

## From Ordinary to Extraordinary: When Work Complements Life

This past summer, I learned what it means to have a vocation—not just *any* job, but one that truly satisfies. A fulfillment of calling.

From May through August of 2019, I had the privilege of serving as The Jewish Foundation (TJF) rabbinic fellow at Valley Temple in Wyoming, Ohio. With the guidance of the senior rabbi there, Rabbi Sandford Kopnick, I slowly but surely stepped into the rabbinic role, growing more experienced and confident as the summer progressed. My role and responsibilities as a fellow touched on many aspects of the rabbinate and synagogue life, all of which provided valuable exposure to the kinds of tasks that I will be expected to perform while working as a rabbi. Between Rabbi Kopnick's thoughtful mentorship and the independence he afforded me in his absence while substituting as his intern, I had the support and the tools to serve the congregation effectively—and with heart.

Working as the TJF fellow at Valley this past summer gave me a taste of rabbinic life in the pulpit that engaged my whole palate. Adjusting to the rhythm of the week alone was an educational experience as I learned to divide my time and manage new and shifting responsibilities while adhering to a seven-day cycle. After acclimating to the customs and practices particular to Valley's worship service, I was thrilled to take full advantage of the opportunities that lay ahead of me. Leading Shabbat services and Saturday morning Torah study on the weekends while tutoring *b'nai mitzvah* students and teaching adult education classes on the weekdays were highlights of my fellowship experience. During the time between tutoring and preparing for the next upcoming class, I worked toward accomplishing two additional goals that Rabbi Kopnick and I set together at the start of my tenure. These goals included arranging and editing a new siddur for *Selichot* services as well as promoting Valley Temple's digital outreach through Google AdGrants and improving its social media presence. By August, I was proud to have secured Valley's approval for up to \$10,000 in grant funding for ads on Google through the Google for Nonprofits initiative.

The time in the week that I spent planning Torah study taught me more than the lessons of the weekly *parashah*: it forced me to think about how I would explain what was happening that week in my own way. I began to recognize the everyday moments in which lending a rabbinic voice could enrich a discussion and cause the teachings of our tradition to come alive in real time. From sharing fresh insights on the High Holiday liturgy to revisiting the Thirteen Principles of Faith by Maimonides, the rabbinic role of meaning making became ever more clear to me in the task of negotiating between tradition and today. As I continue on my path toward becoming a rabbi, I know I will look back on my time at Valley Temple as a seminal part of my professional and spiritual development. I will carry these experiences with me as I grow into my vocation as a rabbi, pursuing that which I know I am meant to do.

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