

HERE'S *my* STORY

HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY SOUL

RABBI YEKUSIEL FARKASH



In 1976, my daughter Chana Bayla fell ill with cancer. Doctor Daniel Krasnekuky at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem took an extraordinary interest in her treatment. He was incredibly dedicated to her. He'd come from his department to the children's ward, and he'd sit next to her bed and administer the injections himself. Unfortunately the treatments were not successful, and she passed away.

After the seven-day mourning period for Chana Bayla had ended, I went to his office and I told him, "Listen, doctor, I can't pay you. But I can share with you what G-d has graced me with — I can study with you. Would you like to study a little Torah?"

He was a Jew without even the most basic knowledge of Torah and *mitzvos*, but he was interested. "What will you learn with me?" he asked. I mentioned the *Tanya*, which contains a little Kabbalah. He liked that — everybody likes Kabbalah.

So we agreed to study together — Monday nights at his house. I would arrive like clockwork. We would study a few lines and it would develop into a discussion. In a short while, this man started to put on *tefillin* and

becoming more observant, but his wife — who would sometimes join us in our Torah debates — was impervious to the whole thing. She simply said, "I'm not interested, I'm perfectly happy the way I am..."

One day, I arrive at his house at my set time, I knock on the door, but there's no response. I knock again and again. Finally, the door opens. I notice that the blinds are drawn and it's dark inside. The doctor comes out all depressed.

"Doctor, what's going on?" I ask him.

"Don't ask. My wife is on her deathbed, may G-d save her."

"What happened?"

He explained that suddenly she developed a strange condition — as soon as she starts to fall asleep, her entire body tenses up and she goes into seizures. Her tongue swells. She wants to cry for help but she can't. This has been happening over and over to the point that she's afraid to sleep. Hadassah Hospital ran all types of tests but they can't diagnose the problem. She's lying at home totally debilitated, having being deprived of sleep for almost a week.

I said to him, "I have a solution: Ask the Rebbe."

"I can't do it without my wife's permission," he replied.

He brought her into the room in a wheelchair, but she wouldn't agree. "What?! Is the Rebbe familiar with my medical file? Is this some kind of joke?"

"You have nothing to lose." I told her.

"Leave me alone, I'm not interested!"

And then G-d put the right words in my mouth. I said to her, "They'll write on your tombstone that you sacrificed your life, leaving behind a husband and orphans, just so as not to ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe!"

Hearing that, she agreed.

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 the 800 videotaped interviews conducted to date. Please share your comments and suggestions. mystory@jemedi.org

I told the doctor to sleep near the phone, in case there was a response from New York.

The following morning, I gave them a call. The wife picked up the phone. During the night they had received an answer from the Rebbe: "Eat and drink only kosher foods, and I will seek a blessing at the Previous Rebbe's gravesite."

Now she had not given the Rebbe any personal information, so how did he know that she did not already keep kosher?

However, she was prepared to do it. She said to me, "Okay, fine, what now? Kosher means no pork and no shellfish, right?"

"There's a lot more to it than that," I said. "You can't mix meat and milk. You need to make all your pots and pans kosher, we'll need to redo your whole kitchen."

"Oy vey!"

"Do you want to be healthy?"

"Yes, I do!"



After thinking for a minute, she said, "You see, the Rebbe is smart. He's not like you — he didn't tell me to become religious, he only instructed me to keep kosher."

I brought over some people and they koshered her kitchen. To tell you the truth, I wasn't sure what would happen next.

In a day's time, I called to see what was happening with her seizures.

"Rabbi Farkash, don't mention seizures! Last night, for the first time, I slept for eight hours straight!"

Over the next few years, little by little, she and her whole family became fully observant.

During the time that they were in the middle of this process a few other amazing things happened:

One day, the doctor came to see me, "Listen, Rabbi Farkash, I received a letter from the Rebbe filled with acronyms, and I can't figure out what they mean."

Now, I had seen plenty of the letters that he had received from the Rebbe as a doctor at Hadassah Hospital. People in their final days would ask him to write to the

Rebbe and ask the Rebbe to pray for them. And these letters were always titled, "Dr. Krasnekuky, Hadassah Hospital." But this one was addressed differently. Using an acronym, the Rebbe had written, "The teacher and *chasid*, the G-d-fearing and venerable master, known as Dr. Daniel Krasnekuky ..."

I said to him, "Do you realize what's going on here? Until today you were a doctor, but now you are only *known* as a doctor. Tell me, did something special happen?"

He was sitting opposite me, and I could tell that he was deliberating whether to divulge something to me. Then he said, "Listen, my wife decided to keep the Laws of Family Purity... Today for the first time in her life, my wife is going to the *mikveh*."

And on that very day he received a letter which the Rebbe sent – obviously sent a few days earlier – that informed him that his status was changed. In the Rebbe's eyes, he had become transformed into a different person!

Rabbi Yekusiel Farkash is a Halachic authority and author of Halachic works. He was interviewed in Jerusalem in February, 2012.

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

This week in....

> **5737 — 1976**, in honor of the "Year of Jewish Education," the Rebbe held a special *farbrengen* with public school students from the "Released Time" program in the large *sukkah* at 770. The Rebbe washed his hands for bread and spoke to the children about the beauty of the holiday.¹ 19 *Tishrei*

> **5750 — 1989**, in a short note appended to an address he was editing, the Rebbe revealed the reason he recited *kaddish* every year on the twenty-fourth of *Tishrei*. It was the *yahrzeit* of the Rebbe's maternal grandmother, Rebbetzin Rochel, who was murdered by the Nazis. "For a few weeks at the end of the summer — during a number of years — I would live with her in Nikolayev, Ukraine and she would take care of me."² 24 *Tishrei*

1. *Sichos Kodesh 5737 Vol. I*, p.96 2. *Sefer Hasichos 5750 Vol 1*, p.63

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