

# HERE'S *my* STORY

## PERSONAL ATTENTION

**RABBI DOVID WEITMAN**

When my friend Rabbi Daniel Moskowitz, now the Chabad emissary in Illinois, and I were young students in *yeshiva*, we volunteered for *Merkos Shlichus* - the Chabad Jewish outreach program by rabbinical students. In the summer of 1976, we were presented with an opportunity to go on a short trip to Sweden. We prepared everything that was needed, and we went to Sweden for about ten days or two weeks. We visited a few small towns, but mainly we stayed in the capital, Stockholm. We gave classes in the local synagogues and we distributed *mezuzahs* and *tefillin*.

While there, we were told that about two hours from Stockholm was a very small town by the name of Vasteras, where a few Jewish families were living. So we decided to visit them.

The Jews in this town were not religious, except for one man. I remember his name was Gilinderman. He told us that his family had made *aliyah* to Israel in 1948, and for a time he had even learned in the Lubavitcher *yeshiva* in Kfar Chabad, Israel. Then his family went back home to Europe, and he ended up marrying a Jewish woman from this small Swedish town and settled there.

We were astonished by his story, and we spent some time with him. He told us about his life in this town. He said he was alone there in trying to keep Torah and *mitzvos*. He put on *tefillin*, and he would not eat unkosher meat. He slaughtered his own chickens in order to keep kosher as best as he could.

He also told us that all the Jews of the region get together



for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in a place two hour's drive from there. They hold services and, since he's the only one who knows how to read Hebrew, he is the cantor - the *chazzan* and the *baal koreh* - the one who reads the Torah. He said that, unfortunately, he goes by car but, as he put it, "I am the only one... I have to save all these Jews. So on the High Holidays, I go there."

That was the extent of our visit, and when we returned home, we wrote a report to the Rebbe. The Rebbe must have been happy by what he read, because a few weeks later, Rabbi Binyomin Gorodetzky, the Rebbe's representative in Europe, told us that the Rebbe mentioned our report to him and said: "I got a report from Sweden that the *yeshiva* students were very successful." We were, obviously, thrilled to hear that.

But here is the part that I want to tell you about: A year

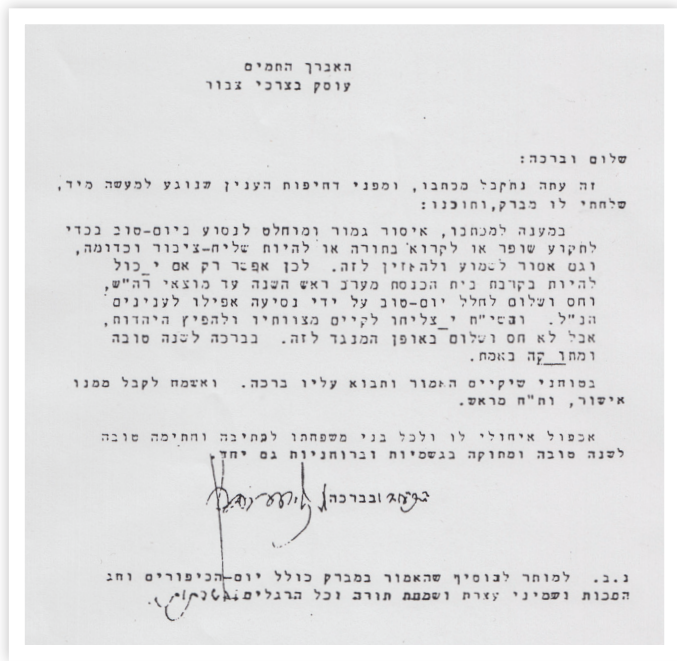
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MY ENCOUNTER  
with the REBBE

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 the 800 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. [mystory@jemedialia.org](mailto:mystory@jemedialia.org)

later, another group went to Sweden and visited this Gilinderman. He showed them a telegram that he got from the Rebbe, which arrived a few days before Rosh Hashanah.

In the telegram, the Rebbe wrote, "It is very important to save Jews and to be a *chazzan* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But you cannot travel on the holy day. Please go there beforehand. May Hashem grant you *hatzlocha* - success in fulfilling his *mitzvos* and spreading *yiddishkeit*."



Now I ask you: How many reports did the Rebbe get? Our report was one of many. We were just two *yeshiva* students who wrote a report that included a small detail about a small Jew in a small town, and we mentioned in passing that he makes the *minyan* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and that, unfortunately, he goes by car because he is the only one who can lead services.

But here, the Rebbe sent a telegram to this Jew saying that although it is very important to be a *chazzan* and make *minyanim*, he should never desecrate the holy day for that. A whole telegram! So much personal attention

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the Rebbe gave to a small Jew in a small town that is so small it is not even on most maps - in the interior of Sweden no less.

We were *yeshiva* students on a short mission. *Bochurim!* And yet the Rebbe read my report, and every other *bochur's* report, and paid attention to every detail.

*Rabbi Yosef Dovid Weitman is a Chabad emissary in Brazil for over 30 years. He was interviewed in his home on a My Encounter trip to Brazil in June, 2012.*

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין  
 ע"י בניהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחיו

## This week in....

- > **5701—1941**, after years of effort, the Rebbe and Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka arrived safely on Pier 8 in Staten Island in the United States, having finally been rescued from the claws of the Nazi monster. A ferry took them to Manhattan, from where they were driven to 770 Eastern Parkway, where they were reunited with the Rebbe Rayatz.<sup>1</sup> 28 Sivan
- > **5733—1973**, in a letter, the Rebbe instructs leaders of Kfar Chabad to establish an educational institution for Jewish Bukharian youth.<sup>2</sup> 26 Sivan
- > **5738—1978**, in middle of the *farbrengen*, the mayor of Safed presented the Rebbe the key to the city. The Rebbe told him that holding the key signifies a certain ownership of the city. In his next talk, the Rebbe explained the uniqueness of the Galilee and the city of Safed in Jewish lore.<sup>3</sup> 26 Sivan
- > **5738—1978**, returning from the Ohel, the Rebbe's car broke down on the Belt Parkway. The Rebbe switched cars to another car that was accompanying him. The Rebbe remained in good spirits throughout the trip. This was the last time this car was used since it was given to the Rebbe on 11 Nissan, 1976. 24 Sivan

<sup>1</sup>. Igros Kodesh Rayatz vol. 5, p. 396. <sup>2</sup>. Igros Kodesh vol. 28, p. 245. <sup>3</sup>. Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 2, p. 615.

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