

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

Help Me to Help Others By Rabbi Danny Gottlieb



One of the most important and rewarding aspects of a rabbi's work is the connection that is made with individuals and families at key moments in their lives. Almost of you have had the opportunity to have your rabbi share the joy of a simcha with you or with someone from the congregation, whether it be an aufruf before their

wedding, standing with them under the chuppah, celebrating a brit milah or naming a newborn child, or passing the Torah through generations as one of our children becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah. But these occasions are not the only moments of connection.

Sometimes the connection is made in a hospital room. And sometimes it is made when a loved one dies—preparing for the funeral and visiting the house of mourning. These occasions are less public, but no less important. And, I must confess, I need your help with them.

You see, although I have now met most of the members of Beth Israel Judea, it is impossible for me to know what is happening with all of our families, unless you tell me. There are times when I will hear about an illness only after the person has been in and out of hospital. And by the time I can visit, the critical moment has passed and the opportunity for me to be with the individual and his or her family has been lost. And even in the case of the death of an extended family member (the parent or relative of a BIJ member), the news does not reach me until after the funeral or sometimes even after the shiva has concluded.

So here's how you can help:

Never assume that I know what you know. If someone in your family is sick, or a death has occurred, if you know of a member's illness or hospitalization, or if you know of a death in the extended family of one of our members, call me. If you are experiencing a hardship of any kind, or know of Temple members who are experiencing hardship, call me. You can call any time of day or night. Send me an e-mail (rabbigottlieb@bij.org) or leave the message on my voicemail (415-586-8833 ext.22). Or follow the instructions on our answering system if it is an emergency. Do not worry that you are giving me information that I might already have. I will always be grateful for the information. I will treat all such information in confidence, and I will act on it as soon as I can.

Try not to give me the information "in passing" on Shabbat as the service is beginning or ending, or at the Kiddush or Oneg. These are times when I am distracted by the task

before me, or by numbers of people whom I am greeting at the same time. At such moments, I may not retain the information that you are giving to me. You will think that I have it, but I may not. Please send me an e-mail or leave the information on my voicemail as a follow up to such conversations. Then for sure I will have it and I will act upon it, which is the most important thing.

Try not to give the information to our school or office staff outside of office hours. We are blessed with a staff that includes members of BIJ. And even our staff who are not BIJ members often participate in services and programs here in our congregation. But when you see them at services or programs, they are not in their work environment, and you cannot be sure that the message will get through. Call the synagogue office and give them the information when they are there, or leave the information for them or for me in our voice- or e-mail boxes.

In addition to Board Members and volunteers, tell me. We are also blessed with dedicated volunteers and synagogue leaders. And it is important to let them know the information that you have. But please do not consider this to be the same as telling me directly. All of our volunteers and leaders are busy people, and they are not at BIJ every day (though I am sure they feel like they are, sometimes!) It may take a while before information finds its way to me through others. Please follow up your conversations with an e-mail or a call to me or a message on my voicemail.

Join our *Chevrat Chesed* (Care and Concern Team). We learn in Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Fathers, in the Mishnah) that "The day is short and the task is great." Join us in reaching out to our members in need. Help us with home and hospital visits, assisting those who are homebound with shopping and other vital tasks, providing transportation to and from medical appointments, and to and from BIJ. Call the synagogue office, or get in touch with Alisa Law or Ian Brown, Co-Chairs of the *Chevrat Chesed*. Become a part of the care and concern team here at BIJ.

Comfort and care of our members is a high priority for me. I am committed to each and every person in our congregation, and available to meet with you at my office or at your home in times of difficulty, illness or loss. But I need everyone's help to know when I am needed. Helping me to help others is a mitzvah. May no one be disappointed or disheartened on my account.

Shalom,

Rabbi Danny Gottlieb