

Larry A Saltzman, MD  
Comments to Mosaic Law Congregation  
Saturday April 20, 2013

Thank you Rabbi for allowing me to say a few words. I stand before you today because I have cancer - Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia and Small Cell Lymphocytic Lymphoma to be exact. And it is because of this illness that I, along with my wife Sharon, Janie and Frank Gumpert were witnesses to this year's Boston Marathon and the heinous bombing that we are all so aware of. Janie also has cancer, Follicular Cell Lymphoma. And if not for the treatments that Mort Ehrlich is currently receiving for his non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma it is quite likely that he would have been there as well.

The common thread here is that there are so many in this Mosaic Law community who have or are currently dealing with blood borne diseases.

I like to run. I find it a healing therapy for my mind and body. And I admit when I should be in schul here on Shabbat I am often on the American River bike trail in that sanctuary reflecting and thanking G-d for my good fortunes.

Often on the American River I connect with my running buddy, guru, and marathon mentor Steve Polansky. It was Steve who was one of the first people I confided in during the winter of 2010 that I had cancer. And it was Steve who hatched the plan for me that since I am so much like the great Maxwell Smart, who always missed it by that much, and the fact that I could never quite qualify for the Boston Marathon, that I would enter that Super Bowl of events in 2012 to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society through its Team in Training Program.

And so this morning, although the events of this past Monday were horrific and traumatizing to all who were witnesses, I do not want to dwell on the negative of the day, I want to expound on the positive.

We have an unbelievable support structure here. Sharon and I are blessed to be a part of this wonderful community. When we went public

with my diagnosis a little over one year ago the response was overwhelming. When we asked for support for my first fund raising effort and participated in last year's Boston Marathon we raised over \$39,000. After last years run in the brutal 90 degree heat I felt that I needed one more try on perhaps a better weather day... Little did I know.

And so one year later, I made the decision to once again to prove to myself, and others, that living with cancer does not necessarily mean one has to give up the things that we love doing. I decided to do this even though my cancer was worsening. My white blood cell counts, which were 23,000 a year ago, are now 70,000 and rising.

Funny thing is this year I am feeling a little more optimistic. Maybe it is not yet settled in that I will need to be treated sooner than later, or maybe it is the great work that the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society is doing and our involvement in raising funds is showing me that amazing new therapies are being developed and there are now talk of cures.

For this year's Boston effort we have raised over \$58,000. That is the most money raised by one individual in the history of the Team in Training efforts in Boston. And I owe it to you in this sanctuary along with my many circles of family and friends.

I believe our true nature, which is being one of support, is displayed during a crisis. During the horrific events Sharon, Frank and Janie who were in the grandstands just opposite to the explosions were led to safety. Of course they have their own accounts of the event and time does not allow for all of us to speak to you this morning. It is ironic that they were in that secure area with VIP passes because of the amount of funds we raised for LLS. That area was secured for VIP's as opposed to the opposite side of the street where the cowards dropped their bombs with the sole intention to mame innocent bystanders most of whom at that time were there to cheer on the charity runners.

I was stopped ½ mile from the finish or exactly 25.8 miles in to the run on my GPS watch. And initially the reason was known only by rumor - an explosion at the finish line. In my daze of dehydration and muscle cramps all I could think of was my wife Sharon is supposed to be there

right now. There was no cell service. Every runner with a cell phone was trying to get through and when my own AT&T enabled phone could not connect to anything a kind runner lent me her Sprint enabled phone and I was able to message my daughter Jen in New York to let her know that I was okay and in turn she let me know that Sharon, Frank and Janie had checked in and they were okay. I broke down in tears. You never know how truly important someone is to you until you are on the verge of losing them.

And then after some time as we were chilling and frozen in motion, the citizens of Boston brought us water, garbage bags, and charged cell phones. Their kindness will never be forgotten.

I finally reunited with Sharon about 3 ½ hours after the tragedy. Our Marriott Hotel was on lockdown and as the evening wore on and I hadn't eaten all day we called for room service only to be told there was none that evening. The hotel we were told was going to open one of their restaurants for dinner. We found our way with other hotel guests to discover that the Marriott had set up a buffet and was providing food for all guests at their expense. Another act of kindness.

I did not intend to win the Boston marathon. I did intend to make a difference and although I did not receive a finisher's medal -- here in this sanctuary I know that we are all winners. Whether you are running, supporting, or fundraising, or if you know someone with a blood cancer, or like me carry one yourself, there is hope here. From the bottom of our hearts Sharon and I want to thank you for your support and efforts. And as crazy as this will sound, if I am healthy enough next spring to take on the Boston Marathon once again, you can count me in to run harder and raise even more funds in honor of those who lost life and limb and to beat once and for all these cancers which have so affected our lives.

Thank you.

Larry A Saltzman, MD

Donations to my Team in Training effort for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society will be accepted through May 31, 2013 at the following link:

<http://pages.teamintraining.org/ma/boston13/drlarrys>