

# The treasure buried in your home

Over 90,000 holy books in one program, an easy-to-use and efficient search engine, quality learning, and tens of thousands of Jews around the globe who enjoy a treasure full of wisdom.

yosef levin

Rabbi Meni Wolf with Rabbi Erez Sela on a tour of a shop in Kfar Chabad



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"During this past summer vacation, we went to Austria. I walked out onto the porch overlooking the magical view and breathed in the fresh air while enjoying the view of the tall mountains. Lifting my eyes to the blue sky, I breathed in the peacefulness and relaxation. And then, as I sat comfortably, my gaze rested on the porch beneath mine. On the porch's table I saw a computer. Beside it, a familiar disk peeked out at me, bearing the Otzar HaHochma logo. I felt like I'd just met an old friend, and I was happy to discover that Otzar HaHochma had become an integral part of every

Jewish home."

This is the story Rabbi Erez Sela, the founder and owner of Otzar HaHochma, chose to begin our conversation with.

During these days of celebration, when we mark another successful year with Otzar HaHochma, we asked to speak with people for whom Otzar HaHochma is an integral part of their lives and world. It was important to us to hear from them about their experiences using the program, and to collect real-life responses. We received countless positive responses telling how Otzar HaHochma has started a real revolution.

"I think that anyone who hasn't yet laid hands on this program will end up having to explain himself later," Rabbi Asher Lamil Hacoheh, the rabbi of Beitar Illit's Chabad community and a well-known Torah scholar said. "Anyone who hasn't seen the amazing experience while

using this program doesn't know what it means to learn Torah for its own sake."

During our conversation with him, we asked how Otzar HaHochma helps him with his important task.

"Otzar HaHochma helps me as a Jew and as a Chabad chasid," he explained, with visible emotion. "Otzar HaHochma is a gift from Above, to the Creator's children."

With a smile, he added, "Once there were heads of steel; today, steel is the head. There are hardly any people in our generation - maybe there are five - who remember everything that was written, where it is written, from the chumash until the last of the Acharonim. The program accompanies me during every minute of learning, and on Shabbos I have a serious problem.... our generation is the heels of Moshiach, we're already holding this 'feet' galus. So we can't

really ask the feet to act like the head...this program is the head which comes to enliven the feet in preparation for the coming of Moshiach."

How does this program accompany you throughout the day?

"Recently, the slogan, 'Let your fingers do the walking' has entered the lexicon. Otzar HaHochma teaches us to understand everything written in the Torah. When I'm looking for any halachic decision, I see all the halachic decisions which were made on that topic, and I can see them and even make a general 'consul' to see which halachic authority is stringent and which is more lenient, so I can arrive at the correct ruling.

"Otzar HaHochma basically gives this generation the keys, opening the bookshelves. Every 18th of Elul, on the Ba'al Shem Tov's birthday, the Alter Rebbe would say a chiddush with en-

ergy and enthusiasm. The Rebbe influenced our generation, he came down from his high level with a great love of Israel, for the sake of his sheep, and dedicated time, sitting and organizing the keys for our generation. Otzar HaHochma embodies with wisdom the 'house full of books' that the Rebbe wanted."

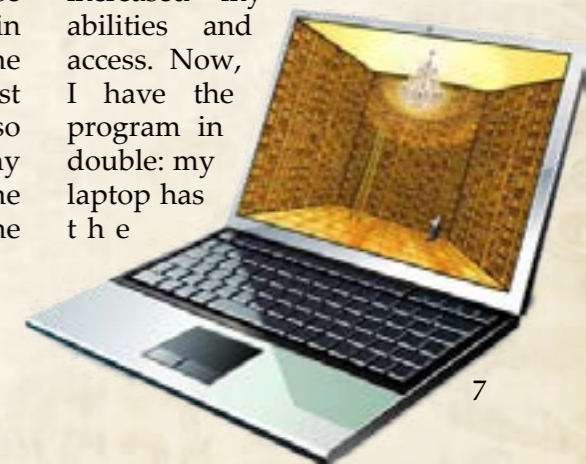
Rabbi Noam Harpez, the Chabad shliach to Har Hazeisim, told us about his feelings and appreciation towards Otzar HaHochma.

"For many years, I've been giving Torah classes to all types of audiences - Chabad house visitors, Chabad communities in various places, and even some charedi audiences. I give at least one Torah class every day, so I'm always on the road, and my laptop helps me prepare some of the classes while I travel," he said.

"I bought Otzar HaHochma in stages. The Chabad books I

found on hey Teves, the day we won the the book suit, and in honor of which we were urged to buy books, separate from the Rebbe's request to have a 'house full of books.' This was several years ago. I went to a Chabad bookstore and discovered a restricted edition of Otzar HaHochma which contained Chabad books. I bought it, and my eyes lit up!

"Chabad books are less available in libraries and synagogues, and I was happy to have merited this. Later, I had an opportunity to buy the full version, which increased my abilities and access. Now, I have the program in double: my laptop has t h e



restricted Chabad version, and at home I enjoy the full version. I've found many quality materials which I loved to learn when I was younger. Suddenly I discovered the same books in new versions which are easy to read and fill my heart with happiness."

What did your learning and preparation look like before Otzar HaHochma, and what does it look like today?

"I can tell you that then and now are two different worlds. There are no words to describe the enormous change," Rabbi Harpez said excitedly. "It's true, you can download tens of thousands of books, including Chabad books, from the internet. But the effectiveness is completely different. With Otzar HaHochma, there are many options for an effective search, and that has a huge effect and adds great strength. If, before I used Otzar HaHochma, I needed to search page by page, today I type something in and find every word and concept in every place they're mentioned, and I receive the book on the screen exactly as it is. I have other Torah treasures on my computer, but they're all in text format and you have to trust the person who typed it, and there are countless mistakes. Here, you have authentic documents, and you can search well. This program gives me a picture of the original page. It's a huge change!"

Can you summarize your experience?

"There are no notes and no bookmarks for sources. It's all available and it allows amazing proficiency. I warmly suggest everyone purchase this program and enjoy quality learning without having to get up from their chair. Those who hear me ask how I became a genius, and I told them it all depends on the little disk attached to my computer."

Rabbi G.A., a Chabad shliach in a major Canadian city, also praised Otzar HaHochma, telling us of his sheer enjoyment. "Otzar HaHochma is the most comprehensive online library for books connected to Judaism, from the time printing began until today," he said, explaining that his learning is effective thanks to the advanced search engine which allows maximum access to the books' content. How does Otzar HaHochma help you?

"I mostly use it in order to learn from Chabad books," he told us. "Many issues in chassidus became clear to me only due to Otzar HaHochma's advanced search engine, which allows me to search chassidic books, as well as the thousands of books in the program."

Rabbi A. also said he bought Otzar HaHochma as a holiday gift for all his children and children-in-law, and they thank him and say their learning has improved because of it.

"I'm happy to have merited this program, and I really enjoy it," he said.

Rabbi Yosef Z. serves as a mashpia in one of the Chabad yeshivas in Israel, and he's been using Otzar HaHochma for fourteen years already. "It influences me every day. While there's no substitute for in-depth learning, learn-

ing with Otzar HaHochma helps differentiate between topics and enormously expands the width, depth and amount of information that you can reach, some of which is only available through the program," he said. "It's all laid out in front of me very quickly. All of my learning has improved and reached greater heights. It's a completely different level of seeing things."

What was it like before you used Otzar HaHochma?

"When I prepared a lesson, searching for the material cost me a lot of time. So even in the time I had left, I didn't manage to go deeper and add a lot. Now, it's all different. I often use Chabad books, and I enjoy going through older treasures and handwritten manuscripts which glorify our past as Chabad chassidim. The program plays a major part in my life, and when I need to update it - something which takes a few days - I make sure to prepare ahead of time all the material I'll need, and only then do I send it for an update."

It's obvious that every user finds an answer to his need in Otzar HaHochma. This is especially true since the selection of topics in Otzar HaHochma's



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Rabbi Asher Lamil Hacoen

## Rabbi Asher Lamil Hacoen, the rabbi of Beitar Illit's Chabad community

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database encompasses every topic in Judaism. We checked the program's many uses and understood that it has everything: The entire Tanach with its commentaries, everything from the Tanaim, together with commentaries - Mishna, Tosefta, Midrash Halacha, agada, commentaries - and the entire Talmud - both Bavli and Yerushalmi - with their commentaries, as well as the literature from the period of the Gaonim. It has halacha, minhagim, and responsa, from the Rishonim until the Acharonim. It has books on Jewish thought and cogitation, from the Middle Ages until the modern period. It has kabbala and chassidus, including special prayers and Torah speeches. It has research on Jewish history, Hebrew linguistics, Jewish psychology, family matters, and more.

"Otzar HaHochma is an accessible and quality database appropriate for every Jew, no matter who he is," said Bosmat

Sela, who, together with her husband, runs the largest digital database for Jewish books. "For Chabad chassidim, it's an outstanding source of quality material. We suggest Chabad chassidim purchase the full version, which includes over 90,000 books, including over 5,000 Chabad books, or purchase the basic program, which includes all Chabad-related materials. As a chassidus which publishes books by the thousands at an amazing pace which realizes the vision of 'spreading your wellsprings outward,' we have the great honor of amalgamating everything which has been published until now and creating a quality platform for every Chabad chassid."

In addition to the Torah books, Otzar HaHochma amalgamates a rare collection connected to Chabad chassidus. It's not just books written by the Rebbeim and Chabad authors - you can also find a wide variety of rare gifts which were published in honor of family events, including rare booklets written in the Rebbe's handwriting. In addition, the database includes many Chabad-related topics, such as various issues of newspapers, photo albums, and history books.

What made you dedicate such a large portion to Chabad?

"When we started out, we felt how much Otzar HaHochma excited thousands of Chabad chassidim in Israel and the Diaspora. Hundreds of chassidim reached out to us. They contacted us with true excitement and enthusiasm. We felt like this program quenched their spiritual thirst. People from all around the world asked us to add more material and many shlichim

expressed a special desire and wanted to participate. We felt how much the idea had 'captured' them and we decided to invest more in the database. For that, we worked together with Kehot, who put us in touch with other Chabad publishing houses in order to help expand the database.

"Otzar HaHochma was received with acclamation," Bosmat added. "We saw the great need, especially from the shlichim who are scattered around the globe, sometimes in remote areas, where it's not always easy to find holy books. The database gave all the shlichim a golden opportunity, and it provides them with a day-to-day solution. They enjoy not just the 5,000 Chabad books, but access to 90,000 books on all aspects of Torah!"

"We call on all authors to contact us and expand the database," the Selas added. "Everyone who has an idea for a book which is not yet in the database - we would be happy for you to write to us about it and we'll investigate the copyright and see if we can add additional files. We will be happy to receive rare collections which will add to our database, creating a perfect circle of treasures connected to Chabad."

"I feel it's a great merit to make the Torah accessible to the People of the Book, whose essence is passing values from one generation to the next," Rabbi Sela added. "And more than that, sometimes, when I think about what I'm meriting to do, I see an additional meaning. Otzar HaHochma gives a voice to the sleeping. We obtain rare books written by many authors who once wrote a book but didn't merit to be remembered, and there wasn't always someone to print the book. Now, thousands of Jews sit and learn their books. It gives them a legacy and it gives them new life."

**Want to purchase Otzar HaHochma? Looking to update your version? Do it at the Kinus Hashluchim! Contact Aharon Sela: Phone: +1-438-878-7674 or 072-2173706 Email: aharoni11@gmail.com**