My dearest sweetest Avi, this is the story of how you came to be. Your daddy and I knew we wanted you long before we started trying to conceive. We took a trip to Africa and as soon as we got back, we started trying to have you. Imagine our surprise when it actually worked the first month. Your Savta was in town for the night and when she left we were going to Galveston for the day to go to Schlitterbahn(ACTIVITY!). I had been feeling fevery all week so I knew something was different. Before we left for the water park I asked your dad if we could take a home pregnancy test. He didn’t want me to take it because it was too early in the month and he didn’t want me to be disappointed. He was in the kitchen washing dishes when I came out and told him it was positive. He couldn’t believe it so we went to the store and bought more tests and they all came back positive. We were so excited and shocked. It was truly a happy day.

I had morning sickness in the first trimester a bit. We were really busy during the first trimester. Aunt Kerryn and Uncle Michael came to visit, we went to Oregon, Austin, and had Doda Karen visit from Switzerland. After all that I ended up with the H1N1 flu. It was awful and we were nervous to tell anyone I was pregnant because of how sick I had been. After we saw the 13 week ultrasound and knew everything was OK, we started telling people. At that appointment we saw that you were a boy but decided not to tell anyone but family. The next weeks of the pregnancy were great. At 20 weeks we knew for sure you were a boy and we told everyone.

The night of daddy’s 30th birthday party I started having Braxton-Hicks contractions. I went to the doctor that week and they put me on “restriction” and then eventually I had to take medicine to help. The next three months of the pregnancy were tough. The contractions happened whenever I stood up and my back hurt all the time. But daddy took good care of me and we made it through.

We took birth classes for six weeks with Amanda. It was great for us and got us really excited to try for an unmedicated birth. There were four other couples and every Monday night we learned about labor and infant care. This was initially how we got to know Amanda. After our classes ended, we saw Amanda several more times. It was wonderful to get to know her and made us so comfortable with the birth process.

On April 19, 2010, at about 2 or 3 a.m. I started having contractions. I didn’t realize that was what they were until about 5 or 6 a.m. I thought I had a stomachache throughout the night but when I woke up I realized that was what was happening. We didn’t want to get too excited in case they stopped so we decided I would go to work and see how it went. I spent the morning at work and tried to wrap everything up. I spoke to Amanda several times and she seemed to think we were in labor. At about 2 p.m. I decided it was time to go home and daddy met me at home since he was too anxious to stay at work. We had a lovely afternoon together. I had a beer and we tried some other home remedies for getting labor going (I won’t tell you little man -- you might not want to hear that about your parents.) About 5 p.m. the contractions seemed to be more frequent and we decided labor was definitely happening. We spoke to Amanda and tried to labor alone until we needed her. I took several baths and we just tried to relax and stay calm. Daddy called Dr. Dryden and we had a “Knocked Up” moment when another doctor said she was on call and could help us. I was even in the bathtub when it happened! BTW, we watched “Knocked Up” hours before we labor started! At about 7:00 p.m. the contractions really started to pick up and we called Amanda to come over. I took several baths and when Amanda arrived we went for a walk. Our neighbors must have thought we were nuts since we were all walking down the street so I could have a contraction (and do my breathing which is really noisy). We were pretty much all hugging in a big three-way hug every time I had a contraction. By about 10:30 p.m. the contractions were coming pretty fast and I started to get nervous about the car ride so we packed up and headed to the hospital. Daddy started to get nervous and even left our pillows behind. At this point, it started to become real. We headed to St. Lukes which is where daddy works to moonlight. He also knows a lot of the doctors there.

The car was rough and I probably had 3 or 4 contractions on the way. When we arrived, I had contractions in the lobby and I think it freaked out the security guard who kept asking if we needed a wheelchair. We got up to our room and settled in. The resident came to check me and I was 4 cm, and 90% effaced. I won’t lie, I was disappointed. I thought I would be further. But I kept laboring for about 7 more hours until about 6 a.m. I spent most of the labor in the bathtub, which had whirlpool jets. It was the only place I found any comfort. I also tried the birthing ball, rocking chair, bed and toilet.

I was so exhausted at that point and just had to know how much I had progressed. We had the resident come back to check me -- you had dropped a bit but otherwise no progress. When he told us, I cried hysterically. I couldn’t believe all my hard work and nothing had happened. Amanda told us there was a reason my labor was slow. She even said “Maybe the cord is wrapped around his neck a few times.” At that point we called Dr. Dryden to discuss my options and decided to try a narcotic and they broke my water at the same time. Well, the narcotic made me feel awful because I would pass out in between contractions and wake up to the next one. It felt like I didn’t have any time between contractions. I labored for several more hours like that until about 12:30 p.m. At that point, I felt like I was going to die or pass out – I felt so out of control! I was so exhausted and each contraction seemed to take everything out of me. At that point I said I wanted an epidural. And I meant, right now! I couldn’t even believe I had to have more contractions while we were waiting. I had been scared to have an epidural but at that point, I just didn’t care. After the epidural I had 3 or 4 contractions and then they died down. I was so worn out that Dr. Dryden suggested I try to sleep and save my energy. Daddy and Amanda went to get some food while I slept. Daddy said he kept running into co-workers while he was getting food. After I work up and they checked me again I was at 10 cm. But my labor was so exhausting that Dr. Dryden decided it would be best to let my body do some of the pushing while I rested. A few hours later we could see your head and it was time to push. The pushing was the easiest part as you were already far down. When I initially got the epidural I was really numb but by the time it was time to push I could feel enough to feel the contractions. I pushed for about 30-45 minutes and then your head started to come out and the rest of you came out so quickly. It turns out the cord was wrapped around your neck twice. Amanda had been right. Dr. Dryden said that were so lucky I didn’t need a C-section and I realized that all my laboring had been for a reason.

It was the most spectacular moment of my life. I fell madly, head over heels in love with you from the second I saw you and knew that life would never be the same again.

I held you on my chest right after you came out. They took you away for a few minutes to the other side of the room to check you and clean you up, but immediately brought you back and I tried to breastfeed you. It wasn’t perfect but I was at least I was able to try. Your daddy and I said the Shehechianu and thanked God for our beautiful new gift.

In the end, we are thrilled with how you got here. We could never have done without the amazing support of Amanda. Not only did she give me so many tools and so much love and support, but she was really there for your daddy. Also, Dr. Dryden was spectacular. She respected that my body could do this and let me be part of the decisions. She went through some contractions with me that showed me that not only is she a wonderful clinician, but that she believes in her patients. We are eternally grateful to both for helping you to have safe arrival.

I could not have made it through without your daddy. He was the most supportive, loving and caring birth partner. He took such good care of me and supported every decision. I knew as long as he was there everything would be OK. Just like me, when you came out he fell totally in love. We are so lucky to have him and he is really the best husband and father in the world!

We are so lucky to have had so many wonderful people as part of this experience. In the words of Amanda’s daughter Ada, ”Thanks for the love.”