

HERE'S my STORY

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THE MIDNIGHT CALL

MR. NAFTALI FELDMAN

My parents were refugees from Poland who met and married in a displaced persons camp in Germany — a place called Foehrenwald, just outside of Munich. Unfortunately, my father did not live long; he died when my mother was pregnant with their first child — me. So I was born in a DP camp to a widow.

My mother never remarried, but eventually she brought me to the United States, and we made our home, together with my grandmother and my aunt, in New York.

When I was eight years old, my mother went looking for a *yeshivah* for me, but all she could afford was ten dollars a month, when the going price was more like twenty-five dollars a month. She went from *yeshivah* to *yeshivah* and could find nothing, until she came to the Lubavitcher *yeshivah*. There, after hearing her story, they offered to take me in for free. But she wouldn't accept that, so finally a deal was struck that she would pay five dollars a month. That's how I became a Lubavitcher.

I was very happy at the Lubavitcher *yeshivah*. The teachers there were extremely kind, warm and giving. They were *chasidim* from the old world who honored the Rebbe with how they taught the children.

I had my first private audience with the Rebbe in 1964, when I was fourteen. At the time I was suffering from a chronic disease called ulcerative colitis, which causes painful inflammation of the intestinal lining, and the *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Mendel Tenenbaum, told me to go see the Rebbe about it.

I was very intimidated walking into the Rebbe's office — it was just a very awesome feeling to be in the



same room with him. But his smile broke all barriers. The kindness was plain to see on his smiling face.

When I told the Rebbe why I had come, he said, "Ask a doctor if it's a good idea for you to eat rice. Tell him that a friend has told you to eat rice." He called himself my "friend" and I was elated. I was a fourteen-year-old boy with no father, and suddenly I had a friend in the Rebbe. It was truly amazing.

When I related this to my mother, she immediately started feeding me rice. She believed in the wisdom of the Rebbe, and if the Rebbe said rice was good for my condition, well, she would make sure I had plenty of it. So I ate rice and, for at least seven years, I experienced no recurrence of the colitis. Previously, I had seen many doctors for this condition, which is quite painful and causes extensive bleeding, but while the medication they gave me sometimes helped for a short while, the problem never really went away. I was told there was no cure, yet the Rebbe helped me just like that with this simple suggestion.

That was not the only time the Rebbe helped me.

continued on reverse

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 1,400 videotaped interviews conducted to date. While we have done our utmost to authenticate these stories, they reflect the listener's recollection and interpretation of the Rebbe's words. Please share any corrections, comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

continued from reverse

The second time was when I was 40 years-old and a father of young children.

In 1990, after succeeding in the kosher restaurant business, I took my first vacation in a dozen years. I remember that I was putting our suitcases in the car, when suddenly I had trouble breathing. I put the suitcases down, lit a cigarette, calmed down, and all was well. But this kept happening every time I picked up the suitcases again — each time I exerted myself, my breathing became very strained.

Finally, my wife stepped in and insisted I get medical attention. To make a long story short — after a stress test, it became clear that my heart was in trouble. I had a blockage in my arteries, and I needed an emergency angioplasty.

I underwent surgery on Shabbat because it couldn't wait. But there were complications and I was experiencing severe clotting, despite high doses of blood thinners. This is a very dangerous situation because if a blood clot migrates, it can stop the heart, damage a lung, or cause a stroke. My life was in danger.

Sunday morning, my wife decided to go see the Rebbe while he was giving out dollars to be given to charity because I desperately needed his blessing. The Rebbe blessed me to recover, but he also told my wife to have my *tefillin* checked immediately. Following his instructions, she took it to a scribe who could do that.

Meanwhile, a blood clot was found in my leg, which the doctors were able to remove. They gave me several blood transfusions, but these were not helping with the continuing clotting issue. They could not figure out why this was happening.

That Monday night — at midnight! — my wife got a call from Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, "The Rebbe wants to know what is wrong with your husband's *tefillin*."

Unfortunately, my wife had no answer because the scribe had not responded as yet. Rabbi Groner was none too pleased. He said to her, "The Rebbe is

waiting for the answer!"

The next day the scribe reported back that there had been a problem with the letter lamed in the word "*levavecha*," meaning "your heart." But he had fixed it, and now the *tefillin* were one hundred percent kosher.

Right when I heard that news, they came to test my blood again, but now the results came back showing that everything was totally normal! I was finally on the road to recovery.

I would like to point out how amazing was the Rebbe's caring for every Jew. When my wife went to see him that Sunday, how many other people came to see him that day? Fifteen-hundred? Two thousand? And yet he remembered her request. He remembered our problem. He remembered our names! And he cared so much that he had his secretary track down our phone number, which was unlisted at the time, and call to inquire - at midnight no less!

The Rebbe's level of concern and kindness to me was unfathomable. He cared deeply about each and every individual that he met. And I'm a witness to it because it happened to me.

Mr. Naftali Feldman is a businessman who lives in New York City. He was interviewed in June of 2016.

לע"נ ר' ישראל יעקב וזוגתו מרת קריינא ע"ה לאקשין
ע"י בניהם ר' נחמן ור' אברהם ומשפחתם שיחי

This week in....

> **5742-1982**, the Rebbe refuted various excuses that people give for not heeding the Previous Rebbe's directive to study *chitas* (acronym for *Chumash*, *Tehillim*, and *Tanya*) every day. He elaborated on the importance of *chitas*, stating that even one who does not find the study enjoyable, must learn it dutifully. ¹
27 Adar

1. *Torat Menachem* 5742 vol. 2 page 1037

Dedicated in loving memory
of our dear father

Reb **Chaim Kaneti**
Yahrzeit, 22 Adar

By **Michael** and **Ricki Verbitsky** and family

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