

דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

לזכות
הרה"ת ר' נועם שמעון הכהן
וזוגתו מרת כוכבה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
כהן

You Won!

AS TOLD BY RABBI MICHOEL AND MRS. CHANA SORAH DANOW (LEEDS, ENGLAND)

Our son Yisroel Aryeh Leib (Leibel) has a global developmental delay and is behind in many areas of his development. For elementary school (five years) he attended the local Lubavitch school, but as he reached high school age we realized that it would be best for him to attend a special needs school that would best accommodate and enhance his development. The closest *frum* Jewish special needs school to our home is Temimei Lev, located 45 miles away in Manchester, England.

In England, the government provides all the funding for special needs education—tuition and transportation to the “closest appropriate school no matter the distance.” After explaining Leibel’s unique situation to the education authorities, we requested that he be transferred to the special needs school of our choice and that he should be able to travel each day in a taxi together with an assistant ensuring his safety. The costs were very high, but we hoped for the best.

Shortly before Pesach, the authorities approved our request and Leibel would be able to travel to Manchester each day to attend Temimei Lev without a problem. We were relieved and grateful for the smooth and quick resolution to this challenge.

However, during the summer we were notified that while the government would pay for Leibel’s tuition for a special needs school, they could not justify the expensive transportation to Manchester, since there was what they deemed an appropriate school only five miles from our home. Our protests that Leibel needed to be in a Jewish, *frum* school fell on deaf ears. Organizing the transportation on our own was impossible and we were at a complete loss.

I immediately flew from England on a special trip to New York to go to the Ohel, and I poured out my heart to the Rebbe. “This is your child. Please help us provide Leibel with the *chinuch* that you want him to have.” I returned home that very day.

If one is dissatisfied with the decision of the education authorities, they can present their case to a tribunal. We contacted a legal advisor and started working on preparing our case for the tribunal, which was set for 12 Cheshvan. We needed to prove that in a non-Jewish school, Leibel would not be in a mode to be educated and it would be detrimental to his development.

Shortly before Rosh Hashanah, our legal advisor suggested that we hire an educational psychologist to write up an assessment proving that Leibel was not fit to attend the nearby school. It was very difficult to find a psychologist willing to prepare such a report within the timeframe we needed and it would be very expensive as well. The situation seemed hopeless and we started feeling desperate.

On Simchas Torah, a *frum* couple from London needed to be in Leeds and we hosted them for the three-day Yom Tov. The woman is a speech therapist and over Yom Tov she learned of our upcoming tribunal. She offered to prepare an assessment, which she accomplished in just several hours!

On 12 Cheshvan, we arrived for the tribunal and I noticed that the seating was prearranged with name cards. My husband's placard was between two women. Inconspicuously, I tried to rearrange the placards in a way that my husband would not need to sit between them, but the judge noticed and said that the seating was meant to be in a specific order.

"I'm sorry, but my husband cannot sit between two women," I said.

"Because of your religion?" the judge asked. "No problem. Sit wherever works for you."

From that point onward, the entire tribunal felt like a *Baalshem'ske maaseh*. The judge shot down every argument presented by the education authorities. "If his father has complications sitting in this courtroom, you expect to accommodate this boy's religious needs on a daily basis?!"

The judge wanted the authorities to accept a compromise we had presented: the government should pay a third of the transportation costs to us and we would arrange Leibel's transportation on our own, but they refused.

At the end of the hearing, the judge announced that the verdict would be ready within two weeks. We realized that Chof Cheshvan would occur within this two-week timeframe and this filled us with a strong sense of hope and excitement. In our family, this Chassidisher Yom Tov has special meaning.

During Tishrei 5751, my sister Leah and her husband, Rabbi Alexander Namdar, merited to be present at the *yechidus* of the Machane Yisrael Development Fund. She told the Rebbe that, *bezras Hashem*, they were expecting *besuros tovos* (the birth of a child) at the end of Cheshvan ("sof Cheshvan"). The Rebbe responded, "Chof Cheshvan? Surely you know that Chof Cheshvan is a *chassidisher* day.¹ You

should utilize the time until then and on that day itself in a *chassidishe* way. Chassidus says one needs to be happy *bgashmiyus*. You will be happy and we will hear good tidings."


Their child was born on 26 Cheshvan and the Rebbe's message about Chof Cheshvan remained a mystery for them.

Shortly thereafter, they moved on shlichus to Sweden and we joined them several years later to open a Jewish school in Gothenburg. After some years, the government closed the school since it did not have the minimum amount of 20 students required by Swedish law. We argued that the school served the special needs of a specific group of children and that size should not be a factor.

After losing the initial court case, we appealed to the Supreme Court and the trial date was set for Chof Cheshvan. Now we understood the meaning of the Rebbe's message to the Namdars in Tishrei 5751, and we looked forward to the court case with much *simchah*. After a fascinating hearing, the judge ruled in favor of the school.

Several years later, in 5767, we moved to Leeds to accommodate Leibel's educational needs. We faced considerable challenges securing the necessary government funding to accommodate his education and development at the local Lubavitch school. To our amazement, the tribunal was set for Chof Cheshvan! On the eve of Chof Cheshvan, the education department offered to give us whatever we wanted as long as we dropped the case.

With all this in mind, the fact that Chof Cheshvan was within the two-week timeframe for a verdict regarding Leibel's high school education made us confident of a positive outcome.

Throughout the day of Chof Cheshvan, my phone was not receiving emails for technical reasons and I was very busy preparing an event for that evening. Later that evening, as I checked my emails on the computer, I finally saw the message that I had received 12 hours earlier containing these two words: You Won! 

1. The Rebbe Rashab was born on 20 Cheshvan, 5621.



YOUR STORY

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