



Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber of Lubavitch: How to Connect to a Rebbe

Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber Schneerson (the Rashab), the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, was the founder of the Lubavitch yeshiva network, Tomchei Temimim and was called 'the Rambam of Chassidut.' He was born on the 20th of Cheshvan in 5621 (November, 1860) and passed away on the second of Nissan, 5680 (1920). He was laid to rest in Rostov in Russia.

When the Rebbe Rashab became the new Rebbe, at a young age, one of the elder chassidim, who had previously been a chassid of the Rashab's father, the Rebbe Maharash and perhaps of his grandfather's, the Tzemach Tzedek, as well, wanted to connect on a soul level to the new Rebbe. Not everyone can approach the Rebbe freely, but this chassid approached the young Rebbe and said, "I want to connect to you like a chassid. How is this done?"

The Rebbe Rashab gave him a simple answer. At that time, books of Chassidut were a bit of a rarity. Printed books were few and far between. The discourses given by the Rebbes on a regular basis were not immediately printed. They were however, copied by a scribe. Anybody who wanted his own copy would pay the scribe a few coins and he would copy the discourse for him. "It is very inexpensive to buy a written copy of my discourses," he said. "There is a scribe here and he takes just a few coins for each copy. The correct way to connect to me is to buy the discourses and learn them well. A chassid learns in depth, focusing his thought and contemplating on the content of the discourse. By studying and contemplating my teachings, as they are written, you will connect to me."

This is a very important rule: In order to connect to a tzaddik, explains the Rebbe Rashab, we have to study his teachings as they pertain to our own souls. The study of Chassidut is not just the acquisition of knowledge. We must learn how the teachings apply to us personally, to help us to refine our character and to rectify our own souls. This type of Torah study is called "*aliba d'nafshei*" – study that will help me in my service of God. We must learn with inner, personal contemplation. By doing so, we will connect to the Rebbe.

The Addition of the Rebbe Rayatz

The son of the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe Rayatz answered a similar question,

and his answer was printed in the *Yom Yom* daily study compilation (24 Sivan). The Chassid, who lived far from the Rebbe and did not merit to be near him or see him, asked how to connect to the Rebbe. The Rebbe Rayatz gave the chassid his father's answer – learn the discourses and read my teachings – but added two additional conditions: “First, hold *farbrengens* – joyous chassidic gatherings in which the Rebbe's teachings are discussed - with other chassidim in your area. Second, fulfill my directives. (The Rebbe was referring mainly to reciting Psalms daily according to the daily portion and reciting the entire book of Psalms on the Shabbat preceding Rosh Chodesh, studying the Book of Tanya according to its daily portion, and reciting the Torah portion of the week according to its daily portion with Rashi from the *Chumash*. This is called *Chitat: Chumash, Tehillim (Psalms) Tanya*. “By fulfilling my directives, holding *farbrengens* with other chassidim and learning my discourses and teachings – you connect to me,” the Rebbe promised.

The Rebbe's Addition

The last Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, made another addition: He said that whoever is his chassid, whoever wants to be connected to him, must spread the word of the redemption throughout the world. This is a message that is connected to the month of Nissan, which is also the month of the Rebbe's birthday.

All the tzaddikim of all the generations have taken action for the coming of Mashiach, but in the past three generations, this action has greatly increased. When a goal is close to being fulfilled, more intense action is required. This intense action began with the Rebbe Rashab. In every generation and at all times, the anticipation for the Mashiach intensifies. The Rebbe emphasized that Mashiach is coming soon and that we must spread the word and prepare the entire world to receive Mashiach and the true and complete redemption.

Studying for Oneself and Spreading the Word

There is an important concept in Kabbalah and Chassidut: “Their end is riveted in their beginning.” The end has to come back and connect to the beginning. The beginning was the Rebbe Rashab, who said that the main connection between a chassid and the Rebbe is when the chassid studies the Rebbe's chassidic discourses for his own rectification. By connecting the beginning with the end we see that today, in our generation, we have to learn the Rebbe's words for our own rectification and to spread his message. It is no longer enough just to learn for our personal rectification.

The Torah is light. The Chassidut taught by the Rebbe is certainly a great light. But if I learn only for myself – even if I am learning for my personal rectification – the study is still defined as “light that illuminates itself.” Instead, we must take that light, which first has to illuminate itself, and transform it into “Light that illuminates others.” The first letters of the phrase “Light that illuminates itself (אור המאיר לעצמו) is an acronym for ‘ohel’ , which means ‘tent.’ The same is true of the phrase: “Light that illuminates others.”

Who would sit in tents? Jacob, the pillar of Torah. Whoever engages in Torah study is called a "dweller of tents." There are two tents: One tent is the light that illuminates itself, in which we merit Torah study according to the connection instructions of the Rebbe Rashab. But we must connect him to the second tent, take the light that shines unto itself and transform it into light that illuminate others. In this way, the redemption will come speedily, in our days!