

HERE'S my STORY

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FORGET THIS EVER HAPPENED

RABBI YANKEL ABRAMCZYK



Although I come from a family of Radomsker *Chasidim*, I was educated in non-Chasidic schools — I attended Torah Vodaas in New York through high school and then the Telz *yeshivah* in Cleveland, and I received my rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the legendary adjudicator of Jewish law in America.

Still, I gravitated to Chasidic courts, and when trouble hit, this is where I went for help.

On Shabbat, in the winter of 1968, while we were living in Montreal, my wife, Frieda, gave birth to our second child, Yossi. She had gone into labor on Friday morning and we arrived at the hospital early to avoid any unnecessary violations of the holy day. The baby was delivered that night without complications and we were very happy.

I went home to sleep and returned after morning prayers, as the hospital — Jewish General — was within walking distance. But when I arrived, I immediately saw

that there were problems. The baby had been placed in an incubator and he was wired up to all kinds of instruments. He seemed to be having trouble breathing, and the doctors and nurses were running back and forth, looking very concerned.

The baby's condition did not improve during the day, and so our pediatrician informed me that Yossi would have to be transferred to Children's Hospital that evening, because here they couldn't figure out what the problem was.

While my wife stayed behind at Jewish General, I followed the ambulance that transferred the baby to the other hospital where he was taken into the emergency room. After a long time passed, when I assume they were checking him over, a doctor came out to speak to me. "Mr. Abramczyk, we have to be realistic," he said. "This child might not survive the night." Those were his exact words, and they sent me into shock.

"What should I do?" I asked, trembling.

"Go home," he replied. "There is nothing you can do here, and we'll keep in touch by phone. If there's any change, we'll let you know."

So I went home. By that time, it was midnight and I prayed in tears. Then I started thinking whom I could call for help — who among the *tzaddikim* would be awake at that hour and be able to give my baby a blessing for recovery.

I called Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, of course. And I called every Rebbe I could think of. I called the Bobover Rebbe in Brooklyn. I called the Skverer Rebbe in New Square. I even called the Gerrer Rebbe in Israel. Everybody was very kind. Each Rebbe gave me a blessing that G-d

continued on reverse



**EVENTS. IDEAS.
PERSONALITIES.**

Marking 70 years from the anniversary of the Rebbe's leadership, each week, JEM will be focusing on one event, idea or personality in the Rebbe's life.



continued from reverse

should help my baby. Each Rebbe urged me not to give up and trust in G-d.

And then I called the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I knew that the customary *farbrengen* commemorating the passing of the Previous Rebbe on *Yud Shvat* was scheduled for that night, and it was likely in progress. I called anyway, and I heard the phone ringing and ringing and ringing. I was ready to give up, when suddenly the Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Leibel Groner, answered.

"You are very lucky," he told me. "I only heard the phone ringing since the Rebbe sent me away from the *farbrengen* to get a book for him from the office." The Rebbe would not usually request books during a *farbrengen*, but at that very moment he did.

I begged him, "Please don't hang up ... Please go back to the *farbrengen* and put my request before the Rebbe."

I stayed on the phone, holding the line, crying and reciting psalms. After about ten minutes, Rabbi Groner came back and told me the Rebbe had given me a blessing: "G-d will help you. Be strong and don't give up. G-d will most certainly help you."

But the Rebbe didn't leave it at that. A few days later he sent me a very warm letter, advising me to check my *tefillin* and my *mezuzot*. Of course, I did that but nothing wrong was found.

Meanwhile, the baby started to improve. Although he had not been expected to survive the Saturday night, he was still alive by Sunday.

On Wednesday, he was doing much better, and my wife and I went together to the Children's Hospital for a conference with the doctor who was in charge of Yossi's treatment. In front of him sat a big file, a few inches thick, and he opened it up and starting reading to us. He read one medical report after another, each from a different specialist offering a potential diagnosis. The first report said that it was possible the baby swallowed some of the amniotic fluid during birth, but upon examination, this proved not to be the case. The second report suggested that he might have a hole in one of his lungs, but that too proved not to be the case.

Page by page he went, reading the various theories and possibilities, all of which had been ruled out. And then he closed the file, looked at us and said, "Mr. and Mrs. Abramczyk, do yourself a favor and do this baby a favor.

Take him home and forget this ever happened. Your baby is one hundred percent healthy." Those were his words.

"Doctor," I said. "I don't think that you'll understand this, but we know why this baby is healthy. It's by the grace of G-d."

Rabbi Yankel Abramczyk is a diamond dealer who resides in Outremont, Canada. He was interviewed in his home in January of 2011.

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לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין

> **5735 - 1975**, at the onset of the Nine Days, when we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple, the Rebbe held an unscheduled *farbrengen* which was focused on a number of practical directives. He chose not to give these directives in advance — because he had hoped that Mashiach would arrive before the Nine Days — and he requested that his message be transmitted to Israel immediately. He went on to explain that during this sad time, any expression of joy that is permitted by halacha should be maximized, and suggested a new practice: publicly completing a tractate of Talmud each of the Nine Days. He specified that this should be done at the Western Wall and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Chevron.¹
29 Tammuz

1. Sichot Kodesh 5735 vol. 2 page 341

MY ENCOUNTER
with the **REBBE**

While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the narrator's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words.

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a kind, giving soul who sought out people to help.

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