

B'ORACH TZEDAKAH
IN THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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B'ORACH TZEDAKAH--IN THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

To introduce this book, it seemed appropriate to adapt something I had written during my father's lifetime, for the ninth volume of his Communal Diary: A Bit of Sunshine at Twilight.

There is an oft-repeated tale about Reb Zusia, the great Hassidic leader, who came to his followers one day deeply troubled because of a vision in which he had learned the question the angels would ask him when he arrived in Heaven. His followers insisted he was a scholarly and humble man, and no question about his life could be that terrifying. Rabbi Zusia disagreed. He would not be asked, he said, why he was not Moses, or why he was not Joshua. He would be asked why he was not Zusia.

There may be other questions that vexed Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, but that one would not be among them. Through his long (and may I add, illustrious, in spite of my being somewhat subjective) career in Jewish communal service, he was always himself: intelligent; creative; brutally honest; energetic; courageous; and impatient with laziness, sectarianism, and unresolved problems in the Jewish community.

Not to mention restless. His eighth book was barely off the press, when my father was thinking of the next one, and the next. He wanted to be sure his legacy would continue to have an impact, that his children would always remember it, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren would come to learn more of it.

More importantly, my father wanted to make sure that the Jewish community would learn from the past--or else be condemned to repeat it.

I would like to thank all those who gave me permission to use their eulogies, remarks, and remembrances in this memorial book. And our entire family would like to thank JBFCS not only for embracing and undertaking the publication of the book but for the wonderful work it does both with the Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council and all its other projects and programs.

This book is dedicated to my father's memory but also to my mother, Frances Trainin, for being an "eizer k'negdo," a worthy helpmate.

-- Barbara Trainin Blank, Editor

Why the title?

The verse "In the path of righteousness there is life" is from the Book of Proverbs 12:28. It was selected by Rabbi Trainin as the motto for the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies.

Eulogies from Rabbi Trainin's Funeral January 9th, 2008

By Rabbi Haskel Lookstein

Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, Manhattan

Ma nishtana Ha-Rav Trainin mikol ha-rabanim? How was this rabbi different from all other rabbis?

I ask that question not just because Rabbi Trainin was unique, but because his passing from our lives occurs during the week of Parshat Bo - the Torah portion which provides the basis for the *seder* on Pesach.

Upon reflection, it can be said that Ike Trainin was a Pesach personality or, more specifically, a *seder* personality.

First: He was a master of *seder* - order. He was super organized. His workplace was impeccably neat. His agendas were clear and precise. His meetings were short, to the point, and focused on results. He returned every single telephone call.

And, like the Pesach *seder*, his life revolved first and foremost around his family. We think of him as a communal servant, but he was, above and beyond all, a son, a husband, a father, a grandfather, and a great grandfather. He revered his father - Ha- Rav Baruch Shalom and his mother - Ha-Rabbanit Henya. His mother actually lived in Fran and Ike's home after the passing of Ike's father. He was married two months shy of 65 years.

It is typical of Ike how he first met Fran. He was teaching at his father's Hebrew School. Another girl broke up with him and he had two tickets to the Yiddish Theater. He asked his class if anyone had a sister and a picture. Someone gave him Fran's picture and he wrote her a schmaltzy letter indicating "I would like to meet you." One month later, he proposed.

Fran and Ike had the same interests and loves - theater, opera, music and travel. They had their arguments - how could anyone live with Ike for 65 years without having occasional disagreements? But they were a great pair and they were extremely devoted to each other.

He was a *v'higadeta l'vincha* father. He loved his son and daughter but he told them exactly what he expected of them - just like with everybody. Both received a Yeshiva of Flatbush education through high school. He adored his grandchildren and he was, in turn, adored by them. They loved his *v'higadeta l'vincha* - his telling them stories of the past and his jokes - how Ike loved to laugh and to tell jokes! One of them said to me, "I have a lot of him in me. I am blunt and opinionated."

So, Rabbi Trainin was a Pesach personality in his passion for *seder* - order - and in his teaching and love of family.

Secondly, he was a Pesach personality because he always worried about others. We all recall that the *seder* begins with the following proclamation: "Let all who are hungry come in and eat; let all who are needy come in and celebrate the Passover with us." The Rav - of blessed memory, explained that the first invitation is to those who have physical needs while the second is to those who have spiritual needs.

We have heard how Ike devoted his life to these two needs. His mission was to be a Ba'al Chesed - to help others. Right up to the end he was getting people into hospitals and nursing homes and taking pride in being able to help in a crisis. When he retired, he started a whole new career in Bikur Cholim, which spread throughout the country.

But he filled spiritual needs too. His first assignment in Federation was to resolve a conflict in Long Island Jewish Hospital relating to a kosher kitchen. He had to find a compromise between those who wanted one and those who didn't. He arranged for there to be two kitchens - one kosher and one non-kosher. He wasn't happy with that compromise but at least he got a kosher kitchen into the hospital.

Almost 50 years ago, he called a young rabbi to his office and asked him to chair a committee on "Unmet Needs." This was my first start in UJA- Federation. He literally shaped my life. He shaped the life of a modern Reform rebbitzin by making her the chair of the Task Force on Jewish Population in the early 1970s. She took the chairmanship as a mother of two children and left it four years later as the mother of four.

There are active, involved, pious people in KJ who became all of these things because Ike took an interest in them and gave their lives direction in a spiritual sense.

Finally, Ike's *seder* personality is reflected in the famous challenge of one of the four sons in the Haggadah. "And it shall come to pass when your children will say to you: "What is this *avoda* to you - to you, but not to him, for he has excluded himself from the people of Israel."

I would like to turn this famous statement around in discussing Rabbi Trainin. Some will say what is all this *avoda* - labor and work - for you? Why all the bother? The answer is it's a bother for you, but not for Ike. Ike's M.O. was work. He thrived on work. He was, in the best sense of the word, a workaholic.

He was always serving others. He was at his desk at 7:30 in the morning after having walked to work. He loved to walk; he loved to swim; above all, he loved to work for the benefit of others. He really couldn't retire.

He wrote 11 volumes of his *Communal Diary* and he was already raising funds for a 12th volume. I think the only time he slept was during the Rabbi's sermon. And I once called him on it. It was at a Federation meeting where he was speaking and I raised my hand to say something. Ike called on me saying, "That's Rabbi Lookstein; he's my Rabbi. He gives the best sermons." I responded: "Ike, how could you say such a thing? You are always sleeping during my sermons!" Ike immediately responded: "I am not sleeping; I have my eyes closed; I concentrate better with my eyes closed."

He was the consummate Jewish professional, an energizer bunny, until his batteries simply gave out. His *seder* was *avoda* - and he thrived on it.

Chasal Siddur Pesach K'hilchato - the *seder* inevitably comes to an end. Ike's Pesach and *seder* have ended too. *K'chol mitzvotav v'chukotav* - he accomplished and conducted his *seder* according to all the rules and principles. *Ka'asher zachinu l'sader oto* - as we witnessed Ike's *seder* in all its glory - *kein nizkeh la'asoto* so, may Fran and the whole family and the community he loved and served so magnificently, carry on his sacred work.

And may God grant him the abundant reward which is the just portion of those who lead a life of *chesed* - doing and caring for others.

* * * * *

By Dr. John Ruskay

Executive Vice President and CEO, UJA-Federation of New York

Tens of thousands of dedicated men and women work in the New York Jewish community. They provide professional leadership for our synagogues, our day schools, Jewish Community Centers, Hillels, national Jewish organizations, and far more.

And while these professionals have and continue to serve us well, and make extraordinary contributions as they lead our institutions, teach the next generation, counsel individuals and families, there was only one Rabbi Isaac Trainin, *zichrono livracaha*, a historic figure in shaping the New York Jewish community, and far beyond.

Rabbi Trainin left the Veterans Administration in 1946 and took a position at the United Services for New Americans, becoming the director of a department whose mission was to train, retrain, and place in the United States religious functionaries who had survived the Holocaust.

Between 1946 and 1950, Rabbi Trainin placed hundreds of communal professionals - rabbis, cantors, teachers, *mohelim* and *shochtim* - in Jewish communities across the United States and Canada.

In 1952 Rabbi Trainin was named Advisor on Religious Affairs at the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. A modest title, to be sure, but let us this morning behold - and savor, even at this sad moment - what emerged from this man.

For fifty-five years, Ike was employed at Federation, retiring in the early 1990s and then continuing to serve as a Life Consultant to the end of his days. Fifty-five years!

As the Advisor on Religious Affairs and later the Executive Director of the Department of Synagogue Relations, first at Federation and then after 1986 at UJA-Federation of New York, Rabbi Trainin forged bridges among synagogues, agencies and Federation.

For Rabbi Trainin was among the very first to understand that synagogues and federations were interdependent, and both were essential to a flourishing Jewish community. Rabbi Trainin recognized that Federation and its agencies could be valuable resources for rabbis, and worked tirelessly to bring synagogues and Federation together to weave a far stronger community.

Who could keep track of the multiple task forces that Rabbi Trainin created on multiple issues in Jewish life? In some ways, his “task forces” were really the first Jewish “chat rooms” before we had heard that phrase; contexts for congregational rabbis, Federation professionals, volunteer leaders, agency executives and often clients -yes, clients - to come together; learn from one another. Identify issues and forge initiatives that over time came to shape the New York Jewish community.

Rabbi Trainin made certain that problems identified were neither avoided nor covered over. No, for Rabbi Trainin, problems identified became mandates for communal action:

Even a brief reading of the names of the task forces vividly illustrates the extent to which Rabbi Trainin was ahead of his time...

The Task Force on Alcoholism, which later included drug abuse.

In the early 1970s, the Task Force on Compulsive Gambling.

In 1966, the Task Force on Marriage and Divorce sponsored its conference and in 1967 published a manual about divorce in the Jewish community.

The Task Force on the Relationship of Rabbis and Social Workers.

In 1977, the Task Force on Mental Health and Judaism published a manual called *Jewish Ethno-Psychiatry*.

A Task Force on the Relationship of the Synagogue and the Jewish Community Center developed protocols for peaceful coexistence in the 1980s.

In the early 1980s, The Task Force on Mixed Marriage, which was one of the earliest settings where American Jewry, long before the 1990 Population Study, recognized the growing challenge of intermarriage.

For over twenty-five years, The Task Force on Jewish Women was the first context in the organized Jewish community to recognize the growing challenge of achieving gender equality in American Jewish life.

In 1962, Rabbi Trainin established the Committee on Medical Ethics. Let us recall that at that time, the entire field of Medical Ethics was in its infancy. For over 45 years the Committee on Medical Ethics was arguably the major context in the North American Jewish community for rabbis across denominational lines to come together, discuss and debate emerging issues, and prepare resource materials for rabbis and professionals.

When taken together, these task forces reflect Rabbi Trainin's astute ability to recognize and hone in on emerging issues and the need for the Jewish community to respond to them.

And today, with Rabbi Trainin having completed his life, let us behold some of the abiding results!!!

It was Rabbi Trainin that led the way for our community to first recognize the problem of substance abuse in our community and take action. Today, JACS - Jewish Alcoholics and Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others - provides support, care and community for those who suffer from alcohol and drug abuse. Many preferred to turn away from these issues. For Rabbi Trainin, a problem identified was a mandate for communal action.

It was Rabbi Trainin - with stubborn determination and persistence - who provided leadership for our community to acknowledge poverty in our community even as large sectors prospered. He was instrumental in creating the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, which today stands as another testament to Rabbi Trainin's vision and courage. For Rabbi Trainin, a problem identified was a mandate for communal action.

Another Task Force recognized the urgent need for the Jewish community to strengthen relations with the ethnic and racial diversity of New York and JCRC reflects that commitment today. And I ought to cite the Coordinating Committee for Bikur Cholim, for Rabbi Trainin understood the unique role of volunteers in becoming directly involved in the act of *chesed*. Problems identified were mandates for communal action.

We say that every human being is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. For 55 years, Rabbi Trainin challenged us to actualize that commitment to all members of our community.

What an incredible record of professional accomplishment! What a model of professional leadership!! What an extraordinary legacy that one professional leaves for us!!

And beyond what Rabbi Trainin accomplished out there, for fifty five years, Rabbi Trainin was also our rabbi at 59th street. Available to all of us - the thousands of your colleagues and volunteer leaders - who turned to you for counsel about difficult personal and professional matters. And Rabbi Trainin served as a source of Jewish wisdom for staff, for our agencies, and for hundreds of volunteers about our tradition and what it has to say about our work.

Frances, Eugene, Barbara; your grandchildren and great-grand children, and the entire family. You have lost your husband, your father, a cherished member of your family.

We hope there is some comfort in knowing that the New York Jewish community, which has gathered here today, the tens of thousands who worked closely with Rabbi Trainin and the far larger number of individuals who directly benefited from your work - they are here with you, and I hope provide a communal embrace at this difficult moment.

For deep in our hearts, each of us knows how blessed we all were that Rabbi Isaac Trainin, *zichrono livracha*, a man of vision, compassion, and courage, graced our community with his incredible gifts.

We stand on your shoulders, Ike, and will for generations to come. And in this way, this extraordinary man - this amazing Jewish professional - who uniquely integrated work, service, and prayer... will endure long into the future.

May his memory be a blessing.

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By Rabbi David Posner (excerpts)

Temple Emanuel, Manhattan

For Ike, the Holy One had a special plan and a unique purpose. Ike was born on March 5, 1919. The Parsha that week was P'kudei. It's the Parsha of ultimate social responsibility and honesty - the meticulous reporting and rendering of the accounts of the community.

Think of the ten volumes of testimony written by Ike as an autobiography and a history of the Jewish people in modern times. Each book could begin with the words: *Ehleh Pkudei-ha-mishkan, mishkan ha-edut*. Ike's Sidra was his sign; his Parsha was his portend; his drash was his destiny. Ike was for us a *mishkan edut* - he was a repository of testimony. He gave an account for everything. He told it all.

We shall never see his likes again. Pray for us, Ike, and we shall pray for you. Wait for us, Ike, and we shall wait for you. *Zecher tsaddik livracha*.

* * * * *

Rabbi Nachman Kahane

Rabbi Trainin's nephew, sent via e-mail from Jerusalem

The demise of my uncle, Rabbi Yitzchak Trainin, marks not only the close of a chapter in my family, as he was the last of my mother's generation, but is an historical turning point that affects the whole of Am Yisrael.

We say three times a day in the thirteenth blessing of the "Amida" prayer: "On the righteous and the pious and the elders of the House of Israel and on the remnant of their houses of study"...

Who are these "remnant of the houses of study?"

This refers to the very last people who lived to see the greats of the past. Ezra the Scribe was the last to see Baruch ben Naria, and Baruch ben Naria was the last to see the Prophet Jeremiah. I once knew a man who all agreed was the last living person to have seen the Chafetz Chaim, so whenever we met, I saw in front of me the Chafetz Chaim.

Rabbi Trainin was probably the last person on earth to have known the two great rabbis of the city Dvinsk in Latvia--Rabbi Meir Simcha, better known as the "Ohr Samayach," and the monumental Gaon Rav Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogochover Gaon.

With the death of Rabbi Trainin, we no longer have a human witness of these two great Torah geniuses.

Rabbi Trainin's father, Harav Baruch Sholom Trainin, was a member of the Beit Din of the Ohr Samayach, and his mother, Rabbanit Helen Trainin, was the personal friend of the Rogochover Rebbetzin, and as such, Rabbi Isaac was a welcome guest in both homes.

I write this in order to state that all should be aware that the death of Rabbi Isaac Trainin has meaning beyond my family or beyond the greater New York community. It is the closing of the generation of greats before the Shoah, and leaves each and every one of us a bit sadder when we contemplate from where we came and who we are today.

May his soul rest in eternal peace with the souls of the righteous of Israel.

Public and Media Announcements

By Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union (e-mail announcement)

...I am also deeply saddened to inform you about the death of Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, a"h. Rabbi Trainin created the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim to advocate for and to help facilitate the development of vibrant synagogue- sponsored and community-based bikur cholim groups. Rabbi Trainin worked for the UJA-Federation of New York and its precursor for 55 years, starting as its director of religious affairs in 1952. At the Federation he helped found the Metropolitan Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty, the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, and the Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons, and Significant Others program. I had the privilege of working with Rabbi Trainin in his bikur cholim work for many years, even before coming to the OU. He was a pioneer as an Orthodox Rabbi working within the UJA Federation system. ...

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“The Federation Rabbi”

By The Editors, *The Jewish Week*

Published on January 9th, 2008

Immediately upon Rabbi Isaac Trainin's retirement after 34 years of professional service at UJA-Federation of New York (and its predecessor agency) in 1986, he was back on East 59th Street to help launch the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim, which now bears his name. In all, he served more than 55 years as a pillar of Jewish communal service. Known widely as “Ike,” Rabbi Trainin, who died this week at the age of 88, will long be remembered not only for his leadership as a voice of Jewish tradition in a once largely secular agency but for his feisty personality in forcing the community to face up to social problems some would have preferred to ignore.

With his ever-present pipe, turtleneck sweaters, gravely voice and drill-sergeant demeanor, he fought for his causes and was among the leaders in creating programs in the Jewish community to deal with alcoholism, drug addiction, compulsive gambling, and divorce, among others. In earlier years, as the executive director of the Federation's commission on synagogue relations, it was Rabbi Trainin who advocated for kosher food at federation events, and increased awareness of Shabbat and Jewish festivals.

A little more than two decades ago, upon retirement, he turned his passion to the mitzvah of bikur cholim, or visiting the sick. For a dozen years, he was the volunteer director of the Council, now operated by JBFCFS, training volunteers in how best to interact with and help hospitalized or homebound Jews. It was part of his overall goal of connecting with those the community might otherwise overlook.

Although ailing for the last few years, Rabbi Trainin was a regular presence at his post-retirement office at UJA-Federation, despite being confined to a wheelchair. Only a few weeks ago he was honored by UJA-Federation for his 55 years of service, praised for transmitting his love of the Jewish

people to the staff and volunteers. How fortunate he was to feel the love and admiration of those in the room and how honored they were to express their gratitude to an individual who accomplished so much for so many.

“My epitaph,” Rabbi Trainin once said, “will be ‘He did not always succeed, but he never gave up.’ ”

We are all the beneficiaries of his persistence.

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The Federation’s Rabbi

By Steve Lipman, *The Jewish Week*

Published on January 9th, 2008

Rabbi Isaac Trainin brought a Jewish voice to a largely secular organization.

Shortly after the 1979 revolution in Iran, which made many of the country’s Jews nervous about their future in a fundamentalist Muslim country, Iranian Jewish families arranged for a few thousand of their children to come alone to the United States to attend Jewish schools.

Pinchas Berger, a staff member of the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services who had done resettlement work here with Jewish émigrés from the former Soviet Union, attended a meeting at UJA-Federation headquarters to discuss the nearly 2,000 young Iranian Jews who would be hosted by yeshivot and day schools in the New York area. The meeting was chaired by a UJA-Federation lay leader, but Berger’s strongest memory is of Rabbi Isaac Trainin, who was executive director of the philanthropy’s commission on synagogue relations.

Rabbi Trainin strongly urged the participants in the meeting, who represented a cross-section of New York’s Jewish organizations, to welcome the youngsters, Berger said. “He certainly let his voice be heard.”

Rabbi Trainin, who died Jan. 8 at his Manhattan home, “did not brag” about his role in opening the doors of the Jewish community to the Iranian students, Berger said. Rabbi Trainin was 88.

The rabbi, who had earned a reputation for bringing a Jewish voice to a largely secular agency as “the federation’s rabbi” for his 34 years of service at UJA-Federation and its predecessor agency, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, immediately upon retirement in 1986 turned his attention to the needs of hospitalized and homebound Jews.

He was recently honored by UJA-Federation for his 55 years of service to the philanthropy.

“Every agency within our network, every grantee we support, every initiative we lead are, in some way, infused with Ike’s vision for the Jewish people — in New York, Israel, and around the globe,” UJA-Federation executive vice president and CEO John Ruskay said at the event.

The Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim, now under the aegis of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, is named for Rabbi Trainin. He served for about a dozen years as the hands-on, volunteer director of the council, which trains volunteers who visit the infirm, and sponsors an annual conference.

"It was his brainchild," says Berger, who is director of Jewish communal services at JBFCS. "He decided that the mainstream Jewish institutions were avoiding contact with people who needed connections to the community — ill, aging, frail, isolated people. He determined that unless a strong voice spoke up and spoke out, nothing would change.

"He didn't just point the finger," Berger said. "He mobilized people. He challenged and engaged people. He was a very passionate person who did not easily take no for an answer."

Berger called Rabbi Trainin "a giant in Jewish communal service. He used his position [in UJA-Federation] to leverage the link between Jewish institutions and rabbis, and human services agencies."

Rabbi Trainin, who was Orthodox and was ordained by Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn, maintained an avuncular, pipe-smoking presence at UJA-Federation headquarters, leading holiday celebrations for staff members and lay leaders, and teaching popular classes about Jewish ethics.

"Rabbi Trainin was a national pioneer in relating the religious communities in America to the Federation world," William Kahn, executive vice president of the Federation in 1986, said upon the rabbi's retirement. "His work resulted in virtually every Federation in America developing a synagogue relations department modeled after New York."

"He was a man who represented moral standards and the values of our religion," said Stephen Solender, former executive vice president of UJA-Federation. "His impact was felt broadly."

Rabbi Trainin, who documented his work in several memoirs, pushed the organized Jewish community to deal with such issues as compulsive gambling, alcoholism, drug addiction, marriage and divorce, cults and intermarriage.

"Nobody believed there was a problem," the rabbi would say.

"He had a very broad sense of Jewish community," Solender said. "He had a sense of the need for our community to be aware of the needs of the poor."

Rabbi Trainin continued until two weeks ago to come to his post-retirement office at UJA-Federation, where he worked as a consultant. The last few years he came in a wheelchair, Solender said. "Every time I'd see him he'd tell me he's working on another chapter of his memoirs."

Rabbi Trainin, born in a religious Zionist family in Russia, came to the U.S. as a child with his parents.

He is survived by his wife, Frances; a son, Eugene; a daughter, Barbara; four grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

His nephew was the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, founder of the Jewish Defense League.

“Meir wasn’t embraced by the Jewish establishment,” Rabbi Trainin said in a 1984 interview with *The Jewish Week*. Had mainstream Jewish organizations been more open to Rabbi Kahane’s brand of activism, Rabbi Trainin speculated, “there would never have been a JDL.”

Rabbi Trainin would describe himself as an activist within a mainstream setting.

“My epitaph,” he once said, “will be ‘He did not always succeed, but he never gave up.’”

Both the previous editorial and article and a later article in this memorial book by Steve Lipman are reprinted with permission.

Sheloshim

By Pinchas Berger, LCSW

Director, JBFCS Jewish Community Services

Collaborating with Rabbi Isaac (Ike) Trainin was not always easy, but if you were willing and able to hang in and navigate the rough spots, proved to be consistently worthwhile. Unfortunately, and much to my own detriment, I must admit that I did not always meet the challenge, and for that I am truly sorry.

Others have described Rabbi Trainin's immeasurable contributions to the development of the unrivaled UJA-Federation Network and the field of Jewish Communal Services. I believe that his record of success was primarily due to his unwillingness to take No for an answer, an unwillingness born out of his passionate commitment to helping the most vulnerable members of the Jewish community.

Ike Trainin demanded much of himself and from others. He set high performance standards for both himself and others, and was sorely disappointed when his expectations were not met. I, for one, believe that both his high expectations and deep disappointment were due to his concern about those in need and strong belief in the community's role and responsibility to alleviate their suffering.

Toward that end, Ike Trainin maintained that the true test and mark of a caring and compassionate community rested on the readiness of community members to help and support each other at critical moments. While he recognized the role of professionals, Ike truly valued what people could do for each other. It was this belief that led Rabbi Trainin to advocate and facilitate the formation of JACS (Jewish Alcoholics and Chemically Dependent Persons and Their Significant Others*) and to create the Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council* that is named in his honor. In so doing, Ike Trainin once again shone the light and led the way by demonstrating the importance and impact of mutual support as an essential component of a comprehensive communal service system. And for that, we should all be grateful.

* A JBFCS Rita J. Kaplan Jewish Connections Program

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By Rabbi David Feldman

Dean, Jewish Institute of Bioethics, Teaneck, NJ

Rabbi Isaac Trainin was tireless and visionary.

If you want to pay him tribute in your heart ...

Think of the burgeoning number of people who continue to be helped by the agencies of Federation that he created and nurtured;

Read the speeches he gave and the articles he wrote in support of causes and project he sponsored;

Speak to the families who needed and received help for one or another of its members, for whom there was help nowhere else;

Contemplate the compassion that moved him to respond to such needs;

Consider the lasting changes in federation and in its agencies, and the raising of the bar of its service and outreach.

List the special committees that his vision and capacity brought into being, each cultivating its ability to inform and contribute to the public welfare.

Through the committee on medical ethics, for example, Rabbi Trainin gave practical and intellectual guidance. He selected scholars and spokespeople for this group, leading them to their trailblazing deliberations, and keeping them on track to produce needed decisions and useful publications. Having had the privilege of chairing this committee, I observed firsthand as he oversaw its sessions, its standards, and its goals.

Expertise and dedication were evident in all aspects of his work, culminating in the grand achievement of the bikkur cholim enterprise . . . But with an impressive series of accomplishments along the way.

Our mind's eye beholds all this, and we pay him the tribute of respect and gratitude.

* * * * *

By Blu Greenberg

Revised version of remarks delivered at the Sheloshim

Ike Trainin was two people. One was your ordinary, average citizen, your neighbor next door, your colleague down the hall, the person we all are— hard working, decent , accessible; also, very human, with high and low moods, focus on small things, a few idiosyncrasies, a little ego. Ike was all of this. Counting heads mattered: how many people showed up for a meeting; how many turned out for a conference. If you arrived late to a Commission meeting, Ike would not hesitate to ask “What happened?” a question offered not in the spirit of whether something untoward had delayed you but rather as two points off for not getting there on time. Ike could guilt a grown man or woman like no one else.

Considering all his great accomplishments, Ike did not have a grand ego. But if his ego was bruised, he'd let you know. He was totally transparent. If another took credit that Ike felt was inappropriate, or if someone forgot to credit Ike, well, you'd hear about it. He knew exactly who called after a conference to say it was good, and appreciated each and every compliment. He also knew who did not

call, and it bothered him. He often saw things in black and white, “terrible” or “great.” With Ike Trainin, very little was neutral.

That was the ordinary man, the man with human frailties. But there was also the ‘essential Ike’, the giant of a man for our times. To some extent, his all too human frailties masked his greatness, for though he was appreciated, I believe he was not sufficiently venerated in his lifetime.

The ‘essential Ike’ possessed many qualities. In his spirit of brevity, I will cite three, the acronym of his name and the real hallmarks of his legacy: Initiative, Kindness, and Empowerment.

Initiative: at Rabbi Trainin’s funeral, John Ruskay spoke of the many programs Ike had developed, so many that it was mind boggling to hear them all in one sitting. Yet, as we stood outside the synagogue after the funeral, two friends, rabbis from the CSR days, complained that John had forgotten to mention the particular initiatives on which they had labored. Working with Ike, I would often think of him as the cartoon character with a light bulb glowing from his head, symbol of a brand new idea being created. Wherever there was a need, Ike’s light bulb illuminated. The very next day or week, a new task force, think tank, or network was created to solve the problem. He was not interested in bemoaning facts on the ground but rather in changing them.

Yet even more than not wringing hands but becoming hands on, Ike’s arc extended to searching out those whom he felt were under-served by the community. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein’s first task force tells the whole story. Lookstein, then assistant rabbi at Kehilath Jeshurun, was called upon by Rabbi Trainin to head the “Task Force on Unmet Needs.” The charge? Go out and see who is hurting, who needs help. Don’t wait for the problem to show up at your door; go find it and then fix it.

That was his greatness. It explains why he was the first to deal with so many of the issues that are now standard items on the community’s agenda –intermarriage, women’s roles, the declining birth rate, and pariah populations that were neglected – gamblers, alcoholics, addicts, abused women, anyone who was at the periphery of the community.

His initiative was broadly focused. I can speak to two particular issues I know best: women and interdenominational relations. Often, I have been credited with creating the first Jewish women’s task force in the Federation world. But in truth, it was Rabbi Trainin’s initiative. The background to the story was one of happenstance. I mention this because happenstance, isolated incidents, and an individual’s plight often played into his bold new communal initiatives.

In 1974, I called him on behalf of a friend who sought help on a hospital matter. Immediately, Ike responded with, “What a coincidence! I was going to call you today. We must do something about Jewish women in the Federation world.” He had read about the First National Jewish Women’s

Conference of '73 and saw the need to bring Jewish feminism into the organized Jewish world. Out of that conversation grew the Jewish Women's Task Force, which operates unto this day. Ike conceived of, or supported so many of its cutting edge programs and conferences – women's leadership training, synagogue roles, the plight of the *agunah*, domestic violence, Jewish family and work issues, and much more.

Jewish pluralism was another pioneering area of Ike Trainin. To understand how unique and forward thinking he was, one must know the climate of those times. In the 40's, 50's and early 60's, the Federation consisted largely of Our Crowd. Traditional Jews were rarely involved. The rabbis were not connected, the leadership was largely secular, and the issues were health and social services, not Jewish education. Great divisiveness existed between the denominations, a persistent split. In the 60's, my husband, Irving Greenberg, was involved in creating CLAL. CLAL's three missions were leadership education, Holocaust remembrance, and Jewish unity. The Jewish unity piece was [and remains] the least successful effort of the organization.

What was Isaac Trainin's response to internecine strife or disinterest? In the early 60's, he created the Commission on Synagogue Relations and invited rabbis of every stripe into the Federation world. In doing so, he also invited Federation leadership into the synagogues. Perhaps more important, he invited rabbinic leaders into each other's worlds, some of which had never been bridged before. He created a sense of collegiality that persisted until CSR was disbanded upon his retirement.

K for Kindness. The Task Force on Unmet Needs basically asked the question that was center and front of all his enterprises: Who is hurting? How can we help? During my tenure in CSR, I worked with Ike on a conference on Infertility. Conference planning took an entire year, and as we were about to go forward, we brought several infertile couples into the process. Quickly we realized that in our programming, we had not sufficiently accounted for the great pain infertile couples suffered. As much as Ike wanted speed and action, he saw it appropriate to begin the planning process anew. He would not ride roughshod over their feelings, no matter the delay.

Another example of how kindness grounded all of his initiatives was his attitude to *yordim*. American Jewish Zionist leadership did not view Israeli expatriates as like themselves, i.e., choosing the creature comforts of America over a harder life in the Jewish homeland. Instead, they – we – saw yordim almost as failures, traitors, abandoning the noble Zionist dream of building a Jewish State. Ike Trainin saw it differently and challenged the leadership: "We should not turn our backs on them. They need a community as much as any other Jews. We must go to them to connect, since they won't come to Federation or synagogue." He organized programs and activities in Queens and the Upper West Side and other places of high concentration of Israelis. Not all his initiatives were warmly received, but that did not stop him. In short order, the rest of the community followed suit and changed its attitude toward *yordim*.

His essential kindness encompassed a concern for the dignity of others. Among the diverse group of rabbis on the Commission was a Reform rabbi who also held a doctorate. A particular Orthodox rabbi always referred to him as Dr. It was obvious to everyone why. After two meetings, Ike invited the Orthodox rabbi into his office. He said, "It is your prerogative to recognize or not recognize Reform rabbis, but here we respect all rabbis. So you can decide whether you'd like to stay on the Board and recognize his status or resign." There were no protracted negotiations, no meetings or position papers. Just give the man his due honor, and we can continue to be colleagues. Simple as that for Ike. And "Rabbi" it was from the Orthodox colleague who stayed on CSR for another dozen years.

E for Empowerment. Rabbi Isaac Trainin pulled hundreds of souls into Jewish communal leadership. Many of our Jewish leaders and communal workers today in the Tri-State area came through the ranks with Ike Trainin. With Ike, there were no turf issues, only service. He sat through endless meetings and listened. If someone suggested a good idea- - and occasionally even not such a good idea --, Ike's response was "Good idea; now go and do it. We will back you." If you were willing to work, well, that was heaven for him. The volunteer hours that he managed to extract on behalf of the Jewish community are inestimable and have surely earned him a venerable place in the world to come.

Isaac Trainin made you feel that you could accomplish whatever goal you set for yourself. He did not micro manage and was happy when someone took up the reins and went forward. More accurately, he held the reins but let you fly. When I was invited to join the Commission, most of the rabbis were my seniors, not only in years but in experience, prestige and honor. I should have been timid to speak in that setting, but Ike made me feel that my participation was valued. All who worked with him learned a great deal from him.

After a person dies, we pray that he or she serves as a *melitz yosher*, an intercessor who pleads on behalf of the Jewish people. Given his life's work, he surely took up that task without delay. But of Rabbi Isaac Trainin it must also be said that even if he folded his hands after his life ended, he fulfilled the ultimate goal of a *melitz yosher*, for his work on Earth changed the life and lot of hundreds of thousands of Jews, not only those contemporaneous with him but also those of generations to come.

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Kehilath Jeshurun Bulletin

In Memoriam

Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin

For over sixty years he was a dedicated and indefatigable servant of the Jewish community. From his early career in HIAS, Rabbi Trainin went on to become the Director of the Department of Religious Services Affairs at UJA-Federation. In that capacity, he brought the American synagogue into

Federation and implemented transformative programs which gave Federation a new sensitivity, not alone to religion, but to many “unmet needs” as he called them. He was a veritable Energizer Bunny, arriving at his office daily before 7:30 AM and leaving long after everybody else had left. He always put the Jewish community first and he had very little tolerance for those who did not share that commitment. The author of eleven volumes of a communal diary, he and they were a treasure trove of information about a community and a man who made a profound impact on that community. His wife, Frances, was a lifelong supporter of Ike and all of his work, and she will miss him terribly.

Tributes

By Rabbi Moshe David Tendler

Professor of Talmud, Medical Ethics, Yeshiva University

Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, *zichrono livracha*, was an acquaintance for more than 40 years. He became one of my closest friends during the nine years I served as the chairman of the Committee on Medical Ethics of the Federation and ever after. As Director of the Committee on Religious Affairs, he was our director as well.

The Medical Ethics Committee was representative of the Jewish community in New York. Members were chosen from the diverse, complex, often antagonistic factions that comprise the Jewish community. Although Rabbi Ike z”l was clearly identified as a learned Orthodox Rav, he earned the respect and affection of all. Decisions of the Committee adhered to the Orthodox Torah view, not by majority vote but through consensus achieved by Ike's sensitivity in human relations and learned mastery of the basic principles being evaluated.

This success was surely due to the realization of every member that Ike z”l loved every Jew and put his love into action for the benefit of all Jews.

He is sorely missed.

Yehi zichro baruch. May his memory be a blessing.

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By Rabbi Jim Michaels

Hebrew Home of Greater Washington, Rockville, MD

I first met Ike Trainin shortly after I moved to a pulpit in Queens. We had a catering hall, and I quickly learned that I would be expected to perform over 40 weddings each year. Most of the couples weren't from my congregation, so I realized I probably would never see any of them again.

I mentioned this to a senior colleague and told him I wanted to do more for these couples. He asked me what I had in mind, and I said I'd like to do some true premarital counseling with them. Usher immediately said, “Call Ike Trainin! He'll help you set it up!”

The next day, I was on the phone with Ike. His immediate response was, “Great idea! Let's do it!” He helped connect me to the proper agency, and eventually we had a group of couples which met together three times. It was unusual at the time; perhaps he helped create a model for what is quite common today.

This set the pattern for my work with Ike. He had an idea, asked me if I would want to work on it, and we made it happen. I had a thought, and he'd immediately create a committee to discuss and

implement it. It was the pattern for a productive relationship which lasted throughout my years in New York.

Let me include one more personal vignette. I became a runner while I was living in Queens; eventually I entered the New York Marathon. I knew Ike's apartment was on First Avenue, near the 16-mile mark. I told him when I expected to pass by. When I did, I looked up to his balcony and saw him standing and watching. He waved, and shouted loud enough for the entire crowd to hear, "Go, Jimmy!" It gave me a boost, and helped me go the distance that day. That was Ike; a cheerleader, but also a rare man who could make things happen. May his memory be a blessing to us all.

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By Rabbi Basil Herring

Rabbinical Council of America

We note with regret the passing of Rabbi Isaac Trainin. Rabbi Trainin, as director of the Committee on Religious Affairs at Federation-UJA in New York, was instrumental in infusing a spirit of authentic Judaism into their activities. during the time of his service he was effective in mandatory observance of kashruth in all Federation-UJA public affairs. He was a true friend of the RCA, attended our conventions and was honored on different occasions. *Yehi zichro baruch.*

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Marilyn Klein

Founder, Josh Klein Bikur Cholim Society of Harrisburg, PA

In 1999, when we began to make plans for the Josh Klein Bikur Cholim Society of Harrisburg, I called Rabbi Trainin for guidance. Although I had never met him, we had a connection because his daughter Barbara and her family live in Harrisburg. Rabbi Trainin was kind and encouraging. He offered many helpful suggestions and sent me many useful education materials.

I was honored to meet Rabbi Trainin at the JBFCS annual convention in New York. His kindhearted words inspired and motivated me.

Our organization continues to thrive, in large part due to the valuable initial assistance we received from Rabbi Trainin and the entire Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council.

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An Unusual Friendship

By Rebbetzin Judith Friedlander

What constitutes friendship? Usually the most prevalent ingredients are a meeting of the minds, consonant philosophies of life, similar likes and dislikes and harmonious backgrounds and cultural aspirations. [My husband, the late Rabbi Avraham Friedlander, and I became closer friends with

Rabbi Trainin because despite our superficial differences, we shared those philosophies and aspirations. Most particularly, I became involved in Bikur Cholim—a role encouraged by Rabbi Trainin—and my husband, as a Hassidic rebbe, helped counsel many people one-on-one.

Rabbi Trainin originated from a strictly Lithuanian background and was modern, forceful, articulate, worldly and sophisticated. Rabbi Trainin was the leader of the Bikur Cholim Task Force at UJA-Federation and active in many charitable organizations, in particular JACS, which empowered alcoholics and substance abusers to overcome their dependence. Rabbi Trainin devoted his professional life and off-hours as well, to mitigating the burdens of the sick and downtrodden and providing solutions to heretofore insurmountable problems.

May Rabbi Trainin's many good deeds and our longstanding friendship that overlooked differences illuminate a path for the younger generation to follow. And may Rabbi Trainin—and my husband-- remain as guardian angels over all Jews, guiding our footsteps towards charitable endeavors.

Family Thoughts

By Dahlia Trainin

Rabbi Trainin's oldest granddaughter (written as a high-school senior)

My Grandfather and My Jewish Development

"Dahlia Trainin, are you related to Rabbi Isaac Trainin?" is a question that has been following me around throughout my life. Rabbi Trainin, or Saba, to me, is an individual who I have always admired as a grandfather and as a Jewish leader. It is not just his unbelievable mitzvot and accomplishments that have influenced my Jewish development; it's his sincerity, ambition and love in everything he does. It is people like my Saba who demonstrate the real meaning of *Kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*, All Israel is responsible, one for the other.

.. It was his Kiddush, his *divrai Torah*, his *havdalah* that made me feel the beauty and *menucha* of Shabbat... Even now that I am shomeret Shabbat I know Shabbat won't start without a phone call [before] with my Saba. He has also taught me the importance of family and knowing my heritage by telling me stories of his Jewish childhood in Russia. With his balance of humor and seriousness he has helped me see Orthodox Judaism in a positive light at moments when I need it the most.

Having been extremely active in the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and the United Jewish Appeal for over 30 years, Rabbi Trainin is a true Jewish leader who, now that he is retired, is still so self-motivated that he works twice as hard as before, whether he's writing another book or involved in his Bikur Cholim project which he began by himself. These qualities have taught me leadership skills which I use to the best of my ability in my shul and school. He has taught me that in order to better the Jewish community I cannot wait for others to make that change.

Jewish development as the word suggests is a process, a slow one. We all aspire to be better Jews, to learn more and to strengthen our individual connections toward G-d, but just "aspiring" is not enough... I have developed a love for G-d and the Jewish life. This I owe to my Grandfather.

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By Helena (Nechama) Blank

A granddaughter, 18

Delivered at High-School Graduation

Dear parents, teachers, and fellow students: Bikur Cholim, visiting the sick, has always been an important part of my life. Since I was a little girl my grandfather and mother have always taught me about the Jewish tradition of Bikur Cholim.

My grandfather, Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin z"l who died this past January, was the founder of the New York Federation's Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim. Bikur Cholim is steeped in Jewish tradition. The Torah tells us that G-d himself visited *Avraham Aveninu* after his *brit milah*, so as we are supposed to imitate G-d, we must visit the sick. We Jews are supposed to visit those in hospitals,

the homebound, and those in nursing homes. We offer a few words and minutes of our time in the hope that it will make them feel just a little bit better.

In the fifth grade, my class at the yeshiva and I collected videotapes (before the DVD was invented, of course) to give to the children's ward at Harrisburg [PA] Hospital. In all we collected 560 videos to give and got to visit the kids while delivering the tapes.

Many a time I have gone with my mother to a hospital to visit those who were sick. Once we even ran into a Franciscan monk, the first I'd ever seen, so as you might imagine I was quite excited. I love to help other people and it's a natural high to help other people... For as it is said, in the path of righteousness there is life.

* * * * *

By Cynthia (Tsirl) Blank

A granddaughter, 17 (written at age 13-14)

Albert Einstein once said that it is responsibility of every human being to aspire to do something worthwhile to make the world a better place than the one we found. I know no one who personifies this remark better than my grandfather, Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin. A favorite quotation of his is, "Spend your life looking for your brothers." When I heard him say this I immediately felt ashamed because I always think of myself before I think of everyone else. But I want to be a person that tries to help others. My grandfather's selfless work of 60 years for the Jewish community inspires me to emulate him and help my fellow Jews, whether my friends or even people I don't really know.

Isaac Trainin's career started in 1946, when he helped Jewish refugees from the Holocaust find jobs. In 1952, he became the Advisor of Religious Affairs of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, where he later created a department called the Commission on Synagogue Relations. The Commission had many task forces dealing with problems in the community. In 1968, for example, he created a task force to help recovering alcoholics and prevent alcoholism in Jews. When he found out there were Jews with drug addictions, he then created a task force on that.

His next issue was domestic violence among Jews. Women came forward to talk to him, and another task force (that later became an independent organization) that helped people find houses, gave them money, paid for furniture, and put up housing [was born]. My grandfather then began work on compulsive gambling. A new task force was born, and so were programs to help. Many of the task forces my grandfather created on all matters were adopted by federations all over the country and even in Canada.

All the things my grandfather did make me wonder what else plagues Jews now, and how I can help. I want to explore other problems, not just deal with the ones my grandfather has already dealt with. I also think that children and teenagers should be helped with their problems, not just adults.

In 1986, Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin retired from the federation. He became “bored,” and so he started the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim. He helped all types of Jews become involved in visiting the sick and homebound, from their own synagogues or other synagogues.

What my grandfather has done amazes me and should amaze everyone else. I don't know another person who has dedicated his life to helping his fellow people and has not stopped for anything. Even at the age of 86, he's still looking for a new project. I hope he is with me for many more years, so he can teach me more about what he's done and inspire me to emulate him more. If I had one wish for him, it would be that every Jew on this earth would know and remember what he's done and will try his or her best to keep working to help the Jewish communities all over the world. I know I will.

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These are my reflections, appearing in the newsletter of the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Coordinating Council of Bikur Cholim: The same motif was sounded by Rabbi Uri Topolosky, the rabbi's grandson-in-law, at his funeral.

-- Barbara Trainin Blank

As long as I can remember, bikur cholim was an important part of my father's work, predating the establishment of the Coordinating Council. While I cannot recall any particular person or experience that motivated his commitment, I do remember a midrash he often quoted in speeches and fundraising efforts that offer insight into my father's vision and understanding of bikur cholim.

My father would tell of the first blessing of the *Shemoneh-Esrai*, a silent prayer said during daily services. He noted that the prayer opens with the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but closes with the mention only of Abraham.

Why is that?

Because Jacob, who is shown sitting in his tents, represents a man devoted to Torah study. Isaac, who is shown in quiet reflection, represents a man devoted to prayer. But Abraham, whose tent was open in all directions, represents a man devoted to acts of loving-kindness.

Bikur cholim is one of the many acts of loving-kindness, my father explained, adding that acts of loving-kindness are a unifying force that brings Jews together across all ideologies.

For my father bikur cholim was both a mitzvah, a religious commandment to be fulfilled, and a communal responsibility. Bikur cholim became one of the multiple ways in which he served the Jewish community and one of his lasting legacies. He was so proud that the Coordinating Council was named in his honor.

Tributes Reprinted from Rabbi Trainin's 10th Book

By Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein
United Synagogue of America

Dear Ike:

As you approach the milestone of 55 years of service to the UJA-Federation of New York, I am in awe of the contribution that you have made to the enrichment of Jewish life in your years of stellar service.

When I arrived in New York to assume professional positions 30 years ago, there was a generally held attitude that there was a great antipathy on the part of the Federation community toward Jewish religious life in general and synagogue life in particular. Any dialogue that took place was superficial.

Over the past several decades, this has changed dramatically. Because of your leadership in the Department of Religious Affairs, the bonds between the UJA Federation and the synagogue community in the greater New York area have been forged into an unbreakable chain. There is a feeling of mutual concern and mutual cooperation. Projects and programs that could not ever have been conceived of 50 years ago are blossoming and enriching the lives of an increasing number of Jews.

In reality, the influence of the Department of Religious Affairs has extended far beyond the borders of the New York metropolitan area. Because of your demonstrated success, communities throughout North America have thought to emulate the example of the work you created.

None of this would have been possible without your leadership and your willingness to focus on the goal in order to achieve success. I know that there were inordinate challenges to the success of your work. But, I also know that you succeeded because you did not let those challenges prevail.

We are grateful to you and the UJA-Federation for helping build a stronger community in which the Synagogue and the Federation harness their common energy and resources to enrich the quality of Jewish life.

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By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Senior Rabbi, Congregation Shearith Israel, the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City, founded 1654

I am pleased to salute and congratulate Rabbi Isaac Trainin on the occasion of his 55th anniversary with UJA-Federation. May he, his wife and family be blessed with all good things. Ike has a unique record of achievement on behalf of our community.

For many years, Ike headed the Department of Religious Affairs and the Commission on Synagogue Relations. He had an incredible talent for involving all of us in the work of Federation and making us feel that we were part of the same team. Rabbis and lay people of various Jewish religious affiliations

(and of no affiliation) came together regularly to discuss issues of vital concern to our community. Through these meetings, we not only learned about problems, but planned ways of addressing them. We had numerous conferences with first rate panels dealing with such concerns as medical ethics, drug and alcohol problems, the needs of the handicapped, the needs of Jewish singles, marriage counseling, etc. By working as a team, we transcended intracommunal rivalries-and also established strong friendships across denominational lines. The current UJA-Federation leadership would do well to try to recreate the structures that Ike had put in place.

These achievements were monumental and have had long term positive impact on all of us who worked with Ike. He demonstrated a tireless commitment to be of service; a fearless candor to address any and all issues, regardless of how controversial they may have seemed; a genuine respect for fellow Jews without regard to denomination.

Through his persistence, he drew many of us into the work of the Department of Religious Affairs and the Commission on Synagogue Relations. When he “retired”, he continued his pattern of leadership with his work on behalf of the Council on Bikur Cholim.

I join colleagues and friends in thanking Ike for his many years of devoted service; for his guidance and friendship; for his creative leadership; for his unbounded commitment to the Jewish community. He has made a positive difference not only to our community in general, but to each one of us who worked with him over the years. *Hazak uvaruch*.

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By Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union

The role of directing the Department of Religious Affairs for the UJA is a challenging one indeed. Understanding the needs of the religious community in all its complexity and diversity, and assisting the UJA to service such a kaleidoscope of communities, is an almost superhuman task. And yet, Rabbi Isaac Trainin has been able to steer the course, and steer it skillfully. For that he deserves our admiration.

I personally am most familiar with the Council on Bikur Cholim and its marvelous work. Bikur cholim, caring for the ill, is an ancient mitzvah, whose first exemplar was the Almighty himself in His visit to the recuperating Patriarch Abraham. Adapting such a time-honored tradition to the special needs and challenges of the 21st century is a most difficult task. And yet, the Council, under Rabbi Trainin’s leadership, has been able to accomplish its task and to involve hundreds of individuals in this sacred work. And in a matter which is creative while sensitive, efficient while caring.

One can only admire the consistent success with which Rabbi Trainin’s efforts have been blessed over so many, many years. It is surely a gift from the One Above. May he continue to be blessed in all of his endeavors, *ad meah v’esrim*, until 120 years. *Hatzlachah* (success).

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By Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld

Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills, Queens

Dear Ike:

As you are about to publish the current volume of your memoirs it is only fitting that I as one of the foot soldiers in the regiments which you commanded in the battle for observance of Jewish Law and Practices within the large Jewish community should pen some relevant notes. Your work is after all, the chronicle of how Jewish Agencies came to accept our sacred traditions not as a concession but as an admission of the importance of truly Jewish practice in the professional social service field.

Our mutual association and friendship covers a period of almost 60 years of dedicated and self-sacrificing devotion to the inculcation of Torah values within the American Jewish Professional Organizations.

Your accomplishments are too many to record. Whether it be the observance of kashruth or Shabbat or whether it be the providing of vital social services to the special needs of Orthodox and traditional Jews, whether it be understanding of the meaning of the State of Israel to us in the United States, you were at the forefront of the battle. Without you and your efforts American Jewry, would have been decimated by the tidal waves of total assimilation and intermarriage.

When we first met together with the late Rabbi I. Usher Kirshblum to discuss the introduction of kosher food for patients at the Long Island Jewish Hospital I did not have an inkling that the fight was only the beginning of the battle. It took a long time and much effort but you certainly succeeded largely due to your tenacious adherence to your belief in the importance of Torah practice if we were to be able to retain our standing as a religious community.

In every sphere of social service you were the commanding general to make the nonobservant secular members of or people finally understand what the word "JEWISH" really means. You created the committee on Religious Affairs and used it wisely and courageously to advance the cause of Torah in every aspect of modern life.

One of my fondest memories is the occasion when, as President of Rabbinical Council of America I presented you with a plaque at the annual convention spelling out the gratitude and appreciation which all of Jewry owes you.

How many impoverished Jewish souls you helped survive in a society that would have probably allowed them to disappear!

Of equal importance is your achievement in convincing Orthodox Jews of the need to actively support Federation and UJA. Just as you succeeded in convincing the secular and non-Orthodox community to understand the special needs for observant members of Klal Yisrael, so you were able to demonstrate that Jews who are true to their halachic faith must equally help every Jewish man, woman and child without regard to degree of observance in all circumstances.

I recall the many Shabbatot which you spent in our community and elsewhere in order to drive home the need to care for all Jews.

One of the most important activities was the Committee on Jewish Medical Ethics which you established. You were able to attract Lord Immanuel Jakobovits and other eminent authorities such as Rabbi Dr. Moses D. Tendler to lead the way in this vital field.

On a purely personal level I owe you much and I remember the many kindnesses you showed me and my family on many different occasions.

Finally, I think that the volumes which you published thus far deserve a very special place in the literature of Am Yisrael. May the Almighty bless you and your family with many more productive years so that you can continue to help the Jewish people and the everlasting faith by which you live.

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By Rabbi Myron E. Rakowitz

Sephardic Jewish Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Rav "Ike,"

It is a great honor and privilege to greet you on another milestone in your illustrious and noble career. My wife, Sarah, joins in well wishes.

It is quite a while since you recruited me to join your Synagogue council, to take a leading role and become an officer. You opened new doors and vistas of service for myself and many colleagues.

You brought us all together, Rabbis, Social Workers, Educators, Communal Servants and dedicated laymen. Through your good offices and leadership, we were able to meet and work with a large and promising cadre of the most devoted spiritual and community leaders. We crossed every denominational line and we embodied together every perspective and communal vision. The common denominator was "what's best for our people."

Under your guidance, 130 E. 59th Street, became a most vial address. There we learned, there we debated and there we acted. We were truly a "coat of many colors."

The Synagogue Council was your dream. It was your baby, and we were your spiritual and communal offspring.

Strength to you and more strength to you and Frances who was always at your side, as partner, and as exemplary inspiration.

Your tenacity and devotion to Klal Yisrael rubbed off at home. Your grandson [in-law] just became Rabbi of Beth Israel in New Orleans. This is the Congregation I left some 37 years ago when I was drafted into Ike Trainin's service.

Hazak, Hazak.

A Dose of Humor

Anyone who knew Ike Trainin well knew that joke and storytelling were part of his 'repertoire.' Here's one of my children's favorites:

Johnny comes home from Hebrew School one day, and his father asks him, "So, what did you learn in Hebrew School today?"

Johnny says: "Well, the Jews left Egypt and came to the Sea. So they built pontoon bridges and crossed over. Then the Egyptians came, and the Jews blew up the pontoon bridges so the Egyptians drowned.

The father asks: "Is that really what they taught you in Hebrew School?"

And Johnny replies: "No, but if I told you what they really taught me, you'd never believe me."

Then there's this one:

Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz, an elderly couple, were going on their first trip to Israel and were very excited.

Suddenly, the pilot got on the loud speaker and announced that the plane was having trouble, that one engine was malfunctioning but not to worry.

Mrs. Schwartz turns to Mr. Schwartz and asks: "Did you pay the UJA pledge?"

Mr. Schwartz looks at her as if she's crazy. "The plane's in trouble," he says. "Why are you worried about the UJA pledge now?"

A little while later the pilot announces there's trouble with the second engine, and that the plane would be making an emergency landing.

Again, Mrs. Schwartz asks: "Did you pay the UJA pledge?"

"Are you crazy?" Mr. Schwartz asks. "The plane is making an emergency landing, and you're thinking about the UJA pledge?"

"Just tell me," Mrs. Schwartz persists. "Did you pay the pledge?"

"I'll tell you the truth," Mr. Schwartz confesses. "I didn't have time before we left."

"Don't worry," says his wife. "They'll find us."

And this:

It's a sunny day in Miami. The beach is packed. All of a sudden the sky becomes dark, and a large monster comes out of the ocean. He's very ugly. All the people run out of the water and off the beach, except for one lone little old Jewish lady who sits there.

The monster says to her: "Aren't you afraid of me?"

The little old Jewish lady shakes her head and says: "No, but have I got a girl for you."

Excerpts from Rabbi Trainin's Books and Speeches

Networking in the Jewish Community - A Coordinated Approach

June 10, 1986

One of the great characteristic traits of the Jewish people is that everyone makes Shabbos for himself. This has been true in the synagogue world and to a large extent in our Jewish communal institutions. The concept of a unified approach to a communal problem is not widespread, but is beginning to catch on. That is why the idea of networking has recently come to the fore. Sensitive communal leaders both lay and professional are beginning to realize that if we are concerned with the health and welfare of the Jewish community, then resources have to be pooled and information must be shared so that one agency will know what another is doing.

This volume, *A Little Bit of Sunshine at Twilight*, is probably my swan song. As the editor points out, it is meant to be read by people who are not familiar with my previous eight books or who are looking for a compilation, a "Deuteronomy" of my previous books.

Let me give the reader a summary of my professional and personal lives:

Professional:

In April 1946, a month after the death of my father, I left the Veterans Administration and took a position at the United Services for New Americans. I became the director of a department whose mission was to train, retrain and place religious functionaries who had survived the Holocaust. I refer to rabbis, cantors, teachers, mohelim and shochemim.

From 1946 to 1950 I helped to train, retrain and place hundreds of religious functionaries in cities across our country as well as Canada.

From 1950 until June 1952 I was the administrative assistant to the late Dr. Samuel Belkin, President of Yeshiva University.

In 1952 I began my career with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies as Advisor on Religious Affairs. My entire career at Federation and UJA-Federation is spelled out in the text of this book, the ninth volume of my *Communal Diary*.

Personal:

It has been a long journey, from 1945 to 2006. During this period my son and daughter grew up. My son, Eugene, became a physician. He has two children, Dahlia and Dani. Dahlia has a Ph.D. in psychology and works as a counselor at the Horace Mann School. Her husband, Uri, is an assistant rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. They have two sons, Elyon and Itai. Dani lives in Israel. My wife and I look forward to his marriage. [Currently Dahlia and her family live in New Orleans, where Uri is rabbi of Beth Israel, and Dahlia works as a psychologist.]

My daughter, Barbara, a writer and editor, is married to Dr. Stephen Blank, a professor. They have two teenage daughters, Nechama and Tsirl.

During this period the State of Israel was created, followed by a number of wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors. During this period, my brother, Ben, died of melanoma at the age of 65. My mother died on January 1, 1967, at the age of 80. My sister, Sonia, had two sons. The younger one, Nachman, is a rabbi in Jerusalem. The elder, Meir Kahane, was assassinated in 1990. My sister died in 2003, one day after my wife and I celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary. She left one son, nine grandchildren (Her grandson Binyamin and his wife, Talia, were killed in a Palestinian attack in 1998), and 64 great-grandchildren. [This number has since increased substantially.] I think of my sister all the time.

Now in the twilight of my life, I take comfort in having published nine books, which tell the story of my career in Jewish communal service from 1946 to 2006. I put down my pen with the sense of satisfaction that I have left significant accomplishments, which have become part of the fabric of the Jewish community and of the field of Jewish communal services in New York City.

* * * * *

Remarks at Rabbi Trainin's 80th birthday party

The Book of Exodus begins with the following words: "And these are the names of the Sons of Israel." It then lists Rueben, Simon, Levi and the other sons of Jacob.

The question arises why the names had to be repeated, since the sons had already been mentioned in the closing Chapter of Genesis. I believe the repetition is due to the fact that the sons represented many shades of Judaism...

They differed in many ways and disagreed as to the nature of the Jewish religion. However, in spite of the differences, they were all the children of Israel, and so it is today.

We may differ on many issues, but in the last analysis, we are all the children of Israel. We are all united in terms of *gemilut chassadim*--helping those in need--and certainly bikur cholim, visiting and comforting the sick. May we all be united in helping the poor and the sick and the widow and the orphan and the State of Israel.

* * * * *

The rabbi must be a spiritual leader, concerned with the ethical, religious and moral climate of his community. Second, he must be a teacher. He must transmit the Jewish positions, laws and customs to his membership. Thirdly, he must be a counselor in times of joy, in times of sorrow, and in the entire life cycle of the individual Jew. But above all, in the words of Hillel, "*Al tifrosh min ha'tsibur*"--he must not separate himself from the community. Jewish life does not begin and end within the four walls of a synagogue. A rabbi must be concerned, and teach his congregation to be concerned, about the local Jewish community and the condition of Jews all over the world. This is especially true today, with the problems confronting the State of Israel, many Jewish communities throughout the world, and those facing our own Jewish community in New York.

* * * * *

Writing is good for the soul. If one evaluates one's life and work truthfully, it becomes a real catharsis. One gains an understanding of oneself not otherwise possible. In a sense, writing is self-analysis without seeing a psychiatrist. Honest writing means revealing one's successes and failures--one's human frailties.

Whether one will be widely read is not important. At least one's children and grandchildren will learn of their father and grandfather's struggles and hopefully, achievements. If one has helped his fellow human beings in whatever way, that legacy should be recorded.

* * * * *

This is the last volume of my communal diaries. [Editor: This proved not to be the case.] At best there might be a short supplement, depending on how long I remain in my present position.

I hope my readers will forgive me for being personal at this time. For what follows is meant more for the future reader and for my children and grandchildren. I shall recap what I consider my achievements in communal life and not omit my failures.

Achievements

Organizing from scratch a department at United Service for New Americans, and helping to train, retrain and place hundreds of refugee religious functionaries.

Founding and organizing a Department on Religious Affairs at Federation despite much skepticism and doubt.

Conceiving and founding the Commission on Synagogue Relations in spite of opposition ... [of the other major synagogue councils] including the New York Board of Rabbis, many of whom were opposed to the effort. Overtime, the very leadership of the Board became my greatest supporters. Some became presidents and leaders of the commission.

Conceiving and founding the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty in the face of bitter opposition from groups that saw the Council as a gimmick. Today the Council is the most-unique agency of its kind serving the Jewish poor and homeless.

Advocating the establishment of a Jewish Community Relations Council 10 years before it came into being.

Advocating an agency to serve college youth years before it (Jewish Association for College Youth) came into being.

Promoting a camp for Hassidic children and raising the money for establishing it (Mogen Avraham).

Making Federation and its agencies aware of and recognizing the problems of alcohol and substance abuse. This is at a time when people thought I needed a psychiatrist.

The impact of the work of the Commission on Synagogue Relations on other federations.

Bringing to the attention of the Council of Jewish Federations the problems of mixed marriage, the need for chaplaincy, and Bikur Cholim.

Pushing for recognition of the Jewish component in social work.

Advocating a *shadchanut* (matchmaking) bureau and fighting to establish it.

The establishment of the Committee on Medical Ethics, which I consider perhaps my finest achievement.

There are many other significant achievements credited to the Commission on Synagogue Relations and the Committee on Religious Affairs. Those resulted from ideas projected by others. They are well documented in my diaries.

Failures

In my earlier books, I never mentioned what I felt were my failures. The following are what I consider to be my personal failures:

The inability to influence many Federation secular leaders more.

The intolerance to what I consider mediocrity. I should have been more understanding.

The failure to attract more rabbis to the work of the Department on Religious Affairs.

Not fighting more vigorously for Jewish observance in some Federation agencies. Yes, there are many successes. There should have been more.

Failure at times to distinguish priorities from demands, which in retrospect were secondary.

Weighing the accomplishments against the failures, I'm satisfied that my record is better than average.

That is it. The clock cannot be turned back.

* * * * *

Bikur Cholim -- the Unending Mitzvah

In 1986, after a thorough study which indicated that the vast majority of synagogues in greater New York either had no Bikur Cholim programs, or the few which did were found to be totally inadequate, I founded the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim, the first organization of its kind in Jewish

history. The Council had one major aim - to encourage all synagogues to establish Bikur Cholim programs. Toward that end, training seminars for synagogue volunteers on the premises of synagogues were offered in cooperation with the Department of Jewish Family Life Education of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services.

In the last eight years we have trained volunteers and helped to establish Bikur Cholim programs in over 90 synagogues in greater New York and parts of New Jersey. We encourage synagogue volunteers to visit patients in hospitals, residents of nursing homes, and the homebound which includes the deaf, the blind and the physically handicapped.

Bikur Cholim (Hebrew for "visiting the sick") is one of the most considerable and helpful acts one person can do for another. God set the example when he visited Avraham during his recuperation (Genesis 18:1). The Talmud (Shabbat 127a) includes bikur cholim among the precepts to which no limit is set and to which "a man enjoys the fruits in this world while the principal remains for him in the world to come." The Rambam, who as a physician, approached this mitzvah from both a medical as well as religious perspective, considered it the most important of social obligations, representing the highest form of "loving thy neighbor as thyself."

Bikur cholim applies not only to hospitals, but also to those in nursing homes and the homebound. Since most patients do not stay in the hospital for more than a few days, it is the long-term ill on whom attention needs to be focused. The obligation of bikur cholim does not end with visiting a sick person. The patient's material needs must also be attended to. This includes providing food, supplies, and, when necessary, even medical expenses. Patients often comment on how comforting it is to receive chicken soup and other kosher fare in the hospital from bikur cholim volunteers. In many communities, groups of women divide up the responsibility of preparing meals for new mothers and homebound cholim and their families. As Eliezer ben Isaac of Worms observed, "When visiting an impoverished sick person, be quick to offer him refreshments, and he will value it as though you sustained and restored his soul."

Last year, when I received an award, I told you that my wife and I were about to celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary, and I called her a "saint" for living with me so long. I am glad to report that our 60th anniversary has passed, and we are still married. There is a Jewish legend that states that each time a person performs an act of tzedakah, an angel is created. In a dream I recently had, a voice spoke to me in Hebrew, and I replied "*Hineni*" (here I am). The voice asked me how many bikur cholim angels have been created because of the work of the Council. I woke up! Today I realize that each of you involved in bikur cholim has created and continues to create bikur cholim angels.

The future belongs to those who care. Because you care, the mitzvah of bikur cholim will continue with your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren until the coming of the Messiah.

If you listen very carefully, you will hear the flapping of wings. These are your angels praising you for what you are doing, and in angelic voices, they are saying to you: "Please create more angels, and the blessing of God will be upon you and future generations."

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Soon after I had assumed the presidency of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, an idea began to preoccupy me, and would for a number of years. It was like a buzzing mosquito that wouldn't let go. There seemed to be coordinating bodies in every conceivable realm, but not in bikur cholim.

The more I thought of it, the more I realized there must be a first step. In Volume II of my *Communal Diary*, I describe how, in spite of objections from the late former vice-president of the New York Board of Rabbis, the Commission on Synagogue Relations had established a Task Force on Bikur Cholim.

The Task Force's main purpose was to encourage synagogues to organize bikur cholim committees to visit the sick in hospitals and nursing homes and to visit the homebound. (The sad fact was that of some 700 synagogues in Greater New York, few could claim viable committees on bikur cholim.) During its short life, the Task Force did influence some synagogues. But it soon became evident that what was needed was an independent organization that would act as an umbrella for all bikur cholim programs in synagogues as well as independent bikur cholim societies.

It became evident too that 90 percent of bikur cholim work was being done by Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox societies. While bikur cholim refers to visiting the sick, those societies also provided services that social service agencies didn't provide at all or provided only inadequately. The range of these services was far-reaching: homemaker services, emergency ambulance services, financial assistance, medical care, home hospitality for families of hospital patients on Sabbath and Jewish holidays, and more.

I also recognized that while the Federation Distribution Committee was supportive of programs for the poor, bikur cholim was, to most of the committee's members, simply an alien concept (although Federation did support DOROT, which was dedicated to helping the elderly homebound.

I realized that a task force, which was one of 17 others sponsored by the Commission, could not achieve its purpose. The only answer was an agency devoted to bikur cholim.

Thus, in 1986, when I retired, I was determined to organize an independent agency to be entitled the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim of Greater New York.

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The Bible tells us that in anticipation of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, the Jews had to prepare themselves for three days. When the day arrived, the sounds of the shofar were heard and our sages ask why. The answer given is so apropos to us. The Jewish people were so overwhelmed with the momentous event that was about to take place, that they fell asleep. The shofar had to wake them up.

The Jewish community is so overwhelmed with problems today that we often become paralyzed by fear and fail to act in time. While a heavenly shofar will not be blown at this conference, we must recognize the problem of alcoholism and drug addiction and as indeed some communities have already done, we must set up treatment centers; we must train our rabbis, group workers, and caseworkers on

how to deal with this problem; and we must organize above all, preventative programs. We must find the resources and the know-how. The time is now; tomorrow may be too late.

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On many occasions, my colleagues have asked why I work so hard and why I put in so many hours at my job. Half-jokingly, I have always responded that a person works hard for either one of two reasons: (a) he is an altruist; (b) he is insecure. I then hastened to add that I am not an altruist. In reality, I'm insecure about the Jewish community of New York and want to do as much as possible to assist that community. Perhaps that is hubris, but nevertheless, that is the way I feel and the way I have always felt.

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This reminds me of one of my mother's favorite stories about the stutzorger, the city worrier. It is told that in a small town in Poland, Reb Shlomo was the stutzorger for 17 years. For a few pennies a month, he would worry for you and your family. In effect, for 17 years, that town was Shangri-la. No one had to worry about a thing. Reb Shlomo worried for everyone, for the rabbi, for the businessperson, for the husbands, for the wives, in short, for the entire Jewish community. After 17 years of peace and serenity, one morning during the reading of the Torah in the synagogue, Reb Shlomo got up, banged on the table and announced that he was resigning. There was consternation in the synagogue. The rabbi ran over to him and said, "Reb Shlomo, Reb Shlomo, what is the trouble? Why do you want to resign? Is it that we're not paying you enough? Maybe you are right, we haven't given you a raise for many years. Tell us what you want and you'll get it." "No my dear Rabbi, money is not the problem at all. I got up this morning and after 17 years, I realized that I have been so busy worrying for this whole community of mine that I haven't had one moment to worry about myself. I must quit." I think this fable is very illustrative of Jewish communal servant's responsibility and position.

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Upon Retirement

I have spent over half of my life in this building. To me it was not a job but a mission, and this week's sedra is most appropriate. The most sublime statement in the Bible appears in the sedra of Kedoshim-- " *V'Ahavta l're'acha kamocho.*" And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. That mitzvah is not qualified by any adjectives. It means exactly what it says. It is sad to see that to some Jews, loving one's neighbor is qualified by the statement, provided he or she thinks and believes as I do. If we continue this way, we will reach a point when we will be left with adjectives and no Jews.

* * * * *

My father of blessed memory, who was a European rabbi, instilled in me the love of all Jews... It was he who taught me to be an ecumenical Jew. It was this upbringing that inspired me to build bridges

between the synagogue world and Federation, and between the religious community and Federation. For no matter how we disagree ideologically, there cannot and there must not be a divided Jewish community in the areas of *tzedakah* and *gemilut chassadim*--in the areas of justice, mercy and loving-kindness.

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A Jew does not give charity. The word "charity" is demeaning. A Jew performs an act of *tzedakah*, which means an act of righteousness and loving-kindness. ...

The quintessential person personifying this concept is Father Abraham. Imagine Abraham, who was circumcised at the age of 99. He is sitting in the heat of the day in front of his tent in severe pain. Suddenly he sees three men approaching. Surely he was unaware that they were angels of God. I suppose you all would have done one or two things: either hide in the tent, or, being as rich as Abraham was, send a servant and offer these three tired men some hospitality. Instead, what does Abraham do? In spite of his age and pain, he runs toward the three men and offers them food and nourishment. He surely did not know whether they were Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. As a matter of fact, he didn't even know whether they were Jewish. These were three people in need, and Abraham did not care what their religion, race, creed or color were. And so, long before the Torah was written, Abraham became the principal example of justice and loving-kindness. The Bible tells us, "Thou shalt open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy." When a poor man comes to you it is your obligation to clothe and feed him, look after and care for him.

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I am not an alcoholic, drug addict, or pathological gambler. I have one addiction: that is, the survival of our people, our culture and our heritage.

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I have never basked in the glory of achievement. It is the failures that will not give me rest. One thought strikes my mind again and again. I should have done more! I should have tried harder!

A good friend said to me once, "Look at what you have accomplished and how many people you have helped." I replied, "Yes, but think of all the people who asked for my help and whom I failed."

My father's prediction at my Bar Mitzvah came true. He told me that I would never be a rich man materially, but that somehow my whole life would be spent in helping others.

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Books by Rabbi Trainin

Volume I: From the Pages of My Communal Diary (1977)

Volume II: More Pages from My Communal Diary (1979)
Volume III: In My People's Service (1981)
Volume IV: A Generation of Service (1983)
Volume V: In the Path of Righteousness There is Life (1984)
Volume VI: My Personal Deuteronomy (1985)
Volume VII: Mission: Past, Present, Future (1990)
Volume VIII: An Unending Mission: The Story of Bikur Cholim (2005)
My Mother Helene: A Memoir (2006)
My Father: A Memoir (2007)
Volume IX: A Bit of Sunshine at Twilight
Volume X: What is and What Was (2008)

Books Published by Rabbi Trainin's Departments (Selected List)

Black Jews in America
The Nature of Man in Judaism and Social Work
Intermarriage: The Future of the American Jew (Proceedings of a Conference)
Renascence or Oblivion: Proceedings of a Conference on Jewish Population
Judaism and Drugs
Alcoholism and the Jewish Community
The Jewish Family: A Compendium
Jewish Ethno-Psychiatry
Directory of Services for Jewish Patients
Compendium on Medical Ethics, several volumes
The Pre-Marital Interview
Directory of Programs and Services for Jewish Single Adults
Yad l'Yad: A Training Manual for Bikur Cholim; the newsletter; and others.

More Press

Excerpted from “Nine Most Powerful Rabbis”

New York Magazine, January 22, 1979

By Ronald Rubin

Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin's phone doubles as a hot line for desperate Jews--a rabbi inquiring if a bed can be found at Mt. Sinai Hospital for a congregant dying of cancer, the police precinct at East 67th Street with a runaway teenager asking for a rabbi, a Yiddish-speaking Hasid whose son can no longer control his drug problem, an alcoholic seeking an A.A. group with a Jewish membership... “

Rabbi Trainin's reaction to the designation? “Influential, maybe,” he said.

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“Communal Work – Salute for Selfless Service”

By Steve Lipman, *The Jewish Week*

Rabbi Isaac Trainin, a few years out of yeshiva in Brooklyn, didn't think he had a long future in the Jewish communal world when he was approached to head the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies' department of religious affairs in 1952. He was a lone religious voice in a largely secular organization.

“There were no mezuzahs on any doors,” he recalls. “I was the only yarmulke in the building,” then located on West 47th Street, in the Diamond District.

The federation, which eventually merged into today's UJA-Federation, incorporated more features of Jewish tradition into its mission.

And Rabbi Trainin remained in Jewish communal work.

The rabbi, 83, who retired from the UJA-Federation in 1986 and founded the independent Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council, which is named for him, marked his 50th year in the communal field in September. He was honored for his career at the coordinating council's 15th annual bikur cholim conference last Sunday at UJA-Federation headquarters in Manhattan.

“I didn't think I would last at all” a half-century ago, Rabbi Trainin says. “I was going to practice law.”

But he pushed the Jewish community into dealing with a swath of overlooked issues—drugs, mental health, gambling, poverty—and his crusty persuasiveness won the support of Jewish community leaders.

After stepping down from UJA-Federation, Rabbi Trainin formed its task force on bikur cholim into a separate organization. The coordinating council stresses the importance of visiting the sick, trains volunteers and runs the annual conference.

“I didn’t want to retire. I wanted to be busy,” Rabbi Trainin says. “To me, bikur cholim is one of the most important mitzvot.”

In 1999 he left his full time work at the coordinating council, agreeing to remain as consultant for five years. He calls that his “second retirement.” Rabbi Trainin turned the organization over to the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services to ensure its continuity. “No one lives forever,” he says.

Rabbi Trainin still goes to his office several times a week. “I walk to work every day—four miles a day.” At work on his seventh volume of memoirs, he maintains a regular schedule of Jewish learning and is an avid film watcher. The rabbi estimates that he and his wife, Frances, “own about 6,000 movies.”

Last week’s conference at UJA-Federation had a special significance for Rabbi Trainin. “I think I was born before 80 percent of the people in UJA-Federation were born,” he says.

Rabbi Trainin is looking forward to another anniversary. In March he and Frances will, “God willing,” celebrate their 60th anniversary.

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JBFCS Connections (Newsletter)

By Fran Levine

Published June, 1999

“My whole life has been *bashert* (fated),” recounts Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin, as he celebrates his 80th birthday and looks back on his half-century of leadership within the Jewish community.

This summer, *bashert* ushers Rabbi Trainin to JBFCS as a consultant to one of the groundbreaking programs he founded during an extraordinary career. The Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim of Greater New York, created in 1986 to educate and train volunteers to visit the sick and homebound, will become part of the agency’s Jewish Connections Division in August.

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UJA-Federation

At 85, UJA-Federation's 'House Rabbi' Continues to Promote Mitzvot

June 3, 2004 -- Although it was more than 70 years ago, Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin still recalls his father's prophetic words on the day he became a bar mitzvah.

The esteemed Rabbi Baruch Shalom Trainin gave his son a blessing and said, "I know that materially you'll never be a rich man, but you're going to spend your life helping people." After more than half a century of service to the New York Jewish community, the son has proven that fathers know best.

A lifetime consultant to UJA-Federation of New York, Rabbi Trainin's career is so long that it has spanned the resettlement of European Jewry twice -- first after the Holocaust, when he helped retrain and place religious functionaries throughout North America, and then again when Jews began emigrating from the Soviet Union.

On June 8, dozens of people from the New York Jewish community will gather to honor the semiretired, but perpetually active rabbi, and celebrate his 85th birthday. The event is cosponsored by UJA-Federation, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (JBFCS), and the Coordinating Council on Bikur Cholim, an organization Rabbi Trainin founded to recognize the vital importance of carrying out the mitzvah of visiting the sick and homebound. The Bikur Cholim Council is now a program of JBFCS, which has just announced the establishment of the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Fund.

Bridging the Secular-Religious Divide

A consummate kibitzer, who can be both outspoken and endearing, it was Rabbi Trainin's ability to forge ties with disparate individuals and religious leaders from across the denominational spectrum that first brought him to the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, UJA-Federation's predecessor.

The organization was looking for a "house rabbi" and had already interviewed a number of individuals when Rabbi Trainin heard about the opportunity. "I was able to get letters of recommendation from the presidents of Yeshiva University (Orthodox), the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative), and Hebrew Union College (Reform). And that did it. I got the job."

Raised in a religious environment, but trained as a lawyer and comfortable in a secular setting, Rabbi Trainin used his ability to operate in both worlds to serve as bridge between the two communities.

He would go on to build relationships between the Federation and such religious luminaries as the late Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Schneerson, who endorsed the Federation campaign twice, and the famed Talmudist Rabbi Joseph D. Soloveitchik. When presented with the first-ever compendium on Jewish medical ethics, which was published by the Federation, Rabbi Trainin said that Soloveitchik marveled, "Twenty years ago I asked the Rabbinical Council of America to consider such a thing, and who did it, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies."

"The words still ring in my ears," beams Rabbi Trainin.

But despite the many high points, it was rough going at the beginning.

"Early on, I got a call from the great Rabbi Moshe Feinstein," Rabbi Trainin recalls. "He said, you're never going to last with a secular leadership. Well, he was wrong."

Meanwhile, he remembers a Federation leader complaining that he wore a kippa.

Despite the nay-sayers, Rabbi Trainin quickly proved his worth by solving a crisis that had erupted between the religious community and Long Island Jewish Hospital, which had failed to provide kashruth supervision for its kitchen. A typical Rabbi Trainin compromise was reached through a

combination of persuasive talents and community connections; the person Rabbi Trainin recommended for the job was well known to the hospital's president. A string of other accomplishments, including getting offices closed on Jewish festivals, followed and won Rabbi Trainin a group of powerful allies.

Religious Affairs and More

Over the next five decades, Rabbi Trainin was involved in a slew of pioneering programs. He organized the Women's Task Force on the Role of Jewish Women in a Changing Society, established Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others (JACS), and was instrumental in the founding of both the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York. But, above all, Rabbi Trainin seems to have derived a special satisfaction from spreading *mitzvot* and the values embodied by Judaism.

He continues to advocate for Bikur Cholim, which he says touches the lives of the patients and makes the visitors feel they are doing something worthwhile. Moreover, he believes that it emphasizes a frequently overlooked aspect of Judaism.

Rabbi Trainin fondly recalls a conversation with a woman who did not belong to a synagogue. She had become involved with Bikur Cholim and told him that the experience gave her a newfound appreciation for Judaism. She now realized that it was a beautiful tradition. Encouraged by the comment, but always striving for more, Rabbi Trainin said he quickly responded, "Ma'am, it's not a tradition. It's a law. It's an obligation."

Rabbi Trainin was proud of his children's love of learning and Jewish education. These are excerpts from a d'var Torah presented by his son, Dr. Eugene Trainin:

Hashem imposed on man a world in which many different and antagonistic ideas and values compete. Although this has often resulted in a world history full of horrible crimes and tragedies, the struggle in all generations against evil is what gives value to history, even though this struggle often necessitates great sacrifice. It was no accident that Avraham could begin the story of monotheism only later in time because he never could have functioned in the world the tower-builders envisioned (a cult of idolatry via coercion and totalitarian conformity). In other words, only via diversity and freedom of thought is it possible for man to discover truth and to attain spiritual unity. Or, as Rabbi David Zvi Hoffmann states: "As long as mankind distances itself from Hashem, its division into different nations is better... only when all the nations unite to serve Hashem will their unity be a blessing and endure."

In conclusion, two simple stories in the Parsha (of Noah and the Tower of Babel) are actually complex and profound, but ultimately, are meant to teach how Hashem wants us to treat each other and the consequences of not doing so. Or, to return to the flood motif, when true love burns in the heart, then: "Many waters cannot extinguish love nor the rivers wash it away" (Song of Songs 8:7).

*This book is presented in love and appreciation.
May our father's example inspire all of us.*