

L'CHAIM!

THE LATEST of a plethora of appeals that have recently come through my letter box was a little different. No questionnaire with accompanying free pen and no picture to pull at the heartstrings and ensure that I do not take my next meal for granted. Donkeys, dogs, disease, close to home or in lands far off, religious or political needs, all vie for my attention and my contribution. And as a Jew, come the *Yom Tovim* and High Holy Days, I will be reminded of my obligations to support my synagogue's call for *Tzedaka* and the *mitzvah* which I will be performing, in so doing.

BUT that latest appeal contained a small oblong glazed-over piece of plastic. The accompanying letter asked me to hold it up to my eyes, and to realise that the resultant blur would illustrate to me the effect of a cataract. But the resulting blur actually had a very different effect. Rather than making me see less, it actually made me see more. It made me see Raphael in a new light. I want to share the vision with you. We all need a kind of blur to understand the cataract that afflicts those who seek Raphael's help. Taking its name from the Angel of Healing, the angel who defeated the 'King of Demons.' Raphael Jewish Counselling Service, a registered charity, started some twenty five years ago. To tell a friend to 'pull yourself together' if they have deep worries, stresses, a broken relationship, are mourning the loss of a loved one, or generally, for a multitude of reasons, are finding it difficult to cope, is as useless as suggesting to a person whose sight is severely impaired, to 'open your eyes.'

WHEREAS the latter can usually get help from a specialist surgeon, the former will often find 'an angel in the wings', in the form of Raphael Jewish Counselling Service. Prospective clients simply phone **0870 787 5056** and are phoned back by one of our Intake Counsellors. Our professional Counsellors see clients, on a strictly confidential basis, in counselling rooms based in London, including our newest Counselling Room in Harrow. Payment is agreed according to one's means. No-one is turned away for financial reasons. Our funds come from individuals, trusts, legacies, and activities organised by a small enthusiastic group of 'Friends of Raphael'.

THE INCLUSIVITY of Raphael is best demonstrated by our two Patrons - Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks and Rabbi Tony Bayfield and our Rabbinic Consultants who represent all sections of the community.

AT THIS TIME of year, and particularly when our spiritual appetite is perhaps at a high, we may be able to point someone in Raphael's direction. If you do, I suggest, it will be a real *mitzvah*. It might even be a time when you decide that Raphael is for you. Whether as a client or a donor or a contributor via the 'Friends' you will be in good company, as we quietly do our work, defeating the modern demons that threaten us today. It is not only eyes whose vision may be blurred. The restoration of our ability to see life more clearly, or to enable others so to do, is a blessing beyond compare. Raphael may add a new dimension to our age-old cry, '*L'Chaim!*'

Jack Lynes
Chairman
Raphael Jewish Counselling Service

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