

HERE'S my STORY

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THE BLESSING OF A BROKEN WINDOW

RABBI YONAH FRADKIN

Back in the sixties, by Divine Providence, my family happened to move right next door to the dormitory of the Lubavitcher yeshivah in Montreal. One day my five-year-old younger brother Reuven, or "Ruby," happened to smash a baseball right through the dormitory window.

The students came out to this cute little boy, and you know how Lubavitchers are: They started to talk to him. Before you know it, they were coming to visit our family at home.

Zalman Deitsch was one of the students who would frequent my house, and he would learn with me as well. I was already attending a yeshivah in Montreal, but before my Bar Mitzvah that summer, he suggested I go to the Chabad yeshivah in New York to study.

"It's a fantastic yeshivah," he told me. "You'll love it there."

So in 1965 I came — a young and petrified boy — to the Lubavitch Yeshiva on the corner of Bedford and Dean streets in Brooklyn, New York. Everyone was very nice to me, but it was a tremendously new experience. During my first year, I had the merit of having an audience with the Rebbe.

My yechidus took place right after my Bar Mitzvah, which had been back in Montreal. The Rebbe was extremely warm, and when I came in he looked at



me and asked, "Have you been to my *farbrengens*?"

"Yes," I replied, "I have."

"And do you understand my *farbrengens*?" he inquired.

What's a thirteen-year-old supposed to answer? There were seventy-year-old *chasidim* that didn't understand all the Rebbe's talks. "Not everything," I admitted.

He then asked if I knew how to sing, and I told him I did.

"Well," he said, "this Shabbat there's going to be a *farbrengen* and I'm going to be watching you while you sing." The warmth with which he spoke to me, after I'd just come to New York on my own, was like that of a father caring for his child.

Back in those days, when the Rebbe was going to hold a *farbrengen* on Shabbat, no one knew about it in advance, unless it was on one of the specific dates when there was a *farbrengen* every year. Otherwise, everyone found out on the day itself. But once in a while, the Rebbe would let someone know beforehand, and they would spread the word. That time, I was the lucky boy to be able to come out of the Rebbe's office and tell everyone that there was going to be a *farbrengen* that Shabbat.

All of a sudden, I was the most popular guy around! So it was a wonderful beginning to my new life

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**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

in *yeshivah*; it was quite a change in lifestyle, but a positive one.

A couple of years later, my lovely sister Shoshana was living in Richmond, Virginia. She was married to Rabbi Shlomo Capland, who was working as a fifth grade Judaic teacher, and they were expecting a child. Actually, although they didn't know it at the time, she wasn't going to give birth to one child, but to two. They only discovered that she was having twins at the last minute, however, which led to some serious medical complications.

At about 1:00 AM, in my dormitory, I received a phone call from my brother-in-law, with an urgent request:

"Can you please contact the Rebbe? We need a blessing. The doctors say that if they don't perform an emergency surgery right away, then Shoshana and the babies are going to be in serious danger." Both he and my sister didn't want to do anything until they had the Rebbe's blessing.

I immediately called a few people, and got the home phone number of Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary. When I called him, Rabbi Groner actually gave me the Rebbe's home phone number, as he had been instructed to do in emergency circumstances. Of course, I didn't take down the number in order to keep it, and I threw it away immediately after I called.

By that time, it must have been nearly 2:00 in the morning. The Rebbe's wife, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, answered the phone, and I apologized.

"Please," she replied, "this is what we're here for. If your sister has an emergency, we want to help make sure that everything should be fine."

She didn't say, "Why are you calling at this time?" or anything like that; she was warm and loving, and she made me feel very comfortable.

After a few minutes, she got back on the phone. "Tell your sister and your brother-in-law that there's

Dedicated in honor of Rabbi **Yonah Fradkin**, שיח'י,
the Rebbe's *shliach* to S. Diego, California,
on his 70th birthday.

May your devotion to the Rebbe bring *brachos bli gvul*
to the region and everyone that you impact for many
more years to come.

With wishes for health, happiness, success,
and much *nachas*.

Love,
Your children and grandchildren

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nothing to worry about. And tell the doctors it's going to be a natural childbirth."

Later, I heard back from my brother-in-law that the doctors, who had predicted major complications, had wanted to shoot him for interfering. But, as soon as the Rebbe's blessing came through, the babies shifted in utero, and everything went smoothly and naturally. It was a miracle from Hashem!

Since 1976, Rabbi Yonah Fradkin has been serving as the regional director of Chabad in S. Diego county, California, which today has twenty-six centers. He was interviewed in the *My Encounter* studio in October of 2021.

This week in....

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

> **5715-1955**, After being informed of a violent incident, the Rebbe sent a letter describing how "distressing" and shameful this behavior was. "Even if your description of what happened is 100 percent accurate," the Rebbe wrote, "in no way whatsoever does it justify raising your hand. I suggest that in addition to asking for forgiveness, each of you should fast for two half-days, and donate the cost of those [missed] meals to charity." The Rebbe also suggested that they study Epistle 25 of Iggeret Hakodesh (where the Alter Rebbe describes how one who truly believes in G-d will never become angry) "until it is properly engraved in your minds."¹
24 Sivan

> **5722-1962**, the Rebbe advised an educator to arrange weekly get-togethers over the course of the summer vacation. "The goal should be to maintain the connection between the students and the teachers ... and to encourage the students to set times for Torah study, pray with a *minyan*, and to strengthen the feeling of responsibility that a *yeshivah* student must have as a role model for others."²
24 Sivan

1. Igrot Kodesh vol. 11 page 190 2. Igrot Kodesh vol. 22 page 247

MY ENCOUNTER
with the REBBE

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

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