

# HERE'S my STORY

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## THE NEWBORN WHO SAVED HER MOTHER

**MRS. CHANA LIPSKER**

**M**y story begins when my mother was pregnant with me. She was not far along when she began experiencing terrible pains in her side. This was not my mother's first pregnancy, and she was no stranger to pain, but this was beyond normal, so she knew that something was terribly wrong.

Of course, she went to the doctor who, after examining her, declared, "The pregnancy is not what is causing you this pain. You have a tumor growing inside of you, and we have to abort this baby and cut out the tumor." He went on to tell her that there was no other option as the growing baby would jeopardize her life and, even if she continued with the pregnancy, the baby would not be born normal. So total removal of both the baby and the tumor was absolutely necessary.

Imagine any woman hearing this!

But my mother was not any woman. She was very strong – as I always say, she was a verb, not a noun. After discussing the terrible news with my father, she called the Rebbe's office, where she spoke with Rabbi Hodakov, the Rebbe's secretary. He communicated with the Rebbe and reported back to her that, first of all, she should not have an abortion, and second of all, she needn't worry. In fact, the Rebbe said that she will give birth to this child, and that she will see her children married under the *chuppah*. This meant of course that the baby would live and she would live!

My mother was reassured, but it was not as if she could just put the tumor out of her mind. (When she related this story to my nephew a week before she had a stroke that caused her death, she said, "Even though the Rebbe said not to worry, it wasn't so simple. Of course, I listened to the Rebbe, but it was not easy." She choked up as she said "*Oif dem darf men hubben emunah in a Rebbin* — For this you have to have faith in the Rebbe.")

Meanwhile, she felt the pain getting stronger and stronger. The tumor was palpable as it continued to grow



and endanger her life and that of the baby. Meanwhile, the doctor kept telling her, "You crazy lady — what are you doing?! You want to make your husband a widower? You want to make your children orphans? What are you waiting for?!"

This happened a long time ago, when a doctor was like a god. In those days, a patient never questioned a doctor, who was saying, "This is serious! Your life is at stake. What does a Rebbe know about medicine?!"

She was greatly distressed by the doctor's relentless pressure, so she made an appointment to see the Rebbe. When she came in to the Rebbe's office she burst out crying in front of him. The Rebbe heard her out, but then he raised his hand as was his way, and he said, "I have nothing new to tell you other than what I already told you through Rabbi Hodakov." However, he did recommend a different doctor — a Dr. Halpern — who, after examining her, told her the same thing as the previous doctor. However, when my mother became distressed and cried out, "But Rabbi Schneerson said!" he reversed himself. "Rabbi Schneerson? Oh, that's different." And

*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 1,400 videotaped interviews conducted to date. While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. [mystory@jemedi.org](mailto:mystory@jemedi.org)

continued from reverse

he undertook to treat her.

My mother carried me to term, and while she gave birth to me, the tumor was pushed out of her body. She named me Chana after her mother because, just before she went into labor, her mother came to her in a dream and told her that she was going to give birth to a healthy baby girl, but that this baby would have a growth on her nose.

I was not born with a growth on my nose, but on my lip. I still have a scar from where it was removed. But I suffered no other consequences. I lived a normal life — I grew up I got married, and I had children.

This brings me to another story I want to share - how what the Rebbe said to me really changed the focus of my life.

In 1990, we had a fire in our house on Friday night, *Zot Chanukah*, the last night of Chanukah. I used to light Shabbat candles and then tell my children a story. My youngest son at that time, Yankel, fell asleep on the floor, and I remember thinking to myself, "I should pick him up and take him upstairs to his crib."

But I decided not to interrupt and continued the story. And then I heard a noise upstairs. And when I went up to check, I saw a raging fire. We all ran out of the house; we were safe, but the house was badly burned. The roof was missing and it was snowing right into the house.

That Sunday, we went as a family to receive the Rebbe's blessing, while he was handing out dollars to be given to charity. Standing in line, I kept wondering: Why did G-d send us a fire? What does it mean? What changes must I make in my life? Am I doing something wrong to deserve this?

My husband was first in line. The Rebbe gave him a blessing and said, "In *chasidic* teachings it is written that after a fire you become rich." Then the Rebbe added, "*Zolst dos mekayim zayn, un mit a hiddur* — You should fulfill this to the utmost."

Then it was my turn. To me, the Rebbe said, "I already told your husband that after a fire one becomes rich." I answered, "*Bgashmius ubiruchnius* — Materially and spiritually." But even though I said "materially," I was concentrating on the spiritual, and that's what I really wanted a blessing for.

In loving memory of my dear mother,  
Mrs. **Devorah Leah Medalie**, of blessed memory.

By her children,  
**Lazer & Chaya Medalie** & family

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I felt that the Rebbe must have read my mind because he said, "Beginning with the material." Then he lifted his hand and said "*Du gayst glaich un fun ruchnius un ich hoib un fun gashmius* — You focus on the spiritual, but I begin with the material."

Those words completely changed my life outlook. I realized that life is all about the material, which must be elevated and used to serve G-d. Nothing is to be considered bad or ugly, to be scorned or avoided. Everything should be used as a tool to come closer to G-d.

This I learned from the Rebbe. He was a force for the positive. And this simple sentence he addressed to me became very, very important to the way I view the world, the way I look at the stressors and challenges in life, the way I transcend things that are painful and the pressures of exile (*galus*). Because of what the Rebbe said, I always ask myself: How can everything I encounter be used for good, or as an opportunity to grow?

*Mrs. Chana Lipsker has been an educator and teacher in the Beth Rivkah girls' school of Brooklyn, New York, for over 40 years. She was interviewed in October of 2015.*

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

## This week in...

> **5744-1984**, during a children's assembly, the Rebbe delivered a talk in Russian, addressing the Jews living behind the Iron Curtain. He mentioned how difficult practicing Judaism is in the Soviet Union due to a concerted effort to erase religion from the region. He brought attention to the Soviet Union's constitution, which actually grants individual freedoms, and proclaimed that the counter religious activity is in fact illegal and should not be permitted. The Rebbe related how, in the face of government intimidation, his father fought for the local *matzah* production to be according to *halachic* specifications, and ultimately succeeded by standing up for his beliefs and demanding that his rights not be usurped. <sup>1</sup> 18 Nissan

1. *Torat Menachem* 5744 vol. 3 page 1492

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