



The Rebbe's
TOMORROW

On the Lubavitcher Rebbe's 20th *yahrtzeit* this Gimmel Tammuz, his chassidim and admirers the world over will stop for a moment to reflect on the Rebbe's enormous accomplishments — and then they'll get back to work, energized by the Rebbe's words, inspired by his example, and motivated by his vision, even two decades later

BY *Yisroel Besser*
PHOTOS *COL, Meir Haltovsky, JEM*



If there is an idea that runs through the maze of well-worn hallways at 788 Eastern Parkway, the offices adjoining one of the most iconic shuls in America, it might well be a quote from the man whose name and mission will forever be synonymous with the building. “When you use a moment productively, filling it with purpose, it lives on forever,” the Lubavitcher Rebbe would say.

Watch the videos, if you’re not old enough to remember, and study the way the Rebbe spurs on the spirited singing of his chassidim, waving his right arm in a gesture of enthusiasm and encouragement. “Sing on,” he seems to be saying, as he makes his way down the mysteriously created passageway, space where a moment earlier, there was a tightly packed mass of people. “Sing on.”

And so they do, trying — despite the crushing loss of their leader, father, and inspiration — to focus on the tasks at hand. And there are many tasks. These people, the army he left over, are undaunted, courageous, energetic. There is an entire world to engage, to light up. Here at Chabad Lubavitch World Headquarters, that’s what keeps them busy.

The building’s architecture doesn’t live up to its impressive name. The cracked tiles and sagging stairs leading to upper floors seem more appropriate to a struggling business than to the nerve center of a global education and outreach enterprise.

My guide, the dynamic Rabbi Mendy Kotlarsky (son of Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky), is quick with a story.

The offices of the Rebbe and his faithful secretary, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov z”l, were relatively simple. Once, someone commented about the plain decor and furnishings at the center of operations and Rabbi Hodakov replied to the petitioner with a question.

“The Empire State Building is the most imposing building in the city. And where does this huge skyscraper get its heat from? The boiler room! Why then, isn’t the boiler room, with its tank and pipes, in the lobby, on the red carpet? Why is this crucial center hidden away, several layers below street level?

“This is the fact — the boiler room doesn’t get the fancy furnishings, but it’s where the energy and fuel for the rest of the structure comes from. This,” Rabbi Hodakov would conclude, “is the boiler room of Chabad.”

Our Father’s Holdings In a modest second-floor office, Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky receives us with his trademark refinement and elegance.

On a side table sits a vintage Hebrew typewriter, a relic from the glory days, when the Boston-born rabbi would spend long hours in his Rebbe’s anteroom, a sentry hovering near the king. He penned correspondence for the Rebbe, handled administrative duties and, on nights when the Rebbe would receive visitors for *yechidus*, private discussions, Rabbi Krinsky would often remain there until dawn, waiting to drive the Rebbe home.

I open the conversation by asking about the signs dotting the neighborhood, referring to events and gatherings commemorating the upcoming 20th *yahrtzeit* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Why now? There seems to be much more buildup to this milestone, in contrast to the 10th or 15th *yahrtzeits*. Does it represent a certain shift in direction?

Rabbi Krinsky thinks for just a moment before answering. “The source might be in Tanach, where we are told that a full 20 years after Shimshon Hagibor’s passing, the Plishtim still feared him. There was still an effect. I think the underlying sentiment here is that 20 years after the Rebbe’s passing, the effect is here. We are still connected.”



On Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky’s desk is his most cherished possession — a picture of the Rebbe from the apartment in Mumbai, still splattered with blood. “The massacre left a hole in my heart”



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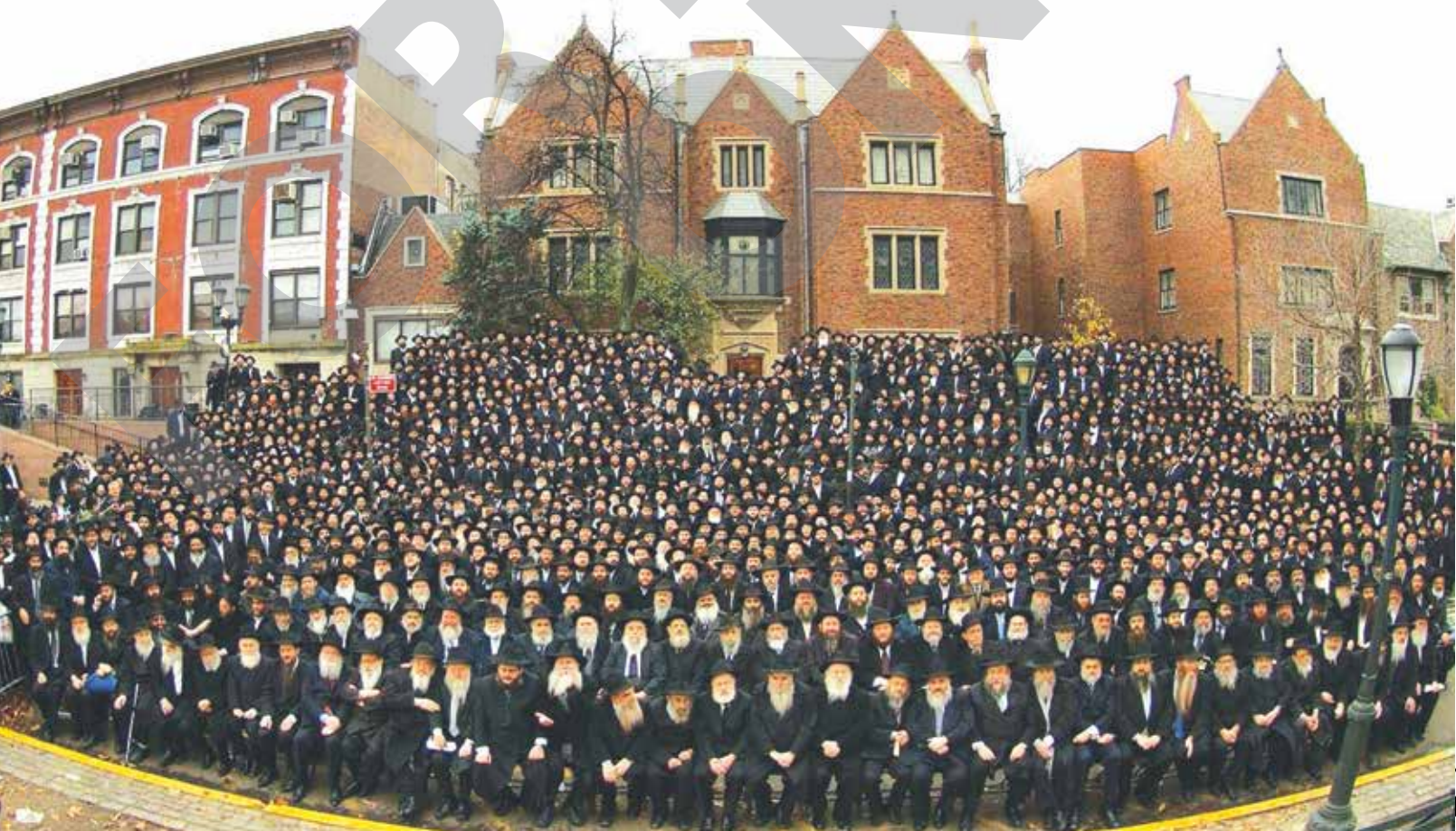
The polished diplomat gives way to chassid as the tone shifts to a soft singsong. “In *chassidus*, there is a big *eisek* about the age of 20. There was a *ma’amar* that the Rebbe suggested we learn when we turned 20, a short *shtickel* in *Likutei Torah* [a collection of Torah commentary written by the Baal Hatanya], maybe half a page. The Gemara says that a *ben esrim*, a 20-year-old, has the maturity to be involved in his father’s business affairs. But isn’t the milestone for adulthood 13, according to the Torah? The Alter Rebbe explains the significance of the two stages according to Kabbalah and *chassidus*.

“What’s relevant to us now is that we, the Rebbe’s children, are at the point of 20 years. We have developed to the point of *‘lisa v’litein b’nischei aviv*’; we are ready to analyze and take stock of our father’s holdings.”

No Such Rambam There is a stream of books, lectures, and forums devoted to the Rebbe and his impact timed to coincide with this milestone *yahrtzeit*. Rabbi Krinsky offers that the books are very nice, but no book can do justice to the Rebbe.

“He was more than an inspirational leader and certainly more than an effective CEO. He was a huge *masmid*, and I don’t know if the authors got that. It’s central to who he was. I would sit here at night waiting to drive him home and hours would pass with the Rebbe sitting by his beloved *seforim*, in a world of his own. He would often ask me for one *sefer* or another. He was a *mechadeish*, he brought a

The growth of this movement after Gimmel Tammuz isn't due to good marketing, slogans, or leadership, but due to the bond that the Rebbe created, a bond that can't be broken



"Removed as he was, the Rebbe was ever-aware of the needs of others." Rabbi Krinsky, his driver and confidant, was there as he straddled different dimensions

