

HERE'S my STORY

Generously
sponsored
by the  Crain-Maling
Foundation

SPECIAL "GUESTS" OF HONOR

RABBI ASHER ZEILINGOLD

In 1966, my wife and I went to Minnesota, following the Rebbe's advice that we become Rabbi and Rebbetzin of Aduth Israel Congregation in St. Paul. From the very start of our mission, we felt so tremendously supported by the Rebbe, and the stories I would like to share demonstrate how he paid attention to the smallest detail, how he never missed the tiniest thing, and how he looked after us in every way.

After we established ourselves in St. Paul, I made it a habit to send everything that we published to the Rebbe. I'm talking about synagogue bulletins, newsletters and announcements that were sent out to the entire community, as well as matters of Jewish interest that appeared in the local newspapers.

That first year, my wife and I wanted to organize an event that would attract everybody. We settled on a Purim dinner and sent out an announcement about it, including two tickets for which we charged \$5 apiece. This went to every family belonging to the synagogue, and it also went to the Rebbe.

A short while later, I received an envelope from the Rebbe containing two five dollar bills. Inside the envelope was also a typed note stating that this was to cover the cost of two tickets to the Purim dinner.

I still have those two five dollar bills. It was extremely meaningful to me and my wife that the Rebbe had wanted to make us feel like he was participating from afar. We were young and inexperienced but we were trying our best, and it meant so much to us to be supported in this way. Often in our work, we'd hope people would respond but we'd hear nothing, so to get this response from the Rebbe meant the world to us.

About a year later, I undertook a campaign to strengthen the membership of the synagogue. I wanted to get more people involved, to join up. As part of this campaign, I decided to send out a little brochure, inviting unaffiliated people for our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services.



I had the brochure designed along a model used by another synagogue, and I had it printed up.

But before I sent out this brochure, I wanted the Rebbe to see it. Around that time — about 40 days before Rosh Hashanah — I came to the Chabad Headquarters in New York, and I added the brochure to the pile of mail that the Rebbe's secretary was taking in to him.

Shortly thereafter, I received a message that the Rebbe wanted to see me. To be summoned like this was a most unusual occurrence, and I became very nervous — I had no idea what the Rebbe wanted from me. Had I, perhaps, done something wrong?

When I walked into his office, the Rebbe was sitting at his desk with my brochure opened before him. He looked at me and said, "I want to tell you something. Since you moved to Minnesota, I have received and read every piece of printed material that you have sent out. Now, this is the first thing that you've printed which does not have *Boruch Hashem* on it."

He was right. One is supposed to place the Hebrew continued on reverse

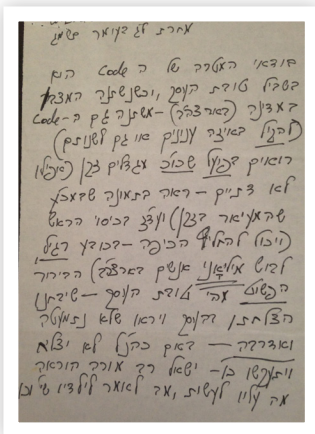
MY ENCOUNTER
with the REBBE

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 1200 videotaped interviews conducted to date. These stories are based on the recollection of the individuals recounting them. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

continued from reverse

letters *Beis Hey* – standing for *Boruch Hashem*, meaning, “With the Grace of G-d” — on the top of written or printed materials. But I had forgotten to put those letters on this brochure.

He continued, “I want you to know that it’s very important to start everything you write with *Boruch Hashem*. You have to understand that acknowledging G-d gives a special dimension of blessing and success to whatever you do. Now, I know this omission was not deliberate, but we have to fix it.”



Handwritten copy of the Rebbe's answer

In response, I offered to destroy all the printed brochures and start all over, but the Rebbe said, “No, that would be a waste, and there is an easier way. I think what you can do is add a little card to this mailing from the president of the synagogue, wishing the recipient a *Shana Tovah*, a Good New Year. And on that little card you can include a *Boruch Hashem*.”

Of course, this is what I did, and I never made that mistake again!

Two years passed. After a while, I decided not to send every individual item to the Rebbe separately, so I would wait until I had a stack of material before I shipped it off. In 1983 I visited the Chabad Headquarters for Lag B’omer. And I took with me a pile of articles which I hoped the Rebbe would read whenever he would find the time, if he would ever find the time.

Before I went, I was studying Torah with a particular individual who did not consider himself a Lubavitch *chossid*, but who followed many customs of Lubavitch. He was the regional manager for a department store chain, a very prestigious position. Recently, he had let his beard grow, in accordance with Jewish law and Chabad custom, but his employer told him that he had to cut it off. He was obviously very disturbed by that directive, and he asked my advice as what to do. I said to him, “In a few days I will be going to New York, where I am going to visit the Rebbe, and I will ask the Rebbe what

you should do. However, I must caution you that I doubt the Rebbe will tell you to cut off your beard. In fact, I believe that he will surely say that you must keep it.” He agreed to do whatever the Rebbe advised.

I explained his situation in a letter which I put together with the package of bulletins and newsletters that I submitted to the Rebbe.

The answer was surprisingly quick. The Rebbe said that this man should tell his employer that the Mayor of St. Paul has a beard. The mayor, George Latimer, was not Jewish; indeed, he was a Catholic of Lebanese extraction.

Now, how did the Rebbe know this? A few months earlier, we’d had a celebration in our synagogue, and the Mayor of St. Paul was invited to participate. He came, and we took several group pictures which were published in the *American Jewish World*, a local Jewish newspaper, and of course, the Mayor was identified (among many others) in the caption.

That’s how the Rebbe knew about the Mayor’s beard. He had carefully reviewed the newsletters, bulletins and newspapers clippings — even the photo captions! — that I had sent him.

The manager brought this point up to his employer, and he got to keep his beard!

Rabbi Asher Zeilingold has served the Adath Israel Congregation of St. Paul, Minnesota since 1966. He was interviewed in Brooklyn in February of 2011.

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

This week in....

> **5738-1977**, for the first time since suffering a severe heart attack one month prior, the Rebbe left 770 to visit the central Chabad library next door. He examined the newly-arrived historic Chabad manuscripts, which had finally been released by the Polish government after years of intense efforts.¹ 28 *Cheshvan*

1. *Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 1, p. 596*

לע"נ

ברוך בן משה

נפ' ר"ח א' כסלו ה'תשס"ז

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

A project of:



JEWISH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

mystory@jemedia.org | myencounterblog.com | 718-774-6000
784 Eastern Parkway | Suite 403 | Brooklyn, NY 11213

© Copyright, Jewish Educational Media, 2015