

From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles <[editor@ascentofsafed.com](mailto:editor@ascentofsafed.com)>

[www.ascentofsafed.com](http://www.ascentofsafed.com) Story #IIO2-2I, 22 Shevat 5779 (Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

## *Road Work*

*Told by Chessed Halberstam*

The Rebbe requested that I try to see to it that the Rebbetzin gets out of the house every day for fresh air. Usually, we would drive out to a park in Long Island. In the years that my son, Ari (may G-d avenge his blood\*) was a young child, we would often drive by his school on Ocean Parkway to take him along; the Rebbetzin enjoyed playing with him, pushing him on the swings in the park playground, etc.

One day, as we neared the park, we found our regular route closed off due to road work, and were forced to proceed instead on a parallel street. As we drove along that street, we heard the sound of a woman screaming in Russian. When I stopped at the next traffic light, the Rebbetzin turned to me and said: "I heard a woman screaming. Can you go back and see what that was about?"

We drove back to the beginning of the street. There we saw a woman standing on the curb and weeping, while near her, workers were carrying furniture and household items from a house and loading them on to a truck belonging to the county marshal. At the Rebbetzin's request, I parked behind the marshal's truck and went to learn the details of what was going on. The marshal explained that the woman had not paid her rent for many months, and was now being evicted from her home.

When I reported back to the Rebbetzin, she asked me to go back and inquire from the marshal how much the woman owed, and if he would accept a personal check. She also asked that I should not say anything to the family being evicted.

At this point, I still did not realize where all this was leading, but I fulfilled the Rebbetzin's request. The sum that the family owed was approximately \$6,700. The marshal said that he had no problem accepting a personal check, as long as he confirms with the bank that the check is covered; he also said that if he received the payment, his men would carry everything back into the house.

When I informed the Rebbetzin of the details, she took out her checkbook and, to my amazement, wrote out a check for the full amount, and asked me to give it to the marshal. The marshal made a phone call to the bank, and then instructed his workers to take everything back into the house.

~~The~~ As soon as they began, the Rebbetzin immediately urged me to quickly drive away, before the woman realized what had transpired.

I was completely amazed at what I had seen. Later, when we were in the park, I could not contain myself, and asked the Rebbetzin what had prompted her to give such a large sum to a total stranger.

“Do you really want to know?” asked the Rebbetzin.

“Yes, I do,” I replied.

“Then I’ll tell you,” she said.

“Once, when I was a young girl, my father\*\* took me for a walk in the park. He sat me down on a bench, and started to tell me about the idea of *hashgachah peratit* (specific divine providence). Every time—said Father—when something causes us to deviate from our normal routine, there is a divinely ordained reason for this; every time we see something unusual, there is a purpose in why we’ve been shown this sight.

“Today,” continued the Rebbetzin, “when I saw the ‘Detour’ sign instructing us to deviate from our regular route, I remembered my father’s words, and immediately thought to myself: Every day we drive by this street; suddenly the street’s closed off, and we’re sent to a different street. What is the purpose of this? How is this connected to me? Then I heard the sound of a woman crying and screaming. I realized that we had been sent along this route for a purpose.”

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Source: Reprinted with permission from //chabad.org/156251 and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles. [**Chessed Halberstam** worked in the employ of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, for eighteen years—from 1970 until the Rebbetzin’s passing in 1988—performing household chores and serving as the Rebbetzin’s driver.]

\* *Author’s note:* Ari Halberstam was murdered by an Arab terrorist in 1994, in the infamous [Brooklyn Bridge shooting](#).

\*\* *Biographical note:*

**Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia Schneerson** (25 Adar 5661- 22 Shvat 5748 / March 1901 - Feb. 1988 C.E.) was the daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneerson. On 14 Kislev 5689 (Dec. 1928 C.E.), she married the future Rebbe, her distant cousin, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, in Warsaw, in a wedding attended by many Chasidic rebbes and leading Torah scholars of the generation. She devoted herself totally to supporting her husband in his role as a leader of world Jewry, and was known in her own right for her modesty, erudition, piety and good deeds.

*Connection:* Seasonal – Shvat 22 is the 31<sup>st</sup> yearzeit of the Rebbetzin.