

THE VISIONARY LEADER
WHO SPOKE ONLY ONE LANGUAGE:

YOURS.

RABBI MENACHEM
M. SCHNEERSON
"THE REBBE"

ABOUT YOU.

As a twenty-first century Jew, you are likely familiar with the name Chabad, have probably heard of The Rebbe and may even know one or more of his 4,000 emissaries. Chabad Jewish centers and services thrive in 48 U.S. States and 81 countries worldwide.

Yet—cover image notwithstanding—this magazine is not really about the greatness of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson of righteous memory. This magazine is about the greatness of everyone else.

Over 40 years of public leadership, the Rebbe showed unshakeable trust in every person's ability to make this world a divine place. With unquestioning love and a soft sense of urgency, he provided the tools for millions to find that ability within themselves.

Twenty years after the Rebbe's passing (1994), we share the stories, essays and insights ahead, to offer a small taste of a man and a message are of timeless value.

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A comprehensive experience of biography, personal encounters and audio/visual recordings on the Rebbe and his ongoing impact.

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The #1 Judaism site online delivering inspiration, education, study and practice for every level of interest and familiarity.

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Diane Abrams visits the Rebbe with her daughter Becky who was born to the 49-year-old Abrams after the Rebbe's unexpected blessing. See *First Person*, page 18

Yossi Melamed, 1988 / JEM



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1,100 Jewish teens from around the world crowd Times Square in NYC for an annual concert hosted by CTeen (*Chabad's Teen network*), 2014.

Bentzi Sasson / CTeen.com

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The Living Archive is a project to preserve the video, audio, and photographic recordings of the Rebbe.

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COVER PHOTO

The Rebbe outside "770", Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn, NY. *Levi Freidin, 1988 / JEM*

He Cared So Much. But, Why?

A question of the Rebbe's motive

WHEREVER JEWS ARE, there you will find a direct personal emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. And there you will see him or her reaching out to Jews and rekindling the flame of Jewish life. Chabad went and still goes everywhere. Above all, Chabad went before anyone else, and at a time when it was fraught with immense danger, to the former Soviet Union to reach out to the Jews of silence and keep the spirit of Judaism alive. It was risky—it was almost impossible. And because it was almost impossible, Chabad did it. Under the Rebbe, Chabad recognized no boundaries.

And I have often asked myself, why? What drove the Lubavitcher Rebbe? Was it, I once thought, that extraordinary statement of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement, who himself spent a lifetime going out to Jews wherever they were—in little villages, little *shtetlach*; who when asked why he does this, why he doesn't do what a rabbi is supposed to do—sit in his study and learn, said, "Every single Jew is a letter in the Torah scroll. And just as a Torah scroll is invalid if one letter is obliterated or missing, so the Jewish people, which is a living Torah scroll, is invalid if one Jew is missing. I go around restoring Jews to their place in the Torah." Was it that image that drove him?

Was the life work of the Rebbe nothing less than a recreation in a secular world of the early days of the Chasidic movement itself, when, as the Rebbe himself put it, that the task of Chasidism was to wake the Jewish people from its spiritual sleep? Was that it? Was he recreating what had once happened two centuries before?

Or was it something else? Was it perhaps that the Lubavitcher Rebbe lived through the black hole of Jewish history—the holocaust. He had seen his whole world, that world of Eastern European Jewry, go up in flames. And I have often asked myself, what did he feel? What did he feel about the destruction of one third of our Jewish people, including one and a half million children,



WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO SEARCH OUT EVERY JEW IN LOVE AS JEWS HAD ONCE BEEN SEARCHED OUT AND HUNTED DOWN IN HATE?

Jewish children who never tasted sin?

Chasidism uses a very powerful, highly charged word from Kabbalah, *tikkun*—which means to mend this fractured world. How could you mend a fracture so deep, such a hole in the heart of humanity? I once speculated in a newspaper article that maybe, just maybe, the Lubavitcher Rebbe had undertaken the most daring spiritual initiative ever undertaken in the history of humanity: would it be possible to search out every Jew in love as Jews had once been searched out and hunted down in hate, and was this the only possible *tikkun*—the only possible mending of a post-Holocaust world.

Who can say?

All we know for sure is that there are few phenomena like it in the whole of Jewish history, and it owes its inspiration to one man. ■

RABBI SACKS is a global religious leader, philosopher and author who served as chief rabbi of the Commonwealth for 22 years. This essay is excerpted from a lecture marking one year to the Rebbe's passing. Courtesy of chabad.org



▲ Rabbi Shalom D. Lipskar helps a Jewish prison inmate put on *tefillin* and recite the "Shema" prayer affirming the Oneness of G-d. See *Knowing Yourself*, page 11.

12 New Answers to Age-old Questions

In public addresses, private audiences and thousands of detailed letters, the Rebbe encouraged questioners to value each moment as a once-in-a-lifetime chance to change the world for the better.



Of the Rebbe's teachings:

1. Is it okay to be different?

The rebellion in young people is not a crime. On the contrary: it is the fire of the soul that refuses to conform, that is dissatisfied with the status quo, that cries out that it wants to change the world and is frustrated with not knowing how. (1963)

The first "Chabad House" opened in 1967 at UCLA as a home-base for Jewish college



SIMON JACOBSON is the author of *Toward a Meaningful Life: The Wisdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (William Morrow, 2004), and is director of the Meaningful Life Center (mlc.org). He was an editor and publisher of the Rebbe's talks for 22 years.

students. As of 2014, Chabad Houses serve students on 210 college campuses.

2. Is having faith naïve?

We see that people inherently believe in something greater than themselves. Experiencing that faith requires fuel—information about G-d and about ourselves. Cultivate faith through study and prayer. Actualize it through good deeds and charity. Talk about it with family and friends.

3. What should schools be teaching?

All educational efforts are basically meaningless unless built on the solid foundation of good character.

4. Is there a "better" half?

After thousands of years of male dominance, we now stand at the beginning of the feminine era, when women will rise to their appropriate prominence, and the entire world will recognize the harmony between man and woman. (1952)

The Lubavitch Women's Organization founded by the Rebbe held its first international conference in 1955.

5. Can attitude define reality?

Adam, the first man, complained to G-d while in the Garden of Eden; Jewish men and women blessed G-d while in Nazi concentration camps; all of us exist between these two extremes. Our perspective determines exactly where.

6. Do miracles exist?

This physical, natural world is not a separate entity from



◀ In conversation with New York Governor Averell Harriman (1956). Until 1981, the Rebbe received visitors in his office three nights a week from 8:00pm until early morning. Anyone—homeless or head of state—was welcome to schedule an appointment.
Alexander Archer, 1956 / JEM

this huge planet of billions of people? From today's technology we see how people across the globe, normally divided by time and space are suddenly unified. One person lighting a candle in his tiny corner can illuminate the entire world...

In 1960, the hour-long "Tanya on the Radio" show went live, one of the first-ever broadcasts of a Torah class.

the higher, spiritual world—rather, it evolved from it. And so, when someone connects himself to the spiritual world, to G-d, he can affect things in this physical world in a way that cannot be anticipated. Yes, through our good deeds, miracles can be made.

7. Is happiness achievable?

Man can be truly happy if he nourishes his soul as he does his body.

8. Is there a secret to parenting?

As parents and teachers we

must remember to be humble, to develop the trait of humility. We are not the source of guidance and information, but a vehicle for that which comes from a greater, higher place. How can we be arrogant in dispensing this knowledge?

More than 350 of the Rebbe's published talks are from his addresses at children's gatherings.

9. Can a mitzvah improve my business?

When a Jew strengthens his bond with the Source of wisdom, which is in G-d, he gains

wisdom and understanding also in mundane affairs, which helps him to decide what to do and what not to do in matters of business and the like.

10. What is the nature of evil?

Evil is simply the absence of good; it has no real existence of its own, and is instantly dispelled in the light of goodness.

11. Is technology ruining us?

Everything is created for G-d's glory. One might think: what can I possibly accomplish sitting in this tiny corner on

12. Is it time to retire?

One does not become less valuable with age. It's true, a twenty-year-old can dance for hours while his grandmother tires after a few minutes. But man was not created to dance for hours. Man was created to make life on earth brighter and holier than it was before he arrived.

Celebrating his 70th birthday in 1972, the Rebbe dispelled any notion of retirement, announcing plans to build 71 new Jewish institutions that year. ■



What is a **REBBE?**

His published teachings fill more than 100 volumes; his letters are in dozens more. After his passing, he is still turned to constantly for blessing, insight and guidance. So what exactly is a rebbe?

RABBI MOSHE YITZCHAK HECHT had been the Chabad presence in New Haven, Connecticut, since 1946. The demands on him grew year by year, with a synagogue, a school, a yeshiva and many other responsibilities that required a staff several times that which he could afford.

In 1974, he wrote to the Rebbe complaining that in 33 years of work he felt he was back at the same place as when he started and that he simply could not continue.

He signed off the letter with a

heart-rending plea that “the Rebbe should help and do all he can.”

The Rebbe responded: *I’ve already followed your advice. I’ve sent there Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Hecht. But it appears from your letter and from those preceding it that you still are not familiar with him and with the capabilities with which this person is endowed.*

Whatever the case, you should get to know him now. Immediately, everything will change—your mood, your trust in G-d, everyday happiness, etc., etc.

Rabbi Hecht felt helpless. The Rebbe did not respond with help but with light.



The Rebbe turns in his seat to acknowledge guests around the room at a *farbrengen* Chassidic gathering in "770", Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn, NY.

Levi Freiden, 1987 / JEM

WITHIN THAT
CONTEXT, YOU
DISCOVER WHERE
YOU ARE NEEDED,
WHAT YOU
ARE HERE TO
ACCOMPLISH, AND
HOW YOU HAVE THE
POWERS TO FULFILL
THAT MISSION.

derstand "What is a rebbe?" and "Who is a rebbe?" you must first ask "What am I" and "Who am I?"

WHO NEEDS A REBBE?

Imagine a rebbe as a ray of light. Light is not a thing for itself. Think of the space beyond our planet's atmosphere: between the brilliant sun and the glowing earth is darkness. The sun passing through a space of nothingness offers nothing. For light to be light, it must have something to enlighten.

For a person entirely submerged in getting from today to tomorrow, there is little to enlighten. But if you seek that which transcends physical sensation and satisfaction, if you feel that need to make sense of life, if you have ever asked yourself, "What am I doing here?" and are looking for something deep inside yourself—then you need a rebbe to get you in touch with that inner self.

A DIFFERENT QUESTION

Rebbe means "my master" or "my teacher." Whether you are a small child learning alef-bet, or an expert scholar sailing the seas of the Talmud, you call your teacher, "rebbe."

There's another meaning to the title rebbe, one especially associated with an 18th century rabbi they called the Baal Shem Tov. The Baal Shem Tov was a teacher who touched not only your mind and heart, but could reach into your essential being and guide you to find yourself there.

A rebbe then is a guide to your true self. Which means that to properly un-

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

How does a rebbe do that? How could he show you something about you that you yourself could not discover?

Because as soon as you are connected to a rebbe, you are connected to a higher, wider context. A context in which you are no longer a lonely speck of dust in the vast, empty space, but a vital part of a greater whole. There, within that context, you discover where you are needed, what you are here to accomplish, and how you have the powers to fulfill that mission.

Context is everything. A sentence fall-

TIMELINE

The Bridge to Brooklyn

UKRAINE, 1902: The Rebbe is born in the city of Nikolaev to the renowned kabbalist Rabbi Levi Yitzchak and Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson. He is named for his great-grandfather Rabbi Menachem Mendel, the third Rebbe of Lubavitch, himself a grandson of Rabbi Schneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chassidism.

From early childhood, he displays a phenomenally insightful mind. By the time he reaches Bar Mitzvah, he is considered an *illuy*, a Torah prodigy. (As a teenager, he exchanges scholarly correspondence with the likes of Rabbi Yosef Rosin, "The Genius of Rogachev".)



The Rebbe in Warsaw, Poland, 1928 prior to his wedding. JEM

POLAND, 1928: Rabbi Menachem Mendel marries Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka (1901-1988), daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, having been suggested as a suitor years earlier by the fifth Rebbe.

GERMANY/FRANCE, 1929: While attending the University of Berlin, then the ESTL engineering school and Sorbonne in Paris, the Rebbe gives Torah classes and facilitates proud Jewish observance despite deepening public hatred of Jews. ▶

TIMELINE

◀ **ESCAPE, 1940:** The German armies conquer Paris. The Rebbe and Rebbetzin leave on one of the last trains out of the city and, after a perilous passage over the front lines of the occupation, arrive in Vichy, France. On June 12, 1941 they board a ship in Lisbon, Portugal and arrive safely in New York 11 days later.

UNITED STATES, 1941: The previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Y. Schneerson, appoints his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, as director of the three central Lubavitch organizations of education, publishing and social services. Also at his father-in-law's urging, the Rebbe begins publishing his notations to various Chassidic treatises, as well as a wide range of responsa on Torah subjects.



The new Rebbe leading a *farbrengen* Chassidic gathering. 1952, JEM

BROOKLYN, 1951: After the passing of his father-in-law in 1950, bereft followers petition Rabbi Menachem Mendel to ascend to the leadership of the movement. His wife tells him, "If you do not accept, 30 years of my father's work will have been wasted." After a full year, the Rebbe formally accepts the position at a public gathering during which, citing American custom, he shares a mission statement: "*The three loves—love of G-d, love of Torah and love of one's fellow—are one. One cannot differentiate between them.... Each one embodies all three and having one will lead to the other two.*" ■

A REBBE CONNECTS US WITH OUR CORE SELVES—AND THEN STEPS OUT OF THE WAY.

en out of a book can never make sense of itself without its story. Out of context, all meaning is distorted—often into its opposite. *A precious ring in the snout of a boar*, King Solomon the Wise tells us, *just renders the beast yet more beastly*. A swan out of context is an ugly duckling.

Life out of context is called exile. Without your context, it's not just that your place is missing. Without knowing your place, you cannot find your center, the very core of who you are.

Connecting to a rebbe connects you to the whole. And within that whole is the liberation from personal exile.

FINDING THE CENTER

A rebbe is capable of doing that because he himself stands at the heart of that context.

All beauty in our universe begins with a nucleus. For a crystal to form, whether it be a snowflake or a diamond, a tiny nucleus of molecules must first become the basic structure from which a marvelous symmetry may extend. The same with life—whether it be a single cell, an entire tree or a human being—all begins with a tiny seed carrying the information that will unfold to form the limbs and organs of a mature organism.

And together, we all form a single organism too. Our bodies may be separate, but our souls are one. What makes them one? They have a single nucleus. After all, what is a soul? It is G-d breathing inside you; it is the Divine Presence invested within your physical body. In Hebrew, a soul is called *neshamah*—meaning a breath, as in the story of the creation of the first human being, "And G-d blew into his nostrils the breath of life." At every moment, G-d breathes within us, and through that breath we are one with Him and He is one with us. In that breath, we are our Creator.

G-d is one, and so He is found in our

oneness. Not as individuals, but as a whole; a singularity. Not as I, but as we. As a harmony of multifarious parts becoming one.

Which means that to find that oneness, that place inside you in which you are one with your G-d, you

must first connect your soul with other souls, which connect with yet more networks of souls, all forming a single cell around a single nucleus. That nucleus, in turn, is the nodal point at which G-d's breath enters. It is where all things become one.

In that nucleus, a rebbe stands, and from there he brings us together as one, to feel one another, to know us, to know ourselves, and to know our center, our core, the place where G-d enters each of our souls. A rebbe connects us with our core selves—and then steps out of the way.

HEADS AND HEADS

The Hebrew word "Rebbe", they say, stands for **Rosh B'nei Yisrael**. That means "a head of the Jewish People."

Most of us think of a head as a control center. The head tells the heart, the lungs, the stomach, the fingers and toes what to do. Certainly, I am not interested in handing myself over to one who controls me. G-d gave me my life to be me, not to be controlled by someone else.

But if you think of your own head, it is certainly not like that. It is the head of an organism, a body. Which means that before it is a head, it is first a part of this body. And so, the head is not concerned with consuming all other body parts into the head's agenda. The head is concerned with the heart being a healthy heart, the stomach being a healthy stomach, the fingers doing what fingers are supposed to do and the toes keeping well within their own domain as well. The head is concerned with each body part fulfilling its own agenda.

So too a rebbe is firstly a servant of his people.



◀ Pausing for a few words with a man who had participated in a *farbrengen* Chassidic gathering.
Yossi Melamed, 1976 / JEM

KNOWING YOUR NAME

Jerry Levine was an anchorman for Miami’s Channel 10 News, and a good one. He had won an Emmy for producing programs encouraging Floridians to participate in regular medical examinations. But in 1989, Rabbi Shalom Lipskar asked him to work for his organization, Aleph, assisting Jewish prisoners and military personnel and their families.

Jerry was young and thought, “Hey, here’s a great opportunity to try something new and different. And I can always get back into the news business if it doesn’t work out.”

So at Rabbi Lipskar’s suggestion, Jerry wrote to the Lubavitcher Rebbe to ask his advice, providing many details about himself and his personal goals.

The Rebbe’s response? A fax arrived on Rabbi Lipskar’s desk: “Tell me all his names.”

Jerry thought he had told the Rebbe all his names: Yosef ben Hirsch Leib ha’Levi. But when he went to talk with his mother about it, she told him he was actually Yosef Mordechai ben Hirsch Leib ha’Levi.

So he wrote again, this time with his full name. The Rebbe responded, telling

him to ask the advice of a good friend.

“What I got from that,” Jerry says, “is that this is a different sort of leader.”

Any other leader would have been concerned with “What can this person provide my organization? How can he get us better media exposure?”

**G-D GAVE ME
MY LIFE TO BE
ME, NOT TO BE
CONTROLLED BY
SOMEONE ELSE.**

The Rebbe’s concern, in Jerry’s words, was that a Jewish boy didn’t know his own name. How did he know that? How did he recognize something was missing?

Why shouldn’t he? Just as a brain knows what the stomach needs, a rebbe knows a Jew better than the Jew knows his own self.

That is the job of a rebbe—to help you

find your name, your true self, and where you belong.

But it is not the knowing that is relevant here. It is the caring. This was the Rebbe’s first concern, because that is the job of a rebbe—to help you find your name, your true self, and where you belong.

NOTHING FOR YOURSELF

Freddy Hager once came to see the Rebbe as a young man. He showed the Rebbe a picture of his grandfather, who had been a chassidic rebbe in Galicia.

The Rebbe asked him, “Do you know what it means to be a rebbe?” But Freddy didn’t respond. So the Rebbe answered.

“The Baal Shem Tov was the first rebbe. He would not go to sleep at night as long as he had anything of value left in his house. Whatever he had, he gave away to those who needed it.”

“That’s what it means to be a rebbe,” concluded the Rebbe. “Whatever you have, you have for others.” ■

TZVIFREEMAN, a senior editor at Chabad.org, writes extensively on the practical use of mystical knowledge. He is the author of *Bringing Heaven Down to Earth—365 Meditations and Everyday Wisdom from the Teachings of the Rebbe*.
Courtesy of chabad.org

CHASE THE IMPOSSIBLE

"The Rebbe wanted me to write more. He kept on urging me to keep writing—sometimes in strong terms, sometimes in gentle terms, sometimes in humorous terms, but always pushing me to write more. Every time I saw him, he would ask me, 'What's with the next book? I've been waiting for so long already...'. Because of his constant prodding, I eventually came to write some 35 books."



—THE LATE RABBI DR. J. IMMANUEL SCHOCHET
professor of Jewish philosophy and mysticism

REMAIN OPEN

"After having met a wise man you remain the same as before—you have become neither less of a fool nor more of a sage...Not so with a believer. After having met him you are no longer the same. Though you may not have accepted his faith, you have nevertheless been embraced by it. For the true believer believes in you as well."

—GEULA COHEN
Israeli activist, writer and former Knesset Member



CHERISH THE JOURNEY

"We are the students who internalize best...the words of the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe: In each journey of our lives we must fully be aware of where we are. We may only be passing through on our way to somewhere seemingly more important. Nevertheless there is purpose in where we are right now."

—COLLEGE SENIOR GABRIEL FELDER
2014 George Washington University commencement speech



LOVE COMPLETELY

"He lived a block away from us and he used to walk past our home on his way from synagogue. My brother and I were ten or twelve years old, playing in front of our house. We were fighting over the ball and he stopped and said: 'Behave yourselves. Love your brother as you love yourself and love yourself as you love your brother, because you are one...love yourself.' About twenty years later, that inspired the name of our organization: 'Love Yourself, Stop the Violence.'"



—NEW YORK PEACE ACTIVIST GEOFFREY DAVIS
on the inspiration for the non-profit started by his late brother, slain New York City Councilman James E. Davis

Mission Critical:

How to live grounded like an astronaut

In December 1968, the first humans orbited the moon aboard the Apollo 8 spacecraft, capturing the world's imagination. The following Shabbat, the Rebbe called an unexpected gathering to discuss vital insights from the event for our global human mission.

Excerpt of the Rebbe's talk:

DAYS BEFORE THE Apollo mission, a popular Jewish radio host challenged a Chabad rabbi on the air: "Under Torah law, if a person eats a just a little bit of non-kosher food, he is punished with thirty-nine lashes. Now, laws should forbid and penalize actions that are harmful to others and to society, but should stay out of a person's private life."

The rabbi was flustered at first. How to explain to an audience raised in free and democratic America, that for an act as "harmless" and "personal" as eating a little bit of food, the Torah instructs that a person be bound, stretched out, and whipped on his bare back thirty-nine times?

The rabbi responded by providing context for the punishment. He explained that numerous conditions had to be met before applying the penalty. Lashes as described were rarely, if ever, actually carried out. "It might therefore be said," concluded the rabbi, "that the Torah's mandated punishment is more an indicator of the severity of the transgression than a practical penal procedure."

RULES IN A DEMOCRACY

All this is of course true, but it doesn't really answer the question. Even if the penalty of lashes was administered once in a hundred years, does the deed itself warrant such punishment? And why does the Torah legislate such a gross intrusion into a person's private life?

The true answer is that ingesting a spiritually toxic bite of food is neither a harmless act nor a personal one: all of creation is deeply affected by our every thought, word and deed, for the better or, G-d forbid, for the worse. How can a person knowingly jeopardize his own well-being, and that



of his family, community and the entire world, because of personal preference?

This is what is written in the books. The nature of the human being, however, is that things are more readily understood and accepted when he or she sees a tangible example of it. By divine providence, we have such an example in the space mission concluded yesterday. Three adult men were told to put aside all personal preferences and follow a set of guidelines that dictated their every behavior, including their most intimate habits. They were told exactly what, how much and when to eat, when and in what position to sleep, and what shoes to wear. Should any one of them have challenged this "dictatorial" regimen, he would have been reminded that a billion dollars have been invested in their endeavor—a billion dollars commands a lot of respect! Of course, he has no idea how most of these instructions relate to the success of his mission— that has been determined by grey-haired scientists after many years of research; but he'll take their word for it, and readily accept the extensive intrusion into his private affairs.

And what if at stake is not a billion-dollar scientific project, but the divine purpose in creation? ■

▲ A student at the University of Arizona stops on the street to perform a *Mitzvah* offered by her local Chabad House. In the Rebbe's view, every single good deed holds infinite value— one need not change completely to cause complete change.

DOWN THE BLOCK, ACROSS THE WORLD

FEATURE

ROCHEL HOLZKENNER

“I don’t believe you. How can you feel my pain? You’re not going through what I’m going through.” Anguish poured off the page, a challenge from the letter’s teenage author to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

For several months now, she’d been writing to the Rebbe, describing her inner turmoil, her rebelliousness, religious confusion, strained home situation. The Rebbe’s responses arrived promptly; in them her most defiant questions were addressed with gentle reason. But this last letter touched a nerve. As part of his response, the Rebbe had expressed empathy, that he

feels her pain. How could he possibly? She quickly jotted back: “I don’t believe you...” and sent her letter off.

Within two hours of her letter there was a response: “When you will merit to grow up and marry, G-d willing you will have a child. The nature of things is that towards the end of the first year, the child will begin to teethe. Teething is painful and the child cries. And





Yeshiva students
escort the Rebbe
from a distance as
he leaves "770",
Lubavitch World
Headquarters.

JEM, 1975

a mother feels that pain as if it was her own. This is how I feel your pain.”

Six Lubavitcher Rebbes

TO APPRECIATE THE REBBE'S vision, it is worth a quick look into his history.

The Hebrew name “Chabad” refers to the Chassidic movement founded in Belarus by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812). While Chassidic philosophy broadly emphasizes serving G-d with joy, Chabad particularly values an *understanding* of G-d—as much as a human can hope to understand—as the surest path to serving Him with joy.

After Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s passing, his son and successor Rabbi DovBer moved to the village of Lubavitch (Russian for “City of Love”) and was hence known as the second “Lubavitcher” Rebbe. He was succeeded in Russia by four additional rebbes, each one expanding further on the Chabad philosophy. In addition, the rebbes worked determinedly to keep Jewish observance thriving amid increasing government harassment.

In 1927, the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, was arrested, imprisoned and beaten by the Soviets for organizing an underground network of Jewish day schools, Mikvahs and synagogues. With the help of influential politicians and businessmen in the United States, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was released from prison and, in 1940, extricated from the destruction raging through Europe.

Arriving in Brooklyn, New York, he was greeted by admirers who—wanting to shield him from disappointment—warned that promoting meticulous Jewish observance in “the Golden Country” was impossible. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak boldly responded “America is no different!” and founded the first Lubavitch Yeshiva in America the next morning.

A Reluctant Seventh

FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS, the sixth Rebbe established channels of support for his network of underground Jewish survival in Russia, and launched several organizations that flourished in America and Israel. In 1950, he passed away and his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, already director of Chabad’s three main organizations, was urged to become the seventh rebbe.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel was known to be a uniquely gifted scholar with a wide-open heart. Yet, famously private, he rebuffed the requests for a full year.

When he did eventually accept the position, it



swiftly became one of global importance. Without the aid of a strategic board, the Rebbe personally guided Chabad into an international force of proactive and positive Jewish revival. Most visible today are the 4,000 Chabad emissary families, or shluchim, in 81 countries who welcome hundreds of thousands of Jews with more than 3,500 educational, religious and humanitarian centers.

Yet, with the expansion of his movement’s activities throughout the world, the Rebbe’s legendary love for every individual remained focused as ever.

Signed With Tears

EVERY DAY FOR DECADES a postal sack full of letters was delivered to 770 Eastern Parkway. Intimate questions typically sketched these pages: a writer looking for advice or for a blessing, for explanation or validation. The Rebbe read every letter personally.

An employee in Chabad’s publishing division recounts: “I saw firsthand the many hours the Rebbe would spend opening, reading and responding to people’s letters, so I ordered an electronic envelope opener. I figured that it would expedite the process.” The next day it was returned by Rabbi Groner, one of the Rebbe’s secretaries. “I demonstrated it and the Rebbe said it made too much noise,” Rabbi Groner explained. After some research, a silent electric opener was found and submitted to the Rebbe. The following day it was returned again. Rabbi Groner said: “The Rebbe smiled widely at the effort, but said there was another reason for not accepting the gift. ‘Many people seal their letter with tears,’ the Rebbe shared. ‘These cannot be opened with a machine.’”

Throughout the years of his leadership, the Rebbe

► The sixth Rebbe (left) in Austria, 1935, with his son-in-law and successor.

JEM



‘MANY PEOPLE SEAL THEIR LETTER WITH TEARS,’ THE REBBE SHARED. ‘THESE CANNOT BE OPENED WITH A MACHINE.’

demonstrated total and unconditional love for every person, no matter if that person knew of him. Stories abound of businesspeople being called by the Rebbe’s office out of the blue with urgent instructions to visit a depressed man in Arizona; bring Shabbat candles to a woman in Maryland; or—as Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, vice-chairman of Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch was instructed—fly to the Caribbean island of Curaçao, mission unstated.

Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime

THE ONLY JEW IN HIS CLASS, Eli Groisman stubbornly refused to participate in the religious services that were part of the school curriculum. “Non-Jewish students picked daily fights with me,” he wrote years later, “I even felt that my teachers and the school’s principal were taking their side.” Groisman began skipping school; his family began to be ostracized from the tiny Curaçao island community.

Desperate for help, Eli’s father went into the small synagogue near his home. Though not observant, he

cried out to G-d. Shortly thereafter, a taxi pulled up and Moshe Kotlarsky and his friend stepped out. “We were sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe,” Kotlarsky said.

Groisman nearly fainted. Once composed, he recounted his pressing dilemma and prayers for help.

With the support of the visiting rabbis, a suitable solution was reached and the family’s situation improved significantly. Eli’s father wrote a letter to the Rebbe, thanking him for his concern for a “small Jew from Curaçao.” The Rebbe

responded: “I was pleased to receive your regards...I must, however take exception to your referring to yourself as ‘a small Jew’. Every Jew, man or woman, is an equal part of the Single Essence...”

And as the Rebbe cared for those who did not know him, he loved those who did not agree with him.

Natan Yellin-Mur was a writer and publicist who regularly published articles defaming everything Jewish, particularly the Jewish state of Israel and its policies. His colleague, Gershon Ber Jacobson, editor of a New York-based Yiddish newspaper, brought Natan to meet the Rebbe.

As the two men approached the Rebbe, Jacobson introduced his guest. The Rebbe turned to Natan, smiled broadly and said “I read all your articles.” Thinking that the Rebbe was perhaps mistaking him for someone else, Natan asked: “Does the Rebbe agree with what I write?” The Rebbe replied: “one need not agree with everything that one reads. What is more important is that every person utilize his or her G-d-given talents to the fullest. When one does so, one will ultimately arrive at truth.”

▲ Distributing coins to children to be given to charity.

Fridrich Vishinsky, 1984

▼ Carrying a bag of letters requesting blessings to be read at the gravesite of his father-in-law in Queens, New York.

Levi Freidin, 1987 / JEM

Digging for Diamonds

BEGINNING IN 1951, the Rebbe received visitors in his office three nights a week from 8:00pm through the early hours of the morning. By the 1980s, the demand had made it impossible to receive everyone privately, so at the age of 83, he began a practice of personally greeting all who arrived each Sunday afternoon. He stood outside the door of his office for hours while thousands of people filed by, many seeking a blessing or advice about a personal matter or spiritual dilemma. The Rebbe gave each person a blessing and a dollar bill to promote charity.

An older woman once asked the Rebbe. “I am tired

from waiting for so many hours to see you. How do you have the strength to stand for seven, eight hours to accommodate everyone?” The Rebbe beamed and replied, “When you are counting diamonds you don’t get tired.”

A diamond expert appreciates diamonds that come in many forms, whether visibly luminous or unrefined.

In the 1950s, a group of college students from Canada met with the Rebbe in his office. One student—genuinely curious if undiplomatic—leaned in and asked: “What is a Rebbe good for?” The campus Hillel director who had organized the trip was visibly embarrassed, but the Rebbe responded, unoffended: “I can’t speak about myself,” he said, “but I can tell you about

FIRST PERSON

THE REBBE’S CHILDREN

BY DIANE ABRAMS

I FIRST MET Rabbi Menachem Schneerson of righteous memory after I had just become engaged to the Bronx borough president, Robert Abrams. An acquaintance of Bob’s arranged an appointment for us to receive a blessing prior to our marriage.

I remember arriving at 770 at midnight, but we did not enter the Rebbe’s room until 3:00am. The Rebbe was very gracious, and that appointment started an ongoing relationship which continued for many years.

When I was forty-eight years old I had only one child, Rachel, and my husband and I wanted another child. We went to an expert in the field, and she told us that we had less than a five percent chance of having another child. While we were visiting doctors and doing research, we had not told anyone, not even our parents. We were hoping and praying alone that we would have another child.

Every year on the last day of the



My husband and I introduce newborn Becky to the Rebbe. *Levi Freidin, 1986 / JEM*

Sukkot festival, we would come to the Rebbe to receive a traditional piece of honey cake and a blessing for a good sweet year. That year we arrived directly from a funeral; it was the first time we had not brought Rachel with us to the Rebbe.

Out of the blue, the Rebbe looked at us and gave us his blessing for “an addition to the family within the next year.” I was stunned. How could he have known that this is what we wanted? We had made no such request of the Rebbe, nor did we tell

any of the Rebbe’s secretaries about our wish. It was tremendously encouraging to me.

Six weeks later, on Thanksgiving, I tested myself on one of those home pregnancy tests and it turned blue—indicating a positive result. I immediately went to the doctor’s office for a “real” test. He called back to say that the test was positive... but there must be some mistake because it simply could not be that I was pregnant!

A year later, in my fiftieth year, I gave birth to a wonderful girl, Binyomina, or Becky, named after my father-in-law, Binyomin, who was a very fine and special man.

When Becky was a few months old, we went for our traditional annual visit to the Rebbe. We had the newborn in our hands. The Rebbe said, “I see you brought the addition to your family.” This was a year later, and the Rebbe used the exact words. I said that we wanted to thank the Rebbe very much for giving us this beautiful child.

“No, it wasn’t me,” the Rebbe said. And he lifted his hand and pointed towards the heavens.

The Rebbe himself had no children, yet he gave so many people blessings for children. We are all his children. ■

my own Rebbe.” He was referring as he frequently did to his father-in-law and predecessor. “My Rebbe was the geologist of the soul. You see, there are many treasures in the earth. There is gold, there is silver, and there are diamonds. But if you don’t know where to dig, you’ll only find dirt and rocks and mud. The Rebbe can tell you where to dig, and what to dig for, but the digging you must do yourself.”

Gems are a fitting analogy for the Rebbe’s appreciation of people. Far from a personal desire to be admired as a shining light, he believed sincerely in every human being’s ability to shine.

Believer-in-Chief

HAVING GRADUATED OXFORD UNIVERSITY with distinction, Jonathan Sacks travelled from England to America to visit family and tour the country. He was particularly interested in Jewish philosophy and had arranged to meet and converse with several famous American rabbis during his stay. “Every one of them, every single rabbinical leader I met in America said, ‘You must see the Rebbe! You must see the Rebbe,’” he recalls. So he scheduled an appointment.

Sacks had a choice of career paths ahead of him. He hoped to be an academic one day, perhaps a professor or a fellow in Cambridge. He had studied economics and considered becoming an economist. And he had hopes of becoming a barrister. He planned to pose these options for the Rebbe’s comments and advice.

Of that first encounter, Sacks relates: “I first asked several intellectual and philosophical questions and [the Rebbe] gave intellectual, philosophical answers. Then he did a role reversal, he started asking *me* questions. ‘How many Jewish students are in Cambridge? How many get involved in Jewish life? What are you doing to bring other people in?’

“Now, I hadn’t come to become a Chabad-Lubavitch emissary. I’d come to ask a few simple questions, and all of a sudden he was challenging me. So I said, ‘In the situation in which I find myself...’—and the Rebbe did something which I think was quite unusual for him, he actually stopped me in mid-sentence. He says, ‘Nobody finds themselves in a situation; you put yourself in a situation. And if you put yourself in that situation, you can put yourself in another situation.’”

To his career question, the Rebbe told Sacks that Anglo Jewry was short of rabbis. “You must train Rabbis and you yourself must become a congregational



FROM THE START, WOMEN WERE INVOLVED IN ALL OF THE REBBE’S OUTREACH AND INREACH PROJECTS

rabbi, so that your students will come and they will hear you give sermons and they will learn.” Sacks listened to the advice and was eventually appointed chief rabbi of the Commonwealth, a title he held for 22 years.

“The world was wrong,” Rabbi Sacks frequently maintains. “They thought that the most important fact about the Rebbe was that here was a man with thousands of followers. They missed the most important fact: That a good leader creates followers, but a great leader creates leaders.

“That’s what the Rebbe did for me and for thousands of others.”

The 51 Percent

OFTEN—AND CERTAINLY A LONE voice among religious leaders in the 1950s—the Rebbe spoke about the gifts of influence unique to women and their foundational role in Jewish continuity. He commonly pointed to the many pivotal events in Jewish history that were shaped by women.

From the start, women were involved in all of the Rebbe’s outreach and inreach projects and are today the equal co-directors of nearly every Chabad House in the world. With the Rebbe’s encouragement, new educational institutions were founded for and run by women. Hundreds of women became educators in various institutions or Chabad centers.

Once, Australian Rabbi Chaim Gutnick and his wife were advised by the Rebbe to organize a lecture series for women on the Jewish perspective on marriage, in-

▲ Addressing the annual Chabad women’s convention. Yossi Melamed, 1978 / JEM

LAND OF THE FREE

“This is a country of kindness”, the Rebbe often said. The freedoms of a democracy must be used by citizens to live proudly and with purpose.

Since 1978, each US president has proclaimed an annual **Education and Sharing Day**, established by congress to honor the Rebbe’s impact on America’s education and values system. The celebration was not given a fixed date on the American calendar. Instead, it is proclaimed on the 11th of Nissan, the Rebbe’s Hebrew birthday.



President Reagan signs the annual proclamation in the Oval Office, 1987

President Jimmy Carter in his 1978 proclamation:

“On April 13 of this year the Congress of the United States... set aside a special day devoted to recognizing the importance of education in the lives of our citizens.”

President Ronald Reagan in his 1982 proclamation:

“The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s work stands as a reminder that knowledge is an unworthy goal unless it is accompanied by moral and spiritual wisdom and understanding. He has provided a vivid example of the eternal validity of the Seven Noahide Laws, a moral code for all of us.”

President Barack Obama in his 2013 proclamation:

“His legacy continues to inspire the service, charity, and goodwill he championed in life. As we reflect on the example he [set], let each of us strive to better realize the values we share.”

“It is this commitment to the same Divine truth and values, more than anything else, [that] unites all Americans in the true sense of E Pluribus Unum.”
—In correspondence with President Reagan, 1982

“You cannot tell Americans to do anything, but if taught, they can do everything.”
—To Pulitzer-winning novelist Herman Wouk

The principles of our republic provide for the freedom of religious practice and faith. This basic freedom must be afforded the children, by setting times for a “Moment of Silence” at the start of every school day. —On every child’s right to acknowledge a higher purpose



Robert Kennedy visits the Rebbe in 1964 as US Attorney General. Warman / JEM

In 1994, the Rebbe was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor, the first rabbi, second member of the clergy and one of fewer than 100 people to ever receive the distinction.



timacy and the traditions of mikvah. Rabbi Gutnick felt that Melbourne Jewry was not yet ripe for the concept. But the Rebbe insisted that an attempt must at least be made and the Gutnicks agreed to try it out.

Upon returning home to Australia, the couple planned and advertised a six-week series. Preparations were made to welcome a large group of women. For the first class, only one woman showed up. For the next five weeks the same woman was the sole attendee. Each time, the rabbi had to give her the class; he would not send her home after she made the effort to come. But he felt like a true failure.

One year later, visiting New York again, Rabbi Gutnick dejectedly reported to the Rebbe that his fears were

confirmed. Notwithstanding all their labor, only one woman—the same woman—showed up for each of the classes. From all of Melbourne Jewry, only one woman was interested enough in learning about Jewish family life.

The Rebbe’s face grew very serious, as he asked: “Only one woman? Tell me, *Reb Chaim*, how many mothers did Moses have?”

Revealing the Underground

FOR A GREAT portion of his leadership, the largest remaining Jewish population in Europe lived under extreme religious oppression in the USSR. The Rebbe was intimately

HOME OF THE SOUL

To the Rebbe, every inch in the Land of Israel is to be cherished as the divine gift promised in the Torah. Intimate concern for the security of the land and the safety and success of its people are felt throughout the Rebbe's talks and writings.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on his 1972 meeting as Ambassador to the United States:

"Here he was, a...person who on the one hand lives in the world of the Torah, but has practical sense and is in tune with the realities of life everywhere in the world. [He] has great sensitivity for the preserving of the Jewish people, the way that he believed it has to be preserved."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on multiple meetings as IDF general:

"His penetrating steel-gray eyes and the incredible knowledge he exhibited in global affairs left an especially strong impression on me... The common thread running through the Rebbe's strategic thinking was always his concern for the continuity of the Jewish people."



Prime Minister Menachem Begin visits the Rebbe in 1977.

Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu on his 1984 meeting as Ambassador to the United Nations:

"He told me to remember what I represent and who I represent, to stand firmly and proudly for Israel and the Jewish people. It was a very concise explanation of the thing that was most important; more important than diplomacy [or] politics; it was the essence of things."

"Many people ask [why I don't move to Israel]... Firstly, I have not left 770 from the day I became Rebbe. I go from here to the cemetery where my father-in-law, of righteous memory, is interred, and I return here. This is the only traveling I do.

"Why don't I leave? It's very simple. The battle for the survival of Judaism is still unfolding and there is no point for me to leave the front to come to Israel and save myself. When the day comes and all Jewish people will be safe, I will go together with them joyously to the Land of Israel."

—As quoted by Moshe Ishon who asked as representative of the Jewish Agency for Israel in New York

"The Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps...G-d's eyes rest on [the Land] always, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." —The Rebbe often quoted these verses from scripture during times of immense fear such as before the 1967 Six-Day-War and the 1991 Gulf War



The Rebbe holds a closed-door reception for wounded IDF soldiers. Yossi Melamed, 1976 / JEM

familiar with this religious persecution. In 1939 his father was arrested and exiled by the Communist regime for a fearless stance against the Party's efforts to eradicate Jewish learning and practice in the Soviet Union.

The Rebbe sent emissaries to the USSR, American Jews posing as tourists. They made contact with the Lubavitch underground still active from the previous rebbes. They brought suitcases with Jewish books, Mezuzot and Tefilin in hidden compartments to distribute to communities bereft of their own supplies. They returned with film strips of the Russian Jews asking for the Rebbe's blessing.

Watching the preserved recordings, one's heart melts

at the tenderness with which the Jews of Silence relate to a man who always heard them: "For my son Yaakov ben Sosha," asks a middle-aged man. "I would like to ask the rebbe to bless all the Jews who are in prison," says a man in his twenties. "Rebbe, thank you for fulfilling my request which I asked you last time," a boy no older than nine years old says into the camera.

In 1989, as the shackles of Communism began to fall away, the Rebbe dispatched shlichim to bring Judaism above ground. The embers of Jewish pride in the Former Soviet Union exploded in flame, led by those individuals who had held strong in their faith in G-d because one man had held strong in his faith in them.



FIRST PERSON

CONCERN FOR ALL MANKIND

THE REBBE'S COUNSEL was sought by national and international government officials of all levels.

After one such a meeting with US Senator Patrick Moynihan, the Rebbe asked if he could request a favor from the Senator.

"Here it comes" the Senator thought to himself, "now the Rebbe is looking for the payoff."

The Rebbe continued: "There is a growing community in Chinatown. These people are quiet, reserved, hard-working, and law-abiding—the type of citizens most countries would treasure.

But because Americans are so outgoing and the Chinese are, by nature, so reserved, they are often overlooked. Thus they miss out benefiting from government programs. I suggest that as US senator from New York, you concern yourself with their needs."



U.S. Senator Patrick Moynihan receives a dollar from the Rebbe
Chaim B. Halberstam, 1990 / JEM

"I was overwhelmed," the Senator said afterwards. "The Rebbe has a community of thousands in New York City and institutions all over the state that could benefit from government programs. I am in a position to help secure funding for them. The Rebbe didn't ask about that. Instead, he was concerned with the Chinese in Chinatown. I don't think he has ever been there, and I'm certain that most people there don't know who he is, but he cares about them..."

As in Russia, so too throughout the world, it was the one person—the one with whom he was interacting at any given moment—that deserved the Rebbe's full attention and his love. Ultimately and inevitably this personal care is what powered the phenomenal movement of Jewish revival.

Bringing G-d Home

FROM CHILDHOOD, THE Rebbe dreamed of the arrival of *Moshiach*—the promised era of complete harmony between the physical world and its G-dly Creator. In a 1956 letter to Israel's president Yitzchak ben Tzvi, he wrote, "From the day I went to *cheder* (elementary school) and even before, the picture of the final redemption started forming in my mind...a redemption in such a way that the suffering and disillusion of the [preceding millenia of] exile will be understood."

In a Chassidic discourse in 1951, on the night he accepted his position, the Rebbe outlined what he saw as the job of the generation: "Kabbala explains that shortly after the world began, the sin of Adam and Eve caused the *Shechina*—G-d's presence—to retreat from the world. Over the next six generations that presence responded to the rise in human self-absorption by retreating further until, by the seventh generation, the world felt G-dless altogether.

"Abraham—the first Jew—began the process of returning the *Shechina* to our physical world. He recognized the spark of the spiritual in physical creations and lovingly pointed it out to everyone he met. People began to understand that they were put here for a purpose and began treating themselves and others with the respect



that such knowledge demands. Over the next six generations, the *Shechina* was drawn closer, until Moses, faithful shepherd of the seventh generation made it at home once more in this physical world.

Eventually, the Rebbe continued, a new rise in self-absorption, war and destruction set the cycle off again. With the empowering urgency that came to be

with overflowing love. This is what would set the stage for G-d to redeem the world.

The Rebbe spoke about this redemption, a global shift that would be a deserved result of the cumulative efforts of every woman, man and child. He referred to the current era as the final stage of this positive transformation and underlined how every person has the power to tip the scales with his or her unique efforts. For the next forty years, he implanted this dream in the consciousness of two generations.

On April 11, 1991, eleven months before falling ill, he addressed his followers again: “I have done all I can to bring Moshiach,” he said with visible emotion. “Now, do everything in your power to transform the world through additional acts of goodness and kindness.”

Indeed, through his personal interactions and by way of his emissaries and followers, the Rebbe launched millions of miniature revolutions. But more, he showed how every person can reach inside and achieve those effects too—one good thought, one good word, one good deed at a time.

“It is not sufficient to mouth slogans. It is up to each and every person to bring about the harmonious, perfect world of *Moshiach* with actions.” ■

▲ Some of the Rebbe’s 4,000 official emissaries pose for a group photo in front of “770” at the end of their annual international conference.

Chaim Perl, 2013 / Kinus.com

“...DO EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD THROUGH ACTS OF GOODNESS AND KINDNESS.”

his hallmark, he addressed his eager new followers, the seventh generation of Chabad Chassidim.

“Seventh is special because it follows the six; we stand on the shoulders of those who have toiled to re-introduce transcendence into the physical world.”

Joseph Telushkin, in the biography “Rebbe”, recounts this inaugural discourse:

Throughout the talk, many times the Rebbe wept softly; often, many seconds would go by until he composed himself. Then he would resume speaking, returning to his central theme: the obligation of every Chasid, every Jew, to carry out G-d’s mission on earth and to do so

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10 Deeds to Jumpstart A Relationship with G-D

Keep your home, your marriage, your kids, your career—keep your life the way it is, but do it higher. That’s the idea behind what we call *mitzvahs*. A mitzvah is a connection between your world and a Higher Force. Here are ten “first-step” mitzvahs suggested by the Rebbe for their foundational significance. Pick one or pick more. Together, we’ll pick up the whole big world.

1



Love Yourself, Love Your Fellow

Treat others as you would ideally be treated—we’re all pieces of the same whole, enlivened by a single Source of life.

2



Pass It On

Give your kids a Jewish education so they’ll champion these values into the bright future!

3

Stay Educated

Schedule regular times during day and night to study. Torah is the source of life; we can learn from it as long as we live.



4



Bridge Worlds

MEN: Wrap Tefillin each weekday, connecting a limited creation with an infinite Creator.

6



Raise Your Hand

Give some coins to charity daily (except Shabbat and Jewish holidays). When your hand gives, your whole self is raised.

5



Scroll Up

Place Mezuzah scrolls on your doorposts, enveloping your home and everything inside.



7

Build Higher

Stock your shelves with books of higher meaning. On a foundation of prayer and Torah, a house becomes a sturdy home.

8



Shine Outward

WOMEN & GIRLS: Light Shabbat candles before sunset each Friday, sending much-needed light and warmth into the world.

Eat Smart

Keep a kosher diet, elevating the food you eat as it becomes the energy you use to do Mitzvahs.

10



9



Create a Splash

Observe the laws of Mikvah and family purity, turning a marriage of two people into an intimate reunion of a single soul.

UNTIL THE LAST CANDLE IS LIT

*The un-orthodox
mindset that still
drives a movement*

For three summers in the mid-1990s, a pair of Chabad students toured Alaska, particularly its most remote parts, to meet Jewish people.

In one small city in Alaska's northwest, the mayor told them that he knew of no Jews, but invited them to give a talk to the students at the local school. The men shared some teachings about Judaism. Then, knowing that the Rebbe wanted them to find Jews if they could, one of the students, Avraham Berkowitz, asked, "Did any of you ever meet a Jew?"

One girl raised her hand.

"Who ever did you meet?" Avraham asked her.

"My mother," the girl answered. "She's right there." She pointed to the school's fifth grade teacher.

After the class, the mother was visibly moved and thanked Avraham and his friend for coming. A native of the lower 48, she had always loved nature and years

earlier, had come to Alaska, fallen in love and married a native man.

"I must tell you that living here I don't know if my daughter will ever meet another rabbi again. I ask you to give my daughter a message so that she will always be proud of her Jewish identity."

Berkowitz's mind was racing. He knew he only had these few minutes, but what should he say? Thinking back, he realized that one of the Rebbe's great strengths was his ability to personalize a mitzvah, to empower the individual. He started to speak to the girl about the holiness of the Sabbath, the day which Jews dedicate to G-d: "And who ushers in Shabbat? It is mothers and daughters who light the Shabbat candles. They bring peace and light into the world."

He then asked her: "Where is the first place in the world where the sun sets?" The girl knew geography, and she said, "Probably New Zealand or Australia."

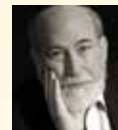
Avraham told her: "That's right. Jewish mothers in New Zealand and Australia are the first to usher in Shabbat. And then Shabbat is ushered in with lit candles in Asia, in Israel, in Europe, and then New York, Chicago, Seattle, Anchorage. And even then, there is one part of the world where the sun has not yet set. Here in the Yupik territory of Alaska. When mothers and daughters around the globe have welcomed the Shabbat, G-d and the Jewish people are still waiting for you, the last

Jewish girl in the world, to light the Shabbat candles."

From my years-long research of the Rebbe's life, it strikes me that the primary and most precious commodity he bequeathed his followers—one he urged the whole Jewish world to accept—was an unconditional love and respect for every Jew, even for those Jews whose lifestyles and religious practices were very different from his own. And this love was accompanied by a desire—unprecedented in history—to reach and empower every single Jew, in every place in the world.

One year, shortly after Rosh HaShanah, George Rohr, a prominent New York philanthropist and benefactor of Chabad, was understandably proud and excited to tell the Rebbe of the beginner's service he had led at Manhattan's Kehilath Jeshurun: "Rebbe, you will be pleased to know that we had 180 people for Rosh HaShanah services who came to us with no background." The Rebbe did not react, so Rohr repeated his words, this time in a louder voice. "We had 180 people for Rosh HaShanah services who came to us with no background." To which the Rebbe raised a timeless and telling challenge: "Tell them that they have a background. They are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah."

JOSEPH TELUSHKIN is a prolific lecturer and bestselling author of more than 18 books on Jewish philosophy, ethics and literacy. He is the author of *Rebbe: The Life and Teachings of Menachem M. Schneerson, the Most Influential Rabbi in Modern History*. A version of this essay appeared in the *New York Jewish Week*, 2012.

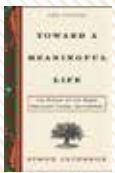


SUGGESTED READING



REBBE
JOSEPH TELUSHKIN
HarperWave, 2014

A rich portrait of a devoted spiritual leader and tireless counselor; controversial advocate for women's rights and community openness; and an accomplished scholar fluent in dozens of languages.



TOWARD A MEANINGFUL LIFE
SIMON JACOBSON
William Morrow, 2004

A spiritual roadmap giving Jews and non-Jews alike fresh perspectives on every aspect of their lives, from birth to death; intimacy and family; career, health, suffering, education, faith, science and government.



BRINGING HEAVEN DOWN TO EARTH (I, II)
TZVI FREEMAN
Eight editions, 1997-2011

A collection of 365 dimensions of the Rebbe's thought finely crafted into memorable aphorisms, and polished to allow the wisdom they contain to shine clearly through. Jump in at any point and read in any order.



SEEDS OF WISDOM
MENDEL KALMENSON
My Encounter with the Rebbe

Seeds of Wisdom is a heart-warming collection of short stories and encounters between the Lubavitcher Rebbe and people who sought his counsel on a wide array of life's questions and challenges.



TORAH STUDIES
RABBI JONATHAN SACKS
Kehot Publication Society, 2000

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You are a vital part of the LIVING TORAH



A TORAH IS made up of thousands of letters. Yet if even one letter is missing or damaged, the Torah scroll has to be wrapped up and put away. It cannot be used until it is fixed.

Jewish people everywhere are compared to a Sefer Torah. No matter how many of us there are, everyone matters, and is loved by G-d. If even a single one of us is 'damaged' or 'missing', it affects our whole entire nation, for we are all connected.

In 1981, the Lubavitcher Rebbe called on all Jewish children to par-

ticipate in writing a Children's Sefer Torah. This meant that every child would have the chance to buy a letter in the Torah, uniting Jews around the world in a show of solidarity.

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Since then, four Sefer Torahs have been completed and reside in Jerusalem, where they are used every week. That means more than 1,219,220 Jewish children have a letter of their own in a Torah, helping to promote peace around

the world, and bring Moshiach closer, when there will be true peace and harmony!

DO YOU WANT YOUR OWN LETTER?

Log onto www.KidsTorah.org to learn more about this wonderful Mitzvah, buy your own letter, and show the world you're proud to be part of G-d's chosen Nation!

The Rebbe
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