



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות
הנערה חנה תחי'
לרגל הגיעה לגיל שתים עשרה
היא עונת בת מצוה
כ"ט שבט ה'תשפ"א

נדפס ע"י הוריה
הרה"ת ר' איסר וזוגתו מרת ח' מושקא
ומשפחתם שיחיו
ניו

I Needed A Hug

AS TOLD BY MR. GABY SILVER (MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA)

I am originally from Melbourne, Australia and despite the fact that I grew up going to a Jewish school with Jewish friends, the extent of my family's observance was making *kiddush* on Friday nights, attending Pesach *seders* and going to shul for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In 5763* I was married to a non-Jewish woman and living in Oceanside, California.

Around that time, Rabbi Boruch and Nechama Greenberg first moved on shlichus to Oceanside. They started a Chabad House and I was from their early *mekuravim*. They organized a Shabbos *minyan* once a month and after participating a number of times and learning more about Yiddishkeit, I would move into their home for those Shabbosim since I lived quite a distance away from them.

Among the several young men who participated in those *minyanim* was a young marine named Ben who was stationed at Camp Pendleton and over time we grew very close. On Shabbosim when there was no *minyan*, Ben would stay over at my home and we would host large fun Friday night dinners with many Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

The two of us were growing in our Yiddishkeit at the same pace and through our shared experiences we developed a very strong and deep friendship. Eventually Ben left the Marines, moved back to Philadelphia and the last I heard from him was that he was planning a trip to Israel with Birthright.

By this time I had grown in my Yiddishkeit to the point that my non-Jewish wife and I both realized that we were



headed in separate directions and we went through a very amicable divorce. I very much wanted to start a Jewish family but finding a *shidduch* proved to be very difficult. I knew that I wanted to live a *frum* lifestyle but I was not yet on that level in my personal observance.

I was at a crossroads in my life with one foot in Yiddishkeit and one foot still firmly set in my old lifestyle, far away from my family in Australia, and my best friend had just moved away. My family was not very happy with my sudden interest in religion and the rest of my friends in Oceanside, although they were supportive, really had no way of relating to my situation. I felt isolated, vulnerable, and emotionally distraught and I desperately needed some guidance, so I decided to go to the Rebbe.

I took the red-eye flight from John Wayne Airport in Long Beach, California to New York City, landed at JFK Airport very early in the morning and hailed a taxi straight to the Ohel.

After going to the *mikveh* and davening Shacharis, I sat down to write my letter to the Rebbe. I poured out my heart in my writing and after detailing my situation and asking for clarity and *brachos*, I expressed myself in these words “Rebbe, I need a hug.” I needed someone to support me and give me the feeling that they’ve “got my back.”

It was a cold, winter Teves morning. When I entered the Ohel so early in the morning, it was practically empty but as I stood there engrossed in saying Tehillim many more people started coming in and shuffling past me. At some point, someone stood right next to me but I paid no attention to him as I was very focused on my *tefillos*. All of a sudden I was startled to overhear the person next to me mentioning my Hebrew name “Gaby ben Leah.”

I looked up and was astonished to see that my good friend Ben was standing right next to me!

He had just returned from his Birthright trip, landing at JFK around 45 minutes after I had and he also came straight

to the Ohel. We were both unaware of each other’s plans and there we were standing side by side at the Ohel without realizing it. When Ben mentioned my Hebrew name he had no idea that he was standing right next to me!

“Ben!” I exclaimed.

“Gaby!” he said, equally astonished and we embraced each other with great excitement.

Aware that we were standing in the Ohel we quickly quieted down and continued with our respective *tefillos* but at that moment I felt that the Rebbe had sent me the hug I so desperately needed.

Ben and I spent the morning together in Crown Heights catching up on the past few months. I purchased a pair of *tzitzis* since that was the *hachlata* I had made at the Ohel that morning.

Needless to say, that morning I received the clarity and support I needed to make the proper decisions in the right direction and today I am, *baruch Hashem*, married and raising a *frum* Chassidische family, all thanks to the Rebbe’s *brachos*.

I was 19 years old on Gimmel Tammuz but despite the fact that I sporadically attended a Chabad shul in Melbourne, I never had the opportunity to see the Rebbe *bgashmiyus*. It is the greatest regret of my life but experiencing what felt to me as a clear response from the Rebbe in such a powerful and surreal way, allowed me to develop a deeply personal relationship with the Rebbe today. **T**

YOUR STORY

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