

A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN

ב"ה

A collection of Teaching & Stories from
The Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson
of righteous memory

כ"ה"ו
מספרי לוי יצחק גרליק



Celebrating the Wedding of
Tzvi & Chanie Backman

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The audiences, held on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, would begin shortly after nightfall and extend through the night; often, the last of the several hundred visitors would depart at dawn. Most had only a minute or two in the presence of the Rebbe, but all would come away with the feeling that in their time with him, however brief, the Rebbe was with them with his entire being, wholly and exclusively focused on their individual concerns.

The number of those seeking the Rebbe's advice and blessing continued to grow; soon all but the most urgent cases had to wait several months for a yechidut appointment. Finally, the requests for meetings with the Rebbe reached such numbers that it was no longer possible to accommodate them. Individual contact with the Rebbe now took the form of written correspondence: some three mailsacks of letters would arrive each day to his office at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, each of which he would personally open and read.

In 1986, the Rebbe began conducting a weekly "receiving line." Each Sunday, the Rebbe would stand in a small room near his office as thousands of men, women and children filed past to see him and receive his blessing. Many used the opportunity to pose a question and receive a word of advice. And to each of them the Rebbe gave a dollar bill, appointing them as his personal agent (shaliach) to give it to the charity of their choice.

Why the dollar? The Rebbe explained his custom by quoting his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, who would often say: "When two Jews meet, something good should result for a third." The Rebbe wished to elevate each of the thousands of encounters of the day to something more than a meeting of two individuals; he wanted that each should involve the performance of a mitzvah, particularly a mitzvah that also benefits another individual.

Again, a most amazing phenomenon was reported by all who came for "Sunday Dollars." The Rebbe, well into his ninth decade at the time, would stand for as long as eight hours without interruption. Yet in the few seconds that he or she was with the Rebbe, each visitor felt that the Rebbe was there only for them. It was as though he or she were the only visitor of the day.

Once, an elderly woman could not contain herself and burst out: "Rebbe, How do you do it? How is it that you do not tire?"

The Rebbe smiled and replied: "Every soul is a diamond. Can one grow tired of counting diamonds?"



THE REBBE SAID THANK YOU

When Joseph Cabiliv—today a successful real estate developer—regained consciousness in the Rambam Hospital in Haifa, he remembered nothing of the circumstances that had brought him there. He felt an excruciating pain in his legs. The discovery that followed was far more horrendous: glancing under the sheet, he saw that both his legs had been amputated, the right leg at the knee, the left at mid-thigh.

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The day before, Joseph, who was serving on reserve duty in Zahal (the Israeli Defense Forces), was patrolling the Golan Heights with several other soldiers when their jeep hit an old Syrian land mine. Two of his comrades were killed on the spot. Another three suffered serious injury. Joseph's legs were so severely crushed that the doctors had no choice but to amputate them.

Aside from the pain and disability, Joseph was confronted with society's incapacity to deal with the handicapped. "My friends would come to visit," he recalls, "sustain fifteen minutes of artificial cheer, and depart without once meeting my eye. My mother would come and cry, and it was I, who so desperately needed consolation, who had to do the consoling. My father would come and sit by my bedside in silence. I don't know which was worse, my mother's tears or my father's silence.

"Returning to my civilian profession as a welder was, of course, impossible, and while people were quick to offer charity, no one had a job for a man without legs. When I ventured out in my wheelchair, people kept their distance, so that a large empty space opened up around me on the busiest street corner."

When Joseph met with other disabled veterans he found that they all shared his experience: they had given their very bodies in defense of the nation, but the nation lacked the spiritual strength to confront their sacrifice.

"In the summer of 1976," Joseph tells, "Zahal sponsored a tour of the United States for a large group of disabled veterans. While we were in New York, a Lubavitcher chassid came to our hotel and suggested that we meet with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Most of us did not know what to make of the invitation, but a few members of our group had heard about the Rebbe and convinced the rest of us to accept.

"As soon as they heard we were coming, the Chabadniks sprang into action, organizing the whole thing with the precision of a military campaign. Ten large commercial vans pulled up to our hotel to transport us and our wheelchairs to the Lubavitch headquarters in Brooklyn. Soon we found ourselves in the famous large synagogue in the basement of 770 Eastern Parkway.

"Ten minutes later, a white-bearded man of about 70 entered the room, followed by two secretaries. As if by a common signal, absolute silence pervaded the room. There was no mistaking the authority he radiated. We had all stood in the presence of military commanders and prime ministers, but this was unlike anything we had ever encountered. This must have been what people felt in the presence of royalty. An identical thought passed through all our minds: Here walks a leader, a prince.

"He passed between us, resting his glance on each one of us and lifting his hand in greeting, and then seated himself opposite us. Again he looked at each of us in turn. From that terrible day on which I had woken without my legs in the Rambam Hospital, I have seen all sorts of things in the eyes of those who looked at me: pain, pity, revulsion, anger. But this was the first time in all those years that I encountered true empathy. With that glance that scarcely lasted a second and the faint smile on his lips, the Rebbe conveyed to me that he is with me—utterly and exclusively with me.

"The Rebbe then began to speak, after apologizing for his Ashkenazic-accented Hebrew. He spoke about our 'disability,' saying that he objected to the use of the term. 'If a person has been deprived of a

limb or a faculty,' he told, 'this itself indicates that G-d has given him special powers to overcome the limitations this entails, and to surpass the achievements of ordinary people. You are not "disabled" or "handicapped," but special and unique, as you possess potentials that the rest of us do not.

"I therefore suggest,' he continued, adding with a smile -of course it is none of my business, but Jews are famous for voicing opinions on matters that do not concern them-that you should no longer be called Nechei Yisrael ("The disabled of Israel," our designation in the Zahal bureaucracy) but Metzuyanei Yisrael ("The Special of Israel").' He spoke for several minutes more, and everything he said-and more importantly, the way in which he said it-addressed what had been churning within me since my injury.

"In parting, he gave each of us a dollar bill, in order-he explained-that we give it to charity in his behalf, making us partners in the fulfillment of a mitzvah. He walked from wheelchair to wheelchair, shaking our hands, giving each a dollar, and adding a personal word or two. When my turn came, I saw his face up close and I felt like a child. He gazed deeply into my eyes, took my hand between his own, pressed it firmly, and said 'Thank you' with a slight nod of his head.

"I later learned that he had said something different to each one of us. To me he said 'Thank you'- somehow he sensed that that was exactly what I needed to hear. With those two words, the Rebbe erased all the bitterness and despair that had accumulated in my heart. I carried the Rebbe's 'Thank you' back to Israel, and I carry it with me to this very day."



THREE DAYS, THREE WORDS

The following is a free translation of a story that appeared in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Achronot on Iyar 4, 5717 (May 5, 1957). We have left the article basically as it was written, wishing to convey the "outsider's" perspective of the Israeli reporter and his impression of the people and the events he describes.

On the eve of Yom HaAtzmaut (Independence Day) last year, as the bonfires were being raised on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, the lights were burning also in Tzafir (Kfar Chabad), the Chabad-Lubavitcher village in the Lod Valley.

For four days the village had been in deep mourning and grievous anguish, the likes of which the Lubavitcher chassidim had not known in many years. On that black and bitter night, a band of fedayeen entered the village. They made their way to the synagogue of the local agricultural school, where the school's young students were in the midst of the evening maariv prayers, and raked the room with fire from their Karl-Gustav rifles. They reaped a cruel blood-harvest: five children and one teacher were killed and another ten children wounded; their pure, holy blood soaking the siddurim that fell from their hands and splattering the synagogue's white-washed walls.

The village chassidim, brawny, broad-shouldered Russian Jews with thick black beards and bushy brows, stood dumbfounded before the terrible scene that met their eyes. A pogrom in Israel! A pogrom in

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Chabad! they whispered, and bit their lips in rage. The women stood there too, hefty, handsome Russian matrons, wringing their hands and murmuring to themselves in Russian and Hebrew, their eyes emitting an endless stream of tears.

This was not a common scene for the Lubavitchers. These Chassidim, who had survived the pogroms in Czar Nikolai's Russia and whom the Red Army could not intimidate, who had been banished to the frozen plains of Siberia, whose backs decades in Stalin's prisons and camps could not bow, now stood stooped and despairing. Now, that the blow had hit home in the heart of the Jewish state.

In the center of the village stood Rabbi Avraham Maayor who had been a high-ranking officer in the Russian Army. Avraham Maayor, of whom legend told that he calmly stood and sang chassidic melodies as a band of soldiers beat him with the butts of their rifles, now stood crying out at the heavens: "Master of the Universe, Why?! How have the children sinned?!"

Despair and dejection pervaded the village, and began to eat away at its foundations. There were some who saw what happened as a sign that their dream of a peaceful life in the Holy Land was premature. Perhaps we should disband, seek refuge in safer havens? The village was slowly dying.

The Village Waits

But it was clear to all that before any decisive move would be made, the Rebbe had to be consulted. Nothing would be done without his knowledge and consent. All awaited the telegram from "there," from New York, but the telegram was inexplicably not forthcoming. Four days had passed since the terror had struck. A lengthy telegram had immediately been dispatched informing the Rebbe of all the details of the tragedy, and an answer was expected that very night. But the Rebbe was silent. What happened, many wondered, why doesn't he respond? Has he not a word of comfort for his stricken followers?

A telegram from the Rebbe, it should be clarified, is an integral part of Chabad-Chassidic life across the globe. Every problem, every decision pertaining to the communal or private life of the Lubavitcher chassid is referred to the Rebbe's headquarters in Brooklyn, and whatever the reply, that is what is done. And the answer is always forthcoming, whether by regular post, express mail, or emergency telegram depending upon the urgency of the matter and always short, succinct, and to the point.

Why, then, is the Rebbe's answer on such a fateful matter tarrying? The village elders had no explanation, and, as the hours and days went by, the question continued to plague their tormented souls, and their anguish and despair weighed increasingly heavier on their hearts.

The Telegram

And then, four days after the tragedy, the telegram arrived. The news spread throughout the village: A telegram from the Rebbe! The telegram has arrived! The entire village, men, women and children, assembled in the village square to hear the Rebbe's reply.

And the Rebbe was characteristically succinct. The telegram contained a single sentence—three Hebrew words—but these three words sufficed to save the village from disintegration and its inhabitants

from despair. Behemshech habinyan tinacheimu, wrote the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. "By your continued building will you be comforted."

The Chassidim of Kfar Chabad now had a firm grasp on their future: they knew what they had to do. They must build! The Rebbe said to build! And that by their continued building they will be comforted! That very night the village elders held a meeting to discuss how the Rebbe's directive might be implemented. After a short discussion, a decision was reached: a vocational school will be built where children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be taught the printing trade. On the very spot where the blood was spilled, the building will be raised.

The Rebbe Knew

The next morning, all residents of the village gathered at the empty lot adjoining the agricultural school and began clearing and leveling the land in preparation for the building. The joy was back in their eyes.

In the weeks that followed, letters arriving from relatives and friends in New York described what had transpired there in those four endless days in which the village had awaited the Rebbe's reply.

For the entire month of Nissan, the month of the redemption, it is the Rebbe's custom to devote himself entirely to the service of the Creator, reducing his contact with his Chassidim to a minimum. Rare is the individual who is granted an audience with the Rebbe in this period, and all but the most urgent correspondence is postponed until the close of the auspicious month.

When the month of Nissan ends, a festive farbrengen (Chassidic gathering) is held at the Rebbe's headquarters on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, marking the Rebbe's resumption of his involvement with his thousands of followers across the globe. The Rebbe speaks for hours, his talks interspersed with bouts of song and l'chaims, often until the wee hours of the morning.

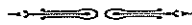
That year, the farbrengen marking the close of Nissan was also held. The tragic news from the Holy Land had arrived in New York moments before the farbrengen was scheduled to begin, but the Rebbe's secretaries decided to withhold the news from him until after the gathering. But what his assistants did not tell him, his heart seems to have told him. That night, the Rebbe spoke of Jewish self-sacrifice and martyrdom al kiddush Hashem (for the sanctification of G-d's name), about the rebuilding of the Holy Land, and the redemption of Israel. Tears flowed from his eyes as he spoke. All night he spoke and wept, sang and wept, and wept still more.

Why is the Rebbe weeping? Only a few of those present could guess those who knew about the telegram from Kfar Chabad.

The farbrengen ended. The chassidim dispersed to their homes, and the Rebbe retired to his room. With great trepidation, two of the Rebbe's closest chassidim knocked on the Rebbe's door and handed him the telegram from Israel. The Rebbe sank into his chair. He locked his door and did not open it for three days. After three days of utter seclusion, he called his secretary and dictated his reply: Behemshech habinyan tinacheimu. By your continued building you will be comforted.

The chassidim of Kfar Chabad have fulfilled their Rebbe's request. Without the aid of philanthropists or foundations, they have raised 50,000 Israeli pounds, and today, one year after the tragedy, the new building of the vocational school is completed.

Tomorrow, as the citizens of Israel celebrate their eighth Independence Day, the chassidim of Kfar Chabad will hold a farbrengen and relate, again and again, the story of the three-word telegram that saved the village.



THE REBBE'S ONLY CHILD

Spurred by the drama of the Cuban Missile Crisis and a young man's desire to be a player on the international scene, I decided to major in political science and pursue a career in the diplomatic corps. The year 1967 found me, an up-and-coming diplomatic aide, on the staff of the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg.

In the first week of June I received a call from a cousin of mine. In an anxious voice, she asked that I stop by at her apartment after work. As I sat in their living room that evening, she and her husband told me the cause of their distress. Their only child, Abraham—a young man several years my junior who had become a baal teshuvah the year before—was studying at a Lubavitcher yeshivah in Israel. Alarmed by the increasing talk of war, they sent him a plane ticket and begged him to come home. Abraham remains adamant in his refusal: the Lubavitcher Rebbe says to stay.

"We tried to approach the Rebbe," my cousin continued. "We wanted to explain to him that Abraham is our only child, that he is our entire life, and to appeal to him to please allow Abraham to return home. But it seems that one must wait several months for an audience with the Rebbe. We wrote him a letter, as his secretaries advised, and received this as a reply." She showed me a short note with the sentence, "The Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers." She seemed little eased by the quote from Psalms.

"Tell us, Joe," my cousin asked, "What's really going on? You have the inside story. Is Israel in any real danger?"

I didn't want to add to their distress, but I felt duty-bound to tell them the truth: the State of Israel is indeed in grave danger. War is all but certain. The Arab states have mobilized forces far superior to Israel's and stand a good chance of defeating the tiny Jewish state; if this happens, I didn't want to imagine the fate of the Jews residing there. My boss, Mr. Goldberg, a deeply committed Jew, cannot sleep at night. "I cannot emphasize enough how serious the situation is," I concluded. "We must get Abraham out of there at once!"

"But how?" cried my cousin. "To him, the Rebbe's word is law. If the Rebbe says to stay, he'll stay!"

"Listen," I said, "I'll speak with the Rebbe. When I introduce myself as Mr. Goldberg's aide, I'm sure to be received immediately. I am certain that I will succeed in persuading him to allow Abraham to come

home."

The next morning I contacted the Rebbe's personal secretary, Rabbi Hodakov. I introduced myself as a member of the United States delegation to the UN and said that I had an "urgent matter" to discuss with the Rebbe. Rabbi Hodakov promised to contact me shortly. A half-hour later he called back to inform me that the Rebbe would see me the following night at 2:00 am.

There was more white in the beard, but otherwise the youthful face and manner had changed little. The same noble countenance, the same penetrating eyes gazed at me from across the desk that night, almost fifteen years after the my last meeting with the Rebbe.

The handshake was firm and warm. "I have already had the privilege of meeting the Rebbe," I began, "Grandfather brought me before my bar mitzvah." The Rebbe's broad smile assured me that he indeed remembered me.

"I must apologize to the Rebbe," I went on. "I'm afraid that I used my position rather unjustly to gain this audience. The 'urgent matter' I spoke of is a personal one."

Again, the Rebbe's warm smile put me at ease. Encouraged, I told the Rebbe about my cousins and their son. "The parents are beside themselves with anxiety." I concluded. "They would greatly appreciate it if the Rebbe would allow their only child to come home until the danger blows over."

The warm smile had disappeared. A grave expression now cloaked the Rebbe's features. "I have thousands of only children in the Land of Israel," said the Rebbe. "If I tell them to remain there, it is because I am certain that no harm shall befall them. Tell your cousin and her husband that they can put their fears to rest. The Guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers. G-d watches over His people wherever they are, and especially in the Holy Land."

"Rebbe," I said, "with all due respect, they cannot put their fears to rest. Neither can I. Perhaps the Rebbe is unaware of the gravity of the situation, but because of my position I am privy to extremely reliable information. Unfortunately, as we speak, the state of Israel is in grave danger."

"Israel," said the Rebbe with absolute conviction, "is not in grave danger. She stands on the threshold of a great victory. With the Almighty's help, this month shall be a month of great miracles for the Jewish nation."

"Now," continued the Rebbe, "If you don't mind, I would like to request something of you. Tell Abraham's father that he, too, can do something for the our brethren in the Land of Israel: tell him that I request that he begin observing the mitzvah of donning tefillin every weekday. I ask that you, too, should begin the daily observance of this mitzvah. I don't know how much you can help Israel in your capacity as an assistant to the UN Ambassador, but with your daily donning of tefillin you will certainly contribute to Israel's victory-without," added the Rebbe with a slight smile "encountering any complications of 'divided loyalties'..."



A JEW IN BROOKLYN

Chaim Tzvi Schwartz was not a Lubavitcher Chassid before the war, his family had been followers of the Rebbe of Munkatch-but a certain day in 1946 found him seeking the counsel of the then Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Scheersohn. Rabbi Schwartz was a young refugee who had lost his entire family, and the only world he knew, in the Holocaust, and was at a loss as to what to do with his life.

"Speak to my son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson," said the Rebbe, and gave Chaim his blessing.

The Rebbe's son-in-law suggested that the young rabbi take up residence in a certain city in Brazil.

"Brazil?"

"There are a great number of Jewish refugees settling in Brazil. Due to the tribulations that our people have undergone in the last few years, most of them lack even the most basic rudiments of a Jewish education. Already, many have fallen prey to assimilation and intermarriage. It is the responsibility of every Torah-educated Jew to prevent the spiritual dissolution of our people. Go to Brazil and help build a community of knowledgeable and observant Jews."

Rabbi Schwartz accepted the mission, moved to Brazil, and founded a Jewish day school. Much effort and toil were necessary to find the funding, train the teachers, and convince the parents of the importance of granting their children a Jewish education. Over the years, Rabbi Schwartz saw his school flourish and grow, and its graduates form the nucleus of a community of proud, committed Jews.

Rabbi Schwartz maintained an infrequent but warm contact with the man who had sent him to Brazil, who had meanwhile assumed the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement following the passing of his father-in-law in 1950. From time to time, Rabbi Schwartz would seek the Rebbe's advice on various challenges and decisions he faced in the course of his work.

It was on one such occasion, several years after his arrival in Brazil, that Rabbi Schwartz truly realized the scope of the Rebbe's concern for his people. Rabbi Schwartz related this incident to a Lubavitcher Chassid he met on a flight from Brazil to New York:

One day he began his tale-I received a call from the parents of one of the children in my school, requesting a meeting. While this was a fairly common request, the anxiety in the voices on the phone told me that this was no simple matter. I invited them to meet with me in my home that evening.

"This does not concern our son," began the father, after they had settled in my study, "who is doing wonderfully in your school, but our eldest daughter, who grew up here before you came. As you know, we are not very observant, but it is important to us that our children should retain their identity as Jews. This is why we send our son to you, despite the fact that your school is considerably more 'religious' than ourselves.

"To get to the point, our daughter has informed us that she has fallen in love with a non-Jew and

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that they intend to marry. We have tried everything to dissuade her, but our arguments, appeals, threats and tears have all been to no avail. She now refuses to discuss the matter with us at all and has moved out of our home. Rabbi! You are our only hope! Perhaps you can reach her, perhaps you can impress upon her the gravity of the betrayal against her people, her parents and her own identity in what she intends to do!"

"Would she agree to meet with me?" I asked.

"If she knew that we had spoken to you, she'd refuse."

"Then I'll go speak to her on my own."

I took her address from her parents and rang her bell that very evening. She was visibly annoyed to learn of my mission, but too well-mannered not to invite me in. We ended up speaking for several hours. She listened politely and promised to consider everything I said, but I came away with the feeling that I had had little effect on her decision.

For several days I pondered the matter, trying to think of what might possibly be done to prevent the loss of a Jewish soul. Then I thought of my last resort—the Rebbe. I called the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Hodakov, related to him the entire affair, and asked for the Rebbe's advice as to what might be done. A few minutes later the phone rang. "The Rebbe says to tell the young woman," said Rabbi Hodakov, "that there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because she intends to marry a non-Jew."

The unexpected reply confused me, and I failed to understand what Rabbi Hodakov was saying. "Who is this Jew?" I blurted out.

Then I heard the Rebbe's voice on the other extension: "His name is Mendel Schneerson."

I slowly returned the receiver to its cradle, more confused than ever. Could I possibly do what the Rebbe suggested? Why, she'll slam the door in my face! After agonizing all night, I decided to carry out the Rebbe's instructions to the letter. After all, the fate of a Jewish soul was at stake, and what did I have to lose, except for my pride?

Early the next morning I was at her door. "Listen," she said before I could utter a word, "whom I marry is my own affair, and no else's. I respect rabbis and men of faith, so I heard you out when I should have shown you the door. Please go away and stop bothering me."

"There is one more thing I need to say to you," said I.

"Then say it, and go."

"There is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because you intend to marry a non-Jew."

"That's what you came to tell me?!" she said, incredulous, and proceeded to close the door.

Midway she stopped. "Who is this Jew?"

"A great Jewish leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe," I replied. "The Rebbe is greatly concerned about the material and spiritual well-being of every Jew, and ago-

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"But I wanted the Rebbe's blessing... I wanted him to tell us that Menasheh will recover..."

"But the Rebbe has given you his blessing. This is his standard reply to such requests. Chassidim regard a promise from the Rebbe to pray for them as a guarantee that everything will be all right."

Eli replaced the receiver somewhat reassured. Still, he had expected something more definitive, more committal. But if the Rebbe's secretary says that he has received the Rebbe's blessing...

Meanwhile, Menasheh's condition continued to deteriorate. The treatments brought much pain and little relief. Soon he had to be hospitalized. Helplessly, the parents watched the life drain out of their child.

Eli called the Rebbe's office. "Look, I know that we already received the Rebbe's blessing, but it doesn't seem to be helping. Menasheh has gone from bad to worse. The doctors say that every day is a miracle... Perhaps we can ask again? Maybe the Rebbe can say something more definite..." The secretary agreed to "send in" a note.

The reply came within an hour, but it was the same reply as before—"I will mention it at the gravesite." And the doctors had nothing good to report.

The following evening, Eli entered his darkened apartment for two hours of fitful rest. Sharon was at the hospital. Soon he would replace her, so that she could catch some sleep. He sank into the sofa, kicked off his shoes, and scanned the disordered room. Medical papers on the table, clothes strewn about, half-finished meals. Then his eyes lighted on the Rebbe's picture, hanging above the mantelpiece. The Rebbe was smiling.

A tide of rage rose in him. Menasheh lies dying in the hospital, and you're smiling! Unthinkingly, Eli reached for one of the shoes on the floor. There was a crash, a spray of shattering glass, and the picture tumbled to the floor...

Two years later, on a Sunday morning in Brooklyn, a father and son stood in line together with thousands of others waiting to see the Rebbe. As the long line snaked past the Rebbe, the Rebbe handed each a dollar bill to give in his name to charity, uttered a few words of blessing, and turned to the next in line. In this manner, the Rebbe devoted a few seconds to each of the tens of thousands who came from all over the world to meet him.

The Rebbe gave the father a dollar, and then turned to the child. "So this is Menasheh," he said with a smile. "How is he?" It took Eli several seconds to respond. How does the Rebbe know them? This was their first time in New York, and except for those two brief letters back then... "He is fine, thank G-d," Eli finally managed, "a complete recovery. The doctors said it was a miracle. Thanks to the Rebbe's blessing."

"Thank G-d, thank G-d," said the Rebbe; and then, quietly: "I still feel the blow..."



nizes over every soul that is lost to its people."

"What does he look like? Do you have a picture of him?"

"I should have a picture somewhere. I'll go and get it for you."

To my surprise, she didn't object, and indicated assent with a mute nod. I rushed home and nearly turned the house upside down in search of a photograph of the Rebbe. I finally found a photo in a desk drawer and hurried back to the young woman's apartment.

One look at the Rebbe's likeness and her face turned pale. "Yes, it's him," she whispered.

"All week long," she explained, "this man has been appearing in my dreams and imploring me not to abandon my people. I told myself that I was conjuring up an image of a Jewish sage and putting those words in his mouth as a reaction to what you and my parents have been saying to me. But no, it was no conjecture. I have never met this man in my life, seen a picture of him, or even heard of him. But this is he—this is the man I have been seeing in my dreams..."



THE BLOW

How to describe the feeling of a parent who has just been told that a malignant tumor is destroying the brain of his ten-year-old child? The doctor had suggested several possible approaches to treatment, but had been brutally honest about the chances. All that Eli and Sharon could realistically expect was a few more painful months of life for their Menasheh.

And then, in the wee hours of a sleepless night, Eli thought of the Rebbe. Both he and Sharon were raised in non-observant homes, but in recent years they had found themselves becoming more involved in Torah learning and practice. It all began at a lecture they had attended at the Chabad House in their Paris neighborhood, where they had first been exposed to the Rebbe's teachings. For the first time in their lives, the faith of their fathers was presented to them as a vibrant guide to a life of meaning and fulfillment. While Eli and Sharon would scarcely describe themselves as "religious," much less as "Chassidim," they developed a deep respect for the Rebbe and began keeping several basic mitzvot such as Shabbat, kashrut, and tefillin.

Eli had heard the stories of those who had been helped by the Rebbe's blessing. Now he grasped at the idea of writing to the Rebbe as his only hope in a sea of despair. If only the Rebbe would promise a speedy recovery for Menasheh!

A few days later, the telephone rang in Eli's home. It was the Rebbe's secretary, who reported that the Rebbe's reply to their note was, "I will mention it at the gravesite."

"What does that mean?" asked Eli.

"It means that the Rebbe will pray for you at the gravesite of his father-in-law, the Previous Rebbe, where he prays for all of those who send in requests for a blessing."

A FATHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

There is probably no aspect of the Rebbe's legacy that has touched and affected the lives of more Jews than the Rebbe's "Mitzvah Campaigns". Tefilin, Shabbat candles, mezuzah, kosher, Jewish education, Sefer Torah, mikvah and more, the Rebbe's Mitzvah Campaigns enrolled and continue to enroll ever-increasing numbers of people in an ongoing drive to increase Jewish observance and commitment. In 5744 (1984) the Rebbe instituted a yearly study cycle of Maimonides' magnum opus "Mishneh Torah" and its' associated work, "The Book of Mitzvos". Tens of thousands of Jews join daily in the study of the same mitzvot and their associated laws, completing a study of all the mitzvot in the Torah each year. Following is the Mitzvos for the next few days.

THE DAILY MITZVA FOR FRIDAY & SHABBAT, ADAR 1-2 FEBRUARY, 23-24

Negative Mitzvah 321

The exhortation against "journeying" [outside the Sabbath bounds] on the Sabbath, Let the man not go out of his place on the seventh day (Exodus 16:29): It has been transmitted to us in the Oral Tradition (Talmud Tractate Sotah) that the forbidden distance is even one amah (approx 1 ½ feet) beyond two thousand outside the city. Walking two thousand amahs in all directions is permitted. In the words of the Midrash Mechilta: "let a man not go out of his place - this [i.e., his place] is two thousand amahs [outside the city]." And in the Talmud Tractate Eruvin: "By Torah ordinance [transgression of the law of] Sabbath bounds entails malkot." The laws of this mitzvah are explained in that tractate.

THE DAILY MITZVA FOR SUNDAY, MONDAY & TUESDAY, ADAR 3-5, FEBRUARY 25-27

Positive Mitzvah 155 Proclaiming the Sanctity of the Shabbat

By this injunction, we are commanded to recite certain words, at the commencement, and the end of the Shabbat, mentioning in them the greatness and high dignity of the day, and its' distinction from the weekdays which have preceded it, and are to follow it. This injunction is contained in Hashem's words, Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8): that is to say, commemorate it by proclaiming its holiness and greatness. This is the commandment of kiddush -sanctification. The Medrash

— A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN —

Mechilta says: Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy: (that is) to sanctify it by (reciting) a blessing . And the Sages say explicitly: Remember the Shabbat over wine, and also, sanctify it on it's coming in and sanctify it on it's going-out referring to the havdalah which is part of the remembrance of the Shabbat enjoined upon us.

The provisions of this commandment are explained (in the Talmud) at the end of Tractate Peschim and in several places in Tractates Brochoth and Shabbat.

A FATHER'S WISDOM

Selected from "Bringing Heaven Down to Earth" (Tzvi Freeman, 1999) these excerpts, adapted from the Rebbe's teachings offer a glimpse into the wealth of his wisdom, offering us a path through every stage of life. The study of Torah and observance of the mitzvos is taken to new heights when illuminated with the light of the Rebbe's profound insight.

When it all began, Heaven was here on Earth.

The physical plane, more than any of the higher spiritual worlds, was the place where the Divine Presence yearned to be.

But Man, step by step, banished the Divine Presence from its home, with a tree of knowledge, with a man who murdered his brother, with all those things that human beings do...

Since Man chased it away, only Man can bring it back. And this began with Abraham, who proclaimed Oneness for all the world.

And it ends with us. Our generation will bring Heaven back down to Earth.



There are people who do much good, but with pessimism - because to them the world is an inherently bad place.

They do good things, but without light and vitality. Who knows how long it can last?

We must know that this world is not a dark, sinister jungle, but a garden. And not just any garden, but G-d's own pleasure garden, full of beauty, wonderful fruits and fragrances, a place where G-d desires to be with all his essence.

It is only that we must break through the thorny husks, shells, and peels to discover the fruit inside.



The higher something is, the lower it falls. So too, the loftiest revelations are to be found in the lowest places.

Therefore, if you find yourself in a place seemingly devoid of anything spiritual - don't despair. The lower you are, the higher you can reach.

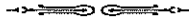


— A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN —

All the world's problems stem from light being withheld.

Our job, then, is to correct this period. Wherever we find light, we must rip away its' casings, exposing it to all, letting it shine forth to the darkest end of the earth.

Especially the light you yourself hold.

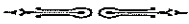


Marriage is a microcosm of the soul's descent into this world:

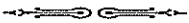
If you are here looking for what you can get out of this world, then the world and all of its trappings will only get you down.

But if you are looking for what you can give, then you, your part of the world and your soul, all are lifted and filled with light.

So too, when you enter a marriage: Look for what you can give and reap harmony and love.



There are not two Torahs, one for mystics and one for legalist. There is the body of Torah and there is the soul of Torah. It is all one. Neither can contradict each other, and in each the other can be found.



Faith is not the result of past experience. On the contrary, faith is an act that comes from within and creates experience. things happen because you trust they will.



A Tzaddik never leaves the world - he transcends it. He is still there to assist those who are bound to him with blessing and advice, just as before, and even more so. Even those who did not know him in his corporeal life time can still create with him an essential bond.

The only difference is in us. Now we must work harder.



They say the most profound darkness comes just before the dawn. The harshest oppression of our forefathers in Egypt came just before their liberation.

There was a coarse darkness of slavery of the body. Today it a darkness of the soul, a deep slumber of the spirit of Man. There are sparks of light, glimmerings of a sun that never shown before, but the darkness of night overwhelms all.

Prepare for Dawn.