



דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

Dedicated By
Chabad Lubavitch of Westport

A Clean Bill

AS TOLD BY PHILLIP (PINCHAS) ELIJAH (CHICAGO, IL)

I was born in Iraq to a Jewish mother and non-Jewish father. I have lived in many countries and cities before coming to Chicago, but it is really my spiritual journey that has been long and winded, up until a couple years ago when I reconnected with Yiddishkeit.

I have grown close with many in the Jewish community here, particularly with Chabad Rabbis Boruch Epstein and Shalom Gurewicz.

This particular story begins seven years ago. I was visiting a friend when my abdomen was suddenly wracked with a terrible pain that had me convulsing on the floor. My friend rushed me to the hospital where they ran some tests and, not finding anything, I was sent home with a suggestion that I go for a more thorough checkup. The pain soon subsided and I never looked into it any further. My life moved on and the incident was soon forgotten.

Early last year a strange thing began to occur. My spleen became extremely enlarged over a period of a few months and was causing me terrible pain. The idea of going to a hospital terrified me so I continued to push it off despite the persistent urgings of Rabbi Shalom and others. One Shabbos, as I was leaving my house for shul, I collapsed in tremendous pain. Struggling to breathe, I dragged myself to bed with great difficulty, certain that I was undergoing a heart attack. After a while my situation improved considerably but I knew something was terribly wrong.

On Motzei Shabbos I received many messages from concerned friends who hadn't seen me in shul that day. When I told them what had happened they declared that there was no more pushing off going to the hospital. The very next morning my good friend, Chananya Ehrenreich, drove me to the emergency room at Evanston Hospital



where the doctors ran many tests on me. When they were finished we were left to wait as they examined to pictures and results for a diagnosis. The wait dragged on for hours, filling me with a sense of foreboding.

The grim look on the doctor's face when he finally appeared gripped me with fear. He said he has good news and bad news. The bad news was that I had cancer. The good news, he informed me, was that I had a 1% chance to live...

It seems the cancer had slowly been growing for seven years and it had spread throughout my entire body. With cancer at stage 4.3 I had 6-12 months to live.

I was sent to more doctors and specialists and more tests were run to determine the cause and its effect. Everyone came to the same conclusion. The last doctor I spoke to was a man by the name of Dr. Greenblatt. After examining the x-rays and all the previous test results, he decided to take me under his care.

I was devastated. For two weeks I stayed home wallowing in despair, not even leaving the house to attend shul on Shabbos. I couldn't understand why now that I had found Yiddishkeit and every day of my life had become a blessing, Hashem was doing this to me. Together with the decline of my physical health, my emotional well-being was in tatters.

I had been diagnosed for about a month when I was suddenly hit by an idea like a bolt from the blue. Half a year prior, Rabbi Epstein had taken a group of us to the Ohel and it was like nothing I had ever experienced before; I decided I would return someday. Recalling that experience, I was filled with an intense longing to visit the Ohel and pour out my heart before the Rebbe and request his holy blessing. I wasn't sure how I would make the trip but I was determined to find a way.

A short time passed and one day my friend Chananya called me with an offer. He was planning to drive to New York for his niece's wedding and he thought it would be good for me to get out and enjoy myself a little, so

he proposed that I come along. Realizing the divine providence, I immediately seized on the opportunity. I told Chananya that I was willing to come on condition that we first stop at the Ohel on our way into New York. Chananya was very skeptical about such things, aside for the fact that it would add much travel time, so at first he resisted. When he realized I was adamant though, he relented.

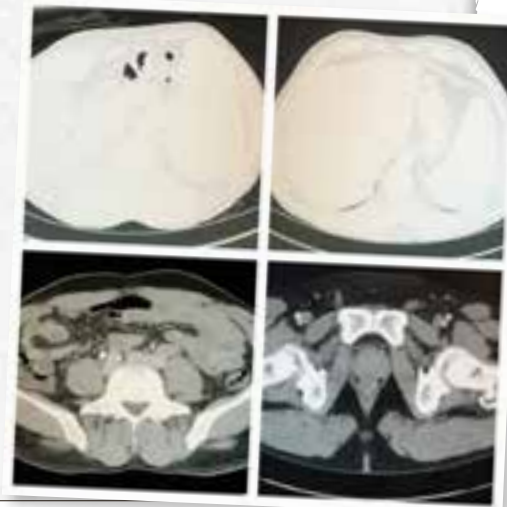
We drove for most of the night and arrived at the Ohel at four o'clock in the morning. I was euphoric. With mounting excitement I prepared myself to enter the Ohel. I prepared my *siddur* and removed my shoes in the tent and went out to the path leading to the Ohel. I noticed two people entering the Ohel and as I wanted to be alone with the Rebbe, I waited for them to leave.

Finally the moment came when I entered the Ohel alone. I cannot adequately describe the feeling that washed over me as I never prayed like never before. I left the Ohel completely shaken and filled with a strange sense of transformation. For the remainder of the ride I didn't utter a word but I was certain everything would somehow work out.

Upon returning from New York my chemotherapy treatments began. I also went back to work and started going to shul again and in general I tried to make the most of each day.

By the fourth session of chemotherapy in June of last year, they decided to run more scans and tests. Dr. Greenblatt spent some time studying the results and returned incredulous. He announced that the scans show that my body had entirely rid itself of the cancer. Not a shadow of the illness remained! Additional scans and supervision, which concluded in August, confirmed that I was completely healthy.

I will never forget those moments with the Rebbe and the certainty of his blessing that continued to accompany me until the day I received a clean bill of health and beyond. **T**



YOUR STORY

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