

'MY SON, YOU ARE BLESSED'

ELIEZER (LAZER) RAKSIN



When my sister and her husband flew to Israel from Canada, we decided to spend Shabbos together in Yerushalayim. My wife and I booked a three-bedroom rental for ourselves and our children. On Thursday night, we dropped my sister off at her hotel and drove to the apartment we had rented. It looked nothing like the photos online. Half the lights were missing bulbs and the air conditioner was broken.

"We're out of here," my wife said. We called the apartment owner and canceled our rental. At that point it was after 11 p.m., so we booked a room in a random hotel nearby. On Friday afternoon, we found another rental. Alas, the new apartment was a disaster too. After running the air conditioner for 45 minutes, I was still sweating. The owner sent a worker to try and fix the problem, but he couldn't. We had to cancel again, hours before Shabbos.

I called my sister to find out if the hotel she was staying in had room for our family for Shabbos. Luckily, they did, which meant we once again had to *shlep* our bags across town. I wondered to myself: *Why is Hashem putting us through this?*

As we approached the hotel, I called my brother-in-law and asked him to wait outside so he could help us with the luggage. While he was waiting, he struck up a conversation with the doorman. "Did you put on *tefillin* today?" he asked.

For a few seconds, the doorman just looked at him. Then he began to speak.

"I put on *tefillin* every day," he said. "This morning, I ran

out of the house early and did not get a chance to put on *tefillin*. I was waiting for somebody to pass by with *tefillin*, but nobody did. Just before you came here, I was praying: 'Hashem, it is almost Shabbos! Please send somebody over to put on *tefillin* with me before it's too late.' And then you showed up!"

Just then, we pulled up to the hotel with my luggage and *tefillin* in hand.

Now I understood why we had to go through all the frustration and delays. It was just so that another Jew could put on *tefillin*. Hashem works in mysterious ways, but there is a reason for everything.

My wife and I landed in Ben Gurion Airport after spending a beautiful Sukkos in Miami. It was 6:00 a.m. and the only taxi driver in sight asked for an exorbitant fare. What choice did we have? We needed to reach Kfar Chabad, where we had parked our car while we were away, and then to head to our home sweet home in Afula, so we agreed to the driver's price.

If you have read my other articles in the *N'shei Chabad*

'I am not a religious person and traveling to Brooklyn while I was in so much pain did not sound like fun.'

Newsletter, you know where our conversation was heading.

"So, do you put on *tefillin* every day?" I asked as he began to drive.

"Let me tell you a story," he responded.

"In 1991, I was diagnosed with a condition that began with a growth on my back. It spread all over my body and made it excruciating just to walk. I was 38 years old, strong and healthy up until that point, and suddenly I needed a wheelchair. I went to doctor after doctor, but they couldn't pinpoint the problem. Finally, a specialist from England told me that the only cure for my ailment was a rare type of surgery in a specific hospital in Coral Springs, Florida. To my horror, there was only a 30% chance that the surgery would be successful.

"My friends suggested that I ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe for a *brachah*. I am not a religious person and traveling to Brooklyn while I was in so much pain did not sound like fun. But they convinced me. I flew to New York and was transported by ambulance from the airport to 770. It happened to be the Rebbe's birthday—I'll always remember the scene of hundreds of people streaming in and out. I was wheeled straight to the Rebbe, who was handing out dollars, and I told him my situation. The Rebbe gave me a dollar and said to me in Hebrew, '*Beni atah mevurach.*' (My son, you are blessed.) With that, I flew to Coral Springs to await my surgery.

"In the days leading up to the surgery, a friend of mine recommended

that I use his pool and pass the time swimming. He promised to help me climb in and out of the pool because I couldn't do that on my own. So, every day, I went to his house for a few hours and enjoyed the comfortable heated pool. After about a week, I realized I could get in and out of the pool on my own. Then I started walking again—without pain! Of course, I canceled my operation. Since then, I have never had a problem walking and I have never missed a day of putting on *tefillin*, which I undertook in the merit of the Lubavitcher Rebbe." The taxi driver showed me the dollar from the Rebbe which he still kept in his wallet. It was worth overpaying for a taxi ride just to hear his story. ❄️



19 Tishrei 5739 (1978). Lazer Raksin (in black hat) with the Rebbe in 770.