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*my*  
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RABBI YITZCHAK LEIB ROSENZWEIG



**M**y wife and I got married in 1966 in Jerusalem. However, several years passed and we had not been blessed with children. We visited medical experts and professors but, after their consultations and tests, they all threw up their hands and explained to us that there was no chance that we would have children.

Although I am not a Chabad *chasid*, I had for many years prayed in a Chabad synagogue and studied Chabad teachings. In 1973, I sent a letter to the Rebbe, in which I related what the doctors had told us, and asked that he bless us to have children. In the answer which I was privileged to receive, he said that he would pray for us at the resting place of his father-in-law, the Previous Rebbe, and recommended that I have my *tefillin* as well as the *mezuzot* in our home checked to ensure "that they are all kosher in accordance with the law."

Then, at the end of the letter, after his signature, he added: "P.S. Since at times G-d's blessings for healthy children are held back as a result of a lack of meticulousness and care in observing the laws of family purity, and since a lack of knowledge leads to a lack of observance, you ought to verify all the relevant details with a rabbi, with the intention of observing them to the fullest."

The years continued to pass and we still didn't have children, but we never gave up hope. We had heard many stories about the Rebbe's blessings, so my wife and I decided to make the trip to see him in person. We arrived in New York in the winter of 1981, fifteen years after our wedding. I immediately contacted the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner, who scheduled us for an audience with the Rebbe. At the appointed date, we waited until nearly 1:00 AM and then entered the Rebbe's study. I felt tremendous excitement at seeing the Rebbe for the very first time.

When he inquired as to whether we had any children, I replied that this was precisely the reason we had come. I showed him some letters and reports we had received from our doctors which the Rebbe studied for some time. I remember the way he leaned forward and read them intently by the dim light of the lamp that stood on his desk. A few minutes after we had entered, a knock was heard and Rabbi Groner appeared at the door: Our audience was taking too long. The Rebbe paid no attention. He continued to study the doctors' letters.

"The doctors do not run the world," the Rebbe finally said. "They are not G-d. And with G-d's help, everything

*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 1,700 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.



continued from reverse

will turn out well." He then blessed us with good tidings. After that, he asked how I occupied myself, I replied that I made *tefillin* for a living, and he wished me success.

After leaving the Rebbe's room, I met an acquaintance from Jerusalem. "Nu," he asked, "how was it?"

I had become so emotional that, at first, I couldn't even reply. We had been in there for all of ten minutes, but we came out feeling much stronger.

Three months later, we discovered that my wife had become pregnant. We had stayed in the United States until then, and we were reluctant to fly once she was pregnant, so we remained there. As the due date approached, some complications arose, threatening the health of the fetus. The doctors wanted to deliver the baby by cesarean immediately, but I asked them to wait so I could inform the Rebbe. Rabbi Groner called me back fairly quickly and said that the Rebbe was encouraging us to proceed with the surgery without delay.

Thank G-d, the procedure was successful, and I hurriedly called the Rebbe back to let him know that my wife had given birth to a baby girl. Rabbi Groner later told me how much the Rebbe had appreciated that I notified him of the good news. "I have two drawers," he had remarked. "The first is filled with troubles, and the second, the one for good news, is empty." Rabbi Groner also passed on the Rebbe's continued blessings.

We returned to Israel, and about a year later, in 1983, we had a second child — this time a son. When I would take him to our Chabad synagogue, they would call him "the Rebbe's boy" — everyone knew that he had been born after the Rebbe's blessing.

It was very important for me that he have the privilege of seeing the Rebbe, so in 1992, in the month of Adar I, I brought him to New York. Chaim Shalom was only eight at the time, but the trip is engraved in his mind.

By that time, the Rebbe had stopped having private audiences in his study, but instead would receive thousands of visitors every Sunday, and as they filed by, he would extend a brief blessing to each person and hand them a dollar bill to be given to charity.

We came on Sunday, the 26th of Adar, and I saw that the place was packed with thousands of people standing in

long lines waiting to pass by the Rebbe. Truth be told, as we waited, I was almost put off by the crowds and the commotion and had half a mind to give up and to try again the following week. But my son persuaded me that once we were already there, we shouldn't give up.

In the end, someone guided us through a doorway into a second line and half an hour later it was our turn. My son went first and received a dollar from the Rebbe's hand. When the Rebbe saw me, his face lit up in greeting and he gave me a blessing. First he gave me one dollar and then added another. "Give this to charity on behalf of the entire family," he said.

As it turned out, this was the last time the Rebbe gave out dollars: The next day, on the 27th of Adar I, 1992, the Rebbe suffered a stroke while praying at the resting place of the Previous Rebbe.

Thank G-d, the Rebbe's blessings have carried on; by now we already have been blessed with grandchildren, and I have no doubt that they are on his account.

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*For many years, Rabbi Yitzchak Leib Rosenzweig worked as a batim-macher, making the square leather boxes of tefillin. He and his son Chaim Shalom were interviewed in his home in November of 2014.*

## This week in...

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

> **5738-1978**, for the first time since his heart attack six months earlier, the Rebbe went home on Shabbat — both Friday night and Shabbat afternoon — rather than staying in 770. A crowd of *chasidim* gathered in front of 770 on Friday night, watching as the Rebbe walked home alongside his cardiologist, while the two of them engaged in conversation.  
*1 Nissan*

> **5745-1985**, shortly before the conclusion of the first annual cycle of studying Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, the Rebbe directed that in addition to studying three chapters every day, the participants should select one law from the daily segment to study in depth.<sup>1</sup>  
*1 Nissan*

1. *Torat Menachem* 5745 vol. 3, p. 1614

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**James Ward Sillen**

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