

## **Hope and Courage - by Aron, June 2024**

(Refers to "On Hope", page 563)

"When you are going through such a hard, draining and emotional time, seeing your child smile, even if very briefly, can mean everything." - A parent from Spread a Smile, my chosen charity.

Spread a Smile is a charity that helps seriously ill children in hospitals across the country to smile again. They do this through in-person and virtual visits. The idea is for very unwell children to be able to cope with the pain and anxiety of severe illness and hospitalisation.

There is a saying, "laughter is the best medicine," and while this isn't completely true, helping children laugh and smile when they are feeling terrible can really make a difference.

I am fortunate not to have anyone in my life going through something like this. So why did I choose this charity to support?

When I heard about the charity, it really got me interested and felt meaningful to me. On the 7th of July, I will be doing a fundraiser - running a "Muddy Runner" - with donations going towards Spread a Smile and cancer research.

Through my bar mitzvah journey and by studying my Torah portion, I have had to think about what courage means. These seriously ill children have so much strength and courage; they inspire us daily. As the passage on page 563 by Anatoly Sharansky reminds us: "Don't believe words from the outside; believe your own heart."