



UNLOCKING THE GATE OF TRUST

Editor's Note

Several weeks ago, we published a story from an anonymous source for the first time. This inspired one reader, who had a very moving encounter with the Rebbe during a particularly difficult time in his life, to come forth and share his experience in writing.

Due to the personal nature of his account, he did not disclose his identity, but the details of his story were verified by his rabbi and his doctor, who were both involved as the events unfolded.

We are thankful to Mr. B. for sharing his story with us. It was very difficult for him to relive this part of his life, but he volunteered to do so with the hope that it would help those who may be dealing with similar challenges.

We hope that others who may have shied away from sharing their stories thus far will be encouraged to emulate his example, and thereby assist many others who could benefit tremendously.

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The Rebbe helped me in many ways, but here I would like to take the opportunity to relate how he helped me with my mental health. I feel that it will give others some insight regarding the Rebbe's view of mental health and also show how the Rebbe's advice was spot on.

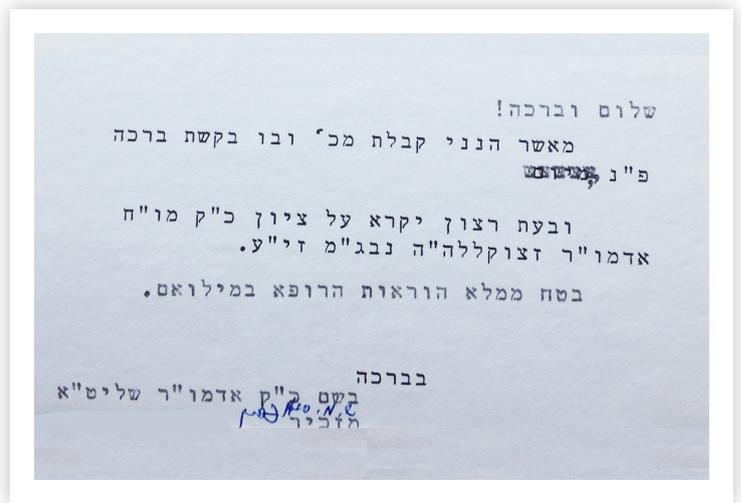
When I was about eighteen years old, I had a psychotic episode and I ended up in a psychiatric hospital for about six weeks. I was subsequently diagnosed as manic depressive, which nowadays is referred to as bipolar.

About six months later, I went to see the Rebbe. In the note that I handed to him, I wrote about the psychotic episode and said that I wanted to visit Israel in the summer, and also that I wanted to enroll afterwards in an out-of-town yeshivah.

During the audience, the Rebbe advised me to ask my psychiatrist's opinion regarding whether or not I should go to Israel. I was stunned, because in my mind I was convinced that the psychotic episode was a thing of the past, and that I was perfectly well now. So I said that it had been a long time since I needed to see a doctor. But the Rebbe replied that the doctor could still look up my file, and if not, I could remind him about what had happened.

Then the Rebbe spoke to me about my desire to attend an out-of-town yeshivah. He gave me a stern look and again said that I should ask the doctor whether this was a good idea.

In conclusion, the Rebbe gave me a blessing, in which he used the words "a healthy nervous condition." I remember thinking that maybe the Rebbe was indicating that my nervous



The Rebbe's letter to the author

condition would always be there, but that it should express itself in a healthy way. Or, maybe he was simply wishing me good mental health.

After consulting with my doctor, I went to study in the out-of-town yeshivah. Then, about four years later, I had another psychotic episode; I was brought to the hospital where I stayed for about six weeks.

This was a very difficult period for me, and at one point I was so distraught that I felt that I needed to call the Rebbe. However, my phone privileges had been taken away and I was not allowed to make the call. So, I went into a hospital office, wedged a chair against the door, and while the staff members were banging to get in, I called the Rebbe's office, very agitated. Rabbi Binyomin Klein, the Rebbe's secretary, answered the phone, and I told him that I'm not hanging up until the Rebbe gives me an assurance that all will be well.

He said, "The Rebbe already gave you an assurance."

"What did he say?" I asked.

"The Rebbe said, "Es vet zain gut — It will be good."

I hung up the phone, took away the chair, and calmly walked out with complete peace of mind. The staff members were all stunned.

(I've often wondered how Rabbi Klein had that answer from the Rebbe waiting for me. I presume that either I or my parents

continued on reverse



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 1,500 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.



continued from reverse

had written to the Rebbe about my situation, and the Rebbe had given the answer to Rabbi Klein, but I hadn't yet received the message.)

About two years later, I had another episode and again stayed in a hospital for a while, and then went back to *yeshivah*. A year passed, and again I had an episode. After I recovered somewhat, I wrote to the Rebbe that I had been very nervous, and I requested his advice and blessing. The Rebbe's secretary responded, telling me that the Rebbe had advised me to do four things: 1) *hesech hadaas meihanal* — to take my mind off the fact that I had been nervous; 2) to check my *tzitzit* to make sure that the garment was kosher; 3) to check my *tefillin* to make sure they were kosher; and 4) to study the "Gate of Trust" in the *Duties of the Heart* by the 11th century sage, Rabbi Bahya Ibn Paquda.

I followed all these instructions. I checked my *tzitzit* and, even though I didn't find any problem with them, I bought new ones just to be sure. I had my *tefillin* checked and, when an issue was found, I had it rectified. I also stopped focusing so much on how nervous I was. Instead, I began to study the "Gate of Trust," which explains how one can live a life of total faith in G-d, free of worry. I recall feeling a tremendous sense of comfort and assurance when I did so. I learned that G-d controls every facet and detail of life, so when we trust in Him, we can deal with others calmly and with confidence. I felt like someone who had been parched in a desert and who was suddenly given a drink of cold refreshing water. My insecurities and worries just melted away. All of a sudden, I felt that I could navigate life and relationships in a secure and worry-free way.

Soon after this, I left the *yeshivah* and went home. I started to work in the family business, but I didn't adjust well to it. I was still feeling the after-effects of the last psychotic episode, and I was depressed (which may have been part of the bipolar condition). I started to see a new doctor, who arranged for me to join a support group, but I hated it so I just stayed at home. That is when my mother called the Rebbe's office, asking if the Rebbe could write a letter to me. The reply was that first I should write a letter to the Rebbe.

So I did, describing my situation. The Rebbe wrote back, "Surely you are following the doctor's instructions in their entirety." He also encouraged me to participate in the various *mitzvah* campaigns which he had launched.

I went to my doctor, and I told him what the Rebbe had said, and that now I was obligated to do what he would tell me to do. The doctor saw that I would now obey his instructions, but he was not comfortable with suddenly having so much influence over me. I told him that although I understood why he didn't like the position that he was put in, I *needed* to follow his instructions.

He conceded, and after we discussed how much I hated the support group, he said that, if I preferred, I could go back to work instead. So I forced myself to start working again, which greatly improved my wellbeing. I even ended up finding my niche in the company and I was successful.

What also helped was participating in the Rebbe's *mitzvah*

campaigns. It made me very happy to help others, and it boosted my self-esteem tremendously. Even today, I find that when I run out of things to do for others, I start feeling depressed, so I immediately begin thinking about ways that I can help people.

Looking back, I can say that, thank G-d, my life has been very productive and happy. I got married and started a family. And I would just like to share this positive outcome with others who may be in the same situation as I once was.



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This week in....

> **5712 — 1951**, during the first Rosh Hashanah after formally assuming leadership of Chabad, the Rebbe held a *farbrengen* with the *chasidim* and distributed *kos shel brachah* afterwards. "Even though it is difficult to establish new practices which were not observed by my father-in-law," the Rebbe said, "I want to eat the holiday meal with you." Through all the years of his leadership, the Rebbe would continue this tradition of holding a *farbrengen* and meal in the concluding hours of Rosh Hashanah.¹ 2 *Tishrei*

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