

A FOCUS ON HEALING

## Coping with adversity



By **JOEL A. ROFFMAN, M.D.,**  
AND **RABBI GORDON A. FULLER**

### Ten Commandments for Coping with Adversity

The following is an excerpt from the book *Coping with Adversity: Judaism's Response to Illness and Other Life Struggles* by Joel A. Roffman, M.D., and Rabbi Gordon A. Fuller and is published by Brown Book Publishing Group.

On July 9, 2007, a feature on CNN reported on a study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It showed that, as a class, antidepressants were the most commonly prescribed medications in America. While many of the patients taking these medications surely have clinical depression as defined in medical texts, the drugs have also been prescribed for simple situational sadness and anxiety. In the year analyzed by the CDC, 118 million prescriptions for antidepressants were filled. While there is much depression in our country, there is also much tension and unhappiness.

Changes in work environment, stressful family issues, and health concerns affect all of us at one time or another. ...Life has a way of confusing us, blessing us, and bruising us, sometimes all at the same time. How we cope with adversity, with the stones and arrows that life hurls our way, will ultimately help determine how happy and fulfilled we are. The data on antidepressant use in our country suggests that as a population we can do better.

We are blessed when we can observe and appreciate people who show grace and strength under duress. Forty-eight-year-old Sonia was in my office recently for an assessment of her heart function before beginning chemotherapy for breast cancer. While she was certainly sad about her plight, she was the embodiment of what we have discussed in this book. She had much to get well for, with a loving family and close friends, and she realized that the anticipated side effects from chemotherapy were simply what she had to go through

in order to get well. She was as cheerful and optimistic as one could expect, and she was concerned about the well-being of her family as she endured what was certain to be a rough time ahead.

In another case, I could feel only sympathy for Wanda, 74, who had been estranged from her widowed sister for many years. Her sister had become mortally ill with cancer, and in a magnanimous gesture, Wanda took her sister into her home for her sister's final days. Wanda came to me for an office visit some months after her sister died, and I couldn't resist asking her, "You had much time to spend with your sister during her final illness. What did you talk about?" "Missed opportunities," she said, choking back tears.

Are we also missing opportunities? Sometimes the greatest tragedies in our lives are not in the losses we suffer but in the potential blessings and joys we fail to realize. Wanda is like the rest of us. She is capable of acts of loving kindness, while at the same time, imperfect in her dealings with others. In fact, this is exactly how we find our biblical figures, from Abraham and Jacob to David and Solomon. The stories related to these figures show them to be very much like – capable of kind and heroic acts, while fully capable of sinful behavior.

Maybe that is the reason why the lessons of the Bible are so compelling. We can relate to biblical figures in a very personal way. Like us, they are flawed. Many of the biblical lessons discussed in this book related to interpersonal actions. God, it seems, wants us to know that, while ritual is important, it serves mainly God. It is even more important to behave well to one another. On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, observant Jews fast, refraining from eating and drinking from sundown to sundown. Indeed, we refrain not only from eating but also from any acts that would provide bodily comfort and pleasure, as we concentrate on how to serve God and each other better in the coming year. On this day, we read a portion of the Bible from Isaiah, Ch. 56 and 57:

*To be sure, they seek Me daily,  
They are eager for the nearness of God.  
Because on your fast day,  
You see to your business and oppress  
all your laborers;  
Because you fast in strife and contention,  
Your fasting today is not such  
As to make your voice heard on high.*

*No, this is the fast I desire:  
To let the oppressed go free,  
It is to share your bread with the hungry,  
When you see the naked to clothe him,  
And not to ignore your own kin.*

The emphasis on behavior toward others and on safeguarding one's health demonstrates that Judaism is a culture that emphasizes life. Preserving life, making the best of bad times while relishing and giving thanks for good times, and caring for ourselves and others are what matter most. We have seen examples throughout the book of the importance Judaism places on health, relationships, and good deeds. If we internalize these lessons, the number of prescriptions for antidepressants will surely be reduced.

Inspired by the teachings of Judaism, we conclude with "Ten Commandments for Coping with Adversity."

**1. Be grateful for all your blessings.** Cherish and enjoy them. To the extent possible, do not let illnesses or the occurrence of the inevitable and unfavorable circumstances of life interfere with joyful moments. Try to live each day as though you had no illness. Do your best to "compartmentalize" any adversities or illnesses you have, not letting them define you. Enjoy all there is to enjoy while recognizing the limited role that the acquisition of consumer goods plays in your lasting satisfaction with life. Take advantage of the health benefits of optimism.

**2. Make your life relevant.** From a simple smile and kind word to the endowment of a charitable fund, all of what we do and say in our daily activities and contact with others has an effect. Make a difference. Look upon every interaction and task as an opportunity to leave a positive imprint on the world. It is never too late in your life to affect favorably your surroundings and heal a world that badly needs repair. Whether large or small, make a positive difference in the world.

**3. Greet people with a cheerful demeanor.** To a large degree, you can make each day "good" or "bad." Make each day as good as it can possibly be. Sprinkle smiles liberally. Cheerfulness will be returned to you by others and will help make every day as pleasant as it can be. When facing life's hardships, you will enjoy your days more if your interpersonal interactions are pleasant.

**4. Recognize that life is a precious gift.** Take proper care of your body, which is a gift from God. Be selfish about your physical well-being, your interests, and your safety – make decisions that will most likely help you attain and preserve optimal health. Do not let others adversely affect your decisions in this regard.

**5. Set aside time to appreciate family and friends.** Create and safeguard periods of time in which you can enjoy and celebrate your



blessings. Set aside time also for rest and reflection. Do not skimp on the amount of time and attention devoted to these purposes, but rather regard these occasions as "holy."

**6. Don't rely on miracles for good things to happen.** Focus on the positives in your life and on what is possible. When you are ill, aggressively fight the illness as though it was your most important task. Face other hardships proactively by utilizing all the resources at your disposal. Make God's work your own, beginning with your own health.

**7. Fulfill your family obligations but don't take on more than your share.** Teach your children to be independent and caring people who contribute to the betterment of the world. Respect, honor, and dignify your parents. Loving behavior toward your whole family will provide a good example to your children. Act in ways to ensure that you will have no regrets, but remember that you can do only so much. Don't be overburdened by your own limitations in these matters – you can control only so much.

**8. Seek forgiveness, make amends, and repent.** Before you act or speak, replay in your mind what you are about to say and do. Pretend you have been given a chance to do or say it again. If you act sinfully in words or in deeds, repent fully and honestly. Interpersonal strife can affect your sense of well-being and even your health. Reconcile differences with those who mean much to you. If your life would be enriched by having a better relationship with a particular person, try to improve that relationship.

**9. Do not excessively grieve the death of a loved one; do not excessively lament your own illness.** Certainly, grieve appropriately and fully for those who have died, but

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# Jewish Chaplain

## Beauty beneath the surface



By LEON H. OLENICK

While being the on-call chaplain, I am so thankful for an undisturbed night of sleep. My alarm clock becomes my best friend because it wakes me in the morning rather than the beeper. Usually, a call comes from an extreme emergency like a death or an accident. When I lie down to sleep at night, I pray for all to be protected.

It was about 3 a.m., and I heard the dreaded beeper. I stumbled to the phone to triage the call and was told to come to the hospital immediately. A woman was crying incessantly and could not be calmed by the staff. I took a shower to refresh myself, and wondered why I got called in the middle of the night for a woman crying? Why couldn't the staff control the situation?

I arrived at the hospital and went immediately to the assigned floor. I was told the woman was in a private room. Prior to entering the room, I took time to review the chart. Wendy was a 29-year-old woman who had a radical mastectomy on her left breast earlier in the day. I entered the room, and saw Wendy, a beautiful woman, sitting on the side of the bed. Her red eyes and cheeks told her story. Her long brown hair was disheveled, flattened from the combination of lying on her pillow, and the wetness of her tears. The blue hospital gown she wore was spotted and wrinkled. A picture of two small children held in the arms of a man stood on the table. I assumed this was her family.

I introduced myself. She looked at me through her tears and thanked me for coming. I took her hand and held it as I asked her to tell me why she was upset. I knew about the mastectomy, however I wanted to hear her speak.

She said, "I found a small lump on my breast, so I went to the doctor. He sent me for a mammogram and an ultra sound. He said that the lump would have to be removed, and that it was a simple procedure: They would put me to sleep, remove the lump, and send me home when I woke up. They said if the lump contains cancer cells, I might have to have some radiation therapy when I healed. I woke up in the recovery

room and the doctor was standing over me. He said the cancer in my breast was worse than anticipated – it was a very aggressive cancer. In order for it not to spread, he had to remove my breast. He told me that although I would receive either radiation or chemotherapy, he would be able to remove the entire tumor and my outlook was favorable for a full recovery. He told me I was very lucky." She looked at me through her tears and asked, "Do you think I was lucky?"

I did not answer, giving her the space to proceed. She spoke about the operation and the shock of waking to this news. She spoke in a very panicky tone, without a pause, for about 15 minutes. I listened. When she was exhausted she looked my way. I asked her to tell me what else was bothering her. She broke down and sunk into my arms. As I held her she said, "I am a young woman, and my husband – that's him in the picture with my children – is a handsome man. We take pride in our appearance. We work out, watch our diet, and are known to our friends as, 'the striking couple.' Do you really think he will want to be with me? Do you think he will want to make love to me, a freak with one breast? How can I still be desirable as a woman?"

She sobbed. I asked her if she had spoken to her husband after the surgery. She said he was there, and that he hugged and kissed her and told her that he loves her.

"He hasn't seen my chest!" She declared in a loud screaming voice. "I have one breast and a bandage for the other."

At this point I could have spoken to her about her inner beauty, the beauty of her children and how the inner is stronger than the outer. I could have spoken to her about reconstructive surgery. I did not. I stayed with her holding her until she cried herself to sleep and then I left the room. Sometimes our words mean nothing, and we must permit people to grieve without interference. I think of the Jewish protocol when entering a house of mourning. We do not approach the mourners, or even address them. We wait, offer presence, and positive energy – love – until we are addressed. This situation was no different. She was mourning a loss, and I was her visitor.

It was morning and the sun was rising. I decided to stay at the hospital. I took a catnap on the sofa in the on-call room and waited to meet Wendy's husband when he came to visit. I was awakened by the floor nurse calling me, per my request, telling me that her husband had arrived.

I arrived at the room, stood by the door and watched the embrace between Wendy and her husband. The drabness of the room I saw a few hours ago had disappeared and the

room was now filled with flowers. I entered the room and introduced myself to Ed. Wendy remembered me and thanked me for staying with her last night. I sat down with them, and asked if I could share a story from my rabbi and teacher, Reb Shlomo Carlebach.

The story is about how we see each other. When we look at each other with good eyes, we see into the soul of the person we are with. What are good eyes? They are the eyes that do not judge who we are or what we may look like on the surface. They are the eyes of that which is in the deepest part of our soul – where all of the beauty in the Universe comes from. When we see each other with good eyes we see from our heart, and we have the ability to heal ourselves, others, and the Universe.

"So, dearest Wendy and Ed, I bless you to be able to always look at each other with good eyes, and witness your Universe as individuals and together. I bless you to see your beautiful children under the wedding canopy, and I bless you with peace."

I knew I could not really know how their relationship would mature. I did not know how Ed's reaction to Wendy's appearance would affect their love life and his desire for her as a woman. The only reflection I was sure of was that if they see each other with "good eyes," they would be able to have open hearts to each other. If they are able to maintain this space, they will have the inner strength to travel the road of life, and explore all of its ups and downs. They would not only find the heart of their own souls, and that of the other, they would be able to find the heart and soul of our Universe. The path was opened for them to be a blessing. This I knew, as I blessed them.

Wendy had suffered a terrible loss and she was grieving. We lose jobs, income, health, and ability to discern. We lose people to death whom we love. We lose love. We grieve all losses in different ways because they all touch a different part of whom we are and who we wish to become.

Wendy needed the space to grieve and accept her loss in her own way. If not given this space I believe her grief would dominate her life and blind her soul.

"For every thing there is a season... A time to speak and a time to refrain from speaking."

Leon H. Olenick is a rabbi and board certified chaplain. He offers spiritual and pastoral care to his patients, families and caregivers spanning a multicultural and religious sphere. He currently is employed by VITAS Innovative Hospice in South Florida. He is married to Jackie Olenick, a Judaic artist. He has three children and nine grandchildren. The stories are taken from a book of short stories that is in progress, Encounters with the

## Think happy – Feel better!

By JON LUMSDEN

When faced with challenging times such as in today's troubled global economy, it's easy to have your attention focused on the negative news that points to an uncertain future. But dwelling on these potential threats can take their toll on your well being. What can you do to keep your quality of life high, in spite of the unpredictable world around you?

When things seem to move out of your ability to control them, it's important to find areas of your life you can control and can move in a positive direction. Worrying over things out of your control can only make things worse, while finding little things you can do to improve your personal life can lift your spirits and give your life a higher sense of purpose. So ask yourself: What can I do to make my life better right now?

Even simple things like taking a walk and observing some beautiful things in your environment can increase your level of appreciation and happiness.

Sometimes the best thing about challenging times is that it can help bring into focus what is truly important in your life. This can be an ideal time for you to take stock of your life and your goals and move your attention to those elements of your life that can bring you the greatest satisfaction.

Conditions in life will always be in a state of change, and how you handle these changes sets the stage for your future. There will always be things you can't control, but the most important things – like your outlook about life and the way you choose to spend your days – are areas you can choose.

So, take good care of yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually in the coming months and enjoy your life!

Lumsden publishes health newsletters through his company, *Massage Marketing*. He has just released a CD of original music, available at [www.jonlumsden.com](http://www.jonlumsden.com). © 2008 *Massage Marketing*. Used with permission; all rights reserved. ■



Last Dance. His intention in sharing his real-life stories is to help people who are facing difficult health, caregiving and end of life issues. The stories are true, only the names have been changed. ■

# Prayers and Affirmations for Healing



By **REB ZALMAN SCHACHTER-SHALOMI**

Reb Zalman suggests that people recite the Asher Yatzar E-lohay n'shamah in the following translations by him. While doing, this visualize and scan your body from the inside and invite Hashem to come and heal you.

## אֲשֶׁר יָצַר

(Asher Yatzar)  
(The One who creates)

I worship You,  
Yah, our God,  
Cosmic Majesty.  
You formed me,  
A human being,  
So wisely.  
You created in me  
All kinds of  
Hollows and ducts,  
Inner organs and intestines.

As I am all transparent to You,  
It is apparent and clear,  
That if any of these  
That need to be open would clog,  
Or any of these  
Which need to be enclosed  
Would seep,  
I could not exist and live  
In Your sight,  
Not even for a moment.

So I am grateful  
And bless You,  
For healing me,  
In amazing ways.

### A biography of Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Meshullam Zalman HaKohen Schachter was born on Aug. 17, 1924 in Zholkiew, Poland, to Shlomo and Hayyah Gittel Schachter. In 1925, his family moved to Vienna, Austria, where he spent most of his childhood. His father, a Belzer hasid with liberal tendencies, had him educated in both a "leftist" Zionist high school, where he learned Latin and modern Hebrew, and a traditional Orthodox yeshiva, where he studied Torah and Talmud.

In 1938, when he was just 13, his family began the long flight from Nazi oppression through Belgium, France, North Africa, and the Caribbean, until they finally landed in New York City in 1941.

## נְשָׁמָה שְׁנָתָת בִּי

(N'shemah Sh'natata Bee)  
(The soul that You have given me)

My God,  
The breath You have given me  
Is fresh.  
You create it.  
You form it.  
You breathe it into me.

And you keep me breathing.

At some time,  
You will take it away from me,  
And I will have breathed  
my last breath in this body.

And You will resuscitate me,  
To the life of the spirit.

For each breath still in me,  
I thank You,  
My own God,  
Who is also my parents' God,  
Lord of all spirits,  
Master of all that happens.

I offer You thanks,  
Cosmic Majesty,  
And worship You,  
For keeping me breathing.

And in this way,  
With each breath,  
You give me Life anew.

While still in Belgium, Schachter became acquainted with and began to frequent a circle of HaBaD Hasidim who cut and polished diamonds in Antwerp. This association eventually led to his becoming a HaBaD hasid of the Lubavitch branch, in whose yeshiva he enrolled after his family arrived in New York. He received his rabbinic ordination from the Central Lubavitch Yeshiva in 1947.

Within a few years of his ordination, he began to travel to college campuses with his friend Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, at the direction of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and took up a post as a congregational rabbi in Fall River, Mass. Later, he would also serve as a congregational rabbi in New Bedford, Mass.

By 1956 he had acquired a master of arts in the psychology of religion (pastoral counseling) from Boston University and taken up a teaching post in the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, which he held until 1975. Soon after, he was instrumental in the founding of the Department and Clinic of Pastoral Psychology at United College (later University of Winnipeg).

In 1968, Schachter had earned his doctorate in Hebrew Letters from Hebrew Union College and was effectively "divorced" from the Lubavitcher Hasidim over issues

## Reb Zalman's Healing Prayer for Surgery\*

Please dear God, heal (name of person); may he/she have the energy, strength, fortitude, faith and good humor to receive the medical ministrations in the most healing way. And may our prayers open the gates allowing the divine light to shine more brightly upon him/her as he/she undergoes surgery and the great challenge he/she is confronting.

May Your design give all of us the gift of this great, wise and loving person for a long time to come.

May his/her family receive our prayers and strength and good humor to stay well and healthy and strong for themselves and for this sick person.

May our friend's whole family and community's be blessed with a sense of peace and confidence and surrender, so that their/our energies can focus on the support that our friend will need in the months ahead.

May his/her trial be a blessing for us all to sanctify and revere life, in all forms, and open our hearts and our consciousness a bit more as we proceed on our Holy journeys through life.

\*Repeat several times:  
*Ana E-l Na R'fa' Na Lah.*

relating to his controversial engagement with modern culture and other religions, but he continued on as an "independent" hasid, teaching the experiential dimensions of Hasidism as one of the world's great spiritual traditions. That year, he was also influential among the group that formed Havurat Shalom in Somerville, Mass.

The following year, inspired by Havurat Shalom, Christian Trappist spirituality and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Schachter founded the B'nai Or Religious Fellowship (now ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal) with a small circle of students.

He ordained his first rabbi, Rabbi Daniel Siegel of Boston (one of the current leaders of ALEPH), and helped to found the Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley, Calif., in 1974.

A few years earlier, he had begun to study Sufism and meet with Sufis in California. This eventually led to his being initiated as a Sheikh in the Sufi Order of Hazrat Inayat Khan in 1975. That year he also became professor of Jewish mysticism and psychology of religion at Temple University where he stayed until his early retirement in 1987, when he was named professor emeritus.

## Affirmations

1. I take an active participation in my own healing.
2. I make a space for divine spirit to enter into my life.
3. I invite the energies of radiant light and bodily vigor to enter into my body, to cleanse and purify, to make me whole.
4. I listen to my body and I ask, "What are you teaching me?"
5. I change to a rhythm more conducive to joy.
6. I take in air and food, which is wholesome for my body, emotions, and mind.
7. I avoid and eliminate, get rid of and vent the unwholesome.
8. With every sigh, I drop some of the load and weight I bear in me.
9. With every breath, I move to become a vessel for God's love and blessing.
10. With every breath, I heal and give thanks.

In 1980, he and two others, ordained one of the early influential women rabbis, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb (now based in New Mexico).

The year 1985 saw the birth of a new period in his life. That year Schachter (now Schachter-Shalomi) took a 40-day retreat at Lama Foundation in New Mexico and emerged with a new teaching that became the foundation of his book, *From Age-ing to Sage-ing*, and the catalyst for the Spiritual Eldering movement.

In 1995 he accepted the World Wisdom Chair at the Naropa Institute (now Naropa University) and found a home from which he could teach contemplative Judaism and ecumenical spirituality in an accredited academic setting.

In 2004 Schachter retired from Naropa University. That year, he also co-founded The Desert Fellowship of the Message, Sufi-Hasidic, Inayati-Maimuniyya Order with Netanel Miles-Yepetz, thus combining the Jewish Hasidic tradition with Islamic Sufi tradition into which he had been initiated in 1975.

Today, he is retired and living happily in Boulder, Colo., with his wife Eve, and his two cats, Mazel and Brakhah.

From *The Reb Zalman Legacy Project website: www.rzlp.org.*

Reb Zalman also has translated much of the T'hilim (Psalms) into the vernacular as well as a weekday Siddur (prayerbook). Both of these are available at [www.aleph.org](http://www.aleph.org). ■

# The Jewish response to illness



By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

I remember it as if it were yesterday. My beautiful 16-year-old daughter Lauren, dancing just the night before, lay motionless in a hospital bed in pain. A poet at heart, she had been on the roof at sunset watching the colors change from pink to deep orange, when she lost her footing and fell, shattering her third and fourth vertebrae.

Her father and I privately nursed our worst fears about what lay ahead: from permanent paralysis to a lifetime of chronic pain. My daughter was more upset about the immediate future. Would she have to miss her prom? Could she still perform in the school musical that was opening in two weeks? Would she be able to go back to school to finish her sophomore year?

My response and ability to cope was nourished by many sources. It began with the way my husband reacted to our daughter in the emergency room, as she lay perfectly still in pain, afraid that any movement might injure her spinal cord causing paralysis. His tenderness and ability to let his love for her shine through his own fears helped me focus on what was most important in the days ahead. As we grappled with decisions about pre- and postsurgical matters, pain control, medications, and the deep sadness of watching our

daughter experience so much pain, fear and disappointment, we stood together thinking of only one thing – how best to love her so that she would get well.

Family and friends huddled around us like a tightly knit team, offering words of comfort, friendship, encouragement and even humor. But it wasn't just the words or the flowers, books, and food that they brought into our hospital room that lifted our spirits, it was the gift of being supported and strengthened by our community. That we did not have to go through this difficult time alone made all the difference in the world; it literally gave us the energy we needed to keep going even after many nights without sleep.

The Jewish tradition has always paid heed to the deepest of human needs and feelings. One way Judaism responds to important emotions and landmark life events is through the use of rituals, blessings and prayers. Whether in response to the joys of birth, the covenant of marriage or the deep sense of loss caused by sickness and death, Jewish rituals create a pathway to more fully understand, appreciate and grow from our life experiences, especially when we are struggling to make sense of them.

Throughout the time we were in the hospital and after we came home, I saw first hand the almost magical powers that the Jewish commandment of *Bikkur Holim*, (visiting the sick) can have on a person. My daughter's mood and determination to get well were strengthened daily by the presence of friends and family around her. Visitors helped all of us fight the feelings of isolation and loneliness that accompany most illnesses; their presence was as a constant reminder that we were not alone in our crisis. Visitors also brought us love and the continuing hope that all would soon be well again.

One evening we had a nurse who insisted on telling us about her own surgery, complete with a viewing of the scars. I know she meant well and was only trying to bond with my daughter, but it didn't make any of us feel better. In its attempt to be sensitive to how a sick person feels, Jewish law has an extensive list of suggestions to guide people who make sick calls, most of which are concerned with being sensitive to the person who is ill. Simply stated, we are expected to be cheerful, positive and compassionate when visiting someone who is sick.

Along with the visitors came many cards, phone calls, and prayers for a *refuah shlemah*, a complete and speedy recovery. Jewish law demands that whenever we hear that someone is sick, we should offer a prayer on his or her behalf. The shortest prayer in the Torah for healing is the one

## A Prayer for Healing

By Rabbi Jim Michaels

In my illness, Lord, I turn to You, for I am your creation.

Your strength and courage are in my spirit,

And Your powers of healing are within my body.

May it be Your will to restore me to health.

In my illness I have learned what is great and what is small.

I know how dependent I am upon You.

My own pain and anxiety have been my teachers.

May I never forget this precious knowledge when I am well again.

Heal me, Lord and I shall be healed, save me and I shall be saved.

Comfort me, Lord, and shelter me in Your love.

Blessed are You, Lord, the faithful and merciful Healer. Amen.

Rabbi James Michaels, D.Min., is the director of pastoral care at the Charles E. Smith Life Communities in Rockville, MD.

Moses said when his sister Miriam was sick: "O Lord, please heal her" (Numbers 12:13). A simple but genuine request to be sure, which makes it clear that our own heartfelt prayers are an important part of responding when someone is ill.

The more formal Hebrew prayer for healing is called the *Mi Shebeirach*, which is recited during the Torah service. Rabbis from every congregation called or visited us at the hospital and put Lauren's name on their congregation's *Mi Shebeirach* list so that her name would be read along with others in the prayer to heal those who were ill. I have always believed in the power of communal prayer, that when people come together to pray for peace or good health, energy is created that moves the world in a more positive direction. But I never truly understood the strength and comfort that I would feel from knowing that for one collective moment, a community was praying for the recovery of my own daughter.

I wouldn't wish what happened to my daughter on anyone and I don't believe that it is necessary for us to suffer in order to grow. What I do believe is that given the inevitable challenges of living, raising a family and growing older, it is both comforting and empowering to know how important Jewish tradi-

## ROFFMAN & FULLER

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remember that ultimately, the best answer to death is life. The deceased are most meaningfully memorialized by performing good deeds in their honor and by acting in such a way that would make them proud and happy. We are in control of how we ultimately respond to all sorts of adversity – from the loss of a loved one to a setback in our own health.

**10. Keep in mind how you want to be remembered.** The memory of the righteous is a blessing. Be a blessing. Live ethically. Enjoy the things you do. Spread love and good cheer. No matter what your age and health status, prepare for your eventual death by writing an ethical will, considering organ donation, showing grace and courage in the face of illness and adversity, and most of all by expressing appreciation and love to those important to you.

Through countless lessons and embodied by numerous biblical figures, Judaism teaches us that whatever adversity we might encounter, the writing of our life's narrative is largely up to us.

### Joel Roffman, M.D.

Dr. Joel Roffman is a cardiologist practicing in Richardson, Texas. He graduated from Boston University School of Medicine and after completing his post-graduate studies in Hartford, Conn., he moved to Dallas, Texas, where he and his wife raised their family. He is a past president of the Southwest Region of the American Jewish Congress and the Richardson Chapter of the American Heart Association. He is currently a vice president of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society.

### Rabbi Gordon Fuller

Rabbi Gordon Fuller is the congregational rabbi for Agudath Jacob in Waco, Texas. He holds degrees in Human Development from Northwestern University and in Social Work from the University of Chicago. Rabbi Fuller was ordained as a rabbi in 2004 following 20 years in Jewish educational leadership positions. ■

tions and community can be for us if we let them into our lives.

Amy Hirshberg Lederman is an award-winning, nationally syndicated columnist, author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney. Her new book *One God, Many Paths: Finding Meaning and Inspiration in Jewish Teachings* is available at [www.OneGod-manyPaths.com](http://www.OneGod-manyPaths.com) or on her website at [www.amyhirshberglederman.com](http://www.amyhirshberglederman.com). ■

