

THE FEIN FAMILY'S DOUBLE MIRACLE

TWO MONTHS AGO A GIRL WAS DRIVING IN THE SHOMRON WHEN SHE WAS ASSAULTED BY A BOULDER THAT BROKE HER SKULL. HER BROTHER, A LUBAVITCHER CHASSID, TELLS US ABOUT THE MIRACLES ACCOMPANYING HER RECOVERY AND HOW HE CAME TO CHABAD.

BY SHAI GEFEN

It happened a little over two months ago on 3 Nissan. The night before, Danielle Fein got engaged. The next day, she was traveling with the *chassan's* family to participate in a *Sheva Brachos* at Yishuv Yakir in the Shomron. An Arab ambush awaited them and a huge rock was thrown at the car, hitting Danielle, who was critically wounded.

Security forces arrived at the scene immediately and took her to the hospital. The entire right side of her skull had been crushed. She was operated on for over ten hours, but her situation still looked hopeless.

Danielle's brother, Yoni Fein, relates how he heard the news:

I heard that a girl from Be'er Sheva had been severely wounded, and I immediately thought of my sister. I got the news shortly thereafter and was in a state of

shock. I went to the hospital and on the way I heard on the radio that her condition was critical. Tears came to my eyes. My sister had just become engaged, and now this terrible tragedy! At first, I was deeply depressed, but after the first shock I remembered the line the Rebbe taught us, *tracht gut vet zayn gut*, and I said to myself, "There's a G-d and there's a Rebbe. There is reason to have hope."

I called my uncle who lives in Crown Heights and asked him to mention my sister to the Rebbe. We also wrote to the Rebbe and received an amazing answer in the *Igros Kodesh*. The Rebbe began the letter with the words, "In response to your letter of 16 Tammuz in which you write about her health... to strengthen faith in Hashem, in His Divine providence over every single Jew, He is utterly good and will

endow her with goodness and kindness, with visible and revealed good, and the stronger the *bitachon*...the faster and the greater will be the blessing they need." (Vol. 11, p. 278).

At the end of the letter the Rebbe adds, "If the *mezuzos* of their house were not checked in the last twelve months, it pays to check them." Of course I checked them that day, and to my surprise we discovered that the letter *Reish* in the word "*ha'aretz*" was cut off...

"We saw exceedingly great miracles," says Yoni Fein who was there for his sister throughout the weeks she stayed in the hospital. The miracles began 24 hours after the murderous attack. Suddenly, with no prior warning, Danielle managed to open her eyes, which the doctors considered a medical miracle. She slowly began to recover and the doctors took her off the respirator. Within a few days she was transferred to the neurosurgery department in the rehab section.

"The surgeon, Professor Jackson of Bellinson Hospital, said that it was an open miracle, the likes of which they hadn't seen in a long time. He said that she had come in nearly dead and they had needed to operate on her brain. They thought this

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would have tragic consequences, but incredibly, there were no negative effects.

Yonei Fein wants to mention and thank all those who prayed for his sister. "It was the first time that I saw the fulfillment of *tracht gut vet zayn gut*. The Rebbe had written the greater the *bitachon*, the faster the salvation. We, the family, can say that we saw this fulfilled with my sister in a quick and supernatural fashion.

The wedding was postponed, but the family plans on combining the wedding with a *seudas hoda'a* for the great miracle the *kalla* experienced.

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Yoni Fein's personal story is not the first moving event in his life. Yoni calls it a double miracle, for a number of years ago he became acquainted with the Rebbe MH"m and his teachings. Today, some of his family has also gotten involved with Chabad.

"I was born into an academic family. My father, a'h, studied at one of the most exclusive universities in America and became a professor of philosophy. At first he was far from religion. His father, my grandfather, was President Roosevelt's personal guard and was the second Jew in history to be accepted into the U.S. Secret Service. He was also not religious.

"My family moved to Eretz Yisroel in 5735 and my father began teaching at Ben Gurion University in Be'er Sheva. He knew seven languages fluently and he lectured

on foreign languages and French literature.

"My family became more religious here. My brother and I began attending religious schools, but it didn't interest me at all. Religion had no place in my life. I didn't see any significance to spiritual life and didn't understand why all this was necessary. It just didn't relate to me, and I became known as an anti-religious kid.

"We once visited America where my parents went for "dollars" on a Sunday. I heard about the religious



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Yoni with his friend Eliyahu Kanterman (left)

Rabbi and didn't want to go see him, so I stayed outside! Fortunately (and I say that today), before leaving, the Rebbe came out to his car on his way to the *mikva* and I was standing there and got to see him.

"I was not an easy child. The greater my opposition, the more tension there was at home and at school. I was expelled and I decided to leave Eretz Yisroel for the United States to make some money.

"Sometime later I heard that my father was very ill and was in the hospital. I went to visit him, and I remember he was talking Chassidus, about *alma d'iskasia*, etc. It turned out that my father had gotten involved with Chabad in Be'er Sheva and had learned Chassidus regularly."

When Yoni reached draft age he returned to Eretz Yisroel and served in the army for three years. He served in dangerous areas in Gaza and in Lebanon. He remembers what Effy Fein, the Givati commander, said to the soldiers, "Statistically, three of you will not be returning home!"

"Despite that," says Yoni, "we all went resolutely to war."

It was at this time that Yoni got to know Chabad better. In the middle of his army duty in Lebanon, he was in some forsaken army base on Purim. "There were ten of us and suddenly the Chabadnikim came and

brought us joy. That visit made a deep impression on me."

After completing army service, Yoni returned to the U.S., where the inner void began gnawing at him. "I was completely disconnected."

"One day, as I was going to Manhattan, a young guy came over to me and asked me whether I was Jewish. I realized he wanted me to put on *t'fillin* and I declined. He kept pressuring me, and finally said to me, "If you don't want to put on *t'fillin*, at least let's sit and talk." I agreed, and in the end I also put on the *t'fillin*.

"My empty life continued to gnaw at me, more than before. In addition to all the *tzaros* I had, on one of my visits to Eretz Yisroel I was injured in a serious car accident. My spleen burst and my lungs were punctured. After lengthy surgeries and hospitalizations, I miraculously recovered. I got of bed and went back to the U.S. to continue my search for meaning in life.

"I registered for classes in psychology and philosophy in the hopes that this would help me organize my thoughts, but it didn't happen. I was so down that I couldn't find enjoyment in anything."

Yoni will never forget that night. "I was living in Connecticut. At two in the morning I decided to go outside. I ignored the pouring rain

and walked and cried, screaming in my despair. At a certain point I yelled, 'G-d, help me!'

"You see how true Chassidus is when it says that even a person who considers himself anti-religious is not far from Hashem, and when he's in trouble he calls out for G-d's help. It was specifically in the terrible depths of despair that the truth began to be revealed me.

"Shortly thereafter a personal friend called me out of the blue. He's a Lubavitcher by the name of Eliyahu Kanterman, whom I knew from my childhood in Be'er Sheva. We had no connection for years and now Hashem sent him to me.

"My personal transformation began with that phone call. Eliyahu, who was learning at 770 at the time, invited me to come visit. He said I should write a *Pa'N* to the Rebbe, and I did. It was very long and detailed everything that had happened to me. At the time I had no idea who the Rebbe or Chabad was, but my friend told me to include whatever is in my heart, so I sat down and kept writing.

"I asked the Rebbe for peace of mind. I asked for easy work (not involving Shabbos). I asked to live in a quiet place, and I asked about other matters, as well.

"Then I went back to Connecticut and within a few days the Rebbe's *brachos* began shining on me. I suddenly found an apartment in a very quiet place in the middle of the forest. Another few days passed and I found a job that did not require me to work on Shabbos. My life quieted down and a spirit of peace enveloped me, which was a gift from Above.

"The place I lived in was in the middle of nature, and I began learning and delving into Judaism. I opened a *Chumash* for the first time



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and simply began learning. I wrote down every question I had, and at the end of the week I called my friend Eliyahu for answers.

"One day Eliyahu said I should visit Crown Heights to see what a Shabbos is all about, as he put it. I went for Shabbos and then another Shabbos, and another... For the first time in my life I saw what pure Jewish serenity is, what a pure house is, what family life around the Shabbos table is, and all this captivated me.

"I decided to try Chassidus. I asked questions and got answers. I remember how I was once sitting with Eliyahu in 770 as we learned Chassidus together for hours. The pleasure I had in that learning is something I hadn't felt in years."

The biggest change actually took place on 23 Nissan 5757, Acharon Shel Pesach. Yoni traveled with a friend to New Haven and looked – until now he doesn't know why – for Chabad. They parked the car far from the *shul* and waited for a *minyán*, but the place was empty. Finally the *shliach* showed up and invited them to eat the Yom Tov meal



At an evening with Chabad

with him. They were touched by the gesture, and from then on were captivated by the magic of Chabad.

They ate the *Seudas Moshiach* and were profoundly affected. When they finished their meal they went with the *shliach* to the nearby university to have the *Seudas Moshiach* with the students. On Motzaei Yom Tov, Yoni knew the moment had come. "I told my friend, this is it! I've used up all the excuses and I'm going to start wearing a *kippa*."

Yoni began feeling he had found his place and the feeling of emptiness began to be substituted for meaning in life, with the path of Judaism clearly paved before him. He began going to 770 every Shabbos, and began following a Jewish-Chassidic way of life.

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Among his other talents, Yoni is also gifted musically. He plays the guitar, and today he uses his talents for *Yiddishkeit*. He began performing at Evenings with Chabad at *kibbutzim* and various cities. At each place he tells his life story. The first time he saw the power of music and Judaism was when he sat in a park in

Brighton Beach and began playing his guitar. Many Jews gathered round and joined in the singing.

Yoni returned to Eretz Yisroel a year and a half ago and married. He learned in *kollel* to make up for the years of learning he lost out on. Today he is an elementary school teacher and in the evenings and during his free time he performs at Evenings with Chabad and tells people how he came to Judaism. He accompanies his story with song, in a special song that describes his life until he came to know the Rebbe MH" M.

Yoni tells and sings about young people, some of whom experienced the same things he did. When he speaks to them he gets right to the point. "Our job today is to bring as many Jews as possible to the Rebbe MH" M, and I try to do it this way."

Wherever he goes he brings his personal message: "Over the years they recommended many miracle cures and various books, but nothing penetrated. Only Chassidus and the Rebbe's teachings managed to touch my soul and to change my life from one extreme to another."