

Dear Rabbis,

As we're sure you know, there is nothing sadder than burying a child, nothing more difficult than counseling a couple who have learned that their child has been born with an incurable, debilitating or potentially life-threatening disease.

Before the advent of screening for Tay-Sachs disease in the 1970s, the Jewish community had no way to identify or counsel carrier couples. Now, with advanced genetic screening procedures, we are able to identify and counsel every carrier couple for many Jewish genetic diseases, and prevent children from being born with them.

But there are still couples who have affected children because they have not been screened.

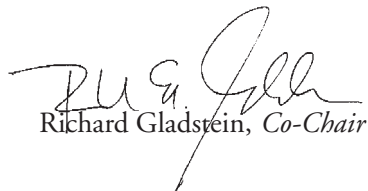
While the incidence of new disease has decreased as screening has improved, anyone who works in the field can tell you there are still far too many children born every year to unsuspecting parents. These are children who may never speak, lift their heads on their own or live to see their fifth birthday. These are children who will suffer painful, life-altering and life-threatening symptoms and illnesses.

The trauma of Jewish genetic diseases also falls heavily on parents, siblings, and families, as they confront tremendous emotional, financial and physical burdens.

Both of us are parents of children born with Jewish genetic diseases and we work with the JGDC, and helped create this rabbi educational program, with the fervent hope that we'll see a time when all persons of Ashkenazi Jewish heritage receive genetic counseling and screening before starting a family. In doing so, couples will be enabled to make educated decisions as they build healthier families.

We ask you to help us by recommending to every couple you marry that they receive genetic counseling and genetic screening for the full panel\* of Jewish genetic diseases, and by emphasizing that whenever possible, screening should be done before pregnancy.

  
Randy Yudenfriend-Glaser, *Chair*

  
Richard Gladstein, *Co-Chair*

Jewish Genetic Disease Consortium

*\*The JGDC currently advocates that couples be screened for the 16 Jewish genetic diseases described on pages 4 and 5. As additional diseases are added to the panel they will be listed on the JGDC's website: [JGDCConsortium.org](http://JGDCConsortium.org).*