

BRAIN WAVES

An Aneurysm, a Brain Surgery, and a Shidduch - Resolved at Chatzos

MIMI

I'm Mimi. I am an eighteen-year-old girl just about to enter Shidduchim and I'm a real tomboy. I have a zest for life, boundless energy, and far too many ideas. So, when my father invited me to join my brothers for Rosh Hashana by the Rebbe in Eretz Yisroel, I immediately said yes. I'm like one of the boys when it comes to adventure.

But when I was standing in the overcrowded shul during Mussaf Shemone Esrie, I started to have second thoughts. I was feeling dizzy and faint.

I thought the hectic schedule and sticky humidity were getting to me, so I tried to sit down. But then, the room started swirling, so I made my way to the exit and sent a message to one of my brothers that I was returning to the apartment.

The rest of Rosh Hashana, I spent in bed, feeling uncharacteristically weak and out of sorts. After yom tov, we went to a local doctor, who dismissed my symptoms as a lingering virus.

MRS. STEINER

But I knew this was something more threatening than a simple virus when I saw my husband pushing his daughter in a wheelchair into the arrivals terminal. My Mimi – who hasn't needed more than five hours of sleep since the day she was born – never sat still. If Mimi was so weak that she needed a wheelchair to support her, we were going to the doctor – NOW.

Straight from the airport.

Well, the doctor diagnosed Mimi with mumps, and we breathed a sigh of relief. *So that's what it was. We can handle that... Give her a little time, and she'll be back to herself.*

Except that, with every passing day, she was getting weaker. We decided to make an appointment with a top specialist in Manhattan for chol hamoed.

ROCHEL LEAH

After spending First Days and chol hamoed at my in-laws, I waltzed into my parents' on Hoshana Raba, eager to deposit my kids in welcoming tantes' arms, flop down on the couch, and breathe. I had not really been keeping up with Mimi's daily updates, so I expected her to be stuck in bed with the mumps – while the rest of my family functioned normally.

The first hint that something was wrong was the smell. Or the lack thereof. Typically, on Hoshana Raba, my mother's kitchen is in overdrive. But not today and not here.

I caught a glimpse of my mother, dashing into a room. She popped back out her head, said something that sounded like 'hello-sorry-can't-greet-you-have-to-take-Mimi-to-hospital-brain-surgery.'

Brain surgery?

I'm not the emotional type, but the shock set me into a panic. I cornered two of my brothers and forced them to tell me everything they knew.

I learnt that my sister had intracranial lesions, which sometimes result when an aneurysm ruptures in the brain.

My brother was his diplomatic best: "Mimi should be dead or paralyzed," he informed me grandly. "But 'cuz she's still alive, they're going to try surgery to pull out the whateveritis from the middle of her brain."

My head started to turn.

I felt so helpless and so afraid. I needed to do something – fast. I took out my phone and called Rivky. Little did I know then that there was no better person to call at that moment than Rivky.

In stilted sentences, I filled her in on Mimi's situation and begged her to have the Kollel Chatzos talmidei chachamim daven for Mimi tonight and every night. When I finished giving her my credit card information and Mimi's tehillim name, I ended the call, feeling somewhat relieved.

I had done *something*.

What I didn't know was just how much this something had done.

The irony wasn't lost on me. Rivky is my good friend, who works in Kollel Chatzos's office. She always shared these amazing yeshua stories, and I usually laughed. I would say these donors are super-rich, super-gullible, and super-desperate. I *am* a cynic.

But now, when I was in the foxhole, I knew that Mimi needed the most powerful zechus ever. And necessity made me reach for the most basic emuna I had as a

yid – that there was nothing more powerful than Torah and tefilla.

At that moment, I understood that Kollel Chatzos’s partners are neither gullible nor desperate. They’re just maaminim, who appreciate the value of Torah. They are Yidden, who, in the middle of the whirlwind of the smug, ‘oh-so-clever America’, remain connected to Hashem and recognize the power of Torah.

What could I tell you? Mimi underwent brain surgery that morning. She was supposed to spend one week at the Brain ICU and two weeks in the regular ICU. She spent *one* day at each.



Members of the Kollel learning in Meron – 2.30 am like midday

Within three weeks, she was back at work.

MIMI

It was strange, really. Doctors kept on predicting I would be paralyzed or somewhat brain damaged. (I know, I’m not the type! But still, I’m not the type for any of this drama!!!) And here I was, out of the lion’s den, with nary a scratch to show (save a scalp of staples.)

Instinctively, I know, I know what did it. Because, from the moment my sister gave my name to Kollel Chatzos, things started moving uphill. Torah must’ve cleared the way for my recovery.

What amazes me most... is that we are amazed that Torah cleared the way for my

recovery!

What on earth happened to us? Has the soft life sunk us into such *gashmius* point of view as to make the most basic bedrock of our emunah seem like a joke?

I don’t know. But I still knew I was not out of the woods yet.

ROCHEL LEAH

I kept Mimi’s name on the list, just to be sure things remained okay.

And then, one Shabbos, I was at my parents’ home. I was marveling at how normal and wonderful Mimi looked. We were standing on the porch and schmoozing about the chesed we had experienced. And then, Mimi paused. “I know I escaped being brain damaged, and I’m grateful forever. But now I’m shidduchim damaged. And that’s almost as bad. People hear I had brain surgery, and they don’t want to go near me. You should hear the names they’re redting me. Awful diseases. Boys with huge, huge problems.” Her words echoed in the starry night.

My heart crumbled for my kid sister, an optimistic young lady turned to a perceptive wilted weed, overnight.

I calmly called Kollel Chatzos’s office and asked to update Mimi’s name. “From refuah to zivug hagon,” I whispered my own tefillos to Hashem.

Forty days later, I was on my parents’ porch, together with Mimi, once again.

She had just gotten engaged. To a most wonderful, healthy boy. Oh yes. He had scoliosis surgery on his spine as a boy. We could live with that.



Mentioning the names at the Kever of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai

I said it once. I’ll say it again. We’re not the mushy type, my sister and I. And, honestly, we definitely had never been the ones to read all those Kollel Chatzos yeshua stories, let alone believe them.

But. But. We experienced one yeshua. And then another yeshua.

So we know. It’s not believing. It’s knowing. Torah works. For everyone. And for us. Forever.

Thank you, Kollel Chatzos – for bringing about our yeshua and restoring our emuna...

**Names changed to protect privacy*

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Kollel Chatzos praying for chatzos partners in Amukah for shidduchim

