

THE REBBETZIN'S NACHAS

MALKA WILSCHANSKI

*Excerpted from The Rebbetzin, a
book compiled by Rabbi Mishael
Aronson*

MY GRANDMOTHER, REBBETZIN Leah Karasik, used to visit Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka every year when she came to the Rebbe for Tishrei. My first visit to the Rebbetzin was in my grandmother's company.

The Rebbetzin herself opened the door and my grandmother shook her hand. I followed her example. The Rebbetzin brought us through the living room into the dining room.

Before my visit, I had been told to pay close attention to many details of the Rebbe's home, such as the china closet in the living room, which contained silver articles that had belonged to previous generations of Chabad Rebbeim. In my great excitement, however, I forgot to look at it.

We sat at the dining room table, on which were set a teapot, cups and various delicacies. Previously, I had been advised that the Rebbetzin would invite us to partake of the delicacies, but that *chassidim* do not eat at the Rebbe's home. During our meeting, however, I wondered to myself whether it would perhaps show more respect for the Rebbetzin to partake of what she had gone to the bother of preparing.

After the Rebbetzin spoke to my grandmother for

a while, she turned to me. I had just started work as a dormitory supervisor at a girls' high school far from my parents' home. That was difficult, and I also encountered problems at work. The Rebbetzin was very interested in every detail, asking how I coped with the problem I mentioned.

As I spoke, I kept in mind that I had been told that what I said would likely be reported to the Rebbe.

At that time I used to paint pictures, and the Rebbetzin asked whether I was studying art and trying to develop my talents in this field.

What amazed me most of all, however, happened after our visit. Right after we left, the Rebbetzin phoned my other grandmother, Rebbetzin Ashkenazi, who was then living in Manhattan. The Rebbetzin



called to give her regards from her granddaughter who had just visited her.

“Mrs. Schneerson”

One of my aunts, a daughter of Rebbetzin Ashkenazi, used to help the Rebbetzin with home decorating.

My aunt, though traditional, was not *chassidish*. For example, when she spoke by phone to the Rebbetzin, she addressed her as “Mrs. Schneerson.” This greatly irked her mother, my grandmother, who asked her daughter to show more respect and call her Rebbetzin.

On the next occasion the Rebbetzin spoke with my grandmother, she appeased her, explaining that she felt more comfortable being called “Mrs. Schneerson.”

The same aunt was once diagnosed by specialists with a serious illness. She mentioned this to the Rebbetzin,

who told her to call at a certain time in the evening. My aunt understood that the Rebbe would be home then, and the Rebbetzin wanted him to hear details of the problem and to give his blessing.

When my aunt called at the time specified, the Rebbetzin asked her to repeat all the details. She did so and noticed that the Rebbetzin remained silent all the way through—indicating, apparently, that the Rebbe was listening on the line.

After she finished, the line was quiet for a few moments. Then the Rebbetzin said, “You should go to your family doctor. Tell him only about your pain, without telling him the diagnosis of the specialists. Follow your doctor’s instructions and you will have a complete recovery.”

The doctor gave her a checkup and told her she seemed to be suffering from a virus. He prescribed some

medication to take several times a day. My aunt followed his instructions and her problem disappeared.

The Rebbetzin greatly valued every moment of the Rebbe’s time, particularly the time he spent with her at home. Nevertheless, she gave up some of her cherished time with him in order to help my aunt...

Your Nachas Is Our Nachas

The Rebbetzin had a motherly feeling towards all the Rebbe’s *chassidim*. My father-in-law, Rabbi Refoel Wilschanski, who lived in Paris, France (he later moved to Crown Heights), once visited the Rebbetzin.

As he concluded his visit he said to her, “May the Rebbe have *nachas* from us!”

The Rebbetzin replied, “Your *nachas* is our *nachas*!”

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