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Rosh Hashana: Signed & Sealed...With Love

For more than sixty years, Rabbi Dr. Nissan Mindel, z'l, was a trusted secretary and a member of the inner-circle of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. A kind *talmid chacham* and master educator, he was an author of dozens of fundamental articles and books on Chabad philosophy, as well as the first translation of *Sefer haTanya* into English.

He also oversaw the publication of Chabad's children's magazines for decades, and was a respected emissary of the Rebbes, representing them at national public events.

As is well known, the Lubavitcher Rebbe corresponded with tens of thousands of people from all walks of life on nearly every topic, dispensing blessings, advice and guidance on every subject imaginable, and responding to questions and needs with endless positivity and insight. As many as 1,800 letters would arrive at the Rebbe's office in a given week, and he would personally open and read each one himself. However, in order to respond thoughtfully to these letters, it was necessary to rely on his secretaries to help write his responses. Rabbi Mindel was responsible for overseeing this immense operation of writing replies in numerous languages and addressing them to their eagerly waiting recipients.

In Rabbi Mindel's introduction to *The Letter and the Spirit*, a multi-volume sampling of letters that he translated, edited and curated, he shares a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the Rebbe's greatness and sensitivity in correspondence.

The Rebbe would personally sign each outgoing letter. In an effort to help manage the overwhelming flow of mail and save the Rebbe's precious time, Rabbi Mindel once suggested they adopt the universally accepted practice of 'signing' letters with a rubber stamp, and allow the production line to rapidly stamp the Rebbe's signature before the letter was placed in an envelope.

While appreciating the thoughtfulness of the suggestion, the Rebbe firmly declined. "How can I send prayerful wishes to a person in such an artificial manner? How would someone feel if they received their Rebbe's good wishes in a letter that was signed with a rubber stamp?"

Another time, someone recommended that the Rebbe use an electric letter-opener to automate the process and save much time and effort. Again, the Rebbe affirmed the good intentions of the recommendation, but then sighed deeply: "Can an electronic machine possibly sense the pain and

tears that went into the writing and signing of these heartfelt letters?”

Much of the imagery unfolded in the liturgy of the *Yamim Noraim* is of the Master of the World judging His creatures and writing our names and our deeds in *Sefer HaZichronos*, “The Book of Remembrances”. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashana*, 16) speaks of three books that are opened in the upper worlds on Rosh Hashana:

אָחַד שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים גְּמוּרֵי, וְאָחַד שֶׁל צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרֵי, וְאָחַד שֶׁל בֵּינוֹנִיִּים. צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרֵי – נִכְתָּבִין וְנִחְתָּמִין לְאֵלְתֵר לְחַיִּים...

“One book is of ‘complete *resha'im*’, one is of ‘complete *tzadikim*’, and one is of ‘average people’. In the book of complete *tzadikim*, they are immediately written and sealed for life...”

Thus, throughout the *Yamim Noraim*, we pray repeatedly and passionately that we, our loved ones, and all of Am Yisrael, will be inscribed in the *Sefer haChayim*, “The Book of Life”.

One of the deeply stirring and emotional selections in the Ashkenazic High Holiday tradition is the *piyut* of *U-Nesaneh Tokef*. This reveals a shocking truth about the *Sefer haZichronos*: “*V'choseim yad kol adam bo* — the signature of each person’s hand is in it.” The Supernal accounting of our deeds is actually sealed in our own handwriting! This brings up a couple questions. What is this ‘book’ which records all our intentions, choices and actions, and where can it be found? And with what writing implement are we ‘signing off’ on our verdict and destiny?

Reb Tzadok haKohen of Lublin tells us: דיודע שהספר של צדיקים ושל רשעים ושל בינונים הוא לב האדם עצמו וכששובר לבו ועשה

תשובה ונשבר לבו בקרבו הרי נקרע הספר של גור דין...כל תיקוני התשובה הכל בלב

“It is known that the ‘Book of the *Tzadikim*’ and that of the *resha'im*, and that of the *beinonim*, are actually the hearts of the persons themselves. And when a person breaks his heart in doing teshuvah, and his heart is broken within him, the ‘Book of Harsh Decrees’ is ripped up....For all the rectifications created by teshuvah occur in the heart.”

(*Takanas haShavin*, 8)

May the *Ribbono shel Olam* receive our heartfelt teshuvah and may we be written and signed into the Book of True *Tzadikim* for a sweet year of revealed good, life, peace and redemption!

לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם
לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום,

בספרם של צדיקים גמורים אמיתיים! ■

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```
checking response.status_code if we get 200, try making request  
if response.status_code != 200:  
print("Status: ", response.status_code, " - The connection failed")
```

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