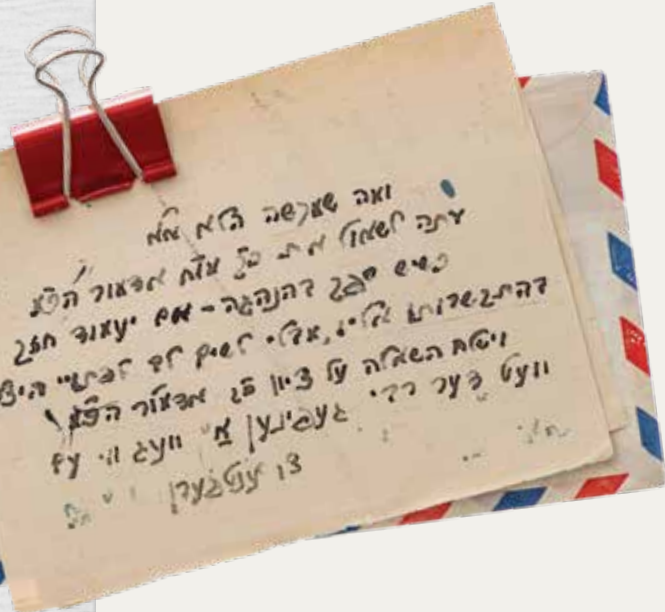




Story



מוקדש לחיזוק ההתקשרות
לכ"ק אדמו"ר
בקשר עם יום הבהיר י"א ניסן

ולזכות שיינא תחי' בת סימא חסיא
לרגל יום הולדתה י"ג ניסן,
לאורך ימים ושנים טובות והצלחה
רבה במילוי שליחותו של כ"ק
אדמו"ר בהוראה הדרכה והשפעה

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' דוד וזוגתו מרת פערל
גאלדא ומשפחתם שיחיו טייכטל
שמפיין, אילינוי

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

When the Story Happens to Me



AS TOLD BY
RABBI YOSEF DOVID SHTROKS
(Olympia, WA)

Shortly after our marriage, my wife and I moved to Olympia, WA, to take over a shlichus that had been established about nine years earlier. Dr. and Mrs. K. of Sacramento, CA, were among the founding supporters of Chabad of Olympia because their daughter lives here with her family, and they continued their support after we moved in.

In the winter of 5782, we had the opportunity to purchase a beautiful campus in a prime location to serve as the

Chabad House, and we launched a campaign to raise funds for a down payment. However, we had trouble securing a mortgage and needed a guarantor to sign on the loan.

As the closing deadline neared, I wrote a letter to the Rebbe and asked for a *bracha*. I then convened a Zoom meeting with key supporters and shared the details of our circumstances. We discussed ideas, but when the meeting concluded with no concrete plan on how to proceed, I glanced at my phone and saw a message from Dr. K,

who graciously committed to being the guarantor. It was another in a string of miracles that brought us to the finish line, and we closed on the property just in time.

The home we were renting at the time was a one-hour walk from the new space. We knew we would need to move to the new area, but we decided to take things one step at a time.

However, days later, we discovered that the house next door to our new Chabad House was available for purchase. Although we were overwhelmed by the task of moving into the new space and handling the extra mortgage expenses, we knew the Rebbe encouraged purchasing homes as a sign of permanence on shlichus, so we decided to make an effort to seize the opportunity.

We negotiated a price and raised more money for a down payment, but securing a mortgage was our main challenge. Once again, Dr. and Mrs. K offered to be the guarantors for the house mortgage, and we were able to purchase and move into the new home, next door to our new Chabad House.

Thus began a new era in our shlichus. Together with the tremendous opportunity for growth came the increased financial burden of two mortgages; it was very challenging. Things were so tough that, as we prepared for Shavuot 5784, I was significantly behind in the mortgage payments. Shortly before Yom Tov, I received a message from the K's that they were visiting their daughter and her family in Olympia and wanted to meet with us. Having known them all these years, this was highly uncharacteristic of them, and considering the difficult and sensitive financial circumstances, this request left me very nervous. I had avoided discussing our financial difficulties with them until then, and I was extremely concerned that this could impact them and their tremendous support to our shlichus.

Not knowing what to expect, I wrote a long and emotional letter to the Rebbe shortly before the meeting, asking for a *bracha* that there should be no fallout between us and these wonderful supporters and that everything

should work out in the best possible way.

After the pleasantries, Dr. K got straight to the point.

"You Chabad rabbis always share miracle stories about the Rebbe," he said. "Typically, it's not my style. But when such stories happen to me, it's very different. Now I have a story to share with you."

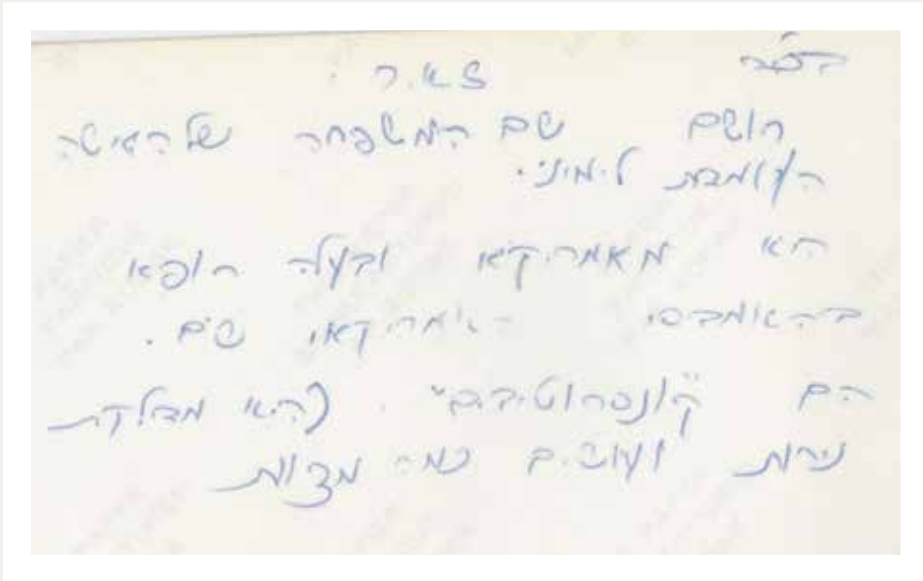
As far as I knew, he had never seen or met the Rebbe, and I was visibly astonished to hear this introduction from him.

"We married in the seventies and did not have children for many years. We tried every possible treatment available in the world, to no avail. Medicine could not even determine the reason my wife was not becoming pregnant. As a physician working for the State Department, I was dispatched to locations around the world to treat US embassy staff, and in the early 1980s, we were stationed in Zaire (a country in Central Africa currently called the Congo). After quite a few years of marriage, we gave up hope of having biological children and adopted two children whom we love very dearly."

"Although not Orthodox, we joined a Sefardic congregation, the only Jewish community in Kinshasa at the time. Then, mysteriously, my wife became pregnant and gave birth to our daughter, then we were blessed with the birth of our son. How it came to be that after so many years of waiting and trying every conceivable treatment, our children were born so unexpectedly has always remained a mystery to us."

"Eventually, I left the State Department and settled in Sacramento, California. When the Cohens moved there, we attended their first Shabbat service, and, until today, I have regular study sessions with Rabbi Cohen. Recently, when I arrived for our study session, Rabbi Cohen excitedly told me his friend Rabbi Shlomo Bentolila, the shliach in the Congo, found a photo of my wife from 1984."

For many decades Chassidim sent photos to the Rebbe, of their families, mitzvot, programs and the like, which were stored and archived in the Library of Agudas Chassidei Chabad. Several years ago, the library published a



website online, making this treasure of Lubavitch history available to the public. Rabbi Bentolila searched the archive for anything associated with Zaire and found a collection of photos from an event in Kinshasa in 5744. Rabbi Leibel Zajac from Brazil returned to Zaire for a follow-up event shortly after printing a Tanya there and reported it to the Rebbe with photos and captions. Rabbi Bentolila recognized Mrs. K in one of the photos and sent it to Rabbi Cohen.

On the back of the photo Rabbi Zajac wrote: *I am writing the name of the woman standing to my right. She is from America, and her husband is a doctor at the American embassy here. They are "conservative," she lights Shabbos candles and they observe some Mitzvos.*

"When I saw the photo and caught sight of the date on it (84 3 27), I exclaimed, 'Rabbi Cohen, I can't believe it! This photo was taken around one month before my wife became pregnant with our daughter! For years we were mystified as to how this miracle happened. But now I know the Rebbe saw the photo and blessed us to have biological children!'"

Dr. K then looked at me and said, "Who knows? Perhaps the Rebbe blessed us with a daughter so many years ago that she should one day live in Olympia, and we would have the opportunity to support the Chabad House here."

I was shaking from emotion. I had entered the meeting fearing the worst, and the Rebbe sent me a clear message that even before I was born, the Rebbe's *brachos* were already set in motion to ensure the success of our shlichus in Olympia today.

In the spirit of their gratitude for the Rebbe's *bracha*, the Ks reiterated their iron-clad support for Chabad of Olympia. Baruch Hashem we experienced a number of financial-related *brachos* shortly thereafter, providing us with greater peace of mind to dedicate ourselves to the Rebbe's shlichus with more vigor and inspiration. **T**

YOUR STORY
Share your story with A Chassidisher Derher by emailing stories@derher.org.

