



לזכות החייל בצבאות ה'
משה שיחי'
לרגל הולדתו כ"ב טבת ה'תשפ"ב

נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וזוגתו מרת
ח'ל מושקא ומשפחתם שיחיו
גרינברג



77 in the REBBE'S SICHOS

with
RABBI LEIBEL ALTEIN

Rabbi Leibel Altein merited to spend decades as a member of the team at Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos, preparing the Rebbe's sichos for publication in Likkutei Sichos.

In his recent interview with Jewish Educational Media, he shared stories and recollections from his years in 770.

Special thanks to Rabbi Elkanah Shmotkin, Rabbi Yechiel Cagen, and Rabbi Bentzion Pearson of JEM, for sharing the interview with us.

THANK YOU RABBI ALTEIN. BEFORE WE TALK ABOUT LIKKUTEI SICHOS, COULD YOU SHARE SOME STORIES FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?

At one point during my *yeshiva ketana* years, I wanted to stop learning *limudei chol*. My parents were against it; I learned in Tomchei Temimim at Bedford and Dean, which was a regular high school with *limudei chol*, and although they had a program of *limudei kodesh* all day, it wasn't very organized.

When I went into *yechidus*, I wrote that I wanted to stop learning *limudei chol*, and the Rebbe agreed. When I later wrote to the Rebbe that my parents were against it, the Rebbe said that my *rosh yeshiva* should speak to them. Ultimately, that worked; Rabbi Tenenbaum somehow convinced my parents to agree.

Another interesting encounter with the Rebbe was before my bar mitzvah.

At my bar mitzvah *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked me what I was going to say at the celebration. I said that I would be reviewing a *maamar* and saying a *pilpul*; so the Rebbe asked me what the *pilpul* was about. I started repeating it, and the Rebbe started asking questions — and he asked and asked until I got stuck and couldn't answer the question.

But then, the Rebbe gave me a *bracha* that was connected to the *pilpul*.

The *pilpul* was on the topic of *ibud oros lishmah* (tanning the hides of the animal for the sake of the mitzvah exclusively), regarding the distinction between tefillin and mezuzah with regard to preparing the parchments. In the *bracha*, the Rebbe said that I should merit to have *ibud oros lishmah* — perhaps a reference to *Torah Or Parshas Mishpatim*, where the matter is discussed.

TELL US ABOUT SOME SPECIAL MOMENTS WHEN YOU WERE A BOCHUR. WHAT WAS BIRCHAS HABANIM LIKE, FOR EXAMPLE?

When I was a *bochur*, the *bracha* for *bochurim* on Erev Yom Kippur was in *Gan Eden Hatachton*. The *bochurim* would squeeze in all the way up the steps, and the pressure of the weight of the people was enormous. At

times, your chest was so squeezed that you couldn't breathe.

After leaving, we would simply indulge in the very fact that we were able to breathe. My main memory is feeling the miracle of remaining alive.

On one occasion of *birchas habanim*, my brother was on shlichus in Australia, and we decided to send the *bracha* to Australia as soon as possible.

The moment the *bracha* was over, I took the blue air-letters that I had prepared in advance and wrote the Rebbe's words as fast as I could — it was only moments to *shkiah* — and ran to put it in the mailbox, so that my brother and the *bochurim* there would be *zoche* to have it a day earlier.

In those years, it wasn't too difficult to write out the text of the Rebbe's words, because they were very short, only a few lines. In the later years, they became much longer.

WERE YOU SENT ON SHLICHUS AS A BOCHUR?

In the middle of winter 5729*, I was learning in the *zal* when Reb Binyomin Klein approached six of us and asked if we were willing to submit our names for a list from which the Rebbe would choose shluchim to Australia.

To get on the list, there were conditions — good health and parental agreement. We arranged those matters and our names were placed on the list — and that was



REB LEIBEL ALTEIN AROUND THE TIME OF HIS BAR MITZVAH.



RECEIVING KOS SHEL BRACHA FROM THE REBBE ON MOTZEI ROSH HASHANAH 5737*.

it. We didn't hear anything.

The day after Purim was a night of *yechidus* — as was the case after every Yom Tov. There was also a *shturemdike* farbrengen happening in 770; at the end of the main Purim farbrengen, the Rebbe had given the *mezonos* and *mashke* to Reb Dovid Raskin, telling him to make a big farbrengen the next day. It was a very *Purim'diker* farbrengen; there was a distinguished guest from South Africa, and I remember noticing that this farbrengen was a little too much for his sensibilities. In the middle of this farbrengen, Rabbi Binyomin Klein tapped on my shoulder and told me to go to Rabbi Hodakov. I went to Rabbi Hodakov's office, and he informed me that I had been chosen to go to Australia.

We were scheduled to depart before Pesach, and our *yechidus* was set for Thursday afternoon, Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

That morning, Reb Michoel Lipsker brought a *sefer Torah* from Morocco. I remember coming into 770 for *krias haTorah* and seeing everyone on the benches, singing *Sisu Veshimchu*, and they told me that there was a *hachnosas sefer Torah*.

After davening, Rabbi Hodakov went into the Rebbe's room — as he did every morning — and came out with a bottle of wine, telling Reb

Michoel that the Rebbe had sent it out so that he would farbrengen.

At that time, the *bochurim's* dining room in 749 was already closed for Pesach cleaning, so they would bus us to Bedford and Dean for meals. The *heimishe* driver, who had no patience, came running into 770 yelling for the *bochurim*, but Rabbi Hodakov came out and told him, "The Rebbe said that Reb Michoel should farbrengen," and the *bochurim* should therefore remain in 770.

We sat down with Reb Michoel, and suddenly, the Rebbe walked in and sat down next to him. The Rebbe poured him *l'chaim* from the wine, and then said the *maamar Hachodesh Hazeh*. It took about 15-20 minutes, and that was it. Many *bochurim* were downstairs and missed the entire thing; only those who happened to be in the *zal* merited to participate.

That afternoon was our *yechidus*. Rabbi Hodakov told us to bring along bags, because the Rebbe would be giving us matzah.

When we entered, the Rebbe was standing and wearing his gartel. He said a short *sicha*, and then instructed us to each take one whole matzah and one broken matzah from the box that was sitting in the back of the room. He then gave each of us a twenty, a ten, a five and a one-dollar bill, a total of thirty-six

dollars, for *maos chitim* in Australia. With that, the *yechidus* was over.

That afternoon, the Rebbe was *magiah* the *sicha*, and we were surprised to see that he added seven-eight packed lines with *mareh mekomos* and *ha'aros*, as if it was a *michtav klali*.

In one footnote the Rebbe explained why he gave 36 dollars, and in another he explained why he gave a whole and broken matzah. At our *tzeis'chem leshalom* that night, Reb Sholom Marosov was asked to read it publicly, directly from the *ksav yad kodesh*. With his immense Torah knowledge, he was able to immediately give context to the Rebbe's concise writing.

For example, the Rebbe began the *yechidus* by saying, "*Azoi vi m'iz shoin adurch di kol hahas'chalos kashos, bemeileh vet ir kenen oif'ton ka'heina vechaheina*—being that the difficult beginnings have already been overcome, you will be able to accomplish more and more." In the words "*kaheina vechaheina*," the Rebbe cited a Gemara in Sanhedrin, and Reb Sholom immediately told us what the Gemara was about — a story about the wives of Shlomo Hamelech and so on.

One footnote was very interesting:

Regarding the fact that the money was for *maos chitim*, the Rebbe wrote, "*Ayen Shulchan Aruch Admur Hazaken, siman tof chof tes, se'if vov*—see the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, 429:6."

What does the Alter Rebbe say there?

The Alter Rebbe says that a person is obligated to give *maos chitim* to the poor of his own city. What about the obligation of new residents? New residents who live in the city for thirty days become obligated as well. However — the Alter Rebbe says in *se'if vov* — if you come with the intention of settling down, you become obligated immediately.

In other words, the Rebbe was

telling us that although the *shlichus* is for two years, it is not temporary. When you go on a *shlichus*, don't look at the calendar; be fully invested at every moment. And this wasn't just a *Chassidishe maaseh* — the Rebbe actually ruled that we were obligated to give *maos chitim*.

WHAT WAS THE SHLICHUS IN AUSTRALIA LIKE?

I'm sure you know that communications in those days were very different than today. A telephone call to America was almost unheard of; it was only done for emergencies. How did we get news from 770? We got letters from our friends. The *hanachos* weren't coming out regularly either; they would simply write a few lines about a *farbrengen's* topics. If there was a weekday *farbrengen*, they would send a tape; it would usually arrive several weeks later.

I remember the *farbrengen* of *Gimmel d'Selichos* that year, when the Rebbe cried tremendously during the *maamar*, "*Ani Ledodi*."

We received the tape on Erev Yom Kippur, right after *kapparos*, and immediately went into the shul to listen to it. The *shochet* — a warm, *balabatisher* Yid who had learned in *misnagdishe* yeshivos in Europe — heard that there was a tape of the Rebbe playing, so he came in to listen. Hearing the Rebbe's weeping, he was *ois-mentch*; it was an amazing

experience for him — he had never heard the Rebbe speak before.

That Yud Shevat was "*Yud Shevat Hagadol*," and we were stuck in Australia. We heard that there was tremendous excitement in 770, but meanwhile, we were on the other side of the world. Needless to say, it was quite disappointing.

Then we heard that a hookup had been arranged from Eretz Yisrael for the first time, and we decided that we had to do something similar. So, for Lag B'omer, we arranged the first hookup.

The second hookup was Yud-Beis Tammuz. In America, the *farbrengen* was Thursday night, which is Friday morning in Australia, and summer in America is winter in Australia, so it was an early Friday as well.

The cost was exorbitant, although I don't recall the exact sums; we collected money from *anash*, and I even wrote my sister to send me the one hundred dollars I had from my bar mitzvah.

The hookup began on Friday in the middle of the day and ended after four in the afternoon, close to *licht bentchen*.

It was quite a scene. The *balabatim* had already begun to arrive for Mincha when, at the end of the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe started *Ki Elokim* and — as it seemed to us — began to dance. Obviously, we went crazy as well; we were on a high.



REB LEIBEL ALTEIN (MIDDLE ROW, SECOND FROM RIGHT) DURING HIS YEARS OF SHLICHUS IN AUSTRALIA.



ONE OF THE EARLY HOOKUPS OF THE REBBE'S FARBRENGENS.

Reb Chaim Serebrianski brought in *mashke* and *farbaisin*, and the entire shul was on wheels — the *balabatim* were in shock; they had never seen anything like it.

There was another interesting story with a hookup later on.

It was Yud-Tes Kislev. We were all ready for the hookup, but when we called, the number wouldn't connect. There was an emergency number to call, but that didn't work either. We knew that the farbrengen had started, but to our frustration, we couldn't connect with 770.

Finally, after about an hour, we got the line. At that very moment, during the third *sicha*, the Rebbe started speaking about Australia!

To digress:

At that time, Chabad in Melbourne lost their building and they needed to buy a new one. They had received an offer to buy a very large lot, but it was prohibitively expensive; however the Rebbe told them to take it.

As we called in, we heard the Rebbe speaking about this very matter! The Rebbe said that they should have understood on their own that there is a need for *ufaratzta* instead of wasting precious dollars on telephone calls, but now that Hashem 'forced them' into the situation, as the Rebbe put

it, it should be with great *hatzlacha*.

WHEN DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN LIKKUTEI SICHOS?

I became involved in Likkutei Sichos around 5733* or 5734*. After the Rebbe stopped being *magiah* the *sichos* in 5732*, Reb Bentche Shemtov put together a new *vaad* to write the *sichos* — Reb Leibel Kaplan, Reb Leibel Schapiro and Reb Nachman Shapiro. They began preparing *sichos* in the beginning of 5733*.

Around Pesach time, something happened and the Rebbe once again stopped giving out the *sichos*. At the same time, Reb Leibel Schapiro had an offer to become *rosh yeshiva* in Miami, and with the Rebbe's *bracha*, he took the post. When the *sichos* once again resumed, he continued working from Miami, but they needed someone local to get involved as well, to polish the versions during the various stages of *hagahos* — they weren't going to send the papers back and forth to Miami.

At some point, Reb Leibel got more involved in matters in Miami, and I took over his role. This continued for some time.

Then, when I got married, I didn't know what to do. It was in 5735*, again a period when the Rebbe

had not been editing new *sichos*, so I thought that I should perhaps enter *kolel*. However, that was a bit complicated. Due to my involvement in the *sichos*, I was considered a "drop-out;" I hadn't been attending the *sedarim* of yeshiva. But to enter the *kolel*, you needed a note from the *hanhala* that you were a *shomer sedarim*. When I asked Rabbi Mentlik if I could go to *kolel*, he said, "I can't write that you are a *shomer sedarim*, but I can give you a note that I recommend that the *kolel* accept you."

During my *chasunah yechidus*, I asked the Rebbe whether I should join the *kolel*, but the Rebbe didn't give me a clear answer. At the time, I wasn't sure what to do, but I soon concluded that the Rebbe wasn't going to *instruct* me to be involved in the *sichos*. That was something that would need to come from me. With that in mind, I decided to remain involved in the *sichos*. And then, within a short time, the *sichos* resumed.

WHAT EXACTLY DID PREPARING THE WEEKLY LIKUT ENTAIL?

The first stage was that we would simply read years and years of *sichos*. We would sit with a collection of *sichos* and read through page after page, making lists and arranging the *sichos* according to *parshios*. That way, on any given week, we were able to pull out the folder from that *parsha* and choose a *sicha*.

In my years, Reb Yoel was no longer very involved, but we would occasionally ask for his assistance. This was especially the case with the *sichos* on Likkutei Levi Yitzchok which included a lot of Zohar; he was very heavily involved in those.

Every weekly *likut* was submitted to the Rebbe twice. First, it was typed up on a typewriter in double lines, leaving each line with plenty of room for editing. After reviewing

it ourselves, it would be submitted to the Rebbe for editing. After we received those *hagahos*, we would go over them, prepare them for print, and then it went to a typesetter to be prepared on a long page called a galley, about 18 inches long.

After proofreading those galleys, we would submit it to the Rebbe for the second *hagaha*.

The Rebbe's comments were different, depending on whether it was the first or second version. In the first version, it was less exact and official. The Rebbe would often begin a line without finishing it, indicating that we were to do so. In the second version, when the *sicha* was pretty much ready, the Rebbe would write more concisely and much more exactly.

One very unique comment was for Parshas Noach 5738* (vol. 15). The *sicha* is based on a Zohar about the revelation of *chochmah*, and the Rebbe wrote a whole *se'if* in his own handwriting about the danger of going to college. The entire page was filled with his handwriting. This was right after the Rebbe's heart attack on Shemini Atzeres, and he nevertheless wrote a very long *arichus*.

There were times that the second *hagaha* wasn't enough; sometimes we didn't understand what the Rebbe meant, and we corresponded back and forth with the Rebbe several times. This occurred especially when the Rebbe would add full pieces; we sometimes didn't quite grasp the Rebbe's intent, and we would need to ask again to make sure it was clear.

WAS IT DIFFICULT WORK?

The work for Likkutei Sichos was always very tense. We consistently remembered that we were preparing something that would be printed in the Rebbe's name. This wouldn't be the Torah of Leibel Altein and Nachman Schapiro; this would have the Rebbe's name on the

front page, and we realized that it was a tremendous *achrayus*.

Nowadays, you have Otzar Hachchmah and a variety of tools to help you research Torah concepts. But in those days, forgive my language, we were just *ameratzim*. Preparing the Rebbe's *sichos*, therefore, meant that we simply needed to learn a voluminous amount of Torah.

You know, there are different ways to understand a *sicha*. When the Rebbe speaks, there are many who can follow along, but how many truly understand what the Rebbe is saying? Imagine, *lehavdil elef alfei havdalos*, if the greatest scientist would come and give a lecture on one of his deepest theories. You might be able to follow along, but only those who truly understand physics and chemistry will actually understand this particular scientist's "*chiddush*" in the matter. Someone without the proper background in the field won't have the tools to appreciate the full depth of his words.

When the Rebbe spoke about an *inyan* in Torah, the entire Torah was open in front of him, so to speak.

You might be able to follow along, but do you understand the background? Do you understand the *chiddush*?

In order to be able to get an inkling of what the Rebbe was saying, one had to learn the entire *sugya* in its whole breadth and depth, and then try to see what the Rebbe was getting at. That was really the

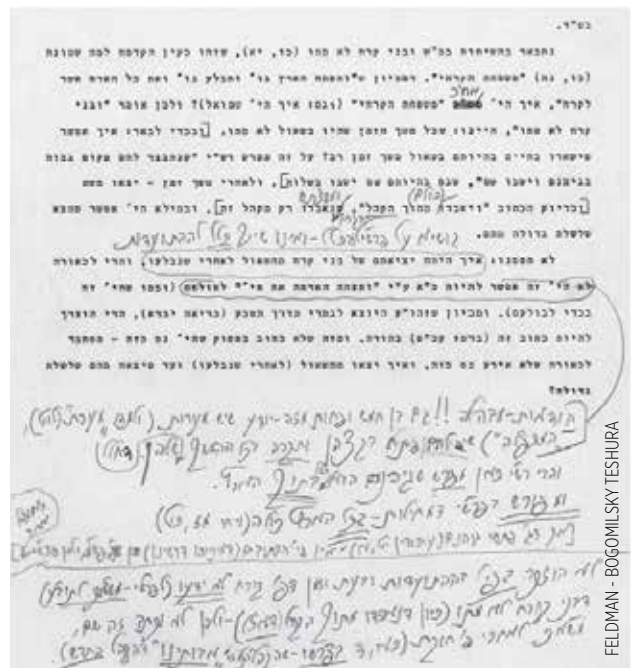
main work in preparing a *sicha*. Very often, we would write questions to the Rebbe on the topic before beginning to write at all, to ensure that we were going in the right direction.

There were plenty of occasions when the Rebbe wrote sharply about our mistakes and misunderstandings. People ask me how it affected us, but in truth, the constant pressure of producing new weekly *likutim* was so intense that we didn't have time to dwell on it. There was simply no time for such things.

The Rebbe worked on the *sichos* at all hours of night and day. There were many times when the Rebbe would come in the morning with a *likut* after editing it during the night at home.

I remember two occasions on Sukkos when the Rebbe was *magiah* a *maamar* — in 5736* and 5738* — and I remember that one of them came back to us on Chol Hamoed with coffee stains on it; the Rebbe had edited it while sitting in the sukkah.

On another occasion, on Shabbos Chazon 5735*, the Rebbe delivered a *hadran* on Brachos and Moed Katan



THE REBBE RESPONDS TO A QUESTION FROM THE MANICHIM. THESE MANOS WERE THEN INCORPORATED INTO THE SICHA.

which is now printed in Likkutei Sichos vol. 14. In the process of the *hagahah*, we sent in a question, and to our surprise, the Rebbe answered it on the evening of Tisha B'av.

When Rabbi Groner gave us the answer, he told us an interesting story.

Before the *nesius*, he worked for the Rebbe as a technical helper in a variety of ways. The Rebbe oversaw Kehos, so Rabbi Groner would occasionally take things for the Rebbe to the Balshan printshop.

On one occasion, the Frierdiker Rebbe gave a *maamar* for publication but the *kitzurim* weren't there yet, so he couldn't print it.

Time was passing and it was getting very late, and finally the Rebbe gave it to him. He noticed that they were written in the Rebbe's handwriting — but it wasn't merely copied. It was clearly something that the Rebbe had written on his own; there were edits and additions and so on.

That was a discovery for him; he had always thought that the *kitzurim* were from the Frierdiker Rebbe, but clearly, they were actually authored by the Rebbe.

WERE THERE OTHER PROJECTS THAT YOU WORKED ON?

Yes, there were several such projects. For example, when the Rebbe announced the *takanas Harambam*, he told us to create a *moreh shiur*.

Part of the work was simple — to

catalog every three chapters. But the Rebbe was heavily involved in the other elements, such as splitting the *hakdamah* and the *sefer hatefillos*, and it was those specifications that set the first *siyum* for Yud-Alef Nissan. The Rebbe also clarified that we should include the *pesukim* in the beginning of each *sefer* in the *moreh shiur*; every part of the Rembam's work was important and needed to be accounted for.

One of the most intense projects was the *mahadura kama* of Tanya.

In 5738*, part of the Frierdiker Rebbe's library was released from its exile in Warsaw and brought to the Rebbe. On the night before Rosh Chodesh Kislev — when the Rebbe went home — the Rebbe left 770 for the first time to see the *bichlach* that had arrived at the library.

One of those *bichlach* was a Tanya in handwriting. However, it wasn't the same version as our printed Tanya; it seemed to be an earlier draft, and at some point, the Rebbe instructed Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos to take this manuscript and publish a *mahadura kama*, a "first edition" of the Tanya.

Now, the Rebbe's library had additional old manuscripts that included Tanya, so it wasn't a simple job. It necessitated extensive editing work, comparing the various versions of the manuscripts and preparing them for print.

Our specialty wasn't printing



THE FIRST PRINTING OF THE MAFTEICHOS ON THE ALTER REBBE'S MAAMARIM.

sefarim. We were familiar with similar works that were done on Midrash, but we weren't exactly sure how to go about it. We asked the Rebbe and he gave us very precise guidance about the process.

We began working on it at the end of 5741*, but it soon became overwhelming. It was quite a difficult job, and this was in addition to our responsibilities to produce the weekly *likut*.

The weekly *likut*, I should note, was a 24/7 job; even on Shabbos, when we couldn't write, we would be learning *sichos* for future use. But now, on top of everything else, we were working on the Tanya — and the Rebbe said that he wanted it completed for Yud-Tes Kislev. We literally moved

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM, 141547

REB LEIBEL ALTEIN WORKING ON A NEW "LIKKUT." WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE "VAAD": REB YOEL KAHN, REB NACHMAN SCHAPIRO, AND REB DOVID FELDMAN.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM, 193285

into our office; we all left home and spent twenty-four hours a day in the office, working like madmen.

Every part of the work was unusually difficult. The manuscripts were difficult to decipher, the typesetting needed to be done in multiple fonts, and proofreading was quite complicated.

Then, we realized that if we would wait to finish the entire book before bringing it to a printer, it would never be ready in time. So Reb Zalman Chanin decided that he would print it in the printing presses of Vaad L'Hafotzas Sichos upstairs in 770. We didn't have the equipment to print a whole *sefer* at a time, so he decided to print pamphlet by pamphlet of thirty-two pages each and later bring it all to a binder to glue and bind together.

We asked the Rebbe's permission to do so, but we didn't receive an answer. We weren't sure how to proceed, but it seemed the only way to finish in time, so we decided to go ahead. Years later, we discovered that the Rebbe had indeed approved of the plan, but for whatever reason, the answer never made it to us at the time.

Erev Shabbos was 15 Kislev, and miraculously, we managed to have a *sefer* — bound and ready — brought into the Rebbe.

That Shabbos, the Rebbe came into the farbrengen holding the *sefer* and spoke extensively about it during the *sichos*.

At first, the Rebbe spoke about the very idea of printing it. What's the point of printing the early version of Tanya if we have the final version?

The Rebbe answered that a lot could be gleaned from seeing the Alter Rebbe's original words and seeing how he decided to write the final version. He proceeded to open the *sefer* and deliver an entire *sicha*, delving into the differences between the two versions.

But then, the Rebbe spoke about the fact that the *sefer* was released in time for Shabbos. He related that the Alter Rebbe had wanted the original Tanya to be ready in time for Yud-Tes Kislev, the *yahrzeit* of the Mezritcher Magid, but in the end it didn't make it in time. This new Tanya, the Rebbe said, served as a correction for the delayed printing in the Alter Rebbe's times. The Rebbe also noted that he didn't think we would actually make it in time.

The *sicha* is printed; you can open up Toras Menachem 5742* and read the *sicha*, and see for yourself just how much *nachas* the Rebbe had from the fact that it was ready in time.

There was also another instance where the Rebbe gave us a short deadline: the publishing of the *mafteichos* of the Alter Rebbe's *maamarim*. The Rebbe said that he wanted the entire project done in a week's time.

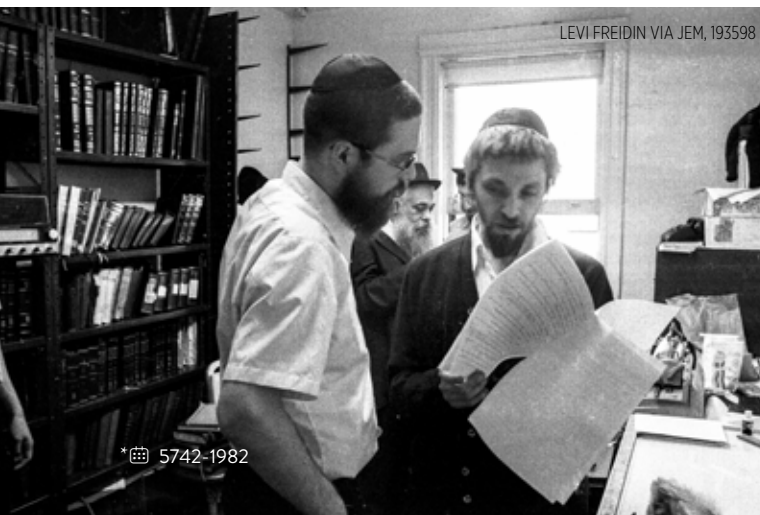
At the end of every single day, we were to submit a *duch* with that day's



A HANDWRITTEN VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL "MAHADURA KAMA," AND THE PRINTED VERSION FROM 5742*.

progress. Each evening, we would give the Rebbe the galleys, and in the morning, we would receive it back with his additions and edits.

Essentially, the entire *mafteichos* was based on the Rebbe's work, because in the early years, the Rebbe had personally written the *mafteichos* on Likkutei Torah and



* 5742-1982



LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM, 1936/02

Torah Ohr — and that was the basis that we used for our *mafteichos*.

When we prepared the *hakdashos*, the Rebbe told us to write a *hakdasha* with the names and mother's names of all those who had worked on the *sefer*, and the Rebbe proceeded to add his own name in the middle. Obviously, we wanted to put it on top, but the Rebbe didn't allow it. His name was there for the simple reason that he had actually put many hours of physical work into preparing those *mafteichos*.

DID YOU PREPARE SICHOS OR ALSO MAAMARIM FOR THE REBBE'S HAGAHAH?

There was one *maamar* that I prepared for *hagahah* — *Lecha Dodi* 5714*, which came out in 5739*. (I also prepared the *maamar* *Nosata Lyireiecha* 5736* for *hagahah*.)

During the process of *hagahah*, the Rebbe made sure that all the Rabbeim were mentioned; I think the Tzemach Tzedek was missing from the original version, and the Rebbe added it in the *hagahah*.

It was a very special *maamar*, because from then on *chassanim* were able to review the Rebbe's *maamar* at their weddings. In earlier years, *chassanim* would deliver the Frieddiker Rebbe's *maamar* while inserting some of the Rebbe's *biurim*.

During that *tekufah* — Yud-Daled

Kislev 5739* — there was also a special *koch* in *sefarim*, because the Rebbe said at the farbrengen that when the Frieddiker Rebbe had his fiftieth wedding anniversary, they (i.e., the Rebbe) would bring him a new *sefer* every single day of the *sheva brachos*. Hearing that, we realized that we needed to do the same, and we made sure to have a newly printed *sefer* for every single day.

WERE THERE ANY OTHER PROJECTS YOU WERE INVOLVED IN? WE HEARD THAT YOU USED TO LEAD AN ENGLISH CHAZARAH AFTER THE REBBE'S FARBRENGENS.

Over the years, I became known as someone who does an English *chazarah* of the Rebbe's *sichos*. It started when a few of us would gather to review the *tochen* of the farbrengen. Slowly, the crowd began to grow, and it seemed to become an official gathering, but it was really just a couple of guys. For some reason, we did it in English, so it became popular for those who didn't speak Yiddish.

HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO REMEMBER THE SICHOS?

I don't have a photographic memory; I won't remember your phone number. But I tried hard to understand the Rebbe's words,

and when I understood them, it became clear and easy to repeat. If I grasped what the Rebbe was saying, it was like a puzzle that made sense — and I was able to repeat it.

But most importantly, it's about your willpower. When we truly want to do something, we suddenly figure out how to do it. It's true that it is a challenge, but if you really want to, you can accomplish it.

Another project I was involved in was “Chassidus on the Telephone.”

The project began when someone decided that Tanya classes should be made widely available. That is when Reb Yoel recorded his famous Tanya classes. Then, the Rebbe made a comment noting that the classes — which were Tanya *b'iyun* — weren't following the yearly Chitas cycle, so another line was opened with the daily Chitas. My part in the project was that I would share a *sicha* as a class on the program.

On one occasion, we were fortunate enough that the Rebbe spoke about it at a farbrengen; it was Bechukosai 5744*, I believe.

When the project first began, the Rebbe wrote an interesting *maaneh*. “*Bechlalus, nachon hu*—in general, it is a positive thing,” the Rebbe wrote. However, the Rebbe added, “*Tzarich l'hiyos mumche shezmano panui l'kach*—there needs to be an expert with the available time for it.”

A number of people were involved; Reb Yosef Wineberg due to his Tanya classes, Reb Chaim Baruch Halberstam due to his technological expertise (he developed a whole system to connect the tape recorder to the telephone lines), as well as Rabbi Aharon Slonim (today of Binghamton), and Reb Nochum Sternberg. But unfortunately, the project didn't thrive as it could have — because, just as the Rebbe wrote, it needed a full-time expert, and that never materialized.

Later, when we opened



REB LIEBEL ALTEIN RECEIVING MATZOS FROM THE REBBE.

Heichal Menachem, we took “Chassidus on the Telephone” under our wing, so to speak.

IN CONCLUSION: THIS INTERVIEW WILL BE PUBLISHED IN TIME FOR YUD-ALEF NISSAN. WHAT IS YUD-ALEF NISSAN?

What is the question? We were *zoche* to have the Rebbe in the world!

The earliest Yud-Alef Nissan I remember celebrating was in 5726*. Reb Yoel was our *mashpia* in Bedford and Dean, and he told us to come farbrengen in 770 in honor of the occasion. Reb Shmuel Levitin sat with us for a few minutes, and then Reb Yoel farbrenged late into the night.

In 5731*, there was a surprise *maamar*. When the Rebbe returned from the Ohel, Rabbi Hodakov went into the Rebbe’s room and came out saying that there would be a surprise farbrengen. There was a wedding that night, which might explain why it was an early and brief event.

From the perspective of *hagahah*, there was a special event for Yud-Alef Nissan 5747*. At the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke a *sicha* about the eternal nature of the *nesi’im*, and he was *magiah* it for the Kfar Chabad Magazine and the Algemeiner Journal. The Rebbe then instructed us to include it in Likkutei Sichos, so we reworked it, the Rebbe was *magiah* it again, and it was included in the next volume.¹

The Yud-Alef Nissan farbrengens had a unique style of their own. For example, the Rebbe often spoke about issues concerning the world at large. The Rebbe also often cited the *possuk*, “*V’ishru es’chem kol hagoyim*,” which is associated with Asher, the *nasi* of 11 Nissan, and that was often a big topic at the farbrengen.

One of my fondest memories of Yud-Alef Nissan is from 5732*. That year, the *bochurim* wanted



REB LEBEL (TOP ROW, FOURTH FROM LEFT) ATTENDS A CHAZARAH OF THE REBBE’S FARBRENGEN BY REB YOEL KAHN.

to give a *matana* to the Rebbe.

At the Rebbe’s fortieth wedding anniversary in 5728*, he said that the *matanos* should be Torah and tzedakah, so for Yud-Alef Nissan 5732*, the Rebbe’s seventieth birthday, we arranged both. First, we collected \$7,000 among the *bochurim*. Then, for the Torah gift, we came up with the idea to learn Likkutei Sichos for 70 minutes after *seder*, from 9:30 to 10:40 p.m. each night.

That was the first ‘*seder sichos*.’

After a while, as we were *koching* in *sichos*, we began to have questions and comments, so we began writing *haaros*, and then, someone wrote up a few of them on blue stencil — nowadays, a blue stencil sounds like it is from Mesushelach’s times, but that was basically the most unofficial form of printing at the time.

This *seder sichos* continued after Yud-Alef Nissan, and at some point in the summer, Reb Leibel Raskin came to 770 and noticed the ‘publication.’

“Why don’t you send this to me?” He asked. “It’s just a paper,” I responded, “it is *pnimi*, just for the *bochurim*.”

“And what am I,” he asked

angrily, “a *chutz*, an outsider?”

We decided to make a booklet. We went over the *haaros*, polished up the language, put together a nice looking *kuntres*, and named it “*Kovetz Haaros Hatmimim*.”

When we were ready to go to print, we gave the Rebbe a copy of the *shaar blatt* and the *pesach davar*, and noted that the printing would cost \$600.

To our surprise and delight, the Rebbe edited the *pesach davar*, and wrote that *mazkirus* would provide ten percent of the funding as they did for all the 71 *mosdos of shnas hashivim*.²

It was amazing. We imagined the concept of the 71 *mosdos* to mean large new Chabad Houses, but to the Rebbe, a booklet printed by the *bochurim* who had a *koch* in the Rebbe’s Torah was just as worthy as being counted among them.

Initially, we called it *Haaros Hatemimim*, and the Rebbe commented that we thereby excluded *anash*. That’s how the name became, *Haaros Hatemimim V’Anash*.

Rabbi Altein, thank you! 🕒

1. *Sicha* for Nissan, vol. 32, p. 19.

2. See *Igros Kodesh* vol. 27, p. 498.