

HERE'S *my* STORY

"THIS IS HOW I FEEL YOUR PAIN"

RABBI SHMUEL KAPLAN

Three or four months after I started studying in *kollel*, the rabbinical seminary where young married men go to study for a year or two, I was asked to see Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov, who was the head of the *kollel* and the Rebbe's chief secretary. Rabbi Hodakov told me that he had a special mission for me that would take priority over everything else I was doing, even over my studies.

The mission involved helping a young, seventeen year-old girl who was experiencing great emotional difficulties with teenage issues - rebelliousness, religious confusion, her home situation - the typical things that trouble teenagers. In her case though, these problems were quite severe. The Rebbe had taken an extraordinary personal interest in helping this girl through this stage in her life, and I was recruited to do what needed to be done.

For three or four months, I spent fifty percent of my time working on this issue. I didn't do a single thing without consulting Rabbi Hodakov, who in turn would consult with the Rebbe and relay the Rebbe's instructions how to deal with each particular situation.

This young girl often wrote to the Rebbe directly, and when the Rebbe responded, I was instructed to discuss his response with her. What I want to describe is one particular exchange that was absolutely extraordinary.

She had written to the Rebbe, describing at length her anguish and inner turmoil. The Rebbe responded to her immediately as he did throughout this episode - typically



within a couple of hours or, at most, within a day. In his letter, the Rebbe wrote, among other things, that he empathizes with her... that he feels her pain.

So she wrote back: "I don't believe you. How can you feel my pain? You're not going through what I'm going through."

Within two hours, there was a response from the Rebbe, and this was the gist of it:

"When you will merit to grow up and marry, G-d willing you will have a child. The nature of things is that towards the end of the first year, the child will begin to teethe. Teething is painful and the child cries. And a mother feels that pain as if it was her own. This is how I feel your pain."

The last words of the letter read: *Kach ani margish tzaara*, "This is how I feel your pain."

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 the 800 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemediia.org

This had a very strong impact on her. We discussed it and she began to realize that the Rebbe was feeling what she was going through, and that the Rebbe was trying to help her. Slowly, she began to respond. She made progress, she matured and things turned out well for her. Eventually she got married, had children and many good things happened to her.



I feel privileged to have witnessed firsthand the Rebbe's involvement in this girl's life... how he put himself into it with such intensity. I mean, he was the Rebbe, and yet he spent so much time answering her letters back and forth, back and forth, over weeks and months. And through his caring, he succeeded in turning her life around.

Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan is the head Chabad emissary in Maryland.

New Interviews

> **Rabbi Binyomin Wulliger**, a Klausenberger chosid who came to America in 1938 and was at the pier when the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in the U.S. on 9 Adar, 1940. Five days later, he went to the Rebbe Rayatz's first farbrengen in the U.S., which was held at the Greystone Hotel in Manhattan. When describing the Rebbe Rayatz's countenance at that event, as he sang the Alter Rebbe's Niggun of Four Stanzas, Wulliger broke down in tears.

In honor of
our dear Rebbe

by

Rabbi Leib and
Esther Lerner

Rabbi Menachem
and Faige Rosenblum

You can help us record more testimonies by dedicating future editions of *Here's My Story*

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

This week in....

- > **5690—1930**, in a response to the Rebbe Rayatz's request, the Rebbe reported his impressions of Rabbi Yehuda Eber's knowledge in Torah learning to the Rebbe Rayatz. Rabbi Eber, who had recently arrived in Riga, Latvia from Russia, later became the Rosh Yeshiva of the flagship Lubavitcher Yeshivos in Warsaw and Otwock, Poland, a position he held from 1932 to 1940. *13 Iyar*
- > **5712—1952**, the Rebbe's brother, Reb Yisroel Arye Leib, suffered a heart attack and passed away at the age of 42. For the next 13 years, the Rebbe expended extraordinary efforts to ensure that his mother would not learn of his brother's passing including arranging letters, ostensibly from his brother, to be sent from England to his mother in New York. *13 Iyar*
- > **5721—1961**, in his office, early on the morning of his brother's *yahrzeit*, the Rebbe recited the chasidic discourse *Kedoshim Tihyu*.¹ *13 Iyar*
- > **5740—1980**, in a talk several days before Lag B'omer, the Rebbe encouraged Jewish communities across the world to hold Lag B'omer parades in their respective communities.² *14 Iyar*

¹ *Sefer Maamorim, Volume V, p. 257.* ² *Sichos Kodosh 5740, Volume II, p. 867-872.*



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