

מז' בסלד



in honor of her Bas-Mitzvah

9th of Kislev 5775 / November 30th, 2014

BH. Kislev 5775 / November 2014

Dear family and friends,

We chose to do my Bas-Mitzvah project about the Mittler Rebbe, the 2nd Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, because his birthday and yartzeit fall on the same day as my Hebrew birthday.

My Bas-Mitzvah project was a joint effort, thanks to my parents and siblings for all their talent, support and assistance. It was exciting to share the effort and enthusiasm all throughout the process. Special thanks to my father for the ideas, stories and insights (and for writing up this booklet) and to my mother for her artistic talent and dedicating much time to work with me on each canvas. My siblings each had a hand in some of the projects, whether it was drawing the hand in the Aleph, outlining the zentangles of the onion, helping paint the backgrounds or brainstorming how to do each canvas & shopping or looking around the house for materials.

Interest in the Mittler Rebbe kind of runs in my family. My great-uncle Rabbi Alexander Piekarski devoted much of his life's work in the Library of Agudas Chassidei Chabad to publishing the Mittler Rebbe's works from handwritten manuscript.

Rabbi Avtzon's 375-pg English book on the Mittler Rebbe was a very good resource. We especially liked that my grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Galperin is acknowledged in the introduction "for his wise counsel." We also used (and adapted) text from chabad.org, and other websites.

Every Bas-Mitzvah girl thanks her teachers at school, of course. But for this project specifically, I want to thank the Maimonides School (and summers at the Jewish Girls Retreat) for great art classes, a focus on hands-on and visual learning, for the emphasis on relevant connections to learning, and to always seek life-lessons.

Its customary to bless others on the day of your birthday, especially on a day like a Bas-Mitzvah. I want to wish you all much blessing and success, as the Rebbe would say, Bracha v'Hatzlacha, with good health and much happiness.

Thank you to students and alumni, classmates and teachers, family from far & near and community friends and families for celebrating my Bas-Mitzvah with me.

Sara Rubin & family

Rebbe Dovber, The Mitteler Rebbe

a short biography

Rebbe Dovber was the son of Rebbe Schneur Zalman (founder of Chabad and author of the Tanya) and Rebbetzin Sterna, born on the 9th of Kislev 5534 (1773) just under a year after the passing of the Maggid of Mezeritch for whom he was named.

He was the first Chabad Rebbe to settle in Lubavitch which remained the home of Chabad for 102 years until WWI. Each of his books were dedicated to a different Chassid (for example: *Pokaych Ivrim* to the Baal Teshuvah of Yosef the Wagon-Driver, *Imre-Binah* to R' Yekusiel Lepler). Whenever dealing with a Chassid's issues he tried to find similar in himself, as he empathized with people. He had tremendous concentration and focus, and was known to study and think for hours on end without distraction. His mind flowed faster than his words, sometime he would say "sha! sha!" to calm his mind down. He established *Chabadnitzes* (adjoining room to Shul for longer davening, farbrengens etc). He had a *Kapelye* orchestra and singers for Chassidic Niggunim (among them: the Mittler Rebbe's Kapelye song, Nye Zuritzi Chloptzi and the Chabad Birchas Kohanim tune).

It was said of him that if you'd cut his finger, Chassidus would come gushing out, for it was his very life. In fact, Dr. Heibenthal prevailed on the governor to allow the Mitteler Rebbe to say Chassidus while in prison because it was a basic life necessity for his very health!

He married Rebbetzin Shaina, daughter of Reb Yaakov of Yanovitch. She lived a long life and even helped prepare food for her orphaned granddaughter Rebbetzin Rivka's wedding (wife of the Rebbe Maharash) 60 years after her own wedding! Their children included Menachem Nochum (named for the Tshernobler Rebbe), Chaya Mushka (the first wife of the Tzemach Tzedek), Menucha Rochel (who married Yaakov Kuli-Slonim and settled in Chevron) and others.

Like his father he was imprisoned by the authorities. He was released on the 10th of Kislev, but unlike his father the day of his release is a more subdued celebration, because he passed away the following year one day earlier, on his 54th birthday, the 9th of Kislev, and was buried in Niezhin in NE Ukraine.

While less is known of his life than most of the other Chabad Rebbes, we still had many wonderful stories and teachings to choose from. There is no portrait of the Mitteler Rebbe, yet we hope this Bas-Mitzvah project gives us a little glimpse of him, his life and teachings.



This is an Aleph

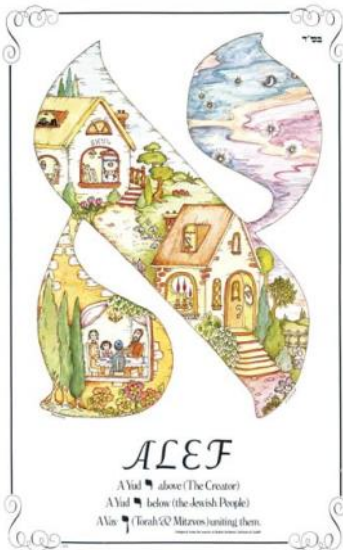
The Alter Rebbe told a young disciple of the Maggid in his customary chant: “I have the Mitzva of educating my children. You have the Mitzva of providing for your family. Let us make an exchange. I will give you what you need to fulfill your Mitzva and you will teach my son (who was later the Mitteler Rebbe).”

Then the Alter Rebbe explained: “What is an Aleph? A dot above, a dot below, and a line between - this is an Aleph!”

A child must know that the Aleph of Torah is a Yud above, a Yid below, and the line of faith that joins them.

Another version: A Yud above - this is the soul; a Yid (Jew) below - this is the body; and the line of Yir'at Shamayim (fear of Heaven) is in the center.

(Rebbe's HaYom Yom 8 Adar I)



Michael Muchnik's “Aleph” has been the artistic standard for this concept. This poster hung in the old Chabad Pizza shop on Washington Ave in Albany.

We redid the art here to reflect the message of the second version above. The hand with the match is the body below, the flame above is the soul. In middle are physical Mitzvah observances we do in this world that connect body and soul in the service of G-d.

It's a great visual, because the shape of the Aleph, the first Hebrew letter, reflects so much mystical depth of what is behind each and every Mitzvah.

It's a good idea to give kids an easy, concrete and memorable visual that has a lot of meaning behind it, which they can understand more and more of as they learn more and grow older.



Already mid-Elul and no Leeches yet!

R' Avraham the Doctor, one of the Chassidim of the Alter Rebbe, once complained that the month of Elul was already almost finished, and he had still not yet collected the leeches for the coming season.

Leeches were used back then for a medicinal purpose: to suck out bad blood so the body could produce new untainted blood or to lower a person's blood pressure. Leeches were harvested from the shallows of ponds while it was still warm out before the onset of winter, when the leeches would retreat deeper for warmth and it would be too hard to get them. They were then kept for use by the doctor all winter-long.

The Rebbe's son, DovBer (later to become the Mittlerer Rebbe), a young boy at the time overheard Avraham the Doctor's statement.

Young Dovber later noticed several Chassidim conversing and laughing. He told them: "Elul is almost over and you have still not prepared the leeches. And yet you are laughing!?" He said his piece and left the room. The Chassidim figured that he must have been repeating something he heard from his father, so they searched for meaning in his words. They took it as a message that they were not taking advantage of the Elul month opportunities to properly prepare for the High Holidays.

Some time went by, and this story reached the Alter Rebbe himself. It was discovered that the Alter Rebbe had never said it, but rather it was something his young son overheard from Avraham the Doctor. The Alter Rebbe confirmed it, for the path of the Baal Shem Tov is to utilize all we see and hear as a lesson in the service of G-d. He was pleased to see that which he toiled over and worked on had become natural in his son. He promised the Chassidim that everyone who follows this path of the Baal Shem Tov will draw down a good spark from Heaven, for them and for their children throughout the generations.

It's so valuable to be able to learn meaningful life-lessons and inspiration from everyday things and experiences.

Don't leave things to the last minute. Be prepared.

Many things we may take for granted today were once upon a time major breakthrough innovations that were considered impossible.



Sadness: Gold & Silver as Work of Man

Once, when the young Dov Ber returned from school, he met three of his father's eminent Chassidim who were waiting to be received in a private audience by the Rebbe.

The young boy overheard Reb Shmuel Munkes ask the other two Chassidim, "Why are you so down? Why are you sad?"

Reb Yosef and Reb Shlomo replied, "Times are bad, the financial situation in the region is very difficult and our business is suffering."

When young Dov Ber heard this, he asked cleverly, "Why do you need to ask them the reason for 'their sadness' (*atzveihem* in Hebrew)? Doesn't it say in Psalms, "*Atzabeihem*--their idols--are silver and gold, the handiwork of man?"

It was a play on words. *Atazabeyhem* literally means idols in this verse, but the same *Ayztav* root is the Hebrew word for sadness.

So, according to young Dov Ber's pun, their sadness is from thinking that gold and silver are from the work of man, without realization that all success is really from G-d's blessing.

Money is very important and useful, but it can't buy happiness. In fact, without a healthy perspective, money can actually make people pretty frustrated and upset.

It's amazing how versatile and flexible Hebrew words are. There are many ideas and lessons that can be learned from switching a letter or even a vowel, or changing the meaning even just a bit.



Blessings and Curses

The Alter Rebbe would serve as the public Torah reader.

One year, he was away during the Torah reading of *Ki Savo*, and his young son and future successor, Dovber, heard someone else read the portion, which includes the *Tochacha*, G-d's severe rebuke of the Jewish people.

The son became so distressed from the negative content of the reading that he fainted and fell ill. Weeks later it was still questionable whether he'd be able to fast on Yom Kippur.

Chassidim later asked him: "This is not the first year that you heard this Torah portion read. In previous years you didn't faint; what happened this year?"

The boy responded, "The way father reads it, I don't hear curses."

The magnifying glass represents the unique perspective of the Alter Rebbe, that he was able to look deeper within to discover the hidden positive blessing underneath all the negative curses.

People who have a positive perspective benefit others, too, not only themselves. The Alter Rebbe's way of reading the curses as blessings was not only for himself but it was felt by others, too.



The Gartel-Belt

The Alter Rebbe would say private Chassidic discourses for his eldest daughter Fraida. Her brother Dov Ber, later to become the Mittlerer Rebbe, was thirsty for Chassidic teaching and begged her to allow him to hide in the room so he could hear it as well.

On one occasion, the Alter Rebbe was explaining to Fraida inner mystical meanings behind the eight special garments of the Kohen Gadol. He explained seven of them, but seemed to miss the mystical explanation for the *Avnet* - the belt which was the 8th garment.

Dov Ber was trying to find some way to catch his sister's attention and get her to ask their father to explain the 8th garment. He was so eager to hear that explanation. In desperation he took off his gartel belt and flung it out toward her.

She got the hint. She asked her father to explain the Avnet, but that made him suspicious and he told her, "It seems that someone else is in the room besides us..."

We see from this story that women and girls can and should learn Chassidus, in fact the Alter Rebbe said certain Chassidus for his daughter Fraida that his son Dovber wasn't allowed in for.

This story also shows the Mittlerer Rebbe's great thirst for Torah. He was so eager to hear these explanations that he hid inside the room, and even risked discovery by throwing out that Gartel.

It's also a good message about being resourceful. He couldn't get his sister's attention, and didn't have a way to tell her to ask about the Avnet belt - until he used what he had handy: his own belt!



Thanks for making a Chassid of my Berel!

Once when Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch was visiting with his father-in-law in Yanovitch, he met one of his father's Chassidim and spoke to him about improvement in meaningful prayer.

The Chassid said to Rabbi DovBer: "Considering who you are and how you've lived, what's the big deal? Your father -- well, we all know who your father is. I'm sure that your father secured a most lofty soul to bring down into the world. You were raised in a Rebbe's home and great care was taken to mold your character and safeguard you from any negative influences. All your life you've been exposed to scholarship and sanctity, and to this very day you're preoccupied only with the study of Torah and the teachings of Chassidism. So you have lots of knowledge and you pray with fervor and devotion. Big deal.

"Now, take me, for example. My father was a simple man, he scraped out some soul from the bottom of the barrel. My upbringing? I was basically left to my own devices. Do you know what I do with my life? Let me tell you how I earn my living. I loan money to the peasants during the planting season* and then, during the winter months, I make my rounds of their villages & farms to collect the debts before they have a chance to squander their entire harvest on vodka. This means setting out several hours before sunrise, well before the permissible time for prayer, equipped with a flask -- for without a drink one cannot begin to talk business with a peasant. After drinking to his health, one must share a l'chayim with the woman in the house as well -- otherwise she can ruin the whole deal for you. Only then can you sit down to settle part of the account.

"After three or four such stops I make my way home, immerse myself in the mikveh and prepare for prayer. But after such preliminaries, what sort of prayer would you expect...?"

The words of this Chassid, who was, in truth, known for his refined nature and soulful prayers, made a deep impression. Rabbi DovBer immediately traveled home, poured out his heart and reworked his own service of G-d.

The next time the Chassid from Yanovitch came to the Alter Rebbe, he said to him: "Thank you! You have made a Chassid out of my Berel."

* Reb Noach Losice OBM did this for a living this way in Poland before WWII.

This story teaches us sensitivity to other people & their life situations. We shouldn't judge people without considering the full story & background.



The Cry of a Child

The Alter Rebbe lived upstairs, his son the Mittlerer Rebbe lived downstairs in the same home. One night, the Mittlerer Rebbe's baby fell out of the cradle, but the Mittlerer Rebbe was too absorbed in study to notice. His father, the Alter Rebbe, heard the cry from upstairs, came down to soothe the baby and told his son: "We must be never too absorbed to not hear the cry of a child." The Rebbe interpreted the "cry of a child" to also refer those of any age crying out for spiritual or material assistance.

The camp song below tells the story and message:

Once when the
Mitteler Rebbe Dov Ber
was Learning late in the night
Torah and holiness
sang in his heart
Echoing power and might.

Once when the
Mitteler Rebbe Dov Ber
was Learning late in the night
Torah and holiness
sang in his heart
Filling his eyes with their light.

Nearby his baby was sleeping
It woke up suddenly weeping
And crying aloud for its father
But nobody answered its call.

The Rebbe Reb Berl was learning
The Torah within him was burning
The whole world & all of its treasures
Worth less than a dream in the night

Above Reb Berl, his father was up
Learning late in the night
The Alter Rebbe the Manhig Hador
Heard it cry out in fright.

Down down to the child he came
And lifted it up on his arm
He dried the rears and sang it a song
Guarding the child from harm.

The Alter Rebbe stayed near him
For he knew his son
would not hear him
Until he had finished his learning
And then he told him these words:

Berel my son let me teach you
The cries of a child must reach you
No matter how deep you devotion
No matter how high you may rise.

The Alter Rebbe was teaching his
son, And every other Jew
To help when our children
cry out in their need
This is the task we must do.

The Rebbe's speech
must be treasured
His words are counted
and measured
His message is lasting and precious
To guide us all through the night.



Like a Broad River

The Alter Rebbe was the innovator and visionary, founder of Chabad Chassidus. His original teachings are compared to a wellspring, fresh new droplets, one bit at a time.

His son, the Mittler Rebbe, took his father's concepts and broadened them, his Maamorim are much longer teachings with more breadth and detail. These teachings are compared to a broad river, widening as it goes further along.

This canvas has lots of blue buttons of all sizes, starting off as the narrow spring of the Alter Rebbe with smaller buttons, and widening out to the broad river of the Mittler Rebbe, with larger buttons, too.

Buttons are a good metaphor for Chassidus, which connects and keeps together the spiritual and physical, the body and soul of Judaism.

It's also like the Gemorah says about Tzedakah: Each coin may be small, but together they add up to a great amount. So it is with the teaching of Chassidus, it's not all at once, but one piece at a time.



Street Conversation

“My wish is that when two Chassidim meet, their discussion should be about *Yichudah Il’ah* and *Yichudah Tahtah*.” - The Mittler Rebbe

The Mittler Rebbe was very eager that Chassidus should be part of the everyday conversation, on the tip of people’s tongues, that it should be a real and regular part of a Chassid’s life.

Chassidus talks a lot about two levels of Divine Unity. The higher form transcends the worlds, the lower one includes and involves the worlds. One is more pure, lofty and holy, the other more realistic and relevant, one is abstract while the other is personal. Each has their strengths and purpose, both perspectives are necessary for living a Jewish life in the light of Chassidus.

It’s easier to start conversations with casual less-meaningful things. That’s why people like to talk about the weather or news or sports. But this wish of the Mittler Rebbe encourages us to deepen our interactions and conversations. Take it to the next level! Don’t leave it shallow. Make it deep! Make it meaningful!

Talking about BOTH levels of unity reflects the Mittler Rebbe’s style of being concerned with BOTH the spiritual and material wellbeing of his Chassidim. Too holy isn’t good, too physical isn’t either. We need both!



ONION : SELFLESSLY
IMPARTING FLAVOR

Onion: Selflessly Imparting Flavor

The Mittler Rebbe encouraged his Chassidim to make a special effort to stop in villages and towns along their journeys to share with others the Chassidus they heard or knew.

One such Chassid had been traveling about, and did a lot of Chassidus sharing. He was quite good at it. But he started to get uncomfortable with the fuss people were making over his talents and abilities, worrying that it was feeding his ego and going to his head. He was thinking about stopping, but asked the Mittler Rebbe first.

The Mittler Rebbe told him: “*A Tzibel zul fubn deer veren, uber Chassidus zolst du Chazeren*” which translates to: Even if you become an onion, you should still share the Chassidic teachings!

Why an onion?

An onion is sharp and zesty with special flavor. When you boil it in a soup it imparts that flavor to the whole pot, but in that process the cooked onion loses its own flavor.

Like the onion, you sometimes need to selflessly sacrifice your own personal growth so others may grow.

(Toras Menachem 5715, vol. 1, p. 313ff. Sichos Kodesh, RC Adar 5740)



The Farming Colonies in Kherson

In addition to his concern and encouragement of Chassidic learning and teaching, the Mittlerer Rebbe was also very concerned about how they earned a living and provided for their families.

He urged communities to open trade-schools so people could have skills that were in demand at the time.

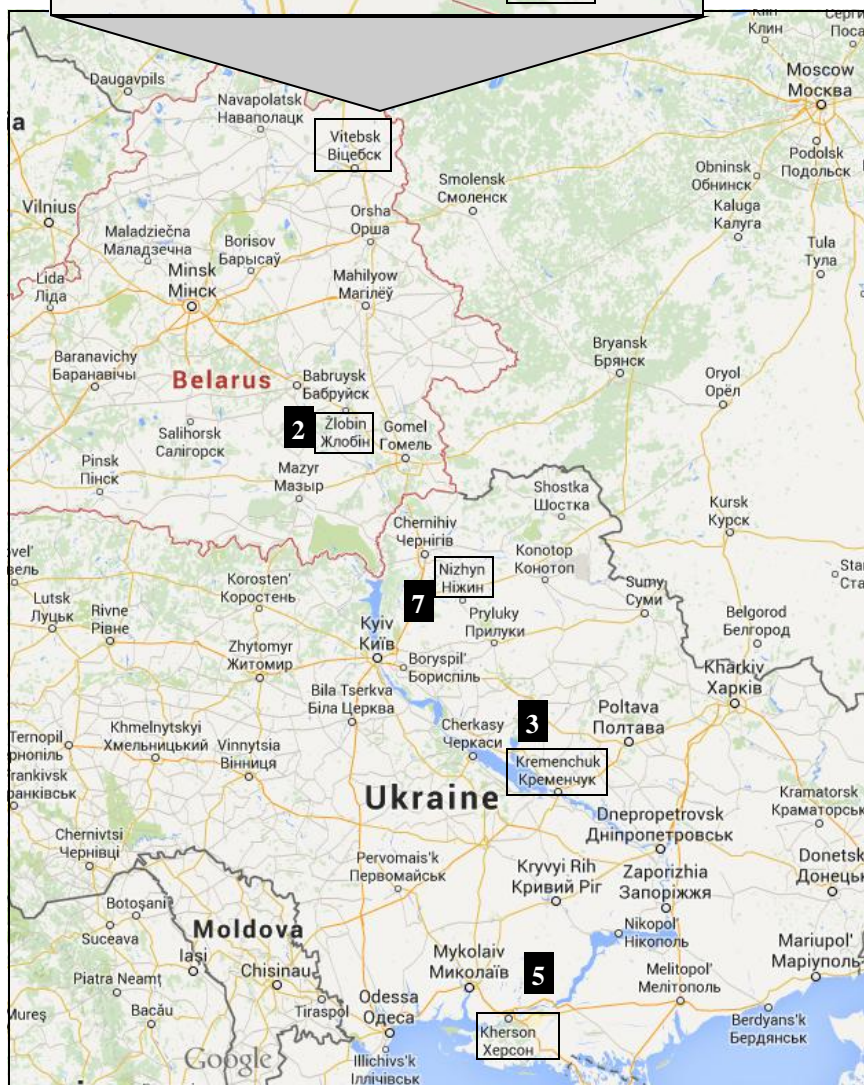
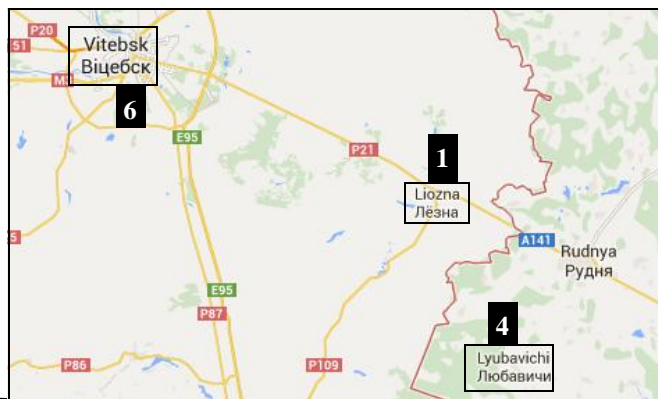
He also encouraged a return to agriculture: growing grain, dairy farming and the like. It was a way to earn your own bread on your own plot of land, with less interference from hostile neighbors.

In 1815, with Russian government permission and sponsorship he set up agricultural colonies in the Kherson region of the Ukraine. He traveled to raise funds for this purpose, and spent time visiting the Chassidic farmers to encourage them and to ensure that their spiritual needs were not being neglected.

Some Chassidim were afraid to live so far from their Rebbe and their center in the town of Lubavitch, but the Mittlerer Rebbe reassured them that he would spend time visiting them, as well as sending elder Chassidim to teach them and bring inspiration. One of those teachers and mentors was the legendary Reb Hillel Paritcher, who made many trips there, and passed away there on the 11th of Av.

In the recent Telushkin book “Rebbe” there’s this story: The Rebbe asked Rabbi Avraham Shemtov if he’s in touch with R’ Zalman Shachter (who used to be a Chabad Chassid but took a different path). R’ Avraham said that they are friends and see each other. Then the Rebbe asked how Zalman is doing in terms of earning a living. Rabbi Shemtov said he didn’t know. “How can you say you are his friend if he you don’t know how he’s earning a living?” the Rebbe asked.

The Baal Shem Tov said that a Neshoma comes down to the world for 70 or 80 years just to do a fellow Jew a favor, either physically or spiritually.



MAP LEGEND

1. **LIOZNA** The Mitteler Rebbe grew up in Liadi and Liozna with his father, the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad.
2. **ZHLOBIN** Zhlobin was the site of his daughter's wedding to the grandson of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. This was a famous Chassidic wedding about which many stories are told.
3. **KREMENCHUK** He was in Kremenchuk at the time of his father's passing in Pienna, on a communal mission.
4. **LUBAVITCH** After his father's passing he settled in the town of Lubavitch which became the home for Chabad for 102 years until WWI, and it became a surname of the movement.
5. **KHERSON** The Cherson/Kherson colonies of religious agricultural settlement was a big focus of the Mitteler Rebbe's plan for Chassidim economic wellbeing. This map illustrates the distance to Lubavitch which explains the hesitation of some Chassidim to settle there.
6. **VITEBSK** He was arrested and imprisoned in Vitebsk, which was the county seat, and released on the 10th of Kislev.
7. **NIEZHIN** He passed away a year later, on his birthday, the 9th of Kislev, on the return trip from his father's burial site in Haditch. He fell ill, passed away and was buried in Niezhin.

REBBES OF CHABAD

a snapshot view

1. **ALTER REBBE** Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) married to Rebbetzin Sterna. Lived in Liadi and Liozna, Ohel in Haditch.
2. **MITTELER REBBE** Rebbe Dovber (1773-1827) married to Rebbetzin Shaina. First Rebbe to settle Lubavitch. Ohel in Niezhin.
3. **TZEMACH TZEDEK** Rebbe Menachem Mendel (1789-1866) married to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Ohel in Lubavitch.
4. **MAHARASH** Rebbe Shmuel (1834-1882) married to Rebbetzin Rivka. Ohel in Lubavitch.
5. **RASHAB** Rebbe Sholom Dov Ber (1860-1920) married to Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah. Ohel in Rostov.
6. **FREIDIKER REBBE** Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak (1880-1950) married to Rebbetzin Nechama Dina. Lived in Russia, Latvia, Poland and New York. Ohel in Queens, NY.
7. **OUR REBBE** Rebbe Menachem Mendel (1902-1994) married to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Lived in Russia, Germany, France and New York. Same Ohel as his father-in-law Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak.

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ליובאוויטש

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ברוקלין, נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Kislev, 5740
Brooklyn, N. Y.

To All Participants in the
FIFTH YEAR CELEBRATION of
Chabad Lubavitch-Capital District
Albany, New York

Sara's Bas-Mitzvah falls between Vayeitze & Vayishlach, the theme of both Parshas being the theme of this inspiring letter of the Rebbe to Albany Chabad in 1979.

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Celebration, and may it be with Hatzlocho in every respect.

In keeping with the time-honored custom to draw a timely lesson from the reading of the weekly Torah portion, it is well to reflect on the story of our Father Jacob which is related in the Sedra Vayetze of the Shabbos immediately preceding the event and continued in the following Sedra Vayishlach.

The Sedra Vayetze begins with the Patriarch's leaving his parental home in Be'er Sheva and going into "exile." Understandably, his heart is filled with apprehension as to what the future holds for him and for the family he intended to raise. But, reassured by G-d's promise of protection and help, he proceeds on his way in the fullest confidence that he will succeed in his life's purpose to carry on and transmit the traditions of his ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, and return home safe and sound. Indeed, as we read on, Jacob succeeded beyond expectation, and despite the adverse and alien surroundings, he was able to raise his children in the finest tradition of his ancestors, to become the Divine Tribes of Israel, the progenitors of our people Israel.

In the following Sedra, Vayishlach, we read about Jacob's return with his blessed family, blessed not only spiritually but also with worldly goods. Confronted by his sworn enemy, his prayers were answered again. Foe turn friend, and Father Jacob brings his family home - "complete, whole, and perfect" in every respect, spiritually, physically and materially.

"The experiences of the Patriarchs are a 'sign' for the children," our Sages declare. The story of our Father Jacob is an everlasting source of guidance and inspiration for every Jew, not to be disheartened by the fact that Jews are a small minority among the nations of the world, facing seemingly overwhelming difficulties and challenges. For, with an unshakable will and determination to carry on the traditions of our ancestors and to raise our children in the way of the Torah and Mitzvos without compromise, we are assured of G-d's blessings, not only to overcome all adversity, but come out of it all the stronger and more complete in every respect.

The spirit of our Father Jacob is very much alive in the Chabad-Lubavitch institutions and animates the Lubavitch activists with exemplary dedication to the cause of spreading and strengthening Yiddishkeit. They surely deserve not only the fullest support, but also personal involvement.

I extend to each and all of you prayerful wishes to go from strength to strength in your continued endeavors in behalf of this vital cause, which is also bound to widen the channels and vessels to receive G-d's blessings in all your personal needs, materially and spiritually.

With esteem and blessing,

