שבת קודש כ"ה אלול ה'תשע"ג
ת"נצ'בה'
נדפס ע"י
משפחתה שיחיו

THE REBBE'S KOCH IN IGERES HATESHUVAH

ספר — אוצר החסידים — יובא"ש

לקוטי אמרים

תניא

חלק שלישי

הנכרא בשם

אגרת התשובה



— עם הוספות —

יוצא לאור על ידי מערכת

"אוצר החסידים"

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שנת חמשת אלפים שבע מאות עשרים ושמונה לבריאה

The Wave

The year was 5728*. The world had just witnessed the miraculous victory of Israel in the Six Day War. Around the world, Yidden were upbeat, publicly displaying Jewish pride, and caught in a wave of Jewish ‘awakening.’

In the *maamar* of Rosh Hashanah 5728*, the Rebbe said: “In a certain regard, the sounding of the ‘shofar gadol’ has already begun... As we see in recent times, many who were ‘wandering’ *Rachamana litzlan*, have awakened with teshuvah through the sound of the ‘shofar gadol.’”

Over the next several months, the Rebbe expounded on the mitzvah of *teshuvah* at various farbrengens. For example, at the Purim farbrengen the Rebbe spoke at length about Maftir Yonah and its eternal lesson.

The farbrengen of Chof Av was themed with *teshuvah*. The *hadran* was on Mesechta Yoma, which discusses the mitzvah of *teshuvah*. The Rebbe discussed two teachings of his father on the topic of *teshuvah*. In addition, the Rebbe devoted a *sicha* to the mitzvah aspect of *teshuvah*. Expounding on the words of the Alter Rebbe in the first *perek* of Igeres Hateshuvah והנה מצות התשובה מן התורה, addressing the question whether *teshuvah* is counted as one of the 613 *mitzvos*.

A Special Print

At the end of 5728*, no one foresaw what was going to happen over the next while—that Igeres Hateshuvah was to



THE REBBE GIVES A BRACHA TO CHASSIDIM ON EREV YOM KIPPUR 5728*.

become the Rebbe’s focus for the next two and a half years.

Days ahead of Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe instructed that Igeres Hateshuvah be printed as its own booklet, both in standard format and in pocket-size format.

On 24 Elul 5728* the Igeres was sent to print along with notes and explanations culled from the Rebbe’s *sichos*. The printing was sponsored by the Rebbe himself, in memory of his mother, Rebbetzin Chana.

Two days later, following *selichos*, the Rebbe asked the *mazkirim* where the printing was holding and requested that a copy be brought to him as soon as it arrived from the printer.

As soon as the newly printed Igeres Hateshuvah arrived, the Rebbe instructed Rabbi Hodakov that it be studied that very night, even if only “a few lines,” adding that one of the

SMALL TANYA

In Reshimos on Tanya, the Rebbe mentions the Tanya printed in Shklov in the year 5566*, where Igeres Hateshuvah is titled ‘Tanya Katan’ (the small Tanya), as it was called at the time.

The reason for this title, it seems, is for just as the Tanya begins with the word ‘Tanya,’ so too Igeres Hateshuvah begins with the word ‘Tanya,’ only that it contains far less chapters, hence the title ‘Tanya Katan.’

In a letter written in 5706*¹, the Rebbe makes another comparison between the first and third section of the Tanya, that they can both serve as substitutes for *sifrei mussar*.

Also of note is that to many people who asked the Rebbe where to begin their study of Tanya or Chassidus in general, the Rebbe pointed to Igeres Hateshuvah.



IN THE SHKLOV EDITION OF THE TANYA, PRINTED IN 5566*, IGERES HATESHUVAH WAS INCLUDED.

guests from Kfar Chabad should lead the study.

Rabbi Hodakov entered the shul to give over the Rebbe's instructions, holding four bottles of *mashke* from the Rebbe, to be distributed during the study, per the Rebbe's instructions.

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe took the newly printed Igeres Hateshuvah along with him to the Ohel.

During those years, the Rebbe would usually enter *shul* on Shabbos morning holding his *siddur*, as well as a Tanya, which he would learn from for a few minutes before *Baruch She'amar*. Soon after the Igeres was printed, it took the place of the Tanya. The Rebbe would keep the Igeres in the back of his *siddur*, and before *Baruch She'amar* would learn from it for a few minutes.

Rabbi Leibel Schapiro related: "It once happened that the Rebbe returned from the Ohel quite late and came out for Mincha and Maariv. In order for the *tefillos* to be immediately one after the other without the need to go back and forth from his room, the Rebbe stayed at his place, took out the new Igeres Hateshuvah booklet, and studied from it for a few minutes."

While the Igeres was being printed in New York, Rabbi Hodakov instructed Rabbi Ephraim Wolff of Eretz Yisroel to print it there as well, and to advertise the printing in newspapers, with details where the new print can be purchased. Regarding the sale, it was to be sold for minimal cost, but not distributed for free. Additionally, the Rebbe's personal dedication for Rebbetzin Chana was to be included.

Subsequently, the Igeres was printed on Erev Yom Kippur in pocket-size format, and a short while later in standard format as well. The Rebbe participated in the costs of the printing.

With the printing of the Igeres, the Rebbe began a *koch* in the Igeres, requesting and encouraging that the Igeres be disseminated as widely as possible. In various letters from early 5729*, we find that the Rebbe mentions the printing of the Igeres and encourages the recipients to both distribute and also study the Igeres, establish *shiurim* on it, and so on.

At farbrengens throughout Tishrei, the Rebbe encouraged Chassidim time and again to study the Igeres. So much so that on Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5729*, the Rebbe encouraged memorizing the Igeres by heart.

At the farbrengen of Simchas Torah, the Rebbe mentioned that even though there are those who have already studied Igeres Hateshuvah many times, perhaps even 101 times, there is always room to increase its understanding more and more.

At a *yechidus klolis* at the conclusion of Tishrei, the Rebbe spoke to the guests of Kfar Chabad and among other things the Rebbe said:

We've spoken a great deal about Igeres Hateshuvah... It would be appropriate to arrange shiurim in the Igeres from time to

TIKKUNIM

During the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Chukas-Balak of that year, the Rebbe spoke of a group of *bochurim* who behaved inappropriately, and instructed that as a *tikkun* they should learn Igeres Hateshuvah by heart along with 100 *blatt* of Gemara.

The Rebbe also instructed a *chosson* that year to study the Igeres at least two or three times before his wedding.

time, and if necessary, to add in its study alone, if the shiur isn't sufficient. This is not only intended for Kfar Chabad, rather for all Yidden wherever they may be, and not only for the laymen but for those whose occupation is to study Torah too.

During the farbrengen of Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe spoke proudly of the fact that earlier that night, at the central farbrengen in Kfar Chabad, they discussed Igeres Hateshuvah, and *teshuvah* in general. A short while later, the Rebbe mentioned this in a letter to Reb Zalmon Jaffe regarding the study of the Igeres, adding that at the farbrengen in Kfar Chabad, President Zalman Shazar mentioned that he too is studying the Igeres.

While many were sure the reason for the sudden *koch* in Igeres Hateshuvah was connected with the '*teshuvah* wave'



FOR MANY YEARS, THE REBBE CARRIED IN HIS SIDDUR THE KUNTRES WITH IGERES HATESHUVA.



ARE WE WORSE OFF?

In the third *perek* of Igeres Hateshuvah, the Alter Rebbe provides us with practical advice. In the days of old, one would bring a *korban* to atone for sins, and to become close to Hashem once again. Due to the inability to bring *korbanos* in absence of the *Beis Hamikdash*, there are alternative methods to receive atonement. As discussed in Tikkunei Teshuvah of the Arizal, one can atone with fasting, and the Alter Rebbe advises with regards to the amount of fasts one must fast in order to properly atone for various sins.

The Alter Rebbe then continues, that in this day and age, when fasting isn't as practical as it used to be due to the weakened nature of our bodies, fasting can be replaced with giving *tzedakah*.

One can understand this to mean that atonement through fasting would be ideal, however, since it has become too difficult, there is the option of giving *tzedakah*; although it would still have been better to fast.

At the farbrengen of the second day of Sukkos 5729* the Rebbe brought this up: "One should not feel down about our difficulty with fasting." The Rebbe went on to explain that Hashem is the one who set the laws of nature. If it is the will of Hashem that our generations not be able to fast, then it isn't what is necessary for us.

The Rebbe then continued that if one can't afford to give *tzedakah* in the amounts specified by the Alter Rebbe, there must be another option.

Then, the Rebbe taught a tremendous *chiddush*. The Rebbe brought the famous ruling that one who studies the laws of bringing a *korban olah* is considered to have actually brought a *korban olah*. The same, the Rebbe said, is regarding the fasts prescribed by the Arizal or the amounts of *tzedakah* instructed by the Alter Rebbe. If one is incapable of them, then through studying the subject in Igeres Hateshuvah, it is considered as if he were to complete them, accomplishing the same results as if he were to have fasted all the fasts or given the full amount of *tzedakah*.

From here we can learn the great value of studying Igeres Hateshuvah. One might learn about the loftiest levels of *teshuvah* that seem to be beyond what people of our stature are capable of reaching and feel down as a result. We must remember, however, that studying the "laws of *teshuvah*" as they are spelled out in Chassidus, is considered as if we have in fact achieved the loftiest levels as they are described in Igeres Hateshuvah.



that swept up the Jewish world at the time, it seems that it was (also) connected with the weekly Tanya class on the radio taught by Rabbi Wineberg, which had begun studying Igeres Hateshuvah at the start of 5729*.

Yud-Daled Kislev 5729* marked the Rebbe and Rebbetzin's 40th wedding anniversary and Chassidim resolved to advance this initiative as an anniversary gift. *Shiurim* in Igeres Hateshuvah sprung up in Lubavitch communities worldwide. Young and old alike studied the Igeres thoroughly and could be seen *chapping arain* a few lines of Igeres Hateshuvah at any free moment.

Word quickly spread about what Chassidim were trying to accomplish as a gift to the Rebbe, and even the local news agencies reported on it.

The following is a headline printed in one of New York's newspapers:

An Original Present From Chassidim to their Rebbe — Studying the Work, Igeres Hateshuvah

The article continued: "This week marks forty years since the marriage of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita, the leader of Chabad. His Chassidim have decided to present him with a novel gift: Every Chossid will learn the volume of Igeres Hateshuvah — compiled by the first Chabad Rebbe — by heart. At the Rebbe's behest, lessons on this work have been made available for all, and a new printing has been published in five languages: Hebrew, English, French, Spanish and Italian."



JEW 287133 (PURIM 5729)

The Rebbe's Teachings

Just a few days into 5729*, at the farbrengen of Shabbos Shuva, the Rebbe said a *sicha* in which he offered a deep insight explaining the Alter Rebbe's choice of *pesukim* at the beginning of the Igeres. At the next farbrengen, the Rebbe continued to explain the *pesukim* in the Igeres, and then going through the first *perek*, providing insight into almost every sentence.

The Rebbe concluded that farbrengen saying: *What we learned today serves as a reminder how precise each and every word of Tanya is. As the Rebbe Rashab once said, "The greatest scholars won't comprehend everything alluded to in the Tanya, yet even the simplest person can understand its literal interpretation."*

The Rebbe's teaching of Igeres Hateshuvah continued throughout the farbrengens of Tishrei. Between Shabbos Shuva and Shabbos Breishis, the Rebbe went through the whole Igeres.

A few weeks later, at the farbrengen of Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe began a second cycle of teaching Igeres Hateshuvah. This one lasted for the next two years. The Rebbe taught the

whole Igeres quite thoroughly, going through it line by line. At each Shabbos farbrengen the Rebbe would teach a few lines, usually picking up where he left off at the previous farbrengen.

There are various things the Rebbe consistently taught at farbrengens. For many years, at each Shabbos farbrengen, the Rebbe famously taught a Rashi. In the summers, the Rebbe also taught Pirkei Avos. In later years, there were also regular *sichos* on Rambam.

What's unique about the Rebbe's teaching Igeres Hateshuvah is that it is the only thing the Rebbe taught in full. The Rebbe went through the entire Igeres, line by line, from Perek Aleph through Perek Yud-Beis over that period.

One can learn the Rebbe's *sichos* on many Rashis or many *halachos* in Rambam, whereas Igeres Hateshuvah can be learned line by line with the Rebbe's *sichos* from the beginning until the end.

"It was a remarkable experience," says Rabbi Leibel Schapiro. "The Rebbe taught us almost like a *rosh yeshiva* teaching his students from inside the *sefer*, picking up at each farbrengen where he left off previously. We knew to prepare the next few lines the Rebbe was going to teach at the next farbrengen."

After Gimmel Tammuz, when the Rebbe's Reshimos were discovered, among them were the Rebbe's notations on Tanya, including many on Igeres Hateshuvah. In some of the notes, the Rebbe raises questions, leaving them unanswered as a *צ"ע*. Interesting to note is that throughout the years 5729*-5730*, the Rebbe addressed many of these at the farbrengens, answering many of the earlier unanswered questions.



JEW 103694 (23 TISHREI 5729)



ORPHANED?!

One of the most unique *sichos* said on *Igeres Hateshuvah* was at the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5730*.

The Rebbe mentioned what the Alter Rebbe writes in *Perek Yud* יתום הזה בדור (now, in our 'orphaned' generation). The Rebbe asked, "How can the Alter Rebbe call his generation a דור יתום when the Alter Rebbe himself was living among them? The same goes for the generations to follow until the [Friediker] Rebbe—how can the Alter Rebbe refer to such generations as a דור יתום?!"

The idea that the Rebbe explains is that an orphan is one who lost their father and mother. In Kabbalah, our intellect, *chochma* and *bina*, are compared to 'father' and 'mother.' The Alter Rebbe's point with this title is that the generation is lacking proper intellectual capabilities, as he goes on to describe that in these generations one cannot instantly change his state of mind.

Moving Along

During the summer of 5730*, the Rebbe taught the final *perek* of the *Igeres*. For everyone present, this seemed to be the conclusion of the Rebbe's teaching of *Igeres Hateshuvah*. Yet, for the next half-a-year, the Rebbe taught the *Igeres* yet another time, this time offering an entirely new angle.

During that summer, the Rebbe published for the first time a portion of his father's Torah. The booklet contained Harav Levi Yitzchok's handwritten notes, written while in exile in Kazakhstan on the margins of his *Tanya*. Of them, 16 notes were written on *Igeres Hateshuvah*.

These notes would become the focus of the Rebbe's *koch* in *Igeres Hateshuvah* for the next few months.

Beginning around Chof Av 5730*, the Rebbe began to teach these notes, one note at each Shabbos farbrengen. These *sichos* were uniquely edited by the Rebbe, and subsequently published in *Likkutei Sichos*.

At first glance, Harav Levi Yitzchok's notations seem to be an analysis of the Alter Rebbe's precise wording, explaining what the deeper message of the words allude to in terms of Kabbalah, far deeper than what meets the eye when studying *Igeres Hateshuvah*.

Over those few months, the Rebbe taught that his father's insights in fact shed light on many questions that arise when studying the *Igeres*, even offering a deeper understanding of the entire idea raised by the Alter Rebbe.

This cycle of studying *Igeres Hateshuvah*, as mentioned, went on for about half-a-year. At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Vayikra 5731*, the Rebbe taught the final note of Harav Levi Yitzchok on the *Igeres*.

The Rebbe then went on to explain the reason the Alter Rebbe titled it *Igeres Hateshuvah*, as opposed to *Sha'ar Hateshuvah* or similar: A letter is sent to someone who is far away. The same would also apply to one who is metaphorically distant due to his many sins; the Alter Rebbe is 'sending' the *Igeres* to him too, to elevate him from his current state.

The following Shabbos was Shabbos Hagadol. The Rebbe taught something from his father's Torah relating to the *parsha*. At the conclusion, the Rebbe connected the teaching with the end of *Igeres Hateshuvah*. This concluded two-and-a-half years of the Rebbe teaching *Igeres Hateshuvah*.

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On numerous occasions, the Rebbe connected the learning of *Igeres Hateshuvah* with the coming of Moshiach. At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5729*² the Rebbe said, that through the study of *Igeres Hateshuvah* we hasten the arrival of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, quoting the famous words of the Rambam³: ישראל לעשות תשובה בסוף! גלותן ומיד הן נגאלין! ❶

1. Igros Kodesh, vol. 2, p. 102.

2. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos vol. 55 p. 4.

3. Hilchos Teshuvah, 7, 5.