


**I BELIEVE
IN
HASHEM,
I TRUST
IN
HASHEM**





“When things were really tough and being b’simchah was extra hard, I would sing and dance with my tambourine. You can’t be sad and worried when you are dancing!”

On 11 Tishrei, I had the honor to meet with Rabbi Chaim Levi and Mrs. Baila Goldstein and three of their sons, Zalman, Shmuly and Yanky. It was more like a *chassidische farbrengen* than an interview, and ended with Baila and me humming “I Believe in Hashem” in the rain on the Goldsteins’ front porch while waiting for my ride home.

At the beginning of the interview, all three sons said: “The interview should really be with our wives, Shiffy, Rivkie and Shula. They had the real *mesiras nefesh*. It was during corona, when the schools were closed and all the children were in lockdown at home full time, not even going to play on the sidewalk outside. All this while preparing for Pesach, yet they wholeheartedly gave up their husbands so we could be busy with our father’s care.”

I hope you enjoy the reading as much as I loved (and personally benefited from) the interviewing. -Rishe Deitsch



WEDNESDAY
8 ADAR
3/4/20

Levi and Baila both became sick the week before Purim. Soon Baila was diagnosed with pneumonia, put on antibiotics, and she recovered, *b"H*. But Levi just didn't get better.

SUNDAY
19 ADAR
3/15/20

ON SUNDAY MORNING after Purim, PA Mordechai Strausser from Dr. Eli Rosen's office called to check on him. After speaking with Levi and hearing how labored his breathing was, he said, "I'm calling Hatzalah. You have to go to the hospital right away. You have COVID."

Upon his arrival at the emergency room in Maimonides,

Levi was immediately intubated and put on a ventilator to help him breathe. He was also placed in a medically induced coma, which prevents patients from pulling the ventilator tubes out of their throat, as they are extremely uncomfortable.

BAILA: I packed up his things and also my own things, to go with him. But when we came out to the Hatzalah ambulance, they said to me, "You can't come along." Then my husband looked at me and asked, "You're not coming?" This was very painful to me. We were sure that wherever my husband goes, I go along.

I was very broken and lost. My first reaction was to call my *mashpia*. She guided me to focus on the positive and constantly thank Hashem for the *brachos* that I do have. Her words became my guiding light for the coming months.

Thank You, Hashem, that my husband is alive.

Thank You, Hashem, for the *refuah sheleimah* that You are giving him.

Thank You, Hashem, for our *lichtige kinderlach* and *einiklach*.

Thank you, Hashem, for our supportive siblings.

Thank you, Hashem, for the support I am getting from our friends and the *Tehillim* groups.

My list of *brachos* was endless.

When things were really tough and being *b'simchah* was extra hard, I would sing and dance with my tambourine. You can't be sad and worried when you are dancing! I would *daven* to Hashem asking Him to help me be strong and *b'simchah*.

MONDAY
20 ADAR
3/16/20

BAILA: The next day, Monday, they told us we can come to be with my husband, but only one family member at a time. I packed a Chitas, a dollar from the Rebbe, and a piece of cloth from a tablecloth the Rebbe used, and my son took me to the hospital.

When we got there, they sent us up to the ICU on the seventh floor, where we were turned away and sent downstairs to wait. Finally, they let us know that no one is allowed in, not even to stand outside his room, and that we should go home. It was a tremendous shock. No words can describe the feeling of going home knowing that I couldn't even visit my husband.

WEDNESDAY 22 ADAR 3/18/20

ZALMAN: For the first few days, the situation seemed hopeful and my father's condition seemed to be improving. We were calling the hospital regularly getting updates on his condition. The hospital spoke to us about the possibility of extubating my father very soon.

FRIDAY 24 ADAR 3/20/20

ZALMAN: When we called the ICU on Friday morning, the doctor told us that my father's heart wasn't doing well overnight and they were trying to stabilize it. This was a big disappointment and also very worrisome. This started a downward spiral, R"l.

BAILA: The first Shabbos that Levi was in the hospital was 25 Adar, the birthday of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka and also my father-in-law's *yahrzeit*. I felt sad that my husband wouldn't be able to say *kaddish* for his father. With all the shuls closed, I thought, perhaps no one would say *kaddish* for him at all.

Usually my husband prepares the *licht* for Shabbos. This time I prepared them myself, while hearing news from the hospital that things had taken a turn for the worse. After I *bentched* *licht*, I opened the Rebbe's *Igros Kodesh*, *chelek* 25, page 89, in which the Rebbe gives "a *brachah* for *arichus yamim*, in good health and happy spirits especially during the month of Adar—*marbim b'simchah*." So I decided to be *b'simchah* despite the fear and the many unknowns. I sat down and pictured my husband being back home, stronger, back to his teaching and other good activities.

YANKY: When we asked about calling the hospital on Shabbos and Yom Tov, our uncle, Rabbi Yehoram Ulman, a senior *dayan* in the Sydney Beis Din, said that not only were we *allowed* to call the hospital but we were *obligated* to keep calling as usual. He said it was absolutely necessary for *pikuach nefesh*, as it was important for the staff to know that they would be called upon to give a daily update. He went on to record this message in a video to be shared with others in this situation. So for the next two months, the three of us [Zalman, Shmuly and Yanky]

kept up our communication with the hospital and carried our phones with us 24/7 until my father was no longer in critical condition.

SUNDAY 26 ADAR 3/22/20

ZALMAN: At the morning update, we were told that my father's heart had gotten worse and that he had to be shocked several times overnight.

A few hours later, we got a call from the hospital. This was the first time they ever initiated a call: "Things are getting worse." So I asked, "What should we expect going forward?" I was told grimly, "Expect things to get *even* worse." They told me I should speak to my mother, to "prepare her" and I should "let the family know."

I asked the doctor who called me what the head doctor said, and he replied, "He's the one who instructed me to call you."

He then asked me to release the hospital from having to resuscitate our father, saying, "Everything is failing anyway and the machines can't help, so why cause him all the pain and needless suffering and unnecessary exposure for the hospital staff?" Of course I told them they had to do everything they could to prolong our father's life. He ended the call by saying, "Expect a call from pain management."

I received a call from the pain management office. (I soon understood that this is a euphemism for hospice care). The woman who called was carefully chosen for the job. First she expressed interest in our family ("he has ten kids, wow"), then she began to make promises ("we can make your father very comfortable... he won't suffer"), and then she began to prophesize ("it's not a question of *if* his heart stops, it's a matter of *when*...").

I got off the phone and began to question myself. What is the correct thing to do according to *halachah*? Should my father have to suffer in the last hours of his life?

I immediately called Rabbi Ulman, who said, "Although at times that may be a valid question, in your father's case, since he was perfectly healthy two weeks ago, you have to do everything possible to save him." I was relieved.

That afternoon, after we received that terrible prognosis, I decided despite the lockdown to leave my house and go to the Ohel. At that point the streets were deserted, with everyone hunkered down at home.



When I arrived at the Ohel, in middle of the afternoon, it was virtually empty. Extremely unusual. I stood there, just the Rebbe and me, poured out my heart and begged the Rebbe for a miracle.

After I came out of the Ohel, I opened the *Igros Kodesh* (Vol. 12, page 217) where the Rebbe writes, “I don’t know why he is so upset and agitated about his health, because he is healthy—*bori hu!*”

SHMULY: We were very fortunate to have Dr. Yehudah Trestman, a critical care pulmonologist from Poway, California, and a close friend of our uncle Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, guiding us throughout my father’s hospitalization. He would join us on the phone calls with my father’s medical staff every day and sometimes several times a day.

After getting off the phone with the hospital that day, he said that as Yidden and especially *chassidim*, we needed to focus on the possibility of my father surviving. Since my father was still alive, that was all that mattered.

While all of this grim news was pouring in, we decided to add a name to our father. There was only one catch: There were no *minyanim* being held... anywhere in the world! Finally we found a *minyan* in Australia taking place in someone’s backyard on Monday morning, and they added the name Chaim at *krias haTorah*.

My youngest brother, Moishy, immediately ordered new *tallis* and *tefillin* bags for my father with his new name, Chaim Levi (see photo). Through this purchase we were telling Hashem that despite the desperate prognosis, we had *bitachon* that my father would recover and need these new bags.

YANKY: The whole idea of us not being with our father was painful, especially knowing that he would be feeling lonely. My sister Sheina Mushka Einstein came up with the idea for us to send in an MP3 player with messages from our family. With the help of Eliezer Putter, a Lubavitcher PA at Maimonides, and the nurses, we set up an MP3 player so that my father constantly had *sichos*, *niggunim*, *pesukim*, and messages from family playing near his bed in the ICU.

SHMULY: That night I drove to Maimonides with a dollar of the Rebbe, a picture of the family, a *Chitas* and the MP3 player that Yanky had prepared, and delivered it all to the hospital along with some treats for the hospital staff. I met Eliezer outside the hospital (no visitors were allowed inside the hospital). When I gave him the package I asked him if my father had a chance of living. He gave me a warm smile and said as only a *chossid* can

say, “Sure it is possible for him to survive!” I knew that he was familiar with the situation. I came home with a glimmer of hope.

ZALMAN: Sunday night came, and *baruch Hashem* my father was still alive. People all over the world were *davening* for him, and every hour that passed seemed like a miracle. But on Monday we were informed that his kidneys had begun to fail and they were stopping all medications.

TUESDAY 28 ADAR 3/24/20

ZALMAN: We were informed that the kidney failure was causing a toxic buildup in my father’s body and they needed to put him on dialysis. But in order to do that they had to first do a procedure to insert a catheter, which in my father’s critical and unstable condition could be very dangerous. I immediately gave them the approval and called Rabbi Ulman to confirm that it was the correct thing to do; he agreed. The procedure was scheduled for Wednesday, 3:00 p.m.

I went back to the Ohel so I could be there during the procedure. This time there were a few people there and when I noticed that a full *minyan* was present, I interrupted everyone and asked them to please join us to daven for our father and all of the sick Yidden. I also had many family members on the line with me for our daily conference call. I called on all the Rebbeim from the Baal Shem Tov on down, weeping and begging for a *refuah shleimah* for my father, Chaim Levi ben Chana Priva.

After I came out of the Ohel I opened the Rebbe’s *Igros Kodesh* (Vol. 17, page 129). It was a letter dated 25 Iyar, where the Rebbe writes that he was “happy to hear that he is recovering, and as it is close to the time of receiving the Torah, and that alone gives strength...” (And indeed, two months later my father was informed on 25 Iyar that he was being discharged the next day, and he ended up coming home just in time for Shavuos.) The procedure was successful.

BAILA: Days and nights passed. My husband, Chaim Levi, was still in very critical condition, but alive *baruch Hashem*. My siblings, Rabbi Yechiel Mendel Kalmenson, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Kalmenson, Rabbi Yisroel Shimon Kalmenson, Mrs. Doba Vorst, Mrs. Chaya Uminer, Mrs.



Moshe immediately handed over a credit card to pay for their entire stock of PAPR's and Yanky found a courier to drive them overnight from Ohio to New York.

Sterna Spritzer, and Ms. Chana Kalmenson, all rallied around me, making a conference call every single day with Torah, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*. My son Yechiel started a nightly conference call with all my children for Torah, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*. These conference calls gave me tremendous *chizuk* and continued every single day until my husband came home.

SHMULY: My sister Sheina Mushka, who lives on *shlichus* in New Haven with her husband, Yitzchok Meir Einstein, said that my mother's words of *emunah* and *bitachon* during these calls and at other times helped her tremendously during the most difficult weeks.

Hearing our mother, who was home alone without my father, speaking so positively and with such strength inspired and strengthened all of us in our positive thinking.

CHAIM LEVI: I don't remember anything from the weeks that I was unconscious. I was vaguely aware of being involved in a struggle to free myself. I have a recollection of thinking that maybe the time has come and my life on this earth is ending— that this is what that feels like. I remember thinking, I accept this.

BAILA: Our children and grandchildren were really amazing, each and every one did everything they could for my husband and for me. As soon as my husband was hospitalized, my granddaughter Chana went into a quiet room and completed the entire *Tehillim*. The grandchildren took upon themselves many special *hachlatos*. Some would say every *brachah* on food clearly and would begin with “*lizchus Chaim Levi ben Chana Priva. Baruch Ata...*” Some took upon themselves to add extra *hiddur* in saying *Modeh Ani* and *Asher Yatzar*. Our six-year-old grandson Yossi

would spend 30-40 minutes on most days reading my husband's *kapitel*.

My children made sure I had everything I needed in the house. I didn't have to go out for anything. Plus my sons were constantly in touch with the doctors and nurses so I knew my husband was being attended to in the best possible way.



Throughout COVID, even though my children were very devoted and always nearby and taking care of me, I was still all alone at home. But we have *shalom bayis*, so the *Shechinah* rests in our home, and I felt Hashem with me. Before Pesach, our son Zalman came with his older children and made the entire Pesach for me in my house, from preparing the kitchen to cooking all the food. We made enough food for my husband and me as we had *bitachon* that he would be home for Pesach.

My son Yanky, who lives upstairs from us, made the first *seder* with his family on my front porch. From my dining room table I was able to be part of it, to hear and see the *divrei Torah*, the *niggunim*, the *fier kashes*, everything. They really tried to bring *simchah* into my home and my heart and my Yom Tov.

Still, during the *seder* I thought to myself: I don't need to eat *maror*. I could taste it without eating it, just knowing that my husband was alone in a hospital, unconscious, not having any *seder* at all.

The second *seder* night, my daughter and son-in-law Hindy and Menachem Feldman came with their two babies to make their *seder* on the porch again (despite the inclement weather that night), so I could participate. Once again, their company really kept my spirits up and helped me have *simchas Yom Tov*.

SHMULY: It was already three weeks and my father was still intubated. Dr. Trestman explained to us that once a patient has been intubated for two weeks or more, the lungs start to weaken and it becomes impossible for the patient to be extubated (i.e. removed from the ventilator to breathe on their own). The only practical route would be to perform a tracheotomy, an incision in the neck in which they can place the ventilator tubes instead of through the mouth.

With each passing day, the risk of complications was growing, and clearly he needed the trache. Yet the hospital wasn't traching *any* COVID patients. We consulted with Dr. Avi Rosenberg (a *frum* doctor at Johns Hopkins Hospital who helped many people during the pandemic). He spoke with some of his contacts at Maimonides and discovered that there was a major shortage of proper protective equipment to do the procedure safely. They desperately needed these astronaut-style suits called PAPR's (Powered Air Purifying Respirator) where the medical staff have their own supply of oxygen without getting exposed to anything in the patient's room. They were already risking their lives by treating COVID patients, and doing a surgery without protective gear would increase their risk exponentially.

(One of the ICU doctors at Maimonides ended up in the same ICU as a patient.)

We contacted Rosa Hinda (Rubashkin) Weiss, who was instrumental in helping many, many people. She managed to source two PAPR's but the hospital desperately needed more than just two. There were simply none to be found in the entire Northeast!

During the afternoon on the first day of Pesach, while everyone was preparing for the second *seder*, Yanky and our cousin Eli Uminer made contact with a warehouse in Ohio that sold welding supplies and they confirmed that they had PAPR's (these special suits are used by welders as well). Eli Uminer ran over to Moshe Rubashkin's house. Moshe immediately handed over a credit card to pay for their entire stock of PAPR's and Yanky found a courier to drive them overnight from Ohio to New York. As soon as they arrived in New York, Eli and Yanky delivered them to Esther Mintz, the RN from the tracheotomy team. The hospital staff was very impressed and grateful for the PAPR's. My father was the first patient to receive a trache, followed by many others *B"H*. These PAPR's enabled the hospital staff to perform other important procedures on COVID patients that were previously not possible.

Baruch Hashem the surgery was a success and they were able to remove the sedation on Monday, 19 Nissan. My father was transferred out of the ICU into the vent unit where he slowly began to regain consciousness. Yanky set up a laptop which he would control remotely (we were still not allowed into the hospital then) so that we could communicate with our father and keep him company.

Everyone at home and at the hospital was very impressed with Yanky's communication with my father through the laptop. He managed to establish a connection with my father in the early stages when he was just beginning to regain consciousness. Even later when my father was fully awake, he wasn't able to speak because of the trache and his hands were too weak to be used as a means of communication.

Yanky would sleep with the open laptop next to him so that he could tend to my father's needs throughout the night. This was the closest we could get to having someone with him in the hospital.

CHAIM LEVI: I have very little recollection from my time at Maimonides. I remember that Eliezer Putter came every day to wash *negel vasser* with me and put on *tefillin* with me.

When I regained consciousness, I "knew" it was almost Pesach, but when I asked, I was told that Pesach was long

over. I had no matzah, no four cups of wine, nothing. This was Hashem's Will. I don't remember any of this conversation. My family told me about it later.

SHMULY: When my father was transferred to the vent unit at Maimonides, one of the nurses there told Eliezer Putter, "It's because of Rabbi Yossi Goldstein [our father's father] that I am *frum* today. I was a student in Bais Yaakov many years ago. I was a rambunctious trouble-maker and got sent out of class all the time. I would end up at Rabbi Goldstein's office, the assistant principal. It was his kindness and patience that kept me from giving up."

FRIDAY 7 IYAR 5/1/20

CHAIM LEVI: After three weeks in the vent unit, I was stable enough to be transferred to Specialty Hospital of Central Jersey where they would wean me off the ventilator with Hashem's help.

One of my early memories at the new hospital was when the door to my room opened and someone came in and began singing and dancing, "*Ess iz doch altz hevel havalim, ein od milvado!*" Then he asked me if I wanted to put on *tefillin*. I said, "Sure! Of course!" I could not yet use my arms to do it myself. This was Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Holtzer, a grandson of Shachna and Ada Zirkind, a Satmar *chossid* and chaplain of the rehab hospital. He laughed and said, "Moshiach is surely coming when a Satmar *chossid* is helping a Lubavitcher *chossid* put on *tefillin*."

Reb Shlomo Zalman would come by daily and sing and dance *Hupp Cossack* and other *lebedige niggunim* and put on *tefillin* with me until eventually I was strong enough to do it on my own. On my last day at the hospital, I was able to do *mitvza'im* and put on *tefillin* with one of my doctors.

During one of my physical therapy sessions, they sat me up in a chair and asked me to hold on to a walker and try to stand up. I couldn't. They said, "Count to three and stand up." I couldn't do it. As hard as I tried, it was simply impossible!

Then an idea came to my mind. I pictured the Rebbe standing in front of me and saying, "Levi, get up!" And believe it or not, I stood up! Then they told me, "Take this walker and start walking." My feet were collapsing. I had no strength to stand. It was like taking a week-old baby and putting her on the floor to walk. Suddenly, I

imagined myself walking to 770 to see the Rebbe, and I got a new boost of strength and I started to walk. The therapists were amazed that I was walking so well, and that's how I started my recovery.

After three weeks of intense therapy in Lakewood and successful weaning off the ventilator, Dr. Rosen said to my family: "Bring him home! We'll take good care of him here!" *Baruch Hashem* for that. It's an understatement to say I was very happy to come home.

Before leaving Specialty Hospital, the director, Dr. Chuna Chaim (Howard) Lebowitz, told me that he'd like to learn *Tanya*. Since then we have a weekly *Tanya chavrusa* which we both enjoy very much. (When he met me the first time he started singing "Hashem Is Here," knowing the song that my father, "Uncle Yossi," had made famous.)

Back in Crown Heights, Dr. Rosen, Yingi Bistritzky and Golan Ben-Oni put together the most amazing rehab center in ULY on Crown St. for all of us COVID survivors. In a very short time I was regaining all my strength and getting back on my feet *baruch Hashem*.

On Shavuot 5727, the Rebbe quoted the Frieddiker Rebbe, after his imprisonment in Shpalerke in 5687 (1927): "On Rosh Hashanah before I was arrested I said a maamar and I mentioned in this maamar the chiddush of the Baal Shem Tov regarding the inyan of hashgachah pratis, that everything, even a single blade of grass, and for sure every single Yid, is under Hashem's individual care and attention. At the time, I didn't know why I put it in. It was unrelated to what I said before or after in the maamar; it didn't belong there and wasn't part of the sequence. Now, after the arrest and the liberation, I realized that had I not inserted that inyan in the maamar, I don't know if I would have made it through."

About a year prior to corona, I started learning *Shaar Habitachon* in *Chovos Halevavos* (per the Rebbe's numerous letters in *Igros Kodesh*). I also started to call into the Bitachon Hotline (929-470-5577) and came across the song "I Believe in Hashem" by Rabbi Ephraim Wachsmann. This *niggun* really struck a chord with me. The words were powerful! I learned it by heart very quickly and would sing it and teach it to others wherever I went.

On 20 Av, 5779, I was asked to *farbreng* at Nosson's Shul. I spoke about *bitachon* and then taught the *niggun* to the



The Goldsteins with a picture of their children (L-R): Zalman, Yechiel, Moishy, Chaya Seema Friedman, Sheina Mushka Einstein, Hindy Feldman, Kutzy, Shmuly, Mendy and Yanky.

crowd, which someone there videotaped. While I was hospitalized, someone shared the clip of me teaching the *niggun* and it went viral.

Then while I was in the rehab hospital in Lakewood, I sang the song again from my hospital bed. The video quickly made its way all over the world. At the team huddle the next morning, the hospital staff showed this video to boost morale.

After I came home, Dr. Rosen on one of his house calls (I don't know how he did it, so many people received house calls, plus his office kept tabs on so many sick people) told me that his wife keeps singing the song that I sang from my hospital bed.

Shula, my daughter-in-law, said to me: "During the most critical days you weren't awake to have *bitachon*. When you say that *bitachon* helped you, the fact is that you stirred up the *bitachon* in all the people around you. It was because of everyone's *bitachon* that Hashem helped you!"

The song goes like this:

**I believe in Hashem, I trust in Hashem
There never is a moment when
I am alone, and on my own
I believe and I trust in Hashem.
Because I understand that He's holding my hand**



At the interview (L-R): Rische Deitsch, Baila Goldstein, Rabbi Chaim Levi Goldstein. Not shown but present at the interview were sons Zalman, Shmuly, and Yanky.

**And every step is perfectly planned
He's holding me tight, so I'll be alright
I believe and I trust in Hashem.**

Recently, I got to meet Dr. Yitzchok Kupfer (head of ICU at Maimonides) at the *l'chaim* for his son's engagement. After an emotional thank-you, I told him that the Rebbe Maharash had a doctor who would stroke his beard while deciding on a treatment. The Rebbe Maharash told this doctor that the very act of stroking his beard brought down the 13 *Middos* of *Rachamim*, Hashem's Mercy. In kabbalistic terms, the beard corresponds to the level of *Arich*, which is an acronym for **אֲנִי יְיָ רַפְאֵי**: (for I, the Lord, heal you, *Shemos*, 15:26). I felt that Dr. Kupfer, a *chossid* with his full beard, did the same for me.

We are very grateful and humbled from all the *brachos* that Hashem gave us and all the support we received from our family and friends. Thank you for all the *tefillos*, especially to the hundreds of participants on the *Tehillim* groups who kept saying *Tehillim* around the clock, non-stop.

We are forever grateful for the kindnesses that were shown to us by complete strangers, who taught us what it means to care for a human being you've never met before. These angels stepped in and gave

of themselves to help us and Klal Yisroel. We'd like to thank the staff at Maimonides including Dr. Gomez, Dr. Cho, Dr. Seneviratne Chanaka, Dr. Kabu Chawla, Maria Lopez, Alex Gross, Bracha Tova Cywiak and Jake and Nadia, volunteer nurses who came from out of state to help.

Thank you to Dr. Henry Fishman, Yossi Sternberg, Nussi Sternberg, Yossi Katz, Mayer Rosenbaum, Michael Kraus, Nuta Felsenberg, Leah Gelerenter, Moshe Chaim Weider, Ella Adler, Yanky Zahler and many, many more.

Our hearts ache for all of the people who passed away during the pandemic and their families. We *daven* for Moshiach now so we can be reunited with all our loved ones.

I would like to encourage everyone to increase in their *emunah* and *bitachon* by learning *Shaar Habitachon* in *Chovos Halevavos*. May Hashem *bentch* Klal Yisroel with all the *brachos* that we need: *parnassah*, good health, *nachas* from children, *shidduchim*. Most of all, may we merit to see the end of *galus* with Moshiach NOW! ❏

For more from veteran *mechanech* Rabbi Chaim Levi Goldstein, please visit ChinuchTime.com. To learn more about *bitachon*, and what it can accomplish in the life of a Jew, learn *Shaar Habitachon* with Rabbi Shais Taub: soulwords.org/trust. -Ed.