

He Cared So Much. But, Why?

A question of the Rebbe's motive

WHEREVER JEWS ARE, there you will find a direct personal emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. And there you will see him or her reaching out to Jews and rekindling the flame of Jewish life. Chabad went and still goes everywhere. Above all, Chabad went before anyone else, and at a time when it was fraught with immense danger, to the former Soviet Union to reach out to the Jews of silence and keep the spirit of Judaism alive. It was risky—it was almost impossible. And because it was almost impossible, Chabad did it. Under the Rebbe, Chabad recognized no boundaries.

And I have often asked myself, why? What drove the Lubavitcher Rebbe? Was it, I once thought, that extraordinary statement of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chasidic movement, who himself spent a lifetime going out to Jews wherever they were—in little villages, little *shtetlach*; who when asked why he does this, why he doesn't do what a rabbi is supposed to do—sit in his study and learn, said, "Every single Jew is a letter in the Torah scroll. And just as a Torah scroll is invalid if one letter is obliterated or missing, so the Jewish people, which is a living Torah scroll, is invalid if one Jew is missing. I go around restoring Jews to their place in the Torah." Was it that image that drove him?

Was the life work of the Rebbe nothing less than a recreation in a secular world of the early days of the Chasidic movement itself, when, as the Rebbe himself put it, that the task of Chasidism was to wake the Jewish people from its spiritual sleep? Was that it? Was he recreating what had once happened two centuries before?

Or was it something else? Was it perhaps that the Lubavitcher Rebbe lived through the black hole of Jewish history—the holocaust. He had seen his whole world, that world of Eastern European Jewry, go up in flames. And I have often asked myself, what did he feel? What did he feel about the destruction of one third of our Jewish people, including one and a half million children,



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Jewish children who never tasted sin?

Chassidism uses a very powerful, highly charged word from Kabbalah, *tikkun*—which means to mend this fractured world. How could you mend a fracture so deep, such a hole in the heart of humanity? I once speculated in a newspaper article that maybe, just maybe, the Lubavitcher Rebbe had undertaken the most daring spiritual initiative ever undertaken in the history of humanity: would it be possible to search out every Jew in love as Jews had once been searched out and hunted down in hate, and was this the only possible *tikkun*—the only possible mending of a post-Holocaust world.

Who can say?

All we know for sure is that there are few phenomena like it in the whole of Jewish history, and it owes its inspiration to one man. ■

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▲ Rabbi Shalom D. Lipskar helps a Jewish prison inmate put on tefillin and recite the "Shema" prayer affirming the Oneness of G-d. See *Knowing Yourself*, page 11.

12 New Answers to Age-old Questions

In public addresses, private audiences and thousands of detailed letters, the Rebbe encouraged questioners to value each moment as a once-in-a-lifetime chance to change the world for the better.



Of the Rebbe's teachings:

1. Is it okay to be different?

The rebellion in young people is not a crime. On the contrary: it is the fire of the soul that refuses to conform, that is dissatisfied with the status quo, that cries out that it wants to change the world and is frustrated with not knowing how. (1963)

The first "Chabad House" opened in 1967 at UCLA as a home-base for Jewish college



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students. As of 2014, Chabad Houses serve students on 210 college campuses.

2. Is having faith naïve?

We see that people inherently believe in something greater than themselves. Experiencing that faith requires fuel—information about G-d and about ourselves. Cultivate faith through study and prayer. Actualize it through good deeds and charity. Talk about it with family and friends.

3. What should schools be teaching?

All educational efforts are basically meaningless unless built on the solid foundation of good character.

4. Is there a "better" half?

After thousands of years of male dominance, we now stand at the beginning of the feminine era, when women will rise to their appropriate prominence, and the entire world will recognize the harmony between man and woman. (1952)

The Lubavitch Women's Organization founded by the Rebbe held its first international conference in 1955.

5. Can attitude define reality?

Adam, the first man, complained to G-d while in the Garden of Eden; Jewish men and women blessed G-d while in Nazi concentration camps; all of us exist between these two extremes. Our perspective determines exactly where.

6. Do miracles exist?

This physical, natural world is not a separate entity from