



Thank You for the Rambam

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“It’s not good. We have barely 1 mm left.”

In my 12+ years as his patient, I had never seen my doctor so upset before. It was a standard checkup about halfway through my pregnancy. There had already been several major hurdles to overcome before we had even gotten to this point, and I had known already that the risks would be higher this time around. As this pregnancy followed five prior c-sections, the risk of the uterine lining thinning was definitely a top concern, but I had imagined it wouldn’t be a real issue until closer to the end of the pregnancy.

“So, what do we do?” I asked.

“There’s nothing we can do,” he replied. “We’re going to reduce all physical activity in the hopes that this doesn’t get too much worse but it’s already so thin. And you’re only at 23 weeks; we still have a long way to go.”

I left the doctor’s office with strict orders for modified bedrest, avoidance of any strenuous activity, and a modified diet plan, as well as a planned early delivery at 36 weeks. But that was still more than three months away. Even if we made it that far, I was told, there would likely be a NICU stay for the baby. And that wasn’t even close to the worst-case scenario.

Trying to get a handle on my thoughts during the drive home, with a somewhat shaky voice I sang aloud Rabbi Yossi Goldstein’s song, “I Believe in Hashem,” in an attempt to calm my nerves.

For whatever reason I decided to finish my errands for the day rather than going straight home and that’s how I wound up at the nail salon, earbuds in, looking for a *shiur* to listen to. It was Wednesday, Yud Aleph Nissan, and Rabbi Yossi Paltiel’s live *farbreng* from the previous night was available.

"I want to tell you," he said, "that for years I learned one *perek* of Rambam [per day]. We recently found ourselves in a situation where we needed a *nes l'maalah miderech hateva*. Someone shared with me that someone once wrote to the Rebbe that he needed a *mofes l'maalah miteva* and the Rebbe responded, if that's what you need then learn *shlosheh prakim* Rambam [three chapters per day]. Later he received a call from the Rebbe's office informing him that this was not an instruction only for this particular person, and you can share in the Rebbe's name that if you need a *mofes*, learn *shlosheh prakim*. So I changed to *shlosheh prakim*. And I can tell you that it's true. We had a [miracle that was higher than nature]."

*Well, what am I supposed to do with that? I thought to myself. My husband has already been doing *shlosheh prakim* for several years; it's not like I can ask him to increase in his *limud haRambam*!*

It was almost like a compulsion came

over me. The logical part of my brain was protesting that Rambam isn't for girls and this is way too big of a commitment to make. That my daily *Chitas* was just fine. But I found myself opening my daily study app to the *perek echad* Rambam tab in English.

Look, it's not like you need to commit forever, I told myself. Just until b'shaah tovah the baby's born. And you'll be in bed a lot anyway. This will give you something positive to focus on.

And then—I guess we're doing this, I thought, as I scanned the *halachos* of that day's *perek echad*. *Hilchos mikvaos*.

Nope, too hard. Let's see what *shlosheh prakim* is for today. *Hilchos Shabbos*. Yes! That sounds more manageable.

And without any further debating, I started reading.

Well, the joke was on me because within a few weeks *shlosheh prakim* moved on to *hilchos eiruvin* (somewhat manageable) and then to *kiddush hachodesh* (genuinely beyond the scope

THE REBBE SAID:

Even though the main *tafkid* of a woman is to be the *akeres habayis*, [taking care of children] *chinuch* of children, everything going on at home, and all the people who live there, [and to influence them for the good in] thought, speech, and action, and therefore she doesn't have a lot of free time, still, in the time she does have, if she will learn Rambam—of course not in the way the men do it, one *perek* per day or three per day, but in the way of *Sefer Hamitzvos*—then this is very beneficial and important.

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of my intellectual capacities). I must say, though, that I'm left with a newfound appreciation for the brilliance of the Rambam and of our *chachamim*.

With Hashem's help, and a lot of extra work on the part of my husband and 14-year-old daughter, we made it through Pesach to the next appointment.

Not much had changed, care instructions were the same, but my doctor seemed a bit calmer than before. "We don't expect it to get better," he said. "As the baby grows, the uterus stretches more, like a balloon, so we'll keep monitoring the situation. Call immediately if there is any bleeding, sharp pain or regular contractions."

I won't pretend the next few months were easy. Each week felt like an eternity as I counted down to the next milestone that would bring us closer to week 36 and when friends and family asked how I was feeling, I answered truthfully that I was



Rabbi Shmuel and Mrs. Chana Aber with Yisrael at his *bris*, in Crown Heights.

“You should know, the Rebbe agreed that we may publicize that learning Rambam brings *nissim l’maalah miderech hateva*,” he continued.

taking it day by day and often hour by hour. My Colel Chabad *pushka* app got put to frequent use and when I’d feel the pain on my scar that was becoming quite familiar, I’d sing “I Believe in Hashem” over and over to reassure myself.

And through it all, I had the Rambam. I had felt a bit silly at the start, almost like an imposter, trying to make my way through what I still thought of as the men’s *shiurim*. But I kept at it. Sometimes it meant staying up late to finish, and some days I let it pile up, but overall, I kept up with the daily cycle.

I often say that we can learn about *tznius* from Hashem because when he sends *nissim*, they don’t usually announce themselves with flashes and grand gestures; they manifest themselves subtly. But when you take the time to recognize them, there’s really no explanation other than the Aibershter’s guiding Hand leading and protecting you at every moment.

That is what happened throughout this pregnancy. At each appointment as we tracked the thinning of the uterine scar, my doctor would tell me, it’s thinner, but it’s stable. I’ll see you at the next appointment.

And as we approached week 36, the constant dull pain and pressure on my scar subsided. Suddenly, I had more energy and was able to spend a day slowly sorting laundry and doing some gentle housekeeping for the first time in weeks.

We made it to week 36 and my doctor sent me for consultations with the hospital to decide when to deliver. My next appointment was a day before the 37-week mark and I decided to stop at the Ohel on the way there. As I walked into the tent, I saw a familiar face. Rabbi Yossi Paltiel and his wife were on their way into the Ohel but I wasn’t about to interrupt them. I wrote my letter, brought it to the Rebbe and said my *Tehillim*. As I walked out, intending to visit the Rebbetzins, again I saw Rabbi Paltiel and his wife. “Do you have the time?” she asked me.

“It’s 11:15,” I responded, and introduced myself. And her husband told me, “Regards to your husband.”

“Actually, there’s something I want to share with you,” I said. “A few months ago I received some scary news from my doctor and it didn’t look like we’d make it safely to the end of this pregnancy. I was listening to your Yud Aleph Nissan *farbrengen* and you shared that

you needed a *yeshuah* so you took on Rambam and saw *nissim*. So I started learning *shlosheh perakim*—”

“—and you saw *nissim l’maalah miderech hateva*!” he finished my sentence.

“I did.”

We had been trying to just get to week 36 and here we were already a week past that.

“You should know, the Rebbe agreed that we may publicize that learning Rambam brings *nissim l’maalah miderech hateva*,” he continued. A few hours later, I am sitting in my doctor’s office and he tells me, “At this point, if you want to wait until the end, you can.”

I told him that the pain had stopped. “Yeah, I know,” he told me.

“You do? What happened?”

“You can google it,” he said, and threw out a medical term. I looked it up on my phone and said, “So the lining thickened up?”

“Yes, it happens,” he said. “It’s not a miracle.”

“But you told me you don’t expect it to get better!” I protested.

“I said we don’t expect it to happen, I didn’t say it couldn’t happen. Ninety-nine

The following is excerpted and paraphrased from Rabbi Yossi Paltiel's Yud Aleph Nissan farbrengen of 5785. To listen to this class, visit insidechassidus.org/jewish-and-chassidic-calendar and click on the Yud Aleph Nissan page, then select "farbrengen Yud Aleph Nissan 5785."

When you do what the Rebbe said to do, you're connected with him, and then miracles follow.

There were *shluchim* in Brazil who were told they would never have a baby. They did not have money, but the *shliach* collected pennies and finally had enough money to send his wife to the Rebbe to ask for a *brachah*.

During *yechidus*, the *shlucha* told the Rebbe what the doctors had said.

The Rebbe seemingly changed the subject by asking her how long she would be in the U.S. After she replied, the Rebbe asked her if while she was here, she would travel to a few locations to speak about *taharas hamishpachah*. He instructed her to ask his chief secretary, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Hodakov, to arrange her itinerary.

As the *shliach* tells it, "My wife went to four cities. We had four children."

When faced with a challenge, when you need a miracle, don't get nervous, don't go high, don't go low. *Just do*. Do what the Rebbe said to do, and then you're connected with him, and then you are above the rules of nature.

There are three ways to learn Rambam daily: There's *Sefer Hamitzvos*; there's one *perek* per day; and there's three *prakim* per day. I was learning one *perek* per day; I did it that way because I wanted to really learn it, not just read it. I got flak from my friends, but I stuck to my one *perek* per day. Then my wife and I found ourselves in a situation where we needed a miracle.

And I heard a story from Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Raichik, a very special *chossid* of the Rebbe. Rabbi Raichik met a Yid who told him that he needs a miracle. Rabbi Raichik offered to write to the Rebbe for the Yid, which he did. The Rebbe replied, "Learn Rambam, which is an acronym for: *Rabos Mofsai B'Eretz Mitzrayim. Increase my wonders manifold in the land of Egypt.*"

Later, the Rebbe replied to Rabbi Raichik in answer to his question of whether this answer was only for the individual or for the public—the Rebbe replied that this answer, indicating that learning Rambam brings miracles, was not an answer only for this individual; it applies to everyone; and this may be publicized in the name of the Rebbe.

I changed from one *perek* per day to three, and I can testify that it is true. *Baruch Hashem*, we got our *yeshuah*. May all Yidden get all the *yeshuos* they need, *mamash* now!

times out of a hundred it gets worse, but in 1% of cases it gets better!"

Nissim l'maaloh miderech hateva.

I'm not done! The *nissim* continued.

The surgery was scheduled for the following Wednesday, 27 Tammuz, exactly one week before my girls were scheduled to leave for camp. I had wanted to do it a day or two earlier as I knew already that *b'ezras Hashem* there would be a *bris* and I knew my girls would want to be there for it. My youngest also had a last-day-of-school performance scheduled for a week after 27 Tammuz, which he was excited about since mommies would be coming (and with a new sibling about to arrive, I thought it was important that I be there for his moment). Additionally, I wanted to avoid being in the hospital over Shabbos, and with standard post c-section stay being three nights, a Wednesday birth would mean discharge Motzoei Shabbos. How could all this work out??

We arrived for the operation at 5:00 a.m. and as the medical team introduced themselves I noticed that there were quite a bit more people than there had been at my previous c-sections.

"Are all the extra people here because the risks are higher this time?" I asked the resident who would be assisting with the surgery.

"Little bit," she replied, which I took as polite bedside manner for "OH YEAH!"

With Hashem's tremendous kindness, our baby boy was born. All of the extra medical personnel ended up leaving mid-surgery; they just weren't needed. The NICU stay I had been worried about? In the end we had a 24-hour observation period in the NICU but not before I got to hold my baby for a few hours and by the next afternoon he was back in my room. Even that was *hashgachah pratis* as it meant I was up and walking within 12 hours of the surgery because I had to walk to and from the NICU. This dramatically sped up my recovery so that by Friday, we were both discharged



Yisrael Aber, just born.

with plenty of time to make it home for Shabbos (a full day earlier than any of my previous c-sections).

Baruch Hashem, the *bris* was on time, and my girls were there to hear him named Yisrael before catching their buses to camp. My son's school director

even generously switched the class performance to the day before so that he and I were both able to make it to his last day of school.

In the recovery room, an hour after Yisrael was born, I turned to my husband and asked him, "Would you please text Rabbi Paltiel to let him know we *baruch Hashem* had a healthy baby boy? And tell him your wife says thank-you for the Rambam."

POSTSCRIPT

I was hesitant to share my story as taking on Rambam is a huge commitment for most men, let alone busy mothers and wives. What pushed me to do it was the fact that the Rebbe wanted us to publicize the fact that *limud haRambam* brings *nissim*. When I sat down to write it, I looked up the Yud

Aleph Nissan *farbrengen* that inspired me and heard Rabbi Paltiel introducing the topic with a story of a *tzadik* who intervened to save a Jewish girl from a *goy* who wanted to marry her by drawing up *tena'im* with the girl, making her his *kallah*, which caused the *goy* to die within a day.

"What's the point of this story?" he continued. "The point is that when you're connected to a *tzadik*, the rules are different. And we have the opportunity to connect to the Rebbe in so many ways. Learning Rambam is yet another opportunity to connect to the Rebbe."

The message is powerful and clear. Every directive of the Rebbe that we fulfill is an opportunity to connect to the Rebbe. And when you're connected to the Rebbe, the rules are different. ■

The views in this article are the writer's alone. Readers are encouraged to discuss these matters with their personal mashpia. -Ed.



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