

FEATURE



Alternate Route to Recovery

A MOTHER'S STORY



My oldest son Duvi has always been an exceptional boy, every mother's dream. He is bright, mature, and sensitive – one of the top boys in his *shiur*. One thing he has never been is a complainer. So when he called me from yeshivah complaining of a debilitating headache, alarm bells began ringing in my head. I told him that he must be developing migraines, which is not uncommon in our family. He called again on Thursday evening, asking to come home because he was in such unrelenting agony. I gave him Tylenol and sent him to bed, but he couldn't sleep. He tried taking a hot bath and I massaged his head at midnight – all to no avail.

Friday morning rolled around and Duvi was vomiting repeatedly, his headache still fierce. I raced through the morning routine, somehow managing to ready all the little ones in record time, then sped to the doctor's office with Duvi, all Shabbos plans completely forgotten.

After taking one look at Duvi, the doctor immediately sent us to the ER. She said he needed a CT scan and an IV for dehydration due to the vomiting. The ER, which had been notified about our impending arrival, whisked us off quickly for the CT scan. I sat with the technician as he performed the scan and saw images of Duvi's brain appear on the screen. I felt like telling him, "In all your years of doing this job, you have never seen a more brilliant, special, or beautiful brain than this one!" Everything on the screen looked normal to me and I couldn't understand what was taking so long, or why the ER doctor was doing repeated eye exams (which I later understood were neurological exams). My heart was pounding and it was all I could do to concentrate on *Tehillim* as the minutes ticked by unbearably slowly. Finally, the doctor entered accompanied by the chief of pediatric oncology. They gently looked at us and articu-

lated the words that I had been dreading: Duvi had a mass in the center of his brain. None of us could say the words "brain tumor" – they were too horrific. I grabbed Duvi's soft, large hand and sobbed quietly. The doctors seemed to fade away as I looked into my son's eyes and thought, "Hashem! He is such a sterling *bachur*, this son of mine. Such fine *middos*...the *illui* of his yeshivah...! We need him! Klal Yisrael needs him!" I couldn't control my tears, even though I desperately wanted to compose myself and be strong for Duvi.

The months that followed were harrowing, and each day felt like a lifetime. Duvi underwent a risky brain surgery to confirm the details of the tumor. The tumor was confirmed to be a germinoma, and a week later he began chemo. Our overall concern throughout the treatments was the long-term effects that the chemo and radiation might cause. I remember when my husband, Duvi, and I met with the team of doctors who explained all the possible side effects, both short and long term. It was the first time Duvi, who was always calm and serene throughout his illness, was shaken up. The reality that he wouldn't be in yeshivah for months had slowly been sinking in, but the fact that his mental capabilities might be impacted was absolutely overwhelming.

After the third round of chemo, Duvi had an MRI, which showed good news and bad news. The good news was the tumor had shrunk. The bad news: two other smaller spots on the scan had not been affected by the chemo. The next stage of his treatment regimen was proton beam therapy, a specialized radiation technology.

On the first day of radiation, I remember feeling a tinge of hope and also a great deal of nervousness that Duvi's mental abilities would possibly be diminished. Somebody jokingly quipped,



“Duvi’s so smart; he can spare some brain cells and no one would even notice!” Understandably, that didn’t make me feel any better.

The radiation therapy ended in July and we anxiously waited for the results. The results were bittersweet. On the one hand, the tumor had disappeared; however, the smaller spots had only faded slightly. Our doctor was stumped – he had never seen anything like this before. He refused to administer any more treatments because Duvi had reached the maximum amount of radiation that could be applied to the brain without causing damage. He was unsure how to proceed and decided to monitor

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him closely and perform another MRI in eight weeks.

The doctors had been very confident that we would receive good news after the last round of radiation and I even had distant thoughts of a *seudas bodaa’h* percolating in my head. This was quite a blow. We felt so helpless and I realized more than ever how dependent we are on Hashem. It was clear that He was orchestrating this and the doctors were only puppets in His hands.

We were now at a very confusing crossroads. The doctors could do nothing more for Duvi and so we began contemplating alternative cancer therapy, but the prospect was paralyzing. There are countless folks claiming to have the magic cure for

The Safirstein Program



The goal of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation is to destroy cancer cells, either by poisoning, burning, or cutting them out. However, these treatments don’t address the underlying problem of why the cancer appeared in the first place.

Even if therapy succeeds in eradicating every single tumor cell, it never addresses the reason cancer developed, so the likelihood of recurrence is high and is compounded by the toxicity and scarring that result from the treatments. The Safirstein Program targets the *cause* of the cancer through natural interventions and may be taken concurrently with conventional therapies.

Our body is basically a biochemical factory; we eat nutrients which are broken down into individual chemicals that have to combine in a precise way for our body to function properly. If they are lacking, the system will only work partially, if at all. In laymen’s terms, if I have

to make a cake and the recipe calls for eight eggs and I have only two, the cake isn’t going to come out right. Similarly, this occurs with our bodily functions. If there are deficiencies, degenerative diseases like cancer could eventually develop.

The Safirstein Program includes most of the nutrients that the body needs to correct those deficiencies. Among these are vitamin D, vitamin K, iodine, omega 3 fatty acids, medicinal mushrooms and botanical extracts that give the immune system the ammunition it needs to fight the cancer. Hashem created the immune system with the ability to fight disease and to self-repair, but He left it to us to provide the raw materials it needs to function.

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cancer – how would we know what was legitimate and what wasn't? And I was pretty skeptical about the whole idea of alternative medicine,

anyway. Right after Duvi was diagnosed, a friend had suggested that he take certain vitamins. I was annoyed and incredulous that she would even suggest such a thing. I felt like saying, "My son has a brain tumor and you want him to take vitamins?!"

But now we were literally grasping at straws. We were ready to look beyond conventional medicine and I *davened* so hard that Hashem should show us which path to take, because we were utterly clueless.

He sent me a *siman* the very next day. My husband and I were taking a much-needed vacation when another mother of an ill child called to give me *chizuk*. During the course of the conversation, she mentioned that her son had started the Safirstein Program and his condition improved dramatically. I hung up feeling strengthened, and also quite curious.

After making many phone calls, my husband and I met with Mr. Safirstein for several hours. He seemed highly knowledgeable, possessing great integrity and honorable intentions. The fact that he was *frum* comforted me. Besides all that, he had formulated a regimen which was producing remarkable results.

Not wanting to waste time, Duvi joined the Safirstein Program.

The specific nutrients that he prescribed for Duvi would target the many weaknesses of the cancer cells and supply the ammunition that the immune system needed to fight them.

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The program also allowed Duvi to return to yeshivah and we began assuming our long-forgotten daily routine, all the while *davening* fervently that we were doing the right *hishtadlus*. Finally, the time arrived for Duvi's next MRI. With bated breath, we waited for the results and were ecstatic when we heard that the spots had shrunk significantly. The doctors called it a medical mystery, while we thanked Hashem with overflowing gratitude for showing us the right path.

The next MRI was scheduled for February, three months away. In the meantime, we continued the program and kept Duvi's name on the *Tehillim* list. It was a very hopeful time for our family; we finally felt a ray of hope after months of desperation.

When the next MRI came back clear, we were overwhelmed. Honestly, I was amazed that the therapy had worked. The doctors monitored Duvi for the next few months and by the time summer rolled around, we received the go-ahead from our *rav* to make a *seudas hoda'a*'h.

A few years have passed and *baruch Hashem*, you would never know that Duvi ever had a brain tumor. He is happy, energetic, and his mental capacities haven't been impacted at all as he continues to *shteig* in yeshivah. *Baruch Hashem*, he hasn't suffered any side effects from the chemo and radiation. We have kept him on the Safirstein Program for maintenance and I have incorporated parts of the program for the rest of my family for preventative measures.

Now, I'm the one who recommends vitamins to friends who have relatives with cancer! They look at me incredulously but after I tell them my story, I think they understand... 