



THE LIBRARY

The the Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad—Ohel Yosef Yitzchak—Lubavitch, the Central Chabad Lubavitch Library and Archive Center, is located at the world headquarters of the Chabad Lubavitch movement at 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York.

This is one of the most prominent Judaic libraries, containing about 250,000 published volumes, most of them rare. Around 200,000 of these are in Hebrew and Yiddish, and about 50,000 in other languages.

In addition, the Library contains:

- Several thousand manuscripts, mostly on Chabad Chasidic philosophy, either actual manuscripts of the Chabad Rebbes, or copied by Chasidim for their own study and inspiration.
- A large archive of correspondence and writings relating to the Chabad philosophy and movement, including the vast collection of letters written by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe.
- A collection of sacred objects bequeathed by the Chabad Rebbes, as well as various items presented, as gifts, to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, during his years of leadership.
- A collection of photographs of Chasidim and Chabad activities sent to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak and his successor, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, during their years of leadership.
- A large collection of news clippings relating to the Chabad movement and Jewry in general.
- Announcements, flyers and brochures of all sorts that were sent to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

The Chabad Research Center is assigned the task of re researching the manuscript and archive collections, and the fruits of their labors are published in the volumes of discourses, addresses and letters of the Chabad Rebbes, by Kehot Publication Society, the Lubavitcher Publishing House.

The only section of the Library open to general researchers is the collection of published volumes, of which a detailed, computerized catalogue is available. This catalogue can be accessed by the public at:

<http://chabadlibrary.org.catalog>

The Library also maintains an active exhibition hall, where items from the various collections are selected for display.



HISTORY

Throughout the history of the Chabad movement, a central collection of books and manuscripts was in the possession of the Rebbe of every generation.

In earlier generations—end of 18th century and early 19th century—this collection was relatively small. Little remains of the original collections, for almost all books and manuscripts were either destroyed in the frequent fires plaguing small towns in those days or were lost in various other upheavals and crisis situations over the generations.

The bulk of the existing collection began to form in the third generation of Chabad—during the mid-19th century—and progressively expanded over time to become one of the world's most prominent Judaic libraries.

Our only knowledge of a library during Chabad's first generation is an extant list of about 100 published volumes seized for inspection from the home of the movement's founder, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), known as the "Alter Rebbe," during his arrest by the Czarist government on trumped up charges. It is assumed that only part of his library was seized—for the purpose of seeking evidence of subversion, from which investigators could deduce the likely content of the rest of the library.

Based on this list, it seems that Rabbi Schneur Zalman's entire collection comprised no more than a few hundred books. Even a collection of that size was large for Russia in those days, but it was still too small to be called a "library."

At the end of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's life, two fires ravaged his home. The first, in 1810, claimed many of his manuscripts, including those of his *Shluchan Aruch* (his revision of the standard code of Jewish law). The second was during the War of 1812, when the Rebbe, accompanied by his family and many followers, fled before Napoleon's advancing forces. The refugees traveled from place to place until the Rebbe passed away on 24th Teves, 5573 (1812).

At the end of summer, 1813, Rabbi Schneur Zalman's son and successor, Rabbi DovBer Schneuri (1773-1827), known as the "Mitteler Rebbe," settled in the White Russian town of Lubavitch. He built a large synagogue and a house for himself. According to a police report made after an 1825 search of his home, he possessed a library of 611 volumes contained on the shelves of four book-cases.

During Chabad's third generation, under Rabbi DovBer's son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866), known for his major Talmudic-Halachic work, *Tzemach Tzedek*, a more substantial collection took form. It became the nucleus of the central Chabad collection, which continued to grow during following generations.

Over time, however, the collection endured many crises:

- Much of the collection, including important manuscripts, was ravaged by serious fires that plagued the town of Lubavitch.
- After the passing of Rabbi Menachem Mendel and of his son and successor, Rabbi Shmuel (1834-1882), some published volumes in their collections were inherited by heirs other than their successors.
- Most of the collection accumulated by the Chabad Rebbes—especially by Rabbi Shmuel's son, Rabbi Shalom DovBer (1860-1920), and the latter's son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (1880-1950)—was sent for safekeeping to Moscow during World War I. In 1924, this collection was confiscated by the new Soviet regime, forcing Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak to start building a new library.
- After the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland and eventual rescue of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak to New York, his new collection remained in Poland. His strenuous rescue efforts finally succeeded in getting it transported—in the midst of World War II—to New York at the end of summer, 1941.
- From 1985 to 1987, a protracted court battle was successfully conducted against a relative of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, who claimed inheritance rights for parts of the library.

Despite all these crises, most of this great and rare collection assembled by the Chabad Rebbes over several generations remained intact. The largest portion is now housed in the Central Chabad Lubavitch Library.



The Library today has three sections: 1) The Lubavitch Collection; 2) The Collection of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak; 3) The Collection of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson.

THE LUBAVITCH COLLECTION

Most of the books accumulated by the Chabad Rebbes from the early 1800s to 1915 are presently in the Russian State Library.

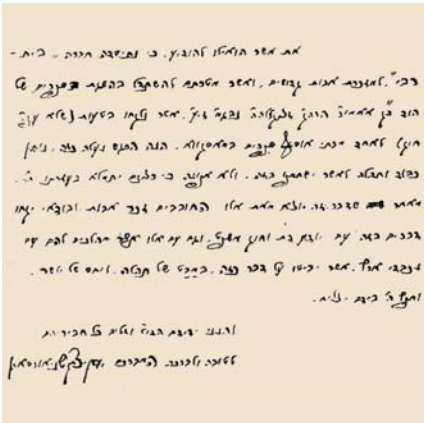
In fall, 1915, as German forces approached, Rabbi Shalom DovBer and his family were forced to leave Lubavitch. He moved to Rostov, in south Russia. He sent most of his collection to Moscow for safekeeping, planning to retrieve it after the war. In 1920, however, he passed away in Rostov, before the end of the Russian civil war that followed World War I.

As peace gradually returned to the land, his son and successor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, finally had an opportunity to request the return of the collection. The new Soviet regime, however, nationalized the warehouse and gave the Lubavitch Collection to the Russian State Library (then called the State Rumyantsev Museum). Only about 100 of the collection's volumes had accompanied Rabbi Shalom DovBer and Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak to Rostov—for study or because of sentimental value—and these accompanied Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak on all his later wanderings, to Leningrad, Riga, Warsaw, Otwock, and Brooklyn. Today they are held in a special bookcase in the Chabad Library.

During the years following, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak attempted through various means to seek the release of his original library, but was unsuccessful.

In 1981, at the first signs of a new era in the Soviet Union, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson—who had succeeded his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, in 1950—renewed efforts to reclaim this sacred collection. For more than a decade, he energetically pursued this goal, sending special representatives and twice dispatching a special delegation for a prolonged mission to the Soviet Union to seek the collection's retrieval. Unfortunately, the collection remains in the Russian State Library to this day.

These efforts continue today in the hope, faith and conviction that it will be recognized by all that these sacred books must return to their rightful place, the Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad—Ohel Yosef Yitzchak—Lubavitch.



THE COLLECTION OF RABBI YOSEF YITZCHAK

When the Lubavitch Collection was confiscated in 1924 and given to the Russian State Library, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak began to rebuild his library anew. He started by acquiring the entire collection of Shmuel Winer, a bibliographer and collector of rare books whose personal collection comprised about 5,000 valuable, antique and rare volumes, scrolls, marriage contracts, and the like. The Rebbe continued to expand and supplement his library by acquiring volumes of Judaica and Hebraica of all kinds.

In 1927, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was arrested by the Soviet authorities and eventually sent into exile. Miraculously, he was set free, but was forced to leave the Soviet Union later that year. At first he was denied permission to take his new book collection. He firmly refused, however, to leave without it, and even-



tually his collection was permitted to accompany him to Riga, Latvia.

From there, and later from his home in Warsaw and later in Otwock, Poland, the Rebbe requested his followers everywhere to help enrich the “Lubavitch Library” with volumes of all kinds.

When World War II began in 1939, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was trapped in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. Several months later, he was rescued along with his family and some members of his secretariat, returning first to Riga and finally, at the end of winter, 1940, arrived in New York.

The library, however, remained in occupied Poland. It took a year and a half for his tireless efforts to succeed in getting the library transported to New York from Europe, through Sweden, at the end of summer, 1941.

The ground floor of the new Lubavitch World Headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York, became the home of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak’s Collection, where it remains to this day.

THE COLLECTION OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE, RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

In early summer, 1941, the Rebbe’s second son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, arrived with his wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, in New York. Soon after, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak appointed him head of Merkos L’inyonei Chinuch (the Central Organization for Jewish Education). Rabbi Menachem Schneerson established a separate library on the premises to serve that organization’s needs.

After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak’s passing on 10th Shevat, 5710 (January 28th, 1950), the mantle of leadership passed to his son-in-law, who became the seventh Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. The Rebbe continued to expand his new collection, and, in 1967, as this collection grew, the building adjacent to the headquarters was acquired for the purpose of housing this special collection.

Two distinct libraries were now maintained at Lubavitch World Headquarters between 1968 and 1985—the Collection of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak on the ground floor of 770 Eastern Parkway, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Collection in the annex.

During 1985 to 1987, the aforementioned litigation was conducted, in which a relative of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak claimed inheritance rights over part of the Rebbe’s collection. The United States Federal Court ruled that all books illegally removed must be returned to the library, for the Rebbe retained no personal ownership of the books, but all belonged to the Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad (the association of Chabad Chasidim).

After the court victory, the Rebbe directed that both collections be merged into a single central library entitled the “Library of Agudas Chasidei Chabad—Ohel Yosef Yitzchak-Lubavitch,” and that the library annex be renovated and expanded to join to the main building. The Rebbe also launched a campaign for new book acquisitions.

Construction began in 1989, and was completed in 1992. Also completed then was a master catalogue of both collections, enabling the reading room to be opened to researchers. Since then, the library comprises both collections in a single facility. In 1994, the exhibition hall was opened to the public.



THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION AND ARCHIVE

Parallel to the collections of published volumes through the seven generations of the Chabad movement, the Manuscript Collection also grew from generation to generation. The bulk of this collection comprises manuscripts of Chabad Chasidic philosophy.

The writing of Chabad manuscripts began during the era of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's leadership, when no works of Chabad philosophy had yet been published. When the Rebbe's center was in Liozna, he delivered public discourses regularly on holidays and on the last shabbos of every month. After his release from imprisonment in 1798, and especially after he moved to Liadi in 1801, he delivered discourses every Shabbos. The discourses were transcribed by his brother, Rabbi Yehudah Leib (Rabbi of Yanovitch and author of *Sh'eiris Yehuda*), and others, including the Rebbe's sons. The transcripts were copied and widely disseminated among the thousands of Chasidim. Even the Rebbe's central work, the *Tanya*, was originally disseminated during the early 1790's as handwritten copies of the Rebbe's manuscript, until it was published in a more complete edition in 1796.

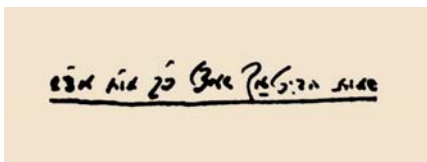
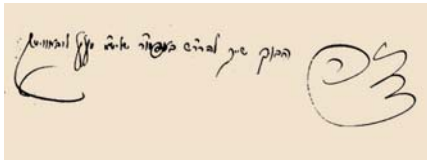
Chasidim strove to collect as many of these discourses as they could, usually binding the few dozen they managed to obtain in a volume or two. Even so, these collected manuscripts did not yet constitute a collection. It was Rabbi Schneur Zalman's grandson and eventual successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, author of *Tzemach Tzedek*, who worked hard to gather as many manuscripts as possible, especially following Rabbi Schneur Zalman's passing. He was able to gather most of his grandfather's discourses, forming the basis of the Chabad Manuscript Collection, which remained at the center of Chabad leadership during the following generations.

In every generation this collection grew. The Rebbes sought to acquire manuscripts of the Rebbes of previous generations, or transcripts of their discourses that were not in the collection. Every Rebbe also wrote many of his own discourses, and Chasidim likewise wrote transcripts (which might differ from the Rebbe's manuscript because, when delivering a discourse orally, he may have said it at greater length or briefer length than when he wrote it), copies of which often became part of the Rebbe's collection. Thus, the collection of manuscripts grew and passed from every Rebbe to his successor.

Even this collection was not entirely safe from depletion. Fires in Lubavitch destroyed many volumes of manuscripts, and after every Rebbe's passing, a few volumes passed into the possession of heirs other than his successor. The bulk of the collection, however, remained at the Chabad movement's center in every generation. Even the few volumes passing into the possession of other heirs were in most cases ultimately acquired by the Rebbes of following generations or by their followers and were returned to the collection.

The Manuscript Collection was preserved until the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939. After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak left Poland, the collection was lost. Decades later, however, its location was rediscovered in a library in Warsaw, and efforts were made to retrieve it. With Divine help, it was returned to the Central Chabad Library at the end of 1977.

Today, the Library has some 3,000 manuscript volumes, of which over 100 are in the handwriting of the Chabad Rebbes themselves. In addition, the Li-



brary's vast archive has about 100,000 letters and documents of seven generations of Chabad Rebbes, as well as letters written to them, plus thousands of other historic letters and documents.

A special team of the Chabad Research Center studies these manuscripts and compile and publish the discourses, public addresses and letters of the Chabad Rebbes. The publishing is in the hands of the Lubavitcher Publishing House, Kehot Publication Society.

THE EXHIBITION HALL

The Library is open to researchers, rabbis, lecturers and authors who visit the library to examine rare books unavailable elsewhere.

Nevertheless, in order to satisfy public demand to view some of the Library's treasures, a special hall has been designated solely for exhibits. Periodically the librarians select a specific theme to which the new exhibition is dedicated. Presented at these exhibitions over the years have been books, manuscripts, artifacts, paintings, photographs, and the like, relating to each of the Chabad Rebbes and to every area of Chabad activity, in addition to other great Jewish leaders, particularly leaders of the general Chasidic movement.

Other displays have included the Library's outstanding collection of Pass-over Haggados, *kesubos* (marriage contracts), and first editions of Chasidic books published in early generations.

These exhibits attract individuals and families, schoolchildren and students, tourists and visitors from all backgrounds who are interested in viewing priceless books, artifacts and other treasures of the library, which bring to life Chasidic history and Jewish history in general.

