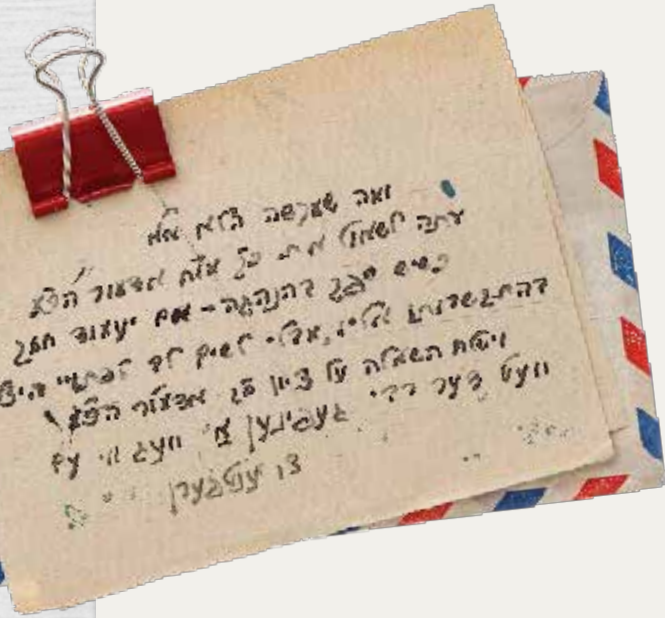




Story

לזכות
החתן הרה"ת ר' לוי שיחיל' טייכטל
והכלה המהוללה מרת חנה לאה תחיל' לשס
לרגל בואם בקשרי שידוכין

נדפס ע"י
משפחתם שיחיו



דער רבי זעט
געפינען א זעג...

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I Experienced Clarity



AS TOLD BY
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Shortly after Pesach 5785, my wife was in her third month of pregnancy with our second daughter when her doctor recommended and administered a routine alpha-fetoprotein blood test to check for serious birth defects. When the results arrived, the doctor notified us that she needed to undergo more tests at the hospital. The earliest appointment we could make was a few weeks later, and in the meantime, the doctor contacted us and emphasized that we needed to receive the updated results urgently.

I sent the results of the initial test to my father-in-law, Rabbi Yitzchok Kulski, who is a radiologist in Paris, France, and he confirmed that more tests were needed. He also strongly encouraged me to write to the Rebbe requesting a *bracha*, even before our hospital appointment.

Lag B'Omer was on Friday, and I planned to write a letter to the Rebbe that afternoon, with several items I wished to report and, of course, to update the Rebbe on the evolving situation regarding the pregnancy and ask for a *bracha*.

That week, someone posted on a community WhatsApp chat that the weekly “Here’s My Story” (Issue 644) publication from JEM featured a story by Rabbi Yechiel Haboura, a teacher at the Beis Yehuda School in Detroit. While I usually don’t get around to reading the HMS, in this case, figuring that such a story would be of interest to the broader Detroit community, I took several dozen copies from yeshiva to distribute in a few local shuls.

At home, after reporting on a recent event my wife organized, I continued my letter to the Rebbe with the issues surrounding the pregnancy. After writing out all the details, my hand became a bit stiff, so I decided to take a short break before writing the other items. In the meantime, I decided to read the JEM story from the copies I had with me. In it, Rabbi Haboura described the miraculous circumstances of his birth in 5747.

By the third paragraph, I realized something very special was happening. “Early in the pregnancy, my mother took the alpha-fetoprotein test to check for birth defects. The results were not good. As the doctors explained, the levels of alpha-fetoprotein in her blood meant one of three things: The baby would have severe digestive issues, some kind of birth defect in the brain or spine, or Down’s syndrome.”

The story went on to say that the doctors recommended an abortion; however, the Chassidim she knew encouraged her to write to the Rebbe, who gave her specific instructions on how to continue the pregnancy and “gave her a blessing for a healthy child and said that everything would be okay...when the time came, she gave birth to a completely healthy baby boy, without any medical issues at all: me.”

“When I asked my mother how she felt after receiving the Rebbe’s answer, she told me that she was definitely still afraid and anxious about the future... Yet despite all

this, in a way that she couldn’t quite put into words, she felt a special connection with the Rebbe. And based on this connection, she was able to make her decision with confidence.”

As I concluded reading this story with almost the same serious medical issue we were dealing with, I experienced an incredible sense of clarity. While I know the Rebbe is with me and involved in every detail of my life, it’s often a struggle for me to feel this tangibly. At that moment, I experienced such a profound sense of clarity that the Rebbe was present with me for real; it was palpable. I was overcome with a sense of awe, as well as tremendous gratitude and relief, at receiving such a clear and direct message from the Rebbe that assured me that all would be well with my wife and child.

The results of further testing confirmed to the doctors the need for extreme concern, and early on, they insisted my wife needed to be tested three times a week so they could closely monitor her progress and make contingency plans in the event of emergencies. The results also showed grave risks for my wife’s well-being.

We made a special trip to New York to daven at the Ohel, checked our *mezuzos*, and I committed to an extra *shiur* in Chassidus. Meanwhile, the doctors devised a plan for how to monitor the pregnancy and concluded that on the first day of the ninth month, they would need to induce the birth, to ensure the maximum amount of time for the baby’s development, with the least amount of concern for the worst to happen to the baby or my wife.

Although that was the official schedule, they did not believe the pregnancy would last that long, and figured an emergency induction would be necessary much earlier, or even worse, *Rachmana litzlan*.

The results of her thrice-weekly tests always showed that the level of concern was just low enough not to necessitate an emergency birth. Every time we arrived for her

appointment, Dr. Frederic Bartholomew, who is a true *rofeh yedid*, effusively glowed how relieved he was to see us once again at his office and not in the hospital, and stressed how miraculous it was that an emergency had not yet occurred.

But despite the tremendous concern of all the doctors involved, my wife and I felt a certain calmness about it all, confident in the Rebbe's *bracha* that all would be well. The circumstances of how I read that story of the Rebbe's *bracha* for a healthy birth in a nearly identical situation gave us a strong sense of *bitachon* that is hard to explain.

Unbeknownst to us, my father-in-law had shown the medical file to some of his colleagues who are specialists in the field, and they all gave a very negative prognosis. Some family members, hearing about the seriousness of the case, took it upon themselves to recite Tehillim, but they did not share this with us.

My father-in-law said to me that since the upcoming birth could be extremely complicated, with the possibility that we would need to make difficult decisions swiftly, he suggested I discuss with a *rav* the various halachic concerns to bear in mind in case of such an eventuality. In hindsight, I realize that this conversation was his way of conveying how gravely concerned he and the other doctors were about how this pregnancy would conclude.

But because of that story, and our determination to have *bitachon*, we were both mostly oblivious to the gravity of the situation and were therefore not crushed by worry and fear. In fact, whenever I started feeling stressed about the situation, I reread the story, which I kept on our shelf ever since, and remembered the clarity I felt on Lag B'Omer when I first read it.

On Sunday evening, 22 Elul, one day before her scheduled induction, my wife went into labor naturally, and Baruch Hashem, shortly thereafter, gave birth to a



RABBI SHEMTOV AND DR. BARTHOLOMEW WITH THE MIRACLE BABY.

healthy baby girl. A few minutes later, Dr. Bartholomew proclaimed, “This birth was a miracle!”

He even confided to us that his concern for this pregnancy was so acute that he could not sleep at night as a result. Indeed, all the evidence available to us after the birth confirmed that the pregnancy consistently bordered on disaster, but the final result was a happy and healthy one for all. **T**

YOUR STORY

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