



Corona: The undeniable heroes

By Rebbetzen & Ma'ayan Lisa Levene, Belmont United Synagogue

"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but how much or how little you accomplish with what you have."

The eloquence of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsh hit me when I put pen to paper to try to make sense of the rollercoaster I've just experienced the last few days. I myself did not appreciate the severity of this virus. I'm a healthy 40 year old with no underlying medical conditions or health problems yet I found myself in bed, debilitated, unable to move or function, struggling to breathe and was in genuine fear of my life. This does not just affect old and vulnerable people, but anyone. I thank Hashem that He gave me the strength to get through this. I have literally been home not even 3 hours but while everything is so fresh and raw I wanted to publicly thank the care staff, nurses, doctors and anyone else that is putting their lives as risk to safeguard and look after us during such an inexplicable and painful time.

I have witnessed such incredible love, sensitivity and unknowable acts of kindness, personally or to others, of such indescribable proportions that I am left truly humbled. Hatzola, the Jewish medical ambulance service, the A&E wards, the isolation teams and the doctors and nurses that sacrifice themselves by serving those patients who are sufferers of this tragic virus.... My hakaras hatov, deep immeasurable appreciation is so hard to fully articulate.

The long hours, the work, the abuse many of you are met with, as people panic or are too weak or in pain to appreciate that you are trying to help.... when my world was crashing down, I heard it all. There were moments, when I myself didn't think I would make it through, points where I threw my 'hands' to Hashem and asked Him to take me, should that be His wish, but even though I was too weak to talk, or share, what I tried to say is... you all inspired me!!!! You saw that I wasn't just another number bay 2, bed 9. You were helping me, my family, wider family, community and 1000's.... I thank you all, the cleaners, porters, security staff..... all of you. You are my undeniable heroes, your inner strength and courageousness is unprecedented.

By virtue of the fact that we are all Jewish, we are family. Our vulnerability at such times is so acute but we are part of a community, so never totally alone. I also extend my thanks to all of you, my family; we are all using what we have to give our uniqueness and share our abilities with those who need. No one truly knows how much that piano song someone sent me stirred my soul, the pictures of the wedding that I couldn't be at, touched my heart, the prayers from those who don't even know me, made me feel blessed.

Everyone of us is a leader! Leadership, true Jewish leadership, is not a job or a career. It is not about us accomplishing things. It is about 'Hineni', 'Here I am' being there in whatever way that we can. Leadership is not about us and our ego, but it's about being there if needed and if not, stepping back!! It's a mission given to us by G-d. It is about doing what is right, even if means going against what is popular. It is the little actions that often go unnoticed that define who we really are. It is about remembering that the ends don't justify the means. It is about following guidelines and advice. It is about seeing the bigger picture. It is about being balanced. It is about constantly developing and strengthening ourselves so that we can give to others. It means seeing the beauty in everyone. It means recognising our own greatness.

It's not what we have it's what we do with it! Rav Hirsh thank you for giving me the words to articulate it.