

“My father was Jewish, but my mother was Catholic. By the way, do you know the great Rabbi from New York? I met him personally.”

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

## ***A Dream Painting***

It was winter 1998, when Montreal was hit with a famous ice storm and the electricity to the entire city was cut off.

On Thursday afternoon, after two days without power, the Nussbaum family of Montreal was not sure where to spend Shabbat. Staying in their cold, dark house didn't seem to be the best option. They finally decided to stay in a hotel in the commercial district of the city. Their thinking was that, as an important center of international commerce, that area of the city would be one of the last to lose power. Furthermore, that hotel was close to a Chabad House, where the Nussbaum family would be able to eat their Shabbat meals.

That Friday afternoon, as the Nussbaums made their way to the hotel for Shabbat, the power outage reached the business district as well. The hotel guests were not affected so much, since the hotel was connected to a backup generator. However, the nearby Chabad House had no power. The Nussbaum family, along with the other guests, had to pray and eat by candlelight.

The Nussbaums will long remember the lofty spirit of that Shabbat. But their truly memorable experience came on Saturday night, when they returned to the hotel and wanted to eat the traditional “*Melaveh Malka*” meal to escort the departing Shabbat Queen. Not wanting to use the hotel's dishes, which were not kosher, Pesach Nussbaum approached a hotel worker and asked her if she could find for them some disposable dishes.

The hotel worker was happy to help, and returned a few minutes later with napkins, paper cups and a cardboard box. “We do not have disposable tableware. However, would you use a brand new set?” she asked, opening up the box.

“Thank you very much,” said Pesach gratefully, and with a big smile. “We can definitely use that.”

After the meal, Pesach went to the kitchen to thank the hotel worker and return the tableware. In response, as if to explain her eagerness to help, she said, “My father was Jewish, but my mother was Catholic. By the way, do you know the great Rabbi from New York?”

Pesach was taken aback at the question. Apparently she was referring to the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

“I met him personally,” the hotel worker explained. “I came there one Sunday to receive a dollar and his blessing. When I was standing opposite him I was unable to open my mouth, out of embarrassment. The Rebbe began to speak to me in French, my native language. He said, ‘Whatever you choose to do in life, G-d will be with you.’”

While Pesach tried to digest her story, she continued with another surprising detail: “I have an oil portrait of the Rebbe, and for a while I have been looking for someone to give it to. Would you agree to accept it? I feel unworthy of keeping such a holy painting in my home.”

Mr. Nussbaum wrote down her name, Anne Audrey, and her phone number, and assured her that he would be in touch.

That Tuesday afternoon, Pesach gave Anne a call. Montreal was still without power and they prepared for another night of darkness. “Thank you for calling,” said Anne. “Could I come to see you tonight?”

That evening at 7:30, Anne came to the Nussbaum's house, holding the painting wrapped in a cloth. She was invited in by the Nussbaums, and in their living room she shared the story of her life.

“My father died when I was five years old. Shortly after his death, my mother became ill as well and was near death. I prayed constantly for her recovery. I would close my eyes, and there, in front of my eyes, I would see a majestic figure, whose face I did not recognize.

“With miracles, my mother recovered completely, thank G-d. From then on, I could not get the image out of my mind, of the face I had seen during my prayers. As a girl I had a talent for drawing, and from memory, I sketched a picture of the man's face.

“One evening, I was watching television and flipping through the channels. Suddenly I stopped in shock. There on the screen was the face that was so familiar to me! I called my mother and when she looked at the screen, she fainted. She, too, recognized the man – from the picture I had drawn!

“On bottom of the screen was a running banner with information how to contact the Lubavitcher Rebbe – that was the man's title. I wasted no time and called the number. I spoke to one of the secretaries who gave me all the information I asked for.

“Three years later, my mother gave me permission to travel alone to New York, to receive the Rebbe's blessing, as I have already told you.

“This picture,” said Anne, pointing at the painting, “is not my work, although it is based on it. We commissioned this artwork by a famous painter; my mother paid a large sum of money for it.

Recently my mother died. Before she passed away, she told me to give the painting over for safekeeping to a person who would treat it well.

“The day before I met you, I 'talked' to my mother in my thoughts. I told her that I had tried to find a suitable person but had not met one yet. I asked her to please send me the right person. And the very next day, I met you...”

Anne concluded her story, and just that moment, to everyone's surprise, the room suddenly became suffused with light. The power had come back on. After a blackout that lasted for a full week, power was finally restored to the city of Montreal.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition on [//congregationlubavitch.org](http://congregationlubavitch.org). (I have not yet been able to clarify what *their* source was.)

<http://www.congregationlubavitch.org/page.asp?pageID=%7B83E841B5-347A-411E-BF3E-498C981DAF97%7D>

Connection: Seasonal -- Wednesday night-Thursday is the 26<sup>th</sup> yearzeit of **the Lubavitcher Rebbe**.

*Biographical note:* **Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe** מנחם: [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.

