

I was always certain I wanted to dedicate my life to helping people, but I wasn't quite sure how. I am currently a junior on a premed track, because somewhere around my 21st birthday I realized that the best way to combine my love for the sciences and my desperate need to feel that I am helping people is by becoming a doctor. My goal of becoming a physician will allow me this great opportunity of ridding the world of as much physical pain and suffering as I can. It is my hope to settle in Israel after I have completed my schooling. My inspiration to do this, is from a beautiful story my friend told me about her late grandfather who was a pediatrician. He owned a successful practice in Suffolk County, which he had built up from scratch.

One summer he took a tour of Israel, just an average secular tour of all the historic sites, and he found himself in the northern part of the country near the Lebanese and Syrian borders where there was an emergency and a Palestinian needed immediate medical attention. Being a highly qualified doctor, he was able to save the man, and was subsequently informed that there was a huge shortage of physicians in the Northern region, as there was a large Jewish population in addition to a large Palestinian refugee camp there. He decided that as a physician, and a Jew, it was his duty to assist the masses of Palestinians just as he would for the Jewish population, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion. He then proceeded to volunteer on the Israeli border every summer where he treated Israelis and Palestinians alike.

I found this story incredibly inspiring and it encouraged me to continue on my pre-medicine path. The story showed me that even our most innate hatred for others can be overcome if we fill ourselves with love and acceptance in an attempt to better ourselves and this world. If there were more people like this man perhaps the conflict would have been resolved long ago. It is my dream that I will have the opportunity to do similar work as this wonderful human being and doctor has done.

I am currently a Migdalim Fellow, through the Hillel at Queens, and my sole purpose is to facilitate conversations on campus about Israel. This position gives me the opportunity to engage in difficult conversations with members of opposing viewpoints. An even more invaluable lesson that the fellowship has taught me is the art of listening to others. I participated in many training sessions that emphasized the importance of listening to an entire story and accepting their viewpoint. The idea is not to change anyone, for that is an implausible task, but rather to understand them and perhaps help them understand me, and why I so inexplicably love a nation that has clearly wronged many and continues to make mistakes every day. This skill has helped me empathize while validating, and gaining the other persons perspective.

Using the skills I have learned from this fellowship and the knowledge I will gain from the Ibrahim Middle East program, I will truly have the opportunity to help spread awareness and tolerance across the college campus and community I live in. It is my hope that I will have the ability to have an impact on cultivating some sort of awareness by showing the complete story through discussions and more importantly listening. With this valuable tool, I am confident that we can all enjoy a more supportive, tolerant and understanding between different faiths and cultures.

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