

בס"ד

דברי תורה ד'צבי אליהו  
**DIVREI TORAH**

ראש השנה

Rosh Hashanah

September 19-20, 2009 - 1-2 Tishrei 5770

Dedication Page

In Memory of  
Our Founder and Publisher

Harry Yellin

Uncle, Zayde, and Friend  
to Everyone



Dedication Page

On the Occasion of the  
First Yahrtzeit of Our Loving  
Husband, Father, Grandfather, and  
Great-Grandfather

Harry Yellin, z"l  
Little Zadie

Love

Cookie, Harvey, Ester,  
Freddie, Grandchildren, and  
Great-Grandchildren

Dedication Page

Happy 90<sup>th</sup>

Leonard

With Gratitude to Hashem and  
Your Doctors



Let's Try from 120!!

Sara

Dedication Page

Wishing a Kesiva vChasimah to  
All of  
Menachem Shalom ben Miriam's  
Precious Mispallelim



We Thank You for Your  
Continued Prayers and Assistance!

With Gratitude,  
**the Landon Family**

## A and H Ties

### Aron Weiner

It all started approximately eight years ago, when I wore a new tie to Synagogue that I had ordered from the Land's End catalogue. Harry Yellin, o.b.m., commented that he thought the tie was beautiful, and quite nice. I was very impressed and appreciative of Harry's comments, and I thought it would only be appropriate to purchase an identical tie for him. And so I did. That was the birth of A and H Ties (Aron and Harry Ties).

Shortly thereafter, Harry purchased a new tie for himself and gave me an identical tie. For the next several years, whenever either Harry or I purchased a tie, we purchased an identical tie for the other. In addition, there were other people (they know who they are), who got caught up in the spirit, who gave us matching ties.

Every Friday afternoon, I called Harry to make our tie selections to be worn on Friday night, a different tie for Shabbos morning, and another tie for Shabbos evening. In addition to making selections for every Shabbos, we also coordinated our tie selection for the Yontifs, and, on more than one occasion, for weddings.

A and H Ties took on what seemed to me to be a legendary status. Harry and I acquired approximately 40 ties for our collection, and being the super organized person that he was, Harry produced a catalogue entitled "A and H Ties, First Edition" which included small color photographs of each tie. (The last edition that was published was the fourth edition.)

Over the years, we met officially once each year to eliminate from our catalogue those ties that had lost favor with either of us and to add any new acquisitions. In our catalogue, Harry assigned each tie a number, and a name that was generally descriptive of the tie. For example, there was "Marsha's Gold Tie," and there was our "International Collection." Unofficially, Harry kept a record of when each tie was worn by us so that we avoided wearing the same tie too often.

Preparations for Shabbos are always very special, and I looked forward to my weekly discussions with Harry to make our tie selections for the weekend. Harry and I were amazed at the conversation and comments that our ties generated. At the very beginning, people would say to me, "Are you aware that Harry is wearing the same tie that you are wearing?" Over the years, the "legend" grew. Most of the regulars at Shul were aware that Harry and I wore identical ties. It seemed to be a frequent topic of conversation, and Harry and I always enjoyed the comments.

Harry passed away on the second day of Tishrei, and this will be the first anniversary of his Yahrzeit. Following Harry's passing, he bequeathed his tie collection to three of his grandsons. We tried to continue the tradition for a while, but it just was too difficult. Each tie had a special meaning to Harry and me, and while I still continue to wear the ties from our collection, it simply didn't feel appropriate to continue since Harry was no longer here to participate.

Harry Yellin was a unique and wonderful person. He was kind and always unselfishly gave his time and advice to

everyone. Harry was never too busy to provide his assistance. For many years, he helped the Synagogue, the Day School and other organizations, always doing so in his own pleasant, and yet professional manner. Harry was the founder of the weekly Divrei Torah for Congregation BB Jacob, and for the first few years, he did it singlehandedly.<sup>1</sup> Harry was a dear friend. I miss him and the good times that we spent together. I hope that in some small way, I'll be able to emulate the kindness, thoughtfulness and generosity that he embodied.

### Footnote

1. Edward Rabhan became the proofreader and substitute publisher, and I became the distributor.

## Okay Rabbi Adam Singer

You are not okay. I am not okay. I am sorry to be the one to break this to you, but all of the self-help books, all of the coddling, friendship, praise from authority figures etc. has not, does not and will not make any one of us "okay". I am referring specifically to the sense of "okayness" we associate with accomplishing in life what could be expected of us, attaining the milestones we could be expected to have achieved. "Okayness" is the validation one gives a child who got a "73%" on a math test. We say, "You're okay, as long as you tried your best!" It's a lie. 73 out of 100 is not "okay." It's short of the mark. Make no mistake, grades are not and should not be a mark of the individual's self-worth. Rather a low grade is an indication that a person needs extra assistance in something. We love the child who got the

"C", we acknowledge the inherent goodness in the child, but we acknowledge there is work to be done.

We all have work to be done. None of us is "okay" and "okayness" itself is a lie. In reality, in the world where we truly live and exist there are only two states: the real and the ideal. The real is who we truly are: our thoughts, feelings and actions. The ideal is who we are supposed to be: the vision of the actualized person we have the potential to become and the life we could be living. The ideal is described exclusively by the Torah.

A Jewish life, a Torah observant life, is the process of moving from the real to the ideal. It is the process of moving from the things we do, think, and feel today, to becoming the ideal person we can become. Each of us has mitzvahs (commandments from the Torah) that we ought to keep but don't or don't keep as well as we are supposed to. This can be in the realm of loving one's fellow human beings, judging people appropriately, not feeling jealousy over our friends' accomplishments or possessions. It could be in the realm of kashrus, Shabbos observance, attending services, etc. These mitzvahs are the ideal. And at some level we all know that our failure to do what we *truly* can do is a failure. It is not "okay" not to do the things we are supposed to be doing.

Take solace that we *all* share the failure to live up to the potential we are capable, but recognize that the voyage from who we are now to who we are obligated to become is a voyage we must endeavor to take. We are not obligated to achieve the absolute ideal, but we are obligated to strive for it

with every resource we possess. Our greatest shortcoming is our failure to direct every resource to achieving this ideal.

These days of awe between and including Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur are the most important days of the year to move forward in a quest to become who we have the potential to be. These are the days prescribed by our Torah as days auspicious to commit to one or perhaps two small, but concrete steps to grow closer to the person who we know we ought to be. These are the days set aside particularly to grow more in our service to G-d, and our obligation to ourselves to become the people we truly have the potential to become.

In these days between Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur take at least five minutes and contemplate just how you want to be remembered when you have left this world. Envision the scene of your eulogies as vividly as possible. What are the character traits, the accomplishments you'd like to be remembered for? Better still, take time to find writings of the Jewish sages that describe the greatness of what a human being can be. Masterplan by Rabbi Aryeh Carmell is one example of a book which is very accessible to English-speakers which describes the mitzvahs we are expected to perform and how they fit into G-d's "masterplan". Take five minutes to envision just one small thing you can do this year to move a little closer from the real to the ideal in this year. It can be attending a Torah class once a week. It might be lighting Shabbos candles. It might be making one phone call once a week to someone you know would appreciate hearing from you. These steps can be the movement that give meaning to life and move us all

towards achieving the greatest potential of our people, and our world and ultimately bring the moshiach and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, may it be soon and in our days.

**GOOD SHABBOS AND MAY WE ALL BE WRITTEN AND SEALED FOR A GOOD, SWEET AND GROWTH-FILLED YEAR IN THE BOOK OF LIFE!!**

*Note: This d'var Torah was inspired by a lecture I heard from Rabbi Ephraim Becker, Ph.D. If this essay is untrue or falls short of the mark, it is most likely from my mistakes in expressing Rabbi Becker's ideas. If it inspires and guides, please know that I learned this approach from him and cannot claim to have thought of it on my own. Best wishes for a happy, sweet new year.*

## **A Head Above The Rest**

Reuven Formey

The day of Rosh Hashanah has various concepts and themes associated with it. The most commonly discussed aspect is that it is a Day of Judgment, a day in which G-d determines what the future holds for all of mankind in the coming year. A judgment is rendered in regards to a person's health, finances, possessions, and various details of life, and we ask that He provide these things in abundance and judge us favorably. But there is another major theme to this awesome day. Rosh Hashanah is when the Jewish people again present the crown of Kingship to G-d and entreat Him to be our sole Ruler. By doing this we agree to nullify ourselves totally to His will and put aside all our desires in deference to what He wants. But these two concepts of asking G-d for our own needs and wants, yet completely nullifying ourselves to His will,

seem contradictory. How can we accept G-d's Kingship on Rosh Hashanah in a state of total submission, but still pray for all the things that we desire? How can we focus on submitting and requesting simultaneously?

This brings a similar question in regards to the very name of the day. "Rosh Hashanah" literally means the "head of the year." Just as the head, which contains the brain, controls and empowers all the workings of the rest of the organs and limbs of the body, so too does Rosh Hashanah hold the power to infuse energy into all of the days of the year. But, the very reason this day can do this is because it transcends all the minor details that make all the days of the year different. If Rosh Hashanah is on such a lofty and transcendent level, how can it have a relationship with even the detailed aspects of everyday of the year? To use an analogy for the question, typically the biggest scholar does not have a relationship with the lowly pauper, much less a close and personal relationship where he guides every detail of the pauper's life. So, how do we understand this concept?

The power of Rosh Hashanah reflects G-d's Essence. In truth, this level cannot be said to "transcend" the levels below it. When we say one level "transcends" another, it gives the connotation that it is simply higher than the other level, yet still has a connection to it. The connection is that the particular level represents a step above the other. Thus they share a recognizable relationship. For example, the number 2 is greater than 1. One million also transcends or is higher than 1. But no matter how high the number you choose,

even though it transcends 1, it still has a relationship to 1 because they are both numbers and if you keep counting from 1, eventually you'll get to that high number. On the other hand, the number 1 has no relationship to infinity. They are incomparable. Actually, no number or measure of counting will ever reach infinity. So to compare it to a number is to falsely say there's a limit on the essence of what it is. The same idea is true in regards to G-d's Essence as it influences Rosh Hashanah. To say it simply "transcends" or is higher than all levels would be like putting a limit on it! But infinitude has absolutely no limits and therefore it even has the ability to go into the finite and control all lower aspects within our material world. Rosh Hashanah has the power to be the "head" in control of every detail of the days of the new year **because** of it's incomparable level and power. In short, it can do it all!

This concept is reflected in the very Torah that is essentially one with G-d. The Sages say, "Laws regarding monetary matters cannot be derived from laws regarding Torah prohibitions." Yet we know that there are other various laws in Torah where the application from one subject is used as a reference for arguing on a subject of another discipline. Thus within Torah itself we see both separateness and cohesion, and yet we know that the Torah remains a complete unity nevertheless because of its total connection to G-d's Essence. There is no contradiction.

Now we can understand why there is no contradiction between asking G-d for our wants and needs on Rosh Hashanah and at the same time nullifying ourselves before His will as King. The whole of a Jew's life is

governed by G-d. Everything he or she receives, the places they may go, and even certain decisions they are compelled to make are apart of a larger plan for the person. The question is, does a person acknowledge that all they've been given, whether something of need or a personal desire, comes from G-d and should be used in His service exclusively? Rosh Hashanah is a day to recognize this reality. Since we said that there is no contradiction between the Essence of G-d manifest on Rosh Hashanah and the seemingly lowly personal needs of every day, we can have confidence asking for these things on a day that we are renewing our vow to use it all in His service! If we were saying, "Hey G-d, gimme this, gimme that!" simply to satisfy our own mundane passions, then we'd be missing the point. But the beauty of being a Jew with a soul whose essence is literally connected to G-d's Essence is that even if we can't consciously ask G-d for what we want without personal motives in our hearts and minds, the desire is still coming from a place within us that wants to serve Him. If a Jew desires good food or a nice home, it's because the essence of their soul wants to elevate that food like the sacrifices offered on the altar in the Temple, or perhaps it wants to glorify their home in order that the Divine Presence dwell with them and their family in a place as close to the magnificence of a Temple-like structure as possible. At any rate, the source of the desire is holy. It's only that our animalistic side blurs the desire coming from our soul and it comes out in the form of a selfish motive. Rosh Hashanah is a time to make a new effort in devoting our passions to G-d Himself in a revealed way. And since a Jew's actual makeup (a soul unlimited due to its divine connection, and a limited body)

reflects combining opposites, we have the unique ability to truly bring these concepts into unity.

The fact that Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat this year will only make our efforts that much more successful. Shabbat is similar to Rosh Hashanah in that it infuses blessing into the week just as Rosh Hashanah does into the year. However, Shabbat represents going above worldliness altogether, and thus enabling us to come down and use that vitality for the week. In contrast, the very purpose of Rosh Hashanah, as its name connotes, lies specifically in affecting the *worldly* aspects connected to the year. When these two times of Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah come together, there is a special dimension that is added to the concept of what's above joining with what's down low. We see this in the fact that the shofar is not blown when these two times coincide. Although halachically this is because of the fear that an inexperienced shofar blower might transgress the Shabbat law of carrying in order to seek guidance on how to blow properly from an expert, nevertheless every halacha is rooted in a spiritual concept. To explain, we blow the shofar in order to draw down G-d's will that He should proclaim his Kingship over us and respond to our pleas for love and mercy. However, within the holiness of Shabbat, that divine will is already manifested! Therefore the Shofar is not blown. Worldliness and the natural order and its nurture on Rosh Hashanah, are brought up to a level that reflects being above nature, Shabbat. This is all achieved by the influence of a level higher than both Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah...G-d Himself.

Pnimityus HaTorah teaches that every year contains within it a unique vitality that is brought down on Rosh Hashanah. No year previous to it contains the same amount of spiritual light. In previous years, various scholars have found that the number of the year itself, whether through gematria (numerical value of the letters) or represented by its Hebrew letters, have alluded to both the positive or negative (G-d forbid) events of that year. To use just one of many examples, the year 5750/1990 was Tav-Shin-Nun. These letters form the acronym for 'T'hei Shnas Nissim', "This will be a year of miracles." That was the year of the Gulf War, in which Israel was miraculously protected from what was later to be reported as hundreds of scud missiles and more than ten tons of explosives, many of which were launched but never found. Many miracles were reported. Even though 39 missiles did land in Israel, they reportedly killed only two people. Indeed, a miracle with G-d's hand all over it. Not to mention the significance of the number 39 to Shabbat observance. This Rosh Hashanah will be Tav-Shin-Ayin, **5770**. A verse in Micha says, "*The one who bursts forth has gone up before them; they broke and passed through a gate and went out through it; and their king passed before them, and the Lord was at their head.*" (Micha 2:13). Rashi comments that the "one who breaks forth" is "Their savior, who breaks the fences of thorns and the hedges of briers, to straighten the road before them." Also, in Bereishit, in regards to G-d giving the Land of Israel to the Jewish people and the promise of their tremendous growth the Torah says, "*And you shall burst forth westward, eastward, northward and southward*" (Genesis 28:14). The

letters of 'paratzta', 'burst forth' – which appears in both these verses, which allude to Moshiach and our growth in number and strength, equal the gematria of 770, the final three numbers of the coming year. We cannot bring solid proofs about redemption from these quite interesting points. But we can guarantee one thing. If we Jews hope and pray with true desire that this year will bring about the wondrous purpose for which the world was created, 5770 will no doubt be the year of our rejoicing.

*Based upon the teachings of the Rebbe Menachem M. Shneershon, zt'l*

## Rosh Hashana Rabbi Yosef Samberg

As we all know, Rosh Hashana is a very important and serious day. It is the day when we are judged by G-d to determine what the upcoming Jewish year will be. As we solemnly contemplate the words in the Musaf service, "Who will live, who will die", thoughts of ourselves, loved ones, and friends come to the forefront of our thoughts, and force us to face the true realities of life - G-d, and only G-d, controls our futures and destinies.

In trying to help us understand the imagery of how we are being judged of Rosh Hashana, the Mishna in Tractate Rosh Hashana teaches that we walk before G-d like "Bnai Maron." In explaining this statement, the Talmud quotes three opinions. The first opinion explains it as referring to sheep that pass single file in front of their owner in order to be counted. The second opinion holds that it alludes to a narrow path along the mountainside that allows only one person to walk along it.

Finally, the third opinion explains it as soldiers who march single file. Although many commentators explain the subtle differences in these three opinions, there is a common denominator; we are judged one by one, and by ourselves.

One of my favorite parts of teaching is refereeing. When two children approach me, each blaming the other for the altercation, it now falls into my lap to “get to the bottom of it.” As the truth slowly unfolds, I ask one child, “Why did you do that?” Invariably, the answer starts with, “HE!” I immediately stop him and ask again, “Why did YOU do that?” My point is to encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions, without shifting the blame to others. As the Talmud teaches, we walk in front of G-d in a straight line. By walking single file in front of G-d to be judged on Rosh Hashana, we are forced to candidly look at ourselves and make a reckoning based solely on what we did as individuals over the past year. We are not able, nor are we permitted to look to others as excuses for our shortcomings and misgivings. On Rosh Hashana we are forced to stand and answer the questions of, “Why did YOU do that?”

As scary as that thought is, it is also possible to explain the idea of being alone in front of G-d in a more inspiring light. A question is posed, was to why Adam was originally created in this vast world all by himself. The answer given explains the reason to be that all people can take the lesson that, just as Adam could say that the whole world was created for him, we can say the same thing for ourselves. How unbelievable is that? Everything we see around us, from the grass beneath our feet

to the vast cosmos above, was created just for us, to help us fulfill our unique purpose and job in life. If G-d is willing to create this awesome universe just for me, one simple person, doesn't this teach us about the potential that is inside each one of us? We can accomplish so much in so many ways if we simply put our mind to it and resolve not to be deterred when faced with obstacles. A student of Jewish or world history would see that so many great feats which affected the world at large were brought about, not by groups, but rather by the force of one simple person doing extraordinary things.

Therefore, Rosh Hashana forces us to face up to our own individual past and its shortcomings, while at the same time, having to look deep within ourselves to find and unlock our immeasurable potential for the forthcoming year.

As I write these words, I cannot stop thinking that “Uncle” Harry Yellin, whose first Yartzeit is the second day of Rosh Hashana, epitomized this idea of the power of an individual. The fact that you are reading this article today and that over the course of a decade, hundreds of people have read, shared, and have been inspired by these pamphlets, is a tribute to him and his resolve to help not just the Jewish community of Savannah but to Jews worldwide. I do not have to tell you how Uncle Harry's fingerprints are indelibly found on every area of Jewish Savannah. On a recent visit back in February, I went into his office and just stood there and wondered how many wonderful mitzvos were performed, and how many lives were touched, from his computer and workstation. And as I must add, this was all

done without fanfare, but with simple humility and cheer, and of course, Aunt Cookie's encouragement and support. If we ever doubt what one person can accomplish in a short time, we should look to Uncle Harry and his accomplishments for inspiration. May his memory act as a merit for his wonderful family who, having learned through his example, are dedicated to the growth of the community, and to Klal Yisroel in general.

Have a meaningful Rosh Hashana and may we all merit a year of health and good tidings.

Good Yom Tov.

## Rosh Hashana Reflections

M. Landon

"Didn't you ever look at your child suffering, and ask yourself 'Where's G-d?'" A Shabbos guest recently asked. Interestingly enough, the question about feelings of abandonment during our most recent nisayon (challenge/test) had actually surfaced the opposite effect. Recognizing again, how very indebted we are to Hakadosh Baruch Hu (the Holy One Blessed be He), arouses within us a desire to share with you how very benevolent our Creator is. Through sharing some personal accounts of this difficult time, you will see how through all of this, He has brought us closer.

After the initial experience of shock, disbelief and sadness over a life threatening diagnosis for our young child, a plan had to be made how we were going to deal with the task that lay ahead.

Understanding that the chances of a child being in this situation was less than 1 in 10,000, it was clear to us from the beginning that this was from Hashem. "If He has the power to give it, He has the power to take it away. Statistics, no statistics. G-d is outside of numbers – He either wills it to be one way, or another." Ain ode milvado. There is no one but Him. So, following this logic, "If G-d gave us this, *what are we supposed to do with it?*" The answer was not forthcoming, but one thing was for certain - this was clearly a test, and "throwing in the towel" was *not* an option.

There were endless medical details that needed attending to, nerves that needed calming, siblings that needed reassuring, insurance issues to be put in order, and quieting of the inner voice that was simply screaming "Don't want this!" Knowing that this was a spiritual test, possibly given to us to atone for wrong choices made in our lives, "guilt" was the next unwelcome guest in this already crowded hospital room of emotions. The calendar said "January," but we were definitely feeling "Elul." Personal accounting of wrongs and misdeeds were gone over with fine tooth combs, hoping this spiritual workout would be the "magic elixir" to show HaShem we were serious about change and we didn't need this type of wake up call. Please, spare our son, our baby, who has never sinned in his short life!

**"What do you do when you know that everything is riding on you, and yet, never in your life have you felt more ill-equipped to meet this challenge?"** It's Rosh Hashanah, and Hashem is going to decide what is in store for your future based on who you are right now. Ok, I'm

committed to improving myself. I know there have to be changes, but what specifically does He want me to change?? Aren't there any 'Cliff's notes' to doing proper tshuva??”

The doctors were not wasting anytime on hishtadlus (effort) to rid his body of this aggressive cancer. We couldn't afford to waste time on our “spiritual hishtadlus” either. The response to our prayer for Hashem's guidance was clear – “You don't know what to do? So what – it behooves you to **do something**. If there's something that you can do to heal him, you have to do it.”

What was the “something” we chose to do collectively? To stay focused on the positive. Negative thoughts were a constant companion that needed to constantly be told “Not productive. Go away.” The best way we found to do this was to actively look – and share - our evidence that G-d was “still in the picture.” It was really difficult to do this at first, but as our Sages tell us, “Make for G-d an opening the size of a needle and Hashem will expand it to a large banquet hall.” It soon became impossible not to see Hashem's involvement and it was quite comforting to feel His Presence holding our hands *every step of the way*.

There were so many chasadim (acts of kindness) done on our behalf, from those who were close to us, to strangers all over the world; unified efforts, individual efforts; there was so much spiritual growth that was inspired by this small little child – who was cognizant of none of this, obviously – the resounding theme of this time period became “mi kamcha yisroel?” Truly, who is

like your nation, Hashem?

Just thinking about how many aspects of our situation were in place before we even began this test is mind boggling – like “the refuah before the makah”. (There is an idea in the Torah that Hashem does not give a challenge without first setting up its solution.)

Before we even knew the diagnosis was cancer, as soon as we knew it was a possibility, we were on the phone with the director from the Southeast Division of Chai Lifeline, an international organization that helps families in these situations navigate their way in this state of turmoil. How were we able to contact this Social Worker so fast (it was Saturday night and normally we couldn't reach anyone before Monday)? How is it we even knew of this organization so well or that there even was a special contingency in this region? Well, knowing that things are not coincidental in Hashem's world, this director “happened” to be none other than our close friend's mother, whom we knew for over 7 years! How did we meet this friend originally? Des Moines, Iowa!!! If this friend hadn't been in Des Moines, and we hadn't been in Des Moines at the same time, we most likely would not have felt this kind of close connection and immediate trust in this person. (How we got to Des Moines is a whole other story in and of itself.)

Furthermore, if it had not been for these very same friends moving to Savannah, we would not have known there was even a position available and worthwhile looking into. Fortunately for us – and we hope the Savannah community feels the same – we have never looked back. We felt

immediately “at home” here, and cared for “like family” when both of my parents became suddenly ill within the first few months after our move. Due to these difficulties we experienced, and how supportive the community had been, we knew that whatever uncertainties lay ahead could be managed. Can you see now how Hashem was trying to “buffer” the blow?

Our School was particularly understanding that our focus had to be with our son, was exceedingly flexible with extended absences, and fed my family nightly for over a year. Our neighbors pitched in with car pools and homework and babysitting for over a year. Friends constantly told me of the good deeds being done in the merit of a full recovery. Emergency Tehillim were immediately organized and continue still today. Someone said at one point, “You have to run this race, but we’ll be there to pass you the cups of water.” Our family remains truly grateful for the beautiful community in which Hashem has placed us.

We weren't the only ones who He moved seemingly for this purpose. Only two years prior, my sister had moved from New York to Atlanta. We were somewhat familiar with the fame of Oncology in New York and armed with the knowledge that droves of people go to hospitals there, it was difficult to see ourselves going anywhere else. We knew that expertise was one factor, but since this cancer was rare, we wanted a doctor who had handled numerous cases such as this one. We found an oncologist (who was Jewish, no less) who further specialized in Neuroblastoma, and he was based in Atlanta - of all places – and only minutes from my sister's house. This

challenge we were faced with of “where to go?” was beginning to become clearer. With the exception of Sloan Kettering, all of the hospitals throughout the US that belong to the Children's Oncology Group follow a protocol for this particular presentation. This was why we chose to have our son treated in Atlanta, since the care was comparable and we had my sister there as a home base. This doctor, by the way, was excellent. Numerous articles have been written on research he has done (and continues to do) to find a cure, and additionally, he presented himself to us as a real mensch. He took a special interest in my son, that I attribute to the kinship Jews feel toward each other, and asked for his Hebrew name so he could *daven* for him. Not a native to Atlanta himself, he understood my ethnocentric preference towards New York doctors, and explained to me where he felt each had their strengths in light of our current situation. Simultaneously, the way in which we were being treated by the staff was such that we felt secure in staying here for the time being. To this day, it surprises us that we still think of Children's Hospital in Atlanta with warm thoughts despite the traumas experienced there.

As we quickly learned my sister became more than just a home base – she became a crucial arm of the lifeline of support. In addition to creating a blog to help inform everyone of my son's progress, (which she *still* maintains to this day), my sister made numerous calls to chessed contacts in the area. Instantly, we had frequent hospital visits, meals delivered, a nurse who volunteered to come daily to my sister's house when we weren't admitted and helped me with the shots and dressing

changes and IV hookups I needed to give my son. My sister's family (which boasts a few young kids) had to adjust to the changes very quickly and we were fortunate that those shifts in schedules and space were not resented. We really felt the anchor of having family and friends while amidst these turbulent waters.

Although my sister, herself, was somewhat new to the community, we began to discover together the true heart of the Jewish people. We help one another. I know that some people will think that this is an elitist statement, but while it's true that there are Yichidim (extraordinary people that are the *exception* to the rule), among the greater world out there, you generally do not find this type of supportive community everywhere you go, unless you're Jewish. We began to see this fact and appreciate it the more and more entrenched we were in hospital stays and in different states. We went to Jacksonville for our radiation treatments and there, too, despite being a third of the size of Savannah, the Chessed was astounding. Wherever we went, G-d and His representatives were there. In fact, not only were they there, but of the small contingency of people who could make meals for us in Jacksonville, one of them regularly made food without the same allergens my son had because her kids shared the same ones !!! How do you like that? Hashem knows I'm going to need Challah for Shabbos and the person who regularly bakes challah for the community also has a child with egg allergies!

You want to say that Hashem is not in the picture? What is it then? Coincidence? Personally, I think it's more difficult to

believe that all of this is random and we live in a chaotic world than it is to open our eyes and see evidence of His Presence.

One proof reminds us of another that Hashem is here and our ramblings could easily fill tomes. There is one story, however, that stands out as being the most illustrative when it comes to hinting to a broader purpose hidden behind all the pain.

After 6 rounds of chemo, surgery, an additional regimen of high dose chemo preceding a bone marrow transplant and 13 days of radiation, our emaciated little tzaddikel still had scans that showed the presence of cancer. What to do? There was an experimental treatment that seemed to show success, but was only available in one place in this country, Memorial Sloan Kettering, NY. One problem though. Insurance didn't want to cover it. And how much is being requested in order to begin? \$125,000. Delays earlier in treatment due to attempts to get insurance to cover radiation made the urgency to begin this treatment stronger (it had been almost 100 days since he had chemo, and still had cancer roaming unchecked), and legal counsel we sought, pointed out that there wasn't a likelihood we would win this one in the time frame we were given. That left one option. Make the appointment, and the money will just have to come. Just to recap, we're teachers, not businessmen, and we have never even owned a house, so this amount of money is really foreign to us, and the market had crashed but a month before. Did we mention that all of this basically had to be done *in a week*? There should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the fact that we got the money we needed for the treatment

was clearly an act of G-d. There was no way we could do it without Him. We knew that from the beginning. This one spoke to that one and publicized the predicament here and there and strangers from across the globe not only started to wire money but also were inspired to begin davening and growing spiritually. Facebook, blogs, radio, tv all were elevated to tools of a yeshuva (salvation) for my son. Jews unified in a way we had never been witness to in our lives. Someone wrote on our blog, "Your request was made on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, and like Chanukah, 8 days later there was a story of "malah min hatevah" (above the natural order of things ) to tell. The details of this story alone could easily fill a book in and of itself. The majority of the monies collected were from individuals, NOT trust funds as you would expect. The visit tracker on our blog read over 1000 people in just 2 days after it had been put on! Can we even begin to comprehend the magnitude of the spiritual effects this urgent situation has motivated?

Why did we merit to be a part of all this? We cannot ever underestimate the power of our tefillos and tzedaka and the actions we take to get closer to a more spiritual life!! What happened next, really drives this point home. In December, 2008, after the doctor at Sloan Kettering had told us we most likely made the wrong choice going to these other places until now, five days of scans showed **no trace of cancer anywhere** in his body. What changed? Nothing more had been done since the last scan, other than the spiritual upheavals created by innumerable Jews the world over, to get him there.

It really doesn't stop there. Had we gotten different results, we would have questioned the care we received until this point. Hashem gave us the gift of knowing that He guided us to the hospitals he needed to be in. Hashem could have made the scans appear clear before the whole fund-raising saga, but the people who were all motivated to do the actions they did wouldn't have occurred either. To this day, we really feel that there is a direct relationship between the spiritual outpouring of that 8 day period and that first set of clean scans that were taken but a month later.

So, now what about the therapy that this money was raised for? The general consensus with this type of cancer is that clean scans do not equal remission. Sloan Kettering believes that cancer can still roam microscopically, undetected, and therefore the antibody therapy can still be effective. What they see as currently 'treating' whatever cancer we don't see, also has shown promise to be effective as prevention. After 6 months of clean scans, Thank G-d, we are coming closer and closer to believe that the antibody therapy that our son is getting is purely a preventative measure. After the holidays we will be going up to NY again for more scans and possibly treatment.

"How do you sleep at night not knowing what tomorrow will bring?" our guest asks.

Smiling, he gets the response, "Since when am I in charge of our future? If I am not sleeping at night it's because I'm not doing my part of what I'm *supposed* to be doing – fixing myself. I'll leave tomorrow up to G-d."