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“Don’t Ask Twice; Just Listen”

The following story was related by Rebbetzin Chaya-Mushka of blessed memory, wife of the Lubavitcher Rebbe:

There was a family, relatives of **the Lubavitcher Rebbe**, who lived in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn. Whenever they had a question for the Rebbe, they asked his wife, **Rebbetzin Chaya-Mushka Shneerson**, and she passed the question on to the Rebbe. Afterwards, she related the Rebbe's answer to the family.

One day, the Rebbetzin received a phone call from that family that the mother was very sick and, after many tests in the hospital, the doctors concluded that she needed surgery. They were calling to ask for the Rebbe's consent and blessing for the operation.

When the Rebbetzin conveyed the message to the Rebbe, the Rebbe responded that they should not do the operation. The Rebbetzin told the family the Rebbe's answer, but a few days later, they called again. They said that the doctors said that because they refused the operation, her condition deteriorated and her life could be endangered. They asked whether she could ask the Rebbe again.

The Rebbetzin said that in Lubavitch you don't ask twice. "I consider myself a chasid of the Rebbe and I do as the chasidim do, so I cannot ask again," she said.

The family was distraught, so the Rebbetzin said that if the Rebbe came home and asked whether she had heard anything from the family, she was willing to repeat what they had told her, but she would not ask again.

When the Rebbe came home for supper, he asked the Rebbetzin whether she had heard from the family. She told the Rebbe what they had said and then added, "I'm not asking; I'm just telling you."

The Rebbe looked serious and after a pause he said, "I repeat, they should not operate!"

The Rebbetzin conveyed this clear answer to the family and a few days later they called again. They said that the doctors said her condition had deteriorated further and her life was in immediate danger. They were asked to sign that they took full responsibility for the woman and absolved the doctors and the hospital of any responsibility.

The Rebbetzin said, "The Rebbe said two times already not to operate."

When the Rebbe came home, the Rebbetzin told him the latest events and the Rebbe said, "Why don't they try medication?"

The Rebbetzin immediately called the family to tell them. They in turn mentioned it to the doctors, who laughed at them in response. "The rabbi knows better than we do about medicine? We say that only surgery can save her. It is definitely not a matter of medication."

The family believed the Rebbe and went from department to department, looking for a doctor who would understand them. Finally, they found a doctor who thought for a moment and then said, "I think I know which medication the Rebbe has in mind, and since I wear a white jacket and can go wherever I want, I will visit your mother and give her an injection and let's see what happens."

A few days later, the doctors said her condition had suddenly stabilized. They did not know what had happened, but she was no longer deteriorating. The doctor was optimistic and told the family that apparently he had used the medicine the Rebbe was thinking of. He gave the woman another injection and two days later the doctors who had been treating her admitted she had improved somewhat. Every so often, the doctor would come by and give her medication until she was out of danger and was released from the hospital.

The family kept in constant touch with the Rebbetzin. When the Rebbetzin told the Rebbe that the mother had returned home, the Rebbe said, "When they asked me about an operation, I saw that if they did it, she wouldn't make it off the operating table, which is why I adamantly opposed an operation. When they asked again, I thought the doctors would see that the family was adamantly opposed to an operation and would try medication. When I saw that they weren't thinking along those lines at all, I explicitly suggested medication."

The Rebbetzin related this and said that the Rebbe had added, "Now you see how important it is to listen to whatever we say, even when the experts say the opposite."

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Do the Rebbes know everything? Here is another, similar story:

Once, someone asked the **Rebbe Rayatz (Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneersohn)**, the Rebbe's predecessor, whether his son should travel or not and the Rebbe said "No." The son did not listen and boarded the ship. A few days into the voyage the ship sank.

After the week of mourning, the brokenhearted father came to the Rebbe and said, "If the Rebbe would have explained why he negated the trip, I am sure my son would have listened."

The Rebbe Rayatz replied, "Believe me that not every time I say something, do I know why I am saying it. I just convey what I am told from Above. But this I know: when I say it, you have to follow it - or else..."

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*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the version told in the name of the Rebbetzin by *Rabbi Leibel Groner*, one of the Rebbe's personal secretaries, and subsequently reprinted in *Beis Moshiach Magazine* and posted on *LchaimWeekly.org* (#1005).

*Biographical notes (in order of appearance):*

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher** זי"ע, נ"ד: [11 Nissan 5662 - 3 Tammuz 5754 (April 1902 – June 1994 C.E.)], became the seventh Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty after his father-in-law's passing on 10 Shvat 5710 (1950 C.E.). He is widely acknowledged as the greatest Jewish leader of the second half of the 20th century. Although a dominant scholar in both the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah and fluent in many languages and scientific subjects, the Rebbe is best known for his extraordinary love and concern for every Jew on the planet. His emissaries around the globe dedicated to strengthening Judaism number in the thousands. Hundreds of volumes of his teachings have been printed, as well as dozens of English renditions.

**Rebbetzin Chaya Moussia Schneerson** (of blessed memory: 25 Adar 5661- 22 Shvat 5748 / March 1901 - Feb. 1988 C.E.) was the daughter of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneersohn. 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.

**Rabbi Yosef-Yitzchak Schneersohn** [of blessed memory: 12 Tammuz 5640 - 10 Shvat 5710 (Jan. 1880-June 1950)], known as the **Rebbe Rayatz**, was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, from 1920 to 1950. He established a network of Jewish educational institutions and Chassidim that was the single most significant factor for the preservation of Judaism during the dread reign of the communist Soviets. In 1940 he moved to the USA, established Chabad world-wide headquarters in Brooklyn and launched the global campaign to renew and spread Judaism in all languages and in every corner of the world, the campaign continued and expanded so remarkably successfully by his son-in-law and successor, Rabbi Menachem-Mendel Schneerson.

*Connection:* Seasonal -- Sunday night (Shvat 22/Feb 17) is the *yahrzeit* of the Lubavitcher Rebbetzin.