

# ב"ה Perspectives

FIFTEEN

## *The Rebbe's* **EDITOR**

*The Lifework of  
Rabbi Nissan Mindel*



**MERKAZ  
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מרכז אנ"ש

### **THE COLD FIREBRAND**

*The Life of R. Chaim Ber Wilensky*

### **LET THEM DECIDE**

*Rabbi Binyomin Cohen*

### **CHINUCH IN OUR TIME**

*Rabbi Nachman Yosef Twersky*



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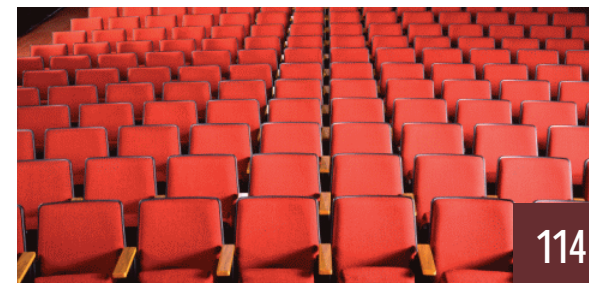
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**MERKAZ  
ANASH**  
מרכז אנ"ש

347.471.1770  
info@MerkazAnash.com  
www.MerkazAnash.com  
478 Albany Ave. Ste. 11  
Brooklyn NY 11203

**Rabbi Shimon Hellinger**  
General Editor

**Mrs. Basya Yahel**  
**Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altien**  
**Rabbi Shaya Bernstien**  
Editors

**Rabbi Schneur Zalman Rabin**  
Reviewer

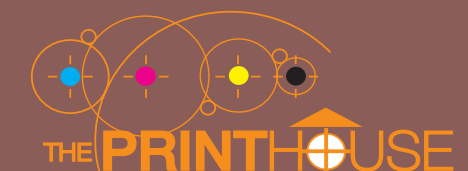
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Administration

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Vaad Hamosifin

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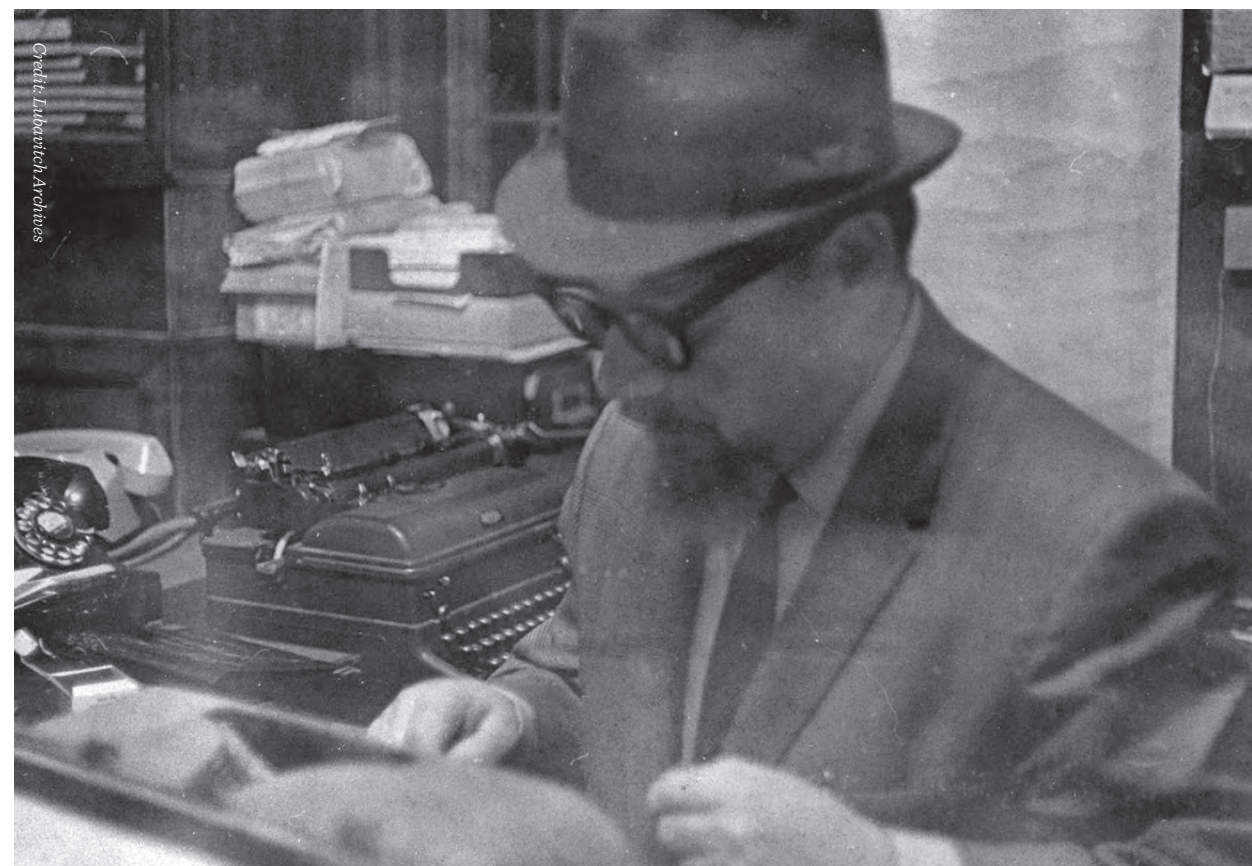
# MANAGING *the* REBBE'S CORRESPONDENCE

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*Rabbi Nissan Mindel*

*Date unknown*

—  
*Translated from Lashon Hakodesh*  
by PERSPECTIVES STAFF



*At work in his office, circa mid-1970s*

*I have been asked to share some details about one particular field of the Rebbe's activities, and that is the field of correspondence: the many letters which the Rebbe received and how he deals with them. This topic falls under my domain being that one of my occupations in the Rebbe's secretariat is to serve as the Lubavitcher Rebbe's personal secretary, though the Rebbe naturally has other secretaries as well.*

## WHO CORRESPONDS WITH THE REBBE?

It is worth noting as an introduction, that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is not only the Rebbe or leader of Chabad chassidim who are spread around the world, but he is also the leader of all Jewry. This was also the case with the previous Lubavitcher Rebbes, beginning with the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya and the *Shulchan Aruch*, who established the Chabad philosophy and movement and was the patriarch of the line of Chabad leaders of the last two hundred years. It is therefore understood that those who turn and write to him are not only his chassidim

and devotees, but also people from all types of backgrounds, famous and influential people, heads of communities, *rabbonim*, community activists, politicians, and so on and so forth.

I estimate that on **average**, the Rebbe receives about two hundred letters a week, perhaps more. The content of the letters can be divided in to several categories:

As the leader of Chabad, by whose word all Chabad matters are set, he receives regular reports on Chabad institutions in *Eretz Yisroel* and the diaspora and their activities, and also requests for advice and directives. This includes the various organizations run by Chabad, such as "*Agudas Chabad*," "*Tze'irei Agudas Chabad*," and "*Nshei U'Bnos Chabad*," including all their subdivisions, as well as charitable organizations, schools, and so on.

Many personal letters are for advice and blessing: not only from chassidim but from all Jews, men and women, and even young boys and girls.

As a Jewish leader, he receives letters from various religious and social groups/organizations, from leaders and activists, coming with inquiries on issues

# WHAT IS JUDAISM?

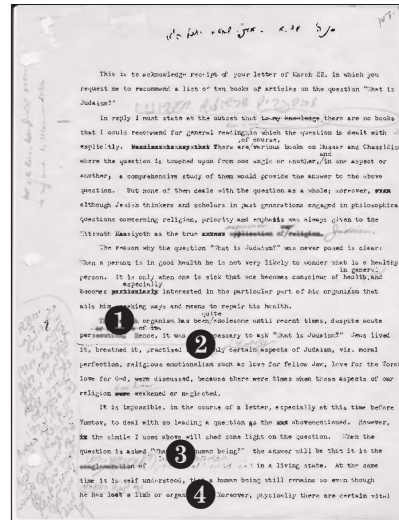
A response to the question "What is Judaism?" and why that question is only being asked today.

Note how the lines are double spaced to leave room for editing.

- 1 The Rebbe deletes the suggestion that the wholesomeness of Yiddishkeit resulted from persecution. While it may be true, it would not draw a person to want a wholesome Yiddishkeit.
- 2 Here the Rebbe adds:

Only individuals or small groups sometimes became ill in this respect, but after a short time their condition became clear (either they returned to good health, or G-d forbid they became totally cut off, like the Karaites or the Frankists, and the like), but there was never a possibility to remain within the community and to "call darkness 'light' and bitterness 'sweet.'

- 3 Instead of "conglomeration" which implies a random collection of items, the Rebbe suggests "compendium?" and adds in *Lashon Hakodesh* that he is looking for a word that conveys a שלימה - complete unity.
- 4 The Rebbe adds, "even many of them [limbs]."



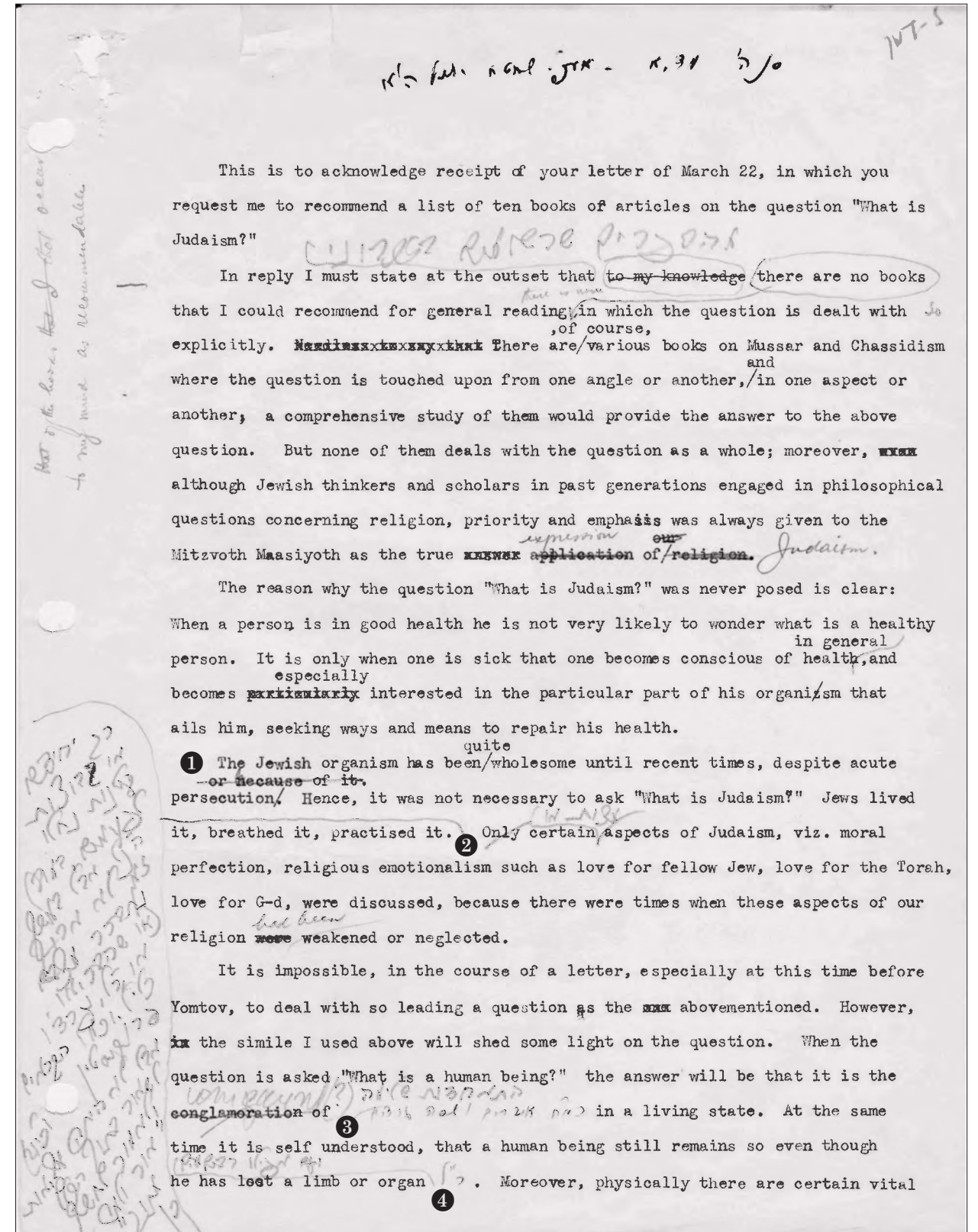
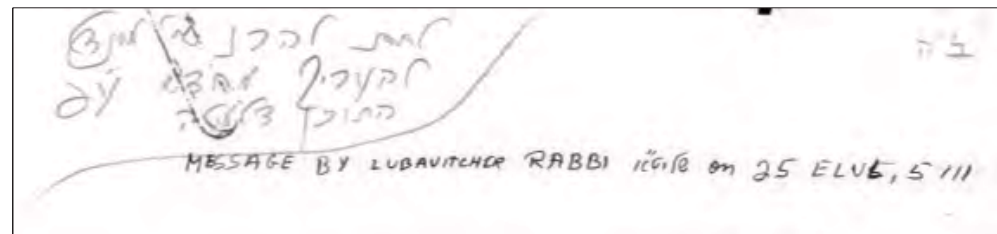
comments and edits to a letter see full size letter for more detail ▶

internal memos

## REWORKING SICHOS

The Rebbe entrusted Rabbi Mindel to rework sichos and incorporate the Rebbe's comments and additions, as in this Elul message:

"Give this to Rabbi Nissan Mindel to reedit completely based on the content below."





# *The Cold* **FIREBRAND**

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*The Life of*  
**R. Chaim Ber Wilensky**

A MIGHTY MASKIL | THE CHRONICLES OF CHASSIDIM | A QUESTIONNAIRE

---

*Amongst the intellectual giants of Chassidus Chabad, R. Chaim Ber Wilensky of Kremenchug, stands out as an independent thinker, pragmatic intellectual, and a silent leader.*

*Despite spending hours at a time contemplating Chassidus, he was keenly aware of the realities of life and the artificial steps they demand – though he sometimes willingly ignored them. Single-mindedly focused on the objectives of Chassidus, he had no interest in promoting himself or his ideas and emotions, and he kept silent, unless he deemed it necessary to speak up. He was nevertheless the leader in his town and active in all community and private matters.*

*Most accounts of chassidim are limited to select anecdotes by an outsider about the chossid's "shul life" – his davening, learning, farbrenging or his visit to Lubavitch – but little on his private life and day-to-day conduct. In this case we have a detailed account by R. Chaim Ber's son about his private world – his daily conduct, his lifestyle, and his unique personality.*

# A QUESTIONNAIRE

*The life of the chossid R. Yitzchok Chaim Dovber Wilensky*

*Completed by his son Reb Michoel Wilensky*

## His name?

His full name is, as mentioned, Reb Yitzchok Chaim Dovber with the addition of HaLevi, (one of the first two names was added when he was ill as a child or as a young man), he was called to the Torah by the name Yitzchok Chaim Dov, he was normally called Chaim Ber, and he signed by the name Yitzchok Chaim Duber.

## What was his father's name?

Meir.

## What was his mother's name?

Bracha.

## What did his parents do for a living?

I believe they had a small store, but they definitely sold paltry items.

## When was he born?

Between the years 5596-98 [1836-38], (the birthday written in his travel documents was inaccurate).

## Where was he born?

Kremenchug.

## Who were his teachers as a small child? In his youth? As a bochur?

I don't know who his teachers were, however my grandmother would proudly say (my grandfather passed away before I was born) that although they were not wealthy people, they still made sure my father had the best teachers of the town, and from very early on he excelled in his studies.

## When did he get married? And any other information about his wife's family.

My father was married three times and widowed twice. He first married at eighteen or nineteen years old. A few months after his wedding he traveled to Lubavitch only to return during the shiva of his wife who died in childbirth.

One of her sisters was married to Reb Noach Sheinis from Verchni-Dnipropetrovsk (their son learned in Lubavitch in the years 5654-5 [1894-5]), and the other was married to Mr. Dikansky (whose first name I cannot remember) from the city of Yaketrinislav. (The latter was a board member of his city, and was responsible for selling merchant certifications, etc. He had an office in the city building in which he always had a *Mishnayos* or another *sefer* to learn from in his spare time. Incidentally, this Mr. Dikansky had a son Reb Yisroel who was a learned man and a thinker, and

Let  
**THEM**  
decide

RABBI BINYOMIN COHEN

**A few months** after our arrival in Australia some forty two years ago, my wife and I were invited to participate in a Shabbaton taking place in Kew – a suburb of Melbourne. The entire Shabbos program was conducted in the Kew shul, which, despite being somewhat past its heyday, still managed to attract a substantial congregation. The concluding event of the Shabbaton was a special *Shalosh Seudos* which was held in the shul hall.

I sat at the head of the table next to the Rabbi of the shul, Rabbi Yaakov Schreiber z”l who was a direct descendant of Rabbi Moshe Schreiber z”l (1766 – 1839), better known as the Chasam Sofer, the world-renowned Rav of Pressburg and spiritual leader of Hungarian orthodoxy.

The chairman said a few words of introduction and called upon me to address the gathering. Before I had a chance to stand up, Rabbi Schreiber leaned over to me and whispered into my ear. “The Chasam Sofer pointed out,” he said in Yiddish, “that we have to be very happy when Jews keep the Shabbos which Hashem gave them. Once that is over, we should not make the Shabbos any longer for them than it needs to be. So please don’t speak for too long.”

Needless to say, I complied with the Rabbi’s request. My address did not last for more than ten minutes, the *Shalosh Seudos* concluded promptly, and the worthy congregants of Kew were able to go home without being delayed or inconvenienced by any Rabbinic over-enthusiasm.

Despite having dutifully toed the line, I was, in retrospect, more than a little surprised by the

Chasam Sofer’s words. He was, after all, famous for being a demanding and uncompromising religious leader who tolerated no interference when it came to setting standards of Torah observance. Surely it was rather out of character that a man who had dedicated his whole life to the raising of the spiritual bar should have voiced his concern that nobody be kept unduly long in shul at the end of Shabbos? Still, if the Chasam Sofer’s direct descendant had received such a teaching in the name of his illustrious ancestor, there seemed to be little reason to doubt its accuracy. Surely the Rabbi of Pressburg had his reasons, even if they seemed somewhat at odds with his general approach.

The whole matter was not of any urgency, or even of much practical importance. I promptly forgot about it for several decades until I recently happened to hear about something rather similar which took place in Eretz Yisroel quite a while ago.

**The year** was 5725 (1965) and the place was the town of Bnei Brak, a citadel of piety and devotion by any standards. The Chabad shul in Rechov Avraham was, like shuls the world over, in the habit of hosting a *Shalosh Seudos* after *mincha* every Shabbos afternoon. Challah was available for those who wanted it, but many of those present made do with other foods. The reason for this was based on that which is explained in Chassidus that at this particular time the most exalted spiritual level of the Shabbos day is reached. It is, in fact, a level akin to that of Yom Kippur, and therefore, quite understandably, a

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