IT ALL COMES BACK TO BASEBALL
RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ
CRW REMARKS 11/15/03

So terrorists takeover the temple during high holy days. They hold the Rabbi the cantor and the temple president hostage. Each is given a final request. The Cantor requests to sing Kol Nidrei in the long traditional mode that he has always wanted but never been permitted to do. The Rabbi requests to give his infamous High Holy Day sermon where he proves through a lengthy examination of torah he is actually a direct descendent of Moses. Hearing these two the temple president requests, if I have to listen to those two kill me first.

With four rabbis speaking tonight we may all understand the request of the Temple President.

Weeks ago Brian emailed all of us and asked us to speak for no more than 8 minutes each on what role BBYO played in our becoming Rabbis. Soon after I say down and started to make two lists, one was entitled "Reasons I became a Rabbi" and the second "Reasons that I joined BBYO." As I made the lists there were many similarities and invisible lines of connection between the two. Both BBYO and the Rabbinate were and are an expression of values and ideals that had been impressed upon me by my parents and grandparents. My mom and dad met in BBYO, my grandparents were advisors, my brother and sister were members of Machar AZA and Chai BBG respectively and both went on to win international awards for oratory. I am not the first in my generation of Moskovitz that likes to hear the sound of my own voice, only of the three I get paid for it. On my two lists the words, leadership, community, friendship, role modeling, being part of something bigger than an individual, these words appear on both

my lists, they helped shape my identity as a teenager and they form the essence of my rabbinate.

As an aside you should know that a rabbi's greatest fear when performing two funerals within a day of the other is that we will mix up the names or stories and give the wrong eulogy for the deceased. In preparing this talk, I was struck with my second biggest fear; that I would mix up my two lists and you would think that I became a rabbi, well for the reasons we all joined BBYO, for sports and to kiss girls. In fact only one of those appears on both lists….. I would never put the other in writing.

When I was 13 years old, I was a baseball nut, I had a permanent indention in my hair from the Giants cap that I always wore, which is probably why I now need to wear one when it is cold. I lived for baseball, and rooted for the lackluster Giants of the 1980's with all my heart and soul. Players like, Al Holland, Jonnie LeMaster, Mike Ivy, Marc Hill, Atlee Hamacker. It was a time of heroes. I could recite to you every important Giant statistic for our star players, or those that passed as stars in the 80's. Like the number of home runs hit by Dwayne Kipper in his career, 1 and not with the Giants. Number of innings Greg 'Moon Man' Mitton went without giving up a homerun, 59. Amount of money we paid Free Agent Rennie Stennet, to come over form Pittsburgh and then sit on the bench for 4 years, well I don't remember but it was a lot.

I joined BBYO for many very important reasons to a 13 year old. First and foremost I joined BBYO because they played baseball, well actually softball, which I have come to learn is baseball for middle aged Jewish guys who never gave up on there dreams of big league stardom, once again there was BBYO preparing me for my future. In BBYO it didn't matter if you were good at baseball, just that you were a Jewish kid

(we sometimes in the tournaments it didn't actually matter if you were Jewish either), when I showed up at my first chapter event at Booth Bay Park, a 13 year old kid in awe of these big guys like the Riteman Brother's and Jeff Brody and Scott Kermit, they didn't sit me on the bench, they sent me to third base and put me right in the line up, which was probably why Hyman's chapter always beat us. Baseball was why I joined BBYO, but it was acceptance, even by those 3 and four years older than me, it was a place to belong, it was friendship, and it was as I came to learn in the lingo of BBYO, fraternity that made it such an important part of my childhood, helped me mature into he person I am today.

Baseball and BBYO are also the reasons I became a Rabbi. I was a game of catch with Rabbi Bruce Aft at BBYO Kallah in Starlight, PA that set me on this course. Rabbi Bruce got the message that Jewish kids don't become pro-ballplayers a little later in life and he was at the time both a rabbi and a minor league pitcher. I was a catcher for San Mateo High, and so we played catch every day at free time. He would pitch and I would ask questions about what it was like to be a rabbi. I had been surrounded by rabbis in my life, but it was BBYO that put a fielder's glove on one of them and gave me a chance to play catch with him. You can learn a lot about a person in a game of catch and I learned that Rabbi Bruce had the coolest job in the world. He never had to leave BBYO, as a Rabbi he got to continue to go to camp, to give speeches, to plan programs, to have BBYO style creative Shabbat services, as a rabbi he could still conclude his days form time to time with a friendship circle. I am told that adults pay thousands of dollars so they can go back to kindergarten for a day or two and have nap time and apple juice and graham crackers. In away becoming a Rabbi helped insure that BBYO, its values, friendships, its essence would also be a part of my professional day. In some respects I

became a Rabbi after BBYO so I could stay in BBYO, or maybe so that BBYO would stay a part of me.

My best friends and strongest memories are of my days as an Aleph in AZA. On some level our seven cardinal principals:

PATRIOTISM -- loyalty to my homeland, to its laws, to its principles, to its ethics. To die for it if need be, but primarily to live for

JUDAISM -- Always to observe the tenets of my faith; ever to do justice, love, mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord my G-d.

FILIAL LOVE -- ever to honor and love my parents. To be considerate of my elders and to respect age.

CHARITY -- to give of myself and my substance for all worthy causes, to be kind and generous to all in need, regardless of race or creed.

CONDUCT -- never too bold, never too forward, ever humble, ever observing the principles of gentlemen.

PURITY -- to keep my soul pure, my mind active and my body healthy.

FRATERNITY -- a spirit of sociability, of cooperation and of friendship toward all

AZA's that shall make of us
one fellowship; a love of
and a loyalty to AZA and
its ideals.

On some level these are the very same principals that guide me in my rabbinate and I think for all of us who have been through this Mikvah of BBYO, this ritual immersion in Jewish community it continues to guide our steps many years later.

I haven't been a rabbi very long, and I am only now beginning to understand and experience some of the heartache and suffering that comes with ministering to a community in times of great struggle and challenge. It is not all baby namings and bar mitzvah's, each illness, each death, each crisis rabbis feel them particularly personally, our congregations are our extended families, our members are our siblings, our parents our grandparents. So too BBYO was and still is my family as well. I look back on those formative years of my life and I am so thankful for the members of my BBYO family, we laugh and cried together we shared experiences we struggle to remember on nights like tonight and some that we blush and would soon forget. We were, at least in my view a Band of Brothers, the collegiality of the rabbinate is a close second, but nothing compares to those days in AZA. Thank you for this honor, and thank you even more for the honor of being in the presence of such remarkable people who shaped my life, and continue to guide my steps as I walk along the path that BBYO led me out upon so many years ago.

Fraternally submitted…. Thank you!