

לזכות החיילת בצבאות ה' חנה תחי'
לרגל הולדתה למז"ט ביום י"ט מר-חשוון ה'תשע"ה
שנזכה לגדלה לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים כרצו"ק ולנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר
נדפס ע"י הורי' הרה"ת מנחם מענדל וזוגתו חי' מושקא שיחיו גרינברג

THE REBBE'S CHILD

*A Chassidisher Derher recently interviewed **Reb Benny Vaksberger** and **Reb Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin**, who shared this heartwarming story.*

Special thanks to Reb Sholom Mordechai for his tremendous effort in bringing this story to print, despite his present situation.

*We dedicate this story l'zechus **Reb Sholom Mordechai HaLevi ben Rivka**.
May he merit a geulah shleima and revealed good, teikef umiyad.*

Special thanks to Yossi Rubashkin.

My name is Benny Vaksberger. My family are Seret-Vishnitzer chassidim, and most of us live in Eretz Yisrael, where we have a Judaica business. Our company is called Malchut Vaksberger. We produce all kinds of Judaica, such as *bentchers*, *birkas hashachar cards*, and other such products. Today I also live in Eretz Yisrael, where I work for the family business.

At the time this story took place, approximately eighteen years ago, I was working as a *shochet* in Postville, Iowa for Reb Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin. He had always wanted families to move to Postville, so that there will be children who need a *cheder*. That, in turn, would cause teachers to come with their families. In short, he wanted to build a full community.

Postville is a small isolated village, hours away from the closest Jewish community. To convince someone to move there with

his family is no simple task, and every new member in the community was a cause for celebration. Likewise, every baby born in Postville was a *simcha*; one more child for the *cheder*.

As I was one of the first to move there with my wife, the 'pioneers,' Reb Sholom Mordechai was always very grateful to us. Over the years we became good friends. We would spend many long hours in conversation, and I was a regular guest at his weekly *melava malka*.

I was living in Postville for a few years already, and after four years of marriage, my wife and I had not yet been blessed with children. My wife was getting lonely living in far-off Postville, and she was becoming a bit bitter about the whole situation.

We managed to get an appointment with a top fertility doctor in Eretz Yisrael, and my wife wanted to leave to Eretz Yisrael right away. My job included a little bit

of everything at the factory; I *shechted* chickens, turkeys, cows, sheep, and anything else they produced. As this was right before Tishrei, the busiest season at the meat plant, I didn't feel comfortable leaving Reb Sholom Mordechai short a *shochet*. I suggested to my wife that we stay until after Succos, and immediately after Simchas Torah we would go to Eretz Yisrael, and she agreed.

That Simchas Torah was very *freilach* in Postville. There were only about twenty five people there, with plenty of *lchaim* to go around, and the dancing went on all day.

The next segment of the story is related by Reb Sholom Mordechai himself:

I recall that Simchas Torah clearly; it was in true Postville style. The dancing, singing, and *farbrenging* were all *freilach*, and our entire small community was in a very uplifted mood.



PHOTO: JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE / 108714

During the dancing, I stepped out onto the front porch for a small break (something which I hardly ever do) and I bumped into Reb Benny. He looked a little too serious for Simchas Torah, as if something was bothering him. I approached him and invited him back inside to join the dancing. He refused, so instead we stood outside and chatted for a while.

He told me that he was leaving after yom tov back to Eretz Yisrael. I asked him why, and he told me he's going to look into medical help for having children. They had an appointment with a big specialist who they thought would be able to help. So I told him, "Why don't you go to the greatest specialist of them all? Go to the Rebbe!"

He said it's too hard for him and his wife to go to New York. Being that my

birthday is Chof-Ches Tishrei, and I was planning on going to the Ohel, I suggested that they come together with me, and they'll ask the Rebbe for a brocha to have children.

Reb Benny continues his story:

During the festivities, Reb Sholom Mordechai approached me, and we started talking. I told him I had an appointment with a doctor in Eretz Yisrael, and that I would be leaving shortly after yom tov.

He tried convincing me to stay and suggested that we consult with specialists here in America. I told him that we had already gone down that avenue and nothing had helped. Then he told me that he's taking me and my wife to New York with him. We'll go to the Ohel, and ask the Rebbe for a *brocha* which will

surely be fulfilled. I figured he was just in a *Simchas Torah'dikeh* mood, and I didn't take him too seriously.

A few days later, I was sitting at home after a regular day's work, when I heard a car horn frantically honking. I ran outside and found Reb Sholom Mordechai waiting in his car. As soon as he saw me he started screaming that we're late for our flight, the airport is an hour away, and that I have to get into the car right away. He wouldn't even let me pack; before we realized what was happening, my wife and I were sitting in the car on the way to the airport.

We flew on a tiny North West regional jet carrying us, the pilot, and a handful of other passengers. In New York, Reb Sholom Mordechai rented a car, and we drove to the Ohel. We got to the Ohel at around two o'clock in the morning, where he brought us into a house adjacent to the *beis hachayim*. There was a big screen playing a video of the Rebbe distributing dollars. There were tables and chairs, and a very welcoming atmosphere. This was our first time there, and it made a big impression on us.

Reb Sholom Mordechai offered us drinks, but we weren't interested. We told him all we wanted to do was daven for children and leave. He then informed us that the *minhag* is not to wear shoes when we go into the Ohel. There were some pairs of slippers laying there for visitors to use, and he told us that we can wear those. My wife started saying that she doesn't really want to put on slippers that so many people used, so he said, "No problem, go in barefoot."

We went into the Ohel. I must say that although living in Postville got me used to winter weather, the cold still shocked me. There is no roof on top of the Ohel, so we were standing there, barefoot, in the bitter cold, shivering from the freezing wind. My wife said enough is enough, she's going back inside.



I tried to reason with her and convince her to stay a little, but she refused to stand outside for even one more minute. Finally I told her, “Listen, we came here all the way from Postville. This kind man purchased plane tickets for us and went through so much trouble just to bring us here. Let’s at least write our names and ask for a *brocha*.”

She agreed, and we wrote our names. I also found a *maane lasnho* and started reading. We stood by the Ohel, alone, with no one else there, crying our hearts out. We ended up being there for a while, enough time for me to finish the whole *maane lashon*. We went back inside, where Reb Sholom Mordechai was waiting for us with some hot tea. Then he himself went into the Ohel and after he finished, we drove straight back to the airport.

We got back to Postville and as Reb Sholom Mordechai dropped us off at our house, in what seemed to be a final attempt to convince us out of leaving town, he turned to us and asked, “Nu; so are you still going to Eretz Yisrael?”

My wife told him that we already had scheduled an appointment, and to cancel after working so hard to get it didn’t seem right. Additionally, we already had plane tickets, which would cost a lot of money to cancel. In short, our minds were made up about leaving for Israel. He offered to arrange everything, to pay to have our tickets canceled, cancel our appointment, to give me a raise, anything, as long as we would stay in Postville. My wife thanked him warmly for everything he did for us, and told him how we felt standing at the Ohel. We believed that our *tefilos* would be answered, but there was no change of plans. We were determined to leave.

A week or two later we were in Israel for our appointment. The doctor performed all the tests, and we sat in the waiting room to hear the results. After about half an hour, the doctor came in and asked us

impatiently, “What are you doing here? Why did you come to me? Don’t you know that you’re pregnant?”

We both burst out crying, and told the doctor the whole story. We called Postville to inform Reb Sholom Mordechai that the Rebbe’s *brocha* was fulfilled and we were going to have a child!

Our son was born on Yud-Beis Tammuz (the *chag hageula* of the Friediker Rebbe). I remember calling Reb Sholom Mordechai excitedly and telling him that today is indeed a *chag hageula* for my family! He replied that he feels responsible for this child and he will take care of him. And he did exactly that. Once we were back in Postville, all expenses for our son came straight out of his pocket. For the *upshernish* he hosted a big party for the whole community, with a full catered meal. It was a really beautiful event.

My wife had a grandfather after whom she always wanted to give a name. In addition, throughout the first four years of our marriage, she had committed herself a number of times to give certain names, in the hope that this would grant us a child. When our first son was born we both knew that we now had to repay the Rebbe. My wife would always tell Reb Sholom Mordechai, “Don’t worry, as soon as

I finish with the names I’m obligated to give, the next name is for the Rebbe.”

Our sixth child was also born on a special day, Yud Shevat (the beginning of the Rebbe’s *nesius*). This turned out to be our last child, and he understands very well that he is here thanks to the Rebbe’s *brocha*. When asked what his name is, he proudly answers, “My name is Menachem Mendel, after the Lubavitcher Rebbe!”

I also have a big picture of the Rebbe hanging on the wall in my house. People ask me if I’m a Seret-Vizhnitz chossid or a Chabad chossid. I answer them that I am a Seret-Vihnitz chossid, but I am no less a chossid of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. **D**



LEFT: REB SHOLOM MORDECHAI RUBASHKIN JOINS REB BENNY VAKSBERGER AT THE UPSHERNISH CELEBRATION OF HIS FIRSTBORN SON, BORN AFTER A VISIT AT THE OHEL. BELOW: THE VAKSBERGER CHILDREN, INCLUDING THE YOUNGEST; MENACHEM MENDEL

