

HERE'S my STORY

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PREEMPTIVE CHILD PROTECTION

MRS. TZIREL WEINBAUM



In 1990, when I was passing through New York — on my way home from Toronto where I was invited to speak at a women's convention — I went to see the Rebbe as he was giving out dollars for charity. I stood in that very long line because there was someone who desperately needed the Rebbe's blessing, and I wanted to use this occasion to ask for it. I was very nervous that when I reached the head of the line I would be so in awe of the Rebbe that I'd be rendered speechless, and I kept reciting Psalms to give myself courage.

When I finally arrived in front of the Rebbe, I somehow managed to verbalize my request, giving the name of the person on whose behalf I was requesting the blessing.

However, the Rebbe dismissed my request with a wave of the hand, as if to indicate that a blessing for this person was not necessary. Instead, he handed me three dollars and said that these were for my children.

When I walked away, I burst into tears because what I had come for was a blessing for someone — and that blessing I didn't receive! What I received instead was three dollars for my children — of whom there were more than three — and they were all just fine, thank G-d; they didn't need intervention. Or so I thought.

But when I returned to England and greeted my children, a very strange thing happened. The kids collected the presents I had brought back for them and ran off to play. They were playing a tag game called Keystone which involved running outside around the house and up to the front door which was "Keystone" — whoever reached it first, slammed into the door, yelled "home" and was the winner.

Moishie, one of my sons, came running up to the front door and, while slamming "home," put his arm straight through the glass panel. And then, when he pulled his arm back, he caught it on a jagged piece of glass which ripped it wide open.

We rushed him to the hospital, where they had to operate on his arm. Afterwards, the doctor came out shaking his head. "Your son missed his artery by a fraction of a millimeter," he said. "All I can tell you is that you must have somebody up above pulling strings for you."

I understood that this was the result of the blessing that accompanied the first of the three dollars that the Rebbe gave me, and I got very nervous wondering what might happen next.

The arm injury happened on Tuesday. On Friday morning, my oldest son, Shimmy, was delivering bundles of the *L'Chaim* leaflet to the various synagogues in the area. He made the deliveries on his bike, and it usually took him until about a half hour before the onset of Shabbat to return home. But he didn't come home as usual. Instead, the doorbell rang, and I found a man standing on my doorstep holding a half a bike in his hand, with Shimmy next to him.

The man was clearly upset. "I am so sorry," he said, "I came around the corner and I didn't see him ... I knocked him off his bike."

My sole concern was for Shimmy, but he assured me

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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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that he was fine. So I told the man he could leave.

Unfortunately, by nightfall it was clear that Shimmy was not fine, and we asked a doctor friend who lived up the road to come in and see Shimmy.

He examined Shimmy and asked him to describe the accident in detail. After hearing his account, the doctor said, "You were lucky that the pedal was up during the collision, because otherwise your foot could have been smashed just like the bike was. As it is, your leg is not even broken. It'll be sore for a few days, but just keep putting ice packs on it and thanking G-d for this miracle."

Shortly thereafter there came a third incident involving another of my children which I don't recall exactly. It wasn't quite as dramatic as either of these two, but it taught me a lesson: When the Rebbe tells you that you don't need a blessing for something, rest assured you don't need a blessing. However, when you do need a blessing, the Rebbe will make sure that you get it.

The power of the Rebbe's blessings was driven home to me when my eleventh child, Levi, was born in 1988. During labor, I broke two vertebrae in my spine. At first, I had no idea what had happened, just that I had a lot of pain in my back — in fact, so much pain that I could hardly lift the baby or move about properly. The pain was relieved somewhat when I was lying down, but a mother can't function lying down!

I returned to the hospital, reporting just how crippled I felt and how difficult it was for me to care for my children. The doctors were not at all sympathetic — they said, "If you have so many children, this is what you must expect." They even predicted that I would probably end up with a prolapse of the spine and would have to spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair.

Needless to say, I was very upset, and so when I learned that somebody from our community in London was going to New York, I implored this person to ask the Rebbe for a blessing that I recover.

The Rebbe gave his blessing along with instructions that we check our *mezuzahs*.

My husband took down all the *mezuzahs*. He put each one separately in an envelope, writing down which room each one came from, and he took them to the scribe to be checked.

This was at least six months after Levi was born and, by this time, the pain was the worst when I was sitting down. So imagine my surprise that the scribe found one *mezuzah* scroll to be defective — the one from the kitchen where I spent much of my time — with the backs of the letters broken in the words *b'shivticha b'vaysecha*, which means "when you sit in your house."

Of course, we immediately replaced that scroll, and then my back slowly got better. Not only didn't I suffer from a prolapse of the spine as the doctors had predicted, but I went on to give birth to three more children: Mushky, Shmulie and Mendel.

I consider them to be the Rebbe's children, as they may never have been born were it not for the Rebbe's blessing.

Mrs. Tzirel Weinbaum is the director of the London Jewish Family Centre. She and her husband, Dr. Bunim Weinbaum, reside in Hampstead Garden, a suburb of London, where she was interviewed in August, 2007.

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**, the Rebbe emphasized that the twentieth of Av is forty days before Rosh Hashanah. Bringing examples from Torah, where a period of preparation is forty days, he concluded that it is time to begin preparing for Rosh Hashanah, when there will surely be a verdict for a good new year.¹ 20 Av
- > **5719-1959**, the Rebbe wrote to the composer and conductor Rabbi Yosef Yehuda Marton, supporting his plan to establish a *chasidic* choir, calling the idea "very, very appropriate." The Rebbe noted that in the times of Rabbi Sholom Dovber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, there was a choir at the central Chabad *yeshivah* in the town of Lubavitch.² 20 Av

1. *Torat Menachem* vol. 12 page 157 2. *Igrot Kodesh* vol 18 page 503

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