

# HERE'S my STORY

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**RABBI PINCHUS FELDMAN**



I was born in 1944 in Brooklyn, where I grew up in a Chabad family. My father was a *chasid* of the Previous Rebbe, as well as his successor, the Rebbe; and he served as a Chabad emissary in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Jacksonville and Baltimore. As a child I had many encounters with the Previous Rebbe, and later, as a young man and adult, with the Rebbe. But here I would like to relate a couple amazing incidents, from among many, that happened involving the Rebbe after I was sent as the Chabad emissary to Sydney, Australia.

A few years into my assignment, I had the occasion to come back to the United States for a visit, and to have an audience with the Rebbe together with my whole family. I walked into his office with my wife and four children who were all under six and who had been cautioned to be on their best behavior. But, as soon as we came through the door, my daughter Fruma Ita, (today a Chabad emissary in Australia,) who was a small child at the time, ran over to the Rebbe and put out her hand saying, "*Sholom Aleichem*." The Rebbe answered with a

smile and gave her his hand.

Two years passed, and we again visited New York, and we again brought the children for an audience with the Rebbe. Now Fruma Ita was older and more aware. But just the same, the Rebbe greeted her with a big smile and "*Sholom Aleichem*." This is only a small illustration of the Rebbe's sensitivity to little children. It was an amazing trait of the Rebbe. On the one hand, there was his greatness as a Torah sage, on the other there was his humility and ability to relate to every little child — this was something special and unique to him as a Jewish leader.

Of course, the Rebbe was concerned about every Jew — whether a child or a senior citizen. I recall one occasion when he urged me to encourage my wife's grandfather, Rabbi Osher Abramson, not to retire from community work, including his position as the presiding Rabbi of the Australian Rabbinical Court, although he was elderly and not well. With that in mind, I mentioned, "But he is already over seventy years old!"

As soon as I said it, I realized who I was talking to — the Rebbe was also in his 70s. I was very embarrassed, but the Rebbe gave me a big smile and said, "I am also seventy but I have plans for ten years, and after that, another ten years."

While I served as the head of Sydney's Yeshiva Centre, many an interesting problem found its way to my door. For example, an Israeli tourist in Australia once got into trouble. He was a big guy, very proud of his Jewishness, which he advertised with an oversized Star of David on his chest. This drew the attention of some anti-Semites who just happened to be off-duty policemen. They provoked him with some unrepeatable slurs, and he responded in a way he shouldn't have. He was arrested and was facing jail time for an attack on police.

He contacted me, begging me to help him find a good lawyer to challenge the charges against him. In response, I turned to a member of my congregation, a

*continued on reverse*

MY ENCOUNTER  
with the **REBBE**

An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in over 1400 videotaped interviews conducted to date. These stories are based on the recollection of the individuals recounting them. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. [mystory@jemedia.org](mailto:mystory@jemedia.org)

gentleman named Robert Kremnizer, who was a highly successful lawyer and a pillar of supporter for the Chabad community.

Because Mr. Kremnizer was not experienced in criminal matters, he obtained the services of a Jewish barrister to handle the case. This barrister saw the case as impossible to win, but the accused didn't. He put his trust in the Rebbe, and he wrote to the Rebbe asking for a blessing for a favorable outcome. The Rebbe gave a blessing that everything will be okay, and now this Israeli man was sure that he would beat the charges, even though the barrister was telling him to get ready for prison time.

So what happened? The court hearing was set for 11 o'clock, but the prosecutor didn't show up, nor did any of the witnesses in the case. So the barrister asked the judge to dismiss the case. At first the judge refused, but after more time passed and the prosecutor still hadn't shown up, the judge said, "I'm afraid I have no choice. Since the other side is not here, I must dismiss the case."

As soon as the case was dismissed, the prosecutor came running along with all the witnesses. Why were they late? Well, one had a flat tire, the other was involved in a car accident, something else happened to the third one. But the Israeli fellow got off scot free.

We were all amazed, particularly Mr. Kremnizer, who realized more than anybody else the stakes involved, and the power of the Rebbe's blessing.

This incident led to his sharing stories about the Rebbe with one of the top barristers in Australia, a non-Jew. This barrister had inquired where Mr. Kremnizer spent his holiday, and Mr. Kremnizer had answered, "I didn't go on a holiday — I went to see my Rebbe." He then went on to explain about the power of the Rebbe's blessings.

"Does your Rebbe give blessings to people that are not of the Jewish faith also?" the barrister wanted to know, and he confided that his pregnant wife was experiencing complications and was very depressed as a result — she sure could use a blessing.

Mr. Kremnizer came to me to ask if he should encourage him to write to the Rebbe. I answered, "Of course. Who are we to censor the Rebbe's mail?"

So this barrister wrote to the Rebbe and got an immediate response. About ten days later he shared

the good news with Mr. Kremnizer; he said that the Rebbe gave a blessing and also instructed him to put up a charity box in his home.

"Well, this is because when the Rebbe recommends doing a *mitzvah*, that *mitzvah* becomes a vessel for the blessing," Mr. Kremnizer explained. "It is important to do this."

"I realized that immediately," the man said. "As soon as I got the letter, I took the biggest charity box that I could find and I nailed it next to my doorway. And the next day, my wife took a turn for the better."

The end of this story is that the pregnancy went completely well and there was a happy ending with a newborn baby.

There is a postscript. A year or so after she gave birth, the barrister's wife happened to be in the hospital for an unrelated matter, and her roommate was a Jewish woman from my community. The Jewish woman was complaining about her health issues, but the barrister's wife was not sympathetic. She said to her, "You're Jewish, right? So I don't understand what your problem is. Just write to the Rebbe — he will give you a blessing and everything will be well."

*Rabbi Pinchus Feldman has served as the Chabad emissary of New South Wales, Australia since 1968. In 2002, he received the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the Jewish community. He was interviewed in March of 2015.*

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## This week in....

> **57511- 1950**, at a *farbrengen*, the Rebbe stated the importance of influencing fellow Jews, even when the results are not seen right away. This can be comparable to drilling for oil, which at times needs much effort and determination. But once the well is reached, there is very little to stop it from bursting forth.<sup>1</sup> 17 Tishrei

1. Yimei Breishis pg. 266

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