Ilanit Lauren Goldberg

Ilanit grew up in a Modern Orthodox community, where she learned to love HaShem and humanity. As a teenager, she shifted her spiritual energy from religious practice to social change and eventually worked in the field of Jewish social justice. She longed for a way to merge her passions for Judaism and justice; this journey led her to RRC.

While at RRC, Ilanit worked at Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps, at the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, and as a coordinator of the course Rodef Shalom: Pursuing Peace in Judaism for the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies. She was a Kathryn Davis Fellow for Peace at the Middlebury College School of Hebrew, a participant in the Encounter leadership seminar on conflict transformation and a facilitation fellow for the Jewish Council on Public Affairs’ civility initiative. She also worked with youth and adults at several congregations and was a rabbinic intern at Vassar College.

Ilanit was increasingly drawn to chaplaincy and to the intersections of pastoral care and social justice. She completed a year-long chaplaincy residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital and a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she provided spiritual care to Holocaust survivors. She also worked at the Abramson Center for Jewish Life. She was raised with the knowledge that the Shekhinah, the Divine Presence, is everywhere; she discovered that nowhere is this more true than at the bedsides of those who suffer.

Ilanit is a deeply grateful recipient of the Ziegelman Scholarship. She lacks the words to adequately thank her parents for their patience and support; nonetheless, she thanks them along with her siblings and grandparents for believing in her every step of this journey. She also thanks her teachers, rabbis, CPE supervisors and fellow students who have helped her to stretch her heart and mind to take in their Torah and wisdom. There is a special place of gratitude in her heart for Daniel Gradess, her husband, who could not be more supportive if he tried.

Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes in the morning.
—Psalm 30:6

As a chaplain-rabbi, I place myself in the midst of suffering. Sometimes that means praying with parents in the pediatric ICU or joining with Israelis and Palestinians who know the suffering of conflict and terror. Weeping may last through the night, but when we stay present with suffering, we can move towards the morning that is always waiting to arrive. God renews creation each day. God is the force that turns our mourning into joyful dancing. I’m ready to dance.