

**A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT IN TRIBUTE TO
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE:
A HISTORIC FIGURE WHOSE PRESENCE
AND INFLUENCE INTENSIFY WITH TIME**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is a Historic Figure Whose Presence and Influence Intensify with Time

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory (1902-1994), the seventh leader in the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty, is considered to have been the most phenomenal Jewish personality of modern times. To hundreds of thousands of followers and millions of sympathizers and admirers around the world, he was — and still is, despite his passing — “the Rebbe,” undoubtedly, the one individual more than any other singularly responsible for stirring the conscience and spiritual awakening of world Jewry.

The Rebbe was born in 1902, on the 11th day of Nissan, in Nikolaev, Russia, to the renowned kabbalist, talmudic scholar and leader Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson. Rebbetzin Chana (1880-1964) was known for her erudition, kindness and extraordinary accessibility. Her courage and ingenuity became legend when during her husband’s exile by the Soviets to a remote village in Asian Russia she labored to make inks from herbs she gathered in the fields — so that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak could continue writing his commentary on kabbalah and other Torah-subjects. The Rebbe was named after his ancestor, the third Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, with whom he later shared many characteristics.

TO SAVE A LIFE

There is a story told about the Rebbe’s early life that seems to be almost symbolic of everything that was to follow. When he was nine years old, the young Menachem Mendel courageously dove into the Black Sea and saved the life of a little boy who had rowed out to sea and lost control of his small craft. That sense of “other lives in danger” seems to have dominated his consciousness; of Jews drowning in assimilation, ignorance or alienation—and no one hearing their cries for help: Jews on campus, in isolated communities, under repressive regimes. From early childhood he displayed a prodigious mental acuity. By the time he reached his Bar Mitzvah, the Rebbe was considered an *illuy*, a Torah prodigy. He spent his teen years immersed in the study of Torah.

MARRIAGE IN WARSAW

In 1928 Rabbi Menachem Mendel married the sixth Rebbe’s daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, in Warsaw. (The Rebbetzin, born in 1901, was chosen by her father, the sixth Rebbe, to accompany him in his forced exile to Kostroma in 1927. For sixty years she was the Rebbe’s life partner; she passed away on 22 Sh’vat in 1988.) He later studied in the University of Berlin and then at the Sorbonne in Paris. It may have been in these years that his formidable knowledge of mathematics and the sciences began to blossom.

ARRIVAL IN THE U.S.A.

On Monday, Sivan 28, 5701 (June 23, 1941) the Rebbe and the Rebbetzin arrived in the United States, having been miraculously rescued, by the grace of Almighty Gd, from the European holocaust. The Rebbe’s arrival marked the launching

of sweeping new efforts in bolstering and disseminating Torah and Judaism in general, and Chassidic teachings in particular, through the establishment of three central Lubavitch organizations under the Rebbe’s leadership: *Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch* (“Central Organization For Jewish Education”), *Kehot Publication Society*, and *Machne Israel*, a social services agency. Shortly after his arrival, per his father-in-law’s urging, the Rebbe began publishing his notations to various Chassidic and kabbalistic treatises, as well as a wide range of response on Torah subjects. With publication of these works his genius was soon recognized by scholars throughout the world.

LEADERSHIP

After the passing of his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, in 1950, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson reluctantly ascended to the leadership of the Lubavitch movement, whose headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, New York. Soon Lubavitch institutions and activities took on new dimensions. The outreaching philosophy of Chabad-Lubavitch was translated into ever greater action, as Lubavitch centers and Chabad Houses were opened in dozens of cities and university campuses around the world.

The Rebbe keenly understood that our every action is part of a bigger picture. Every good deed we do brings humanity closer to the ultimate goal, the era of cosmic perfection and universal awareness of Gd, known in Judaism as the time of Moshiach. The Rebbe spoke tirelessly about this time, demonstrating how the world is heading closer and closer to this special era and how every person can actualize it by increasing in acts of goodness and kindness.

On Monday afternoon (March 2, 1992), while praying at the gravesite of his father-in-law and predecessor, the Rebbe suffered a stroke that paralyzed his right side and, most devastatingly, robbed him of the ability to speak.

Two years and three months later, the Rebbe passed away in the early morning hours of the 3rd of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, in the year 5754 from creation (June, 12 1994), orphaning a generation.

UNIQUENESS

With the Rebbe’s teachings propelling them and his example serving as a beacon to emulate, Lubavitch has rapidly grown to be a worldwide presence, and all its various activities are stamped with his vision. Small wonder then, that many ask, “What is it about his leadership that was — and, in so many ways, still is — so unique? Why do leading personalities of the day maintain such profound respect and admiration for him?”

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Many leaders recognize the need of the moment and respond with courage and directions. This is *their* forte — and an admirable one. Others, though their strength may not lie in “instant response” to current problems, are blessed with the ability of perceptive foresight — knowing

what tomorrow will bring and how to best prepare. Still other leaders excel in yet a third distinct area, possessing a keen sense of history and tradition; their advice and leadership is molded by a great sensitivity to the past.

But one who possessed all three qualities was truly unique, standing alone in leadership. Such was the Lubavitcher Rebbe — the inspiration and driving force behind the success of Lubavitch today. Radiating a keen sense of urgency, he demanded much from his followers, and even more from himself. The Rebbe led, above else, by *example*.

INITIATION, NOT REACTION

He was a rare blend of prophetic visionary and pragmatic leader, synthesizing deep insight into the present needs of the Jewish people with a breadth of vision for its future. In a sense, he charted the course of Jewish history — initiating, in addition to reacting to, current events. The Rebbe was guided by inspired insight and foresight in combination with encyclopedic scholarship, and all his pronouncements and undertakings were, first and foremost, rooted in our Holy Torah. Time and again, what was clear to him at the outset became obvious to other leaders with hindsight, decades later.

EVERYONE’S UNIQUE ROLE

From the moment the Rebbe arrived in America in 1941, his brilliance at addressing himself to the following ideal became apparent: He would not acknowledge division or separation. Every Jew — indeed every human being — has a unique role to play in the greater scheme of things and is an integral part of the tapestry of Gd’s creation.

For nearly five of the most critical decades in recent history, the Rebbe’s goal to reach out to every corner of the world with love and concern has unfolded dramatically. No sector of the community has been excluded — young and old; men and women; leader and layman; scholar and laborer; student and teacher; children, and even infants.

He had an uncanny ability to meet everyone at their own level — he advised Heads of State on matters of national and international importance, explored with professionals the complexities in their own fields of expertise, and spoke to small children with warm words and a fatherly smile.

“ACTUALIZE YOUR POTENTIAL!”

With extraordinary insight, he perceived the wealth of potential in each person. His inspiration, now accessible through his writings and videos, boosts the individual’s self-perception, ignites his awareness of that hidden wealth and motivates a desire to fulfill his potential. In the same way, many a community has been transformed by the Rebbe’s message, and been given — directly or indirectly — a new sense of purpose and confidence. In each case the same strong, if subtle, message is imparted: “You are Divinely gifted with enormous strength and energy — actualize it!” ●

The Lubavitcher Rebbe was the Most Influential Jewish Figure in Modern History

From his modest room in 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of saintly memory, advised and counselled some of the world's greatest leaders, eminent rabbis, Roshei Yeshiva, Poskim and laymen. He sought nothing less than to transform our reality into a better one. While he was devoted to the Jewish people his message was universal; his vision encompassed the entire world. The Rebbe's influence stretched far and wide and was considered the most influential Jewish figure in modern history. He always felt the pulse of the Jewish People. He was not affiliated with any political party, no financial empire to call his own, and yet heads of state ambassadors and other world leaders would come to visit him.

During the lifetime of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneerson when he visited Eretz Yisroel in 1929 he met someone who told him "I knew your father, Rabbi Sholom Ber Schneerson." The Previous Rebbe exclaimed "You knew my father?! You SAW my father, you didn't know him, no one really knew my father."

The same could be said of the current Rebbe, whose 28th yahrzeit will be marked this Shabbat

the 3rd day of Tamuz. No one knew really the Rebbe, we all saw him but each person perceived him differently. This supplement is a tribute to the legacy of the Rebbe to what we saw and heard from him.

The Rebbe's life was a spiritual life consisting of faith, awe and love of Torah and Hashem. He was compared to Moses who is described by the Zohar to be a "Faithful Shepherd of his people" because of his total dedication and genuine concern for the welfare for each and every Jewish person.

As the great luminary and Posek Hador Hagaon Rav Moshe Feinstein of righteous memory wrote in a letter dated Rosh Chodesh Shvat 1978 (see full letter inside this supplement): "All of his (the Rebbe's) endeavors to bring our fellow Jews to observe the *mitzvos* of *HaShem* and to fortify their faith in Him are outstanding." Later in a special publication of Chidushei Torah which was published in honor of the Rebbe's 80th birthday Rabbi Feinstein sent in his participation with a Torah article (see also inside supplement) with an introduction that read: "In regard to my dear friend, the honorable and holy genius and tzadik, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch, his genius in Torah is recognized by Torah scholars worldwide, as is his great and

brilliant devotion to Torah study, for he constantly labors at Torah and is indeed a master of Torah... During the many years that I have known the Rebbe shlit"a – our relationship has been one of great friendship – I have had opportunities to discuss with him complex topics, both in the revealed and esoteric dimension of Torah, and I have always been impressed by his greatness and brilliance... His entire being is devoted to spreading Torah study throughout the world, to all members of the Jewish people, both great and the small, and to this he has applied his genius and life.

The purpose of this supplement is not to glorify the Rebbe but to keep his vision alive in memory and in deed, to serve as a source of inspiration to all those who had the privilege of seeing the Rebbe or heard about him. One can unite with the Rebbe through following the practice that he greatly encouraged of learning Torah every single day and observing of Mitzvos.

I would like to give special thanks to Rabbi Heshy Korenblit for contributing to the content and production of this supplement. ●

Avrohom S. Lewin
Supplement Editor

The Rebbe Gives Out Dollars For The Jewish Press

BY ASHEL COHEN

In the course of the years people who were affiliated with *The Jewish Press* would get a special dollar from the Rebbe during the Sundays that he would distribute dollars for *tzedakah*. Rabbi Sholom Klass, of blessed memory, the publisher of *The Jewish Press*, once said that "although I never met the Rebbe, the Rebbe did more for the Jewish People than anyone else in the world."

The Torah editor of *The Jewish Press*, Rabbi Yaakov Klass, relates that he would often serve as a *sandek* for Russian Jews who immigrated to the U.S. They were not circumcised due to the religious persecution in Russia. The FREE organization, a special organization to help Russian Jews, sponsored their *bris milah* ceremony.

One Sunday Rabbi Zalman Shagalow, of blessed memory, who was on the staff of FREE took him to the Rebbe to receive a dollar for *tzedakah* and when Rabbi Shagalow told the Rebbe that he writes for *The Jewish Press*, the Rebbe gave him two dollars, "one dollar for you and one dollar for *The Jewish Press*."

A number of years later, Rabbi Klass went back on line to receive a dollar and "I

mentioned to the Rebbe that my mother is very sick and I would like to ask a *bracha* from the Rebbe she should have a *refuah shleima*," says Rabbi Klass, "and a *refuah shleima* for my son who was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, and a *bracha* for my daughter she should find a *shidduch*."

"The Rebbe gave me a big smile and said, "here is a dollar for your mother *zol gezunt zein* (she should be well). Here is another dollar for your son *zol gezunt zein*, another dollar for your daughter she should find a *shidduch*, another dollar for *The Jewish Press*, and another dollar for you."

Superstar singer Avremal Fried who happened to be on the line together with Rabbi Klass remarked afterwards, "I never saw the Rebbe giving someone 5 dollars..."

A similar episode happened with Mr. Julius Liebb, of blessed memory, who was a writer in *The Jewish Press*. There was a certain professor in Brooklyn College who would write in the Jewish Week vicious articles against the Rebbe especially when the Rebbe would criticize the Israeli government for even speaking about territorial concessions. The Rebbe based his

warning against giving up an inch of land not because of *kedushat haaretz* (the sanctity of the land) but on the definitive halachic ruling in *Orach Chaim Hilchos Shabbos* 329, which pertains to any border city in the world (not only in Eretz Yisroel) where there is a Jewish community and foreigners want to enter the city even for the purpose of acquiring trivial objects like straw and stubble, it is an obligation and a mitzvah to take up arms, even on Shabbos, in order to push them back otherwise they will overrun the city. It is a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, saving lives.

All of Israel today is considered a border town, the Rebbe said, and giving up land to the Arabs would not lead to peace but to bloodshed.

Julius Liebb would write articles defending the Rebbe against this professor. One time Rabbi Shmuel Butman introduced him to the Rebbe on a Sunday when he would give out dollars for *tzedakah* saying that "he writes for *The Jewish Press*. The Rebbe told Mr. Liebb "I like your writing." He gave him a dollar for himself and an extra dollar for *The Jewish Press*. ●

A Visit With the New Lubavitcher Rebbe

BY GERSHON KRANZLER

[Adapted from an account that first appeared in 1951 in *Orthodox Jewish Life* (Sept./Oct.), under the heading: "Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, having just accepted the position as leader of the Lubavitch movement, talked of his concerns and his approach to strengthening Judaism in the United States."]

It was shortly after the leaders of the world Chabad movement had elected Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson to succeed his late father-in-law, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneerson, as the head of the famous Chassidic school associated with the name of Lubavitch, on the 10th of Shevat of this year [1951].

I was standing in the hallway of the Rebbe's residence in Brooklyn. The *Maariv* service had just concluded and the Yeshiva Bachurim were streaming out of the *Beth Hamidrash* into the cold winter evening. Released from the strenuous routine of many hours of concentrated study, the young scholars, most of them with beard and *peyos*, were chatting freely and loudly, while they put on their coats to leave the building. Suddenly the loud talk ceased and a look of awed respect appeared on the lively faces as the new Rebbe walked through the hall towards the door. Deferentially, they pressed forward on both sides of the narrow doorway. One young man, flustered, moved from one side of the way to the other, to make more room and stumbled into the path of the Rebbe. Before he had a chance to recover his balance, the Rebbe had taken him by the shoulder and had gently helped him to the side, a smile lighting up his serious face.

Instantly, the embarrassment of the young scholar was gone. The Rebbe's smile reflected in his happy eyes, and the entire atmosphere was suddenly changed. The awe was gone and a warm current of friendly understanding seemed to flow through the young scholars pressed closely into the hallway, brightening the frosty dark of the evening.

This experience of a few fleeting moments, the mute exchange of a smile and glance, answered many a question that had risen in my mind since the passing of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe a year before, and the election of his successor. I had the privilege of knowing Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson before he assumed his new office and I had come to appreciate the young scholar with the serious face and unassuming, almost shy manners. He then directed the educational aspects of the Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch. But now everything was different. This was no longer the "RaMaSh," the son-in-law of the Rebbe, respected as a scholar, a friendly advisor, and interpreter of the thoughts of Chabad Chassidism. His new burden of office, with its responsibility for the thousands of followers of Chabad the world over, and its exacting demands for attention to the hundreds

of visitors seeking aid, advice and inspiration from the Lubavitcher Rebbe day in, day out, would seem to have removed Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson from any close personal relation. But the little incident in the hallway taught me better, and I began to appreciate the importance which a Chassidic leader of this type can assume for the future of the Jewish people, even in these days of twentieth century culture.

When the opportunity arose to visit the Rebbe and to transmit his views and perspective on the task ahead, I remembered something Rabbi Schneerson had once said when he addressed a gathering of young workers for the furtherance of Jewish education: "It is not we that count, we with our weaknesses and capabilities. It is our will to do a job that we realize is important. Success is not in our hands, it is in Gd's. But we have to will to do what He demands of us, and in that will all our weaknesses and insufficiencies wane and become insignificant."

I could not have searched for a better motto to characterize the message of courage and encouragement which I took with me when I had the privilege to spend some time with the new Lubavitcher Rebbe, and to question him on his views concerning the contemporary Jewish scene.

The familiar pale face, with its deeply searching eyes and frame of black beard, seemed to have taken on added seriousness. The sense of warm understanding and deep responsibility for every word spoken which had always characterized Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson was now still more marked. Still in his forties, he seemed to personify the centuries of Jewish scholarship and Chassidic self-search as he voiced his reflections upon the problems of the day.

IS DISPERSION A CATASTROPHE?

"It is a mistake," said Rabbi Schneerson, "if we conceive of the worldwide dispersion of the Jewish people in *golus* [exile] as a catastrophe. As a matter of fact, this very lack of concentration of the remnants of our nation was the source of our salvation throughout the centuries of persecution and pogroms. Hitler was the greatest threat to our national survival because the largest concentration of the masses of Eastern and Central European Jewry had come into his evil grasp. On the other hand, however, concentration of large groups of our people in one country has been the means of creating the spiritual centers from which the rest of the Jewish colonies could draw their inspiration, leadership and material replenishment.

"Our history in *golus* is an unbroken chain of the emergence and disappearance of such centers in country after country, and from one corner of the earth to the next. As the Jewish sun set in one land, it had already begun to rise in another. Now that the great centers of Eastern Europe have

been destroyed by Fascism and Communism, America has become the focus and fountain-head of Jewish survival. Providence has prepared a new home for Torah and Yiddishkeit in this country, while the flames devoured the bastions of the strongest and most impregnable Jewish fortresses on the other side of the ocean."

With earnest emphasis, the new Chabad leader continued: "American Jewry must recognize this sacred, historical mission which Divine Providence has entrusted to it at this critical moment of our struggle for survival. The largest concentration of our best elements are in America. We must lead the smaller Jewish communities in other countries and continents, even in *Eretz Yisrael*, which must lean heavily on American support for its economic and spiritual survival. The very shape which Jewry and Judaism of tomorrow will present, depends on the active leadership of each and every Jew in this country.

"Realization of this historical mission," Rabbi Schneerson said, "demands a complete about-face and reevaluation of our spiritual position. America's great genius has been in the development of the individual, of the pioneering and self-made man type. Although this helped in developing our potentialities by demanding every last ounce of ingenuity and perseverance, it has on the other hand focused too much attention on egoistic aims and interests. Personal goals have dominated. Only in our spare and leisure time, after we have carved our groove in terms of economic or social success, have we dedicated some time and effort to philanthropic and communal affairs. We have been social workers on an amateur, after-working-hours basis. This pattern of life has been no less characteristic of American Jews than of other Americans.

"But it is at this point that there must be a change of basic outlook and concomitant redirection and reorganization of our existence as a community and as individuals. Primarily we must live the life of social beings, with the responsibility and dedication of our best efforts for the *clal*, the community. Only then can we afford to invest in our own individual aims and goals."

This, Rabbi Schneerson stressed, was his main message to American Jews: "The only way American Jewry can live up to its historic task is by self-sacrificing, self-effacing *mesirat nefesh* for the Jewish *clal*."

"The thing we have to fear most at this moment is the defeatism and the defection that has gripped some of our best elements in this country in the face of the growing effects of so-called 'interfaith' movements, of the watering down of the very content of our religion to a point where our children will no longer know whether they are Jewish or not. Charity begins at home. We cannot talk of assuming responsibility for the rest of the Jewish world, of building new centers

A Visit With the New Lubavitcher Rebbe Continues...

for Torah and Yiddishkeit elsewhere, even in *Eretz Yisrael*, when right here in our midst our brothers and sisters are being engulfed. More than that, we have no right to teach and lead others if at home we neglect the very thing we want to make others do.

“But,” warned the Rebbe with a smile, “I don’t want you to convey the impression that I am merely giving *mussar* - moral exhortations. It has never been the way of Lubavitch to give *mussar* only. *Mussar* serves us only as a means towards actions. Whatever we say or preach must be geared to some active goal. We ourselves can point to amazing results that draw in ever-widening circles of non-religious as well as religious elements of our people.”

In response to the look of surprise in my eyes, the Rebbe continued: “Yes, I mean non-religious circles. You see, it has always been the belief of Chabad that there is not a single Jew, as far as he may seem or thought himself to have drifted from the center of Yiddishkeit, who does not have some good point, some particular mitzvah which by nature or by inclination he may promote. This spark of good in each soul can and must be utilized for the good of the Jewish community and in turn, for the good of the person who does it. For this reason, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe called not only on Orthodox Jews for

cooperation in this work after he settled in this country ten years ago, but he drew on all types of Jews who had the power and will to contribute some aspect, some particular skill or capacity towards the offensive for Jewish education and the Torah life.”

Rabbi Schneerson paused. For some minutes he remained sunk in reflection, then said: “Let’s realize this. The Jewish people has been so heavily decimated in the past decade or two that each of us must be made to count, and to count doubly. And it is for this reason that this call to take the offensive for Torah Judaism is not only directed at the observant. The accomplishment counts for what it achieves objectively and what it does to the one involved. In this respect, too, a mitzvah is its own reward.

“Many of those who may think they are lost as ‘*Epikorsim*’ are really not, and need only some stimulation, some bridge to find the way back. There was for example, the man who visited the late Lubavitcher Rebbe to ask for his counsel concerning some business matter. After he had answered the question, the Rebbe suggested that he put on Tefillin. The visitor protested, ‘What is the sense of talking to me about Tefillin if I do not believe in anything at all. I am an *Apikores*.’

“Not so easily does one become an *Apikores*,” replied the Rebbe. ‘One has to know a great deal

of the questions and problems and know the answers, and then refuse to accept them, to deserve this title. You first put on Tefillin, and you will discover that you needed only such a bridge to find yourself.”

As I took leave, overwhelmed by the spiritual experience of the short hour I had been privileged to spend with the new Lubavitcher Rebbe, he stressed again an earlier warning. “The only purpose of our talk can be to speak about the work which the late Lubavitcher Rebbe has started in this country, and into which he has been able to draw so many varied groups of Jewish people. This work must and will go on, with the help of Gd. We must all contribute to this historic mission. This is what I want you to convey to your readers. And if it helps to make them realize what our task is, and put their shoulder to the wheel, then our time was well spent indeed.”

This is the new Lubavitcher Rebbe. The high office, the admiration of the people, the burden of directing innumerable activities of world-wide organizations, had not marred his modesty. Publicity is generally sought by leaders of such stature, but the new Rebbe is not that kind of leader. As he once told a gathering of his co-workers: “We, ourselves, don’t count. It is our task, our sacred mission, that matters. And if we but want to carry it on, our goal will not remain unachieved.” ●



**WORLD
LEADER**

Yitzchak Rabin met with the Rebbe in 1972 and later recalled:

“I felt that I am meeting a unique personality, a person that on the one hand lives in the world of the Torah but has got practical sense to the realities of life everywhere in the world and great sensitivity for the preservation of the Jewish people.”

*Caption of picture:
Yitzchak Rabin*



Velvel Schildkraut, JEM



Sam Shlagbaum, JEM

What Gedolim Said About The Rebbe

BY RABBI YOSEF KRUPNICK,

KASHRUT ADMINISTRATOR AT THE DETROIT COUNCIL OF ORTHODOX RABBIS, AS TOLD TO MY ENCOUNTER, JEM

Rabbi Boruch Ber Leibowitz tells the Rebbe: “If you come and learn in my *yeshivah*, I guarantee that you will be the leader of the Lithuanian *yeshivah* world.”

In 1966, I was learning on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, famous throughout the world as “RJJ.” At the time I had a study partner by the name of Alexander Stern, who had a connection with Chabad, and he was constantly inviting me to see what a *farbrengen* with the Rebbe was like. Finally, I accepted his invitation for Yud Shevat.

The tenth of the Hebrew month of Shevat is a most significant date on the Chabad calendar. It’s the anniversary of the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, also known as the Rebbe Rayatz, and the day when, a year later, his son-in-law Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson formally accepted the leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch.

I went to the *farbrengen*, and I enjoyed it very much. The result was that I got home very, very late, and the next morning I was late for *yeshivah*. Our teacher, Reb Shaya Shimonowitz, who was one of the real giants left over from the old Mir Yeshivah in Europe, realized immediately why the two of us were late that morning. When we walked into class, he reprimanded us: “Don’t you realize the importance of Torah? You lost time from Torah study . . . you missed a class!”

I went to the *farbrengen*, and I enjoyed it very much. The result was that I got home very, very late, and the next morning I was late for *yeshivah*.

He reprimanded us very, very harshly, and to be quite honest, I was deeply hurt. Up to that point I thought I had a very good relationship with him. This was the first time that he had come down on my case in this way.

When he finished the class and it was time to go to the study hall, he asked Alex and me to stay behind. And I was sure that we were about to get the second round of rebuke, but that’s not what happened.

When everybody else had left, and it was just the two of us with Reb Shaya, he told us an amazing story. It seems that he understood how much his rebuke had hurt us, and he decided to make it up to us—telling us, by implication, that the time we spent at Chabad with the Lubavitcher Rebbe was not really wasted.

It seems that in 1937, when the Rebbe was not yet the Rebbe and was studying in Berlin and Paris, he was sent on various missions by the Previous Rebbe. On this particular occasion he had to travel to Vilna, Lithuania—an important seat of *yeshivah* learning at that time—in order to invite Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzenski to cosign a letter that the Previous Rebbe had written.

Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz (1864–1939)

When the Rebbe arrived, it just so happened that Reb Chaim Ozer was meeting in his office with a visitor, another Torah luminary of the time, Reb Baruch Ber Leibowitz, the *rosh yeshivah* of Kaminetz and the leading disciple of Reb Chaim Brisker. The Rebbe was told that he was going to have to wait until they finished their meeting before he could go in.

As he waited, there were a few people in the study hall at the time who realized that he was a chassid, and so they decided to harass him. They started asking him pointed questions on Talmudic topics—did he know this topic, and what did he have to say about it, and so forth.

But the Rebbe didn’t answer. Our teacher, Reb Shaya, was present as this was going on, because he was Reb Baruch Ber’s escort, and he said that some of the people were really pestering him mercilessly. And still the Rebbe said nothing, remaining quiet.

And then Reb Chaim Ozer opened the door. He stood listening to this, and then he beckoned the Rebbe to come in. The Rebbe went in-

side, where he began to answer the questions that had been posed to him outside. Reb Shaya said he answered with great clarity and with great depth, quoting both early and later Torah commentators.

So, Reb Chaim Ozer asked the Rebbe, “Why didn’t you answer these questions outside, when they were harassing you?”

“I didn’t come to hold debates with anybody . . .”

The Rebbe replied, “I didn’t come to hold debates with anybody. However, I noticed that you observed their questions, and I became afraid that my failure to answer might have a negative impact on the mission given to me by my father-in-law.” He feared that perhaps Reb Chaim Ozer might not agree to cosign the letter of the Previous Rebbe, so he decided to clear up the situation.

After this exchange, Reb Chaim Ozer took the letter and started reading through it. In the meantime his illustrious visitor, Reb Baruch Ber, continued to talk with the Rebbe.

After a few minutes Reb Baruch Ber said to the Rebbe, “If you come and learn in my *yeshivah*, I guarantee that you will be the leader of the Lithuanian *yeshivah* world.”

The Rebbe politely declined. He said he had his path, knew what he had to do and whom he had to answer to—meaning the Previous Rebbe. When he said this, Reb Baruch Ber started to cry.

Reb Shaya, who was present through this whole encounter, said he had never told this story to anybody before. And it was a difficult admission for him, I think, that the Rebbe, a chassid, potentially could have become the leader of a different segment of the Jewish world if he had so chosen. ●



The Rebbe during the Mincha prayers

The Rebbe and the Rambam

BY RABBI SHMUEL BUTMAN

Last year, the Siyum HoRambam Haolomi took place on Gimmel Tammuz. This year, it was on Lag B'Omer. We are now between Lag B'Omer and Gimmel Tammuz, so perhaps this leads us to think about the connection between the Rebbe and the Rambam.

There are many. For starters, the Rambam rules in his Mishneh Torah (*Hilchos Melochim* 8:10) that a Jew has an obligation not only to himself, but to all *bo'ei olam*, to all members of mankind.

From the time of the Rambam until the Rebbe, this ruling was not practiced for reasons known to the Jewish leaders in each generation. Perhaps the time or situation in the world did not allow for it. But the Rebbe, in our generation adopted the Rambam's ruling that a Jew has an obligation to all the members of society and the Rebbe went out with a universal campaign for all human beings to do more goodness and kindness, for all of society to follow the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach, known as the Seven Noahide Laws.

The second area where we see a similarity is their knowledge of all the *chochmos* (wisdoms and sciences) of the world. Both the Rambam and the Rebbe possessed all these wisdoms. The Rebbe wanted to be versed in all the *chochmos* of the world so that he can help people in every way, both people who understand Torah and mitzvos, and also people who (for the time being) only understand other *chochmos*.

Another area in which we see the similarity between them: The Rambam is generally known as a codifier, a Posek, a halachic authority. There's another side of the Rambam that is not as well known, but nevertheless existed very strongly. Namely, the Rambam as a leader of the Jewish people, who felt the pain of the Jewish people, carried their burden, and who was there for them in their time of need.

We're talking about all members of the Jewish people, regardless of their status. Even if their status was not the greatest in observance or intellectual capacity, the Rambam was there to help them.

Among the *seforim* of the Rambam, there's a *sefer* that is called Igros HoRambam, the letters of the Rambam. Translations of the original Arabic letters were published from manuscripts for the first time by Avrohom Geiger in 1850.

Among the letters is a treatise called *Igeres Hashmad* or *Maamar Kiddush Hashem*. The story was that the Jewish community was suffering from countries where the Muslim community had the upper hand and decreed that every Jew has to make a statement. He has to proclaim that "Allah is god and Mohammed is his prophet" and those who disobey will be sentenced to death.

There were many Jews who withstood the test and paid with their lives *al kiddush Hashem*. And there were some Jews who made that proclamation. Among them were those who in private

continued to practice their life as Jews, and they were called *anusim*, or Marranos, as we are familiar with from our history. Outwardly, they conducted themselves as the rest of society while privately they were observant.

There was a certain Rabbi who considered himself a halachic authority, and he wrote that all of those Jews who made that proclamation are considered *goyim*. He wrote that this applies even if they continue observing Torah and *mitzvos* afterwards, nevertheless, since they made this proclamation they are *goyim*.

*B'chayeichon
uv'yomeichon
uv'chayei
d'Rabbeinu Moshe
ben Maimon
HaSefardi...
Rambam was
a leader of the
Jewish community
and stood up for
Jews when they
were in need...*

When the people of the Jewish community heard this, they said to themselves, "If this is what we are considered in the Jewish community, so why do we have to go on Kiddush Hashem and continue living our lives privately as Jews, which was very difficult." And of course, that was havoc in the Jewish community.

When the Rambam heard about it he wrote a long treatise against this individual that this individual just did not know the Jewish law. The Halacha is that if someone is forced to worship idols, then he has to give up his life. It's one of the three things that one is obligated to give up his life for. Nevertheless, writes the Rambam, that only applies to **an act** of worship. To make a verbal statement, one is not obligated to give up one's life.

This letter helped the Jewish community tremendously, and in certain places, the Jews would mention the Rambam in Kaddish, saying, "*B'chayeichon uv'yomeichon uv'chayei d'Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon HaSefardi*."

This means that the Rambam was not only a codifier, and not only a great Halachic authori-

ty, the Rambam was a leader of the Jewish community and stood up for Jews when they were in need.

In our generation, the Rebbe's reach was not only to Lubavitcher Chassidim, rather to all Jews. And it wasn't only to Jews but to all people of the world. The Rebbe did that by starting a world wide campaign for "All the citizens of the world" to practice the "Seven Noahide Laws."

Just a short story out of the many stories that illustrate this point: I was involved in bringing United States Senator of the State of New York Daniel Moynihan, to the Rebbe. During their conversation, the Rebbe said to him that he wants to ask him for a favor. The Rebbe went on to say that there is a Chinese community in the City of New York who do not know the English language well but nevertheless have many needs, so the Rebbe is asking the Senator that he should look into the needs of the Chinese community since they cannot communicate their needs well in English.

When the senator left, he told me, "When the Rabbi asked me for a favor, I was thinking 'Of course I would do any favor that the Rabbi is asking me!' I was thinking he wants a favor for the Lubavitch community, which of course I would do. But I'm so surprised. He didn't ask for the Lubavitch community. He didn't ask for the Jewish community. He asked for the Chinese community."

Here was the Rebbe meeting a United States Senator with a lot of influence and the Rebbe used that opportunity to help the Chinese community. This demonstrates how the Rebbe's care, was not only to Chassidim and not only to Jews, but for the entire world.

In a most practical connection – the Rebbe instituted the daily learning of Rambam. The Rebbe instituted it in a way to reach everyone. Three Perokim (chapters) per day; One Perek per day, or *Sefer HaMitzvos*. So that all Jews are included.

Another glaring similarity is that the Rambam concludes his principal *Sefer*, the only one he wrote in *Lashon HaKadosh* the *Sefer HaYad* with the *Halachos* of Moshiach. The Rebbe dedicated his life in preparing the world for the coming of Moshiach.

In so many instances, as we know, the Rebbe told us that we live in a special generation, the last generation of Golus and the first generation of Geula. The central theme of the Rebbe is that each and every single one of us, including everyone, excluding no one, should be ready for that great day, coming our way, the day of the *Geula HaAmitis v'haShleima*, the coming of Moshiach. *Teikef Umiyad Mamash*. ●

Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman is the Director of the Lubavitch Youth Organization and the chairman of the Siyum HoRambam Haolomi -- the International Rambam Celebration.

The Rebbe Tells David Ben Gurion Israel Must Remain Jewish

By the Grace of G-d
9 Adar I 5719
[February 17, 1959]
Brooklyn, N.Y.

His Excellency
Mr. David Ben-Gurion,
Prime Minister of Israel

GREETINGS

Yesterday I sent you my official reply to the question of Registration, and I have to apologize for the delay in my reply till now for a number of reasons. What is written further is not official, and not even semi-official.

It was once fashionable in certain circles to suggest that the Jewish religion and religious observances were necessary for those living in the Diaspora—as a shield against assimilation. But for those who can find another “antidote”—in the place of religion, particularly for those living in Eretz Yisrael, within their own society, where the atmosphere, language, etc., (apparently) serve as ample assurances of national preservation, the Jewish religion was superfluous—what need had they to burden themselves with all its minutiae in their daily life? But the trend of developments in Eretz Yisrael in the last seven or eight years has increasingly emphasized the opposite view: That however vital the need for religion amongst Diaspora Jewry, it is needed even more for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. One of the basic reasons for this is that it is precisely in Eretz Yisrael that there exists the danger that a new generation will grow up, a new type bearing the name of Israel but completely divorced from the past of our people and its eternal and essential values, and moreover, hostile to it in its world outlook, its culture, and the content of its daily life; hostile—in spite of the fact that it will speak Hebrew, dwell in the land of the Patriarchs, and wax enthusiastic over the Bible.

I do not wish to dwell on this painful subject at all for obvious reasons (especially since I see no need for further elaboration). One of the reasons is that I fervently hope that this calamity will not come to pass. Eventually, members of that generation itself will vehemently rise up against that danger, and will take measures to ward off the evil. Indeed, it is just recently that an intense ferment has been felt in Eretz Yisrael and abroad demanding a spiritual content to life; if a deeper probe is made, it becomes evident that the yearning is for something transcending the reason of man.

The thirst of the youth of our eternal people will certainly not be quenched by rationalizations and theories that are the product of contemporary mortals, which will share the fate of those ideologies which made their debut only yesterday and which are no more today. Here is the place for the Law of Moses and Israel, the Oral and Written Law, our independent values dating from the day the Jewish people stood before G-d, our G-d, at Horeb, and the great voice was heard which did not stop: “I am G-d your G-d . . . You shall have no other gods . . .”

Needless to say, I do not speak here of a theoretical religiosity which serves only as a purely philosophical world outlook, or as the subject of lectures at weekends and holidays. I speak of a pervading and practical way of life, which includes the weekdays too, and all such matters which are usually termed “secular.” Our faith is, after all, essentially one of practical deeds.

Now is the ideal opportunity to transform the whole canvas of life in Eretz Yisrael and direct it into the abovementioned channels. This opportunity is knocking at your door, for you have been granted the ability and privilege to use it to the best advantage, a privilege and opportunity which are not given to every man, and the likes of which have not presented themselves for many decades.

It is more than likely that the aforementioned lines will astonish you. Do I really imagine that by means of this letter I can change or influence an outlook many decades old, and in particular, the outlook of a man who has seen the fruit of his labors? But, since in my opinion the situation in Eretz Yisrael is as described above—the situation in itself, the essential truth of the idea, the unique and most wonderful opportunity granted you—it is they which speak, appeal and demand. I am sure that even without my letter you have often reflected on this. But I could not allow myself to pass over this in silence—at a time when I am engaged in writing on the subject of Registration, which is part and parcel of the general background outlined above. I felt it my duty to refer to this, at least in a private letter to you.

At this opportunity, and begging apology for the delay, I thank you for sending me your booklet. Let me base my next few words on what you wrote in the booklet when referring to Eretz Yisrael: I mean the expression “the Holy Land.” Now, the epithet “holy,” like that of “Jew,” has had its content defined and consecrated by generations of our people, from the time of the Giving of the Law—when the title “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” was bestowed on us, and when the Jewish people were granted the Holy Land according to its borders, “the land of the Canaanite and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates”—till the present day and including it.

Yours truly,
The Rebbe's Signature



HaGaon Rav Yosef Dov Soloveichik greets the Rebbe in 770 when he came to participate in a *farbrengen* on Yud Shvat 1980.

Rabbi Soloveichik on the Rebbe: Er is a Gaon, Er is a Gadol, Er is a Manhig Yisroel.”

Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet a close student of Rabbi Soloveitchik said of the Rebbe “Er iz a Gaon. Er iz a Gadol. Er iz a Manhig Yisroel. (He is a genius, he is a great man, he is a leader of the Jewish people). The Rav described the Rebbe’s memory as “*gevaldig*” (astounding). “In all my life, I never encountered someone with such a memory.” Then the Rav proceeded to describe his understanding of the Rebbe’s Torah. “Those of us who emanate from Brisk don’t adhere to the *pilpul* system perpetuated in Poland,” the Rav said, “but the Rebbe has a *gevaldiger* comprehension of the Torah.

HaGaon Rav Shlom Zalman Auerbach

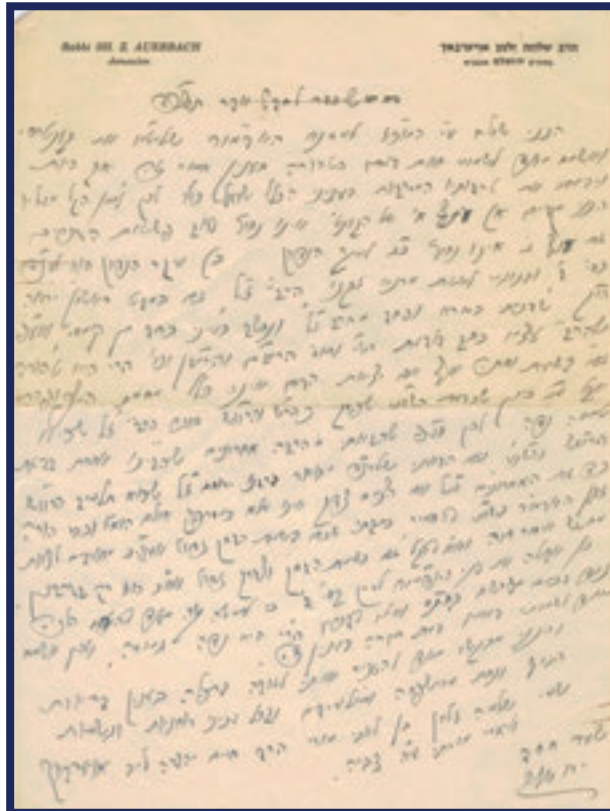
The Rebbe is Wondrous and Unique

In 1977 the great *gaon* and *posek* Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, sent in a special Torah article to a book that was published in honor of the Rebbe's birthday. In his introduction he wrote: הנני משתתף בהדפסת דברי תורה בספר זה המוקדש לכבודו הגדול של האדמו"ר המופלא והמיוחד בדורנו בתורה ובהנהגה הרבי מליובאוויטש שליט"א ואין כבוד אלא תורה.

(Translation) I also contribute to the publication of Torah in this book, which is dedicated to the great honor of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who is wondrous and unique in our generation, in Torah and in his actions; for there is no honor other than Torah.

In 1964 he asked the Rebbe for his opinion concerning a very difficult subject in learning. הנני שולח ע"י המוציא כתב זה את קונטרסי ואשמח מאד לשמוע חוות דעתו הטהורה בענין חמור זה... ידעתי את טרדותיו המרובות בעיני הכלל ישראל כולו... והנני מבקשו מאד להזכיר אותי לטובה בתפלה בענין בריאת הגוף ונחת מהמשרחה ומתלמידים ובכל עניני רוחניות וגשמיות. שמי שלמה זלמן בן לאבי מורי הרב חיים יהודה ליב אויערבך ולאמי מורתי ע"ה צביה, שערי חסד ירושלים.

The following is a copy of the full letter with partial translation:



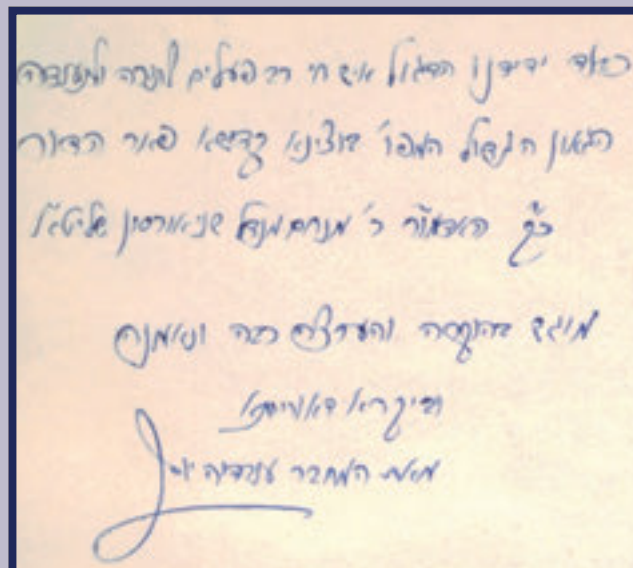
In a blessing to the Rebbe on his 75th birthday Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes:

גם אני הקטן מצטרף להודות לה' ולשמוח יחד עם רבבות ישראל, במלאת שבעים וחמש שנה להאדמו"ר המופלא ומיוחד הרבי מליובאוויטש שליט"א אשר בדור הזה הוא מגדל אור המאיר ומפיץ קרני אור של אמת ואמונה בלבותיהם של ישראל די בכל אתר ואתר ומחדיר בהם אור תורת ה' וזיו מצותי, ויחד עם ההודי' על העבר, גם אני מצטרף לתפילה וברכה הנישאת בפי כל, כי לא יטוש ה' חסדו מאתנו, ויאריך ה' ימיו ושנות ממלכתו, עד עמוד הכהן לאורים ותומים במהרה בימינו אמן

(Translation): I, too, join in thanking G-d and rejoicing together with the multitude of Jews on the occasion of the seventy-fifth birthday of the truly amazing and unique Lubavitcher Rebbe, *shlit"a*, who is a tower of light in our generation, and who illuminates and spreads rays of truth and faith to the hearts of all Israel, wherever they are, imbuing them with the light of Torah and the radiance of the *mitzvot*. In addition to our gratitude for the past, I join in the prayer and blessing uttered by all, that G-d will not forsake his love of us, and will prolong the Rebbe's days and influence, until the return of the priests to the *urim v'tumim*, may it be speedily in our days. ●

HaGaon Rav Ovadiah Yosef, great *Gaon*, *Posek* and leader of Sefardic Jewry writes in an inscription in his halachic book which he sent to the Rebbe:

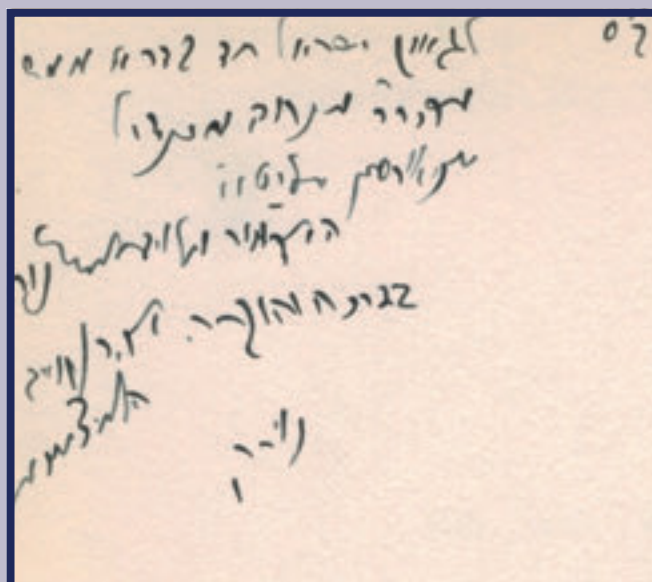
(Translation) To our esteemed friend, a fountain of life and deeds in the cause of Torah scholarship, the towering *gaon* and resplendent beacon, the glory of the generation, the holy Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (*May he be blessed with long years of life!*) this work is presented in genuine reverence and admiration, in honor of the Torah, by the author, Ovadiah Yosef. ●



Ovadiah Yosef



Hagaon Rav Chaim Zimmerman



HaGaon Rav Chaim Zimmerman: The Rebbe is a *Chad Bedoro mamesh* (he is literally one in a Generation).

The great Torah genius Rav Chaim Zimmerman who was a nephew of HaGaon Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz of Kaminetz would inscribe in his *seforim* that he sent to the Rebbe:

Translation: To the Gaon of Israel literally one in a generation Rave Menachem Mendel Schneerson Shlitah, the Lubavitcher Rebbe. With blessings and appreciation. Aaron Chaim Zimmerman. New York.

The Contributions of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Torah Scholarship

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB

We live in an age of specialization, which has convinced us that even our greatest leaders excel in only a limited range of activities. It is the rare leader in whom we recognize a wide range of diverse achievements.

Even among gedolei Yisrael in our history, we find some who specialized in halachah, others in pilpul and still others in homiletics, or derush. We have come to believe that those who were involved in community affairs necessarily compromised their scholarly pursuits by doing so. And Chassidic masters who combine their Chassidic Torah with Talmudic expertise are often seen as exceptions to the rule.

Of course, we are all aware of those rare individuals who possessed a dazzlingly diverse repertoire of Jewish leadership attributes. Beginning in medieval times, the Rambam and the Ramban come to mind. In later generations, the Maharal of Prague, the Ba'al HaTanya and the Chatam Sofer are good examples of men who were great Talmudists, heroic community leaders, gifted teachers and preachers and prolific writers.

RESHIMOT I ⁽¹⁾

A page of the Reshimot, the handwritten notebooks in which the Rebbe transcribed some of his chiddushei Torah. These notebooks only came to light after the Rebbe's passing, when they were discovered in a drawer in his room. The entries in these journals date between the years 1928, the year of the Rebbe's marriage, and 1950, the year of his assumption of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Throughout these years—which included his evacuation from Berlin in 1933, his escape from Nazi-occupied Paris in 1941 and his subsequent wanderings as a refugee in Vichy France and Fascist Spain—the Rebbe kept these notebooks with him at all times.

The late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt"l, whose twentieth yahrtzeit we are commemorating this summer (3 Tammuz/July 1), is an example of one such wide-ranging Torah personality. Sadly, however, many see him much more narrowly, focusing on one or another of his many accomplishments, but failing to appreciate the vast range of his contributions to the machshavah and Torah of the Jewish world.

Because his success in certain areas of leadership is immediately apparent, we tend to blind ourselves to other, perhaps less easily discernible, achievements. Thus, all acknowledge his amazing ability to inspire thousands of his Chassidic followers, as well as many who were not part of his community, to devote their lives to outreach in all the far-flung corners of the globe. His command of the entire corpus of Chassidic thought is evident and impressive, as was his ability to convey those teachings to masses of individuals who have no prior exposure to Chassidic thought.

Rabbi Schneerson's written works fill multiple

library shelves, and his spoken words have been eternalized in audio and video recordings and in many print volumes. His sensitivity, empathy and compassion for all Jews were directly experienced by thousands who had the privilege of individual consultations with him. His care and concern for every Jew—indeed for every human being—were his essential personal characteristics. His counsel was sage, and often bordered on the miraculous. His political views were explicit, forceful and impactful.

Because of all of these phenomenal achievements, and more, many overlook the fact that the Rebbe contributed to traditional Torah exegesis in numerous ways. For the remainder of this essay, I will attempt to describe some of those contributions, while fully aware that my description cannot possibly convey the full scope of his work. I will focus primarily on those aspects of the Rebbe's scholarly heritage from which I have personally benefited.

COMMENTARY ON RASHI

Rashi's commentary on Chumash is essential to traditional Torah study. Every committed Jew approaches his study of the weekly parashah through the lenses that Rashi provides. Over the centuries, a number of Torah scholars of the first rank have written commentaries on Rashi's commentary. Such works are known as "supercommentaries."

The Rebbe left us with a modern-day such supercommentary synopsized by a team of scholars in the form of a readily available five-volume work entitled *Biurim LePirush Rashi al HaTorah*. This work originated from the Rebbe's practice of delving into a quotation from Rashi at each of his regular public, multi-hour farbrengen. He attended to issues of textual content, grammar or sequence. The Rebbe would first resolve those issues before continuing to expound upon the subject from a Chassidic, and sometimes musar, perspective. His five-volume work dispenses with the Chassidic material and distills much of the Rebbe's teachings of what we would call the peshat, or simple meaning of Rashi's words.

Neighbors stop to watch the Rebbe arrive at 770 Eastern Parkway, circa summer 1977.

The Rebbe paid careful attention to seemingly minor points in the text. By concentrating on those fine details, he was able to extract an array of exegetical treasures. Some of his conclusions have halachic implications, some are keen observations of the linguistic components of Rashi's choice of words and all are relevant to the personal spiritual service of the reader. I myself have come to rely upon this work in the preparation of my weekly sermons and as material for discussion around the Shabbos table, irrespective of whether those around the table are learned elders or young schoolchildren.

THE WORKS OF RAMBAM

The Rebbe expected from his followers a great deal in the way of Torah study. He strongly rein-

forced the study regimens that his distinguished predecessors instituted: a requirement of one masechet of Shas annually, a daily diet of Chassidic discourses and daily portions of Chumash, Psalms and the Chassidic classic *Sefer HaTanya*. The Rebbe emphasized that this was all in addition to the individual learning required of each person according to Jewish law, as depicted in the Shulchan Aruch's *Hilchot Talmud Torah*. Among the Rebbe's own innovative projects in this regard was his request for the daily study of Rambam. For more advanced students, he required the study of three chapters or, if too difficult, then one chapter daily of *Mishneh Torah*; for those less knowledgeable, he required the study of a parallel selection of the Rambam's *Sefer HaMitzvot* each day. The festive siyum with which the completion of the entire work was celebrated each year was rivaled only by the festivities of the major holidays on the Jewish calendar.

But the Rebbe's emphasis on the Rambam and his teachings did not stop with his insistence upon the study of the Maimonidean text itself. Entire volumes of the Rebbe's teachings are dedicated to analysis of those texts. My personal favorite remains his commentary on the Rambam's *Hilchot Beit HaBechirah*, the Laws of the Holy Temple. The Rebbe recommended that *Hilchot Beit HaBechirah* be studied during the Three Weeks of mourning prior to Tishah B'Av. In his commentary, the Rebbe combines a profound analysis of the conceptual underpinnings of the Rambam's text with an appreciation for the spiritual guidance that the student can derive from the Rambam's treatment of the subject. He achieves the latter by applying his mastery of Chassidic thought to the Rambam's words. But for the former, he relies upon a surprising "mentor": the brilliant but often cryptic notes of Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon.

It is clear that the Rebbe was heavily influenced in his approach to Talmud study in general, and to the works of the Rambam in particular, by this early twentieth-century genius. The hallmarks of the Rogatchover's approach are his astonishing bekiut (thorough familiarity with the entire range of rabbinic literature) and a method of study that does not hesitate to use abstract philosophical concepts. Garnered in part from the Rambam's own *Moreh Nevuchim*, Rabbi Yosef Rosen uses these concepts as analytic tools to find the underlying themes behind seemingly disparate strands of Talmudic discussion.

In my opinion, the Rebbe remains the foremost interpreter of the Rogatchover's Torah teachings. Most of us, who find the Rogatchover's writings forbiddingly terse and often inscrutable, are indebted to the Rebbe for making them more accessible.

CHIDDUSHEI TORAH AND LOMDUT

The ultimate criterion of rabbinic greatness is, of course, exceptional proficiency in the Talmud corpus. The ability to formulate novellae,

The Contributions of the Lubavitcher Rebbe to Torah Scholarship Continued...

to expound with originality upon a wide range of texts—reconciling seeming contradictions and resolving questions of all sorts—is the sine qua non of rabbinic greatness. It is here that the Rebbe's contributions, although published and available to all, are least known to those outside his circle of followers.

The most incontrovertible demonstration of the Rebbe's lomdut is found in the hadranim, the lectures he delivered at the conclusion of studying Talmudic tractates. The Rebbe delivered 151 such hadranim, eighty-four of which are recorded in the two-volume *Hadranim al HaShas*, published by Kehot Publication Society. I have two personal favorites: one is the hadran that the Rebbe delivered on the occasion of the completion of the entire Talmud, in which he persuasively argues that a common thread runs through all of the hundreds of disputes between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. The other is his hadran on the tractate Bava Kama. This is a tour de force in which the Rebbe connects the Bavi and Yerushalmi, uses the “Brisker” concepts of cheftza and gavra and ingeniously links the beginning of the tractate with its end—all to elucidate a fundamental principle which underlies the entire 118 folio pages of the crucial tractate.

DERUSH, OR HOMILETICS

As a pulpit rabbi for many years, and as one who is still frequently called upon to deliver sermons, I have found the Rebbe's works to be veritable archives of chomer lederush, homiletic material. The thirty-nine volumes of his selected edited sichot, or weekly discourses, and more than two hundred unedited ones, might prove to be too overwhelming a source for busy pulpit rabbis. Fortunately, many of his teachings have been condensed

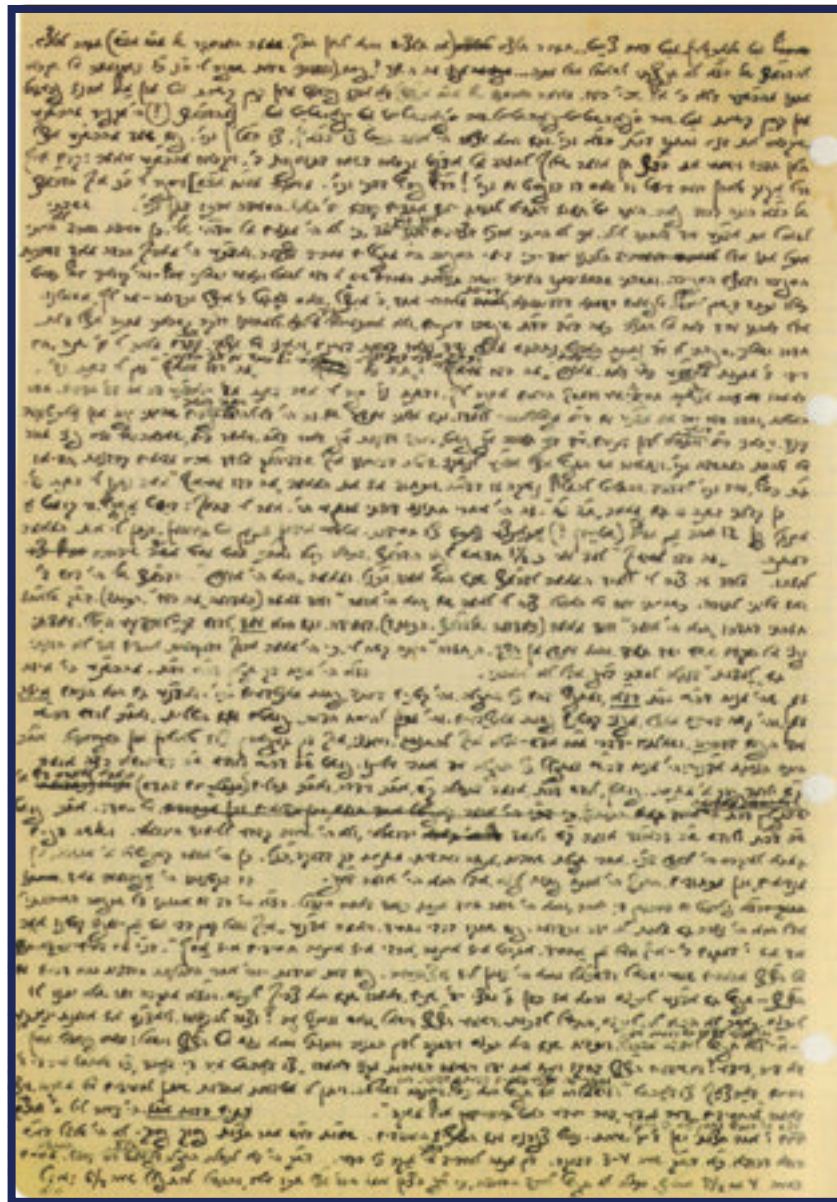
and compiled in a collection about the festivals called *Shaarei HaMoadim*. I have found those volumes indispensable for preparing and delivering inspiring and spiritually relevant sermons—grounded in a heterogeneous array of sources—to audiences of every possible background. On the occasion of Shevii Shel Pesach, I once delivered a lecture to a distinctly secular audience on the topic of miracles, using the Rebbe's discourse on the Splitting of the Red Sea from *Shaarei HaMoadim* as a guide.

THE REBBE AS PASTORAL COUNSELOR

Most readers would surely concur that an essential component of great Torah scholarship is a rabbi's ability to use that scholarship to assist those seeking personal guidance. We have interesting manuscript evidence of the Rambam's skill in this regard; in much more recent times we know of the practical advice that spiritual leaders like the Chofetz Chaim and the Chazon Ish were able to give those who sought their counsel.

I personally benefited from the Rebbe's advice in a life-changing telephone conversation I had with him more than forty years ago. Thousands of others have benefitted similarly.

We have written documentation of these counseling sessions in the multi-volume collection of letters that the Rebbe wrote over the course of



A page of the Reshimot, the handwritten notebooks in which the Rebbe transcribed some of his chiddushei Torah. These notebooks only came to light after the Rebbe's passing, when they were discovered in a drawer in his room. The entries in these journals date between the years 1928, the year of the Rebbe's marriage, and 1950, the year of his assumption of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Throughout these years—which included his evacuation from Berlin in 1933, his escape from Nazi-occupied Paris in 1941 and his subsequent wanderings as a refugee in Vichy France and Fascist Spain—the Rebbe kept these notebooks with him at all times.

Frankl to persist in his dispute against the Freudians. See Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks' article on page 21.)

By expanding our view of the Rebbe and increasing our familiarity with his contributions, we get a picture of his unusual significance in Jewish history. More important, we become aware that his teachings remain a vital source of education and inspiration for all Jews, irrespective of one's background and hashkafic perspective.

The Rebbe was not just a rebbe for Chabad Chassidim. He was, and remains, a rebbe for us all. ●

Listen to Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb discuss the Lubavitcher Rebbe's scholarship at www.ou.org/life/inspiration/savitsky-weinreb.

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb is executive vice president, emeritus of the Orthodox Union. Photos courtesy of Jewish Educational Media's (JEM) Living Archive. JEM is devoted to gathering, preserving and providing access to the photos and audio and video tapes of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. JEM has also embarked on an oral history project about the Rebbe's life, documenting first-person accounts of people's encounters with the Rebbe, as well as tracking down and preserving priceless documents from the Rebbe's largely unknown early life.

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his leadership career. This collection is published as *Iggerot Kodesh*. It amounts to thirty volumes and has scores more in the works. I am drawn to this collection especially because of my training and experience in the field of psychotherapy. A number of major principles of effective counseling emerge from these letters. To name a few:

1. It is important to have clear and achievable goals in life.
2. When those goals are reached, one must immediately set new goals and never complacently rest upon one's laurels.
3. Study, joy and song are antidotes to depression, as is focusing on helping others.
4. One must cultivate as many friendships as possible, and do so by giving spiritually or materially to the other person.
5. We need much less sleep than we think.
6. One must persist in the face of failure. Failure is seldom total and never final; it is usually a step toward reaching the next level of achievement.
7. One must never compromise one's religious principles. Such compromise is not effective.

8. Each person has a distinct role to play; both God and one's fellow man fully rely on him to accomplish it. No one else can do what he is uniquely created to do.

The Rebbe tried valiantly to change the orientation of modern psychology from Dr. Sigmund Freud's approach to that of Dr. Viktor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*. (Dr. Freud and his followers believed that unconscious and dark forces were the essence of man. Dr. Frankl, who was a survivor of Auschwitz, asserted that man's conscious search for meaning is his essence. The Rebbe personally encouraged Dr.

An Unparalleled Leader

BY RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

In honor of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's 20th yahrtzeit this summer, Jewish Action asked a number of contributors to reflect on the Rebbe's legacy and lasting impact on Jewish life.

There have been many great Jewish leaders in history. Some left a permanent mark on the Jewish mind by their contributions to Torah and the poetry and prose of the Jewish soul. Some created new communities, others revived flagging ones; some shaped the entire tenor of a region. But it would be hard to name an individual who, in his lifetime, transformed virtually every Jewish community in the world as well as created communities in places where none existed before. That is a measure of the achievement of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He was not just a great leader—he was a unique one.

I have told the story of my first encounter with the Rebbe many times, and I mention it only briefly here simply as a reminder of how vast his impact was, and how early it was recognized. In 1968 I was a second-year undergraduate at Cambridge, studying philosophy at a time when being a philosopher with religious faith seemed, at least in Britain, almost a contradiction in terms. So that summer I traveled to America to see if I could meet the leading rabbis and Jewish intellectuals and hear from them how they wrestled with some of the problems I had encountered. What fascinated me from the outset was how many of those I met mentioned the Rebbe. Already then, he had assumed almost a legendary stature. It didn't matter where I went or whom I spoke to, somehow his name would come up in the conversation and it would be spoken of in awe, whether the person I was speaking to was Chassidic or not, Orthodox or not. People seemed to know that there was something special about this man that transcended the normal parameters of religious leadership.

I soon found out what it was, when I had the chance to meet the Rebbe in the course of that visit. He was the only person among the dozens I encountered who performed a role reversal in the course of our conversation. Within minutes I discovered that it was not me who was interviewing the Rebbe, but the Rebbe who was interviewing me. He wanted to know about the state of Jewish life in Cambridge, how many Jewish students there were, how many were engaged with Jewish life and what I was doing to increase their number.

This was wholly unexpected and life-changing. Here was one of the leaders of the Jewish world taking time—considerable time—to listen to an unknown undergraduate student from thousands of miles away and speak to him as if he mattered, as if he could make a difference. He was, powerfully and passionately, urging me to get involved. Years later, looking back on that en-

counter, I summed it up by saying that good leaders create followers. Great leaders create leaders. That was the Rebbe's greatness. Not only did he lead, he was a source of leadership in others.

Time and again I heard similar stories from or about others. There was the philosophy professor who told me that as a young man, he had been drawn to Chabad. He had come to study at 770 Eastern Parkway and wanted to stay there for the rest of his life. After a few years, though, he was summoned to the Rebbe, who told him that the time had come to renew his philosophical studies, to get a doctorate and become a professor, to which end he should go to the most prestigious graduate school at that time: Harvard. How many rashei yeshivah today would tell one of their best students to go back to university and find a permanent place in academic life? Few, I would imagine. But because of the Rebbe, this man was able to influence generations of Jewish students.

**From the Rebbe,
I learned how
faith in God helps
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people, challenging
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greater than they
might otherwise
have become.**

Then there was the leader of Chabad in a country where there was a sizeable Lubavitch presence. He was in his mid-forties and struck me as rather young to be in charge of so large an organization. I asked him how long he had been in that position. He replied, "twenty-five years." I knew many people who spoke about the need to encourage young Jewish leadership. The Rebbe did not speak about it; he just did it. He took young people, gave them huge responsibilities and guided them as they grew. That took vision and courage. It also took faith. From the Rebbe, I learned how faith in God helps you have faith in people, challenging them to become greater than they might otherwise have become. Believing in them, he helped them believe in themselves.

Another story I came across only indirectly concerned a man I never met but greatly admired, the late Dr. Viktor Frankl, the psychother-

apist who survived Auschwitz where he helped many people recover the will to live. When the war was over, he founded a new school of psychotherapy—he called it Logotherapy—based in what he called "man's will to meaning." I found his work deeply spiritual and deeply Jewish. But Dr. Frankl himself wrote little about his Jewish identity and I suspected that he had little connection with organized Jewish life.

A follower of Chabad read one of my books in which I had written about Dr. Frankl, and told me a fascinating story. Evidently the Rebbe knew about his work, and in the 1950s when a woman came to the Rebbe and mentioned she was about to visit Vienna, he asked her to deliver a message to Dr. Frankl. The message was simple and brief: "Remain strong. Continue your work with complete resolve. Don't give up. Ultimately you will prevail." She delivered the message.

Many years later the Chabad shaliach in Vienna heard this story from the woman herself who told him that when she visited Dr. Frankl she found him on the brink of leaving Vienna for Australia. His work was out of step with Freudian psychoanalysis, then the dominant school in Vienna, and he found himself isolated and shunned. He had decided to leave and begin again far away when the message from the Rebbe arrived. He was amazed. How did the Rebbe know about his situation? Why did he care? What relationship did the Rebbe have to psychotherapy? And why was he interested in a Jew who had married out and had no connection with the Jewish community?

The intervention had its desired effect: Dr. Frankl stayed. In 1959, his book *Man's Search for Meaning* was published and became a massive best-seller. He himself became famous and eventually his approach helped change the direction of psychotherapy. When his biography was published, something startling emerged: every day he prayed and put on tefillin. Telling this story, the shaliach adds, "I've often wondered why the Rebbe took an interest in the success of Viktor Frankl, a secular and intermarried Jew, and sought him out to offer encouragement and support." But that was the Rebbe. His field of vision was vast and he knew that every Jew has his or her part to play in the drama of redemption that is the Jewish task on Earth.

There are thousands of such stories. I suspect that everyone who met the Rebbe has one or several to tell. I will mention just one. When I visited the Rebbe ten years after my first visit, we discussed many things—especially his concerns about the lack of serious rabbinic training in Europe in general and Britain specifically. Toward the end of the conversation, I mentioned that my wife, Elaine, was expecting our second child, and I asked for the Rebbe's berachah. He asked whether we had any other children already. I replied, "Yes,

An Unparalleled Leader Continued...

a son.” In that case, said the Rebbe, your next child will be a daughter. He said this with not the slightest indication of doubt. It was less a blessing than a firm and confident assertion.

I returned home. Months passed and the birth drew near. My friends in Lubavitch told me to write to the Rebbe for a berachah. I told them the Rebbe had already given a berachah. Nonetheless, they insisted, write. I did. Days and weeks went by and I received no reply. Finally the moment came when Elaine told me to phone for an ambulance. We heard it pull up in front of the house, and then the door bell rang. I opened it, assuming it was the ambulance driver. To my surprise, it was the mailman with a letter. As Elaine entered the ambulance, I opened the envelope, and there it was: the Rebbe’s blessing. How it happened, I will never know; the mail never came at that time of the day. But stories about the Rebbe are like that. He was a man around whom miracles happened.

When, under the impact of that first encounter, I eventually decided to study for semichah, I wanted to demonstrate my gratitude to the person who had led me in this direction. So I devoted much of my spare time that year, 5734, to translating some of the Rebbe’s sichot into English. Eventually they were published as a book, *Torah Studies*. That was a transformative experience in itself. When you come to translate someone else’s words, you come to know their thoughts quite intimately.

I learned much about the Rebbe from those sichot. In particular, I began to see how one theme ran like a connecting thread through many of his speeches—the idea of yeridah letzorech aliyah, a descent for the sake of an ascent. He was constantly engaged in what a psychotherapist would call “re-framing.” Yes, the Jewish people had undergone a monumental tragedy during the Holocaust; yes, Jewish life as he found it in America when he be-

came the Rebbe was in a weakened state. Assimilation ran high. So did intermarriage rates. But the Rebbe, with his profound belief in Divine providence, was convinced that descent is the beginning of ascent, disconnection is a call to reconnection and tragedy itself the prelude to redemption. That is how the Rebbe rescued hope and rekindled a fire that seemed almost to have died.

One sichah in particular, though, had an electrifying effect on me. It was a talk he gave on the episode of the spies. How, he asked, could ten of these men have had so little faith that they came back and said, “We cannot go forward against those people . . . They are too strong for us!”? They had seen God’s miracles. They had witnessed the greatest empire of the ancient world brought to its knees. They had experienced the Splitting of the Red Sea. Of what were they afraid? Besides which, these were not ordinary men. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize that they were people of stature, leaders, princes. Surely they should have known that they had nothing to fear.

The Rebbe’s answer was astonishing. He said that they were not afraid of defeat; they were afraid of victory. They knew they would win. But what would happen to the people then? Here, in the desert, they drank water from a rock, ate manna from Heaven and were surrounded by clouds of glory. They lived in close and continuous proximity to God. There, in the land, they would have battles to fight, a war to win, fields to plant, harvests to gather, an economy to run and a society to sustain. What would happen to their relationship with God? Why exchange a miracle-saturated life for the trials and tribulations of the real world of politics and economics?

They were, said the Rebbe, holy people, but they had made a holy mistake. God wants us to be in the world because only then can we bring the Divine presence down. God seeks, in the Chassidic

phrase, dirah b’tachtonim, a dwelling place in the lower world. Our task is not to escape to Heaven but to bring Heaven down to Earth.

That one essay tells us what made the Rebbe different. At a time when so many other Jews whose homes were in the yeshivah and the Chassidic enclaves were turning inward, he turned outward and sent his shluchim across the world to create thousands of “dwelling places in the lower world.” He knew that we all have a part to play in that process—from philosophy professors to psychotherapists, from politicians to poets—all the tens of thousands of people who sought him out and the hundreds of thousands his emissaries sought out. We are each a candle in the giant menorah that is the Jewish people. We are each a thread in the tallit, each, in the Ba’al Shem Tov’s phrase, a letter in the scroll of the living Torah that carries God’s word to us and to the world.

The sages expressed, and Maimonides codified, a remarkable idea: that we should each see our lives, our communities and the world as if they are equally poised between good and bad, as if our next act would tilt the balance, not only for us, but for the world. Can one person really change the world? Anyone who doubts this should study the life of the Rebbe and listen to the testimonies of those whose lives he changed. The Rebbe changed the world by teaching us that we could do so. He is no longer with us, but his message lives on more urgently than ever, summoning us to see the greatness he taught us we have. ●

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l is a global religious leader, philosopher, author of over twenty-five books and renowned speaker. He currently teaches Judaic thought at New York University and at Yeshiva University. Rabbi Sacks zt”l served as chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth between September 1991 and September 2013.

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#THE_REBBE

The Rebbe told me: Remember, even in the darkest place, the light of a single candle can be seen far and wide

MR. BENJAMIN NETANYAHU
ISRAEL PRIME MINISTER



WORLD LEADER

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher
in an interview said:

“I wish to honor leadership itself in all that is good, honest and just and I honor the Rebbe in the work that he has done and the example that he has set and the inspiration that he has given to many, many people.”

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

The Rebbe's Legacy: Become a Living Mezuzah for Another! A Philosophical Rebel

BY RABBI MENDEL KALMENSON

In its very first recorded case of mutiny, the Torah recounts the story of Korach who publicly challenged the authority and integrity of Moshe.

Traditionally, the story of Korach has been read as a story of revolt motivated by a power struggle and vices like greed and status-seeking.

But upon closer analysis, we encounter a more nuanced Korach whose issue with Moshe was more philosophical than political.

The Midrash recounts the back story to the public showdown between Korach and Moshe:

Korach took two-hundred and fifty magistrates. They came and stood before Moshe and asked him: "If a garment is made entirely of blue wool, what is the law as regards to it being exempted from the obligation of *tzitzit*?" Moshe answered them: "It is subject to the obligation of *tzitzit*."

Korach further challenged Moshe: "If a house is full of Torah scrolls, what is the law? Does it need a mezuzah on its doorpost or not?" Replied Moshe, "It is obligated." Said Korach: "The entire Torah, consisting of 275 chapters, does not absolve this house, and the [two] chapters in the mezuzah absolve it?"

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of sainted memory, once explained the depth of Korach's argument and Moshe's response.

Essentially, the function of *tzitzis* and mezuzah are one and the same: they both serve as constant reminders (among many others prescribed by Judaism), one on our person the other on our home, of a higher force in our life to whom we are answerable.

Does G-d not trust us to internalize our faith in Him to the point that we no longer need so many constant reminders of His presence?

This, explains the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was the essence of Korach's argument.

"If a house is full of Torah scrolls, what is the law? Does it need a mezuzah on its doorpost or not?"

In other words, if one is so knowledgeable in Torah that they can be compared to a house which is full of Torah scrolls, why would they need to be reminded of the specific passages contained in the mezuzah?

Furthermore, he argued: *"If a garment is made entirely of blue wool, is it not exempted from the obligation of tzitzis?"*

That is, if someone is so spiritually infused with Divine consciousness that they "resemble the Divine throne" do they still need to be reminded

of G-d's presence?

Moshe's response was: Yes. Even someone who knows much of Torah and believes in G-d can lose touch with their knowledge and belief unless they regularly engage in physical rituals and encounter tangible symbols of their knowledge and belief.

What makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply what we believe, but how regularly we are reminded of those beliefs...

Alain De Botton put it well when he said:

"In the secular world we tend to believe that if you tell someone something once, they'll remember it. Sit them in a classroom, tell them about Plato at the age of 20, send them out for a career in management consultancy for 40 years, and that lesson will stick with them. Religions say, "Nonsense. You need to keep repeating the lesson 10 times a day. Otherwise, our minds are like sieves. Religions, he concludes, are cultures of repetition. They circle the great truths again and again and again."

Put differently, what makes the difference to the way we behave is not simply *what we believe*, but how regularly we are *reminded of those beliefs*.

Take the following example:

Professor Deepak Malhotra surveyed the willingness of Christians to give to online charitable appeals. The response was 300 percent greater if the appeal was made on a Sunday than on any other day of the week. Clearly the participants did not change their minds about religious belief or the importance of charitable giving between weekdays and Sundays. It was simply that on Sundays they were more likely to

have thought about G-d on that day. A similar test was carried out among Muslims in Morocco, where it was found that people were more likely to give generously to charity if they lived in a place where they could hear the call to prayer from a local minaret.

Wittgenstein once said that "the work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders."

In the case of Judaism the purpose of the outward signs – *tzitzis*, mezuzah and *tefillin* – is precisely that: to assemble reminders, on our clothes, our homes, our arms and head, that we are constantly accompanied throughout our lives by the loving presence of G-d who cares deeply about the behavior of His children.

In this context, and in the lead up to the 3rd of Tammuz, the 28th *yahrzeit* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of sainted memory, it seems fitting to share the following reflection.

One of the great contributions of the Rebbe was the vast network of *shluchim* and *shluchos* he inspired to take up the call of "*Lech Lecha*" and leave the relative material and spiritual comforts of their homes, families, and communities in order to enhance Jewish life and establish Jewish communities in literally every corner of the globe.

One might say that the over 5,500 Lubavitch *shluchim* families who have built Chabad houses in over 100 countries around the world, serve as virtual *mezuzos*; as embodiments and living reminders that G-d is present in such "G-d-forsaken" places like Vladivostock, Russia, Pnom Pen, Cambodia, and Tasmania, Australia.

Like the mezuzah, the *shluchim* are committed to the physical and spiritual safety and well being of the Jewish people wherever they may be.

I will never forget the day I arrived in Cusco, Peru the day before Pesach to help the local *shliach* with a seder that would be attended by 900 Israeli backpackers, except that he was still not in Cusco because he had gone to help locate the Jewish bodies of Israeli backpackers who had tragically died in a bus crash in La Paz, Bolivia.

And then there are the mitzvah mobile homes or "Tanks" as they are often called, which one can encounter driving through busy city centers, bringing Yiddishkeit to those who didn't even know they were looking for it, serving as a very visible reminder that G-d is present at the Western Wall and on Wall Street alike.

לזכות אברהם שמואל הכהן בן רחל ודבורית בת שושנה ומשפחתם שיחיו
לזכות מרדכי צבי בן פייגה ועטיל בת מרים רחל ומשפחתם שיחיו
לזכות שמעון לייב הכהן בן משה נחמה ומאשה חיה בת שיינה ומשפחתם שיחיו

The Rebbe's Legacy: Become a Living Mezuzah for Another! A Philosophical Rebel Continued...

Like *mezuzos*, the young rabbinical students, who offer Jews the opportunity to do a mitzvah on the go, de-compartmentalize the street from the synagogue, demonstrating that Hashem is everywhere at all times.

I am reminded of a moving story I heard from a *shliach* who helped build up Jewish life in St. Louis, Missouri. As a young rabbinic student he once traveled with a friend to the suburbs of Long Island where they walked from door to door seeking out local Jews. Imagine their shock when after being welcomed into the home of one Jewish resident he told them unsettlingly: "It's because of your colleagues that I committed the gravest sin of my life."

Taken aback, they asked the fellow to explain, hoping that they might be in a position to help rectify an unfortunate mistake from the past.

"At the time I was working in Manhattan and was rushing to my office one day when I bumped into a nice yeshiva student who asked me innocently if I was Jewish." Not wishing to enter into a longer discussion I mindlessly responded, "No, I'm not Jewish" and I went on my way. And that was the biggest mistake I made in my life. The entire day I couldn't stop thinking about how I could have allowed myself to deny that I was Jewish."

When I got home that night, my wife saw that I was beside myself and when I told her why, she too became aggravated, shocked that I could deny my Jewishness, even if mindlessly.

The two of us spent a sleepless night, deep in discussion about matters of Jewish identity, and by the time morning came, we had decided that we would place our children who were not in Jewish schools at the time, in a Jewish day school, so that they never come to repeat my mistake even inadvertently.

"So you see," he concluded, "It was because of your colleagues that I committed the greatest sin of my life – and here he added with a twinkle in his eye and a sense of pride – "it was because of your colleagues that I performed the most important mitzvah of my life."

So as we mark the Rebbe's 28th

yahrzeit, and honor the Rebbe's life and legacy this Shabbos, let us resolve to do more than affix *mezuzos* on the doors of Jewish homes, let us each become a living and loving mezuzah for others in our orbit and sphere of influence, embodying Hashem's

Presence, Purpose, and Providence wherever we go, and with whomever we interact. ●

Rabbi Mendel Kalmenson is the rabbi of Beit Baruch and executive director of Chabad of Belgravia, London, where he

lives with his wife, Chana, and children. Mendel was an editor at the Judaism Website – Chabad.org, and is also the author of the popular books Seeds of Wisdom, A Time to Heal, and Positivity Bias. His latest book, "The People of the Word: 50 words that Shaped Jewish Thinking" is set to be released Summer of 2022.

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BY RABBI MEIR ELLITUV,
EDITOR IN CHIEF OF RAMBAM PARDES HAMELECH

Geonus, Borderline Ruach HaKodesh

The Rebbe's immense Torah output does not only incorporate every realm of Torah thought; it also makes it seem as if that specific realm was the center of the Rebbe's focus in Torah study.

This is the case with the hundreds of incisive explanations into Rashi's commentary on the Torah, the one-hundred-fifty profound *hadranim* which he delivered on the *masechtos* of the Bavli and Yerushalmi, his hundreds of explanations on Midrash, *Pirkei Avos*, Shulchan Aruch, Zohar, Kabbalah and Chassidus, Jewish thought and philosophy. They come together to create an immense corpus of Torah literature in which he not only demonstrates proficiency but also paves new paths of understanding.

Through the study of the Rebbe's teachings, one gains proficiency not only in the classic yeshiva *masechtos* but in all of Shas, and not only in Talmud Bavli, but also in the Talmud Yerushalmi, and not only in classics of Jewish thought but even in works which most people have never heard of.

The Rebbe's thousands(!) of explanations on Rambam are a subject unto themselves. During the five years I dedicated to the new Rambam with the Rebbe's teachings, I became aware of the Rebbe's unbelievable breadth of knowledge in every single halacha in Rambam. Whenever a halacha is dealt with twice in Mishneh Torah, the Rebbe always cites where else the Rambam wrote about the same topic and proposes a novel approach to understanding the unique elements in each version.

With his brilliance, the Rebbe explained hundreds of Torah topics – some more known and some lesser known – based on the writings of the Rambam, turning the study of Mishneh Torah into a fascinating experience.

This is not the place for a long Torah dissertation. Instead, allow me to share three short examples of the Rebbe's breadth and depth of understanding in the Rambam's teachings.

The first is from a line-and-a-half in a letter which the Rebbe wrote to Rabbi Binyaminson in 1939 (when the Rebbe was only twenty-seven!) about a halacha which appears twice in Mishneh Torah, in *Hilchos Milah* and in *Hilchos Melachim*, regarding the punishment for a gentile who refuses to accept the Seven Noahide Laws in Eretz Yisrael. In the letter, the Rebbe writes, "On the topic of this halacha, the Rambam's suggestion is very novel; what is the source for it?"

I was astounded by the confidence the Rebbe had at such a young age to indicate that he had studied and delved into the halacha to the extent that he was confident that there was no source – and to make that assertion in a letter to one of the *Gedolei Yisrael*.

When I prepared the Hebrew edition of *Pardes*

HaMelech, I wondered whether the Rebbe arrived at a different conclusion at a later point – after all, this was written in his youth – but my search of the Rebbe's teachings did not turn anything up, so I decided to include the letter in our commentary; but I still wondered about that halacha often.

That Chol Hamoed Sukkos, with the first volume in hand, I visited Rav Dov Povarsky of Ponovezh. The Rosh Yeshiva, with whom I've had the merit of discussing Torah during the past decade – is known for his phenomenal breadth of knowledge in every Torah topic, be it Chazal, *Rishonim* or *Acharonim*. During our conversation, I asked the Rosh Yeshiva if he had an answer to that question. He knew exactly what I was talking about; "*Ich veis oich nish*, I also don't know," he said. He opened up the *chiddushim* of the Brisker Rav on the Rambam, and showed me that he wrote the very same question. (The Brisker Rav's *chiddushim* were published in 1965

Learning the
Rebbe's teachings
on Rambam
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by his sons, long after his passing in 1959).

Another example: The Rebbe wrote a letter to the Rogatchover Gaon in 1925, when he was 22 years old, on a complicated halachic matter regarding whether a *treifa*, an animal with a defect which renders it not kosher, can return to kosher status if it heals from the defect (the Rogatchover leans to the side that says it cannot).

The letter is fascinating. The Rebbe cites over twenty sources from which he brilliantly demonstrates that a *treifa* could indeed return to becoming kosher.

Learning the Rebbe's teachings on Rambam enlightens a person's knowledge of Shas as well. Here is just one example which enlightens the very first *mishnah* in Shas:

Brachos begins with a statement: "From when do we read *Shema* in the evening? From the time when the *Kohanim* enter to eat their *terumah*."

Why does the *mishnah* choose to connect

these two random topics? In fact, they seem to be very different from a halachic perspective, for the following reason: *terumah* is only relevant at a time when the entire Jewish people live in the land, which means that *terumah* was only a rabbinic law throughout the second Temple period, when most of the Jewish people remained in exile.

Shema is a mitzvah of the Torah, which means that if one read it during the twilight of *bein hashmashos*, it might not qualify and he must therefore repeat it. If one were to eat *terumah*, which is a rabbinic decree, during *bein hashmashos*, the halacha would be different!

The Rebbe explains:

The Rambam writes in the beginning of *Hilchos Bikurim* chapter 2: "*Bikkurim* are brought only during the Temple era." The Rebbe notes that the Rambam omitted the qualification which he *did* write with regard to *terumah* — that it is only relevant at a time when the entire Jewish people live in the land.

The Gemara says that Challah, *Terumah*, and *Bikkurim* could all be called *terumah*. Therefore, when the *mishnah* in *Berachos* spoke about *terumah*, it was referring to *bikkurim*. This is also evident from the fact that it uses the word *terumasan*, their [the kohen's] *terumah*; this cannot refer to ordinary *terumah*, because in a certain sense, *terumah* always remains in the owner's possession; he could at least choose which kohen to give it to. This is not the case with *bikkurim*, which must be transferred to the *Kohanim* serving the Temple.

Being that *bikkurim* are not associated with the presence of the entire Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael, they remained a Torah-law during the second Temple era as well – and therefore, they can be compared to the law of reading *Shema*, which is a Torah law as well.

Learning the thousands of explanations from the Rebbe (now also available in the English edition) turns one's Rambam study into an experience of *lomdus*, *bekius*, Jewish thought – complete with lessons in one's Divine service. It makes the Rambam study a new, uplifting, Torah experience. ●

¹ Published in *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 35 pg. 237

² 1:6.

³ 8:10.

⁴ End of *Hilchos Melachim*.

⁵ Rashi and Ran in *Chullin* 46, the Rambam in *Hilchos Shechitah* chapt. 7, Rashi in *Yevamos* 76 & 43, Rambam *Hilchos Shechita* 3:21, *Chullin* 68b, Rambam *Hilchos Maachalos Asuros* 4:6, *Hilchos Shechita* 5:1 & 3, *Tosfos Chullin* 42a (d"h *hakol*) *Chullin* 54a & 57b, *Bava Basra* 74b, *Chullin* 43a, *Yevamos* 114b, *Tosfos Yevamos* 120b, a slight proof from *Bava Metziah* 107b, *Bava Metziah* 113b, *Pesachim* 56 according to the version of the Bavli and Yerushalmi, but not according to the version of Moreh Nevuchim, *Tosfos* in *Bechoros* 38b, the Rashbam's version of *Bava Basra* 74b, & *Tosfos Gittin* 69a.

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The Rebbe and the Rav

BY RABBI AARON RAKEFFET-ROTHKOFF

There was a knock on the door when I was visiting my rebbe, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, to express my condolences upon the loss of his mother. It was 1967.

It was quite early and I was the only one with the Rav at that moment. I quickly opened the door to the apartment and was greeted by two patriarchal figures, Rabbis Yochanan Gordon and Yisroel Jacobson. I ushered them in and observed the Rav's face brighten as they entered. They informed my rebbe that they were sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to convey his condolences on the Rav's bereavement. They were soon engaged in animated conversation about Lubavitch in the "Alter Heim" ("Old Country"). They discussed the Rav's formative years in Khaslavichy, White Russia, where his father, Reb Moshe, was the rabbi. The Khaslavichy Jewish community consisted of a large number of Lubavitch Chassidim, and here the young Soloveitchik was exposed to Chabad Chassidic literature and lifestyle. Their influence remained with the Rav for the rest of his life.¹

When the Chabad emissaries left, the Rav turned to me and reminisced about the years he spent studying at the University of Berlin, where he first met the future seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. With a sense of admiration, the Rav said to me, "At the University, no one knew about my background and where I was coming from. Everyone knew who the future Lubavitcher Rebbe was!" Years later, I came across pictures of the Rav and the Rebbe during their Berlin days. My rebbe's appearance was similar to that of most other students, while the Lubavitcher Rebbe attended university in Chassidic garb.

A student of the Rav discussed the Berlin era with him at a later period. This student later recapped what the Rav recounted:

The Rav was already in the University of Berlin when the Lubavitcher Rebbe first came there. The Rav showed him the ropes when he arrived, and introduced him to R. Chaim's derech in learning. The Lubavitcher Rebbe was a very quiet person during those years.²

The Rav was introduced to the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, when the latter visited his son-in-law in Berlin in 1929 and 1930. Rabbi Schneersohn wrote:

Regarding Rabbi Y. Soloveitchik, I know him already for many years. While he was still in Berlin, I was introduced to him by my son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. My son-in-law told me about his great in-depth understanding of Torah and how he studies assiduously. I was very delighted to become close to him.³

In 1941, the relationship between the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe and the Rav was helpful in enabling my rebbe to succeed his father, Rav Moshe Soloveichik, as the senior rosh yeshivah at

the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn sent a letter of support for the Rav, which greatly enhanced his candidacy. It read:

It is my hope that the great, excellent, and renowned gaon, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, will be selected to sit on his father's chair as the rosh yeshivah of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. It is only fitting and proper that he inherit this position. He will bring abundant blessings to the Yeshiva after the recent loss of its two heads. The eminent gaon has the ability to restore the school's former glory and through him solace will be attained.⁴

A member of the Rav's immediate family declared that this communication was pivotal in the Rav being selected to replace his late father. Dr. Haym Soloveitchik related:

In fact, the Previous Rebbe was ultimately the deciding factor in my father getting the job. The committee was split in their opinion about my father. One of the members of the committee was Mr. Abraham Mazer, a well-known New York philanthropist. He was also a very big supporter of Lubavitch. The Previous Rebbe called Mr. Mazer and asked him to support my father. His vote was the key factor in the committee's decision to offer my father the job.⁵

The Rav was able to publicly affirm his esteem for Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn shortly afterwards. On June 14, 1942, at a banquet celebrating the founding of the United Lubavitcher Yeshivah in the United States, the keynote address was delivered by the Rav. In his speech, he compared the Rebbe to the first-century Tanna, Rav Chanina ben Dosa. Rabbi Soloveitchik cited the Talmudic passage which described one of the miracles that occurred for Rav Chanina ben Dosa:

Once on a Friday eve he noticed that his daughter was sad, and he said to her, "My daughter, why are you sad?" She replied, "My oil can got mixed up with my vinegar can and I kindled of it the Sabbath light." He said to her, "Why should this trouble you? He who had commanded the oil to burn will also command the vinegar to burn." A Tanna taught: "The light continued to burn the whole day until they took of it light for the Havdalah" (Ta'anit 25a).

The Rav declared that Lubavitch Chassidism, under the guidance of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, had also successfully demonstrated that vinegar can burn. Despite the obstacles engendered by the Godless Communist regime, Lubavitch Chassidism continued to function throughout the Russian realm. Similarly, the Rav was confident that the Lubavitch movement could succeed in kindling the flames of Torah in the United States. Despite the spirituality impoverished American soil, the vinegar would burn.⁶

During this period, both the Rav and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who was now

the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, became active on the American Torah educational scene. Rabbi Soloveitchik succeeded his father as the senior rosh yeshivah in May of 1941. He remained in this position until illness forced his retirement in December of 1985.

The Rebbe arrived in the United States on June 23, 1941. He quickly became instrumental in the establishment of two central Lubavitch organizations: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch (Central Organization for Jewish Education) and Machne Israel, a social service agency. Following his father-in-law's death in 1950, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson reluctantly assumed leadership of the movement.⁷ In the ensuing decades, the Rav and the Rebbe maintained an indirect but ongoing relationship. They corresponded before the High Holy Days and the yamim tovim.⁸ In 1964, when the Rebbe sat shivah for his mother, Rebbetzin Chana, he was visited by Rav Soloveitchik. The two scholars soon engaged in a learned discussion of the Sabbath and Festival status of the mourner before the burial (aninut). This exchange evolved from the Rebbetzin's death on Shabbat. The Rebbe later wrote to the Rav, detailing his stance and his understanding of Maimonides' commentary on this topic.⁹

The Rav was accompanied to the shivah by Rabbi Sholem Kowalsky. The latter transcribed his conversation with the Rav as they traveled to Crown Heights. Rabbi Kowalsky wrote:

The journey from Yeshiva University to Crown Heights took over an hour, affording me lots of time to discuss the Lubavitcher Rebbe with the Rav. During the discussion, I asked the Rav to tell me about the Lubavitcher Rebbe as a person—his imposing character, his personality and his great Torah scholarship, as well as his relationship with him.

The Rav told me that he was a great admirer of the Rebbe. He said their relationship began when they were in Berlin where they were both studying at the University of Berlin. During that period they would often meet at the home of the Gaon, Rabbi Chaim Heller. It was in the course of these meetings that a strong friendship developed between the two men, both of whom were destined to become outstanding spiritual leaders of the century.

The Rav recalled that the Rebbe always carried the key to the mikvah with him when he attended lectures at the university. "At about two or three o'clock every afternoon when he left the university, he would go straight to the mikvah. No one was aware of the minhag and I only learnt about it by chance," the Rav said.

"On another occasion, I offered the Rebbe a drink. The Rebbe refused, but when I pressured him I understood that he was fasting that day. It was Monday and the Rebbe was fasting. Imagine that," Rabbi Soloveitchik said to me. "A Berlin

The Rebbe and the Rav Continued...

University student immersed in secular studies maintains this custom of mikvah and fasting.

“These things made huge impressions on me. Additionally, the Rebbe had an amazing memory.” The Rav described the Rebbe’s memory as “gevaldig” (astounding). “In all my life, I never encountered someone with such a memory.”

Then the Rav proceeded to describe his understanding of the Rebbe’s Torah.

“Those of us who emanate from Brisk don’t adhere to the pilpul system perpetuated in Poland,” the Rav said, “but the Rebbe has a gevaldiger comprehension of the Torah.

“There were other Jewish students from other communities in the university, studying together with us at the same time. Some of them are considered today to be famous gedolei Torah. In the university they behaved the same way as other university students, but this Jew (the Rebbe) behaved like a Jew from Warsaw or from Russia. Berlin made absolutely no impression upon him at all.”¹⁰

Levi Yitzhak HaYerushalmi, a writer for Ma’ariv, the Israeli daily newspaper, had an interview with Rabbi Soloveitchik when the former visited the United States. Their dialogue was published in the October 28, 1977 edition of Ma’ariv. HaYerushalmi raised the issue of the teshuvah movement, which was then becoming more widespread. In his response, the Rav praised the Lubavitch tefillin campaigns. Rabbi Soloveitchik declared:

With this act of placing Tefillin upon Jews, the Chabad devotees remind their brethren that they are Jewish. This is praiseworthy. The tyro experiencing the Tefillin performance may begin to wonder what this precept is all about. He may start to question his spirituality. When a member of the Jewish people starts to explore his religious status, we never know how the process will culminate!

The Rav then detailed for HaYerushalmi his own experiences as a youngster growing up in Khaslavichy.¹¹ The Rav then continued his evaluation of Chabad activities on the American scene:

No other organization could achieve what Chabad has accomplished in America. Chabad has placed Judaism in the public thoroughfare. Even though Chabad adherents are a minority among the American Torah community, its success is highly visible. It has taught the observant Jew to assert “chutzpah.” It has stressed disseminating the Torah to the Jewish people on every street corner. At times I may not agree with some of their methods. Nevertheless, this accomplishment is one of a kind. It has rejuvenated religious Jewry in America.

For instance, in the past whenever a Jewish topic arose, the leading newspapers such as The New York Times would quote Reform rabbis. The Torah world no longer existed for these newspapers. Chabad has placed Torah in the headlines

of the newspapers, radio and television.

There is another aspect of Chabad thinking which I consider very important. They comprehend reality and act accordingly. They open centers for Judaism on college campuses. This is most admirable. Many religious Jews look down upon these Jewish youngsters attending secular universities. Here I totally agree with Chabad. We must recognize the environment in which these Jewish men and women function. Most of these students are not observant, yet they possess a spark of Judaism in their hearts. We must attempt to set alight this flame.

In 1980, on Yud Shevat, the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, Chabad also celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson’s ascendancy to leadership. The Rav attended this farbrengen in a public display of acquaintanceship with Lubavitch. Among those who accompanied Rabbi Soloveitchik to this event was Rabbi Herschel Schacter, a 1941 graduate of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and the spiritual leader of the Mosholu Jewish Center in the Bronx from 1947 until it closed in 1999. Rabbi Schacter was later interviewed by Jewish Educational Media regarding this event. The Rebbe entered the beit hamidrash right after the Rav arrived. Rabbi Schacter described the public demonstration of their relationship that night:

They came up, they shook hands with each other, and the Rebbe motions to the Rav to walk ahead, and the Rav motions to the Rebbe to walk ahead, so the Rebbe walked ahead. And he sat down. There are a million other people piling in around, but in front, right [at] the front table was only the Rebbe and the Rav, zatzal, and I. They wanted to give me a chair, I said, “No, no, no.” I was standing...right behind the Rav, and I did not sit down the whole time...

The Rav listened very carefully to the Rebbe, and he had said he’s going to be there only for a half hour. An hour passed, then I myself said to him, “Maybe the Rav is not comfortable?” He said, “No, no, no. I want to stay.” I think he was there for close to two hours.

The moment he stood up, the Rebbe jumped up. The Rav didn’t wait for the Rebbe to come to him, he went to the Rebbe to shake hands and say goodbye, and I walked with the Rav, right behind. And they talked to each other for a few minutes. Very warm. You could see on their faces that these two men liked each other, they really liked one another...

Those words are not on any manuscript, but I was standing right there, and I heard ...you can take on my word of honor, that the Rebbe said to the Rav, and he’s looking at me...He says, “Du host, Baruch Hashem, voile talmidim! You have wonderful students.” In a hundred years, when I come before the kise hakavod, I am going to re-

mind the Ribbono shel Olam of what these two Geonim said to one another.

It [was] very nice, it was very warm. After two, three minutes they shook hands and we started to walk back. And everybody was standing, even those people who were sitting. As soon as the Rebbe got up, everybody got up. And everybody was standing, until . . . we, the two of us, walked through.

We walked back to the car, we sat down. I said to the Rav, “Nu, what does the Rav say? What do you say about the Rebbe?”

He’s sitting in the front, I can’t see his face. He hesitated for a minute and he says, “Er iz a Gaon. Er iz a Gadol. Er iz a Manhig Yisroel. He is a genius, he is a great man, he is a leader of the Jewish people.”¹²

The account of this farbrengen quickly circulated throughout the Torah world. For many, it was an ecstatic moment that the Rav and the Rebbe could publicly exemplify the Talmudic aphorism that “the disciples of the sages increase peace in the world” (Berachot 64a). This was particularly on target at this event as both protagonists descended from families that represented different configurations of Torah civilization.

Perhaps there was also a basic subliminal thought behind the Rav’s participation. He was expressing his gratitude to Chabad for the additional Torah perspectives they set in motion for him. In a talk he delivered at Lincoln Square Synagogue in 1975, the Rav related:

By sheer association I recall an experience from my early youth. Let me give you the background of that experience.

I was then about seven or eight years old. I attended a heder in a small town on the border of White Russia and Russia proper. The town was called Khaslavichy; you certainly have never heard of it. My father was the rabbi in the town. I, like every other Jewish boy, attended the heder. My teacher was not a great scholar, but he was [a] hasid, a Habbadnik [a follower of the Lubavitcher Rebbe]. His expertise in the study and teaching of Talmud was then under a question mark. As a young boy, I too questioned his scholarship. I know now that he was not a great scholar.

Nonetheless, I have been grateful to him all my life, because he taught me something that no one else taught me. Perhaps there is one exception, my mother. Namely, he instructed me in how to behold a vision. He did not train my mind but somehow addressed himself to my soul and my heart. He taught me how a Jew can be imaginative in religious matters. Many people practice Judaism but do so unimaginatively. He taught me how to practice Judaism, Torah, and mitzvot in an imaginative way. He showed us how to see a vision and make it come to life. Not many heder boys knew what a vision was and certainly not how to make a dream real. He taught me how to

The Rebbe and the Rav Continued...

live Judaism and not just practice it.¹³

Some two hundred years earlier, it was noted that the Vilna Gaon departed from his city rather than meet with Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Lubavitch. The chasm between their Torah outlooks were too great to be bridged. In 1980, the Rav, a direct descendant of Rabbi Chaim Volozhin, a leading student of the Gaon, embraced the Rebbe, a scion of the “Alter Rebbe.” Fascinatingly, at this historic event in 1980, these two imposing worlds merged into one elevated reality. ●

Listen to Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff discuss the relationship between the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the Rav at www.ou.org/life/inspiration/savitsky-rakeffet.

Notes

¹ Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Vol. I (New Jersey, 1999), 23-24 and Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage: A Daughter's Memoir* (New Jersey, 1995), 124-125.

² David Holzer, *The Rav: Thinking Aloud* (Florida, 2009), 42.

³ Cited by Shaul Shimon Deutsch, *Larger Than Life: The Life and Times of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson*, Vol. II (Brooklyn, 1997), 113.

⁴ Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Silver Era: Rabbi Eliezer Silver And His Generation* (Jerusalem, 2000), 270.

⁵ Cited by Deutsch, *Larger Than Life*, II, 116.

⁶ Shalom Dover HaLevi Wolpo, *Shemen Sasson Meichaveirecha*, Vol. III (Holon, 2003), 178-179.

⁷ Chabad-Lubavitch: *The Lamplighters* (Brooklyn, 1988), 7.

⁸ Examples of this correspondence are reproduced in Shalom Dover HaLevi Wolpo's *Shemen Sasson Meichaveirecha*, 184-188.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 181-184.

¹⁰ Sholem B. Kowalsky, *From My Zaidy's House* (Jerusalem, 2000), 274-275.

¹¹ Cf. Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 23-24; 255-265.

¹² YouTube video entitled “Excerpt: The Rebbe and the Rav,” interview with Rabbi Herschel Schacter by Jewish Educational Media. Circulated in transcript form by Jewish Educational Media. A more negative assessment of this event is attributed to Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik by Deutsch in *Larger Than Life*, Vol. II, 119.

¹³ Cited by Rakeffet-Rothkoff in *The Rav*, 149-150.

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff is rosh yeshivah and professor of rabbinic literature at Yeshiva University's Caroline and Joseph S. Gruss Institute in Jerusalem. He is a noted scholar, author and teacher who has taught thousands of students throughout his over fifty years of teaching. He would like to express gratitude to Mrs. Cheri Levy, student liaison, S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program and the RIETS Israel Kollel, for help in preparing the article for publication.

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Hagaon Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss: Fortunate is He and Fortunate is the Generation for His Lofty Activities and Great Influence

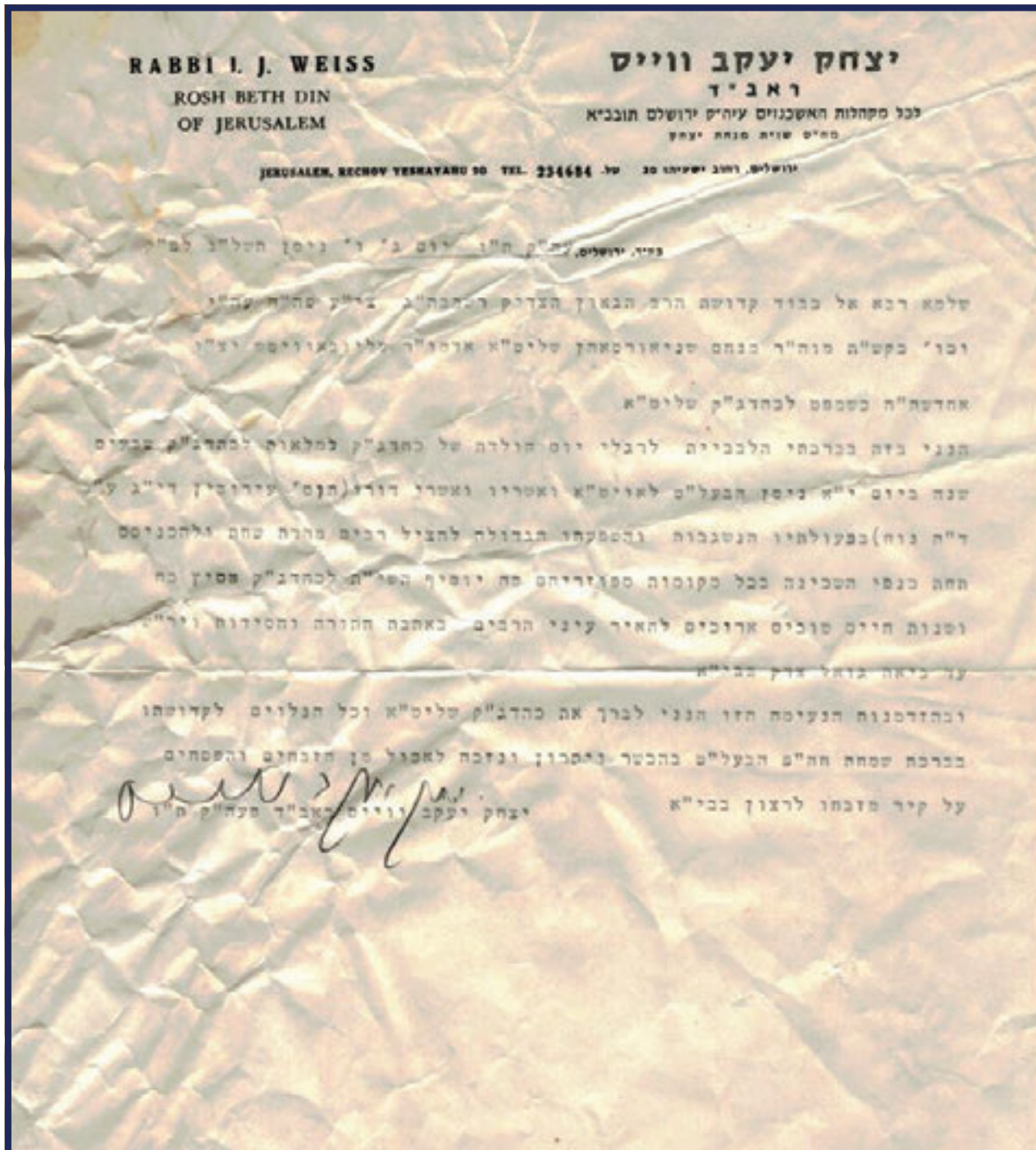
In a letter during the month of Nissan 1972 the great *Gaon* and *Posek*, head of the Eida Hachreidit, Rav Yitzchok Yaakov Weiss writes;

(Translation): Peace to the honorable genius and *tzaddik*, leader of the entire diaspora, our Rabbi and Teacher, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Rebbe of Lubavitch:

I offer my heartfelt blessings on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of Rebbe, on the 11th of Nissan. Fortunate is he and fortunate is his generation (*Tosafot Eruvin*, 13b “*Noach*”), for his lofty activities and the great influence he has had in saving countless [Jews] from desolation and has brought them under the wings of the Divine Presence, in all the places they have been dispersed. May Hashem bless with greater strength, and long, good years, to illuminate the hearts of the multitude with the love of Torah, *Chasidut*, and fear of G-d, until the coming of the righteous redeemer, soon in our days.

On this fortuitous occasion, let me bless the Rebbe, *shlit”a*, and all those who are attached to his holiness a joyful Pesach, and may we merit to eat from the sacrifices and from the Paschal offering, [whose blood is offered] on His altar, soon in our days. ●

R. Yitzchak Weiss



What Gedolim Said About The Rebbe

HaGaon Rav Moshe Feinstein: The world doesn't know how great of a *gaon* in learning the Rebbe is.

In a podcast *Meaningful People* on YouTube, Alexander Stern speaks about his close relationship with Rav Moshe: "It was a Thursday night, I was sitting with Reb Moshe and his wife in the kitchen and I told him I have a *yechidus* (private audience) with the Rebbe on Sunday, should I give him a copy of *Igros Moshe*. Reb Moshe said 'of course' and he took the *sefer* and started writing an inscription inside. His wife became upset and said 'why are you writing an inscription, you don't write for anybody?' Reb Moshe retorted 'I don't ask you what I should do.'

"Reb Moshe then told me that he had met the Rebbe on three different occasions before he became Rebbe and I spoke with him in learning during all three occasions. He is a big *gaon* and the world doesn't know what kind of a *gaon* he is." "בְּקֶשֶׁר לִידִידִי וְחֲבִיבִי מַעֲלֵת הוֹד כְּבוֹד קְדוּשַׁת הַגָּאוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָאֲדָמוּרִי מִנְחָם מֵעֲנַדל שְׁלִיט"א שְׁנִיאֹרְסָאָהָן מְלִיּוּבָאוּיִטְשׁ, הֵנָּה יָדוּעַ בְּעוֹלָם אֹדוֹת גְּאוּנוֹתוֹ בַּתּוֹרָה וְאִיךְ שֶׁהוּא בִּאֲמַת מַתְעַסֵּק גָּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה בְּגָאוֹן, שֶׁהוּא עוֹבֵד תַּמִּיד בַּתּוֹרָה וְשֶׁהוּא בִּאֲמַת בַּעַל תּוֹרָה... בְּמִשְׁךְ הַשָּׁנִים שֶׁאֵנִי מְכִיר אֶת הָאֲדָמוּרִי שְׁלִיט"א, שֶׁהִקְשֶׁר בֵּינֵינוּ הָיָה בִּידִידוֹת גְּדוֹלָה, הָיָה לִי כְּמָה הַזְדַּמְנוּיוֹת לְהִשְׁתַּעֲשֹׁעַ עִמּוֹ בַּעֲנִינִים מְסוֹבְכִים בֵּין בַּתּוֹרָה הַגָּלוּהָ וּבֵין בַּתּוֹרָה הַנִּסְתֶּר, וְתַמִּיד הַחֲשַׁבְתִּיו כְּרוֹם גְּדוֹלוֹת וְגְאוּנוֹתוֹ... שֶׁקִּדַּשׁ עֲצָמוֹ לְהַכִּנֵּס רָאשׁוֹ וְרֹבּוֹ לְהַרְבִּיץ תּוֹרָה בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם, בְּקִטְנִים וּבְגְדוּלִים בְּכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּיחָד, וּבִאֲמַת מַתְעַסֵּק בְּגְאוּנוֹת בַּעֲנִין שֶׁל הַרְבַּצַּת תּוֹרָה. וְנִכְרַ שְׁכָל עֲבוּדָתוֹ הוּא בְּזֶה... בְּכָל פְּעוּלוֹתָיו הַמְרֻבִּים, הַצִּיּוּרִיִּים וְהָאִישִׁיִּים. זֶה רְצִיתִי לְהַזְכִּיר שֶׁזֶּה בִּאֲמַת הַשִּׁבְחָה הַכִּי גְדוֹל, וְהוּא הַשִּׁבְחָה שֶׁהִיא לְכָל גְּדוּלֵי עוֹלָם בְּמִשְׁךְ כָּל הַשָּׁנִים, שֶׁהִיוּ בַּעֲיָקֵר בַּתּוֹרָה... לְפִיכֵךְ אֲנִי מִשְׁתַּתֵּף בְּשִׂמְחָה לְהַעֲנִין שְׁתִּקְבֵּל בְּעוֹלָם כּוֹל, שִׁישׁ שִׂמְחָה גְּדוֹלָה שֶׁהִשִּׁי"ת הָאֲרִיךְ יָמָיו לְשָׁנַת הַשְּׁמוּנִים. וְאֵין מַסְפִּיק סֵתֵם לְבָרְכוֹ לְאֲרִיכוֹת יָמִים



ושנים, שהיום לא מספיק ברכה זו, שמקוים שמלך המשיח יבוא מיד ובקרוב, ויזכה אז האדמו"ר שליט"א לעבוד לעולם ועד בתורה וביראת שמים... ונברך שיזכה ידידי אדמו"ר שליט"א לאריכות זה, ושיזכו כל כלל ישראל לגאולה השלימה בקרוב מיד ביחד עם האדמו"ר שליט"א.

(Translation): In regard to my dear friend, the honorable and holy genius and *tzaddik*, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch. His genius in Torah is recognize worldwide, as is his great and brilliant devotion to Torah study, for he constantly labors at Torah and is indeed a master of Torah... During the many years that I have known the Rebbe, *shlit"א* – our relationship has been one of great friendship – I have had opportunities to discuss with him complex topics, both in the revealed or the concealed dimension of Torah, and I have always been impressed by his greatness and brilliance... His entire being is devoted to spreading Torah throughout the world, to all members of Israel, both great and the small, and to this he has applied his brilliance. It is obvious that his manifold efforts, both the public and the private, are all directed toward this end.

And this I wanted to mention, for the study of Torah is truly the greatest praise, for which the leaders [of Israel] have always been praised ... Therefore, I gladly join in the matter, accepted worldwide, to rejoice in his reaching his eightieth year, with G-d's help. Indeed, to bless him with a long life today is insufficient. [Rather], we hope for the imminent arrival of the Messiah, so that the Rebbe should be able to serve [Hashem] with Torah and fear of G-d forever... May we bless that my dear friend, the Rebbe, merit *this* type of long life, and that the entire Jewish people should see the complete redemption, soon, together with the Rebbe, *shlit"א*.

In 1978 following the Rebbe's heart attack a few months earlier Rav Moshe wrote the following letter supporting the ten "*Mivtzoim*" asking people to make sure they are fulfilled.

(Translation) By the grace of G-d

Rosh Chodesh Shvat 5738 (1978)

Considering the medical condition of the *gaon* and *tzaddik* – the Lubavitcher Rebbe, *shlita*, who toils day and night to disseminate Torah and to fortify *Yiddishkeit* and to bring the hearts of our fellow Jews close to our Father in Heaven, I would like to request that *rabbanim* everywhere to address their shuls and *batei midrash*. Let them urge their communities to participate in the well-known campaigns that encourage our fellow Jews to have the *zechus* of fulfilling the *mitzvos* of *tefillin*, *mezuzah*, *Shabbos* candles.

Since the entire desire of the soul of the *gaon* and *tzaddik* of Lubavitch, *shlita*, is to bring our brother Jews close to our Father in Heaven, and it is widely known that thousands have become *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos* via these outreach campaigns, it is certain that every active participation in them will fortify his health.

All of his endeavors to bring our fellow Jews to observe the *mitzvos* of Hashem and to fortify their faith in Him are outstanding – and may He grant the Rebbe a complete recovery that will enable him to continue to toil for the glory of Heaven, for the observance of *mitzvos*, and for the study of Torah, until the coming of the Redeemer. ●

Moshe Feinstein



Rav Feinstein reading a telegram from the Rebbe to a conference of the Agudas Harabonim. Next to him is Rabbi Avrohom Shmuel Lewin, secretary of Agudas Horabonim.



Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, helping Rav Moshe with his coat following his private audience with the Rebbe in 770 (the first time after he became Rebbe) in Nissan 1972.

Where Change Begins

BY GORDON ZACKS

You want to change the world? Start by changing yourself.
—The Rebbe

In 1969, I was the Chairman of the Young Leadership Cabinet of the national United Jewish Appeal. As such, I was invited to deliver the keynote address to the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds Annual Conference, being held that year in November in Boston. The theme was “Youth Looks at the Future of the American Jewish Community.” I spent six months preparing for this talk. Usually, I speak extemporaneously with at most a one-page outline. This time—because of its importance—I elected to read the entire speech.

In it, I thanked my parents’ generation for supporting the creation of the state of Israel and rescuing survivors from the Holocaust. In its aftermath, two million Jews had been delivered through their efforts from lands of oppression and resettled to lands of freedom. Nonetheless, I pointed out that we faced a disaster in the field of Jewish education. We ran the risk of losing more Jews through assimilation than we had saved through affirmation. We needed to address the failure of our Jewish educational system to inspire many young Jews to continue to be Jewish. I recommended that we create a national Jewish research and development venture capital fund to invest risk capital in innovative approaches to make Jewish education relevant to young people and to create an Institute for Jewish Life that would manage the process.

To fund this Institute, I proposed that the Jewish community endow the Institute with \$100 million of State of Israel bonds for a period of ten years. The purchasers would receive a tax deduction. At the end of ten years, they would get their principal back. The Institute would get the use of the interest. Annually it would provide about \$6 million in revenue. We would have ten years in which to evaluate the results. If the concept didn’t produce worthwhile results, that would be the end of the Institute. Ultimately the idea was adopted in an abbreviated form with funding of \$3.5 million. In this truncated version, it failed in its mission and was eventually closed. Still, it stimulated a lot of discussion about Jewish education, and placed it right behind rescue as a priority for the American Jewish community.

In December 1969, I received a call from a man named Leibel Alevsky. He was a rabbi with the Lubavitch movement in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. He said the Rebbe wanted to meet me. Given the tone of the phone call, I thought I was being invited for a royal audience. I immediately said yes to a date in January, but I didn’t even know who the Rebbe was! My rabbi gave me some background and urged me to go ahead with the meeting. On the appointed day in January, Alevsky and I were finishing dinner in his home at 11:15 at night. We got a call that the

Rebbe would see me now. I walked with Alevsky to a modest building to find 300 people—from around the world—each waiting at the Rebbe’s headquarters, the *Chabad Center*, in the middle of the night for an audience with the Rebbe!

Later I learned that the Rebbe held these audiences three times each week, lasting from sundown often until the middle of the night.

I went in alone to see the Rebbe. In his office, illuminated by a single ceiling light, books were stacked from the floor to the ceiling. He was a slight man with translucent skin and absolutely clear whites of his eyes—the sclera encircling his sparkling blue irises, his beard outlining an impish grin. The Rebbe was sixty-seven at the time. He looked at me in such a penetrating way that I felt like I was being x-rayed.

“Mr. Zacks, I have read your speech,” he began, “and it’s clear you have taken good care of your mind. I can look at you, and it’s clear you have taken good care of your body. *What* have you done to take care of your soul?”

No small talk about how I was or if I had a pleasant trip. I was stunned.

“The Jewish house is on fire,” he continued. “We have an emergency, and this is not the time to experiment with new ways to put out the fire. Instead, you call the proven and tested fire department. We *are* that fire department. We—the Lubavitch—don’t have drugs or intermarriage problems with our children or kids opting out of Judaism. Our tradition works, and our children are being educated. We have a worldwide outreach program that contacts and impacts non-observant Jews and saves souls. Give us the \$100 million, and we will spend it to correct the problems that you are concerned about.”

“Rebbe,” I asked after pausing for a moment, “what if the house is on fire, but people have forgotten your telephone number?” “Gd will provide,” he answered me.

“There are millions of Jews whose houses are on fire,” I said to him. “Most of them are Jews who will not call you, either because they have lost your number or *they* won’t accept the lifestyle compromises you expect. They’re still worthy of saving in their own way, and they are entitled to a quality Jewish education that makes Judaism relevant to their lives. That’s why we need this Institute.”

“Do you believe in revelation, Mr. Zacks?” he asked me next.

“I believe in Gd and I believe he inspires... but I don’t believe he writes,” I answered.

“You mean, Mr. Zacks, that there is this vast structure Gd has created of plants, animals, food chains, stars, and planets. And, that the only creature in all of creation that doesn’t understand how to fit in and live their life purposefully is the human?”

I told him yes.

“What about the complexity of the human body? What about the jewel of the human cell?



How does the body ingest food and renew itself with absolute consistency?”

I had no answer.

“Why, Mr. Zacks, is the nose always where the nose belongs? Why are the eyes always on the face for generation after generation?”

I could only shrug my shoulders, but my respect for him deepened by the moment.

“And, how can you account for the brain and the mind? How do they steer this remarkable system in a purposeful and precise way? And, what about how we fit into the earth’s ecosystem, where we inhale the oxygen that plants so wonderfully manufacture for us? Could this all be accidental?”

How could I answer him?

“And, beyond what happens on earth. What about all the heavenly bodies in the sky that seem to follow such a perfect order and don’t collide with each other? Is man the only creature on the planet earth without guidelines for living its life? Should man ignore the Torah given to us by Gd as a roadmap to guide us? This is the missing link which connects us to the complexity of Nature!”

So it went. Comment after comment. More times than not, I could not begin to answer his points.

He quoted Kazantzakis’ book *Zorba the Greek* to me during our conversation. “Do you remember the young man talking with Zorba on the beach, when Zorba asks what the purpose of life is? The young fellow admits he doesn’t know. And Zorba comments, ‘Well, all those damned books you read—what good are they? Why do you read them?’ Zorba’s friend says he doesn’t know. Zorba can see his friend doesn’t have an answer to the most fundamental question. That’s the trouble with you. ‘A man’s head is like a grocer,’ Zorba says, ‘it keeps accounts.... The head’s a careful little shopkeeper; it never risks all it has, always keeps something in reserve. It never

Where Change Begins Continued...

breaks the string.' Wise men and grocers *weigh* everything. They can never cut the cord and be free. Your problem, Mr. Zacks, is that you are trying to find Gd's map through your head. You are unlikely to find it that way. You have to *experience* before you can truly feel and then be free to learn. Let me send a teacher to live with you for a year and teach you how to *be* Jewish. You will unleash a whole new dimension to your life. If you really want to change the world, change yourself! It's like dropping a stone into a pool of water and watching the concentric circles radiate to the shore. You will influence all the people around you, and they will influence others in turn. That's how you bring about improvement in the world."

"Rebbe, I'm not ready to do that," I told him. I remained firm despite the incredibly woven tapestry of the universe he presented to me.

"What do you have to lose?" he asked, "One year of your life? What if I'm right? It could gain you an eternity if I'm right, but only cost you one year if I'm wrong."

"I'll think about it," I said as we wrapped up our hour-and-a-half conversation. The normal audience with the Rebbe was thirty seconds to a minute. Three hundred people were still waiting to come in at one in the morning.

The Rebbe took people the way they were. His ultimate goal was to bring you to the ways of Jewish life, but his means were not confrontational and demanding. You could literally feel his warmth and love in addition to the power of his vast intellect. Once he established the *Chabad* Center at 770 Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights, I don't think he ever left it. Yet he was totally wired into the events of the world. I sensed this in my first meeting with the Rebbe. He radiated compassion, love, and respect for others—a servant leader totally committed to serving Gd through helping others.

The Rebbe wrote me letters encouraging me to devote myself to Jewish education. Over a series of years, I received five letters from him saying that he wanted to send his representative to me to spend a year teaching me how to be Jewish. I responded to each of them and declined.

Beginning in 1986, the Rebbe had a receiving line on Sunday in which he passed out a dollar bill to be given by the recipient as *tzedakah* to charity. His reasoning: "When two people meet, something good should result for a third." People waited in line for as long as four hours to be greeted by him and receive his blessing and the dollar bill. The Rebbe was eighty-four when he started doing this. An older woman in the line asked him how he could manage to perform this demanding task. "Every soul is a diamond," he answered. "Can one grow tired of counting diamonds?"

In 1987, my youngest daughter, Kim, had just returned from Israel and she wanted to participate in the custom of Sunday Dollars. I said fine

I would take her. I neither called nor told anyone who I was when we arrived. I stood in line with her. It had been seventeen years since I had seen the Rebbe and ten years since he wrote me his last letter. When it was our turn to speak with the Rebbe, he looked at me and asked "What are you doing for Jewish education?" His eyes had the same penetrating look that had scanned me seventeen years earlier and asked, "*What* are you doing to take care of your soul, Mr. Zacks?" It was as though I had just walked back into his office. In truth, hundreds of thousands of people had filed past him over those years.

"You are amazing!" I exclaimed to him.

"What has that to do with saving Jewish lives? What are you **doing** for Jewish education?" he retorted. He may not have gotten exactly what he wanted from me, but the Rebbe surely taught me the power of changing yourself to influence others. He wanted to enlist me as *his* fundraiser for Jewish education. While I certainly considered his invitation, I declined it. Still he may have been the most charismatic man I ever met. He had an incredible aura to him, partly because he was such a combination of charisma *and* pragmatism. This man came out of the scientific community to return to the religious life. Every Israeli prime minister and Israeli chief of staff found his way to the Rebbe's doorstep when they came to the United States. The most amazing thing? The Rebbe saw himself as perfecting Gd's will. He had no power in the sense that a police commissioner, a general, or a tax collector does. He had no one enforcing his decisions. What he *did* have was the authority of his holiness, which caused others to connect to him. It wasn't his title that gave the Rebbe authority. It was his presence and his profound grasp of bringing the principles of the *Torah* to life in himself and in others. The Rebbe didn't declare himself a leader. His overpowering presence inspired those around him to declare him their leader and to revere him. Through earning respect and trust, people endowed him with leadership.

About ten years after I first met the Rebbe, I attended a dinner in Cleveland at the home of Leibel Alevsky. At the table with us was the man the Rebbe sent to the Soviet Union to save Jews. When the Rebbe sent him on this mission, he didn't give him a plan or give him money! This was during the Stalin era. The anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist mentality of the Soviets may have been at its very worst. The Rebbe's designate went to the Soviet Union, lived and worked by his wits, and figured out how he could smuggle Jews out to Poland by train. He succeeded. At the same time, he was smuggling *in* prayer books, religious articles, and calendars for those still in the Soviet Union. And, he set up secret schools to teach Hebrew. The Lubavitchers are incredibly resourceful people, whose outreach is one-on-one.

The Lubavitchers are the essence of true believers. As I traveled abroad, I first noted their presence in Morocco. They ran schools for kids in the ghetto. That may sound noble, but not earth-shattering until you understand the kind of "social security system" that prevailed in Morocco at the time. Children *were* the system. At birth, many infants—Arabs and Jews both—were maimed and deformed by their parents so the kids could beg more effectively! The Lubavitchers *bought* the children from their parents for one more *dirham* than the market value of the child begging on the street for a year, and then they gave the children an education.

You could see the evidence of the Rebbe's positive work all over the world in places like the Soviet Union, Morocco, and Iran. How did these devout Lubavitchers get there? The Rebbe would simply say, "Go to Morocco and save souls." They didn't get a dime or an ounce of organizational help. They saved thousands and thousands of Jews physically, and they spiritually changed many more. The conviction they are doing Gd's work carries them forward. Their passion brings them to college campuses all over the United States. They will send out a representative wearing *payos* and a black frock coat and open up a *Chabad* house on campuses like University of California at Berkeley. They get kids off narcotics and give them a spiritual jolt instead of a buzz on drugs. "Get high on Gd!" they preach. Their individual missions are great illustrations of the power of one. The Rebbe's passion for saving Jewish souls lives through them.

Unlike every other Jewish figure in this book, the Rebbe was not a Zionist. Though very supportive of the state of Israel and its defense forces, he felt that redemption would only be ushered in by the Messiah. He also drove home the point that a commitment to the state of Israel does not exempt us from fulfilling age-old Judaic commandments. In fact, it should actually elicit more loyalty to the Torah. The Rebbe was completely devoted to fulfilling Gd's will.

The essence of the Rebbe's teaching is celebration of Gd. The *Chabad* radiate a wonderful joy of life that is a reverberation of the Rebbe's spirit. I wish I could believe the way they do, with their absolute confidence in their answer. Their sheer love in celebrating the Jewish traditions with singing and dancing is unmatched. Nothing equals the celebration of a Shabbat with a Chabadnik. The food is homemade, delicious—though not necessarily healthy for your arteries—but it's only the beginning of the positive energy that flows in each Shabbat from celebrating the birthday of the world! ●

Mr. Gordon Zacks was general chairman designate of the National United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and was a founding member and chairman of the Young Leadership Cabinet of the UJA. Excerpted from Defining Moments by Gordon Zacks, published by Beaufort Books.

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The String and the Flame

BY YEHUDAH AVNER

Israeli Ambassador Yehuda Avner before his historic first meeting with newly elected United States President Jimmy Carter in Washington, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin asked me to arrange a meeting with the Lubavitcher Rebbe in New York.

I myself had visited the Rebbe previously on behalf of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, and later as an advisor to Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's then-ambassador to the UN.

The Rebbe himself came out and escorted Prime Minister Begin to the entrance. Reporters were throwing out questions at the both of them, and I recall one question from a reporter for the *Village Voice*. He asked Begin, "Why do you seek out the Rebbe prior to your meeting with President Carter?" And Begin said, "It's my first meeting with the new U.S. president, and it's very important for me to get the blessings of the Rebbe for its success."

"Begin thought that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was the greatest Jewish leader of the 20th century . . ."

He went on to say that the Rebbe had many insights, and that he was a man of awesome knowledge. "I can learn many things from him." He also described the Rebbe as an old friend.

Then he was asked, "Why doesn't the Rebbe come to you, as you are prime minister? Why do you go to the Rebbe?" And he said, "He is a great sage of Israel . . . he is a great leader himself."

Actually, Begin thought that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was the greatest Jewish leader of the 20th Century. I heard him say that.

And I recall the Rebbe saying with enormous modesty, in response to a question by the press: "I greet Prime Minister Begin as a friend, but I am receiving his visit on behalf of the Lubavitch movement."

Yehuda Avner, with Menachem Begin (Left).

After Begin's meeting with Carter at the White House, I returned to see the Rebbe in order to give him a report. My appointment was set for 10 p.m.—and I must tell you that the Rebbe always gave me an appointment at a "civilized" hour, not in the middle of the night.

I was ushered straight in, and I gave the Rebbe a report of the meeting. I'm not permitted to go into details, because there are still segments of that meeting that are classified. I must have spoken for half an hour, and then the Rebbe began to comment—and again, I don't think I can reveal those comments.

This exchange went on until after midnight. I was very tired, yet the Rebbe was as sprightly and as fresh as ever. But he saw that I was tired. He leaned over to me—I was sitting at the side of his desk—and he put his



The Rebbe shaking hands with Ambassador Yehudah Avner who served as Prime Minister Menachem Begin's liaison to the Rebbe

hand on mine. I will always remember these words. He said, "Reb Yehuda, you know us so well; why don't you identify more with us?"

"And that is what I try to do—to help every man and woman fulfill the purpose for which they were created."

Now, I shall never know whether it was only because I was tired that I had the temerity to say what I really felt or whether I would have said it anyway, but I heard myself saying to the Rebbe, "Because I have within my own family those who see in the Rebbe powers that the Rebbe does not recognize in himself."

And he got a very serious look in his eyes, and he said to me these words: "There are evidently people who need crutches."

"I will tell you what I'm trying to do . . . Reb Yehuda, imagine you are looking at a cupboard, and I tell you to open that cupboard. You open the cupboard, and you see there a candle, but I tell you that it is not a candle—it is a lump of wax with a piece of string inside. When does the wax and the wick become a candle? When one brings a flame to the wick. That is when the wax and the wick fulfill the purpose for which they were created."

"And that is what I try to do—to help every man and woman fulfill the purpose for which they were created."

I was sitting there listening to him, impressed by the authority in his voice. And then he said these words:

The Rebbe greets Avner at a Yechidus with Menachem Begin in 1977

"*Ha-esh, zeh esh ha-Torah*—the fire is the fire of the Torah. When one brings the flame to the wick, one ignites the soul—for the wick is the soul—and it gives life to the body, which is the wax. And then the body and the soul fulfill the purpose for which they were created. And that happens through the fire of Torah."

By the time my meeting with the Rebbe was over, it was past two in the morning. For the last hour, a buzzer had been buzzing intermittently, and only later did I realize that the door couldn't be opened unless the Rebbe released the latch from the inside. But he didn't. He merely said, "*Al ti-tyaches*—don't pay attention."

Finally, I rose and he escorted me to the door. He took hold of both my hands to say goodbye, and I said, "Has the Rebbe lit my candle?"

He answered, "No. I have given you the match. Only you can light your own candle." ●



The Rebbe meets with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his entourage in 1977

The Rebbe Never Stopped

BY YISROEL SHMOTKIN

he Rebbe speaking at a farbrengen at 770 Eastern Parkway.

“The Rebbe was watched 24 hours a day. Yet there was not one minute in which his personality did not shine.”

—Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz)

The Rebbe never stopped. He was active seven days a week, 365 days a year, often twenty hours a day or more.

During 44 years of leadership, he did not take a single vacation, nor a personal or sick day. This is neither exaggeration nor legend. It is a matter of record, as the Rebbe’s daily schedule was public knowledge.

During those 44 years, the Rebbe delivered thousands of public discourses. He responded to millions of **He counseled countless individuals** letters and requests for advice and blessings from men and women everywhere, and to questions from organizations and institutions of all stripes. These requests ran the full gamut of human experience: health, marriage, children, livelihood, education, business, Torah and the sciences.

The Rebbe initiated, guided and supervised a global network of Lubavitch institutions. In personal meetings he counseled countless individuals – Torah scholars, simple folk and heads of state, men and women, hoary elders and children, business titans and troubled teens, men of letters and the ill and infirm.

Every Sunday from 1986 until his stroke in 1992, the Rebbe would stand for many hours without interruption, greeting people, listening and offering blessings and advice while distributing to each person a dollar to give to charity. These sessions often lasted more than seven

hours – and by this time the Rebbe was already in his late eighties!

The Rebbe spent the larger portion of his day immersed in Torah study and prayer.

Yet somehow, everyone – especially his Chasidim – took this all for granted.

No one ever questioned how such a schedule, such a lifestyle, was humanly possible. The Rebbe made it all seem so natural, so organic, so effortless, that one easily forgot that his was a schedule beyond the capacity of any ordinary human being.

All these, and more ...

Some saw the Rebbe as the consummate *Ohev Yisrael*, lover of all Jews. Others observed his *yir’as shamayim*, his reverence for Gd...some recognized his complete selflessness. Others were awed by his genius in Torah scholarship... Some saw him as the man of unparalleled activism. Others experienced the impact of his profound wisdom and keen insight... Some saw him as the paragon of *mesiras nefesh*, absolute self-sacrifice. Others perceived him as the catalyst of a Jewish revolution... Some recognized him as the ultimate leader. Others viewed him as the ultimate Chasid, devoted entirely to his Rebbe... **No one ever questioned how such a schedule was humanely possible** And still others appreciated him as the ultimate scholar and intellectual.

The Rebbe was all of these.

Yet it is his essence, which transcends the particulars of his person, from which all of the above emanated. From the very depth of his *ne-shamah* (soul), from the core of his being, the Rebbe revered Gd, loved every Jew, and was devoted to Torah and the fulfillment of Gd’s will.

The Rebbe communicated many of his thoughts and insights to us out of his deep desire to give to

others. By sharing, he afforded us a glimpse into the window of his soul, a reflection of his spirit.

The Wish to Share

“He who has a generous eye, shall be blessed, for he gave of his bread to the poor” (*Proverbs 22:9*). According to our sages, this refers to Moses whose innate generosity impelled him to share insights of the Torah – even those which he was not commanded to relay.

On a number of occasions the Rebbe shared teachings and stories that he had heard from his father-in-law and predecessor, Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchok Schneersohn, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, adding that he had not been given explicit permission to make them public but was nevertheless taking the liberty to do so, as “my father-in-law knew

A DIFFERENT WORLD

For the Rebbe, nothing was ordinary. Everything that he touched took on new light, new life, new depth, new meaning. The presence of Gd was palpable. An ordinary day became a holiday. An ordinary person became extraordinary. A routine mitzvah became precious. A simple Talmudic exchange became a profound principle. A minor footnote in the life of his Rebbe became a life’s lesson. Any mundane object was a spark, any episode a lesson in the service of Gd. Every occurrence was a stage in the fulfillment of the Divine plan. Every occasion – good or seemingly bad – was a challenge to help us better serve the Almighty. The Rebbe shed new light on every subject. He cut to the core of every matter. ●

Rabbi Yisroel Shmotkin is director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Wisconsin

Reprinted from Chabad.org



Rebbe Launches Worldwide Tzivos Hashem Organization

World leader, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was sought after by top political figures, successful business people and the finest professionals for his sage advice on matters of grave importance. He was a mentor and spiritual leader to hundreds of thousands of everyday people in all corners of the globe, no one was turned away. Yet, amidst his awesome schedule, the Rebbe busied himself with the lives of children, and set out to harness their great potential.

With a vision that has been unfolding and mushrooming for twenty years, the Rebbe called for the establishment of Tzivos Hashem in the fall of 1980. Children were a top priority for the Rebbe. Rather, each Jewish child was a top priority for the Rebbe. From his vantage point as world leader and spiritual giant, he understood the intrinsic promise held by children, and he founded Tzivos Hashem to cultivate and nurture them so that they could grow to be strong and healthy in body, mind and soul. The Rebbe himself would hold communal meetings, which he called rallies, with thousands of children at a time. And it was the Rebbe himself who spoke to the children directly and put great responsibilities on their shoulders. Not only did the Rebbe see children as the promise of a better tomorrow, the Rebbe saw children as the promise for a better today.

Judaism stresses that chinuch, Jewish education, should begin at an early age to prepare for adulthood. The Rebbe emphasized that not only are children's mitzvos for the sake of practicing for the future, but that their mitzvos, now, while they are young, have significance in and of themselves. Through his confidence in them and his expectations, the Rebbe actually confirmed a child's self esteem and challenged children to use their inborn strengths and talents for good. The Tzivos Hashem relationship did not flow in just one direction, of commander to commandee. The soldiers of Tzivos Hashem gave nachas to the Rebbe as he watched them increase their mitzvos and perform them with greater care. And it was the children who were able to identify with and express the Rebbe's passion to bring the world to peace and goodness, as they would sing for him their theme song: We Want Moshiach Now.

Today Tzivos Hashem is the foremost worldwide organization serving the physical and spiritual needs of Jewish children.

Participants in Tzivos Hashem programs are youngsters under the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah from backgrounds spanning the spectrum of levels of Jewish education and commitment to Jewish affiliation, without regard to social and economic status.

From its headquarters in Brooklyn, Tzivos Hashem spearheads the trend to revive Jewish identity in children and provide them with a Jewish education through informal and entertaining programs, modern cutting edge teaching



methods, first-class publications and personal encounters.

Fall 1980 – 5741

- Establishment of Tzivos Hashem Activities. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson encourages Jewish children to enlist in Tzivos Hashem. Enrollment pours in from many countries. Registration is recorded in pencil on cards. Tzivos Hashem enrollment reaches 60,000 boys and girls.
- The Tzivos Hashem emblem is designed under the scrutiny of the Rebbe
- Soldiers go up in Rank
- The Rebbe hosts Rallies for Tzivos Hashem
- Children begin learning twelve Torah passages selected by the Rebbe
- Youth Groups
- Tzivos Hashem Choir
- Adopted the theme song 'We Want Moshiach Now'

1982 – 5742

- The Moshiach Times Magazine
- The comic character the Shpy is created for Tzivos Hashem
- Pesach Experience
- Tzivos Hashem Radio Show
- Rallies with the Rebbe

1983 – 5743

- Registration reaches 100,000 in North America and 250,000 children worldwide.
- Tzivos Hashem Newsletter
- Lag B'Omer Parade
- Sukkos Experience

1984 – 5744

- Tzivos Hashem Pen-Pal Program Dail-a-Jewish Story
- Tzivos Hashem visits schools presenting a Matza baking program
- Schools tour the Matza Bakery
- Tzivos Hashem visits children in hospitals
- Tzivos Hashem records soldiers' rank in a computerized database

1985 – 5745

- The Matza Ball Race
- 'Jewish Heroes' and 'Good News' columns in Newsletter
- The Moshiach Times is published in Italian
- Traveling Tzivos Hashem Programs visit schools, camps, Y's and youth groups

1986 – 5746

- The Wonderful World of Shabbos
- After school tutoring programs
- Child's Hotline
- The Summer Experience
- The Tzivos Hashem Bookstore
- The Dreidel House

1987 – 5747

- Sergeant Shmulke appears in the Tzivos Hashem Newsletter
- Tzivos Hashem Summer Camp
- Tours with entertainer Moshe Yess

1988 – 5748

- 'We Want Moshiach Now' bumper stickers
- Tzivos Hashem rooms

Rebbe Launches Worldwide Tzivos Hashem Organization Continued...

- Project Identity: Canarsie
- The Jewish Birthday Club
- HaChai Publications is founded to honor the memory of the Rebbe's wife Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka
- The Jewish Expo opens in the Javits Convention Center

1989 – 5749

- The first Shomer Shabbos baseball team
- A big brother/big sister program named 'Achim'
- The Shpy records a cassette tape

1990 – 5750

- Jewish Chaplaincy Program for Boy Scouts of America
- 'Step Up' Bar Mitzvah program

1991 – 5751

- Ten Years of Tzivos Hashem
- The Jewish Family Expo exhibited in Moscow and Paris
- Enrollment in Tzivos Hashem exceeds 300,000 children
- Dial a Jewish Story becomes internationally syndicated
- Shomer Shabbos Little League expanded to four teams

1992 – 5752

- Animated Chanukah windows on Fifth Avenue
- Chanukah House
- The International Jewish Camp Scholarship Fund

1993 – 5753

- Jewish Craft Workshops
- The Jewish Children's Fund
- The Jewish Expo takes semi-permanent residency in the Yale building
- Plans begin for The Jewish Children's Museum
- Youth Clubs in Russia
- Project Keep Warm

1994 – 5754

- National Rambam Contest
- Yeshivas Erev
- Educational publications translated into six languages

1995 – 5755

- Israeli, and Russian children join the Shomer Shabbos Little League
- www.tzivoshashem.org
- In former Soviet Union:
- Summer camp
- Winter camp
- Pesach camp
- Russian language newsletter

1996 – 5756

- Torah Knowledge contest in Russia Winner of Russian contest visit New York
- Project Second Chance
- Video production of 'Professor Pellah's Place'

Today Tzivos Hashem is the foremost world-wide organization serving the physical and spiritual needs of Jewish children...

1997 – 5757

- Plans for orphanages in Russia
- Land purchased and cleared for The Jewish Children's Museum
- Jewish Craft Workshops tour Israel
- HaChai Publishers produces its 50th book

1998 – 5758

- The Esther and William Benenson Home for Jewish Boys in Ukraine
- The Esther and William Benenson Home for Jewish Girls in Ukraine
- The Marcia Wilf and Ira Yavarkovsky Jewish Children's Clinic in Ukraine
- The Bat Mitzvah Club
- Staffweek for boys
- Tzivos Hashem Craft Workshops Tour Russia
- The 100th Issue of The Moshiach Times magazine

1999 – 5759

- Gwathmey Siegel Architects Associates to design The Jewish Children's Museum
- Douglas/Gallagher to design exhibits for The Jewish Children's Museum
- Ground breaking ceremony for The Jewish Children's Museum
- HaChai publication wins prestigious children's book award
- Food Pantry in Ukraine
- Craft Workshops in India

2000 – 5760 through 2004 – 5764

- The Joseph Papp Children's Humanitarian Fund
- Chayolei Bais Dovid Clubs for Kids
- Bat Mitzvah Club operates in 100 cities
- 15th Youth Club opens in the former So-

viet Union

- Staffweek for girls
- Jewish Theme Series
- Winter Camp
- Jewishkids.org features animated kids website
- Building in Zaparoshe, Ukraine purchased for medical center

2005 – 5765 through 2009-5769

- Jewish Children's Museum welcomes 10,000 visitors during its first month
- Printing press in Ukraine publishes 350+ page prayer book
- Worldwide Tehillim Club surpasses 11,000 members
- 220 Bat Mitzvah Clubs worldwide
- Website tzivoshashem.org debuts as information clearinghouse
- Friendship Circle brings social opportunities to hundreds of special children
- Orphanages in Ukraine begin expansion
- Wheels for Life bus saves children from street life
- Chayolei Tzivos Hashem

2010 – 5770

- The Great Parade
- Attara Publishing
- Hachayol Magazine
- Tzivos Hashem kids Magazine in 9 languages
- Raksin's Children's Tehillim
- JCM Golf Event
- The Great Jewish Big Rig
- Jewish Kids Got Talent
- Siddur with Pirush Hamilos

2011 – 5771 through 2017 – 5777

- Crown Heights Safety Day
- Kosher Day
- Yahadus Curriculum
- Haggadah
- Kids Website together with Chabad.org
- Hakhel Rally
- JCM Summer Soiree
- Rebbe Redt Tzu Kinder published in Yiddish
- Living Jewish handbook
- Illustrated and explanatory family Haggadah
- Educational Siddur – Nusach Ashkenaz
- Illustrated Pirkei Avos with translation and insights
- Completed Yahadus series on the 613 Mitzvos
- Inspirational new Siddur for Chabad Houses
- Special Pirkei Avos for Jewish soldiers and prisoners
- Illustrated and explanatory family Haggadah in French
- Chidon Sefer Hamitzvos ●

World Leaders on the Rebbe



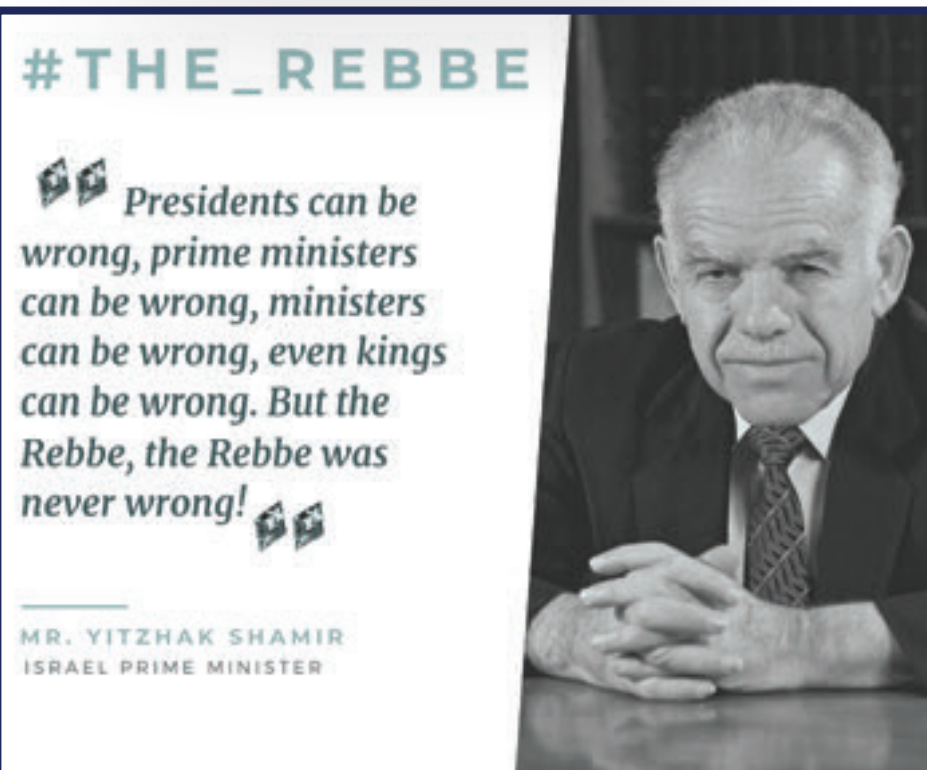
MENACHEM BEGIN AND THE REBBE

Yossi Melamed, JEM



ARIEL SHARON AND THE REBBE

Chaim B. Halberstam, JEM



THE REBBE AND BIBI NETANYAHU

Chaim B. Halberstam, JEM

#THE_REBBE

🔱 The Rebbe saw the future with the same degree of clarity with which one sees the present. The Rebbe knew how to see both the immediate and the future to come. He probably knows things we do not know 🔱

MR. SHIMON PERES
PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL
WINNER OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE



Israeli President Zalman Shazar visiting the Rebbe in 770

#THE_REBBE

🔱 The Lubavitcher Rebbe was a compassionate and visionary leader. Knowledge inspired by unwavering virtue and commitment to faith were central to his life mission. His legacy continue as examples of selfless service and devotion for all who know the story of his purposeful life 🔱

MR. DONALD J. TRUMP
PRESIDENT OF USA





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THE WEISS EDITION

Light points

from the
teachings of
the Lubavitcher
Rebbe ז"ע
Adapted by
Baruch Shalom
Davidson

MARKING THE REBBE'S 28TH YAHARZEIT - HILULA ON THE 3RD OF TAMMUZ

הָאִישׁ אֶחָד יִחַשׂא וְעַל כָּל־הָעֵדָה תִּקְצַף (במדבר טו, כב)

**WHEN ONE MAN SINS, SHALL YOU BE WRATHFUL WITH
THE WHOLE CONGREGATION?** (BAMIDBAR 16:22)

Under the Influence

When Korach led Bnei Yisrael in the rebellion against Moshe, G-d threatened to wipe out the entire group. Per Rashi's explanation (ad loc.), Moshe and Aharon pleaded with G-d, Who knows the thoughts of every person, to distinguish between those who sinned and those who did not:

A mortal king against whom a segment of his country sours does not know who exactly is the offender; therefore, when he is angry, he exacts punishment upon them all. But You, all thoughts are revealed before You; You know who the sinner is. If one man is the sinner, shall You be wrathful with the whole congregation?

What does the analogy add that we wouldn't otherwise know? Asking G-d not to punish people He knows to be innocent seems quite reasonable. Would any fair judge collectively punish an entire group of people due to his inability to identify the actual culprits?

Upon careful analysis, however, the analogy illustrates that Moshe and Aharon sought a radical level of forgiveness on behalf of the community—one which was *not* self-understood. In this instance, like in the analogy, it would have been arguably justified to punish the entire group.

The king in the analogy is not exacting punishment upon innocents; he is punishing only the people who "soured against him." Moshe was arguing that within the group, there is the offender—the source of the problematic conduct, and then there are those who "soured against him"—i.e., their conduct is contemptible, but perhaps it was instigated by someone else. These people are not faultless, but Moshe and Aharon argued that there should be room to grant them some clemency if it could be clearly established who belonged to which group.

Moshe and Aharon knew that *all* of Korach's followers were guilty for participating in the uprising, but they begged G-d to show leniency nonetheless. Knowing, as He does, that the truly rotten one was Korach alone, they pleaded that all the others, who were merely indoctrinated by him, be forgiven.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 13, pp. 51-55



הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה יְלֵד לְמָה הוּא דּוֹמֶה: לְדִין כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶיֶר חֲדָשׁ, וְהַלּוֹמֵד
תּוֹרָה זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דּוֹמֶה: לְדִין כְּתוּבָה עַל נֶיֶר מְחֻקָּה. (אבות ה, ב)

One who learns Torah in his childhood, what is this comparable to? To ink inscribed on fresh paper. One who learns Torah in his old age, what is this comparable to? To ink inscribed on erased paper. (Avos 4:20)

Open-Minded

The Mishna compares a child's Torah study to ink on fresh paper to illustrate the benefit of studying Torah early in life, rather than delaying it for later. But why does the Mishna then emphasize the inferiority of learning in one's old age, comparing it to ink on used paper? Isn't it better to learn later in life than never to learn at all? Should someone who did not study in their youth be discouraged from doing so now?

The Mishna is not dismissing the dreams of those who missed the opportunity

to study Torah in their youth; both clauses address people of all ages and backgrounds—veteran students and newcomers alike.

The goal of Torah study is to grasp and internalize the wisdom of the Torah itself, not to reach the conclusions you would naturally be inclined toward. In order for your mind to be receptive of this pure wisdom, you must approach the Torah devoid of any smugness or ego, and open yourself up to hearing its truth. This is true when studying any wisdom or science, how much more so when studying the Torah, the wisdom of the Creator Himself, which infinitely transcends all skills and constructs that are defined by and confined to the limits of created existence.

Accordingly, says the Mishna, regardless of your age or level of advancement, if you regard yourself as an "elder" and approach the study of the Torah self-assured of your skills and academic prowess, your grasp of the Torah's Divine wisdom will be inadequate. But if you study the Torah with humility and modesty, regarding yourself as but a small child, you will ultimately succeed at grasping its wisdom; your mind will absorb it "like ink inscribed on a new paper."

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 19, pp. 40-44



לֹא נִגְאָלוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם אֶלָּא בְּזִכּוֹת הָאֱמוּנָה (ילקוט שמעוני חושע, רמז תק"ט)

**OUR ANCESTORS WERE REDEEMED FROM EGYPT ONLY IN
THE MERIT OF THEIR FAITH.** (YALKUT SHIMONI, HOSHEA, NO. 519)

Jewish Faith

The Midrash teaches that Bnei Yisrael merited their freedom from Egypt due to their faith in G-d. Why are faith and redemption so connected?

What is faith? Some people come to believe in G-d when they find that the "rules of nature" alone no longer suffice: upon witnessing a miraculous occurrence that defies the patterns of nature they have come to expect, or when they ponder how nature itself came into being.

Chasidus regards this inevitable and reluctant belief in G-d as a spiritual form of "Egypt." Mitzrayim, as Egypt is called in the Torah, shares the same root as the Hebrew word meitzar, constraint. Inevitable faith is constrained—you recognize G-d, but only to a degree. What is real and certain in your eyes is the natural world, which appears to be self-acting and spontaneous. G-d is a stranger, welcome only to the extent that nature itself must acknowledge His existence. And if you could find a way to remove Him entirely from the equation...

In Judaism, "having faith" is not simply the backup plan when all else fails—it is an outlook that precedes and supersedes any other explanation or solution. We intuitively trust that every detail in the entire universe is directed by G-d, Who is infinitely greater than the world He created and not at all bound by the patterns of nature He built into it. We insist that even things which appear to be the products of nature are truly the direct workings of G-d. As the Talmud Yerushalmi explains, a Jew plants a seed in the ground because he trusts that G-d is looking after him and will ensure that his efforts bear fruit, not because the patterns of nature indicate that planting a seed will result in its growth (cited in Tosafos, s.v. emunas, Shabbos 31a).

It was this sort of faith that led to our ancestors' exodus from Egypt. Bnei Yisrael's willing and unequivocal trust in G-d caused His transcendence of nature to be revealed—the miraculous redemption from the land of Egypt, and with it our eternal freedom to rise above any spiritual Egypts in which we may find ourselves, including our ultimate redemption with Moshiach.

—*Likutei Sichos*, vol. 1, pp. 239-241

“Rebbe,” I said, choking back tears, “as a Jew I am proud that we have someone like you leading us.”

BY YOSEF BEN ELIEZER

I first met **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** a month before my Bar Mitzva in 1954, when my grandfather took me to get a blessing. The Rebbe spoke to my grandfather in Yiddish. After, he looked at me and asked me in English, “Which sport do you like the best?” Though shocked to hear such a question, I answered, “Baseball!” The Rebbe continued, “Do you like to play when there are two teams or just one?”

I realized this rabbi from Russia didn’t know much about the game. “Rabbi, you can’t play baseball with just one team.” “Why not?” the Rebbe asked seriously. I explained patiently, “Rabbi, the whole trick is to see who will win, so there has to be two teams.” “And who usually wins?” asked the Rebbe. “The one who plays the best,” I smiled.

The Rebbe continued, “Do you ever play baseball with your friends?” “Sure,” I answered. “Do you ever go to see professional games?” “Sure I do.” “Why isn’t it enough just to play with your friends?” A bit frustrated, I answered, “Rabbi, I’m just playing kids’ stuff with my friends. But at a professional baseball game, it’s for real.”

“Yosef,” the Rebbe addressed me with a broad smile, “in your heart you have a big field. The two sides are your *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) and your *yetzer tov* (good inclination). Till now they played kids’ stuff. But from your Bar Mitzva day on, the game is for real. You’ve got to make sure to always win against your *yetzer hara*. Remember, just like baseball, the one who plays the best wins. If only you’ll want to, you’ll always be able to win. And may your grandfather and parents always have much *nachas* from you.”

That meeting with the Rebbe stayed engraved in my mind, although outwardly I continued with my life as before. In two instances the Rebbe’s words literally saved me:

The first was when, at age sixteen, my class was rewarded with a trip to New Orleans for special achievement. When I came home with the good news, my parents realized that the trip was scheduled for *Yom Kippur*. “You can’t leave for the weekend of Yom Kippur,” they said. “We’ve never broken Yom Kippur!”

“Please try to understand,” I pleaded. “All year we’ve been dreaming about this trip. I’ll never forgive myself if I don’t go!”

My parents understood me well enough, but still they maintained their stance. I claimed that Yom Kippur was still holy to me. I fasted last year and would fast next year, but this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance. My parents ultimately left it up to me, and I decided to go.

The night before the trip, I was at my friend’s house watching a baseball game. At the end one team won the game in a surprise upset. The commentator discussing the outcome said, “After all, in baseball, the team that plays the best wins.” When I heard these words, I had a sudden flashback to the Rebbe’s office three years earlier. I changed my plans and stayed home for Yom

Kippur.

The second incident occurred during my college days. A group of Mormon missionaries had a successful mission on campus. Many Jewish students became interested and “converted.” My friends joined the group and urged me to go. I, too, became involved.

The day before my conversion, I was playing a game of baseball with my friends. My team lost. I went over to the coach of the winning team, patted him on the back and said, “The team that plays the best, wins.”

It was like I was hit in the head. Again, a flashback to eight years earlier. I turned white. And I didn’t go through with the conversion. Not only that, but when I explained to my friends what had happened and described my memories of the Rebbe, they joined me in leaving the Mormons.

The next time I met the Rebbe was just before the Six Day War in 1967. At that time, I was working as an assistant to Arthur Goldberg, then the USA representative to the United Nations. One day in June I got a phone call from my cousin about an urgent matter. She told me about her precious only son, Avraham, and how he had become a *baal teshuva*, a returnee to traditional Judaism, and was learning in a Chabad yeshiva in Israel. Now, with threats of war escalating, she had sent him a ticket to come home. Avraham, however, refused, saying that the Rebbe said that no Jews should leave Israel.

She then said, “I wrote to the Rebbe, explaining that Avraham is our only child, our whole life. He answered with one sentence: ‘The Al-mighty G-d, who never sleeps, watches over the Jewish people.’ Tell me,” she asked, “How bad is it in Israel?”

I didn’t want to scare her. I simply said, “Avraham has to come home. I’ll try to get into the Rebbe. I have ties with Arthur Goldberg that might give me some pull.”

The next evening I entered the Rebbe’s room. “I was here once before, when I was 13,” I told the Rebbe. The Rebbe smiled broadly, his beard whiter than before, but his piercing eyes were still young. “I want to make this a personal visit,” I said, and then explained the plight of my cousin and her only son.

The Rebbe’s face became serious. “I have thousands of only sons in Eretz Yisrael. If I tell them to remain there, it’s because I’m sure nothing will happen to them. Tell your cousin that she should be completely calm. G-d Al-mighty, who never sleeps, watches the Jewish people everywhere and especially in Eretz Yisrael.”

“Rebbe,” I responded, “with all due respect, I can’t be calm. Maybe the Rebbe isn’t aware, but I know the extent of the danger to Israel.” The Rebbe answered, “The land of Israel is in no danger. It stands before a great victory. This is a month of great goodness for the Jewish people.”

The Rebbe continued, “I have a personal re-

quest: Tell Avraham’s father that there is something he can do for the Jewish people - put on *tefilin* every weekday. You too, should put on *tefilin* every weekday. And when everything ends well, I would like to talk to you again.”

I was left speechless. I don’t know how long I stared at this man opposite me, awed by his fantastic strength and the great responsibility he was able to shoulder. “Rebbe,” I said, choking back tears, “as a Jew I am proud that we have someone like you leading us, and I thank you for the time you gave to me.”

“Let us hear good tidings,” the Rebbe ended. As I prepared to leave, the Rebbe smiled and asked, “By the way, do you still like baseball?”

Words cannot describe the trying days before the Six Day War. The world held its breath as the war began. The sudden victory found me, Arthur Goldberg and his assistant glued to the television. We cried as we watched the soldiers running to the Western Wall to kiss the stones of the Western Wall and Chief Rabbi Goren blowing the *shofar*. “Arthur,” I said, “I thought the worst was going to happen. But there is one Jew who knew with certainty that victory was near.” And I proceeded to tell him of my audience with the Rebbe.

As I had promised the Rebbe at our meeting before the war, I returned to the Rebbe’s headquarters. I expected an “I told you so” from the Rebbe. But that was far from what I got.

The Rebbe greeted me and then began, “This is a very great period for the Jewish people. Sometimes G-d makes a miracle for us, proclaiming it as if with a *shofar* to the whole world, ‘These are My people, the Jewish people.’ This is the way it was last week. At times it is as if G-d hides Himself from His children, but at other times His goodness is open for all to see. G-d, who created the whole world, gave the Jews the Land of Israel. For some time, a long time, He took it away from the Jews and gave it to other nations. Last week G-d took the Land of Israel back from the nations and gave it to the Jews.

“No one should have any doubts that it was G-d who did it all. It was done with miracles, great miracles. The whole world witnessed how the Land of Israel was surrounded by enemies on all sides and everyone was terrified. G-d made our enemies fall in the quickest of time and gave us our holiest places. But Jews have free choice, and two things must be dealt with immediately. No one should say, ‘My might won the war.’ It was not the army that brought the victory; the miracles came only from G-d Himself. This is what pertains to you, and this is why I asked you to come again.

“I know,” the Rebbe continued, “the nature of the Jewish people, including those in power in Israel. I am suspicious that very soon they will send a proposal to Washington agreeing to give back the acquired territory. They don’t understand. They didn’t win any territory. G-d gave it

“Rebbe,” I said, choking back tears, “as a Jew I am proud that we have someone like you leading us.” Continued...

to them as a present, through miracles. G-d gave them back their land. You must prevent any re-turning of territory.”

I told the Rebbe that it was not my prerogative to agree or disagree with giving back land, but the Rebbe insisted that I tell the Israeli representatives I come in contact with what he had said. He insisted that it was my right as a citizen to be able to do this.

“If they ask you where you get your certainty that this is so, tell them the story of the only child, and how his parents were in fear and how from this room he was promised his safety together with thousands of other only children. And if they ask how this room got its certainty, and on what basis, tell them that there is a Creator of the world who decided to give back the land of Israel to the people of Israel, and if the Creator of the world gives a present, one is to hold it dear, protect it and not to look for ways to get rid of it.”

My views were shaken. My whole perception of Judaism changed. I thought, “Fortunate is the nation that has a man like the Lubavitcher Rebbe in its midst.”

I tried my best to perform the mission the Reb-

be had given me. One day an Israeli in the UN approached me. “I was at the Simchat Torah celebrations of the Rebbe yesterday. He sends you his regards and his thanks.”

Such personal encouragement from the Rebbe let me know I was doing something right. I married an Israeli woman, moved to Israel, and later joined the ranks of the Israeli government. I witnessed closely the great changes the Rebbe created in the world through his emissaries.

My last meeting with the Rebbe was on a Sunday at “dollars”, when he distributed bills to be given to *tzedaka*. I received a dollar and told the Rebbe I was planning to visit Germany. Though a top-secret visit, the Rebbe understood why.

Then the Rebbe gave me an extra dollar and said, “This is for charity in Stuttgart.” “I am not planning to go to Stuttgart,” I told the Rebbe. But the Rebbe ignored my statement, wished me success and looked to the next person in line.

I traveled to Germany. After leaving Frankfurt, the captain of the plane suddenly announced that there would be an emergency landing in Stuttgart. I remembered the extra dollar in my pocket and, while waiting for the pilot to announce our continuing journey, I began speaking to a fellow

traveler. We became friendly, and he told me that he was born a Jew, and that after the Holocaust he was left alone, confused, fearful and angry. During this trying period he decided to convert to Christianity. “And I have not done so poorly. I am a wealthy man,” he added.

I had an idea. I told the man, “Listen, there’s a rabbi in New York, a great rabbi of the Jews. This week he gave me a dollar to give to charity in Stuttgart, even though I didn’t think I’d be here. I know you don’t need charity, but since you are Jewish, and the only Jew I’ve met along my journey, maybe the Rebbe meant it for you.”

“I’m not a Jew,” the man insisted. “Listen,” I said. “It is true that you have not been living as a Jew, but maybe, just maybe, the Rebbe wanted at least that you should die as a Jew.” I don’t know what made me say those words, but the sudden gush of tears of my traveling companion made me think that I had said the right thing.

The Rebbe was blessed with eyes that see further than other human beings. When I heard the news of his passing on the third of Tammuz 1994, I thought of the Rebbe’s words: “I have thousands of only children”. I consider myself one of them. ●



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