

Friday Night Speech

Hello everyone. I wanted to do two things to start off this speech tonight: one - say Shabbat shalom, and two – introduce myself and why I am talking in front of all of you right now. My name is Simon Lewin. You may know my parents- Jen the board member and Jeff the oneg captain. Both very esteemed positions. But I, currently, have a spot as a student in Sunday religious school. That is actually why I am here tonight. Throughout the last few months of religious school, my class had broken into groups and begun working on social justice projects. Now, what you must realize is that Dave Synder was our teacher, so our projects were nothing less than.....fabulous. Throughout the process, we learned a lot about our topics, which varied from gun violence to animal abuse. I was the leader of the gun control group. To be perfectly honest, I learned some pretty scary stuff. For instance, here is a list of yearly death tolls caused by civilian gun violence in several countries: Japan – around 50, Germany, France, and Italy – near 150, Canada – close to 200. Now, I ask you to take a second to notice that as the countries get closer and closer to the US, the numbers steadily increase. Finally, in the United States of America, the annual death toll reaches over 10,000. The fact that 283 million firearms are in civilian possession probably has something to do with this massive death toll. We have *got* to do something about this issue.

Even in ancient times sages realized that protection vs. violence would be an issue. Except rather than guns, they quarreled about vicious dogs. On one hand, the animals acted as a means of personal protection and security. But on the other hand, this sudden up rise in vicious animals could cause an increase in violence. One argument stated that only one dog should be allowed per home, and only to act in a defensive way. Another argument contradicted this, saying that the beasts should be outlawed all together because it created a much larger chance of

danger than protection. The debates went on like this, making points and then putting them down. This is almost parallel to the arguments that come up nowadays regarding gun violence.

Many people assume that since we are not those sages or government officials, can't make a difference in this conflict. For the most part, that is utterly untrue. Although there is no immediate action that can be taken, we can make our voices heard in the support of stricter gun control laws. The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, and the Violence Policy Center are all great organizations that fight for gun control laws, and gladly accept members or donations.

We fought against the majority to make same-sex marriage legal, and, if we try, we can do the same here – make better laws for a better world. Thank you, and, once again, happy Shabbos.