



RABBI ISAAC N. TRAININ BIKUR CHOLIM COORDINATING COUNCIL

A PROGRAM OF THE JEWISH BOARD OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES



Bikur Cholim Comic Book "Good Company" Gets A Companion User Guide

Too old for comics? No way!

With our new colorful, clear, compact, and user-friendly companion guide to our comic book, the Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council (BCCC) gets serious about humor and humorous about some serious stuff. The comic, an inventive way to open up the topic of bikur cholim to everyone, now comes with easy and fun instructions for use.

The comic takes on some key facts and fictions about making a visit, with humor and respect for both the visitor and those in need of a visit. The companion guide encourages parents, teachers, chesed coordinators and bikur

cholim programs to open discussion about bikur cholim, the first step in building awareness. While we understand that *kavannah* (intention) is a large part of the visit, having the basic skills to perform a visit makes it that much more effective and rewarding.



Download the FREE guide at www.bikurcholimcc.org/humor

The accompanying guide offers lesson plans, motivational strategies and even humorous cartooning tips so that anyone can have a good time drawing their own comic. Use the comic book in a training program at your synagogue or school. Give the comic book to volunteers to show appreciation. Use it in hospital chesed rooms. Give it as a Bar or Bat mitzvah gift to guests. Give it to friends and family.

Join us on Sunday November 8, 2009

8:30 am – 3:30 pm
UJA Federation of New York
130 East 59th Street

The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim: An Investment of Enduring Value

“For each little effort toward holiness, heaven rewards man richly.” ~Talmud Yoma 39a



Bikur Cholim is Hebrew for visiting the sick

22nd Annual Bikur Cholim Conference

Co-Sponsored by The Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council/ Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services and UJA-Federation of New York

Internationally Renowned Lecturers

Keynote Speaker:

- **Rabbi Aaron Glatt, M.D.**
President/CEO, New Island Hospital, NY; Full Professor of Medicine, NY College; Assistant Rabbi, Young Israel of Woodmere; Author of *Visiting the Sick*

Mid-Day Presentation:

- **Dr. David Pelcovitz, Ph.D.**
Professor of Psychology and Education, Yeshiva University

For Information:

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Visit: www.bikurcholimcc.org
Phone: 212.399.2685 ext. 212

Rabbi Dr. Glatt comes from a distinctively qualified vantage point, steeped in both the medical and the Jewish spiritual realms. He will discuss what medicine and the wisdom of Judaism can teach us about bikur cholim and the far reaching impact on both visitor and visited.

In our Mid-Day Presentation, Dr. Pelcovitz, a highly respected psychologist and trauma specialist, will focus on protective factors for dealing with stress, particularly on the connection between bikur cholim and resilience and how it enhances one's well-being.

A broad selection of workshops to stimulate and inspire. Community members, both new and experienced visitors, students, teens and clergy are all welcome. Network, brainstorm, have fun and gain the support of a larger community. Learn skills for life which you can put into practice immediately. Come to the conference and see for yourself.

From the Council

Once again, the BCCC has had an exciting year undertaking new initiatives and creating partnerships. To begin with, we created a guide to compliment our comic book, *Good Company: Facts and Fictions* about Bikur Cholim. This 4-page document enables parents, teachers, chesed coordinators and bikur cholim programs to use the comic in a guided, structured way, and can serve as its own tool to help people talk about engaging in this mitzvah. Our terrific team of staff members, Robin Schoenfeld, LMSW and Vicki Rosenstreich, LCSW collaborated once again with illustrator Robert Lebowitz.

We also initiated a quarterly teleconference call, bringing in new partners to our network! Calls focus on issues common to bikur cholim, such as organizing, recruiting, and retaining volunteers; dealing with burnout; and visiting special populations. The calls feature guest speakers who are coordinators in their synagogues.

Finally, the BCCC continues to provide consultation to developing and mature bikur cholim programs. Read in this newsletter of two such consultations, the first being an outgrowth of the BCCC Long Island Regional Event and the successful BC program there that is making a difference, as remarked upon by hospital staff and patients. You can then read about one of the volunteers. The other featured program reveals hard work, energy and continual rededication to a mission by neighbors working together to build community. It shows the process of developing a community-wide bikur cholim program.

We look forward to meeting you at our 22nd Annual Conference on November 8th. Join us for a conference that will be filled with meaningful workshops, practical resources and inspiring speakers. Enjoy the issue!

A Bikur Cholim Grows in a Long Island Hospital

Jewish Patients in Need + a Chaplain with a Mission = a New and Successful Hospital Bikur Cholim.

Friendly smiles, warm hearts, and a commitment to giving describe the visitors of the bikur cholim program at North Shore University Hospital. A hospital-based bikur cholim group has taken root firmly on Long Island grounds. Rabbi Daniel Coleman, the Jewish chaplain at the hospital was looking to “enhance the sometimes lonely and isolating hospital experience for patients.” Beginning in February 2008 with outreach and recruitment, spearheaded by Robyn Spector Blumner, Coordinator of the Great Neck Bikur Cholim and BCCC Executive Committee Member, a training program which attracted about 30 people, was conducted at the hospital.

Working closely with the hospital, the Chaplain ensured that the volunteer program would meet all hospital protocols. Nurses praise the noticeable difference visitors make in putting patients at ease. Patients agree. Rabbi Coleman notes, “recently one man described to me the pair that visited him the previous day as ‘angels.’ Frequently, a patient will say ‘thank you – I just needed to unburden myself.’” The visitor is able to offer some reprieve from their woes. On the lighter side, they can also provide a healthy distraction from the patient’s fears and concerns by bringing news from the outside world.

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It works both ways. Volunteers comment how visiting reenergizes them, even after a long day in the office. “I think many weren’t expecting it to be as personally rewarding as it is and are surprised by how much satisfaction they get from the visits,



Chaplain and visitor, Rabbi Daniel Coleman and Sheldon Ryback

even as they are giving of themselves to others.”

When a bikur cholim volunteer – a stranger – visits a patient, it shows the patient that s/he matters and has value. This enables the patient to feel a sense of connection to the broader community and life, the world beyond the hospital, while also restoring a sense of internal connection by helping them feel worthy and not simply a ‘chart’.

Rabbi Coleman shared a note sent by a volunteer after a recent visit, “I just wanted to let you know about our visit with a patient yesterday.

“I think many weren’t expecting it to be as personally rewarding as it is and are surprised by how much satisfaction they get from the visits...”

When Malka and I entered the room, the wife of the patient looked at us and said in kind of a mean way ‘what are you two so cheerful about?’ Both of them were very upset since the doctor hadn’t shown up. He was supposed to be there at 10 am, and it was 5 pm. We talked to them and sympathized with them. By the time we were ready to leave, they both were laughing!”

The new visiting program continues to reflect on its roots, which has expanded and deepened, while looking forward to nurturing its branches, the many wonderful dedicated visitors.

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Spotlight on Belle Harbor-Neponsit Bikur Cholim – Visiting By The Shore

~By Alan Magill

If a group of Jews of a variety of backgrounds and interests want to work jointly on a project, what activity could be the glue to bring them together? What is the common denominator that touches the core of a Jew? How do you start building a caring community? ***The answer is bikur cholim!***

For the Belle Harbor-Neponsit community in the Rockaway Beach area, this challenge became a mission. They decided to provide bikur cholim and by doing so, work closely with their neighbors to do good for others.

After several community planning meetings, spearheaded by Harvey Gordon, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of Rockaway Peninsula, in collaboration with the BCCC, a training session was held. Rabbi Bennett Rackman, Rabbi of the International Synagogue at John F. Kennedy Airport, local chaplain and community member, secured the space for the meeting.

On a Sunday morning after Passover, despite the early hour and the tendency to want to get back to old routines after a Jewish holiday, people wanted to start a *new* routine and learn how to do effective visiting.

The BCCC Training Guide and the excellent film, “Turn to Me,” triggered group discussion. Fundamental principles on visiting

The BCCC Training Guide and the excellent film, “Turn to Me,” triggered group discussion. Fundamental principles on visiting emerged.



Allan Magill leading the training session

emerged as participants were encouraged to explore their own natural healing words and actions.

Training centered on what a person being visited may want: to feel that someone is interested in and cares about them. By making that phone call or walking through their door, you’ve already given tangible support!

I have discovered that you must be attuned to what the other person needs and not just your own agenda.

I was able to provide an enlightening and engaging focus on effective and not so effective bikur cholim visits by describing my nearly 20 years experience of working in nursing homes, assisted living and other senior venues.

I have discovered that you must be attuned to what the other person needs and not just your own agenda. For instance, while you might be happy to share pictures that interest you, such as your

travels, or grandchildren, make sure the visatee would also be interested. How do you know? Ask! Role playing gave us the opportunity to practice these interactions.

The group took this overview and applied what they as a community looking to start. Dena Heisler, an active volunteer, notes that people involved “believe in thinking big and starting small” as recommended by BCCC. The program will focus on telephone visits and visits to the homebound. Like other communities where there are many seniors, the program offers them the opportunity to both be visitors and to receive support.

We hope this bikur cholim effort will be a uniting force, while having a positive impact on those who are isolated. Heisler added, “we will get to work with and know our Jewish neighbors.”

**Study. Meet. Discuss.
Bikur Cholim Shabbat
Parshat Vayera**

November 7, 2009

To learn more:

www.bikurcholimcc.org





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Alexander Graham Bell Helps BCCC Build Community While Saving Energy



The newest initiative from the BCCC offers a convenient and cost-saving way to bring people from around the country together to discuss bikur cholim.

While the Annual Bikur Cholim Conference in November is a wonderful networking opportunity for bikur cholim folks to meet, share ideas and to

gain inspiration, our quarterly teleconference calls help keep people connected during the year.

The BCCC supported by Susan Rosenthal, Director, National Center for Jewish Healing, held two teleconference calls this year, one in January and one in April. Participants included up to 20 women and men, synagogue and community lay leaders and professionals from such widespread States as NY, CA, FL, WI, MA, OH.

After a brief Dvar Torah related to bikur cholim and go-around introductions, January's guest presenter, Jeannie Blaustein, BC Coordinator, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun and April's guest, Louise Goldberg, BC Coordinator, Farmingdale Wantagh Jewish Center shared a synopsis of their program and then answered questions on how they dealt with particular issues. Callers jumped in to hash out together the nitty gritty of bikur cholim organizing, touching on topics like: recruitment; burnout; visitor appreciation; engaging kids; nuances of and tips for visiting in different settings; and compassionate ways to visit the terminally ill. Participants may not have known each other prior to the call, but feelings of commonality and community quickly emerged during the call.

The next BC Teleconference call will be held on Thursday November 10th from 7 – 8 pm. Please call for more information.

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In My Own Words, Retiree as Visitor: Sheldon Ryback

Confronted by the life changing role called retirement, I quickly realized that volunteering would help with the transition. I responded to an e-mail sent by Rabbi Daniel Coleman requesting volunteers for a Bikur Cholim program. The request brought to mind the morning daily prayer of *"Eleh devarim"* which I have recited since

childhood, where the mitzvah of bikur cholim is delineated as one whose "fruit" a person enjoys in this world and whose main reward is in the World to Come.

I was introduced to the mitzvah of bikur cholim when I was about 9 years old. My father, Rabbi Jacob Ryback, *a'h*, brought me to a nursing home on East Broadway on the Lower East Side to visit with his landsman (fellow townsman) from the shtetl Brainsk. This frail man with an impressive appearance, who to me resembled a biblical figure, told me that he knew both my grandfather and my great grandfather! Neither my

father nor I knew our grandfathers, yet this man did. Although he didn't say much to me that day, what he did say gave me a glimmer of understanding and connection of the background of my family in the shtetl. I will forever hold dear the memory of that brief encounter in my life. I have found that there are many wonderful gifts that come from visiting. Visiting makes me feel part of an unbroken chain to Sinai. May the Almighty grant all those who volunteer in the community good health and the ability to continue doing good deeds for a long time to come.

! Quickie Tip

Set the tone for the visit by starting it on the right note. Begin by greeting the person you are visiting with a pleasant smile and by asking permission to visit at this time. This simple gesture of kindness communicates respect to the person who is sick.

The BCCC Executive Committee Leads the Way

Through the years, we have been blessed with an Executive Committee that has provided us with much support including: development of 2 films, expertise in media and marketing and community organizing, conference staffing, expert guidance and financial resources. We feel tremendous gratitude for the role they play in the program.

A workgroup has formed led by Executive Committee Members: Malcolm Frouman, Chava Rose, Shoshana Shinnar and Ed Wolf, to work with JBFCS staff to develop an enhanced marketing effort. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Robin Schoenfeld, LMSW at rschoenfeld@jbfcs.org.