

# THE BAAL SHEM TOV GOES TO COLLEGE?

**TORAH-TUESDAYS** @ Shabbos House Rohr Chabad Jewish Student Center serving the University at Albany

**20 Life Messages & Teachings from the Baal Shem Tov,  
the Founder of Chassidus, in honor of his birthday on Chai (18th) Elul**

**Everything we hear  
or see ought to be a  
lesson in serving G-d.**  
All of life is a lesson,  
all the world our classroom.



1

**Divine Providence!  
Even the twists & turns  
of a single leaf has  
meaning & purpose.**

Nothing is by chance.  
Make the most of it!



2

**"Your Words Endure Forever"**

**Creation via language,  
ongoing & constant.  
Letters & words are the  
building blocks of existence  
& the ingredients of Creation.**

Constant ongoing creation  
indicates G-d's involvement  
& investment, discoverable  
in all aspects of life.



3

**"Help the fallen donkey of your enemy"**

Donkey shares the Hebrew root of  
materialism & physicality. Don't consider it  
your enemy! Lift it up. Embrace the physical  
as a partner & expression of the spiritual.



4

**"Go to the place which G-d  
will choose to dwell there."**

Biblically, this verse refers to the  
Jerusalem Temple. Baal Shem Tov reads  
it as: Every place we go, G-d chooses for  
us to make it a Divine dwelling place.  
Even a dorm room!



5

**"The 3 Knots" intersect & synthesize  
religious devotion, academic rigor,  
& interpersonal relationships.**

**3 Loves: G-d, Torah  
& the Jewish People  
- all interconnected.**



6

You don't have to be  
a philanthropist to make  
a difference in the lives of others.

**A heartfelt blessing  
or wish from a friend  
is greater than the  
words of angels.**



10

**A soul may  
descend to this  
world just to do  
a spiritual or  
physical favor  
for another.**



We're not just  
in this for ourselves.  
Being there for others  
may be our soul's mission.

7

**Your fellow is your mirror.**

Flaws we find glaring in others  
are areas for us to work on in  
ourselves.



8

**Ahavat Yisrael is even for a  
Jew one has never seen.**

Every Jew is indeed family!



9

**"The People of Israel are a Land of Treasure"**

Like the earth, the Jewish people have within tremendous  
natural resources, some obvious - others hidden, their discovery  
depending on how deep you go. The Baal Shem Tov honed in on  
the "Pintele Yid" soul spark, his goal was to help Jews develop  
their vast inner potential.



11

**The Baal Shem Tov was fond of light, for the Hebrew words light "Ohr" and secret "Raz" share a numerical letter value: knowing the inner meaning is illuminating!**



Never suffice with surface.  
Plumb the depths of Torah,  
indeed the depth of one's soul!

12

Entering within words of Torah  
is protective from worldly  
turbulence. Get into it!



**The Hebrew for Ark "Teivah" also means Word.**

13

**Reading the Megillah backwards does not fulfill the obligation.**

Why would the Mishna tell us not to read the story backwards!?

This refers to viewing it in past-tense, as merely historical  
without current relevance.



14

**The difference between apathy & assimilation is a very fine line.**

The Baal Shem Tov was all about warmth.  
Cold Judaism doesn't cut it.

16



**Finding joy in all things and thoughtful enthusiasm are considered biblical Mitzvot for Chassidim.**

Another teaching shared by the Alter Rebbe of Chabad in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, which has become a hallmark of Chassidic life.



18

**Heaven's doors each have their own keys.  
But an ax opens them all!**

Many Baal Shem Tov stories extol selfless dedication, honest sincere attempts and genuine heartfelt devotion over sophisticated, intellectual, self-fulfilled accomplishments.



19

**The Baal Shem Tov said:**

**Seeing water is a sign of blessing.  
His Chassidic teachings were likened to wellsprings bursting forth.**

Water supports life,  
water refreshes,  
water seeks the lowest point.  
& water bursts forth,  
seeping and gushing,  
overcoming obstacles.



15

17



**"Fear Not!"**

His father died  
when he was only five.  
His father's last words  
to him: "Fear Nothing but G-d!"  
Fear is a great inhibitor.  
It keeps us distant, it holds us back.

**"The thorn-bush burned  
with fire but was not consumed"**

The lowly humble thorn-bush burns with an  
unquenchable spiritual thirst. As Steve Jobs  
liked to quote: "Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish!"



20