

the Avodah of Dor Hashvi'i, he cried profusely. Completing Se'if Gimmel, he said, "We will now take a break and say L'Chaim."

Rabbi Nemtzov jumped up onto the table and cried out, "We must say 'Shehecheyanu'! Hashem has helped us – we have a Rebbe!" He then recited the Brocho, "Shehecheyanu" with Hashem's name, and all present responded with a wholehearted "Amein!" The Rebbe smiled and asked Rabbi Nemtzov to come down from the table.

The Rebbe then requested that the Chassidim sing the "Benoni," saying that "the [Friediker] Rebbe cherished this Nigun"; and then the "Rostover Nigun" of the Rebbe Rashab.

After the Nigunim, the Rebbe continued the second part of the Ma'amar. Finishing Se'if Hei, the Rebbe stopped and asked everyone to sing a Nigun from the Rebbe Maharash and one from the Tzemach Tzedek. Following these Nigunim, the Rebbe continued the Ma'amar to the end; concluding with a short Sicha, the Rebbe pointed out that in Chabad generally, the Chassidim must take responsibility for the main Avodah themselves – not simply relying on the Rebbe'im to do it for them.

All through the recitation of the Ma'amar, the Rebbe held his hands under the table with his eyes open, looking straight ahead.

Following the Ma'amar, Rabbi Nemtzov blessed the Rebbe – in the name of all the Chassidim in honor of the Nesi'us – with "Bonei, Chayei U'mezonei," and everyone answered, "Amen!"

At 12:55 a.m., the Rebbe started the Chassidim singing the Nigun, "Ki V'Simcha," as he left the shul. Everyone continued to sing the Nigun as they danced with great joy for a long while. As the Rebbe walked out the door, Rabbi Kazarnovsky wished him, "Mazel Tov!" and the Rebbe smiled.

After the Farbrengen, the Chassidim sat until 3:00 a.m. reviewing the words the Rebbe had spoken that evening; but the Bochorim, despite their extreme exhaustion, stayed until 6:30 in the morning to review the new Ma'amar – over and over, and over again.

# 5730

## **Background: Moshiach's Sefer Torah**

On the night of Simchas Torah, 5702, during the Farbrengen before Hakofos, the Friediker Rebbe spoke to the Chassidim of writing a Sefer Torah expressly for the purpose of greeting Moshiach.

It is important to note when this took place: At that time, the Jewish people were suffering terribly all across Europe

– struggling through more horrifying afflictions than anyone could have imagined would ever occur. In those darkest of times, the Frierdiker Rebbe initiated new efforts to awaken all of his Jewish brethren to return to Hashem, seeking to seize an opportunity to bring about the ultimate Redemption. Thus did the project to write a special Sefer Torah to greet Moshiach commence.

Originally, the Frierdiker Rebbe requested that the parchment for the Sefer come from Eretz Yisroel, so he sent a telegram to R' Shlomo Yehudah Leib Eliazarov of Yerushalayim with precise instructions: The parchment must be made from a "Shlil" (i.e., the hide of a calf still in its mother's stomach) of an animal slaughtered properly through Shechitah; it must be worked specifically for the sake of the Sefer Torah only; and the parchment should be six Tefachim in width.

However, when he realized that the cost of acquiring such a parchment from Israel would be too great, the Frierdiker Rebbe decided that the parchment should be made – and the Sefer Torah written – in America. The Sofer chosen was R' Shmaryahu Factor, who began to write the Sefer in the Alter Rebbe's K'sav.

Initially, it was arranged to start writing the Sefer on the 20th of Cheshvan (birthday of the Rebbe Rashab). For a variety of reasons, however, the writing did not actually begin until the 2nd of Iyar (birthday of the Rebbe Maharash).

The actual writing of the Sefer began in a quiet event without fanfare in the Frierdiker Rebbe's room, with only the Sofer and R' E. Simpson together there with him. The Sofer drew the outline of the letters of the first word and the Frierdiker Rebbe filled them in, setting this unique endeavor in motion.

Following the completion of the first letters, Chassidim gathered for a special meal in the shul downstairs, where they joined together in saying "L'chaim!" From there, they moved on to Mincha in the room where the Frierdiker Rebbe's mother had stayed (this was during the year following her passing, in which the Frierdiker Rebbe regularly davened in her room). After davening, the Frierdiker Rebbe turned to face the crowd and delivered a Sicha. Among the things he said then, the Frierdiker Rebbe related that when a terrible plague struck his city, the Baal Shem Tov instructed that a Sefer Torah be written – and the plague miraculously ended. Now too, said the Frierdiker Rebbe, the Jewish nation is in dire need of immediate salvation; and he concluded, "May Hashem help that the writing of this Sefer Torah indeed bring it about!"

Later that day, the Frierdiker Rebbe selected three of the elder Chassidim – R' Shmuel Levitin, R' Elya Simpson, and R' Dovid Shifrin – as a committee to supervise the entire project. They were instructed to announce to the public that everyone would be entitled to purchase a letter in this historic Sefer Torah, for the price of one dollar.



In a letter dated that day, the Friediker Rebbe writes:

...In the merit of our holy Rebbes, Hashem has granted me the esteemed privilege to carry out the great and exalted Mitzvah of awakening and arousing immediate Teshuvah, preparing ourselves for the imminent redemption, and to write a Sefer Torah expressly to greet Moshiach. Initially, the idea was a personal secret, with intention to perform the act alone. But during the Simchas Torah meal, while speaking about the specialty of Ahavas Yisroel, I had second thoughts as to whether I was correct in my decision to hide the truth and withhold the public from participating in this great and holy opportunity. I have therefore chosen to

proclaim openly that, with Hashem's help, I do plan on writing a Sefer Torah exclusively to greet Moshiach speedily ... All those who wish to participate in the writing are to complete the necessary forms and send them to the committee.

The Friediker Rebbe took upon himself all of the costs of the Sefer Torah, as well as the payment due to the Sofer; all of the contributions received from participants in writing the Sefer were given to Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch and Machne Israel Fund.

As soon as this momentous project was launched, the Rebbe (as chairman of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch and Machne Israel) immediately began promoting the new campaign on a very large scale, enlisting many Jews –

including many community leaders – to sign on as participants in the writing.

In the year 5708, the Rebbe wrote R' Bentzion Shemtov that Moshiach's Sefer Torah would likely be completed in the near future.

Bochurim who learned in the yeshiva in those years recall that every Thursday night they participated in reviewing columns of the Sefer Torah, checking for accuracy.

During this period, R' Elya Simpson composed a detailed program for the Siyum Sefer Torah ceremony that they had scheduled for the 20th of Cheshvan, 5708. According to his plan, they would bring the Sefer Torah to the Frierdiker Rebbe's room to request permission to proceed in writing the final Pesukim; from there they planned to continue to the Rebbe's room downstairs where the writing would take place, and then return to the Frierdiker Rebbe to fill in the last three words – "L'einei Kol Yisroel" – to be followed by a great and joyous celebration.

For reasons unknown, the plan did not materialize; but the Chassidim presumed that the Frierdiker Rebbe had given instructions that the proper time had not yet arrived...

And so the Sefer Torah remained unfinished until 5730 (1970) - twenty years after the passing of the Frierdiker Rebbe.

## Yoman – Shevat 5730

In 5730, with the approaching Yud Shevat marking twenty years of the Rebbe's leadership, Chassidim from all over the world prepared themselves for the momentous day. A special committee, the "Va'ad L'chagigos Ha'esrim" ("Committee for Commemorations of the Twenty[-year Anniversary]), was formed in Eretz Yisroel. This Va'ad fielded many suggestions and proposals for projects to utilize this opportunity to broaden the Rebbe's work in general and achieve its ultimate goal – the arrival of Moshiach.

From Eretz Yisroel came one woman's suggestion that the time had arrived to request the Rebbe's approval to complete the the "Sefer Torah to greet Moshiach" started more than twenty years earlier. This proposal was greeted with great excitement by all Chassidim; soon, a letter was drafted and submitted to the Rebbe. To everyone's dismay, however, the response was negative.

On Wednesday night, Rosh Chodesh Shevat, with the Rebbe's late return from the Ohel came a wonderful surprise for the Chassidim: The Rebbe gave notification that "all obstacles have been brought to an end," and they may now proceed with completion of the Sefer Torah. Imagine the outbreak of joy at this extraordinary news – at last, the "Sefer Torah to greet Moshiach" would finally be finished!



That Shabbos, Parshas Va'era (the 3rd of Shevat), the Rebbe announced the exciting news publicly that the Siyum for "Moshiach's Sefer Torah" would soon take place. During the Sich'a, the Rebbe expressed astonishment that no one in 770 had made this proposal:

The idea, and request, to complete the Sefer Torah came from Eretz Yisroel, when it should have come from right here in New York, where the Sefer Torah is kept – for, as people point out, 770 is the Gematriya of "Poratzta"!

Nonetheless, this notion remains for me (as do many other questions I have) unanswered. One can be standing before a precious treasure in broad daylight, with open eyes, yet he does not see a thing! Where is there a greater and more precious treasure – awaited and hoped for by all of the preceding

generations – than the coming of Moshiach? Yet people turn their faces this way or that; everyone is busy with his own endeavors...

Just as had been instructed when the Sefer was started, the Rebbe announced that anyone who wanted to participate in the writing of the Sefer Torah may do so by donating one dollar. Although the participants would no longer be able to purchase their own letters in the Sefer – for almost all of the letters were already complete, with only a few lines left unfinished – they would nevertheless be able to make their contributions, "and the Malochim will divide the letters among them all!"

Further, the Rebbe indicated that the members of the original committee appointed by the Friediker Rebbe to supervise the writing of the Sefer Torah

should continue the project now as well. The Rebbe concluded, "Let the entire Jewish nation know about this endeavor so that they may all be granted the opportunity to participate in it, and may we indeed merit to bring the Sefer Torah to greet Moshiach!"

Immediately after Shabbos, Chassidim around the world leaped into action. As soon as the news reached Eretz Yisroel, hundreds of Bochurim and Anash went from one end of the country to the other enlisting tens of thousands of their Jewish brethren in this remarkable project. Newspaper advertisements spread its information to all the cities around, resulting in nearly one-hundred-thousand participants from Eretz Yisroel alone!

Among the Chassidim themselves, the atmosphere was electric. Every Chossid had complete confidence and absolute certainty that with the completion of the Sefer Torah, the Golus would end instantly – and the long-awaited Geulah would finally arrive. Everyone prepared in his own way for the much-anticipated future that was now so near!

As Yud Shevat approached, the excitement peaked as hundreds of Chassidim, from all corners of the world, began to stream into 770 to take part in this historic moment. More than a hundred Chassidim arrived just from Eretz Yisroel alone, bringing with them the lists containing the names of participants in the writing of the Sefer

Torah. Chassidim flew in from France, England, Holland, South Africa and many other locations.

At that time, the Sefer Torah was held in R' Shmuel Levitin's room. Throughout the entire week, the Sofer, Rabbi Zirkind, was seen entering the room often, not leaving till late at night.

When the Rebbe returned from the Ohel on Thursday, the night of the 9th of Shevat, he called the members of the committee into his room. When R' Elya Simpson emerged from the meeting, he announced in the Rebbe's name that the Siyum would take place the next day at 2:30 p.m.

Next, members of the "Va'ad L'chagigos Ho'esrim," which had overseen the project's promotion in Israel, were summoned to bring their lengthy lists of participants to the Rebbe's room. When they placed the lists on the floor, the Rebbe asked that they be spread out on the table, and a short Brocho followed.

All that night, a constant flow of Chassidim arrived at 770. As buses full of Chassidim and their families pulled up from all across the United States and Canada, the building became more and more crowded – upstairs and downstairs, even outside.

Inside 770, the night shone like day as Chassidim sat together in Farbrengen all through the night, in an unprecedented

atmosphere of delight and anticipation of the rare events about to transpire...

R' Chanoch Glitzenshtein, officially designated as the representative for all of the Chassidim of Eretz Yisroel, relates:

On Thursday night, the 9th of Shevat, I stayed at the home of my host, R' Meir Harlig. At 4 a.m., I received a telephone call from R' Efraim Wolf (who had also come from Israel) who told me, "We have come here to act – so we are going to assemble now at R' Shimon Goldman's home; you must come immediately, after immersing in the Mikvah."

When I arrived there, I found the members of the "Va'ad L'chagigos Ho'esrim," along with R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, already waiting. We spoke of many things – among them, we discussed practical measures to bring about the Geulah. As the meeting concluded, we decided to write a Pa"N to the Rebbe in which we would request his holy blessing that all our plans should successfully materialize. We resolved that the Pa"N should be read at the Frierdiker Rebbe's Ohel, then presented to the Rebbe.

R' M. M. Wolf adds:

Early Friday morning (after the meeting at R' Goldman's), the members of the committee awaited the Rebbe's arrival at 770. When the Rebbe appeared, they entered his room. presented the Pa"N

and beseeched the Rebbe, saying: The time for Moshiach has arrived and we want him to come actually! The Rebbe listened with deep concentration and instructed the group to go to the Ohel and make the exact same request there.

That day, Friday, the 9th of Shevat, the shul in 770 was packed from end to end. In addition to the many Chassidim who had come from around the world, Jews from all across the New York City area arrived to be part of this historic moment.

At exactly 2:30 p.m., R' Elya Simpson made his way through the crowd cradling the special Sefer Torah. Close behind him walked the Rebbe, with a closed box in his holy hand, as the Bochorim sang "Napoleon's March." The Sefer Torah was set on the table near the Rebbe's place; then the Rebbe sat down.

The Rebbe began with a short Sicha in which he explained that they were performing the Siyum after midday on Friday so that it could take place as close as possible to the actual completion of the twenty years from the Frierdiker Rebbe's passing on Yud Shevat.

This, said the Rebbe, was like the case of the Shofet, Shimshon – of whom it says in one place that he ruled the Jewish people for twenty years, while in another it states that his rule lasted for forty years. This teaches us that he was still feared by the Philistines – even twenty years after his passing.



The Rebbe continued: Being that it is Erev Shabbos, it is a most auspicious time to finish the Sefer Torah according to the instruction of a Nosi Hador – just as the first leader of the Jewish people, Moshe Rabbeinu, completed writing his Sefer Torah for the Jewish people on Erev Shabbos.

Then, in a unique turn of events, the Rebbe proceeded to invite all the Jewish people, wherever they may be, to come and join in the event, "whether they find themselves in the Diaspora or in Eretz Yisroel; and especially those under repressive rule, an exile within an exile..."

The Rebbe then suggested that the eldest member of the Sefer Torah committee appointed by the Friediker Rebbe say a chapter of Tehillim. Normally, the Rebbe said, one normally does not say Chapter 20 of Tehillim after midday on Erev Shabbos; but now, he explained, we stand in uncommon times when all signs point towards Moshiach's coming; thus we now do

things that previously might not have been done.

The Rebbe rose and pointed in the Siddur as R' Shmuel Levitin recited the chapter, verse by verse, with all those gathered repeating after him. The Rebbe then turned to R' Yoel Kahan and instructed him to begin the Alter Rebbe's Nigun; followed by the Nigunim of each of the Rebbeim, and "Hoshiya Es Amecha."

Finally, the moment had arrived, and the last few letters of the Sefer Torah were finished by the Sofer, R' Shmaryahu Factor. The Rebbe stood up again; fixing a powerful gaze on the Sefer Torah, he did not remove his eyes from its letters until the Sefer was completed.

Then the Rebbe asked R' Elya Simpson to give out the Pesukim of "Atoh Horeisa." Overwhelmed by the moment, R' Elya stuttered and confused himself in distributing the verses; the Rebbe corrected him repeatedly. The first and last Pesukim were given to the

Rebbe to recite; distinguished Chassidim representing communities around the world – including R' S. C. Kesselman; R' A. Z. Slonim; R' D. Baumgarten; R' Z. Serebransky; R' N. Nemenov; R' B. Goredtzky; R' D. Skolnik; and R' B. Shemtov – recited others. Rabbi Hadokov, the Rashag and the members of the Sefer Torah committee were also honored to recite Pesukim.

The crowd then sang the Nigun, "Prozois Teisheiv Yerushalayim."

After Hagboh and Gelilah, the Rebbe opened the box he had carried with him into shul. The entire gathering looked on in awe as the Rebbe removed a majestic Torah crown from the box and placed it on top of the Sefer Torah. As the Rebbe set the crown in its place, the Chassidim sang, "Ani Ma'amin"; then the Rebbe carried the Sefer Torah to the Aron Hakodesh under a Chupah, accompanied by burning candles. Reciting the "Shehechyanu" Brocho (which included the new Torah), the Rebbe ate a new fruit.

Then the Chassidim sang the "Nigun Hachonoh," and listened intently as the Rebbe delivered the Ma'amar, "Lehavin Inyan K'sivas Sefer Torah."

The Rebbe concluded with a short Sicha, stating: We have just finished something that had been missing; now, it is only up to each of us to finish the last few things that need to be done to break through the Golus and bring Moshiach.

He added, "It is Erev Shabbos, the day before the [Friediker] Rebbe's 'Yom Hahilulah.' Let it be clear that we do not intend to make a dinner or banquet, or anything of that sort; a 'Yom Hahilulah' is a day for Torah and Yiras Shamayim, for inspirational words that will have positive effect on all those who hear them."

The Rebbe sang the Nigun, "Tzomo L'cho Nafshi" (switching some of the words in the second stanza). Finally, after reciting a Brocho Acharonoh, the Rebbe left the shul as everyone sang, "Uforatzta!"

On Shabbos, the day of Yud Shevat, the Rebbe conducted a Farbrengen. On Motzoei Shabbos, the Rebbe Farbrenged again, washing for Melavah Malka.

[A short while before the evening Farbrengen began, with only a few Chassidim present in shul, the Rebbe entered with a Sefer Torah in hand – carrying it to the front of the shul, he placed it in the Aron Hakodesh. It is rumored that this Sefer Torah was bequeathed to the Rebbe as a gift by the Jewish community in Morocco.]

That evening would mark the first time that the Rebbe's words were transmitted by hook-up to countries all over the world. After the Farbrengen, the Rebbe Bentched and distributed "Kos Shel Brocho" to all of those present.