

## THE REBBE: OHEV YISRAEL, LOVER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

A few years back a young American Jew came to see me. He said, he did not have much connection with the Jewish community but he had now wanted to explore his roots. We struck up a friendship and over the years he has reconnected with the Jewish community.

One day I asked him, if there was anything in particular that triggered this search. He replied, that there was in fact a catalyst which had motivated him to do so.. He told me that whilst he was working at Goldman Sachs in New York, He would often frequent a deli nearby. During one of those visits he noticed a picture of an obvious looking rabbinic figure hanging on the wall, the look and gaze of which had made a profound impression on him. He went on to inquire as to who this man was and was told that this was the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He began investigating as to who the Rebbe was. One thing led to another and a short while once he moved to London he connected with us at the Centre for Jewish life.

Next week Tuesday marks the anniversary of the passing of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The positive impact he had and continues to have on the Jewish people and beyond is historic. It is difficult to capture and explain the Rebbe and his legacy as it continues to unfold.

I will however endeavour to focus on one theme which I think guided and inspired everything else. It is what made the Rebbe a truly unique leader.

In explaining the character traits of a great leader many things come to mind and In varying degrees each trait is a vital component. There is one trait however that transcends all others. It is the love and concern for the people you wish to lead.

It was this profound love and genuine care for each and every Jew that permeated the Rebbe's existence and guided and inspired all aspects of his life. An unconditional love to all Jews equally, Irrespective of who they were or how they behaved. Secular or religious, scholar or uneducated, young or old, rich or poor, chasidic or not. It totally did not matter. The love was total.

And consequently people responded. The stories are legendary. The numbers are staggering. The range of people, literally all types.

Why? Because, people respond to people who genuinely care for them. Not to scholarship, not to visions, not to an orator. All they want is someone who loves them unconditionally, for whom they are. Someone who would do all they can to care for them.

The Rebbe was certainly a **righteous** man an intellectual giant. But above all, he was a lover of all the Jewish people. In this regard there is very little parallel in history. It is because of this that his life and teachings continue to impact all types of Jews, from all walks of life.

By Yosef Vogel

Fri 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Balak

Shabbat Begins: 9.06pm

Shabbat Ends: 10.24pm