

SHABBOS STORIES FOR TAZRIA-METZORA 5786

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180-Degrees Mid-Way

By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg



Rabbi Efraim Roitman, the founder of the *Hashem Loves You* hotline, once shared with me an extraordinary story — one he knew firsthand. Its lesson offers remarkable inspiration. It can be applied on both “good days” and “bad days,” but perhaps it is most vital precisely on the difficult ones.

Many years ago, Rabbi Efraim received a call from a middle-aged man. The moment he heard the man’s voice, Rabbi Efraim sensed that something was wrong — very wrong.

The caller had initially reached out because of Rabbi Efraim's experience helping couples with *shalom bayis*. But only a short time into the conversation, it became clear that the situation ran far deeper. Before the matter of *shalom bayis* could be addressed, many other issues had to be confronted.

The man confided that he was unable to maintain steady employment. His lack of a consistent job not only strained his finances but also shattered his self-esteem. Whenever he encountered adversity, he would lash out in anger. His reactions pushed people away, making it nearly impossible for anyone to want to hire him.

Rabbi Efraim now faced the challenge of somehow guiding this man through the tangled mess of his life. And the damage extended far beyond his livelihood and his *shalom bayis*. Even his family had begun to build a quiet resistance toward him. The slightest perceived disrespect — a glance, a whisper, even a harmless gesture — could ignite a sudden flame of anger.

Rabbi Efraim's goal was to help the man reach a place where he once again felt safe, valued, and capable. Perhaps, he hoped, that would unlock the bolts of the wall that had formed between him and the people around him, allowing him to flourish again with the abilities he truly possessed.



Rabbi Eitan Feiner

As he searched for a way forward, Rabbi Efraim recalled a story he had once heard from Rabbi Eitan Feiner, the Rav of the White Shul in Far Rockaway. Years earlier, at a *Shabbos HaGadol drashah*, Rabbi Feiner had prefaced the story with an opening remark: Although the incident involved a non-Jew, its message carried a powerful lesson — one that anyone could learn from.

Rabbi Efraim hoped that Rabbi Feiner's lesson would help this struggling man as well.

Judge John Kralik once found himself at a very low point in life. His law practice was failing, his personal life was strained, and he felt overwhelmed by everything that seemed to be going wrong.

One day, while reflecting on his situation, he had a simple but powerful idea. Instead of focusing on what he lacked, he would focus on what he had. He set a goal to write one handwritten thank-you note every day for an entire year.

At first, it felt awkward. But slowly, something remarkable began to happen. As he forced himself to search for people to thank, he began noticing kindness everywhere — from friends, colleagues, family members, and even strangers.

Even more surprising, the greatest change did not happen in others — it happened within himself. His outlook shifted from frustration to appreciation, and the relationships in his life began to improve. Kralik later described this experience in his book, where he reflects on how such a small daily act transformed the way he saw his life.

This story reflects a fundamental Torah value: *hakaras hatov* — recognizing and appreciating the good we receive.

“Human nature tends to focus on what is missing,” explained Rabbi Efraim to his caller. “Yet, when a person trains themselves to notice the good, their entire perspective changes. Chazal teach that gratitude is not merely good manners; it is a core *middah* that shapes a person’s character.

“Often, we think life must improve before we can feel grateful. But the lesson is the opposite. When a person becomes grateful, life itself begins to feel full of blessing. When we practice *hakaras hatov* — toward the people around us and toward Hashem — we begin to see that our lives are already filled with countless acts of kindness.”

The man on the phone took well to Rabbi Efraim’s idea.

The very next morning, after his children boarded their bus to school and his wife left for work, he sat down at his quiet dining-room table. From his pocket, he pulled out his gel pen, placed it against a blank sheet of paper, and began to write.

He wrote letters to many people — even those he wasn’t on good terms with. At first, it was not easy. But he did it anyway.

A few days later, some replies began to arrive. Each returned letter became a small stepping-stone, helping him slowly climb out of the mire he had been trapped in.

Just two weeks later, he attended a family *bar mitzvah*. The guests were in for quite a surprise. Their uncle — who had spent years finding fault in everyone around him — suddenly seemed different. He began speaking warmly with relatives. He asked about their lives. He showed genuine interest in their wellbeing and expressed real compassion. It was a side of him that no one had seen in over twenty years.

Six weeks later, Rabbi Efraim received another phone call.

“I got a job!” the caller exclaimed excitedly.

“That’s wonderful,” Rabbi Efraim replied. “But...who is this?”

In his line of work, Rabbi Efraim often spoke with many people anonymously and would usually recognize them by the tone of their voice. But this voice sounded entirely unfamiliar. Only after the man identified himself did Rabbi Efraim realize who he was speaking to — and only then did he truly grasp the depth of the transformation that had taken place.

How this change ultimately affected the man’s *shalom bayis*, Rabbi Efraim does not know. But one thing he does know: It has been more than a decade since that conversation, and the man has never needed to call back for assistance. (Rabbi Efraim’s hotline can be heard by calling: 267 833 0596)

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayikra 5786 email of Zichru Toras Moshe.

A Shidduch Suggestion: “Yes! It’s Her!”

He came from an outstanding family. He had learned in the finest yeshivos and had earned a reputation as a serious masmid and a refined young man. When he entered shidduchim, suggestions flowed steadily. Officially, he claimed he had no demands. Unofficially, his parents did. They wanted to ensure he could continue learning in kollel for years without financial strain, and in their circles that often meant the girl’s family would contribute substantially toward an apartment.

Several promising names were declined before one particular young woman was suggested. Everything about her seemed right—her middos, her family, her quiet intelligence. When he met her, he felt this might just be the one. After meeting for the fifth time, they decided to become chosson and kallah.

Their parents were thrilled. A meeting was scheduled to finalize arrangements. He returned to yeshivah glowing, whispering the news to close friends who promised secrecy. Two days later, both families met at her home. After polite small talk, the parents sent the young couple out.

“Give us time to talk in peace,” his father said lightly. The young couple walked around the block, speaking softly, already imagining the l’chaim, the singing, the whirl of mazal tovs. After half an hour, he suggested they call. “Let’s see if they’re ready for us.”

The girl’s mother answered and said, “Come back right away.” They exchanged nervous smiles. This was it. But the moment they stepped inside, the air

felt wrong. No smiles. No warmth. His father cleared his throat. “We have a problem. The shadchan misled us.”

Silence. “There’s no financial ability for an apartment.” Chairs scraped. Hands were shaken stiffly. “Let’s go,” his father said. Outside, anger burst forth. “It’s a chutzpah! We were clear about our expectations.”

He tried to speak. “Abba... I already proposed.” His father waved it away. “Nothing was signed. These things happen.” The girl stood pale in the doorway as he left, their eyes meeting one last time—confusion, pain, disbelief. He felt something tear inside him, but he said nothing more.

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Within weeks, he was in shidduchim again. This time, there would be no misunderstandings. His parents quietly ensured that expectations were met before things progressed. The next young woman came from a respected family, and negotiations were smooth. Everything his parents had wanted was promised. The engagement was magnificent—music, singing, friends dancing around him in circles of joy. He allowed himself to forget the earlier heartbreak. The wedding was elegant and joyous, and immediately afterward they moved into the apartment that had been purchased for them.

For a brief moment, it seemed like everything had worked out exactly as it should have. But the very next day, small tensions surfaced. “Why do you hold your fork like that?” she asked sharply. He laughed nervously. “Like what?” “Like someone with no manners.” He apologized, unsure what he had done wrong.

The comments continued. The way he walked. The way he closed a door. The way he folded his jacket. Each day carried new criticism. If he tried to explain himself, she accused him of being defensive. If he apologized, she said it proved her point. After sheva brachos ended and the guests stopped coming, the apartment grew heavy with tension. He began to dread walking through the door.

Outwardly, everything appeared flawless—a young kollel couple in their own apartment. Inwardly, he felt himself shrinking. “Maybe I need to change,” he told himself. “Maybe she’s right.” He tried harder—speaking more softly, eating more carefully, moving more cautiously. Nothing helped. Then, one afternoon two months later, he returned home to silence.

The apartment was spotless. Too spotless. Her clothes were gone. On the table lay a brief letter: she had left. He should contact her parents. His hands trembled as he called his own parents. “I’ll do whatever she wants,” he said through tears. “Just tell me what I did wrong.”

His parents listened as the accusations were repeated to them. When he finished recounting the past weeks, they sat in stunned silence. His mother wept

openly. His father, a man known for honesty and measured words, finally said, “If you had done something wrong, I would tell you. There is nothing wrong with you.”

The get was arranged quickly. He stood in beis din feeling stripped of dignity. At twenty-one, divorced, he felt marked. The vibrant bochur everyone had once admired now felt like a shadow.

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A few weeks after the divorce, as he struggled simply to rise in the morning, the phone rang. It was the very *shadchan* who had arranged the first *shidduch*. “I have a suggestion,” she said gently.

He almost laughed at the irony. “For me?”

“Yes. It’s her.”

He was silent. The same young woman he had once nearly married. The *shadchan* explained that from the day she heard of his divorce, the girl had said, “He is the one I was meant to marry.”

Even when others hesitated, even after she sought guidance from a *gadol* who affirmed her conviction, she did not waver. His parents were astonished—and grateful. A date was arranged. When they met again, months after their abrupt separation, he could barely raise his eyes. She began speaking calmly, as though resuming a paused conversation.

She told him about her teaching position, about her brother’s new baby, about ordinary life. Slowly, the stiffness eased. Then silence fell. He swallowed hard. “I need to tell you something.” She waited.

“I’m sorry,” he said, and suddenly the words dissolved into sobs. Months of humiliation and confusion poured out of him. She reached for tissues, her own tears falling freely. They spoke openly—about what had happened, about pain, about expectations, about trust. There was only honesty between them. By the end of the evening, the decision felt clear, but this time it felt deeper.

They became engaged. Years later, their home is alive with children, laughter, and mutual respect. Sometimes he reflects on the night he walked away from her house believing everything had been lost. Now he understands: what seemed like devastation was Divine destiny. What felt like humiliation was the detour that led him home. (Excerpted from the book – “Meant To Be.”)

Reprinted from The Weekly Vort – Parshas Ki Sisa 5786, Parshas Vayakhel-Pekudei 5786 and Parshas Vayikra 5786.

Who Repaid the Loan?

Rav David Ashear shared a story about how Hashem is always present and guiding, supporting, and opening doors that we cannot see. The story took place in London, and is told by Rav Zuckerman.

About forty years ago, in London, there lived a wealthy philanthropist, a man who dedicated his life to helping others. He loved giving, supporting charitable causes, and ensuring that those in need received assistance. But one day, through a sudden financial loss, he found himself completely without funds. Remarkably, he did not disclose his situation to anyone, not even to his wife. He did this because he wanted the people who relied on him to continue receiving his help, without any interruption.

His devotion to giving Tzedakah was greater than his concern for his own hardship. With his fortune gone, the man turned to a prominent philanthropist in Manchester, and he asked for a loan of two million pounds, which is equivalent to roughly four million dollars, with the promise that he could repay it within two years, once his investments matured.

The Manchester philanthropist was skeptical. He asked, “Do you have a guarantor?”

The man from London shook his head. Revealing his situation to anyone else would have been impossible, and he had no one who was willing or able to act as a guarantor.

Then the man from London said something extraordinary: “I am doing this L'Sheim Shamayim. Hashem Himself will be the Guarantor.” The Manchester businessman, deeply moved by the man’s faith and Emunah, agreed. He provided the loan, placing trust not in paper, nor in any person, but only in Hashem.

Two years later, the London philanthropist returned, almost ready to repay the loan. He requested a short extension, saying that he needed just a little more time. The Manchester man, worried that he would never see the money, went to a private room and davened. He said, “Hashem, You are the guarantor for this loan. If it is Your will, I do not even need this money. Please give me a Shidduch for my daughter instead, and I will accept that as repayment.”

Within three weeks, a Shidduch was arranged for his daughter, and it was a perfect match. At the same time, the London philanthropist completed a large business deal that allowed him to repay almost the entire loan. This double Brachah, his daughter’s upcoming marriage and the repayment, demonstrated clearly that Hashem orchestrates all outcomes for those who act with integrity and trust.

When the London philanthropist returned to repay the loan, a debate arose. The Manchester man insisted the loan had already been paid through Hashem's Providence with the Shidduch, while the London man insisted that he would not accept his repayment of the loan for free. The case was brought before a Bais Din in Eretz Yisroel. Rav Zuckerman, who recounted the story, said that every Dayan on the Bais Din was moved to tears by the honesty, integrity, and Emunah that was displayed by both men.

In the final ruling of the Bais Din, they decided that the money should go to the Guarantor's fund, which was a special fund that was arranged during the Shemittah year to assist the public while keeping the Halachos of Shemittah.

Rav Ashear said that the lesson we learn from this story is timeless. Hashem is the ultimate Guarantor. He watches over those who act with honesty and faith, providing guidance and solutions even when the path seems impossible. Both the lender and the borrower exemplified the highest levels of Emunah and integrity, reminding us that trust in Hashem is never misplaced.

When we surrender our worries to Hashem and act ethically in every situation, we align with a force far greater than our own understanding. The London and Manchester philanthropists did not rely solely on contracts, banks, or human guarantees. They relied only on Hashem, and He delivered in ways that were miraculous, precise, and profound. We too must remember in moments of uncertainty to trust in Hashem as our Guarantor, to act with integrity, and to know that Divine Providence is guiding every step of our journey!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Sisa 5786 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah

The “Coincidence” of the Chocolate Chip Muffins

By Rabbi David Bibi

A second story, told by Rabbi Sruly Shain from Shully Rosenblum himself, reveals this same hidden precision. Shully works at The Bagel Hole in Brooklyn. One Friday there were leftover chocolate chip muffins. Instead of letting them go to waste, he brought them home. On the way, he stopped by his parents. His father had injured his leg and was resting at home. Shully also brought him a store bag he wanted for his tallit — the muffins were inside.

His parents said they did not need the muffins. “Save them,” Shully replied. “Maybe the grandchildren will come.”

Shabbat morning at 5:00 a.m., his father was sitting on the couch learning Chumash, his injured leg elevated on a motorized footrest. He fell asleep. The Chumash slipped from his lap and hit the electric lever, pushing the chair into an unusable position. Everyone else in the house was asleep. He stepped outside, hoping to find a non-Jew to help.

A man was walking by. “Excuse me... I have something in my house—” Before he could finish, the man said, “Don’t worry, Rabbi. I’m a Shabbos guy.” He came inside and reset the chair.



Wanting to show appreciation, the father offered the chocolate chip muffins. The man turned pale. “G-d watches over His people,” he said. He explained that he worked as a caretaker for Mr. Fried, an elderly Jewish man in his nineties. Every Shabbat he brought him breakfast before taking him to shul. Usually, Mrs. Fried bought a kosher chocolate chip muffin on Friday afternoon. This week she arrived after the kosher store had closed. So, he bought a non-kosher muffin. He was on his way to deliver it when he was stopped and offered a kosher one.

After Shabbat, the family learned that Mr. Fried had survived World War II and had gone days without eating rather than compromise kashrut. Decades later, when he had no idea what was unfolding, HaShem was guarding that commitment. The Megillah never writes the Name explicitly. But sometimes HaShem writes it in chocolate chip muffins. The world looks random. A book falls. A lever shifts. A man walks by. A muffin remains. Precision.

But Shully's father had to step outside. He had to ask for help. He had to offer the muffins. Participation unlocks providence.

After Haman falls, Mordechai and Esther do something extraordinary. They do not simply celebrate survival. They establish mitzvot: the reading of the Megillah, mishloach manot, matanot la'evyonim, and the Purim seudah (Esther 9:21). None of these depend on the presence of an enemy. They build Jewish life itself. They ensure that redemption is not merely reactive but constructive.

HaShem is behind the curtain. But He waits for Esther to speak. He waits for Mordechai to stand. He waits for Rabbi Friedman to rent the bus. He waits for Shully to take the muffins.

Purim calls us not only to believe in Hashgachah Pratit, but to activate it. Is there a call we need to make? A child we need to invest in? A mitzvah we have postponed? A stand we need to take publicly as Jews?

The strings are there.

But they move when we do.

Reprinted from the Purim 5786 email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.

Why the Klausenberger Rebbe Cried

By Yoni Schwartz

Years ago, a bachur was thrown out of the Klausenberg Yeshiva for misbehavior. Realizing the gravity of his sin, he was distraught and despondent, with nowhere to go and nobody to turn to. Without any other options, he decided to visit the Klausenberger Rebbe, ZT"l, himself. He knocked on his door.

Shocked, the Rebbe said, "It's the middle of yeshiva. What are you doing here?" "I got kicked out," the boy said. "What did you do?" the Rebbe asked. Full of shame and remorse, the boy explained. The Rebbe said, "Wait here. I'll take care of it."

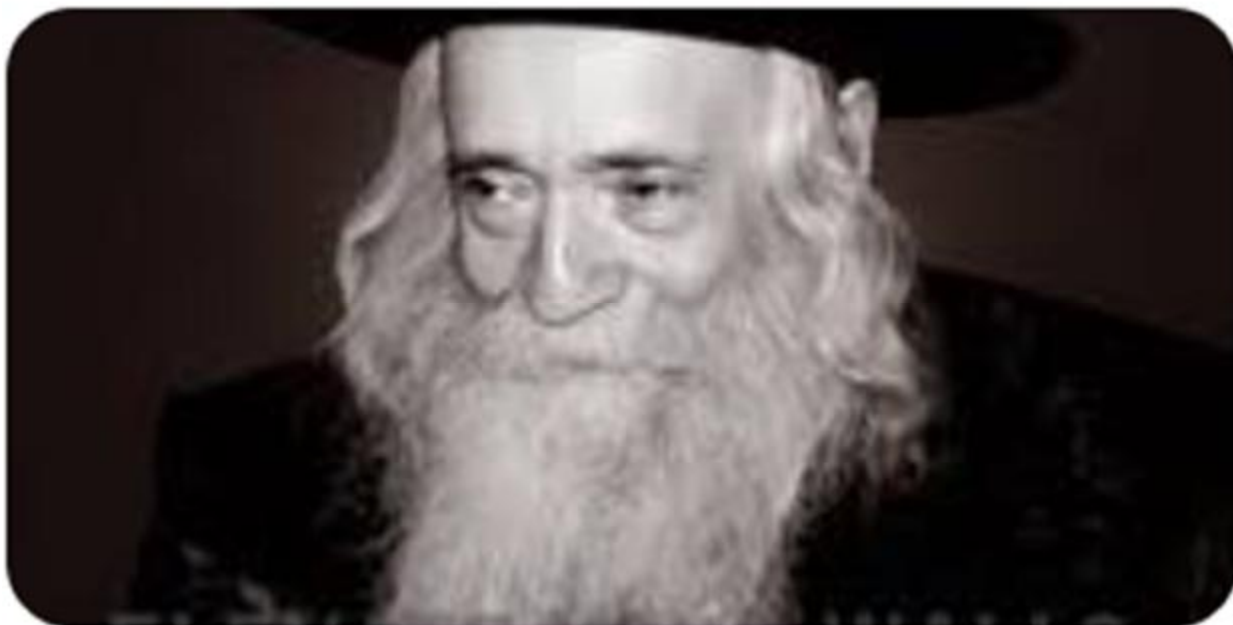
The Rebbe went to the principal's office. When the principal saw that the Rebbe himself had come to visit, he nearly fainted. Once he regained his composure, he asked the Rebbe, "What have I done to merit a visit from the Rebbe?"

The Rebbe explained, "A boy just came to me saying that he got kicked out of yeshiva."

The principal responded, “Yes... well, you see, he has already done this several times.”

The Rebbe responded, “He told me that he’s not going to do it again.”

The principal replied, “Rebbe, do you believe that? Do you know how many times he’s told me that he’s not going to do it again?”



The Rebbe became angry, to the point that he was red in the face, and exclaimed, “Are you telling me that I have no hope? Are you telling the Klausenberger Rebbe that life is over for him? Do you know how many times I promised Hashem that I wouldn’t repeat something - and I did? So, you’re telling me that I have no hope?”

The principal became very scared and accepted the bachur back.

Many years later, as someone was telling over this story, that same bachur was in the audience. When he heard his story, he approached the speaker and said, “I was that boy.”

Thanks to the Rebbe, that bachur ended up becoming an incredible Jew. Who knows where he would have ended up had the Rebbe not believed in him and fought for him?

Reprinted from the Parshas Vayechi 5786 email of Torah Sweets.

The Ultimate Backyard Wedding

As Recalled by Mrs. Esther Serebryanski



Mrs. Esther Serebryanski circa 1950s

My parents, Rabbi Moshe Mordechai and Basya Magnes — educators who devoted their lives for the sake of Judaism — weren't Lubavitch, but they shared its values. Although my mother passed away when I was twelve, she gave me a strong foundation.

After completing high school, I wandered around; I went to college for a while, and worked here and there. My older sister had gotten married to a Lubavitcher boy, but I was still footloose and fancy-free.

One day in the 1950s, she and her husband decided that I had to go see the Lubavitcher Rebbe [Rabbi MenachemMendel Schneerson, zt"l], and they made an appointment for me. Now, I'm an independent-minded person and don't like people doing things for me, especially not my sister, who could be bossy, as older sisters sometimes are. I resented this intrusion into my life and felt that my self-reliance

was being attacked. But then I thought: You know what? I would like to meet the Rebbe.



The Rebbe was known all over, and I had even been to some of his farbrengens, so I wasn't averse to meeting him. My curiosity prevailing over my pained pride, I decided to keep the appointment. Before the meeting, however, I had to think of a plausible reason for taking the Rebbe's time.

As a single person, marriage was always a topic of conversation. So, I decided to say that since I would like to ask for advice when I met someone, I had come to the Rebbe in advance, in order for him to get to know me first. The conversation only lasted for five or ten minutes, with the Rebbe asking a few questions that seemed intended to stimulate the direction of my thoughts. Nothing world-shaking transpired; the questions were searching but mundane.

And yet seeing the Rebbe had a tremendous impact on me. Unknown to my sister and brother-in-law at that time, some private questions had been playing on my mind: I knew people who were religiously observant and those who were not observant. In each group, there were people who were fine and good, and people with their weaknesses. What, then, was the underlying difference?

Meeting the Rebbe was a decisive factor in helping me find an answer. I saw how whenever he asked a question, the words didn't just flop out, like they did when I talked. When he said something, I felt as though the words he spoke had gone through six sieves before they went out, and every move he made was according to the Torah. This isn't just an anomaly, I felt. Here is a living Torah. I wouldn't say that I became a chasid then — I still don't claim to be a chasid — but I knew that the Rebbe was the type of tzaddik that I had only read or heard about.

The fact that, in our three thousand years of history, Jewish culture has consistently produced people of such high caliber as the Rebbe brought me to the

realization that Judaism must have unique qualities not found in other cultures. As a result of that brief encounter, I remained religiously observant.

I went out with a few different boys after that, and there was one young man who was very interested in me, but I wasn't sure, and so I wrote to the Rebbe to get his opinion. In reply, the Rebbe gave me advice that affirmed how I was feeling. If I was going to find someone to marry, I had to feel a little different about that person.

Not long after, a Lubavitcher named Chaim Serebryanski arrived in America. Originally from Russia, he had emigrated to Australia after the war together with his family, and was now looking to get married. Actually, someone had suggested a match for him in Israel, and he was on his way there — until the Rebbe told him to stay in New York.

I wasn't looking to marry a Lubavitcher — at the time, I was more modern Orthodox — but I was impressed when we met. I appreciated his honest smile and good nature. He also really believed in G-d, which was important to me. That might sound strange; after all, I was only going out with observant boys. But there's being religious, and there's being religious in a way that gets to your heart. He was also very active within the Jewish community in Australia, and I saw that his Judaism had that tone of self-sacrifice that I knew from home.

So, I wrote to the Rebbe: “I met this young man, and I'm interested. Should I pursue it further?”

“Surely you have discussed your values, including the matter of moving to Australia,” the Rebbe replied, before going on to give his blessing: “If you are in agreement, may the match take place in a good and auspicious hour.”

The matter of hashkafa, or worldview, was very important because while he came from Russia, I was American, and we were different in nuanced little ways that I didn't fully realize at the time. But in every marriage you have to adjust, and so long as you have the same basic values and goals, you can come to terms with anything. Meanwhile, when the subject of moving to Australia came up, I had first told my husband that I would have to think about it, before realizing that it's not about where we will live, but about whom I am marrying. If he wants to go to Australia, I'll go — particularly because the Rebbe apparently wanted us to go there, too.

And so, after my husband received the Rebbe's blessing in another audience, we got engaged. We didn't have money to spend, so when we were planning the wedding, I thought we should get married on a Friday. Nobody gets married on Friday, because it's right before Shabbat, so that was the cheapest day to book the local hall.

“Very good,” said the Rebbe, when we told him about the plan, “I wish others would do that too.” He added that you only are required to have a minyan, a quorum of ten men, at the festive meal, and you can even hold the event in an apartment.

And so, on a Friday in June of 1959, our wedding was held in the apartment of Mendel and Sarah Shemtov, my husband's cousins. The chupah was in their backyard, and Eli Lipsker, a local musician, played his accordion. The Rebbe sent us a bottle of Dom Bénédictine, and Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman, a well-known Torah scholar who was married to my cousin, came in from Chicago and spoke. After the wedding, the first thing I did as a bride was light Shabbat candles, and we had the Friday night meal at the Shemtovs.



Mrs. Esther Serebryanski with her husband Rabbi Chaim Serebryanski

A few years ago, our neighbor's daughter was getting married on a Friday. She was feeling a little distraught about it, but because the Tishrei holidays were coming up and her fiancé was working in Israel, the only available time was on Friday.

On the morning of her wedding, my husband and I saw her dressed in her wedding gown, looking unsettled. We wished her Mazel Tov, and told her our story, which came as a surprise: She had never heard of anyone else doing this. My husband then brought her a dollar that I had once received from the Rebbe. The girl's face lit up. It was years after the Rebbe had passed, but she had been hoping to get some kind of message that she was doing the right thing. This, she said, felt like the Rebbe himself was participating in her wedding.

Mrs. Esther Serebryanski was a writer and the first English-language editor of the women's periodical Di Yiddishe Heim. She was interviewed in August 2013. She passed away in 2025. Her husband was deceased before her petirah.