

# A Tzaddik and His Students

Many Jews are attracted to spirituality but never think to look in their own religion to find it. Still more are unaware that chassidic philosophy and its practice are the “soul” and spiritual core of Judaism.

The starting point of the chassidic way of life is a chassid’s connection to his or her Rebbe. But like many of the more spiritual concepts in Judaism, the role and function of a Rebbe -- and the chassidic movement in general -- has been largely cloaked in mystery, misinterpreted, or simply unknown.

In this book, **A Tzaddik and His Students: *The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship***, Rabbi Shloma Majeski takes the reader on a step-by-step journey into the spiritual world of the Rebbe-chassid relationship, explaining the nature and purpose of a tzaddik/Rebbe, his connection with his chassidim, and the relevance of this phenomenon in the lives of every human being today.

Rabbi Shloma Majeski is the dean of Machon Chana Women’s Institute of Jewish Studies in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, home of the World Headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. A renowned lecturer on chassidic philosophy for over thirty years, Rabbi Majeski is the author of the acclaimed book *The Chassidic Approach to Joy* and a tape series entitled “The Basic Principles of Chabad Chassidic Philosophy.”



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בס"ד

# A Tzaddik and His Students: THE REBBE-CHASSID RELATIONSHIP

By: Rabbi Shloma Majeski

(Chapter 2)



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## A Tzaddik and His Students: The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship

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information on how to obtain Rabbi Majeski's book *The Chassidic  
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Furthermore, doesn't this level of focus on the Rebbe  
actually detract from the more important areas of Judaism —  
performing *mitzvos* and studying Torah — and perhaps even  
detract from our focus on G-d Himself?

The answer to these questions is that focusing on one's  
connection to a *tzaddik* is not a new practice invented by the  
Baal Shem Tov but a basic principle of Torah. More important,  
working on establishing and developing a stronger connection  
to a *tzaddik* will not only *not* detract from our focus on other  
areas of Judaism, it will actually enhance our focus on Torah,  
*mitzvos* and our connection to G-d.

The Torah sources for this practice and the necessity of  
connecting to a *tzaddik* will be discussed in the next chapter.



לעילוי נשמת  
בת דודי מרת מיניע עטא אסתר ע"ה אלפערין  
בת - יבלחט"א הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' שלמה שניאור זלמן  
וזוגתו מרת שולע שפרה שיחיו  
קייזען  
נפטרה בדמי ימיו, ביום ה' מנחם-אב ה'תשס"ב  
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.  
נדפס ע"י בן דודה  
הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק הלוי וזוגתו מרת גיטל רחל שיחיו  
שגלב  
\* \* \*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Mrs. **Raizel** bas Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה **Mayers**  
On the occasion of her third yahrtzeit,  
8 Menachem-Av, 5770

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

DEDICATED BY HER LOVING CHILDREN  
**Elka** bas **Raizel** 'שתחי  
**Yenta** bas **Raizel** 'שתחי  
**Chaim** ben **Raizel** 'שיחי  
and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren  
שיחיו

(i.e., against G-d). A person who leads a revolution against his Rebbe is considered as if he is leading a revolution against G-d. A person who has complaints against his Rebbe is considered as having complaints against G-d. And a person who doubts his Rebbe is considered as doubting G-d.”

From all this we see clearly that a Rebbe is a G-dly person, a person in whom the *Shechinah* dwells. Just as we have the utmost awe and respect for a Torah scroll because of its holiness, the same applies to a *tzaddik*.

*Why All the Focus  
On Our Relationship With a Tzaddik?*

Despite all this, there is still another question that people ask. Even after acknowledging that a *tzaddik* deserves our utmost awe and respect — not only for his emotional, intellectual, and spiritual qualifications, but because he is a G-dly person — why is it necessary to focus so heavily on a Rebbe and our relationship with him?

In all chassidic circles, in addition to the tremendous level of awe and respect given to one’s Rebbe, there is also a concentrated focus and effort to be more connected to him. A chassid makes a special effort to travel to his Rebbe at certain times of the year and to keep informed at all times of what is going on in the Rebbe’s “court.” In addition to establishing and developing a strong connection to his Rebbe, a chassid turns to him for spiritual and material advice and guidance and looks to him for spiritual inspiration. Indeed, in the final analysis, there is a lot of attention given to one’s Rebbe.

Some ask why this connection is so necessary. Isn’t it much more important to focus on the basics: observing *mitzvos*, studying Torah and developing a connection to G-d? Shouldn’t that be the essence of one’s Jewish life?

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## IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה  
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** ה"י  
**Shagalov**

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה  
**Ekman**

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה  
**Marenburg**

Passed away on the second day  
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)  
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה  
**Ekman (Santiago, Chile)**

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

## AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחי'  
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**Shagalov**

One such example is found in the *Book of Exodus* (33:7) where it says: “Moses used to take his tent and pitch it outside of the camp... and everyone who sought G-d went to this ‘tent of meeting’ which was outside the camp.”

*Rashi*, one of the foremost commentators on the Torah,<sup>17</sup> says that from this verse — that all those who sought G-d went to the tent of Moses — we derive that when a person receives a Torah scholar, meaning a *tzaddik*, it’s as if he is receiving the *Shechinah* (G-d’s presence).

*Rashi* goes on to say, “What does it mean when it says ‘all those who sought G-d?’” He explains that “all” means even the angels in heaven. When one angel asks another angel, “Can you tell me where to find the *Shechinah*?” the answer is, “In the tent of Moshe *Rabbeinu* (Moses our Teacher).”<sup>18</sup>

In another example,<sup>19</sup> it is said that “the awe and reverence you have toward your Rebbe, the *tzaddik*, should be of the same nature as the awe and reverence you have toward G-d.” In other words, since the *tzaddik* contains the *Shechinah* in him, your respect and awe for him should be of the same nature as that which you have for G-d.

*Rambam*’s<sup>20</sup> fifth chapter of the “Laws of Talmud Torah”<sup>21</sup> states that one’s “fear of his Rebbe should be equivalent to his fear of Heaven,” and continues, “Whoever argues against his Rebbe is considered as if he is arguing against the *Shechinah*

17. Born in France (1040-1105), *Rashi* (an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki) is the prolific author of the most comprehensive commentaries on all sections of the Torah and the *Talmud*.

18. See ch. 3 where a comparison is made between a *tzaddik* and the *Beis HaMikdash*.

19. *Ethics of the Fathers* 4:12.

20. An acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides) (b. 1138 in Spain — d. 1204 in Egypt), one of the foremost Jewish philosophers in history and author of such monumental works as the *Commentary on the Mishnah*, *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *Mishneh Torah* (a comprehensive code of Jewish law), *et al*.

21. *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, 5:1.

### *The Deeper Dimensions of a Tzaddik*

While it is true that a *tzaddik's* service of G-d is far greater in all areas than that of even the greatest Torah scholar, this only describes the *tzaddik's* external attributes.

What really defines a *tzaddik* is something much deeper. It is not just that he is on a much higher level than everyone else in the above described areas, it is that his entire essence is G-dly. As his epithet "*Ish HaElokim* (a G-dly person)"<sup>15</sup> indicates, he is a person in whom G-d's presence dwells.

Most people are comfortable with the idea of an *object* being holy. For example, many people will say, "It is easy to accept that a Torah scroll has G-d's presence in it. That's why we all stand with great respect when a Torah scroll is brought into the room. The concept of G-d's presence being revealed or contained in a *shul* or the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Holy Temple) is also understandable. But what does it mean that a particular *person* has G-d's presence in him? Isn't attributing G-dliness to a person akin to idolatry?

The answer to that question does not originate in Chassidism. It is a basic principle in the Torah that any individual who devotes himself totally to spirituality and self-refinement becomes a vessel in which G-d's presence can dwell.<sup>16</sup> One of the fundamental principles of the Jewish faith is that a person who achieves this level of purity in his thought, speech and action will eventually merit to have G-d's presence dwell within him. Many places in the Torah illustrate this idea.

15. *Psalms* 90:1; *Deuteronomy* 33:1; *et al.*

16. A famous question in Torah points to the unusual wording of G-d's statement: "Build Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in *them*" (*Exodus* 25:8), rather than the more expected, "Build Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in *it*." Implied is that when a person refines his personal sanctuary (i.e., his body), G-d's presence will dwell in him. (See *Reishis Chochmah*, *Shaar HaAhavah*, ch. 6; *The Alshich*, *Parshas Terumah*, on this verse.)

## CHAPTER TWO

### **BUT IS IT JEWISH...?**

The previous chapter provided an overview of certain specific practices of chassidic life and how each is firmly rooted in the Torah. It dispelled the myth that Chassidism adds something new to the Torah; merely, that the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the chassidic movement, revived certain fundamental Jewish practices in order to add passion to one's Divine service and act as "smelling salts" for the weaknesses of his and future generations.

As was seen regarding the validity of such practices in one's Divine service as *simchah*, song, heartfelt prayer, and Jewish mysticism, the phenomenon of a Rebbe and his relationship with his chassidim (and with Jews at large) was also included as an aspect of chassidic life that has always been an integral part of Torah and Torah life.

This chapter will take an in-depth look into the internal and external characteristics of a *tzaddik* and specific aspects of a Rebbe's Divine service. At chapter's end, questions are raised as to why one needs to focus on a Rebbe in order to complete his or her own service to G-d.

### *Is It Jewish?*

Nowadays, unfortunately, many Jews are more familiar with the concepts and ideas of other religions than they are of their own. When they encounter something that originated in

the Torah and was then adopted by another religion, they insist that the idea is definitely “*not* Jewish!” but the sole province of the other religion. Not only are they adamant that the idea is not Jewish, but they react quite negatively when they hear the concept being discussed in the context of Jewish practice. Their reaction is most often based on a lack of knowledge and not on truth.

A few years ago, a certain Jewish woman unfortunately converted to another religion. When asked what pushed her to leave the Jewish faith, she answered that she found very beautiful things in other religions that she didn’t find in Judaism — especially their prayers. One prayer in particular captured her heart, she said, and that was the prayer that begins: “The L-rd is my Shepherd....” Now, this “prayer from another religion” is actually the 23rd Psalm in the *Book of Psalms*, written by King David! And the reason she converted from Judaism to another religion is because of the beauty of this prayer!

In another curious incident, a woman who was just getting in touch with her Jewish roots began attending classes on Judaism. During one of the classes, when the concept of Resurrection of the Dead was being discussed, she stood up and blurted out angrily, “I didn’t come here to talk about Christianity!” It took a while to convince her that Resurrection of the Dead is one of the “Thirteen Principles of Faith” that forms the basis of the entire Jewish religion.

This same lack of awareness is often the cause of one’s resistance to the idea of a Rebbe. Because many Jews have been taught that the concept of revering a central human figure in religion is one of the fundamental differences between “us and them,” they are leery of anyone having a special G-dly status that seems to elevate that person above their fellow Jews. The very idea of a holy person — a human being of flesh and

The Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn,<sup>13</sup> was living in Stalinist Russia during the rise of the Communist Regime. Every effort was being made to undermine Judaism, especially from the Jewish Communists known as the Yevseksia. In spite of great threats to his life, the Previous Rebbe worked tirelessly and with complete self-sacrifice to strengthen the material and spiritual situation of the Jewish people throughout Russia.

Like many of the Chabad Rebbes before him, he was arrested several times and on one occasion, sentenced to death. Only through an open miracle was he saved.

In these terrible times in Russia, any efforts to strengthen Judaism meant certain death for whoever was caught doing so. If a certain Jew wanted his child to learn Torah during these years, for example, he wouldn’t dare take the risk of being caught organizing a school or arranging group Torah observance. But the Previous Rebbe did put his life on the line to take that risk throughout his entire lifetime.

If he would have practiced Judaism quietly in his own home — learning Torah, doing *mitzvos*, and *davening* — his life would have been so much easier. Instead he was pursued relentlessly by the KGB for his work in helping other Jews keep their observance of Judaism alive by establishing underground schools for their children, ensuring the availability of kosher food, arranging clandestine circumcisions, and keeping ritual baths<sup>14</sup> open wherever possible — all to insure that the physical and spiritual lives of his fellow Jews would continue for his and subsequent generations.

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13. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe (1880-1950). After his passing, when the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe assumed the leadership of Chabad, he became known (in Yiddish) as the “Frierdiker” Rebbe (the Previous Rebbe).

14. I.e., *mikva’os*.

was not eating, they naturally assumed that to avoid the dire consequences of someone accused of high treason, he was trying to commit suicide.

The investigator, familiar with the Alter Rebbe's lofty spiritual level, quickly intervened. He asked him, "Why aren't you eating? Obviously, if you don't eat, you will not live. Isn't it true that committing suicide is against the laws of your Torah? How could someone like you do such a thing, knowing that one who commits suicide loses his share in the World to Come?"

The Alter Rebbe answered determinedly that he was not trying to end his life; he was simply not eating because the food was not kosher. "Under no circumstances will I eat food that is not kosher, no matter *what* the consequences — even if I lose my share in the World to Come!"<sup>12</sup>

This is the degree of a *tzaddik's* dedication to the observance of *mitzvos*.

### *A Tzaddik's Ahavas Yisrael*

The same level of devotion is evident in a *tzaddik's* love for a fellow Jew (*ahavas Yisrael*). We know of thousands of examples of how *tzaddikim* made colossal sacrifices in their lives to help others.

One that stands out describes the tremendous measure of self-sacrifice a Rebbe, a *tzaddik*, underwent to help his fellow Jews in Communist Russia.

blood — having a more exalted connection to G-d than others makes many people uncomfortable. Usually, these people are expressing innocent and well-meaning concerns based on what they know about other religions and not what they know about Judaism.

So people have many complaints about the concept of a Rebbe. Some say it is a form of idolatry. Others claim that the respect chassidim show their Rebbe demonstrates a level of respect one should only give to G-d and not a human being.

Respect for a Torah scholar, they reason, is not a problem. It is perfectly fitting that a person who is intellectually brilliant and exceptionally talented in any given subject deserves our respect — how much more so someone who is extremely learned in spiritual matters. But, they continue, the way chassidim relate to a Rebbe goes way beyond the acceptable bounds of respect because it calls to mind all those things we were taught are not part of our religion.

Sadly, this is an unfortunate reflection of the sorry state of Jewish education in our day. What many know about Judaism has little to do with Judaism and much to do with what they know about other religions. Simply put, one's basic knowledge of Judaism often comes down to: If *they're* doing it, it can't be Jewish.

In truth, having reverence and awe for a *tzaddik*, a Rebbe, a G-dly person of flesh and blood, is a very basic and essential part of Torah. Although other religions adopted this practice and contorted it to the point of idolatry, the concept in its purest form is one of the most fundamental aspects of Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

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12. The prison authorities immediately put plans into motion to obtain kosher food for him. (For the complete story, see *Beis Rebbe*, vol. 1, ch. 15.)

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1. See *Igros Kodesh of the Previous Rebbe*, vol. 5, p. 379.

### *What Is a Tzaddik?*

To deepen our understanding of a Rebbe, a definition of terms is in order.

A true Rebbe is always a *tzaddik*, but a *tzaddik* is not always a Rebbe. The main distinction between the two is simply that a Rebbe is a *tzaddik* who is the acknowledged leader of a group of chassidim, while a *tzaddik* who is not a Rebbe is not the recognized leader of a chassidic group.<sup>2</sup>

So every Rebbe is a *tzaddik*. But what is a *tzaddik*?<sup>3</sup> Many people will say that a *tzaddik* is a person with special spiritual qualities and abilities that are not only far superior to those of ordinary people but to Torah scholars as well.

Some of the things that define an ordinary G-d-fearing Jew are his study of Torah, observance of the commandments, devotion to prayer, and love for a fellow Jew.<sup>4</sup> A Torah scholar is someone who excels in all these areas. His Torah knowledge, observance of *mitzvos*, prayer, and love for other Jews is on an extraordinary level.

If a Torah scholar's observances are on such an exalted level, what is the special distinction of a *tzaddik*?

### *A Tzaddik's Knowledge*

A chassid by the name of Reb Gershon Ber described the extent and depth of a *tzaddik's* Torah knowledge. Reb

### *A Tzaddik's Observance of Mitzvos*

A *tzaddik's* observance of *mitzvos* is characterized by a superior level of devotion in fulfilling G-d's will. Not only is he very exacting about doing all the *mitzvos* and not violating any aspect of Torah, but he fulfills every detail of each *mitzvah* in the most complete and perfect way possible. His dedication to *mitzvos* is so absolute, he is ready to give up his life not to violate any detail of them.

This is exemplified in the following story. In Russia, in 1798, the Alter Rebbe was falsely accused of treason and arrested by the Czar. These accusations had been levied against him by a certain group of Jews who felt that the chassidic movement went against Judaism and the Torah, and so, not knowing how to stop it on their own, they fabricated false charges against its leader and enlisted the Russian government to have him executed.

After being arrested, the Alter Rebbe was frequently questioned by the prison wardens, who soon discovered what an exceptional person he was. Recognizing his level of holiness, those who had close contact with him began to treat their "special guest" with the utmost respect.

One day, one of the Alter Rebbe's investigators heard screaming and shouting coming from the Alter Rebbe's cell. He rushed to see what was going on and saw some of the prison guards trying to force-feed the Alter Rebbe. Since he

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2. To simplify matters, however, we will use the terms *tzaddik* and Rebbe interchangeably throughout this book.

3. *Tzaddikim* have existed throughout all of Jewish history. The distinction of the term "Rebbe" was attributed to a *tzaddik* who was the acknowledged leader of a group of people, such as Moses in his generation. In the last few centuries, the term "Rebbe" has regained popular usage with the advent of the chassidic movement.

4. A Jew is taught to respect all people, but the "love for a fellow Jew" is a specific commandment in the Torah, based on the idea that all Jews comprise one body.

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great *tzaddik*, Reb Avraham the *Malach* (the Angel), so called because of his level of holiness. When they learned together, they would often delve into the deepest Kabbalistic secrets of G-dliness.

On one particular occasion, the Alter Rebbe felt they were reaching such a close connection with G-d, he feared they would both expire in G-dly ecstasy. He literally saved their lives by jumping out of their "learning circle," washing his hands for bread, and then sharing a bagel with butter that he had brought with him. Doing this enabled them to remain connected to the physical world. (See *Sefer HaSichos, Toras Shalom*, p. 169; and *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 27, p. 273ff.)



love and his yearning to connect to G-d was so intense, he didn't know how his soul was able to stay in his body.

When he *davened*, the spiritual energy elicited by the Alter Rebbe was so powerful, he would often stumble into the walls around him when his connection to G-d reached its peak. His followers would even cushion the walls of the *shul* (synagogue) where he *davened* to keep him from bruising himself during prayer.

If a person doesn't know what *davening* is all about, he might think someone praying with a huge outward display of emotion is peculiar, particularly if the person's expressions seem out of control. But a person who understands the true nature of *davening* would realize and appreciate that the person was experiencing an emotional connection with G-d too deep to be contained in subtlety. Then, all the movements and gesticulating would not only make perfect sense, they would be viewed with respect and admiration.

The Baal Shem Tov once explained this with an analogy. "If a deaf person were to walk into a wedding hall," he said, "and see all the people wildly waving their arms and feet in all directions, he would think that everyone in that room had gone insane. But a person who could hear the music would see the whole picture and understand the beauty and perfection of the dancing."

Although this type of physical expression in *davening* is not prevalent today, the measure of one's greatness in *davening* is still determined by the level of one's sincere excitement and intention. And a *tzaddik's* level of emotion and love for G-d during prayer is much greater and higher than what the ordinary person would ever experience in a lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

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11. In another example of a *tzaddik's* extraordinary connection to G-d, there is a well-known story of the Alter Rebbe, who used to study together with another

Gershon Ber himself was a Torah genius and in his times was considered one of the greatest minds in the Chabad-Chassidic community — someone who understood the deep, abstract concepts of chassidic philosophy on the highest level.

He said, "If I would compare myself to the great chassid Reb Hillel Paritcher<sup>5</sup> and compare the depth of my understanding to his, I would have to compare myself to a cat. I don't mean," he explained, "that as far as I am from the level of a cat, that is how distant I am to him. No. Reb Hillel Paritcher's depth is so incredible that compared to him, the cat and I are of equal distance from him."

He continued, "But if I would compare the level and depth of Reb Hillel Paritcher to that of the Tzemach Tzedek (who was the Rebbe at that time), I would also compare Reb Hillel to the cat. And I don't mean that as distant as the cat is from Reb Hillel Paritcher, that is how distant he is to the Tzemach Tzedek. The depth of Torah knowledge of the Tzemach Tzedek is so incredible, that compared to him, Reb Hillel Paritcher and the cat are of equal distance to him."

Indeed, one of the most striking qualities of a *tzaddik* is his breadth of knowledge. His mind encompasses the entire Torah and all its branches, as illustrated briefly in the story told of the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek and his son, Shmuel, the future Rebbe Maharash,<sup>6</sup> respectively the third and fourth Rebbes of Chabad.

When the Rebbe Maharash was a child, his father, the Tzemach Tzedek, would give him spending money which he

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5. A chassid of both the Mittlerer Rebbe (the second Lubavitcher Rebbe) and the Tzemach Tzedek (see below), Reb Hillel Paritcher (1795-1864) was considered one of the deepest and greatest minds of his time. Reb Gershon Ber himself was a student of his.

6. The Tzemach Tzedek, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866), was called after his great *halachic* work entitled *Tzemach Tzedek Responsa*. The Rebbe Maharash, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), was his son and successor.

would always spend on *seforim* (holy books). There was no bookstore in the small *shtetl* of Lubavitch<sup>7</sup> in those days because there weren't enough people to support one. Instead, a bookseller would travel from village to village and from city to city selling *seforim*, and everyone knew that once every few weeks or months they would have the opportunity to buy Torah books.

When the bookseller came to the town of Lubavitch on this particular occasion, young Shmuel went to his father and said, "I have no money to buy new books; could you please give me my spending money in advance so I can buy some new *seforim*?"

His father said, "Tell me, the books that you already have... do you know them? You should first clearly know the ones you already possess!"

As they were talking, a carpenter happened to be in the process of building a new bookcase for the Tzemach Tzedek, because the Rebbe himself had just bought a few cartons of *seforim*.

The Tzemach Tzedek was then sitting in his library where there were thousands of *seforim*, and his son turned to him and said, "Father, do you know all of *these* books already?"<sup>8</sup> His father said, "Test me." The little boy pulled out one book at random — a Torah book on Hebrew grammar (*dikduk*) that is not commonly studied — and opened to a certain page. He turned to his father and asked what was on that page. The Tzemach Tzedek then proceeded to say every single word written on that page verbatim as if he were reading it straight from the book. The boy pulled out one *sefer* after another, and

each time the Tzemach Tzedek was able to repeat every passage his son requested by heart.<sup>9</sup>

As is known, a *tzaddik's* depth of Torah knowledge is so phenomenal, it is superior even to the greatest Torah scholars. Indeed, every word of Torah and every single *sefer* that he ever studied is clearly "in front of his eyes" to be accessed at will. A *tzaddik's* ability to absorb, comprehend and fuse with everything he studies is so definitive, that his relationship to this knowledge is on a completely different level from that of the average Torah scholar.

### *A Tzaddik's Davening*

This same degree of distinction applies to the *tzaddik's* quality of prayer (*davening*).

We know that the effectiveness of prayer is dependent primarily on how much *kavanah* (intention) is invested in one's prayers.

There are people who say the words of prayer but do not put much heart into them. Then there are people who *daven* with much more *kavanah*. Students of the Baal Shem Tov, for example, would get so excited and emotional when they *davened*, they would dance and sing and wave their arms in all directions as an expression of the intensity of their connection to G-d during prayer.

The Baal Shem Tov himself once said that every time he prayed, he considered it a miracle that he was still alive when his *davening* was over.<sup>10</sup> Stimulated by his prayer, his level of

7. A village in Russia and home to the Chabad movement from 1813-1915. The word "Lubavitch" in Russian means "City of Love."

8. Most likely the young Shmuel was hoping that he would elicit the answer that he did receive from his father; that his father did, indeed, know all the *seforim*.

9. *Sefer HaSichos* of the Previous Rebbe, 5696 (1936) (Kehot Publication Society, Brooklyn, NY), p. 52.

10. See *Tzavaas HaRivash, The Testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov* (Kehot), secs. 35, 42.