

## ***The Apartment Next Door***

Rabbi Yossel, an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in a town in Israel, followed the Chabad custom to have his *mezuzot* and *tefillin* inspected once a year, during **the month of Elul**. In Elul 5749 (1989), R. Yossel brought his tefillin and mezuzot as usual to the home of a scribe. Every single mezuzah was found to be kosher. Satisfied and relieved, R. Yossel took the mezuzot home and re-affixed them on his doorways.

As an emissary of the Rebbe, Yossel wrote regular reports to the Rebbe. In his weekly letter, Yossel reported on the preparations that his community was making towards the upcoming Rosh Hashana holiday, and mentioned that his mezuzot had been checked and were found to be kosher.

The month passed quickly in a whirl of activity. Yossel barely had a moment's rest as he ran around carrying out his communal duties, helping his congregation prepare for the holidays. After all his dashing about, Yossel was not surprised to find that his feet were aching, although this was unusual for him.

The pain intensified to a stabbing, throbbing ache. As the days went by, walking became more difficult for Yossel and he realized that he could ignore the situation no longer. He hobbled to the doctor who inspected the foot and told Yossel that he had a serious infection. The doctor prescribed therapeutic soaks, cream and antibiotics. He cautioned Yossel to let his feet air out and stay off his foot until it healed.

Rosh Hashana arrived, and Yossel could barely drag himself to shul. Every step was agony. Instead of leading his congregation in prayer, Yossel was forced to stay seated the entire time with his feet elevated. His condition worsened as the infection did not respond to any treatment.

On the day after Rosh Hashana Yossel was once again in bed, being examined by his close friend a doctor. "The infection is very serious and has penetrated deep inside your foot. If it doesn't begin to subside, the foot may have to be amputated."

What more could be done? They had already tried everything. Yossel's wife decided to fax a letter to the Rebbe. Generally, Yossel believed in not being a "fair-weather friend" and writing to the Rebbe only when there were problems.

He preferred to report only positive news to the Rebbe<sup>1</sup> which was why he had not written yet about his foot. But now there was no other option.

He gave the letter to his wife to fax, but before she had a chance to do so, they received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretary. "The Rebbe instructs you to check your tefillin and mezuzot, and he will mention you in his prayers at his father-in-law's gravesite."

Yossel's first thought was, my mezuzot were just inspected last month. What could the Rebbe mean? After a short consultation with his wife and children, they came up with a possible explanation.

The family lived in an apartment building. The apartment next door belonged to a friend who had moved out. Before leaving, the friend had handed the keys to the empty apartment to Yossel and told him that the apartment was his to use for his Chabad activities, free of charge. Yossel was surprised and grateful for this generous offer.

The friend moved out, taking all the contents of the apartment with him, including the mezuzot. Yossel set up the apartment as his office and put up plain mezuzot, since he was not sure if, according to Jewish law, he was actually responsible for maintaining mezuzot on the apartment. Because of the Rebbe's instruction, Yossel decided to take down all the mezuzot in his office and have them inspected.

Two weeks later, during the holiday of Sukkot, R. Yossel received a call from the scribe. The mezuzot were checked, and all were found kosher...except for the one on the doorway leading to the porch. Yossel's wife ran out to purchase a new mezuzah and then attached it properly in place.

That same day, she 'happened upon' an article in a medical journal that described a simple, natural remedy for the infection her husband had. Yossel was incredulous--could such a simple method help his foot, after he had already used the most powerful antibiotics? Still, it was worth a try.

Wonder of wonders, as soon as Yossel applied the salve, the infection began to subside. Within a day, his foot was completely healed.

The following day was Simchat Torah, and Yossel gave his congregation a most pleasant surprise, when he walked in on two healthy feet to dance with the Torah together with his community.

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Source: Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from "Geulah" #62 (Nov. 2005).

Connection: Seasonal – the Jewish month of Elul, the 30 days before Rosh Hashana.

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, the Lubavitcher Rebbe made it clear that he expected to receive both.