



10 *Shevat* *at Home*

Special publication for Yud Shevat 5781 (2021)

HOW TO OBSERVE 10 SHEVAT AT HOME

Seventy-one years ago, on 10 Shevat, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory, assumed the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement after the passing of his father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory. In the decades that followed, the Rebbe revolutionized, inspired and guided the post-Holocaust transformation of the Jewish people that continues to this day.

This day, so relevant to every Jew in our generation, is surely a time for reflection, learning, prayer, positive resolutions and acts of loving-kindness.

Additional observances on this day typically include communal gatherings and prayer, as well as prayer at the Ohel, the Rebbes' resting place in Queens, New York.

This year (5781), as 10 Shevat coincides with Shabbat and the pandemic still rages on, visits to the Ohel will not be an option for most of us, and we will be gathering only with our closest family members.

Fascinatingly, two of the signature emphases of the Rebbe are recognizing the unique opportunities and goodness inherent in each challenge and transforming it; AND the elevation of the home as a focal point of Jewish life. Looking for ways to channel this day's inspiration into your home? Here are our suggestions, many of which are the same as normal times.

Due to the sanctity of Shabbat, when we may not use technology, be sure to print up this guide and other texts you will be using before Shabbat.



1. LIGHT A CANDLE

On Friday afternoon, before lighting Shabbat candles, light a 24-hour candle, preferably made of beeswax. (The Hebrew word for beeswax – *שעווה* – is an acronym for the verse *הקיצו ורננו שונני עפר* – "Those who dwell in the dust shall rise and sing," a reference to the resurrection of the dead.)

2. SING A NIGUN OF THE REBBE

The Rebbe taught 13 melodies – called *nigunim* – in the early years of his leadership. In chassidic tradition, it's believed that a teacher infuses his soul into the *nigunim* he teaches, enabling us to connect to him in ways that we cannot connect through his verbal teachings.

Before Shabbat, you can find recordings of all 13 melodies here: www.chabad.org/1168661

3. STUDY THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS

After each of the three daily prayers, Maariv, Shacharit and Minchah, study a portion of *Basi LeGani*, the chassidic discourse the Previous Rebbe had prepared to be released and studied on the Shabbat he passed away, which the Rebbe saw as a sort of final will and testament of his father-in-law.

Print Basi LeGani resources before Shabbat: www.chabad.org/3196275

4. STUDY TANYA

Study a chapter of Tanya before you start your prayers in the morning, and then study another chapter after the afternoon prayers.

Choose chapters to print before Shabbat: www.chabad.org/tanya

5. GIVE CHARITY

Before Shabbat, donate (online or by placing money into a charity box) to institutions and causes related to the Rebbe. The Rebbe emphasized that you should do this on behalf of yourself and every member of your household.



6. WRITE A PRAYER PETITION

The traditional letter that is written to a *tzaddik*, even after his passing, is called a *pidyon nefesh*, abbreviated as *pahn*. In it, we ask the *tzaddik* to arouse heavenly compassion for our souls, and for all those close to us. This year, be sure to write yours by Friday.

Read your *pidyon nefesh* while visualizing the Rebbe standing before you, and leave the *pidyon nefesh* between the pages of a *maamar* or some written teaching of the Rebbe. Then send it to the Rebbe's burial place at Montefiore Cemetery in Queens to be placed there. You can send your letter via online form or email.

Before or after Shabbat, send your letter online:
www.chabad.org/36248

7. STUDY MISHNAH

Mishnah is spelled with the same Hebrew letters as *neshamah*, the Divine soul within each of us. Thus, over the 24-hour period, study chapters of *Mishnah* that begin with the letters of the Previous Rebbe's name.

8. DISCUSS THE REBBES AND THEIR LOVE FOR ALL

Set a time during Shabbat to sit down with your family and talk about the Rebbes, their ideals, and the work to which he devoted his entire life,

especially relating to children and bolstering Jewish education. Under normal circumstances, we also make the effort to do this on a communal level, in synagogues and other institutions. This year, we can do the same via phone, Zoom, Facebook Live or whatever other means we have at our disposal, before or after Shabbat. Find a story or teaching of the Rebbes that you connect with (particularly one that illustrates their unconditional love for all people), and blast it out to your social media circle.

9. JOIN A VIRTUAL FARBRENGEN

Ordinarily, this is a time when communities gather for a chassidic gathering called a *farbrengen* – a unique blend of storytelling, teaching, singing and sharing, during which participants inspire themselves and each other. This year, many communities will be hosting virtual *farbrengens* before or after Shabbat. Want to join? Speak to your local Chabad center to see what's happening in your neck of the woods.



10. MAKE A PLAN

Introspection is nice, but action is vital. Now is the time to make concrete decisions regarding things you can improve, in terms of both your Divine service and how you interact with those around you.

But don't limit yourself to yourself.

The Rebbe taught us to take Judaism to the streets and share it with others. In these challenging times, it may not be possible to physically approach people and offer them Shabbat candles to light or *tefillin* to put on, nor may people be comfortable inviting you into their home to affix a *mezuzah*. But through the gift of digital communication, with some perseverance and creativity, you can surely share one or more of the Rebbe's 10 mitzvah campaigns with others. How do you plan to translate your positive intentions into concrete action?

AN OVERVIEW OF BASI LEGANI

The series of Chassidic discourses, the first of which was released by the the Previous Rebbe, and subsequently expounded upon by the Rebbe, every year on this day.

Adaptation by **Naftali Silberberg**

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The tenth of Shevat was the *yahrtzeit* (anniversary of passing) of the rebbe's grandmother, Rebbetzin Rivkah. In the year 5710 (1950), the tenth of Shevat would fall on Shabbat (January 28). In honor of the occasion, the rebbe submitted for publication a discourse entitled *Basi LeGani* ("I have come to My garden").

On that Shabbat morning, the rebbe passed away at the age of 69.

The year that followed was one of apprehension for Chabad-Lubavitch chassidim. Many immediately recognized that the rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, was eminently suited to succeed his father-in-law, due to his outstanding scholarship and piety. But Rabbi Menachem Mendel humbly refused to accept the mantle of leadership.

After a full year of pleading and cajoling on the part of chassidim, Rabbi Menachem Mendel relented. On the first anniversary of his predecessor's passing, Rabbi Menachem Mendel accepted upon himself the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. In traditional Chabad chassidic form, he did so by delivering a chassidic discourse during a *farbrengen* (chassidic gathering) on that historic day.

The new rebbe's discourse was also entitled *Basi LeGani*. In fact, it was based upon the very discourse that his father-in-law had submitted a year earlier. He started off where his predecessor left off . . .

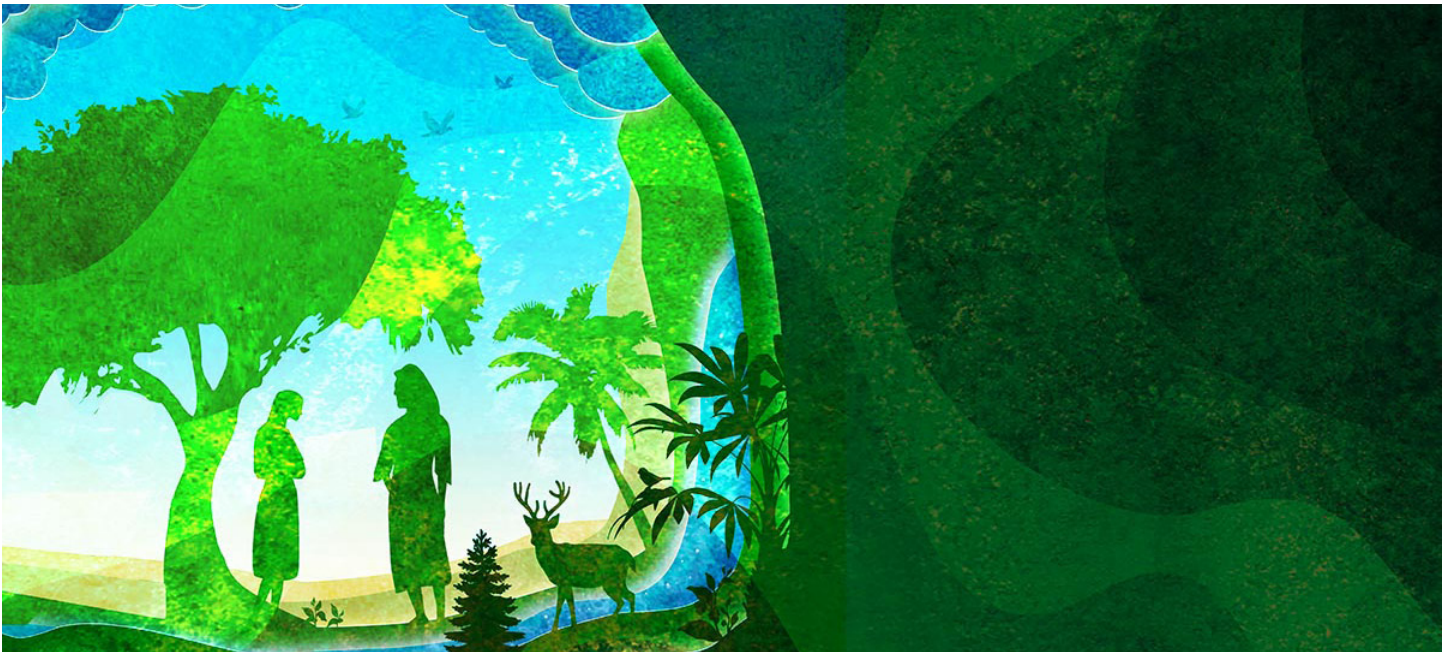
In the decades that followed, every year on the 10th of Shevat, the Rebbe would host a *grand farbrengen*, in keeping with chassidic tradition that designates the *yahrtzeit* of a righteous person as a highly auspicious day. For the chassidim, the day had additional import – it was the anniversary of the date when the Rebbe assumed leadership.

And every year at the 10 Shevat *farbrengen*, the Rebbe would say a chassidic discourse that started with the words *Basi LeGani*, always based on a different chapter of the original discourse penned by his predecessor. It became increasingly clear that the themes addressed in this discourse defined the Rebbe's leadership.

What does this special discourse discuss? Which garden? Who's coming to the garden? And why is this arrival in the garden such an important message for our generation?

The following is an abbreviated adaptation of the major themes discussed by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak.¹

1. *Basi LeGani* is the first in a series of four discourses. The following is an adaptation only of the ideas discussed in the first part of the discourse (the part that was intended for study on the tenth of Shevat).



The Garden

The words *basi legani* are taken from Solomon's Song of Songs.

The garden is our world. Announcing His arrival here in this garden is G-d Himself – who refers to it not as “a garden,” but as “My garden.” All that He created belongs to Him, but of all the myriad spiritual emanations and worlds, there is only one to which He refers as “My,” because it is only here – the very lowest realm – that He wants to call home. The divine light shines ever brightly in the supernal worlds, but only in this physical world does G-d wish to manifest His very essence.

His *shechinah* (presence) was here when He created this world. But it was driven away by a series of sins, starting with Adam and Eve's eating the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Subsequent sinful generations drove the *shechinah* further away, as it ascended from one heaven to the next.

This was no glitch in the plan; it was anything but.

Just as G-d created the world with the vision that it would serve as His domicile, He also had a clear vision as to how this domicile would be created. He envisioned a world characterized by frightful spiritual blackness, wherein creations – possessors

of free choice, capable of embracing the darkness or rejecting it – would repress the darkness, and ultimately transform it into light.

There must be a world which (on the surface) is inhospitable to its Creator. And through the difficult work of banishing and transforming the darkness, it becomes a beautiful “garden.” A place that G-d is delighted to inhabit.

The Precious Seventh

Abraham began to reverse the tide. He started the process of bringing the *shechinah* back down here. The next generations continued the process, which was completed by Moses, the seventh generation from Abraham – for, as the Midrash tells us, “All sevenths are precious.”

At the giving of the Torah, G-d returned in full grandeur: “And G-d descended upon Mt. Sinai” (Exodus 19:20). Though this revelation was temporary, a few months later G-d's presence graced the newly constructed Tabernacle. This time the *shechinah* was here to stay.

And G-d exclaimed, “I have come to My garden.”

But Moses' incredible achievement merely got the

ball rolling. G-d's desire to establish a terrestrial home was yet to be fully reached. It is not enough that the *shechinah* is manifest within the confines of the Tabernacle (and, subsequently, the Temple in Jerusalem). Ultimately the grand plan calls for the entire world, every inch of it, to be a welcoming home, a garden of pleasure, for its Creator.

Setting Ablaze the Inner Animal

The Tabernacle constructed by Moses serves as the template for an identical sanctuary that each and every one of us is expected to create for G-d in our own hearts. In fact, the wording of the verse wherein G-d charges the Israelites to erect a sanctuary alludes to this idea: "They shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in them" (Exodus 25:8). Our sages explain that the plural form, "I will dwell in *them*," teaches us that G-d desires to dwell within the heart of every Jew.

So we turn to the Tabernacle, the prototype of a divine dwelling place, for a better understanding of how to accomplish our mission – of repressing and transforming the darkness, and thereby creating a

personal human sanctuary for the *shechinah*.

The primary service in the Tabernacle was the offering of sacrifices. Practically, this entailed taking an animal, slaughtering it, and then offering it (or parts of it) on the altar, where a heavenly fire would descend and consume it.

The spiritual equivalent (and accompaniment) of this service involves the animal within, the selfish "animalistic" urges and desires that are the lot of every person. Yet each one of us also possesses a G-dly soul, which is ablaze with a "heavenly fire," a passionate and inextinguishable love for G-d. Through contemplating and meditating upon G-d's greatness, we can consume our inner animal with this fire. Yes, the inner animal is selfish, but it can be made to understand that a relationship with G-d is in its most selfish interest too. There's nothing as sweet, wondrous and fulfilling as a relationship with the Creator.

The Hebrew word for sacrifice is *korban*, which literally means "to come close." How does one come close to G-d? By transforming one's inner darkness into light – a light that then shines forth and illuminates the entire world.



The Virtue of Folly

The material used to create the Tabernacle's walls, acacia wood, takes the concept of the transformation of darkness to a more profound level.

In Hebrew, the word for acacia wood is *shittim* – which is related to the word *sh'tut*, "folly." Both these words share the same etymological root, the Hebrew word that means "straying."

Folly is one form of straying. There's a proper and straight path, one dictated by rationale and logic, and one who acts foolishly has wandered off this path of reason.

According to the Talmud, all sins are caused by a "spirit of folly" that pervades an individual. For no Jew in his right mind would willingly sever his or her relationship with G-d – even temporarily – in order to indulge a fleeting desire or whim. And then there are more global follies; assorted universal conventions that are *de facto* law, regardless of whether they are indeed wise (in a given situation) or not.

And G-d tells us that He wants us to create a sanctuary for Him out of these follies. He wants us to take our capacity to act irrationally and dedicate it to His service. He wants us to stray from the path of rationality – but in the opposite direction.

For is it possible to apprehend the unapprehendable? The problem with endeavoring to relate to G-d through logic and intellect lies not in the fact that we are not sufficiently wise to grasp Him, but in the fact that He transcends intellect (which is merely a creation of His).

Ultimately, we relate to G-d through the abnegation of our selves – including our mental capacities – and "foolishly" submitting ourselves to His will.

We must transform the folly of this world into holy



folly¹.

And thus Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak concludes the discourse:

"And then he shall see the realization of the verse, 'And I will dwell in them'; G-dliness will shine in his soul. And this is [what it says in the Zohar], 'When the other side [unholiness] is suppressed' – through a person succeeding in transforming the folly of the animal soul and worldly passions into holiness, for the purpose of studying Torah and observing the mitzvot – 'the transcendent glory of G-d is revealed in all the worlds.' The very highest levels of divinity are revealed and shine brightly."

Over the years, the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, elaborated on the many concepts discussed above. In this article, we will suffice with citing a few ideas from the Rebbe's inaugural discourse in 1951, wherein he explains the special relevance of these ideas to our generation.

1. In the discourse, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak brings an example of such holy folly.

The Talmud (Ketubot 17a) relates that one of the great sages, Rabbi Shmuel bar Yitzchak, would bring joy to brides by juggling myrtle branches before them. He was chastised by his colleague Rabbi Zeira for his behavior: "The master is embarrassing us; he is not demonstrating proper etiquette for a Torah scholar!"

When Rabbi Shmuel passed away, a pillar of fire in the shape of a myrtle interposed between his bier and all those attending the funeral – symbolizing his immense holiness. Then Rabbi Zeira said, "This elder's folly has benefited him . . ."

The Seventh Generation

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's discourse clearly identifies the reason why Moses was privileged to bring the *shechinah* down into this physical world: it was because he was the seventh.

We too are the sevenths, the Rebbe explained, the seventh generation since the inception of Chabad Chassidism. Moses, the seventh generation, first drew down the *shechinah* to this world; we, also the seventh generation, will complete the job, and usher in the final redemption.

"The spiritual task of the seventh generation," the Rebbe asserts, "is to draw down the *shechinah* truly below: transforming the folly of the animal soul – which every man knows only too well that he possesses – and the passions, if not worse, of his animal soul, converting and transforming them into the folly of holiness."

Seventh Since the First

This might leave us wondering: How did we earn this exalted position? Are we greater than all the generations that preceded us?

The Rebbe explains that our sages are precise in their wording. "All those who are seventh are cherished," they state, not "all those who are cherished are seventh." Meaning to say: being seventh is not a status that one achieves by virtue of being precious; rather, the seventh's quality lies simply in the fact that he is seventh. He is cherished not on account of his spiritual service, and not even because he chooses to be precious – it is something that he is born into.

On the other hand, the fact that the seventh is considered so precious in itself points to the greatness of the first – for the seventh is seventh only by virtue of the fact that he is the seventh since the first.

Who was the first? And why was he so great?

The first was our forefather Abraham. And to understand his greatness, the Rebbe contrasts Abraham to another great spiritual leader, Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Akiva was thoroughly suffused with a love for G-d. Because of his insistence on teaching Torah to the masses, he was sentenced by the Romans to a horrible death – he was flayed to death in the public marketplace. His students who were watching saw that a broad smile adorned his holy face. "How is it possible to endure such torture with a smile?" they cried. Rabbi Akiva responded, "My entire life I have awaited the moment when I could sanctify G-d's Name, constantly asking myself: 'When will I be afforded the opportunity to make this ultimate sacrifice?' And now that the opportunity is here, I should not smile?!" Rabbi Akiva, then, understood that the soul can reach no greater heights than through *mesirat nefesh* (martyrdom).

Abraham was different. To Abraham, *mesirat nefesh* was incidental, not something he actively pursued. He knew that his objective was to proclaim and publicize G-d's name. As the verse says, "[Abraham] proclaimed (*vayikra*) there the name of G-d." On this our sages comment, "Do not read *vayikra* – 'he proclaimed,' but *vayakri* – 'he made others proclaim.'" Abraham didn't suffice with proclaiming it himself; he saw to it that the people he influenced should likewise proclaim G-d's name to others.

This was his objective – nothing else. And if in the course of this service *mesirat nefesh* was called for, he was prepared for that too. But he had no personal aspirations, not even the loftiest of aspirations – the connection to G-d achieved through *mesirat nefesh*.

Indeed, so great was Abraham's service that Moses was privileged to have the Torah given through him only because he was the beloved seventh – the seventh to the first. And when Moses once thought to compare himself to Abraham, G-d chastised him: "Do not stand in the place of the great ones!"



A Call to Action

We must understand, the Rebbe continued, that our preciousness as the seventh generation, and our capacity to consummate the process of making this world into a divine abode, is due to the fact that we perpetuate the mission embarked upon by the first.

The conduct of the first rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, was similar to Abraham's. He sought nothing for himself, not even *mesirat nefesh*, for he knew that his whole existence was for the sake of "proclaiming the name of G-d": proclaiming and causing others to proclaim.

In the spirit of Abraham, this means arriving in places where nothing is known of G-dliness, nothing is known of Judaism, nothing is known even of the *alef-bet*, and while there, setting oneself completely aside and devoting oneself to the mission at hand.

And let it be known: if a person wishes to succeed in his own "proclamation," i.e., his own divine service, he must see to it that others too – even those who

have hitherto been utterly ignorant – know and vociferously proclaim.

To conclude with the Rebbe's words:

"It is this that is demanded of each and every one of us of the seventh generation – for 'all those that are seventh are cherished':

"Although the fact that we are in the seventh generation is not the result of our own choosing and our own service, and indeed in certain ways perhaps contrary to our will², nevertheless, 'all those who are seventh are cherished.'

"We are now very near the approaching footsteps of Moshiach; indeed, we are at the conclusion of this period. Our spiritual task is to complete the process of drawing down the *shechinah* – the essence of the *shechinah* – specifically within our lowly world.

Browse Basi Legani resources before Shabbat:

www.chabad.org/3196169

2. Meaning that the transition into the seventh generation occurred as a result of the sixth rebbe's passing.

7 TEACHINGS FROM THE REBBE'S “MISSION STATEMENT”

The following teachings are excerpted and freely translated from the inaugural address of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, delivered on the 10th of Shevat, 1951. Mentions of “the Rebbe” refer to the Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the sixth Rebbe of Chabad, who had passed away exactly one year before the inaugural address of his successor.

Compiled by **Eli Rubin**

1. IF YOU WANT TO LOVE G-D, YOU NEED TO LOVE PEOPLE

Love of G-d, love of the Torah, and Love of the Jewish people are bound up with one another, so much so that they are all one. Only when you love your fellow as yourself are you able to love G-d, who transcends the world and is the master of all things. For this reason the Rebbe relinquished his own physical and even spiritual interests out of love for the Jewish people. If you have love of G-d but not love of the Torah and love of people, you are actually lacking in love of G-d. On the other hand, if you love people you will ultimately come to love the Torah and love G-d as well.

2. WHEN A REBBE ASCENDS, WE MUST ALL ASCEND WITH HIM

The Rebbe's ascent beyond the physical might lead you to think that it has become ever more difficult to connect to him. Know that the contrary is true: Your connection must only increase more and more. Just as the Rebbe constantly ascends to new heights, so we must gather additional strength in order that we may accompany him.



3. YOUR PURPOSE IS FAR MORE PROFOUND THAN YOU THINK

The Zohar teaches that there is depth within depth, there is the revealed and the hidden, and within the hidden is concealed yet deeper purpose. The Rebbe gifted people with various kinds of missions. Some of us were instructed to engage in a trade or in commerce, but the inner intention was to advance Torah study and mitzvah observance. Others of us were instructed to become spiritual educators, disseminators of Judaism, or simply to teach children the Aleph-Bet. We must all realize that these are all but external garments for a more profound vision. The deeper vision is to spread the wellsprings of Chassidism, and thereby to attain ultimate redemption.

4. THE PEOPLE AND THE LEADER ARE ONE

All who had and have a connection with the Rebbe will continue to have a connection to the Rebbe in the future. You must know that all the instructions received from the Rebbe have an inner intent, and that inner intent is to reveal the inner core of the Torah, that the wellsprings shall be spread to the outside ... and then "Moses and the Jewish people shall sing." The "and" in this verse (Exodus, 15:1) signifies ultimate connection. The verse uses the singular form of the verb "to sing" (yashir) rather than the plural (yashiru), indicating that the people and their leader become a single entity.

5. FEED BODIES AND FEED SOULS

Each one of us is required to recognize that our purpose is to emulate our forefather Abraham. When arriving in a place where the people didn't know of G-dliness, didn't know of Judaism, Abraham put himself aside. His priority was to see to it that even such people would ultimately go into the streets and shout "G-d world!" (el olam, Genesis, 21:33) meaning that G-dliness and the world are one. Your love of the Jewish people should not only be actualized physically, in giving food to the hungry and water to the thirsty, but also in bringing Jews to love of Torah and to love of G-d

6. YOUR EARTHLY WORK TRANSCENDS THE LOFTIEST HEAVENS

The ultimate purpose of creation does not lie in any supernal realm, for all those realms entail a descent for G-d. They are but revelations. It is specifically in this world that G-d's transcendent essence is most tangibly encountered. Through the earthly labor of subduing all that is unholy and transforming it into holiness, we uncover G-d's most intimate and transcendent self within the earthly garden.

7. YOU ARE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

In Chabad it was always demanded that each individual must take responsibility for their own spiritual work, and that they must not rely on the Rebbes. In Chabad we each have to work independently, with every limb and sinew. As the Talmud says: All is in the hands of heaven except for fear of heaven (Brachot, 33b). I am not refusing to help you, heaven forbid. I will help as much as I am able. But unless you work independently, what will be gained if I distribute new teachings, if we sing inspiring melodies, and say l'chaim?! Each person must independently transform their worldly excitement into holy excitement.



THE CHICKEN FARMER AND THE MAN IN THE BUS STOP

By Menachem Posner

Reb Yankel Lipskier was hardly your typical New Jersey chicken farmer. He had made his bones in Soviet Russia, where he was the manager of a factory and an active participant in the underground Chabad movement. He was well positioned to support the secret yeshivah that had sprung up in the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, where he and his family lived during World War II.

When the Iron Curtain lifted briefly during the chaotic years that followed the war, Reb Yankel, his wife, Taibel, and their growing brood escaped to the west and lived in France for a short while before coming to the United States. Once they arrived, they settled in Brooklyn to be close to the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe—Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, of righteous memory—who had left the Soviet Union in 1927, but had maintained a close, if clandestine, connection with the Jews who remained there.

Entering the rebbe's study, Reb Yankel asked the rebbe to advise him regarding parnassah. What should he do to earn a livelihood? The rebbe advised him to purchase a Yiddish newspaper and see what opportunities were being advertised. Then the rebbe looked at a page of the newspaper that was in front of him. Running his pencil along the columns of notices, he paused to mark an ad for a chicken farm for sale.

Located in Hightstown, N.J., 60 miles southwest of Brooklyn, the farm hardly seemed like a place to raise a growing chassidic family. But Reb Yankel and Taibel needed no more convincing. Clutching the newspaper clipping, Reb Yankel approached the offices of the Joint Distribution Committee and asked for assistance to purchase the farm.

"I'm sorry," he was told by the sympathetic but skeptical case worker, "that farm is a losing proposition. Why don't you look into something

that has more potential?"

Crestfallen, Reb Yankel returned to the rebbe, who told him, "They will give you funds for the farm. Go back and ask again."

And so it was. With the help of the Joint, the Lipskier family soon found themselves on a farm in New Jersey

They weren't entirely alone. In those days, there were numerous Jewish farmers in the area—mostly fellow immigrants from Europe—and Reb Yankel did his best to kindle the latent spark of Judaism within them.

Even as his farm floundered (the officials from the Joint had been correct in their assessment), his spiritual endeavors thrived. The sleepy synagogue was alive with classes in Tanya, Ein Yaakov and Jewish law.

"You think I sent you to New Jersey to be a farmer?" the rebbe once remarked to Reb Yankel. "Many others can be farmers. You are there to fulfill a Divine mission!"



Life on the farm was hard. The community remained painfully small, and there were few if any other young chassidic families for miles around.

A bright spot in the monotony of loneliness and poverty that was their lot was when the rebbe would dispatch groups of rabbinical students to the area. Sleeping on the synagogue's hard benches, the young men would travel from farm to farm every day for several weeks, selling Jewish texts for nominal fees, encouraging the farmers to increase their Jewish engagement, and reminding them that there was a Jew in Brooklyn who cared for them deeply.

It once happened that a group of students arrived before Shabbat and told Reb Yankel that they had been given a specific instruction from the rebbe: to find out the full Hebrew name of Moishe Green. (When praying for someone, it is customary to pray using their Hebrew name and the Hebrew name of their mother.)

Reb Yankel's mind began racing. He knew just about everybody in the tight-knit Jewish community, and he could not think of anyone named Moishe Green.

Shabbat morning came, and Reb Yankel approached the gabbai, the synagogue caretaker, to see if he perhaps knew the identity of the mysterious Moishe Green.

"Yes, I know who he is," the gabbai said. "He lives around here but has never stepped foot in the synagogue, not even on Yom Kippur. Oddly enough, he came to synagogue this morning and is actually sitting and praying right over there." The caretaker gestured discreetly in the direction of a man with a pronounced hunchback.

Looking at the stranger, Reb Yankel realized that his face was familiar. Every Shabbat, as Reb Yankel walked to synagogue, he would see the man, a fat cigar in his mouth, waiting at the bus stop for the express bus to Jersey City.

Following prayers, Reb Yankel announced that there would be a grand kiddush reception, during which the visiting rabbinical students would share words

of inspiration and lively chassidic melodies. Reb Yankel made sure to sit down next to the newcomer.

Once everyone was seated around the table, happily tucking into the herring, kichel (sweet cracker) and spirits, Reb Yankel raised his glass and announced that there was another reason for the celebration. He was marking the *yahrzeit* (anniversary of passing) of his mother, whose name was Batsheva. "And what was your mother's name?" he asked Moishe Green as nonchalantly as he could.

With the prized information in hand, the rabbinical students were able to report back to the rebbe with the information he had requested.

Meanwhile, Reb Yankel was curious to know what would happen to Moishe Green. The following Shabbat, as he walked to the synagogue, he passed the bus stop, but Moishe was nowhere to be seen. The same thing happened the next week, and the next. Moishe had disappeared.

"Do you know what happened to Moishe Green?" he asked the synagogue caretaker, who seemed to know everything about everyone. "I have not seen him for several weeks now."

"You didn't hear?" replied the caretaker. "After spending Shabbat with the rabbinical students sent by the rebbe, he suddenly left his non-Jewish family and moved out of town!"

While our story ends here, we can only speculate that somewhere in the world the stooped figure of Moishe Green entered a synagogue or yeshiva, ready to resume the Jewish life he had left behind so many years prior.

As for Reb Yankel? It was several more years that he would remain on the chicken farm. In 1954, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, told him that his mission in New Jersey was over, and that he could relocate with his family to Brooklyn. He did so, opened a small grocery, and threw himself into communal life, serving as a gabbai in the Rebbe's synagogue.



THE MAN WHO TURNED JUDAISM OUTWARD

By Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

We first met in 1968. I was an undergraduate, visiting American Jewry to seek out its intellectual leaders. They were impressive. But my encounter with the Rebbe was unique. In every other case, I asked questions and received answers. The Lubavitcher Rebbe alone turned the interview around and began asking me questions. What was I doing for Jewish life in Cambridge? What was I doing to promote Jewish identity among my fellow students?

The challenge was personal and unmistakable. I then realized that what was remarkable about the Rebbe was the exact opposite of what was usually attributed to him. This was not a man who was interested in creating followers. Instead, this was a man who was passionate about creating leaders.

He himself was a leader on a heroic scale. Chosen to succeed his late father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, as head of Lubavitch in 1950, he set about reconstructing the movement in the

inhospitable climate of secular America. At that time it was widely believed that Orthodoxy had no future in the United States. No one had yet found a way to make traditional Judaism a living presence in an America called the *treifa medina*.

Like all classic rabbinic leaders, the Rebbe began with education, creating a network of schools and yeshivot. Then he took the decision that was to change the face of Lubavitch and ultimately the Jewish world. He sent his followers out to places and communities which had never known a Chasidic presence. He began with university campuses. Already, in the early 1950's, Lubavitchers could be found working with Jewish students, telling Chasidic stories, singing songs and introducing them to the hitherto remote world of Jewish mysticism.

It was an extraordinary move, nothing less than the reinvention of the early days of the Chasidic movement when, in the 18th century, followers

of the Baal Shem Tov had traveled from village to village taking with them the message of piety and faith.

Chasidism had proved to be the most effective ways of protecting Judaism against the inroads of secularization. But it was limited in its impact to Eastern Europe. Nothing was less likely than that a strategy from the old world could succeed in the new. But it did. Drawn by its warmth, intrigued by its depth, hitherto assimilated Jews were attracted to Lubavitch and, on meeting the Rebbe, became his disciples.

The second decision was even more remarkable. Though the faith that drove the Rebbe was traditional, the environment to which it was addressed was not. Earlier and more profoundly than any other Jewish leader, he realized that modern communications were transforming the world into a global village.

Religious leadership could now be exercised on a scale impossible before. The Rebbe began sending emissaries throughout the Jewish world, most notably and covertly in Russia. The movement was unified through his regular addresses, communicated through a series of mitzvah campaigns. Few international organizations can have been more tightly led by a single individual on the most slender resources.

It would be hard to find a historical precedent for this massive effort to reignite the flame of Judaism in a secular world. If today we are familiar with the phenomena of baalei teshuvah (religious returnees) and Jewish outreach, it is almost entirely due to the pioneering work by Lubavitch, since adopted by many other groups within Orthodoxy.

The Rebbe was preoccupied by the challenge of

religious leadership. In a conversation we had in 1978 he expressed his concern at the shortage of rabbis throughout the Diaspora, and at the failure of yeshivot to direct their alumni to congregational work. He encouraged me to enter the rabbinate and to train other rabbis, and was particularly supportive of the work of Jews' College. He himself turned his followers into leaders at the earliest possible age and, if the decision to empower youth exposed Lubavitch to risks, it also gave it a vigor and energy that were to be found nowhere else in the religious world.

Behind all this activity lay a compelling vision, never formally articulated but clear nonetheless. The Jewish world, particularly the Europe from which he came, had been devastated by the Holocaust. In the aftermath, one thing had happened but another thing had not. Jews had returned to the land of Israel. But they had not returned to the faith of Israel.

In Judaism, physical and spiritual return are inseparable. In the modern world they had become separated. This was the fracture he sought to mend. Where others devoted themselves to building the Jewish State, he dedicated himself to rebuilding the inner state of Jews.

Excerpted from a tribute penned by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks following the passing of the Rebbe, on 3 Tammuz, 5754 (1994). Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (1948-2020) was an international religious leader, philosopher, and respected moral voice. The author of over 30 books, Rabbi Sacks received multiple awards in recognition of his work including the 2016 Templeton Prize. He was the recipient of 18 honorary doctorates, was knighted by Her Majesty The Queen in 2005 and made a Life Peer, taking his seat in the House of Lords in October 2009. He served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013.

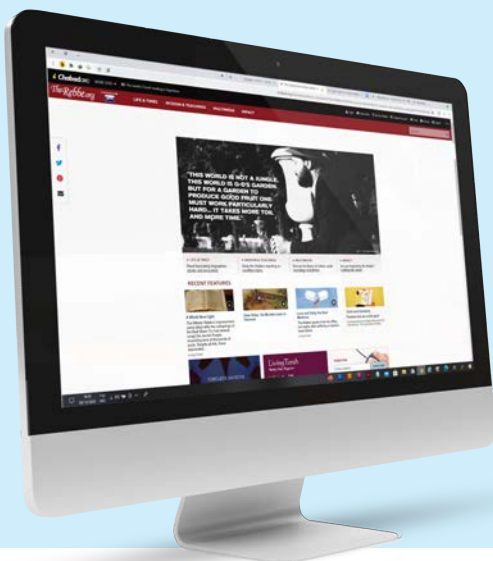
10 Shevat at Home

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