

Rabbi's Column – December 23, 2019

The summary lesson from the next paragraph or so is that no individual or individual community can be all things for all people.

A guest came for Friday night services. He asked me if there was anybody who could serve as emergency transportation in the future for a certain individual. He indicated he was the caregiver/caretaker for this individual's son in California, and he had only come to Cheyenne because of a medical emergency. There wasn't anybody who came to mind as being available for a future, unspecified emergency - everyone I know of has commitments which limit their availability, and many are already helping the community at large in one way or another. Even his offer to pay the person for driving did not change what I knew about people's general availability. As we talked, I continued to elicit information, as I was trying to figure out which Jewish person in town he was talking about. Fairly early on in the conversation I mentioned that being part of the community would have helped. I was thinking of all the people of our community who have been helped by others within the community. He replied that all the bus drivers know her, so she is part of the community. As he continued to describe this Cheyenne resident, I thought I recognized the person. When he added her name to the Mi Shebeirach list, my impression was verified. She is not Jewish, although she has spent some time in various places where Jews are (like Marv's Pawnshop or the Synagogue during services).

Large communities often have Chesed committees, some of which are outreach based (helping those of the community at large, and not just the congregation or Jewish community). In those communities, either the Rabbi or the Chair of that committee would be the person to contact, as they would be able to make an appropriate connection. This might have been the model the guest had in mind when he was trying to find emergency help for Cynthia.

May we as a community and individuals continue to live by Hillel's statement: Nobody else will engage in more self-care for myself than I can; when I am only focused on myself I lose a bit of my humanity; there is no time like the present to work on being properly balanced between the two.