

# HERE'S my STORY

Generously  
sponsored  
by the



Crain-Maling  
Foundation

## NO NEED FOR MIRACLES

**MRS. LISETTE SAYEG**



**Chaim Shlomo during a children's rally  
at 770 Eastern Parkway**

It happened twenty-six years ago that my six-year-old son, Soly, got very sick with cancer and was cured thanks to the advice of the Rebbe.

At some point in 1986, I realized that my little boy was not doing well; he had been sick for one month straight and was not getting better. I kept taking him to local doctors — here in Sao Paulo, Brazil — but they saw nothing specifically wrong. However, my mother's intuition kept telling me something was seriously amiss.

Finally, I convinced a doctor to do a blood test, which showed he had anemia. The doctor prescribed vitamins but they didn't help. Soly was constantly sleeping and listless. Again, I called the doctor, who ordered another type of blood test which showed that, in fact, my son had leukemia.

Naturally, my husband and I went into shock. Our friends urged us to seek medical advice in the United States where more advanced cancer treatment was available than in Brazil. So, two days after this terrible diagnosis, we got on a plane to New York. We went directly to the world

famous Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital where we were met with a woman doctor, a specialist in leukemia, who also happened to be Brazilian.

This doctor told us that Soly had developed the worst form of leukemia possible and was very sick. They would have to start chemotherapy immediately.

Our Rabbi, Yitzchak Michaan, organized a group of Chabad yeshivah students to visit us daily. They suggested that we ask the Rebbe for a blessing.

I did, and he answered right away, with one word — *Bitachon* — which means "Trust in G-d."

That day I made a promise - to learn more Torah, to attend classes, and to become strong in *bitachon*. And I began to feel a stronger connection to G-d.

At some point, the Chabad students realized that I didn't have a Jewish name. So I wrote to the Rebbe who suggested the name Leah for me, Poriya for my daughter and the additional name Chaim — which means "life" — for my son, who now became Chaim Shlomo.

Meanwhile, one of the Chabad students came to me and said, "I want to explain to you what your son's disease means in spiritual terms. He has a problem in the blood which is the body's life force. Perhaps his soul is not happy with his body because he's not eating kosher food."

That's when I remembered that one month before taking ill, my son had asked me to keep kosher — something he had learned about from attending Chabad kindergarten in Sao Paulo — but I had refused. Now I resolved to keep kosher, and also to keep Shabbat and go to the *mikveh* as a married woman is supposed to do. I did all that, but Solly was still not improving. There came a point where the doctors said there was nothing more they could do for him, and we should go back home.

When I heard that, I burst into tears. We had come to the best cancer hospital in New York, we were spending a thousand dollars a day on treatment, but nothing was helping my son. How could that be? So I wrote to the Rebbe, telling him of my despair.

*continued on reverse*

MY ENCOUNTER  
with the  
**REBBE**

An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in over 1300 videotaped interviews conducted to date. These stories are based on the recollection of the individuals recounting them. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. [mystory@jemedia.org](mailto:mystory@jemedia.org)

continued from reverse

I told him about my resolution to begin observing these *mitzvot*, adding, "Please, I implore you — I need your blessing for a miracle."

This time the Rebbe didn't reply. But, suddenly, Soly took a turn for the better. The doctor came to me and said, "What is happening is really impossible, but it's happening. His blood tests are indicating that his cancer is going into remission."

I started to thank her, but she said, "Don't thank me — thank G-d. I have been a doctor here for thirty years, and I've never seen anything like this. I can only say that this is a miracle."

When Soly was discharged from the hospital, I was warned that his remission might not last. The best insurance would be a bone marrow transplant, and my son and my husband proved to be a match. But the doctor was hesitant. The chemotherapy had damaged Soly's vital organs, and a bone marrow transplant would put undue stress on his weakened system.

So again I wrote to the Rebbe. He advised that we get two additional opinions, from the best doctors we can find, and then follow the majority view.

After considerable research, we found two doctors — one in Seattle, one in Boston, both Jewish. And both said that a bone marrow transplant was essential and should have been done long ago.

I returned to Memorial Hospital and I asked the doctor there, "If this was your son, what would you do?" She said that she wouldn't go forward with the transplant; it was just too dangerous.

Again, I wrote to the Rebbe, this time making sure to mention that the doctor who had been treating my son for nine months had serious reservations about a bone marrow transplant. But again, he advised to follow the majority opinion. And so, I insisted we go forward.

Despite the doctor's concerns, everything went smoothly. The operation was a success. Afterwards, Soly was playing happily and all was well.

But after he was released from the hospital, he developed a high fever. I immediately contacted the Rebbe, who gave me a blessing for, as he put it, "everything you are going through."

Fortunately, Soly recovered from the infection. And, after a year in New York, we finally were able to return to Sao Paulo.

When we did, I kept my promise — I began to study Torah seriously at the Chabad House here. My husband did as well. We put our children in Chabad schools and became Torah observant as a family. And then came the happy day when Soly — that is, Chaim Shlomo — celebrated his Bar Mitzvah.

Today, he and my daughter are both grown and married, and I am a grandmother to five grandchildren. Thank G-d, everyone is happy, healthy and leading a Torah observant life.

As for the Rebbe, at the earliest opportunity, I went to thank him. When I went to see him in the receiving line as he was distributing dollars for charity, I said, "I want to thank you for the beautiful blessing you gave my son, who had the miracle of a complete recovery."

He listened carefully and replied, "Thank you very much. May G-d Almighty bless your son to have no need for miracles; he should be healthy in a natural way."

For many years, we would make an annual trip as a family to see the Rebbe and thank him. We wanted him to know how well everything turned out and how happy we were. Even on the day when the Rebbe suffered a stroke, we were there. After that, it was not possible to see him, but we have remained grateful to him for his encouragement, advice and blessings to this day.

*Lisette (Leah) Sayeg is a community social worker and shadchan who lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where she was interviewed in her home in June of 2010.*

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין  
ע"י בניהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחיו

## This week in....

> **5714 - 1954**, in a letter, the Rebbe advised Rabbi Meir Blizinsky that the best method to bring a certain individual closer to Judaism, was to speak to him "without gloves" and explain to him that despite there being no use of crying about his past, from now on, every moment must be used to return to G-d. After introspective thinking, the Rebbe continued, he will realize that this way of life is what he always yearned for.<sup>1</sup> 8 Elul

1. Heichel Menachem, Vol. 1, Pg. 130

לז"נ ר' אליהו בן ירחמיאל חיים  
ומרת פייגא איידל ע"ה  
נפטר ו' מנחם אב תשע"ו  
זכה לגדל בנים ובני בנים מסורים  
לכ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו

You can help us record more testimonies  
by dedicating future editions of *Here's My Story*

A project of:



**JEWISH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA**

interviews@jemedia.org | myencounterblog.com | 718-774-6000  
784 Eastern Parkway | Suite 403 | Brooklyn, NY 11213

© Copyright, Jewish Educational Media, 2016