

What matters?

I love going to the theater and I have since I was 10 years old. I had a very dear aunt, who also loved going to the theater. Six years ago I had the task and pleasure of taking care of her for a few days while she was dying. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done.

About six months later I was back at her house, with my cousin, her daughter, going through her things. Next to her bed in a night table I found theater programs. It was packed with theater programs.

I've been thinking about those programs and what they meant. They reverberate with the echoes of many evenings of pleasure, of laughter, of thoughtfulness, some of boredom, a few naps, maybe some insights, tunes to hum, lines to remember. But they are fleeting moments and when you're done, usually what's left is a program.

Many things in life are that way... momentary pleasures. Not bad things. They illuminate our lives, but then I think back to the programs. In a way they were sad.

So what is worthwhile?
Our lives are so cluttered.

In 1993 IBM had the first layoff in the company's history. Entire departments were let go. I was there. I wasn't laid-off, but I was struck by what I saw. We had worked hard in building and testing computer chips. A friend of mine, who had been laid off was emptying a file cabinet. He tossed stacks of folders, from drawer after drawer, into the trash. We had been so consumed with the details in those folders until the day we threw them all away. Those folders didn't matter on that day. Did they really matter the day before?

What is worthwhile?
We all love toys. But we also know that their appeal tends to fade.

Families and friends. Being with the people we love. Even though these times are fleeting, there is something more there. Maybe because in being together we change each other. There's an element of purpose and of permanence that gives it meaning.

But what about Shir Chadash? Is it worthwhile? Well I love that we are educating our children. And ourselves. I think that's worthwhile. That's permanent. And I am pleased that we are helping our neighbors. As Jews we are obligated to do these things. And we spend time sometimes looking for spirituality. That search is helped along by music and by repeating words that we know by heart but that we don't understand. I think that's worthwhile too. And part of the time we make friends. That requires opening ourselves and caring about others. That is worthwhile.

You know, each weekly e-mail that I write, I open with the words “Dear Shir Chadash family and friends.” To the extent that we really are, we are worthwhile.

Life is short and we ought to do things that are worthwhile.
Just some thoughts.

See you at services.