

## And a Chicken Shall Lead Them: How My Family Discovered Chiropractic

My grandfather Heshel was born in a town that "moved" around a lot. One year it was in Russia; another year it was in Poland, then Germany and then Lithuania. He had had enough of armies, bureaucrats, border fighting and anti-semitism and left Europe shortly after WWI. By the time he stepped down in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty he could speak Russian, Polish, German, Lithuanian, Yiddish (at home and in the local community), and Hebrew (to study the Talmud); he would add English to the list.

A matchmaker introduced him to Ida, and it was love at first sight: at his sight anyway. He proposed to Ida on their first date, but she, shocked by his effrontery, didn't accept, at least not at first.

After they married, he faced the shocking reality that he did not know how to support a family in this strange new world of America. He was trained to be a scholar, having studied in a Yeshiva (religious academy) most of his life. What did he know from working to support a family? He went to his rabbi for advice. "Have a bakery or chicken store," the rabbi said, "because that way your family will always have food."

It sounded like good advice and so, in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a melting pot of immigrants from all over Europe, Heshel and Ida opened a chicken store. They worked hard, developing a reputation for honest and fair trade, and did well. The family was able to buy a home in a nice section of Brooklyn called Flatbush. They survived the Great Depression economically and World War II with their lives, unlike all our relatives who remained in Europe.

One day, in the late '40s, at work, Grandma Ida was pecked by a chicken. The word peck sounds wrong: a peck sounds innocuous, like a little kiss, but this was no kiss. Chickens have hard, sharp beaks that can pierce your skin and cause a lot of tissue damage; that's why chicks' beaks are clipped when they are confined. They can, and sometimes do, peck each other to death. Grandma's thumb was damaged and she was badly hurt.

The soft tissues healed but the pain remained and was getting worse. She went to the family MD, Dr. Appleman. He was stumped. She went back again and again, complaining of intense pain. Not knowing what else to do, Dr. Appleman decided to bandage her hand, wrist, and arm and put it in a sling. "If this doesn't work we may have to cut the nerves," he told her. "You'll lose the use of your hand, but at least you won't suffer anymore."

Grandma Ida was shocked. She did carpentry, electrical work, cooking, gardening, drove the store truck, worked every day, drove Grandpa around (he never learned to drive), ran the house and was looking forward to holding her future grandchildren. She was terrified of surgery.

Desperate, she visited Dr. Friedlander, the neighborhood chiropractor. As Grandma told me years

later: "Friedlander said to me, 'You got time? You got money? I can get you better.'" How's that for office procedure?

"He charged \$10 for three visits," said Grandma. "If he came to your house it was five dollars."

Grandma agreed to Dr. Friedlander's terms. The chiropractor then took out a pair of scissors and started cutting through all the bandages. "What are you doing?," she asked. "Do you know how long it took Dr. Appleman to wrap up my arm?"

"You want to get better?"

"Yes."

He continued cutting.

Then Dr. Friedlander adjusted her spine. "What do I do now?" she asked.

"Come back the day after tomorrow."

Grandma's hand got better, and she would hold lots of grandchildren (and great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren). Soon the whole family was seeing Dr. Friedlander. A mixed blessing. My mother tells me that one day while I was running around his small office he reached for me. I wriggled playfully out of his grasp, and he "threw his back out." He had to visit his chiropractor in Manhattan.

I went to elementary school, junior high and high school with Dr. Friedlander's children. I was in the same Boy Scout troop with his twin sons. I noticed that his children never missed a day of school, and seemed to never be sick. But they also never got any shots, and I worried that they were so unprotected (if only I had been so "unprotected").

Many years later, after graduating from chiropractic college, I returned to the old neighborhood to look up Dr. Friedlander. My family had long ago moved to Florida and California, and all my old friends and neighbors were gone too. The neighborhood was now full of Jamaicans, West Indians, and Haitians (but Fong-Fong the old Chinese restaurant was still there).

What about Dr. Friedlander? I owed him. Maybe I could give him an adjustment? But his shingle was down and his name wasn't on the doorbell. A neighbor told me he had died. "He was a very sick man and wasn't supposed to live long but chiropractic got him healthy and he lived many years." But not enough for me. I'm sorry I never saw him or his kids again. I wonder what happened to them? Did any of them become DCs?

So that's the story of how my family was introduced to chiropractic. Grandma still sees chiropractors and I give her adjustments when I visit her in California. But she stays away from live chickens.

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