

HERE'S my STORY

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THE JOY OF CHILDREN

RABBI MESHULOM WEISS



I was not born into a Lubavitcher family. I was educated in the Torah Vodaas school system in Brooklyn. I did my advanced studies at the Mir Yeshiva from 1952 to 1957 receiving rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz.

However, I became a follower of the Lubavitcher Rebbe because of what happened to a schoolmate of mine. His name was Dovid Shlomyug, and he was a fluent Spanish-speaker from Uruguay. Dovid had a dream to go to Mexico City and open a *yeshivah* high school; something that did not exist in that city. He felt there was a tremendous need for it. He sought the advice of many rabbis and every one of them told him not to go. And then he went to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Next thing I see is Dovid packing his bags. When I asked him what happened, he explained: "The Rebbe advised me that not only should I go and open a *yeshivah*, but I should do so immediately. I should get going now and arrive in Mexico City before Shabbat."

He went and he succeeded; as far as I know that *yeshivah* is still in existence today. I was so impressed by what happened with him that I resolved to seek the advice of the Lubavitcher Rebbe if any life issues came up for me.

And of course they did.

One involved a job offer to be the head of the Talmud Torah at Beth Israel, an Orthodox synagogue in Miami Beach. When I told this to the Rebbe during an audience, he gave me the following advice:

"The main job of a Jewish educator is not to convey information, but to instill in his students a fear of Heaven. But to do this, the educator must fear Heaven himself."

Then he asked: "How can you make sure this is true of you?" In answering this question, the Rebbe used the following analogy. "There are two kinds of water wells," he said. "One kind is filled from an underground spring, and it never runs dry. Another kind is a cistern which is filled with rain water. This type will run dry if the water is not replenished. An educator is akin to the second type, and he must always be replenishing the water — that is, the fear of Heaven — within himself so he does not run dry. And I want to give you a blessing that you should succeed in constantly replenishing yourself and in conveying a fear of Heaven to your students."

The second issue involved my wife to be. When we went to see the Rebbe for a blessing a few days before our wedding, she started to cry and asked that I leave the room so she could speak to the Rebbe alone. Puzzled, I complied.

After twenty minutes, she came out no longer crying, and she said nothing to me about it until after we were married. Then she confessed, "I hope that you won't be upset about what I told the Rebbe. I had wanted to call the wedding off because I am very impatient and have

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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 1400 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

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a bad temper; I feared that my temperament made me unsuitable to be a wife and mother. I told the Rebbe that I would rather not get married than to get married only to get divorced. But the Rebbe just smiled at me and said, 'G-d will bless you with many children, and these children will teach you patience. Meanwhile, do volunteer work — preferably in a hospital with children — and you will find your patience growing. But don't call off the wedding.'

Having the Rebbe's promise of many children, we looked forward to starting our family, but months came and went, and my wife — who was eighteen at the time we got married — did not get pregnant. When we sought the advice of a gynecologist, she was informed that she had an undeveloped womb — what is called an "infantile uterus" — which meant she could not bear children. My wife was absolutely devastated to hear this, so we went to get a second opinion and a third opinion, both of which only confirmed the first.

Then we called New York and reported this news to the Rebbe. His response was to reiterate the promise of many children and to give us a blessing. A month later my wife became pregnant with our first child, a boy whom we named Mordechai. And as it turned out, he was the first of fifteen!

After our sixth or seventh child was born, the doctor called me in and said, "Listen, your wife is having a child every year. This is not good for her body. You must give her a rest." He scared the daylight out of me. I came home and reported this to my wife, who said, "Let's consult a rabbi. We need to know the opinion of Jewish law in a case such as ours."

The rabbi we consulted ruled that, if the doctor said my wife's life was in danger, we had to listen to him and take a break from having children. Maybe have no more kids at all.

We accepted that decision, but shortly thereafter we had an opportunity to be in New York, and my wife decided to pose this question to the Rebbe. She told him about the doctor's opinion and the rabbi's opinion. She also said, "Despite these opinions, I don't want to stop having children. But my husband has been scared by the

doctor and he fears something might happen to me."

Hearing that, the Rebbe called me in and said, "Meshulom, don't mix in to G-d's business. If your wife is not supposed to have any more children, she won't. And if she is, she will. It's not up to you."

Even though the Rebbe usually referred people to a rabbinic authority in such situations, he made an exception in our case. With that we continued and had a total of fifteen beautiful children, thank G-d, each of whom is a tremendous blessing.

But there is postscript to the story.

Years later, when my wife was older, she went to see a gynecologist again. He examined her and said, "You must be very disappointed — as a religious woman, you undoubtedly wanted many children, but with your infantile uterus you obviously never could have any."

My wife said nothing, but she went out the door laughing. When she came home and told me about it, we had a good laugh together. And I said to her, "All those doctors could not have been wrong. But something amazing happened. The Rebbe promised you that you would have many children and gave you a blessing. Without the Rebbe's blessing, without his advice and foresight, none of our children would be here!"

Rabbi Meshulom Weiss served as an educator and kosher supervisor in Los Angeles, California, where he was interviewed in September of 2011.

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

This week in...

> **5743 - 1983**, Rabbi Avraham Menachem Dancyger, the Aleksander Rebbe, visited the Rebbe. During the meeting, they discussed the connection between the Lubavitch and Aleksander Chasidic dynasties. The Aleksander Rebbe also introduced his son, Rabbi Schneur Zalman, saying that he was named after the founder of the Chabad Movement. 21 Iyar

Inspiration.

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Rabbi Motti and Rochel Flikshstein*

*by Jeremy, Shayna, Ethan, Hannah, Lisa and
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