

Brotherhood President, Neal Ginsburg Sermon for Brotherhood Shabbat

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York. For some that may be surprising, as over my years in the Midwest I have lost my accent, but I promise you at one point it was there. As a kid I attended a reform congregation, Temple Ahavat Shalom, in Brooklyn. Before I was born the temple had their own building, but at some point due to some financial or legal happenings that the adults discussed in hushed tones, the building was lost. From the time I was little the congregation rented space from a Korean Orthodox church in Brooklyn, and that is where we held our services, and where I went twice a week for religious and Hebrew school. This was my first introduction to the meaning of a community, and it was not at all related to a building but to the people who occupied it. As a fundraiser twice a year the congregation would participate in one of the largest flea markets in Brooklyn. Over the course of the year people would donate all sorts of items: old books, dishes, cups, etc that would all be packed up and stored in the basement of an old house that doubled as the temple offices. So twice a year my Dad and I would get up before the sun, meet up with a few guys from the congregation and head over to the house. We would load all of the boxes into a van, to be driven over so that they could be unpacked and items setup at the flea market. We would then proceed to spend all day working at the flea market, selling our wares, and progressively getting more aggressive with our pricing as the prospect of having to transport items home began to loom. Inevitably we would have some items that just wouldn't sell, so we would pack them up, load them into the van, and transport them back to the basement of the old house. These were long and exhausting days, and I remember them fondly. I never did ask the key question, why? Why do we do this? As a kid, I guess it was simply an opportunity to spend time with my father, but now that I am older, have a family of my own, and am IHC Brotherhood president, the question of why is a big one.

When Rabbi posed the question to me in preparation for tonight's service, "Why do you do what you do", it gave me pause. I think at some level it's the desire to be a part of the community, and to contribute wherever I can. Those who know me from Brotherhood, will attest that I am not the best cook amongst us, those guys are actually in the kitchen now preparing the Israeli style treats we will enjoy after service. I am also not the most mechanically inclined, as those who helped with the congregational sukkah will undoubtedly confirm. However the great thing is I don't need to be. We are all able to contribute our own unique skills, talents, and resources, which make us special and make our community what it is. I reference Brotherhood, as my own personal experience, but this of course is not specific to Brotherhood, this relates to Sisterhood, IHN, Religious School, Derech Torah, Mitzvah Stickers, and many other opportunities to contribute time, labor and resources to the overall community. The other aspect which attracted me to become a part of the community was of course the social aspect. Moving to a new area, it helps to find people that although they might

come from different places and have different stories, they share this common experience and common bond.

If that starts to answer the question of why, there is also always the question of when. With increasingly busy lives, work schedules, and other commitments the simple desire to help is not the only aspect to consider, and for that I have another story.

Up until just a few years ago we lived in southern Indiana, Seymour, to be specific. Our family literally comprised the Jewish population of Seymour, and Cyle made up the Jewish portion of his school's student body. When Cyle was little and the decision was made to attend IHC, we commenced our adventure of bringing him to religious school each Sunday. Marcia Goldstein always joked that we were consistently one of the first people in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, but I always told her that I knew that if I didn't pull out of the driveway by 7 am, I would not make the 75 mile trip in time to get into the parking lot, give Cyle a few minutes to run in and splash some water on his face, since he would sleep the entire way, and be ready for T'feliah. Truth be told I think we had been making that drive for probably 5 years, when Cyle happened to be awake one morning and commented as we drove up Meridian and past the sign for the Butler campus, "I didn't realize this is where Butler was". I laughed probably the rest of the way to IHC as I realized that we had passed that sign almost every Sunday morning for years, but he had been asleep and never noticed it. Cindy and I made the decision to prioritize being a part of this community, and to ensure that Cyle would be a part of this community, and as I have always heard "you always find time for the things that you prioritize".

Similarly when Cyle became old enough to try out Camp K'ton, the day camp at GUCI, I worked out my schedule at work, such that I could bring him to Zionsville and drop him off, go to work, and then circle back and pick him up before heading back to Seymour, to do it all again the next day. Maybe it was the lack of community in our local environment that made the communities at IHC and GUCI so appealing to us, but this summer as Cyle completes his 8th summer at GUCI I can absolutely say that it was worth it.

I still don't know that I have cracked the question of why do I do what I do. My mind continues to come back to a prayer we said earlier tonight, and that we say each Sunday morning with our religious school families. It is the V'ahavta, and I always enjoy when we read the English translation. It reads, "take these words which I command you this day upon your heart, teach them faithfully to your children". To me this is not a literal reference to these words, sure they need to know these words in preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but it is larger than that. I think this means that I should work to convey to the children of our community, not just my own, the importance of playing a role in whatever way I can for the betterment of that community. It means that I should serve as an example of a Jewish man in all of my actions. I

like to think there is also a part of honoring my ancestors as well by taking lessons learned from my father, and hopefully passing them down to my children.

I still have fond memories of those days working the flea market with my Dad, and I hope that many years from now when Cyle is older, and hopefully has a family of his own, he will think back fondly on a memory of spending time with his Dad, perhaps cooking for Tot Shabbat, putting up the congregational Sukkah, or maybe the night that his Dad gave the sermon for Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom