

*Story #1- By Mrs. Henya Laine*

*R' Chesed Halberstam, who served as helper to the **Rebbe** and Rebbetzin **Chaya Mushka**, ate at our home one Shabbos.*

*I told him he has to pay for the meal by telling me stories of the Rebbetzin that nobody heard.*

*Here is the story he told.*

One Friday, the Rebbetzin tripped on the stairs and bruised her foot badly. The Doctor said that the best thing would be for her to stay off her foot.

The Rebbetzin asked Chesed not to burden the Rebbe with the news.

As soon as the Rebbetzin was comfortably resting in bed, Chesed ran to 770, knocked on the door of the Rebbe's room (he had permission to go in anytime) and told the Rebbe all that transpired, including the request of the Rebbetzin.

The Rebbe smiled and thanked him.

When the Rebbe came home Friday night, the Rebbetzin was sitting at the dining room table and apologized for not getting up, saying that because she was hungry, she had asked Chesed to make Kiddush for her.

The Rebbe played along and made Kiddush without comment. Then the Rebbetzin told the Rebbe she already washed for Hamotzi and ate a piece of Challa.

Again the Rebbe said nothing.

When the Rebbe arrived, Chesed had already had the fish on the table, so they both ate together. But then came the test. It was time for the soup, and the Rebbetzin always served the Rebbe. Since she could not walk, due to the pain, how could she serve it?

Before anyone could say anything, the Rebbe started to sing "Azamer Bishvochim," which is customary to sing at the Shabbos meal, in the Yom Kippur niggun, and the Rebbe went into a devaikus.

While the Rebbe was singing, the Rebbetzin called to Chesed, who always sat in the kitchen while they were eating waiting for instructions, and told him to quickly bring the soup, chicken and dessert.

As soon as all the food was out on the table, the Rebbe finished the Niggun, and they both ate the Shabbos meal together.

*Story #2- After the Rebbetzin's passing, Mrs. **Edith Block** told the following story at her Friday night Oneg Shabbos.*

Mrs. Edith Block and her husband, obm were in Florida at a hotel on vacation. Friday night at the meal, a Chasidishe woman sitting at her table, said to her: "You look like a Lubavitcher, I am very sorry about the passing of Rebbetzin Schneerson. I have something to tell you about your Rebbetzin."

This is the story she told.

"We were Bobover Chasidim, and Holocaust survivors. We were all young and a group of us just couldn't have children. Since we were the only survivors of our large families, we went to the Bobover Rebbe for Brochos, but to no avail.

"One of the young women decided to go to the Lubaitcher Rebbe for a Brochah because she heard he was a 'Baal Mofais' - a holy individual who has brought about miracles from G-d. About 10 of us women decided to join her.

"We knew that the Rebbe lived on President Street, which at the time was right next door to the Bobover Rebbe.

"As we came to 1304 President Street, we got cold feet and couldn't decide who should be the one to knock on the Rebbe's door.

"We were standing on the sidewalk talking about it, when a car pulled out of the driveway. The woman driver walked out of the car and asked us what she could do for us. We stumbled over our words, but finally we told her about our predicament.

The woman took out a pad and pen from her purse and asked us for our names. She then proceeded to give us the name of a fertility doctor in Manhattan and told us to call him in a few days."

This Chasidishe woman continued and said, "I don't know what happened to all the other women. We all went our own ways. This is what happened to me.

"I called the doctor's office and the person at the other end told me that she could make me an appointment with this very busy doctor in a year. I started to cry and the person on the other end asked me to repeat my name. She then told me to wait. A few minutes later she came back to the phone, and told me that they actually have an appointment for me already reserved for the following week.

"Through that doctor," she continued, "G-d blessed me with a daughter. And that daughter has given me 10 grandchildren!"

"Later, I found out that the person who made the appointments for us was none other than the Rebbetzin herself."

Story #3- Years ago, an Orthodox Jewish man had arrived in Paris, and needed to buy Kosher food. He had no idea where to begin looking for a kosher restaurant or store.

He was sitting on the Metro bench in the Paris subway, looking at passersby, trying to see who looked Jewish enough to ask this question.

Suddenly, he saw a yid with a hat and a suit walk briskly out of the Metro door. This man ran after him calling, "Reb Yid, Reb Yid, where is there a Kosher place to eat? I am starving."

The Rebbe stopped abruptly and told this Yid, "Come I'll show you a place."

The Yid followed the Rebbe back into the subway. They traveled a few stops, got out and walked into a building.

The Rebbe opened the door and announced to his wife in Yiddish, "Mir hoben a gast - we have a guest."

The Rebbe and the man walked into the tiny, immaculate dining room and sat down.

There were three settings on the table: set in real cutlery, china, and glassware with cloth napkin.

The man said he was in awe of the cleanliness in the tiny Paris apartment, and the regal way the table was set.

The wife brought in fruit as an appetizer, then fish with some vegetables and fruit as a dessert. The Yid was a little surprised that there was no Hamotzi or Mezonos, but did not say anything.

After bentching the Rebbe apologized for not serving bread or cake. The Rebbe told him that he went to check out the bakeries and was not satisfied with the flour used in baking these foods. Therefore, his wife didn't buy flour at all, even to bake herself.

The Yid thanked them for literally saving his life, and left.

Many years later, this Yid was living in New York, and he chanced to see a photo of the Rebbe in the Jewish newspaper.

He was so upset realizing that the couple who served him was none other than the Lubavitcher Rebbe and Rebbetzin.

He was devastated, so he traveled to 770 to ask forgiveness from the Rebbe. When he saw the Rebbe, he burst out crying asking for Mechilla.

The Rebbe recognized him and said, "I have to thank you for giving me the opportunity to do the Mitzvah of Hachnosas Orchim."

#4- Piece from Rebbiten Chaya Mushka's diary:

I would like to record several of the episodes that I remember. There are many other and greater episodes, yet according to my understanding, it is the small incidents that reveal the greatness and the loftiness of his soul.

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I recall that when my son [the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson] was two years old,<sup>1</sup> he recited the Four Questions on Passover. He memorized them on the eve of the holiday, and understood them like an adult.

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In 1905,<sup>2</sup> when there were pogroms in Russia, my children and I, together with other mothers and children, hid in a pharmacy. As is normal during chaotic times, the children cried a lot. The pharmacist was fearful that the noise would expose him for sheltering Jews, placing his own life in danger.

My then three-year-old son would walk around the room and quiet all the children. This was a remarkable scene. We could not talk because voices could be heard outside, so he silently motioned to them and gestured with his hands to keep quiet, calming each child in a different manner.

The pharmacist kept returning to see how my son was performing, and how [my son] cleverly affected the small children.

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In 1911 my son accompanied me to a health clinic in Balaclava, [Crimea].<sup>3</sup> There was a cave that led to the sea. The narrow stream of water flowed between the two walls [of the cave] and rolled into the sea. The place where the stream and the sea met was very dangerous; even experienced swimmers were cautious.

One time I was at the shore, where we gathered to spend time. I heard that a boy was drowning, and went to see what was happening. I heard from others, and saw for myself, that a small child had rowed out in a single-person boat with one oar [a "kayak"<sup>4</sup>]. As I said before, [the place where the stream and the sea met] was a very dangerous place. The boat began to sink with the child inside.

When my son noticed this, he swam out to the boat, climbed inside, and took the oar from the exhausted, barely conscious boy. Taking control, he steered it out of the danger zone and brought it to the shore, saving the passenger.

But after this difficult—extraordinary, I would say—rescue, my son was physically and emotionally strained. With no warning or forethought, he had to create a strategy to determine in which direction he could safely steer to a less dangerous area. My son therefore became very weak, and he himself began to [struggle from] drown[ing] close to the bank. When I saw him, he was exhausted and pale, and his clothes were drenched.

Thank G-d, we had brought him [to the shore that day].

#5- In the autumn of 1915, during World War I, Chaya Mushka and her family fled Lubavitch and settled in Rostov. While in Rostov, Rabbi Shalom DovBer became ill, and nineteen-year-old Chaya Mushka affectionately cared for her grandfather, spending nights at his side. Before his passing in 1920, Rabbi Shalom DovBer blessed Chaya Mushka and left several Chasidic classics to her in his last will.

Her early twenties saw the intensification of the Communist war against the Jewish soul and the beginning of her father's heroic struggle. During those dark Soviet nights, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak had his daughter Chaya Mushka at his side.

Cognizant of her wisdom and strength, her father involved her in much of his work. Young Chaya Mushka was asked to secretly transport food and supplies to Rostov's underground Yeshiva, in the knowledge that she could be relied upon for her discerning judgment.

Life became increasingly dangerous for the Jews of Rostov, and in the spring of 1924 her family moved to Leningrad, where Chaya Mushka's involvement continued.

In a recently discovered document dated December 4, 1924, her father wrote:

I hereby empower citizen Chaya Moussia Yosepovna (daughter of Yosef) Schneerson, residing at Machovaya Street 12/22, apartment 10, to receive monies on my behalf or documents that are addressed to me, in all forms, from the government bank and all of its branches and offices, and from other banks, government or communal, or from other organizations or private persons or by telegraph.

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka was 23 years old at the time.

The persecution was relentless, and in 1927 the notorious communist police came to arrest her father in their Leningrad home. Maintaining her composure, she brilliantly managed to alert the Rebbe (her husband-to-be) who was in the street, calling out: "Schneerson, guests have come to visit us!" Understanding her message, the Rebbe was quickly able to notify others to take the necessary precaution and begin the international campaign for his release.

Following his arrest and imprisonment in Leningrad, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak was exiled to Kostroma. Upon his request, she was allowed to join him for the journey. On the 12th of Tammuz, she was the bearer of good news when she notified her family in Leningrad of her father's release.

In the autumn of 1927, on the day after Simchat Torah, the Schneerson family left the Soviet Union and moved to Riga, Latvia.

fleeing Russia in 1907, once found himself on a central street in Berlin, where Hitler, *y"sh*, was delivering a speech. The assembled all raised their hands in approval and shouted their support. When they noticed he did not join them, policemen brutally beat him all over his body with a heavy baton until he fainted. It was only by a miracle that he remained alive.

Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia was once walking down the street with the Rebbe when she noticed a group of uniformed Nazis coming towards them. She requested of the Rebbe that he go into a nearby store and hide there until they passed. Instead the Rebbe completely ignored their presence and continued walking as if they did not exist.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the situation in Germany, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin escaped to Paris, France, shortly before Pesach in the spring of 1933.



Chaya Moussia's beloved father was arrested, he just barely avoided the death penalty.<sup>20</sup>

She clearly remembered that 15th of Sivan, the gruesome day when the Yevsektzia came to take him. Like heroines possessed of enormous courage and not an ounce of fear, she and her younger sister Sheina responded proudly to the G.P.U. when asked what party they belonged to: "We are members of our father's party, Jewish girls who are not affiliated with any political party, and who love the traditional ways of Judaism ... and despise the new trends."<sup>21, 22</sup> One of the Yevsektzia raised his gun and ordered them to leave the room.

While in a room by herself with a window open to the courtyard, Chaya Moussia managed to give a message to her *chossan*: "Schneerson! Guests have come to visit us!" He understood and ran to notify others to take appropriate precautions.

Her father, the Previous Rebbe, was taken away to the dreaded Spalerke prison. While there, he was treated brutally and would suffer from those inflictions for the rest of his life. Days passed without anyone in the family knowing his predicament. Suffering, fear, and agony gripped them.

By G-d's grace, the Previous Rebbe was given

## #7- A Paradigm of Selflessness

For several decades the Rebbe would, in addition to all of his other exhausting duties, receive people for private audiences a few nights a week.

Sometimes he would come home at three in the morning, sometimes five, and on occasion he would return when it was already light outside.

**The Rebbetzin went to extraordinary measures to ensure that her husband would come home to a haven of peace**The Rebbetzin once told Mrs. Hadassah Carlebach, a relative of the Rebbetzin and somewhat of a confidante, that she always waited up for the Rebbe. That her husband should come home to a dark house and a cold supper to be eaten alone was simply not an option.

According to Louise Hager, who also shared a close relationship with the Rebbetzin, the Rebbetzin went to extraordinary measures to ensure that her husband would come home to a haven of peace, tranquility, and support.

This came at tremendous personal sacrifice.

Mrs. Hager observes that though the Rebbetzin was brought up in a home similar to the one she later had—one where the man of the house (her father) was totally devoted to the wellbeing of the Jewish nation—still, while growing up in Europe, she had been blessed with a large family network and support group. Not so in America, where she didn't have much family at all, nor any children to be occupied with. So it was at great personal cost that she "gave up" her husband so that the lives of others would be improved and so that an entire world could be bettered.<sup>3</sup>



## #8- Not Just “Self-Less”

**“It’s a matter of life and death,” the mother pleaded** It was a winter morning in 1966, at about 3:30 a.m. The Rebbe had already left his office for home—a somewhat early night; there had been no *yechidut* (private audiences) that night.

Just then a woman frantically phoned the Rebbe’s secretariat saying that her little baby had just fallen and was badly hurt and in critical condition. The doctors were arguing over which procedures to perform, and she desperately needed the Rebbe’s blessing and advice.

The Rebbe’s secretary apologetically explained that it would have to wait until the morning, and that he would consult with the Rebbe first thing after he arrived.

“It’s a matter of life and death,” the mother pleaded. “I need an answer now!”

The secretary decided to dial the Rebbe’s house. If someone would answer, he would apologize for calling so late. He dialed uneasily; the Rebbetzin answered.

“*Ver ret?*” (“Who is talking?”)

The secretary gave his name and immediately said, “I am sorry for calling so late,” and proceeded to apologize profusely. “It’s *chutzpah* to call at such a late hour, but there is a lady here in desperate need. She says it is a matter of life and death . . .”

“Why are you asking forgiveness?” the Rebbetzin exclaimed. “On the contrary, my husband and I were sent to this world to serve people in need twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. By your calling us, you are helping us fulfill our mission.”

As deeply moving as the Rebbetzin’s message of sacrifice was, what strikes me most is the unassuming delivery with which it was conveyed. For not only did she completely dedicate her life to others, she said “thank you” for the opportunity. In her mind and heart, it wasn’t she who was doing a favor; it was others who were helping her fulfill her mission!<sup>5</sup>

There are many people who sacrifice of themselves for others, but how many of them don’t feel righteous about it?

The Rebbetzin’s words weren’t just selfless—where “self” remains, just “less.” They reflected an utter abnegation of self.<sup>6</sup>

## #9-Leaving Space for Others

**When it came to herself, she took no credit for living an altruistic life** Mrs. Leah Kahan, a relative of the Rebbetzin, once visited her at home. On the dining room table lay an array of hand-crafted items one might find at a fundraising function. The Rebbetzin turned to Mrs. Kahan, and in a voice filled with pride said, "Look at what the *shluchim* and *shluchot* [the Rebbe's emissaries stationed around the world] sent me." She continued to go on about how busy and strenuous their lives are, "yet, their busy schedules notwithstanding, they have time to think about me!

"And why me? Who am I?"

At this point, Mrs. Kahan, no longer able to accept the Rebbetzin's self-effacement, interjected and said, "Rebbetzin, don't you know what you mean to the *shluchim*?"

The Rebbetzin, with a hint of a smile but slightly displeased, responded, "Leah, you're being a bit too harsh." As if to say, "You are not giving enough consideration to their hardships and sacrifice, and what it means for them to take time off to think about me."

Here we are presented with the other side of the picture.

When it came to herself, she took no credit for living an altruistic life; in fact, she thanked others for "helping" her live her life for them. But when it came to others and the sacrifices that they made, her voice would swell with pride as she pointed out their merits.

## #10- Last Will and Testament

Dr. Robert Feldman was one of the Rebbetzin's doctors.

One Friday afternoon, Dr. Feldman's daughter Sarah visited the Rebbetzin together with her younger sister. At the time, Sarah was about to begin dating, and she utilized her time with the Rebbetzin to discuss this new and exciting stage in her life. The Rebbetzin advised her like a mother, providing her with direction and focus.

Approximately one year later, Sarah was about to get engaged to her future husband, Levi Shemtov. Her father arranged for her to visit with the Rebbetzin in order to share the good news. The meeting passed very pleasantly, and the Rebbetzin was clearly delighted.

That meeting took place a mere ten days before the Rebbetzin would pass away; unbeknownst to Sarah, the Rebbetzin was in terrible pain.

On the occasion of Sarah's engagement, the Rebbetzin called to wish her well. Needless to say, the bride was elated.

The couple-to-be planned to visit the Rebbetzin together, but were told they'd have to wait until she felt better. Sadly, that meeting was not to be.

The night of the Rebbetzin's passing, the 22nd of Shevat, 1988, Dr. Feldman accompanied the Rebbetzin in the ambulance to the hospital.

What was on the Rebbetzin's mind was an hour or so before she passed away, you wonder?

The Rebbetzin, suffering terribly, did not ask Dr. Feldman, "How bad is it? Will there be a need for a procedure? What is my prognosis?"

**With thoughts about the wellbeing of others, she returned her holy soul to its Maker!** Instead, with her last strength and not much time to live, she collected herself and asked cheerfully, "So, Doctor, how is the new couple-to-be? Are they happy?" As sirens blared outside, she didn't stop to think about herself and her fate but continued to ask, "When is the wedding? Please tell me all about it . . ."

This is how she spent her last moments here on earth, fulfilling her mission "to serve people in need twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week."

With thoughts about the wellbeing of others, she returned her holy soul to its Maker.

But the story is not over.

Right after *shiva*, the seven-day mourning period for the Rebbetzin, the Rebbe sent for Dr. Feldman.

"Tell me, when is the engagement party?" he asked.

That wasn't a simple question to answer. According to the original plan, the party was soon scheduled to take place, still within the first thirty days of the Rebbetzin's passing, considered by Jewish law as a period of mourning, albeit to a lesser degree. However, to push off a happy occasion was no small matter either.

Before Dr. Feldman could answer, the Rebbe continued: “It should take place on the day it was originally scheduled for, and it should not be smaller than originally planned. In fact, it should be bigger!

“Furthermore,” the Rebbe continued—and here he departed from the guidelines he had set down regarding engagement parties, that they should take place at home and for small crowds, in order to keep expenses down—“it should not take place at home, but in a rented hall”—this was unheard of—“and there should be live music [!], and the main thing: much joy!”

The Rebbe’s tone then softened, and in a voice filled with emotion he said, “It should be done this way because this is how the Rebbetzin would have wanted it be . . . and this is what will make the Rebbetzin happy . . .”<sup>2</sup>

Apparently the Rebbetzin was keeping to her mission, fulfilled to perfection here on earth, even from her elevated place in heaven.

The Rebbe had ensured that her legacy would live on.