

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' ישראל פסח  
וזוגתו מרת שולמית ליבא  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
בעניש  
להצלחה מרובה  
במילוי שליחותם הק'  
בבעיון ניו ג'רסי



## The Miracle Was That They Listened

*Rabbi Hershel Chitrik, of blessed memory, was a shliach in Rio De Janeiro for many years.  
He was interviewed in 5769 as part of JEM's Here's My Story project.*

The president of the Agudah of Brazil was a very capable man; he was the president of the community, the president of the *Chevra Kadisha*, he was the president of all the institutions. He was an excellent speaker, intelligent and a *talmid chacham* — a pillar of the community.

His wife once traveled to Miami and she had a briefcase with her, and customs officials discovered millions of dollars of diamonds sewn into her suitcase. At that time, diamonds carried a high duty, and as far as the customs officials saw, she was smuggling them. She protested that she had been given the bag to give as a gift to a woman in Miami, but to no avail: she was arrested.

The scandal was tremendous — even the president of Brazil got involved — and it was the biggest *chilul Hashem* that Brazil had ever seen. The family hired

the best American lawyers they could get, but they couldn't do anything. They said, "At the minimum, she will get 10 years in prison."

Her brother-in-law came to America because he was ashamed to be seen in Brazil. I happened to be in America for Yom Tov, and I spoke to this brother-in-law, whose name was Dovid. I told him, "Dovid, you see that the lawyers are saying it's a lost case. Why not come with me to the Rebbe?" Now, he was a *litvak* who had studied in the Mir Yeshiva, and he initially refused to join me. But I was insistent: "What will it cost you? Come to the Rebbe!"

So he came to the Rebbe. It was a Thursday, and I arranged for him to go into *yechidus*. He tearfully told the Rebbe the story. The Rebbe told him, "Go to Miami." The Rebbe didn't say the name of a person to go to, or an address where he should go. When



CHITRIK FAMILY

RABBI HERSEL CHITRIK WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN BRAZIL.

Dovid came out of *yechidus*, he asked me, “Go to Miami? What will I do in Miami?” I said, “Don’t be a fool! The Rebbe told you to go to Miami. The lawyers said you’ve already lost. The government has an airtight case against her. You have nothing to lose.” So he went to Miami. He booked a kosher hotel on a Friday, he asked about a *minyan* and was directed to one not far away.

He was an emotional person and was crying throughout davening. After davening, a man walked over to him and asked, “Why are you crying?” “You can’t help me,” he responded. But the man insisted, so Dovid sat down and told him the whole story amid tears, of the suitcase she had been given, the inspection in the airport and the arrest, concluding with, “And the Rebbe sent me to Miami so here I am.”

After he finished the story, the man asked him, “When is the court case? Tuesday, right?” “Yes,” Dovid replied.

“I am the judge.”

“And you’ve convinced me that she’s telling the truth, and is the victim of a smuggling ring that used her to unwittingly bring the diamonds into the country.”

And she was set free.

A year later, the judge visited Brazil, and they made a *seudas hodaah*, at which the judge was present — and so was I.

When I came to the Rebbe the following Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe wanted to know what happened, so I told the Rebbe the whole story. I said, “The whole city of Rio De Janeiro is talking about the miracle of the Rebbe.”

The Rebbe laughed and said, “*Ay, Chitrik, di mofes is geven az zey hoben tzugehert*” — “The miracle was that they listened to me.” **T**