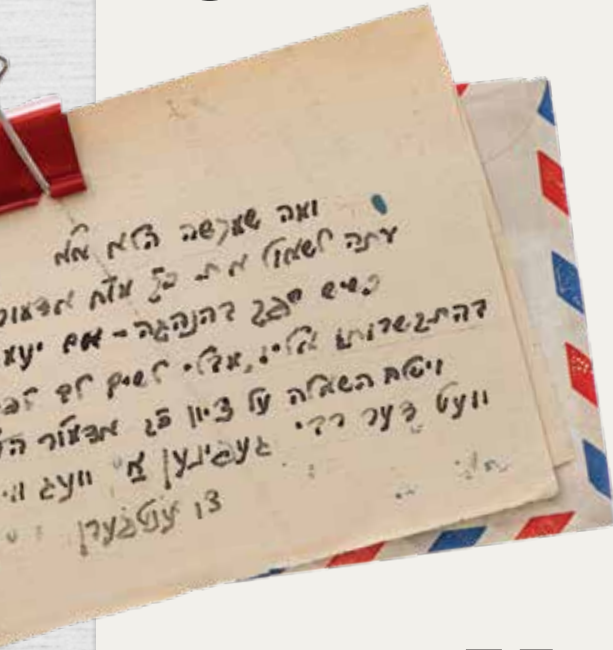




Story



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 שלמה שיח' בן ח'ל פייגל
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דער רבי וועט געפינען א וועג...

WRITTEN BY: RABBI LEVI GREENBERG (TX)

You Proved Me Wrong



AS TOLD BY
Rabbi Shmuly Haskelovich
 (Hamilton, NY)

During the month of Elul 5781, our daughter Henya, who was two years old at the time, suffered a massive stroke. After an emergency surgery and intensive treatment under the care of Dr. Ghatan at Mt. Sinai Hospital, Henya was discharged and started the long and difficult road to recovery at a rehabilitation hospital in New Jersey.

Two months into this ordeal, during the week of Parshas Noach, Henya developed a serious complication. We consulted with another top pediatric neurosurgeon, Dr. Souweidane at Cornell, who recommended implanting a device that would resolve the new complication. Although it was not yet urgent, he predicted it would eventually become necessary



DOCTOR SAADI GHATAN.

for Henya's long-term treatment, and he felt there was no reason to postpone the procedure, especially since other procedures had not solved the problem.

Dr. Souweidane's recommendation came with two major drawbacks. Firstly, once this procedure was done, the patient would forever be reliant on the device. Secondly, it requires constant monitoring and upkeep. The possibility of emergencies is very high, and we would need to relocate to a larger city to be closer to top-tier doctors and hospitals who could best handle such a condition if the need arose. The thought of leaving our *shlichus* in Hamilton was an added crushing blow to an already devastating situation.

Dr. Ghatan, on the other hand, insisted that there was no reason to rush with implanting the device and strongly recommended monitoring Henya's situation for a longer period, even as the complication persisted.

Faced with two opposing opinions from equally qualified and prominent experts in the field, we consulted other doctors to establish a majority opinion, in keeping with the Rebbe's guidance in resolving medical dilemmas. However, no other doctor we consulted had a concrete opinion in either direction. They all agreed that both doctors were equally highly qualified

and had equally valid opinions, and it was up to us, as Henya's parents, to make the final decision.

As time wore on and the complication persisted, we finally decided to follow Dr. Souweidane's recommendation, and the surgery was scheduled for the end of Adar I 5782. Nevertheless, we were filled with tremendous apprehension about the unknown and still unsure if we were making the right decision, given the overwhelming consequences this procedure would have on Henya and our entire family.

Several times a week, I learn Chassidus over the phone with Rabbi Bentzion Shemtov from Chicago. The day before Purim Katan, I was feeling especially worried about the upcoming surgery, and I shared with Bentzion all the details of the excruciating saga.

"Shmuly, you can't make such a decision on your own," Bentzion insisted. "You must go to the Ohel and ask the Rebbe to send you a clear sign as to which doctor you should follow."

Although we had been to the Ohel many times and written to the Rebbe extensively about Henya's condition, I had never asked the Rebbe for clear direction on this specific question. Heeding Bentzion's advice, I went to the Ohel on Purim Katan and wrote a lengthy letter about the current dilemma. Since I was writing

in Hebrew, I spelled Dr. Ghatan's name as "Katan." It was a surname I had never encountered before, and I figured that this was its original iteration. I asked for a clear sign for clarity on how to proceed, while at the same time begging for a *bracha* that we should be able to continue our *shlichus* in Hamilton as well.

That night, as I sat with one of my daughters during bedtime, she suddenly requested to watch a video of the Rebbe together. Her request was out of character, but it warmed my heart. I opened the JEM WhatsApp broadcast where short videos are posted daily (which I rarely followed at the time) and pressed play on the 30-second video posted for Purim Katan.

During Sunday Dollars, Rabbi Yosef Wineberg introduced a Yid to the Rebbe, saying, "This is Yosef Katan from Geneva."

"Don't forget that Katan is the description, the adjective for all Jewish people," the Rebbe said to him. "It does not mean to be 'Katan-small' in achievement—just the opposite. Every activity that was done until now is small in relation to the activity that you will do from now on."

My heart started racing and I felt chills all over my body. The Rebbe was discussing the last name "Katan" and emphasizing its importance and meaning. The circumstances of how I came to see this video just hours after asking the Rebbe for a clear sign as to which doctor to follow were a clear sign to my wife and me that the Rebbe was guiding us to follow Dr. Ghatan's recommendation. We immediately scheduled an emergency consultation with him. He graciously agreed to review the case again and reiterated his opinion that we should not perform the surgery, but rather continue monitoring Henya's situation.


My wife called the scheduling nurse at Dr. Souweidane's office and, after a brutal hour-long phone call, managed to postpone the surgery indefinitely.

At the time, we were staying at an apartment in Crown Heights to be close to Henya's rehab center in New Jersey. Two weeks later, Henya became

lethargic, and when Hatzala arrived, they discovered she had a very high fever. After reviewing her medical history, it was decided to rush her to the Emergency Room at Cornell, so that Dr. Souweidane could perform the surgery we had postponed if it turned out to be the necessary treatment.

The specialists worked tirelessly to determine the cause of the fever, and even Dr. Souweidane reviewed the tests and participated in the deliberations. After many hours, they discovered the problem was a specific infection, and Dr. Souweidane approached me with a startling confession. Based on these new developments, the procedure he had recommended all along could have been completely wrong. Had it been done at its scheduled time a week earlier, Henya's current prognosis could have been much worse, and her treatment severely complicated. It was a miracle that we had postponed the procedure when we did!

A different emergency surgery was performed, and two weeks later, on Shushan Purim, Henya was discharged from the hospital, and the complication that had baffled the doctors for months was healed.

A few months later, at one of the post-op appointments, Dr. Souweidane reviewed the most recent CT scans and shook his head in disbelief. "You proved me wrong..." 

YOUR STORY

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