

The View from the Other Side of the Hospital Bed



Three weeks ago, as I write this message, I got a look at life from the other side of the hospital bed. I had surgery for diverticulitis and spent a few days as an inpatient at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Now, as a rabbi, I make many visits to hospitals, sit with patients at their bedside, and offer prayers for healing. I am not used to being on the other side, the recovering person, the one being visited, the one in need of prayers for healing! This was a humbling experience! Now what I had was not a life-threatening illness. Many of you, I have

since found out, suffer from a similar condition, and probably never will need surgery. But after months of trying to manage the attacks, all of the physicians I saw affirmed that it was the best course for me, despite my trying to convince them to being under anesthesia, powerless and out of control. My imagination went wild.

When I woke up after the surgery, I was positively giddy. Cindy says it was the drugs. I know it was relief. Thank God, the procedure was successful, and I am on a steady road to recovery. Modern medicine is amazing. Minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery is remarkable. I was surprised at how little post-op pain I have had, and how speedy my recovery has been. We are so fortunate to live in times when we benefit from amazing advances in medicine that ease our suffering and enhance our lives.

I have many wonderful friends in the congregation who are physicians, whom I love, admire, and respect. They are affiliated with great hospital centers in the area. It was not easy to decide where to have the surgery. In the end, I had to choose one, and I decided to go where my key physicians are affiliated. I am sure I would have had a wonderful outcome at any of the other medical centers.

I am particularly grateful to **Dr. Howard Weitz**, a devoted AJ member, and a dear personal friend, who went above and beyond in watching over my case and quarterbacking all of my medical needs. Howard is a brilliant doctor, but even more, a fine *mensch*, a man of extraordinary character. I am ever grateful for his attentiveness and his friendship.

In my absence, **Hazzan Howard K. Glantz** and our executive director **Gavi Miller** led the synagogue with consummate skill and dedication. I am grateful to each of them, and, indeed, for all of the members of the synagogue staff who work with such dedication. I also want to thank **Rabbi Sandra Berliner** who stood in for me on one of the *Shabbatot* I was out. I admire Rabbi Berliner as a dedicated congregant and wonderful preacher and teacher.

On the other *Shabbat* when I was recovering, members of the AJWA Sisterhood led services for Sisterhood *Shabbat*. I had hoped to be there for at least part of the service, but it was just too soon. I have heard uniform praise for their participation and for their dedicated involvement.

I did not go out of my way to publicize my illness, but many of you did hear about it through the grapevine. I am so appreciative of your calls, letters, emails and contributions; your visits and gifts of books, food and flowers. They all lifted my spirits and hastened my recovery.

I was touched when **Rabbi Fredi Cooper**, my dear friend and colleague, sat at my bedside, and offered a prayer for my recovery, as I have done for so many in the congregation. And I am especially grateful to my wife **Cindy** who humored and protected me, catered to me and encouraged me, but didn't let me get too maudlin or out of control. Her love is my bulwark of strength and I thank God for it every day. Our children, Cindy's mom and aunt, our brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews were continuing sources of love and encouragement to both of us.

As I look back on my experience from the other side of the hospital bed, I can only hope that my visits and prayers to those who are ill bring as much support and love as I have found in all of you and your attentiveness to me. May we go forward to health and strength.

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