



THE MITZVAH GRAM

The Monthly Publication of The Chicago Mitzvah Campaign

1-866-MY-RABBI

www.chicagomitzvahcampaign.com

CMC Chaplaincy and Senior Services Division

- Hospital visitations
- Weekly "Shabbos packages" delivered to hospital patients
- "Senior Friendship" (home outreach for isolated seniors)
- Monthly Jewish discussion at dozens of retirement and nursing facilities
- Subsidized emergency response systems
- Free kosher guest meals in hospitals
- Free medicar transportation for the elderly and infirm
- Delivering shabbos and holiday meals to patients
- Holiday awareness and celebrations at retirement and nursing homes
- Patient and family support
- Telephone reassurance program
- Promoting traditional Jewish funeral practices

Highlights From the CMC Diary

Magnetic Sign Answers Distressed Woman's Plight

One day, an elderly Jewish resident of the south side of Chicago was attending to some business just north of the downtown area. She had recently learned that her son, who was in poor health, was returning to Chicago from out of state, and would need to be hospitalized and then placed in a care facility. The situation was particularly distressing for her as her son had become more religious later in life, and she felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of providing for his religious sensitivities at this delicate time.

Suddenly looking around, the lady blinked and noticed a CMC vehicle parked nearby, with its eye-catching insignia invitingly emblazoned on the side. When she called the telephone number and explained the situation, the CMC was glad to help. They visited the lady's son in hospital and brought a prayer book, other religious items, and special food for Shabbos. They also provided special counseling and placement information.

Coordinating Kosher Meals at Catholic Nursing Home

Sometimes all that is needed to get the wheels turning in the desired direction can be a well-directed word from a person with experience in the field. It happened recently that a very distraught woman contacted the CMC. Her distress was caused by the fact that her mother had ended up in a nursing home where the staff had told her that there was no kosher food available at the facility, and there was nothing that could be done about it. The CMC made a few phone calls and before long the nursing home was connected with a supplier of excellent kosher meals. The nursing home, the patient, and her daughter couldn't be happier.

CMC Dispatched to ER

On one recent occasion the CMC received a call regarding a patient who had been transferred from a nursing home to the hospital. The patient's blood pressure had dropped alarmingly and she was experiencing septic shock. Her only close family member was a son who resides in Australia. The CMC acted as a liaison for the patient's son to connect with his mother and the medical staff at the hospital, and remained in hospital with the patient until her condition stabilized.

"The Rabbi Will Get Me Through This"

In another recent case the CMC became very close with an elderly cancer patient whose closest family member was her sister in Georgia. Over the course of several months the CMC followed this patient as she went back and forth from hospital to two different nursing homes, all the while linking the patient's sister with her medical team and offering support, encouragement and counsel. The patient and her sister expressed untold gratitude for the CMC's involvement, which provided crucial spiritual care and peace of mind during the very trying and painful last few weeks of the patient's life.

In response to the difficult challenge of needing to transfer facilities yet again, the patient summoned her courage and very movingly told her sister, "Don't worry, the Rabbi has been amazing. He will get me through this somehow..."

Patients Enjoy Shopping Excursions

When the CMC helps place a patient in a nursing home, it makes sure to subsequently follow up and remain in contact with regular visits and appropriate assistance. Occasionally, patients at local nursing homes even enjoy weekly shopping excursions courtesy of the CMC!

Who is the Source of Healing?

Pay the Doctor but Pray to G-d

Dear Rabbi,

I received some very upsetting news this week: my doctor informed me that my terminal illness has drastically worsened and now I have at best only another year or two left to live! I don't know how I can have faith or believe in G-d when this is happening to me. I feel like He has forgotten me. I feel confused, scared and lost and don't know how to stay positive. Please help.

Yours,

Confused and scared

Dear Confused,

I am truly sorry about the harsh news that you received this week, and I would like to share a few important ideas with you. In our daily prayers we say, "Heal us G-d, and we will be healed." This is not just lip service - it is the truth.

Judaism teaches that the source of our healing is always from our Creator. Preferably this Divine healing arrives in a preventative manner, which means that we don't become sick in the first place. When we do get sick however, our healing from G-d usually arrives via the channels

of modern medicine and its practitioners, our doctors. Therefore we consult the doctor and rely on his medical knowledge as G-d's *instrument* of healing. At the same time however, we must never lose sight of our faith in G-d as the *source* of all healing.

A doctor is privileged to utilize his knowledge and experience in his role as G-d's messenger in this world to help facilitate health. However, a doctor cannot declare if or for how long a patient will live. Life and death are entirely in the hands of G-d, and regarding these matters human beings cannot know the future. It is integral to our faith that G-d is all-knowing and all-powerful. Certainly therefore, He is entirely capable of providing health and well-being to anyone at anytime.

Bernie Segal, the well known physician and author, famously said that it is better to give false hope than it is to give false "no hope." We cannot possibly know what kind of healing or medical miracles G-d may yet have in store for a patient.

Positive thought creates an environment that is conducive for heal-

ing. In modern lingo this is called the psychosomatic relationship. Focus on that relationship between your mind and your body and plug in positive and hopeful messages.

Ultimately however, it is important to understand that each one of our lives has a time limit. Our job is to accomplish as much as possible in the amount of time that we are granted. So, the challenge becomes sanctifying each day, and living each day to its fullest. This can only be accomplished through *bitachon* – trust in G-d. You don't need to focus on dying; you need to focus on living. A person should be encouraged in finding things to do each day that bring himself and others joy, fulfillment and meaning.

Remember, G-d has not and cannot forget you. You are His daughter, His creation. Your soul is an actual piece of G-d. He is with you. Talk to Him, cry to Him, pray for His healing, and most of all, connect deeply with Him.

I send you blessings for a complete and speedy recovery. May G-d give you only good health, and the strength to find Him everywhere.

Purim Gift Packages: A Community Endeavor

Every year on Purim the CMC organizes volunteers from the community to celebrate the festival by visiting Jewish seniors at senior residences, care facilities, and nursing homes. The visitors spread the holiday cheer by singing songs, relating the story of Purim, and distributing the CMC's specially prepared Purim gift packages.

The seniors invariably enjoy these Purim celebrations immensely, particularly when the volunteers bring their children along to sing and dance, or just to smile and wish "Happy Purim!" while distributing the packages. And the recipients of these Purim packages are always amazed and delighted by their contents and attractive appearance. But many don't know that the preparation of these beautiful gift packages is a story unto itself.

In the weeks leading up to Purim the CMC visits the faculty and students of the Bernard Zell Anshei Emet Day School. The students of each class enjoy learning about the story and celebration of Purim while having fun participating in the hands-on activity of preparing and crafting the appealing gift packages.

The result of this combined community effort is a fantastic educational experience for the students, who absorb the broader life lessons of community service and respect for the aged, at the same time that they learn about the history and significance of the Purim holiday.

To volunteer to visit and distribute gift packages at a senior residence or care facility on Purim, please contact the CMC at 1-866-MY-RABBI.

A Traditional Jewish Funeral

The general format of a traditional Jewish funeral has not changed for over four thousand years, and is distinguished by its simplicity, dignity, humility and solemnity. Receiving a proper Jewish funeral is extremely significant and important, as it provides vital benefits for the soul of the deceased as well as for the mourners who remain behind.

The components of a traditional funeral are too many to list comprehensively in this short space, and there are also many different customs and traditions that are practiced by various communities. Nevertheless, it is imperative for every Jew to be aware of some of the main elements of a traditional funeral, as the unfortunate reality is that some funeral homes (even those with Jewish-sounding names) will not offer these services unless they are *specifically requested* by the family.

(This is also an additional reason why it is a good idea that arrangements be made ahead of time with the funeral home, instead of waiting until the last minute when the family is naturally going to be dealing with a great deal of strain and stress.)

Some of these essential components include:

Watching Over the Body (שומר - Shomer): Where possible, there should be somebody assigned to watch over the body (as an “honor guard”) until the funeral is completed. Those assigned to accord this honor to the deceased should recite prayers or psalms during their “shift”, as this brings comfort and peace to the soul of the deceased. Many funeral homes already have designated people to call upon when the need arises for a “Shomer”.

Ritual Cleansing (טהרה - Taharah): A proper Taharah includes cleansing, ritually washing and dressing the deceased’s body. The members of the “Taharah” team recite special prayers while performing this true act of kindness that prepares the deceased to meet his Maker with utmost respect and dignity. A proper traditional Taharah prepares the body for its final rest and brings merit and solace to the soul of the deceased.

Shrouds (תכריכין - Tachrichin): The soul and its spiritual happiness is far more important following death than any honor that could possibly be associated with earthly possessions. The traditional shrouds that are mandated by Jewish law are simple, white hand-made garments from linen or muslin, are considered fitting for someone who is about to stand before G-d in judgment. Dressing the deceased in traditional Tachrichin is deemed so important, and its meaning so profound, that Jewish law insists that the funeral be postponed until such shrouds are obtained or made, even though the same law normally prohibits any unnecessary delay before burial.

Casket: Judaism teaches that the body must return to the earth after passing. Therefore the casket must be plain and modest, and constructed from a material that will disintegrate in the earth (i.e. wood, not metal).

Viewing: The casket should remain closed at the funeral. Opening the casket for viewing is prohibited by Jewish law. Indeed, tradition requires that the body be covered soon after doctors pronounce its demise.

Rending Garments (קריעה - Keriah): One of the essential elements of the mourning is when the family members rend their outer garments. This arouses within the mourner and all those present the ability to express grief, and creates an “opening” to release the feelings of the heart. Family members mourning a spouse, father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister are encouraged to follow the age-old custom to tear their outer garments (i.e. jacket, shirt, or the like), and should not suffice with tearing a black ribbon that is worn for the occasion of the funeral.

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Purim Calendar

Purim this year begins at nightfall on Saturday night, March 19, and continues until nightfall on Sunday March 20.

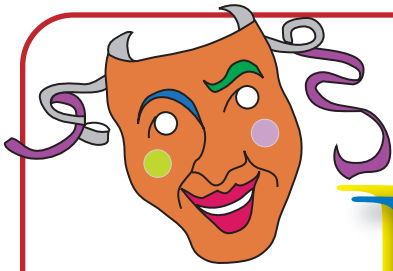
The festival is celebrated on Saturday night (after 7:45pm) by hearing the Megillah reading, and on Sunday by handing out “mishloach manot”, distributing charity to the poor, partaking in a festive holiday meal, and once again hearing the Megillah reading.

And don’t forget to eat hamantashen, dress up in costume and imbibe some of the merry spirit of Purim!

Prayer is Healing

Wishing a speedy recovery and good health to:

- Shoshana bas Sara
- Rivka bas Leba
- Leah bas Chana
- Rivka bas Sara
- Faiga bas Tzila
- Gittel bas Kreindel
- Yehudit bas Sara
- Yehuda Dovid ben Rochel Sima
- Nina bas Sofia
- Mordechai Pesach ben Devorah Mirel
- Chava Ronya bas Chadvera
- Refoel Yakov ben Gitel
- Yitzchok ben Sara
- Mordechai ben Rachel
- Baruch Berl ben Liba Leah
- Yael Chana bas Yehudit Miriam
- Alte Sara Leah bas Rivkah
- Hayered ben Raizel Miriam
- David ban Sarah
- Shoshana Beth bas Bluma
- Devasha Golda bas Chanah



HAPPY PURIM

*Call Today
to Volunteer!*

On Sunday, March 20 the CMC will be sending volunteers to dozens of nursing homes and other residences to **celebrate Purim with senior citizens**



- ◆ Distribute CMC's special "Mishloach Manot"
- ◆ Sing Purim songs
- ◆ Take along children in costumes
- ◆ Bring spirit of Purim to the infirm and elderly...



For more information and to sign up, please call
1-866-MY RABBI (1-866-697-2224)



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This newsletter is dedicated In loving memory of Shirley Schuman