

We Listen to the Coronavirus Experts

By: HESHEY ZELCER

The following poem was written on April 23, 2020. Two short weeks later my brother-in-law succumbed to Covid-19. Less than a week after that my father-in-law passed away from the same disease.

My dear brother-in-law, R. Yechiel Yosef ben Zvi Bezael Bornstein, ז"ל, was taken from us on 12 Iyyar 5780. Born in Yerushalayim to a hareidi family, he joined the Israeli Defense Forces. During the Six-Day War he served in a tank battalion protecting the State of Israel. Following his discharge, he moved to the United States and found employment in the diamond industry. Saving his money, he brought his parents over and helped settle them in Borough Park. With his charm, personality, and constant smile, he won over and married my sister, Chanie. Yossie was loved by everyone he met and helped those in need. He loved learning Torah and teaching Nakh. The last few years of his life he served as president of Ansbei Sfard of Borough Park (the Sfardishe Shul), where he worked tirelessly attending to the needs of the congregation and its members. Yossie is survived by his wife, his three children Rivi, Ari and Toby, numerous grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

My dear father-in-law, R. Avraham ben Nechemia Yisrael Solomon, ז"ל passed away just a few days later on Lag Ba-Omer. Born in Kirbaus, Czechoslovakia he spent the war years as a forced laborer. After the liberation he was taken to Föhrenwald DP Camp where he was privileged to hear the Klausenberger rebbe whose words lifted his spirit. With his faith intact, and anxious to rebuild his life, he relocated to the United States where he was introduced to Rivka, a young woman whom he remembered from Kirbaus. They married, settled in Borough Park and raised four wonderful children. He was kind to everyone, scrupulous in his business dealings, and beloved by family, friends and neighbors. His passion for davening and Torah study remained with him until his final days. After marrying off their children they moved to Flatbush near Hisachdis Yirieim Veretzky (R. Landau's Shul) where they were warmly embraced by its previous rebbe ז"ל and afterwards by its current rebbe sblit"u. He is survived by his four children Temy, Nechemia, Shia and Zisha, numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

May their memories be a blessing.

Heshey Zelcer is on the editorial board of *Hakirah* and has published books and articles on Jewish law, philosophy, history and liturgy.

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We close our houses of worship—
God will understand
We send our employees home—
Finances will work themselves out.

We separate old from young
High-risk from low
Family from friends.

We have it all worked out
We keep our social distance
Don our masks and gloves
We will live forever.

In my naiveté I imagine an ideal life
At home, sipping coffee
Chatting leisurely with my dear wife.

But yesterday, as night approached, sadness descended
It is seven weeks since I hugged my children
Seven weeks since I kissed my grandkids' cheeks.

I awake at night and obsess
Are my hands clean?
Did I touch my face?
Is my cough the start of that dreaded disease?

I try to go back to sleep
But I see loved ones fighting for their lives
Close friends of whom I now speak in the past tense
Fitfully I fall asleep.

I awake in the morning
The sky is brightening
Better days are sure to come.

May God spread His protective shield over us all.