



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

Medical Mystery

AS TOLD BY MOSHE GROSSMAN (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

I would like to share with you a story which, had it not happened to me, I would have never believed it took place. This story transpired in two segments and by the end I was a changed man.

It all began in the summer of 2014 (5774). My then twenty-eight year old daughter took a trip to Israel with an extended stopover in Spain. Arriving in Israel, she noticed swelling in her right arm which she attributed to a bug bite or something she ate, so naturally, she didn't give it much more thought.

The swelling persisted and on the Sunday she returned to the US she called my cousin, a pediatric oncologist, who, after hearing the symptoms came to the conclusion that it must be a blood clot and advised her to go immediately to the hospital.

Living in Manhattan, she made her way to the New York University Hospital emergency room, where an ultrasound scan confirmed the blood clot. Strangely enough, her condition was one that usually appears as a result of activities that demand intensive straining of the arm, such as baseball pitching or weight-lifting, neither of which my daughter had ever attempted.

When my daughter notified me she was on her way to the hospital, I immediately dropped everything to join her in NYU Hospital. The doctors decided on a rather simple operation, which would entail inserting a tube directly into the clot through which a dissolvent medicine would be injected. This would be followed by a CT scan to determine if the blood clot had indeed dissipated. It all sounded rather simple.

The procedure took place on Tuesday. When I went to visit her in the recovery room following the operation, she was suddenly overcome with an intense, excruciating pain in her abdomen and back, causing her body to spasm uncontrollably. The doctors injected her with painkillers and after the pain subsided, she was transferred to the ICU. The tube that was inserted during the procedure needed to be re-opened, as the short passage of time already caused the opening for the dissolvent medicine to close up.

I slept in the hospital that night, and the next morning we were notified that the treatment for the blood clot would be put on hold because, for no apparent reason, my daughter's kidneys abruptly stopped functioning. The doctors were baffled as to what had caused the kidney failure and very soon every department became involved in her case. She underwent numerous tests but none of the results pointed to anything that could be deemed the source for her kidney failure. In the meantime the doctors began to drip liquids into her body to entice the kidneys to begin working again, and over time her body became bloated from the accumulation of liquids.

At the end of the week they began dialysis in the hope of at least cleaning out the poisons out of her blood stream.

A week and a half on dialysis brought no improvement in my daughter's condition and her situation began to seem hopeless and never-ending.

That was when I received a call from Rabbi Yitzchak Weber, the Chabad shliach in my area. He had heard of our situation and he offered to go with me to the Ohel where I could write to the Rebbe for a blessing for my daughter's recovery. I wasn't the biggest believer but I figured it wouldn't hurt.

Rabbi Weber came to NYU Hospital on Thursday at ten o'clock in the evening, and we drove together to the Ohel. We arrived after midnight. I wrote my request and upon the advice of Rabbi Weber I resolved to begin laying tefillin twice a week.

That Shabbos it was decided that instead of bringing the dialysis machine to her room in the ICU, my daughter would be transferred to the dialysis department where, in addition to convenience, she would also avoid the risk of contracting any of the diseases that might have been more prevalent in the ICU.

On Sunday morning, after two weeks of endless tests, dialysis and IV drips my daughter began showing signs of recovery when she went to the bathroom for the first time in weeks, a clear indication that her kidneys had begun functioning once again just as suddenly as they had collapsed two and a half weeks before.

Over the course of the following week she released twenty eights liters of fluid which her body had



accumulated from two weeks of the kidneys not functioning.

She was soon back to normal, and upon being released from the hospital the doctors prescribed oral blood thinners and after nine months the blood clot disappeared.

There is no evident medical explanation, not for her kidney failure nor for her sudden recovery. Although the doctors remain mystified by this medical mystery, I am certainly not, considering the fact that her recovery took place just two days following my visit to the Ohel.

In January 2015 (5775) I was sitting in my office when I suddenly sneezed very hard. I felt a sharp pain on my left side but I attributed it to a pulled muscle and although I was in a lot of pain, I felt better after a few days.

Several days later I was sitting in my office again, when strangely enough the scene repeated itself. The pain I felt wasn't as intense as in the first instance but lo and behold the next morning I noticed a huge bruise on my left side. I visited my doctor who sent me straight to the hospital on suspicion of internal bleeding.

After running some scans and tests the doctors determined that the bruising was a result of an artery I tore when I sneezed.



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Alarmingly, the scans pointed to something much greater that had no connection to the bruising. There was an 8.7 centimeter growth on my left kidney, which was releasing blood as well.

In retrospect, the sneezing and bruising was actually an act of divine providence, as it prompted me to have myself examined and thereby uncovering the much greater issue.

After three days in the hospital the doctors informed me that the bleeding had stopped and although I was being released, they advised me to consult with a nephrologist immediately. Upon consulting with one doctor I was told that no biopsy was necessary as there was little chance that the growth was not cancerous and an operation was necessary to remove most, if not all, of the kidney. I asked

the doctor if the surgery can wait until after my vacation scheduled a couple months later and he assured me it was okay.

Still, I sought out the opinions of two more specialists, one from the University of Pennsylvania and the other from the Fox Chase Cancer Center, and both concurred that the procedure should take place as soon as possible. I decided to undergo the operation with the Fox Chase medical team and we scheduled for February 12 (Chof-Aleph Teves).

Rabbi Weber, with whom I had grown much closer since the story with my daughter, suggested we go visit the Ohel once more and ask for a *brocha* that all should go well.

Visiting the Ohel, I wrote my note in which I asked the Rebbe for a *brocha* for a complete recovery. In the days

leading up to my operation I underwent various tests to monitor the growth in my kidney and it was quickly decided that a full removal of the kidney would be fine as my other kidney was in full working order.

At one point, in addition to running tests on my abdomen, the doctor administered a chest scan as well. The results proved to be terrifying. Two lymph nodes, the size of 3 ½ centimeters & 3 centimeters, were detected behind my trachea. This looked very suspicious as it was the exact area to where the cancer from the kidney was most expected to spread. If this was the case then the disease was already in stage four.

At first the doctor was hesitant to specify the implication of this, but upon my insistence to hear a clear prognosis, he informed me that the average life expectancy of a stage four patient was two-and-a-half years...

That night Rabbi Weber called, as he often did, to hear an update of my situation, and when I shared with him the grim prognosis from earlier that day he had one question for me: What exactly had I written in my letter to the Rebbe. When I told him I had simply asked for a complete recovery he was surprised. "You should have asked for a miracle," he gently chided me. He suggested that I write another note with a request for a miracle, which he then sent with an acquaintance of his to be placed by the Ohel.

The day of my operation arrived. The surgery stretched on for over six hours, much longer than expected. Following the operation, the doctor spoke to my family and explained that everything about the kidney they had extracted screamed cancer, and it was sent for further testing to confirm the expected and seemingly obvious diagnosis. If confirmed, I would have to undergo intensive and lengthy treatment to battle the disease and we could only hope for the best.

After five days of anxious waiting for the lab results, my doctor came back with unbelievable news. The growth was benign! He had made sure the head pathologist himself thoroughly examined the kidney and lo and behold, not one cancer cell was detected.

I must tell you that when I chose my doctor for this procedure, I made certain to choose from all my options the most experienced and acclaimed. My doctor had personally performed six thousand similar procedures and his medical group at Fox Chase had completed over fifteen thousand such operations. From all these cases he had never seen an instance similar to mine. The size, texture, look and make-up of the growth shouted cancer, but the tests have proven it to be completely clean!

That Thursday I underwent a biopsy to determine whether the lymph nodes detected in my chest scan were infected. Following the test I went home to await the results

and I was feeling quite optimistic. I had recovered very well from the surgery the week before and I felt strong and healthy.

The next day a friend came to visit me at home and as I put up the tea kettle to boil I was suddenly attacked by tremendous pain. All at once my hearing dulled, my speech became slurred and I couldn't stand on my feet. I was rushed to the nearest hospital where it was determined that I had suffered three successive mini-strokes.

Astonishingly, I recovered quickly from this as well, and within a week I was back home.

Soon thereafter the results of my biopsy came back clean. The only possible explanation my doctor managed to come up with was that I had truly contracted the disease and in some inexplicable way, my body had absorbed it, a medical phenomenon that defies comprehension.

At that point I was not even surprised as it was evident that I was the beneficiary of extraordinary blessings. Every detail from start to finish was truly a part of this miraculous tapestry of events, beginning with the sneezing and bruising which, having no connection to my kidney disease, merely served as a warning signal for me to have myself examined, and ending with a clean bill of health despite the grim prognosis of the doctors.

Contemplating all this I was suddenly stunned by a recollection that still makes my hair stand on end every time I think about it. When I had asked the Rebbe for a blessing for my daughter half a year earlier, following her kidney failure, I had written that if necessary, I was ready to sacrifice myself and take her place!

Today I know that one must not ask for such things....

Soon after, I made a dinner to give thanks and celebrate my miracle. At the dinner I announced that I will be travelling to the Ohel to give thanks and express my gratitude to the Rebbe, and I urged that anybody in need of a blessing should join me. I rented a limo bus and we filled it with people.

Since then I have arranged regular trips to the Ohel, accompanying and assisting my acquaintances visiting for the first time.

My parents are holocaust survivors and my father was very anti-religious as a result of his experiences. This is the type of home that I was raised in and without a doubt the episode recounted above has completely changed my outlook on life, imbuing me with an entirely new appreciation and sense for true fulfillment. I now lay tefillin every day, attend *shul* on Shabbos and have wholly dedicated myself to assist Rabbi Weber in building Chabad in our community. **T**