

Chaplain / Rabbi David Balto more than anything is a friend to the sick and handicapped, a friend with a creative mind and endless caring and sharing.

He met our brother Mike (Rabbi Michael Bloom / Rav Mike) in the hospital - no longer able to speak or move independently. But with his inner spirit vibrant. And David Balto realized that.

David learned from us, Mike's out of town / out of country sisters, who Mike was, what he cared about, what he did and how he had done so many wonderful things for and with others, and from day one related to Mike as a friend and a peer. I saw that daily when I was in the Washington area to care for Mike and handle bureaucracies / make decisions. And I felt that daily when going back and forth to Israel, David and I wrote, texted, and spoke supporting and caring for Mike.

David talked baseball and Torah, arranged pre-Shavuot learning, Rosh HaShana shofar blowing, Purim megilla reading, Chanuka candle lighting, parents' yahrzeits memorial candle lighting and more. And in sharing Jewish tradition and Mike's heritage with his carers and medical staff, making them sensitive to spiritual needs.

When Mike was in and out of the hospitals and when he was transferred to an acute care facility a bit further out in the suburbs, David was there for and with Mike. Tehilim, baseball scores, putting on tefillin, hanging kids' "get well" or Chanuka pictures in Mike's room - David was there, giving Mike strength, giving Mike hope, treating him as he would a healthy friend, though Mike was seriously ill. Coordinating with Bikur Cholim, with staff at all facilities, and with chaplain friends who were closer to the facility, David made sure Mike had support, prayer, visitors, and religious requirements.

For Mike and for his visiting friends, and for us, Mike's family, David was there; he was reachable, supportive, and caring beyond words. The astounding chesed he did for Mike z"l and for us, is written in the Almighty's accounting - underlined and in bold!

Shanen Bloom Werber, Mike's big sister
Elazar, Gush Etzion, Israel