

RELIGION

COX

3 FEBRUARY 2017

*HEBREW:* HI MY NAME IS AVIGAL SHOSHANA AND I AM JEWISH [VOICE FADES OUT]

HI MY NAME IS ABIGAIL MIKAYLA COX AND I AM JEWISH

[BED FADES IN]

GROWING UP JEWISH DEFINITELY HAD ITS PERKS, I MEAN, WHAT OTHER THIRTEEN YEAR OLD GETS TO THROW A BIG PARTY AND INVITE ALL OF THEIR FRIENDS? PROPERLY KNOWN AS A BAT MITZVAH, BUT ALL WE CARED ABOUT AT THE TIME WAS THE PARTY. YET, THEN AT TIMES, MY RELIGION CLEARLY SINGLED ME OUT FROM THE GROUP. INSTEAD OF WAKING UP ON SUNDAY MORNING AFTER A SLEEPOVER AND GETTING THAT LAST LITTLE BIT OF TIME WITH MY FRIENDS BY EATING AS MANY PANCAKES AS WE COULD, IT WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO GET UP AND OUT OF THE HOUSE BY EIGHT SO I COULD BE AT SUNDAY SCHOOL ON TIME. AND THAT DIDN'T STOP AS WE GOT OLDER. GOING TO CLASSES FOR CONFIRMATION OR EVEN TEACHING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS WE HAD ONCE SO DREADED. BUT IT WAS PART OF OUR OBLIGATION AND TAUGHT US THE VALUE OF TIME AND TO BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT WE HAVE.

EMMI: EMMI COX. I'M IN NINTH GRADE. I AM JEWISH. WE HAD FOUR YEARS OF HEBREW SCHOOL. SO WE WOULD GO IN LIKE ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK AND WE WOULD HAVE CLASSES WHERE WE WOULD LEARN HOW TO SPEAK HEBREW AND READ THE PRAYERS, AND ALL OF THAT. AND THEN, AFTER THAT, THE YEAR BEFORE

MY BAT MITZVAH, I WENT IN AND DID TUTORING WITH A CANTOR, WHO LIKE SINGS ALL OF THE PRAYERS AND KNOWS LIKE WHAT MY TORAH PORTION IS, SO WHAT PART OF THE TOUR THAT I WOULD READ DURING MY BAT MITZVAH. AND I PRACTICED MY PART WITH HER FOR THE YEAR BEFORE, AND THEN WHEN MY BAT MITZVAH CAME AROUND I READ THAT PORTION OF TORAH THAT I HAD BEEN PREPARING.

IT WAS KIND OF LIKE WE WE'RE SUPERHEROES. THERE WAS NOTHING DIFFERENT ABOUT US. WE WENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOL AND PLAYED SPORTS. WE WERE BOTH IN THE MARCHING BAND BUT WHEN THE SUN WENT DOWN, WE. WERE JEWISH.

BUT SUPERMAN ISN'T CALLED WHEN IT'S "CONVENIENT" FOR HIM, WHETHER HE'S AT WORK OR THE STORE, HE DROPS IT ALL TO HELP THOSE IN NEED.

EMMI: A LOT OF TEACHERS DON'T TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION JEWISH HOLIDAYS IN A WAY. AND SO SOMETIMES WHEN I HAVE TO MISS SCHOOL FOR A CERTAIN HOLIDAY, I ALSO HAVE A TEST ON THE DAY, THAT I THEN HAVE TO COME AND MAKE-UP AND THEN I MISS THAT DAY'S LESSON WHEN I HAVE TO MAKE UP THE TEST, AND SO IT'S JUST KIND OF AN INCONVENIENCE BECAUSE NOT EVERYONE MISSES BECAUSE NOT EVERYONE IS JEWISH.

BUT SOMETIMES BEING "NORMAL" DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL THAT WAY. "YOU'RE JEWISH?" "BUT YOU HAVE BLOND HAIR AND BLUE EYES." "WAIT, YOU CELEBRATE HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS?" THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT I WOULD GET ASKED MORE OFTEN THAN NOT AND IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT I REALLY FELT AS THOUGH I WAS DIFFERENT.

[BED FADES OUT]

EMMI: OVER THE SUMMERS I GO TO A CAMP CALLED GUCI WHICH STANDS FOR GOLDMAN UNION CAMP INSTITUTE AND IT'S A JEWISH CAMP, SO IT'S PROBABLY ONE OF MY FAVORITE PLACES AND IT'S REALLY BEEN LIKE MY HOME FOR THE SUMMERS AND I'VE MADE A LOT OF FRIENDS THERE, THAT ALSO GO TO SCHOOL WITH ME AND SO IT'S KIND OF SHAPED MY FRIEND GROUP AS WELL AS MY JEWISH IDENTITY.

WE HAD SOMEWHERE WHERE WE WERE SURROUNDED AND EMBRACED BY PEOPLE JUST LIKE US. PEOPLE WHO HAD GONE THROUGH THE SAME THINGS THAT WE HAD. WHILE WE WERE SPENDING OUR ENTIRE SUMMER AWAY FROM OUR SCHOOL FRIENDS, THEY WERE ALL VERY SUPPORTIVE, WHICH MADE THE EXPERIENCE THAT MUCH BETTER. BEING JEWISH HAS SHAPED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE IN SUCH A HUGE WAY. FROM THE FOOD THAT I EAT, TO THE WAY THAT I TALK. THE PEOPLE THAT SURROUND ME AND MY PASSION FOR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD AROUND ME, IT HAS BECOME NOT JUST OUR RELIGION BUT OUR WAY OF LIFE.

[BED FADES IN]

NOW, IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE MY LIFE ANY OTHER WAY. I COULDN'T BE MORE PROUD OF WHO I AM AND WHERE I COME FROM.

FOR WHJE THIS HAS BEEN ABI COX. MORE STORIES LIKE THIS CAN BE FOUND AT WHJE.COM.

[BED ENDS]