

HERE'S *my* STORY

"BE THERE AT 6 A.M."

RABBI ZALMAN LIPSKER

It happened in the summer of 1961, but I remember it like it was yesterday.

I was a young *yeshiva* student and had just returned to 770 Eastern Parkway, Chabad Headquarters, from my summer mission - the Jewish outreach program by rabbinical students. As it was about 2:00 a.m. and I didn't want to wake anyone up at that hour, I went into the study hall, found a table, and put my head down for a bit.

I had just fallen asleep when I felt somebody tapping me on the shoulder. Totally exhausted, I decided not to pay attention. Again I felt somebody tapping me. I still ignored him, thinking, "If this happens once more, I'm going to let him have it..." And, sure enough, it happened again.

I whipped around and was startled to see Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov, the Rebbe's chief secretary.

"Reb Zalman?" he asked - I was only a student, but he was very proper, *Reb Zalman*. "When did you come back?" "I came in tonight," I replied.

"Do you want to do something?" Even though I was half asleep, I knew that when Rabbi Hodakov asked if you wanted to do something, it was probably coming from the Rebbe. I quickly woke up. "Sure," I said, and followed him to his office where he began to explain to me what he wanted me to do:

"I will give you a pair of *tefillin* and you'll take them to Long Beach, New York. There's a man there by the name of Mr. Louis Shelder. You should bring him the *tefillin* and show him how to put them on. Make sure not to come before 6:00 a.m., because you might wake him up. But don't come after six, because you might miss him!" Now



fully awake, I responded, "Fine."

I washed up, and by then it was 3:30 in the morning. Wanting to follow the instructions to the letter, I departed for my destination with plenty of time to spare. By 5:30 a.m., I was waiting at Mr. Shelder's front door.

At exactly 6:00 a.m. I knocked, and sure enough, a man opened the door. I smiled and said, "My name is Zalman Lipsker. The Lubavitcher Rebbe sent me here to put on *tefillin* with you. Are you Mr. Shelder?" He replied, "Yes, come in."

We made some small talk and then I did exactly as Rabbi Hodakov requested. As I was showing Mr. Shelder how to put on the *tefillin* for the first time, I distinctly remember there was a little girl sitting quietly in the room.

Then he asked, "Where are you going?" "Back to Crown Heights," I replied.

continued on reverse

"And I'm going to Manhattan," he said. "Let's go together." I agreed.

On the way he said to me, "Your Rebbe is something." And then he told me what had transpired:

"Last night at around 11:00, I had an audience with the Rebbe. In the middle of the conversation, the Rebbe asked me whether I put on *tefillin* every day. I said I didn't, and we continued to talk about other matters. A bit later, the Rebbe asked me, 'If you had *tefillin*, would you put them on?' I replied, 'I don't know how,' and we continued to talk about something else. Then he again came back to the subject of *tefillin*: 'If you had *tefillin* and someone showed you how to put them on, would you?' I had no choice but to say yes.

During the conversation, the Rebbe made sure to find out exactly what my morning schedule was – when I get up in the morning, when I leave the house, everything. And here you are, only a few hours later! He sent you with the *tefillin*. This is simply amazing."

Upon my return to 770, I reported to Rabbi Hodakov. But that was not the end of the story.

Many, many years later, I got a call from a woman in Israel, asking about this story. Apparently, I had told it to someone and it had been published in a magazine. This woman read it and decided to find me. Why?

Emotionally, she told me that she was the little girl who was in the room that morning, as I lay *tefillin* on Mr. Louis Shelder – her father.

She told me that the family eventually became fully observant. She now lives in Israel with her husband, and her son is learning in *yeshiva*. After reading the story, she had to call and let me know the happy ending to this remarkable story.

Rabbi Zalman Lipsker has served as the Chabad emissary in Philadelphia for the past five decades. He was interviewed in New York in the summer of 2011.



This week in....

- > **5707—1947**, in Paris, France, the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, revealed the date of her son's birthday, suggesting that chasidim ask the Rebbe – at that time, called "Ramash" – to hold a *farbrengen* for the occasion. The *farbrengen* was held at the home of Rabbi Zalman Schneersohn.¹ *11 Nissan*
- > **5722—1962**, for the first time after taking leadership of Chabad-Lubavitch, the Rebbe held the first Yud Alef Nissan *farbrengen* in honor of his 60th birthday. *11 Nissan*
- > **5730—1970**, in honor of the Rebbe's 68th birthday, Rabbis Zalman Wilschansky and Zalman Chanin composed the first *nigun* from verses of the Rebbe's chapter in *Tehillim*. The tradition of composing a *nigun* from the chapter in *Tehillim* corresponding to the Rebbe's age continues to this day. *11 Nissan*
- > **5732—1972**, in honor of his 70th birthday, the Rebbe requested that 71 new institutions be built as a birthday gift. *11 Nissan*
- > **5738—1978**, President Jimmy Carter inaugurated April 18, 1978 as "Education Day, U.S.A." Subsequent U.S. presidents have since given this designation to the Rebbe's birthday every year since then. *11 Nissan*
- > **5742—1982**, at a *farbrengen* in honor of his 80th birthday, the Rebbe introduced a new campaign to unite all Jewish children through purchasing a letter in a common *Sefer Torah*. At the end of the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe distributed a special edition of *Tanya* to every participant, continuing until 7:30 a.m.! *11 Nissan*

¹ *Yimei Melech* Vol. III, p. 997.

In honor of
The Rebbe's 111th birthday
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By *Anonymous*

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