

HERE'S my STORY

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THE REAL MEDICINE

RABBI YOSEF GOLDBERG

I first met the Lubavitcher Rebbe a few years after he arrived in the United States from war-torn Europe. Of course, he was not the Rebbe then; he was the son-in-law of the Previous Rebbe. At that time, I was enrolled in the Chabad *yeshivah* in Crown Heights, and I would see him from time to time although I had very little contact with him.

In 1951, a year after the Previous Rebbe's passing, he took over the leadership, and the works of wonder began almost immediately. I have several stories to tell about that.

One Shabbat, the phone in our home started ringing. Of course, we didn't answer the phone on Shabbat, but it kept ringing and ringing. Whoever was calling finally rang our landlord, and we learned that the son of my grandfather's friends had fallen into a deep coma and was in critical condition; his parents were calling because they wanted us to go to the Rebbe for a blessing.

I was selected to be the one to ask the Rebbe.

After Shabbat, I went to the Rebbe's office. When he saw me standing outside his door, he invited me in, and I related their request. His instructions to me were to go to the hospital and scream in the man's ear first the Previous Rebbe's name and mother's name, and then the man's name and his mother's name.

Interestingly enough, earlier that year the Rebbe related that, one time, a woman had fallen into a deep coma and the Previous Rebbe instructed her relatives to whisper his name into her ear. When they did so, she immediately began to stir and a short while made a full recovery.

So I did this. I went to the hospital and saw this man — his name was Noah Daniel, he was a department head in New York City's Department of Taxation and Finance — lying there, white as a sheet. I put my lips to his ear and screamed as loud as I could what the Rebbe told me. Suddenly, he began to shake forcefully! Everybody



watching was amazed. But he was still very much out of it. The doctors told his family that he was at death's door. Even if he survived, he would never be normal again; likely, he would live out the rest of his life in a vegetative state.

I reported this to the Rebbe, who told me to come to him every day and he would give me instructions what to do next. And that's what I did. Each day, he gave me a directive. One day he told me to put a *mezuzah* on the door to his cubicle in the intensive care unit. Another time, he told me to put a book of *chasidic* teachings under his pillow.

This went on for quite a while, and when I couldn't go, my brother took my place.

Then one day, on a Friday afternoon, Noah Daniel woke up and, as if nothing had happened, started reciting verses from the *Patach Eliyahu*, the opening of the *Zohar*, the chief work of Kabbalah; these verses are customarily recited before Shabbat, and he seemed keenly aware of what day it was. In every respect, he was completely normal, and his doctors were amazed. He is still alive today — well

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MY ENCOUNTER
with the **REBBE**

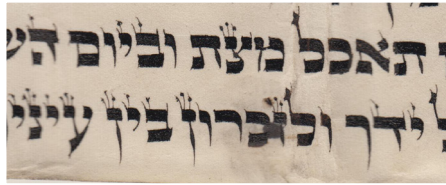
An oral history project dedicated to documenting the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. The story is one of thousands recorded in over 1200 videotaped interviews conducted to date. These stories are based on the recollection of the individuals recounting them. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. mystory@jemediia.org

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into his nineties.

Another story I'd like to tell, is about how the Rebbe's blessing saved my grandfather from having an operation.

This was in the early 1950s, around the time when I bought myself a new car, a Dodge, for the wild sum (in those days) of \$1,500. And seeing me in it, the yeshiva's driver asked if I would give a few



Parchment from Rabbi Goldberg's tefillin.

driving lessons to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the Rebbe's wife. She had an interim license, which meant she couldn't just drive anywhere, but she needed to practice. So I took her to Canarsie, to a site where people learn motorcycle riding, and she was able to brush up there.

It was at this time that my grandfather fell ill, and the doctors said that he had to have an urgent operation on his eye, or he would go blind.

Arrangements were made immediately for an operation at Maimonides Hospital. The day before the surgery was to take place, I saw the Rebbetzin, and I asked her for a favor. I said, "If you don't mind, could you mention my grandfather's name to the Rebbe? He's having an operation tomorrow. He's in danger of losing his sight, and he needs the Rebbe's blessing."

She agreed. The next day, when they laid my grandfather on the operating table, they examined him and saw that there was nothing there to operate on. They sent him home, and he was fine.

In 1989, I faced my own health crisis, and the Rebbe's advice saved me as well.

It started with a persistent pain in my stomach. I went to Dr. Wolfson, a gastroenterologist, who performed an endoscopy and colonoscopy, and said he would call me with the results.

A week later, the phone rang at eight in the morning. It was Dr. Wolfson. Why was he calling so early? As he put it, "You've got big problems. Your life is in danger. You have to have an operation on your stomach."

Immediately, I called the Rebbe's office and spoke with

the Rebbe's secretary. The answer I got was to check the *mezuzahs* in my home and also my *tefillin*.

We had fourteen *mezuzahs* on the various doorways of our home, and I took them all down and packed them up along with my two sets of *tefillin*. I sent them all to a scribe to be checked, while I went to various doctors' appointments who all confirmed that surgery was necessary.

After I returned home, I called the scribe, who demanded that I come over. So I did. When I arrived in his workshop, he showed me something that amazed me, especially so because my *tefillin* had been checked only two months before: Two letters of the *tefillin* scroll were obliterated by a blot. The letters were *zayin* and *chof*, which together spell *zach* meaning "clear." These letters were part of the word *u'lizikaron*, meaning "and it will be a reminder."

I nearly fell down when I saw this.

"You can't use these *tefillin*," the scribe said. Of course, there was no question about that, and I immediately bought new, kosher parchments.

As soon as I got home I called the Rebbe's office to thank him. And the message I got back was "That is the real medicine."

Shortly after, I had the operation and everything was all right.

Rabbi Yosef Goldberg was a teacher for over 15 years and was later the director for the New York City Department for the aging. He was interviewed in Brooklyn, New York in August of 2016.

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ע"י בניהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחיו

This week in....

> **5749 - 1989**, Rabbis Avraham Schapiro and Mordechai Eliyahu, the-then Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief-rabbis of Israel, respectively, visited the Rebbe for a private audience in his study at 770. The ensuing conversation encompassed a variety of topics, including Jewish unity, the study of Kabbalah, and the imminent redemption.¹ 11 Iyar

1. Appendix of *Sichos Kodesh* 5749

In loving memory of
Leah Feiga Bas Meyer

By her children **Simcha** and **Shellee Pollard**,
Bruce and **Jennifer Pollard**, **Gary** and **Chris Pollard**

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