

Rabbi's Message

Dear Friends,

In last month's edition of our Newsletter, I shared with you the list of organizations to which I made donations through the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund that you all created and support for my use. This month, I'd like to give you another opportunity to give. And, I should add, this time it's a request that is decidedly for my own self-interest... sort of...

Perhaps you've heard the phrase Shaliach Tzibbur, which is Hebrew for "Messenger of the community" (a Jewish way of referring to the prayer leader of a religious service). The point, of, course, is that when one leads prayers, one is assuming the role of helping the community deliver its prayers to God. A less common phrase, though no less important, is the term, Shaliach Mitzvah ("Messenger of the Mitzvah"). More on that in a moment.

Some of you may know that I will be heading to Israel for the annual meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis from Sunday, February 19 – Monday, February 27. While I'm always excited to spend time recharging with my rabbinic colleagues, and while I'm also always excited to spend time in Israel (the last time I was there was during the summer of 2018, when I had the honor of accompanying the first-ever JCNWJ pilgrimage trip, so I'm more than ready to get back), I'm especially excited this time because it will be my first time visiting my son, Ari, in the country where he has now become a full citizen! With my upcoming trip to Israel in mind, I'm pleased to offer you all the opportunity to do me a favor...

If you've ever gone to Israel before, maybe before departing, a friend or relative slipped a buck or two into your hands and asked you to find a deserving person or place where you could donate the money upon arrival. You might have thought that carrying the money, finding the worthy cause, and making the donation would be a favor for the one who asked you to do it, but according to tradition, you would have had it backwards had you thought that. According to tradition, it's not you that would be doing the favor, but the donor who would be doing the favor, Why? Because of Shaliach Mitzvah. Tradition teaches that when we are in the process of fulfilling a mitzvah, we are protected from all harm. In other words, by giving us the opportunity to do a mitzvah on their behalf, the donor is ensuring that we travel safely.

So, with my own best interest in mind, I am letting you know that I will be traveling to Israel, and that I will be accepting dollar bills from anyone who would like me to make donations on your behalf while there. If I don't get the opportunity to see you in person before I leave, please feel free to email me and ask me to loan you the dollars that I'll be donating on your behalf.

I look forward to sharing with you upon my return all that I will have learned with and from my rabbinic colleagues in Israel. I look forward, as well, to reporting back to you where your mitzvah dollars wound up. And I promise to bring back pictures of me and Ari, too.

L'Shalom,

Rabbi Dubin