



Miracle in the Trauma

ICU

**GOLDIE GROSSBAUM
FOLSOM, CA**



Goldie: On Tuesday morning, Chai Nissan, I packed some kosher-for-Pesach muffins in my hospital bag (while grumbling that I wouldn't be able to indulge in my customary Reisman's brownie bars after birth) and my husband and I drove to the hospital. It had been an uneventful pregnancy followed by a routine induction, and labor went smoothly. At 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning, our healthy baby girl was born. I asked the nurses to double-check the gender, because I had given up on having a second daughter after a pattern of boy, girl, and then eight boys in a row, *ka"h*.

There was more bleeding than usual and the doctor decided to do a routine procedure to stem the flow. I asked her whether she was concerned and she answered, "No, we do this all the time."

That's the last memory I have of that night. The following five days are blank.

In those five days, family, friends, and complete strangers said *Tehillim* for my survival, acts of kindness were performed across the world, all while my husband sat at my bedside, monitoring every moment of my care and desperately praying for a miracle.

Yossi: I was saying *Tehillim* just outside of the delivery room when I heard the doctor expressing surprise at the amount of bleeding. A few minutes later, Goldie was wheeled out to surgery. Her face was strikingly pale. I suddenly found myself alone in a room with my 20-minute-old daughter. A nurse came to complete the post-birth care of the baby, and another brought me paperwork to sign for Goldie's procedures and blood transfusions. I asked if everything was okay and she responded somewhat cryptically, "It will be."

By tremendous *hashgachah protis*, Goldie had packed kosher-for-Pesach baby formula in the hope that a nurse would do a night feeding or two and she could get some sleep. I made a bottle, fed the baby, and updated my close relatives on the situation. It suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't sent a *tzetel* to the Ohel, so I sent a note asking the Rebbe for a *brachah*. That was the first of at least a dozen notes that I sent to the Ohel over the next few days.

I must have dozed off because I was startled awake by the doctor's voice. She said that Goldie had experienced excessive hemorrhaging. The various procedures they had attempted had failed, but she seemed to have stabilized. They transferred her to the Trauma ICU due to excessive blood loss.

The nurses offered to watch the baby while I went down to the Trauma ICU. At first, I was told that I would be able to enter the unit and see Goldie in a few

I have often wondered where the words of Tehillim go when we pray for people. Now I understand that the Tehillim enters the blood flow of the person who is ill. It becomes the energy and life force in their body.

minutes. Almost an hour passed and no one called me in or answered the phone on the wall. Finally, I banged loudly on the door. A nurse opened the door but didn't have news I wanted to hear. He said I'd have to wait longer for an update. Over his shoulder, I could see that there was a commotion near one room in the unit. At least 15 people were coming and going. A hunch told me it was Goldie's room, and I soon learned that I was right.

A charge nurse came out and said that some complications had arisen and the doctor would come out soon with more information. At this point, I was quite worried although I didn't know the extent of the danger Goldie was in. I sent a message to our family asking them to please recite *Tehillim*.

After what felt like forever, the doctor came to update me. One look at her face told me all I needed to know. Her eyes were bloodshot, and she seemed distraught. "Your wife is very sick," she said. "We are doing everything we can to save her." She told me that Goldie had Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation, a rare but life-threatening condition that causes abnormal blood clotting throughout the body's blood vessels. Her kidneys, liver, and intestines were all failing from the blood loss. Multiple surgeons were called in and they were doing everything they could to save her. I made the mistake of Googling the condition and discovered that it had a mortality rate of 57%.

I started messaging more people to please say *Tehillim*, and posted it on my social media status. My sisters-in-law in New York rushed to the Ohel to *daven*. Time lost any measurable quality. At some point, a surgeon came out and said that they had succeeded in stabilizing Goldie but there was no medication that could fix the condition. They made a large incision in her abdomen, packing the area to try and stop the bleeding. The large wound site was being held closed with bandages and a wound VAC, a machine that worked constantly to drain fluid. They would not know her prognosis for the next 48 hours. In the meantime, she was in critical condition; the doctor advised me to pray.

After 24 hours, the draining of the wound site slowed down—a good sign. Goldie was extubated and soon after started responding to questions, but became incoherent every so often, saying random *pesukim* of *Tehillim* in response to questions from the nurses.

Goldie: I have often wondered where the words of *Tehillim* go when we pray for people. Now I understand that the *Tehillim* enters the blood flow of the person who is ill. It becomes the energy and life force in their body. There were thousands of people across the globe saying *Tehillim* for my recovery. There is no doubt in my mind that all that *Tehillim* circulating

in my body is what brought my body to a full recovery. At that vulnerable time, when I opened my mouth to speak, the *Tehillim* came tumbling out, because that's what was in me. That's what was giving me life.

Yossi: I went home to gather food, *sefarim*, and supplies for the last days of Pesach. I was surprised to find our refrigerator overflowing with trays of food. One of our neighboring *shluchim* had sent over everything we would need at home and at the hospital for the last four meals of Pesach. That was only the beginning of an outpouring of kindness we would receive from all directions.

The hospital graciously provided a room for our newborn (by now named Chaya Mushka) and me to stay in over Yom Tov. On my return to the hospital, I brought a *pushka* and *mezuzah* to place in Goldie's room. I placed a cup filled with coins next to the *pushka* and encouraged the doctors and nurses to give a coin to *tzedakah* when they entered. I was relieved to find that Goldie was a lot more coherent than she had been earlier. She asked me what was going on but didn't fully grasp what was happening. We were able to have a quick video call with the children at home before Yom Tov began, which greatly reassured them, although Goldie has no memory of it.

By Friday morning she was incoherent again. The doctors, however, were pleased with her progress and decided to continue with a planned procedure.

Goldie: The surgeons reported to Yossi that the procedure had gone well. Yossi hoped I might even be able to join him for the Moshiach *seudah* the next evening.

But another crisis arose. An arterial line that had been placed in my femoral artery now posed the risk of infection. Removing it created the risk of internal bleeding. Weighing the two odds, the doctors made the decision to remove it. A few hours later, a nurse who was monitoring me noticed something was amiss and alerted the doctors. They applied pressure to my leg to try and stop the internal bleeding, but to no avail. The situation was critical and I again needed transfusions to keep up with my blood loss, bringing the total amount of blood transfusions to over 30 units. My mental state also deteriorated, and I became delirious. I was singing, screaming, and talking nonsense.

Yossi: It was difficult to see and hear. Goldie was in a lot of pain. After close to two hours, they managed to get the bleeding under control. On Friday night, I prepared a



Yossi Grossbaum is with Goldie Grossbaum.

Apr 23 · 🌐

Shavua tov!!

While it certainly wasn't as smooth as I would have liked, thank G-d, [Goldie](#) is recovering well. Thank you to all who have reached out, it means so much to us!!

Please continue to keep Golda Hadas bas Shterna Sara in your prayers.

May this week be filled with revealed blessing for us all!!



Yossi's social media post featuring the "Think Good" mug.

makeshift Shabbos table in the hospital room and began singing *Eishes Chayil*. I paused... and Goldie filled in the rest of the *passuk*. I was overjoyed—perhaps this was a sign that her mind was still there! Soon after I made *kiddush*, I noticed her heart rate rapidly rising and alerted the nurse. The doctors determined that the internal bleeding had started again.

I watched helplessly as Goldie was once again wheeled off to the operating room. A vascular surgeon was called in to make a large incision and manually stitch her artery. A wound VAC was placed on this wound too. There was nothing for me to do except say more *Tehillim*.

The next day, I made a mini-Moshiach *seudah* next to

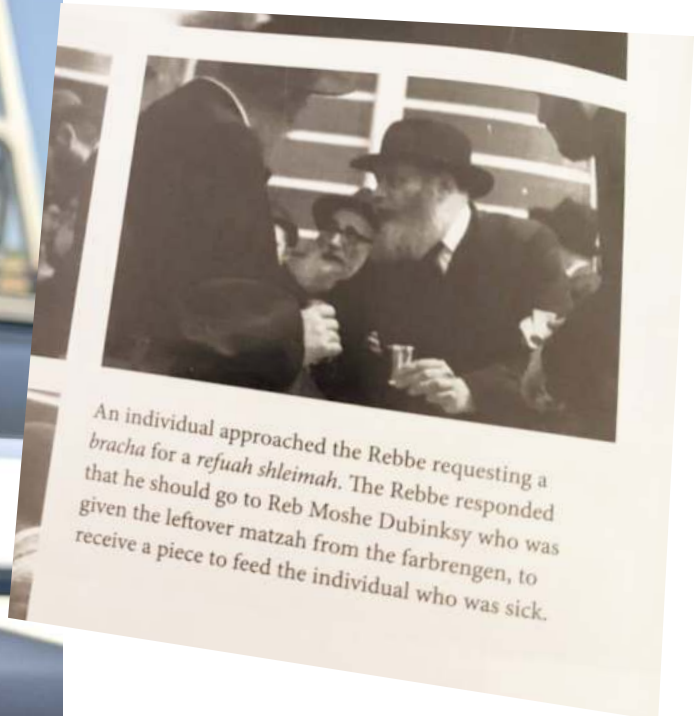
her bed, singing all the *niggunim* and hoping she might respond appropriately. All I got was garbled singing and shouting. After Yom Tov, before I left the hospital to bring Chaya Mushka home, a neurologist came in to check on Goldie. He was optimistic that her mental state wasn't permanently altered and that her current incoherence was a result of all the drugs in her system. I asked if there was anything I could do to help her, and he answered with the simple but now familiar response: "Pray."

While his answer worried me at first, upon reflection it encouraged me. I was reminded of a letter I had read over Yom Tov in which the Rebbe explains that true *bitachon* comes when there are no physical solutions and we turn to Hashem to resolve a matter. It was challenging to realize but it was also somewhat heartening; it's in Hashem's Hands and it will be good!

I had a mug in the hospital with me that we had distributed on Purim to our community with the words "Think good and it will be good" on it. I showed it to the nurses and doctors and it continued to remind me to *tracht gut* and that it would certainly *zayn gut*.

Goldie: On Isru Chag, five days after Chaya Mushka was born, a dear friend and *shlucha*, Mushky Shmotkin from Alameda, reached out to my husband. She said she had something she wanted to bring me. She drove with her family for two hours (each way) to drop off a small piece of the matzah that the Rebbe had given her grandfather, Rabbi Nachman Sudak, *a"h*, over 30 years ago. She was ready to part with the precious kernel on the chance that it would aid in my recovery. Weeks later, Mushky told me that she had only remembered the Rebbe's matzah on Shvii Shel Pesach and felt she had missed an opportunity. During the Moshiach *seudah*, while reading the *Derher*, Mushky did a double take. The page in front of her had a quote of the Rebbe telling someone to get the leftover matzah from a certain person, after Pesach was over, and bring it to his friend who was sick. Mushky understood: It was not too late. The next day, she brought us the priceless gift.

Yossi: I knew this would change everything. Goldie ate



An individual approached the Rebbe requesting a *bracha* for a *refuah shleimah*. The Rebbe responded that he should go to Reb Moshe Dubinsky who was given the leftover matzah from the *farbrengen*, to receive a piece to feed the individual who was sick.

▲The page from *Derher* that inspired Mushky Shmotkin to bring the Rebbe's matzah to Goldie.

The precious piece of matzah from the Rebbe.

all the purée with the Rebbe's matzah in it, and I waited to see what would happen. I left the hospital late that night and slept for a few hours at home. At 5:00 a.m. I called the hospital for an update. I was disappointed to learn that the situation was the same. I could hear Goldie calling out unintelligibly in the background.

Goldie: At 6:00 a.m., just nine hours after eating the Rebbe's *matzah*, I noticed a nurse leaning over me. I glanced up and saw something sticking out above my head.

"What's on my head?" I asked, completely unaware of what had transpired over the last five days or even the last five minutes. The nurse nearly fainted.

She showed me a sign by my bed that said my hair was to remain covered at all times. "That's a hair covering," she said.

I stared at her blankly. I had no idea where I was, how I had gotten there, or how she knew that I covered my hair.

I looked at the left rail of my hospital bed and noticed a picture of a baby with a pink hat.

"Do you know who that is?" the nurse asked. I shook my head.

"You had a baby!" she told me cheerfully.

I looked at her in confusion. "But I wasn't pregnant!"

I couldn't retrieve any memories.

"Do you know who that is?" the nurse asked again. She pointed to my right bed rail. I immediately recognized the picture of the Rebbe. Like the lens on a camera coming into focus, I saw the Rebbe's smile and gained some clarity. I was in a hospital room. Something had happened.

More nurses came in and bombarded me with questions. "What's your name? What's your birthday? Tell us the names of your children!" I couldn't figure out why they were ecstatic when I answered these basic questions correctly. I had no idea that just a few hours earlier I couldn't answer any of them.

Yossi: When I walked into Goldie's room on Monday morning, I noticed that the physical therapist was there. He had come the day before but couldn't get any response from Goldie. Seeing him made me excited. "Has she started responding?" I asked.

Instead of the physical therapist replying, Goldie did.



The Grossbaum family, reunited in the hospital eight days after Goldie gave birth.

“Hi, Yossi,” she said weakly.

I didn’t know what to do or say. I couldn’t believe it—Goldie was finally here again! I don’t usually cry but I was crying and laughing at the same time. All I could think was, *baruch Hashem!*

Goldie: It was only then, after seeing Yossi’s reaction to my simple greeting, that I realized something big had happened. Yossi began typing furiously on his phone. He showed me the status he was posting for hundreds of people waiting for an update: “Goldie is awake and responding!”

“Tell me what happened!” I pleaded. “I’m so confused.”

He looked at me and said calmly, “You were very sick.”

“What? It can’t be! Not me, I’m not the type!”

“For real. The whole world was *davening* for you.”

I couldn’t process it.

“Why are my arms and legs purple? Why can’t I move?”

“You were very sick. We are going to make a big *seudas hodaah*. Oh, and Pesach is over.”

“When was Pesach?” I couldn’t remember the *sedarim*.

“Who is watching the kids?”

“Your parents,” my husband reminded me.

“How did they get here so quickly?”

“They came before Pesach, remember? They have been here for almost two weeks already.”

Yossi told me everything that had happened. While I couldn’t dig up any memories of giving birth, I believed him, especially when he left and returned a short while later with my six-day-old baby girl. He was wheeling a Doona.

“You bought a Doona?” I asked. I’d been debating getting one for years.

“The NorCal *shluchos* bought it for you,” he said, referring to over 70 *shluchos* who I am privileged to call my Northern California family.

“Why would they buy me that? We never buy anyone a baby gift like that!”

“Goldie, you were very sick,” Yossi reiterated. It slowly began to sink in.

It was a lot to adjust to. I had two big wound sites, one with many staples and a second which was held closed by the wound VAC. I couldn’t hold my baby. Chaya Mushka was placed on me, as she had been, unbeknownst to me, every single day since she was born. I couldn’t walk, sit up, turn over, or stand.

But I *could* eat. Ironically, the first thing I (lucidly) ate after coming back to myself was a Reisman’s brownie bar. All I wanted to do was drink. Although I didn’t remember being intubated multiple times, my body did and needed

to recover from the prolonged thirst. The little apple juice containers the hospital offers tasted magical; I downed cup after cup.

Yossi told me about the unbelievable kindness that we had been shown throughout the ordeal. The Shluchim Refuah helpline at Merkos 302 had connected him with doctors who made themselves available at all times of day or night, on Shabbos, Yom Tov, or weekday, to give advice on my medical care. Dr. Avi Rosenberg of Baltimore and Dr. Zev Nelkin of New York helped him maneuver each challenge and continued to advise us throughout my recovery. Friends, family, and our local community of *shluchim* rose to the occasion in ways we couldn't have imagined possible. My kids were flooded with gifts, games, trips, and treats. My parents managed my home and took good care of the children. Discovering the number of times that the *Tehillim* was completed for me around the world was the most incredible hug of support.

On Monday afternoon, my older kids came to visit. I was still on heavy medication and kept dozing off between sentences. A nurse brought me a platter of fruit and I was thrilled to try a juicy grape. I confidently reached for one, only to discover that picking it up was harder than I thought. I watched it fall to the floor and roll away. I then tried to lift my phone, which immediately fell out of my hand. I had never noticed just how heavy an iPhone is—practically the weight of a brick! Yossi encouraged me to message my family and friends, since they were worried and eager to hear from me. My phone was exploding with hundreds of texts, emails, and messages. As I scrolled through message after message, I was overcome by a wave of emotion from everyone's love and concern.

I had to call in a nurse to help me find the little WhatsApp microphone and leave voicenotes. Slurring my words, I left messages for my family and friends so they could hear my voice and know I was on the mend.

On Tuesday afternoon, all my children were able to come visit. The nurses in the trauma unit broke every rule to accommodate our large family. It was a joyful moment for all of us. I was weak and exhausted, but my heart was full.

The rest of the week of recovery in the hospital was draining. I couldn't do anything alone. We rejoiced when, with Herculean effort, I stood with a walker for about ten seconds. I couldn't imagine ever getting back to normal. Had



I really driven a 15-passenger van with ease just a few weeks earlier?

With each passing day, bits and pieces of my memory floated back. They came in unexpected flashes—cooking for Pesach, the first days of Yom Tov, driving to the hospital, and giving birth.

The staff treated me like a queen. They had witnessed a miracle and were fully aware of it. They took turns holding my baby when Yossi brought her to visit each day, and when my older daughter turned 16, they excitedly helped set up my room for a surprise party. It was the first of its type in the Trauma ICU!

On Friday, ten days after giving birth, I was well enough to leave the Trauma ICU and head to a rehab facility. We said an emotional goodbye to the hospital staff who stood by me, believed in me, and were Hashem's chosen messengers to heal me. My husband and I spent Shabbos at the rehab with an elaborate spread of the most delicious foods prepared

Zeesy Grossbaum's surprise birthday party in the Trauma ICU.



Home at last.

by nearby *shluchos*. The food was not just rich in taste, it overflowed with care and love. One fascinating outcome of being in such a vulnerable position was that I could *feel* the care of others. When we are not wrapped in our protective layers of pride, ego, and selfness, we can actually sense the energy of kindness and its healing powers. That kindness, in so many shapes and forms, carried our family through this difficult time. It was tangible.

All through the next week, Yossi showed me gifts that were arriving at our home. Trays of chocolates, boxes of my favorite treats, and the most creative—*kichel* and herring sent by a *shliach* to ensure that our Chabad House had its proper Shabbos *kiddush*. Yossi also brought me piles of cards that were steadily streaming into our house, full of words of encouragement. Those letters gave me strength for the physically taxing days of rehab.

Sometimes we doubt if we should reach out to people who are struggling, thinking we don't want to bother them or convincing ourselves that they have so many other people



reaching out. But I learned through this that you can never go wrong with sending a kind word. It is always appreciated.

As *shluchim*, my husband and I are constant givers and we enjoy it. During my illness and recovery, we were forced to be receivers. It takes humility to receive, yet there is beauty in it too. A giver can't give if there's no receiver—a deep bond is formed through this dynamic. While I was impatient to go back to being a giver, I knew this was our time to receive.

Physical therapy included nothing more elaborate than walking. And it was hard. Sit to stand. Stand to sit. I got my very own walker. I took a few steps and had to rest. Occupational therapy included getting in and out of a mock car, a task that involved excruciating pain. I had my first shower in two weeks, which was a joy that's hard to describe. And for the first time since being a head counselor in camp 20 years earlier, I drank Slurpees again. Lots of them. Yup, ice cold slurpees that felt divine as they coursed through my body. I found out that I could order them from my phone and have them delivered to my hospital room! I drank all

week, at all hours of the day and night.

On Thursday, I was evaluated by all the therapists and my social worker to see if I was ready to go home. They were all concerned about the full house and newborn that awaited me. They couldn't fathom how I did what I did on a normal basis, but now that I was so weak, how could I possibly go home?

It was hard to convince these kind-hearted medical professionals that I would not have to do anything at home but rest and eat. How to explain the concept of *mi k'amcha k'Yisroel?* There was no way to properly express that we had a safety net of family, friends, and community who were taking care of us. That friends had provided financial assistance so that my husband could stay by my side for as long as needed. That my parents were ready to stay with us indefinitely to care for our children. That my in-laws and siblings would fly in to help. That my cousin and her friend would hop in their car and drive two hours to our home to take my kids on trips. That meals were arranged



Goldie and Yossi visiting the hospital staff two weeks after being discharged.

for weeks to come. That despite having a full house, we are part of a nation that takes care of its own.

We must have explained well enough because they discharged me.

On Friday afternoon, trembling with excitement, I was wheeled outside where my husband was waiting in the car. Eighteen days after giving birth, I was finally going home. We pulled up to my house as the kids came running out the door and up the block. Music was blaring and massive letters adorned the lawn: WELCOME HOME, MOMMY! THANK YOU, HASHEM!

With tears streaming down my face, I climbed out of the car and was engulfed by my family. Oh, to be home! My couch felt like a cloud. The floors, the ceilings—I wanted to embrace it all. I didn't care if there were toys on the floor or piles to be sorted. My kids decided that the walker was a new toy for them, and started having races and giving rides up and down the hallway. I realized the walker had to go, which pushed me to walk on my own.

They were baby steps, while holding onto the wall, but I was walking! Just one week earlier, that had seemed impossible.

Over the next few weeks, there was no doing, only being. I witnessed firsthand that what our children need from us most is simply our presence. I sat on the couch while my kids played, fought, roughhoused, ran in and out, and hardly came near me. They had

what they needed: Mommy was there.

Yossi managed all of my appointments. I still didn't have the clarity of mind to keep track of my calendar nor could I drive. We were given a document to bring to the DMV to receive a handicap decal, but thankfully we never needed it.

My wound VAC was changed three times a week, a painful and unpleasant process. The five-pound weight on my shoulder, the long thin tubing, and the pain of the wound site made it difficult for me to hold Chaya Mushka for more than a few minutes at a time. I knew I had to do something to stop me from feeling resentful every time I looked at it. So, my daughter designed a colorful and vibrant image with the words "My

Miracle Reminder" and we printed a tote bag with the image. It was no longer a wound VAC, it was a miracle reminder. We can't control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to it. While I still hated being tethered and it wasn't any more comfortable, my mindset shifted.

The surgeon expected the wound to heal over four months. *Baruch Hashem*, it was closed before the end of two months. The wound VAC was picked up by the healthcare provider and I was free! I hope I never forget what it felt like to be tethered, so that I will always appreciate the joy of being able to sit, stand, run, walk, and drive as I please. As I got stronger, my husband and I were able to downsize our staff. I was deeply grateful for every new milestone: being back in the kitchen cooking, making challah, taking care of Chaya Mushka, bathing her, feeding her, changing her, rocking her to sleep, and doing all the normal things that I did for the rest of my babies.

The Hand of Hashem was clear at so many moments of my story, starting with the hospital I delivered at. My other seven children whom I had given birth to since moving on *shlichus* were born in our small suburban hospital, just a two-minute drive from our home. For this birth, I had to switch providers and deliver at a big city hospital, close to 30 minutes from home. I complained about this for months—I did not want to go to a big noisy hospital so far from home! Yet Hashem puts us where we need to be. The small-town hospital doesn't have a trauma unit or any of the lifesaving facilities that I needed that night.

One nurse told me that on the night I gave birth all the surgeons on call were the heads of their respective units—a rare occurrence. "Someone is watching out for you!" she said.

When Chaya Mushka was ten weeks old, we made the long-anticipated *seudas hodaah*. My family, friends, local community, and nearby *shluchim* came together to celebrate



The wound VAC upgrade.

our miracle. I was able to share my miraculous recovery and finally say the *birchas hagomel*.

We celebrated my son's bar mitzvah on Yud Gimmel Elul. I was able to plan the event from A-Z as I did with my older sons. The only difference was that with all the to-do lists and stress, there was also an overwhelming joy and appreciation that I was able to do what I was doing. I remembered sitting in the hospital, unable to get out of bed, and wondering what would be with my son's bar mitzvah just a few months away. I could never have imagined I would be where I was.

On Chof Gimmel Elul, five months after everything began, I flew to New York to visit the Ohel.

Sitting at the departure gate, I looked around the area filled with passengers and realized nothing about me stood out—there was no way to know that I had been through something so life-altering. I had an overwhelming to-do list for the next few weeks, filled with Yom Tov and *shlichus* activities, but I took a moment to enjoy the feeling of being overwhelmed by regular life.

Standing at the Ohel in the morning sun, I held a thick pile of papers which made up my *pahn*. One by one, I read through each page, then tore them, and let them flutter to the ground. I breathed in the moment and felt grateful that I had finally made it to this long-awaited moment. Thank you, dear Rebbe, for carrying me and my family through.



Goldie, Yossi,
and Chaya
Mushka at the
seudas hodaah.

To my extended family of Yidden around the world, my parents, in-laws, siblings, friends, relatives, local community, NorCal *shluchos*, the global *shluchim* family, and complete strangers, I want to thank each one of you who *davened* for me. Thank you for helping bring about this miracle.

Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu. ❧

Read more of Goldie Grossbaum at www.littleyellownotepad.com.



Celebrating Zalman
Grossbaum's bar
mitzvah, five months
after the miracle.