

HERE'S my STORY

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AN EXPEDITED BLESSING

MR. HIRSCHEL PEKKAR



I was born in 1936 in Ukraine, in the city of Dnepropetrovsk (formerly known as Yekaterinoslav), where the rabbi was Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the Rebbe's father. Unfortunately, I never got to know him because, when I was only three years old, he was arrested for his activities on behalf of Judaism and was exiled by the Soviets to Kazakhstan, where he passed away five years later.

After World War Two — during which my father, a soldier in the Russian army, was killed — my mother and I escaped to Germany, where we stayed for a time at a displaced persons' camp near Bergen-Belsen. At age ten I was sent to live with a relative in England and attended the Gateshead and Manchester *yeshivas* there.

After I finished my schooling, I became a jeweler, eventually settling in London. Although I was leading the life of a religious Jew, I felt something was missing in my life. When I was 18 years old, I began to study Torah with a Chabad rabbi named Yankel Gurkov who introduced me to *chasidic* teachings and told me about the Rebbe.

I felt drawn to the Rebbe since his father was the rabbi of my hometown, so I wrote to him, asking for a blessing for three things: proper intelligence, a good livelihood, and the right woman to marry.

Very soon afterwards I got a reply, in which the Rebbe said he would mention me in his prayers and wished me to share good news soon. Sure enough, two weeks later I met my wife. Just two weeks later!

Not long afterwards, in 1962, I came to New York along with a group of Jews from England as part of a trip organized by Mr. Zalmon Jaffe. At that time, I had my first audience with the Rebbe and instantly I felt that this is the connection that I was looking for.

During that audience, I discussed the issue of my livelihood with him. I recall that he asked me "Are you doing piecework or timework?" He encouraged me to take time to improve my skills as a jeweler and pointed out that the only way that I could do that would be if I was doing piecework and was not pressured timewise. Because of his advice, I set up a little workshop in my home and have been working to improve ever since.

Another time that I had the privilege of having an audience with him, he said to me in Yiddish, "*Zolst nemen fun danet oif gashmiyus un oif ruchniyus mit zich* — You should take with you from here the physical and spiritual [sustenance]."

So I said to the Rebbe, "*Ich hub gevolt nemen der Rebbe mit zich* — I want to take the Rebbe with me."

And the Rebbe replied: "*Az du nemst fun de ruchniyus fun danet, nemst du mir mit zich un az du nemst mir mit zich zolst mir ois nutzen oif gute zachen* — If you are taking from the spiritual from here, you are taking me with you, and if you take me with you, you should use me for good things."

Sometime later, while on a visit to New York, I took a job in Manhattan, for a company that asked me to do jewelry designs. I worked hard on this, but after a while, I felt that I was beginning to work too hard for money. So, at my next meeting with the Rebbe, I decided to give it all to him. When I did, the Rebbe smiled, and then he peeled off a one-hundred-dollar bill from what I gave him and said, "Since this money is mine to do with it whatever I like, I want you to take it and spend it as follows ... It's customary for you to bring back a present for your wife, so buy it with this. And with the change, buy Jewish books for your children."

But the two most dramatic stories I have to tell about the Rebbe have to do with my wife.

There came a time in 1962, when she developed terrible pains in her abdomen. She went to the hospital and they told her that she has gallstones, which were quite apparent on the x-rays.

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MY ENCOUNTER
with the REBBE

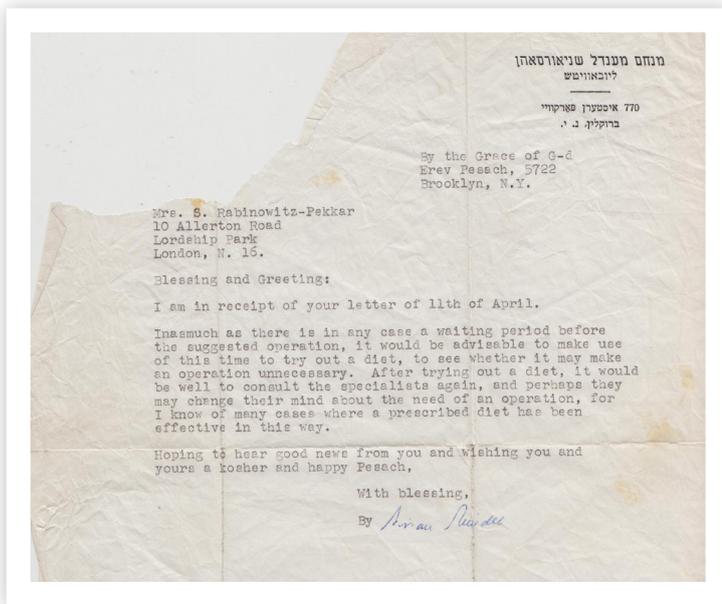
An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in over 1,400 videotaped interviews conducted to date. While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

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Her doctor advised surgery and even said, "If anybody tells you otherwise, he's a quack." So she believed him and the date for the operation was set.

Of course, she was very nervous about it, and she wrote to the Rebbe asking for a blessing, but no answer came.

As it happened, the kosher hospitality place — where our children were to stay while she was undergoing the surgery



and recovering from it — was full at that time, so she had to postpone the operation. And that is exactly when we received a letter from the Rebbe, which said:

"Inasmuch as there is in any case a waiting period before the suggested operation, it would be advisable to make use of this time to try out a diet to see if it may make an operation unnecessary. After trying out a diet, it would be well to consult the specialists again and perhaps they may change their mind about the need of an operation, for I know of many cases where a prescribed diet has been effective in this way."

Of course, my wife tried this diet which consisted of fruit and fruit juices, and her problem went away. So, she never re-scheduled the surgery.

Sometime later, she had a problem with her feet, and while she was being examined, she mentioned that she had had a previous issue with gallstones. So the doctor took an x-ray but found nothing there. "Who told you that you had gallstones?" he exclaimed. The simple advice from the Rebbe cured her completely.

But then, in 1965, my wife became sick again. A doctor

In honor of our dear friends
 Rabbi and Mrs. **Naftali and Sherry Weinstein**
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by **Jeremy, Shayna, Ethan, Hannah, Lisa**
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made a house call and immediately called for an ambulance to transport her to the hospital where she stayed through Shabbat, during which time she experienced improvement and was released immediately after.

I myself stayed with friends that Shabbat and, when I came home, I found a letter from the Rebbe waiting for me. I had not called the Rebbe to ask for a blessing for my wife's recovery, which is why this letter took me by surprise, especially since it said:

"By the time this letter reaches you, I hope that anyone in need of G-d's blessing for improved health will have enjoyed such improvement. In such a case, it is necessary to do all that is required in the natural order of things, under the guidance and care of a doctor, which provides the channel to receive G-d's blessing, as it is written, [in the Book of Deuteronomy 15:10], 'And G-d will bless you in all that you do.'"

And that same time I learned that my wife was better and coming home. But what I couldn't get over was that the Rebbe's letter was mailed out from New York even before she had become sick. In fact, it was dated twenty-five days earlier. How could the Rebbe have known?

Mr. Hirschel Pekkar works as a silversmith in Brooklyn, New York, where he was interviewed in 2012.

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

This week in...

- > **5716-1956**, the Rebbe sent a letter urging an educator to immediately stop resorting to physical means of disciplining his students and to treat them compassionately. ¹ 1 Iyar
- > **5746-1986**, during a public address, the Rebbe mentioned the importance of not obsessing over physical possessions. Alluding to an incident which occurred two weeks prior, when the Rebbe refused to accept a new car as a gift and continued to use his old car (which was about ten years old), he noted that this was not a display of virtue since he takes no pleasure in such things, and his old car was serving him well. ² 1 Iyar

1. Igrot Kodesh vol 13 page 4 2. Torat Menachem 5746 vol. 3 page 267

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JEWISH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

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