

# HERE'S *my* STORY

## SEEING IS BELIEVING

**DR. LEONARD LOVITCH**

The accident happened in the early morning of *Tisha B'Av*, 1982. As I opened my closet door to get ready to go to synagogue, I noticed an old stepladder and a carpet sweeper stashed there temporarily. We were in the midst of construction, and the plumber was running new pipes through my closet up to the attic. I stepped on the rickety ladder to take a look, and I slipped. The handle of the carpet sweeper went straight into my right eye. I screamed in excruciating pain. My wife, Sharon, came running. We realized the severity of the injury: I might, G-d forbid, have lost the vision in my eye.

We called our friend, Dr. Goldstein, an ophthalmologist in Long Beach, and fortunately we caught him before he left his house. "Meet me in my office at 8 o'clock, and I'll have a look."

Sharon drove us over, and after he examined me, Dr. Goldstein said, "Well, I've got good news - it seems like your globe, the eyeball, is intact, but it's up in your head, and you injured the lower part of your eye muscle which controls the movement of your eyeball. I have to get you to an expert right away. A world renowned expert in eye muscles, Dr. Steven Feldon, happens to be at USC here in Los Angeles. We'll get him to examine you."

On the spot, Dr. Goldstein called Dr. Feldon at the Doheny Eye Institute. It normally takes months to get an appointment, and we heard him say, "No, no, no, this is an emergency. Dr. Feldon has to examine Dr. Lovitch today!"

Finally they said, "Okay, okay, send him down."

Dr. Feldon examined me, and after they took some tests, he said: "You have a major injury, and there's nothing I can do for you right now. I want you to wear a patch over your eye, and come back in a month. We'll check you again and see if there's any improvement. We'll see then what we have to do."



Well, you can imagine how upset I was. Here I was, a young surgeon, just beginning my career, and I had only one good eye. It's impossible to operate with one eye; you need stereoscopic vision in order to operate. I had to close my practice since I couldn't schedule any surgeries.

We went home, and Rabbi Newman came to our house. He said, "I heard about your injury, and I have already called the Rebbe's office on your behalf."

A month later we went back to Dr. Feldon. He examined my eye, and said, "No improvement. I think we've given it enough time. I need to operate on your eye and see if there is anything I can fix."

I called Rabbi Leibel Groner, the Rebbe's secretary, and I got the Rebbe's blessing. The operation was scheduled for the following week.

After the operation, Dr. Feldon told us, "I have good news and bad news."

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continued from reverse

"Tell us the good news," we said.

"The good news is that the eye muscle is intact. It was severely injured, but did not become detached from your eyeball. The bad news is that I couldn't do anything to fix it. It's not fixable. Come to my office and we'll get you special glasses called prism glasses which divert the direction of the light and will enable you to see with the one healthy eye.

I was devastated. I had spent years studying to be a surgeon; I was just embarking on my career. What would become of me now?

I called Rabbi Groner, and I told him, "I just don't understand. We learned in Torah classes that everything that happens is for our good. Tell me, where is the good? I don't see it!"

Rabbi Groner spoke to me for a long time, trying to comfort me. Then he said, "I'm going to speak with the Rebbe, and I'll get back to you."

The following Sunday we attended a celebration in the community. When we got home the phone was ringing. Rabbi Groner was on the phone. "Where have you been - I've been trying to reach you all afternoon! I spoke to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe has a question for you: Do you make *kiddush* and *havdalah* on red wine?"

I answered, "Sometimes, not always. Sometimes on white wine, sometimes on grape juice; whatever we have in the house."

"Aha," he said. "The Rebbe told me to instruct you to always make *kiddush* and *havdalah* on red wine."

"Okay," I said. "I'll do that. Is that it?"

At the time, I didn't understand that the Rebbe's entire response to my predicament could be contained in such a short instruction.

By that Shabbos, the whole community had heard what the Rebbe had said. There was a bottle of red wine in *shul* for me, and I made *kiddush* for the entire congregation. Parenthetically, that from that day on, whatever the event is, there is always a bottle of red wine waiting for me at the synagogue.

One week went by, and I made *kiddush* and *havdalah* on red wine, and then two more. A total of six weeks had gone by since my injury. I woke up that Sunday morning and I felt a clicking in my eyeball, as if it was moving.

"Sharon", I said to my wife, "something is going on here. This hasn't happened before. Something is different!" It happened again and again all week, and I felt that there was definitely movement. *Kiddush* and *havdalah* that Shabbos, and one more Shabbos after that - and then suddenly the eyeball was back in its place, as if nothing had happened! I could see perfectly, without the prism glasses, just as before.

I called Dr. Feldon, and I said to him, "I have something to tell you. My eye is better. I can see."

"That's impossible! Come down here and we'll examine you."

When I got there, the whole crew at USC that had been involved in my surgery was waiting for me.

After they examined me, Dr. Feldon said, "You're right, your eye is fine! It's unheard of - it's miraculous! Tell me, whom do you know that can make such a miracle happen?"

I told him, "The Lubavitcher Rebbe, in Brooklyn, New York."

"Well, it's definitely miraculous," he said.

I was very impressed that this doctor acknowledged that the spiritual realm can affect an outcome beyond the world's natural order. I have carried that lesson with me for my entire life, and in my career as well.

I went back to my practice, and I was able to do what I was trained to do, and more. My career has been very profitable, and it has enabled me to give *tzedaka*, charity, not only locally, but to causes all over the world.

*Dr. Leonard Lovitch is a general surgeon in Whittier, California. He and his wife were interviewed in Los Angeles in September, 2011.*

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

## This week in...

- > **5730—1970**, in a letter to Mr. Schneur Zalman Mischari of Kiryat Ono, the Rebbe accepted the idea of a collective Bar Mitzva celebration for orphans of Israeli war veterans and victims of terror. This tradition continues to this day.<sup>1</sup> 22 Sivan

<sup>1</sup> Igros Kodesh Vol. 26, p. 412.

In honor of the engagement of our dear friend

Danny Freundlich  
to  
Chana Sara Newfield

by the JEM staff

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