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Student Reflections
July 2015/Tamuz 5775
Rabbanit Bracha Jaffe
Class of 2017

Bracha Jaffe, Class of 2017, has spent her summer in an intensive 400-hour, 10-week chaplaincy internship that teaches students of all faiths how to best provide pastoral care. Chaplain interns spend three days a week providing pastoral care at NY Presbyterian hospital while the other two days are spent in educational seminars on diverse topics such as family system dynamics, palliative care and the art of narrative listening. In addition the interns submit assignments for class and discussion such as theological reflections as well as outlining and working on personal learning goals.

Bracha's Reflections on Chaplaincy

I walk down busy hospital hallways, slowing my pace and my thoughts, purelling my hands one more time before standing on the threshold of the patient's room. I knock on the door with a welcoming smile and the gift of empty hands. They are empty of needles, charts, pills and tubes; leaving space to hold patients' pain while listening to their stories.

Sometimes, I am rebuffed and that's OK. There's little else they can say "no" to in a hospital and I am glad to allow them this luxury.

I walk around waiting rooms and talk with the families who love and worry and wait for good news. I have been hugged when the good news arrives and I have offered hugs when it doesn't. I have prayed and meditated with Jews, Christians, Muslims and Catholics. I have sung "Itsy Bitsy Spider" to countless babies and children, sometimes gowned and gloved and even masked. I discovered that my eyes crinkle when I smile – even through the mask – so they know that I care.

It is a blessing to be there for people in some of their most vulnerable moments and an honor to walk with them in their journey. I have learned that spirituality is not always about belief in G-d or about religion. It is about finding meaning in one's life. I hope that my presence brings a measure of comfort and peace to those who I visit.