

RABBI PETER S. KNOBEL

רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן שָׁמוּעַ אָמַר, יְהִי כְבוֹד תַּלְמִידָךְ חֻבֵּיב עָלֶיךָ כְּשִׁלְךָ,
וְכְבוֹד חֻבֵּרְךָ כְּמוֹרָא רַבָּךְ, וּמוֹרָא רַבָּךְ כְּמוֹרָא שְׁמַיִם:

We learn in *Pirke Avot* that Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua said:

let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own,
and the honor of your friend as the reverence for your teacher,
and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of heaven.

This teaching lifts up the honor shared between generations of student and teacher, charging that both be elevated to the reverence given to God. This teaching epitomizes the life and example of Rabbi Peter S. Knobel and the honored relationship of generations of Knobel and Greene families. Let me explain...

You see, in 1959, a young rabbi and his bride reached Temple B'nai Jeshurun in Newark, NJ. As Jewish history would have it, that rabbi, my father, soon connected with the Temple Youth Group President, one Peter Knobel. A friendship ensued -- one that included Rabbi Barry H. Greene tutoring that TYG President, Peter Knobel in Hebrew before the latter reached the Hebrew Union College.

From there, the friendship grew, a friendship between Peter & Elaine and Betty & Barry that covered miles, fun escapes from rabbinic

conventions, and the sharing of sacred moments, among them Elaine & Peter's wedding in Newark where Dad officiated; Peter's installation in Groton, Connecticut and here at Beth Emet where Dad joined Peter on the bimah to bless him; the naming and blessing of my children, Noa, David & Talia Polish; and my 18th anniversary of serving NSCI, both of which brought Peter to our bimah.

Dad was Peter's friend and teacher throughout the decades of both of their rabbinates, though, over time, the wisdom flowed both ways, as Dad looked with great respect to his dear friend. Peter never failed to give honor and homage to his rabbi. He did this in his utterly articulate, powerful speaking on countless occasions. He did this with his presence. And he did this with his time, wisdom and friendship for the second generation Rabbi Greene, that is, me.

Indeed Peter showed kavod - honor - with a graciousness of spirit, frank conversation & reflective insight over the 24 years I have lived in Chicago. When I, a new young rabbi, a second-generation Rabbi Greene, showed up in Chicago after ordination knowing nearly no one. Peter and Elaine welcomed me, Peter called me to teach, Elaine attempted to set me up with a good friend, and again and again, Peter was there to talk, listen, share wisdom, give counsel, reflect on matters communal and national, and, of course, eat a good lunch.

The relationship was enriched when you, Jeremy & Alyssa, became part of NSCI's congregational community, and you, Heather & Stephen made your places in our community. Not only could I be your rabbi, but Peter could then take great delight in the next generation of Knobel-Greene rabbinic connections. For me, well, it was a joy each Rosh Hashanah since Peter's retirement that you, Elaine, and he could be found in our sanctuary with your family.

Nine years ago, Peter got up to speak in this sacred sanctuary at the incredible service honoring him on his retirement. He first spoke to you Elaine via phone connection, naming your love and partnership. And then, before he spoke to the congregation, he paused.

Peter said that there was one more person he missed powerfully that night. Peter paused and said: His rabbi. He named Dad and explained that Dad had welcomed/blessed him 30 years ago as he began at Beth Emet and how he always thought that Dad would be there at this juncture – certainly as he was blessed to speak at Dad's retirement service. Peter was most gracious to me—acknowledging how significant it was to him that I – identified as Dad's daughter and his children's rabbi – was there that night that I had taught in my father's stead at the exquisite Shavuot celebration in honor of him and Elaine.

So I stand on this bimah today as Peter stood on the bimah of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun of Newark and then Short Hills, NJ, 11 years ago at my father's funeral. Both died too soon. Both shared an incisive wit, a frank ability to speak their minds, and an irreverence that not all saw behind their serious faces and presence. Both Peter and Dad loved Judaism, Reform Judaism and the Jewish people. Both rabbis dedicated their lives to its service with the highest of integrity, and both allowed their Reform practice to grow through the years.

I stand here, honoring my father's student and friend with the promise to continue in my rabbinate the many lessons Rabbi Peter Knobel has taught me, namely:

- Reverence and honor for one's teachers.
- Presence and respect for one's students.
- Loyal friendship.
- Deep respect for the prayer and ritual of our people.
- Ongoing learning and teaching for one's self and for the purpose of teaching.

- Respect for the integrity of Reform Judaism and its changing meaning for each of us to make our educated choices and see its evolution.

I stand here today for myself and for my parents, for my sister and for my children, all of whom loved Peter and love you, Elaine. I commit myself to learn, teach and continue the lessons of the life of Rabbi Peter S. Knobel, my friend, my teacher, my rabbi. *Zichrono livrachah.*