

Shabbat Shalom.

50 Million.

50 Million Americans are hungry in the US. That's 1 in every 6 people!

17 Million are Children.

4 Million are Seniors.

This is in America. Not that it should happen anywhere.

But, here, in our country. Our home.

These are Our friends, Our neighbors. Our children. Our parents.

On **May 17, 2014**; just a few weeks ago, I burned more than **4800 calories in 7 hours and 28 minutes**. That is more than 2 ½ days of the adult recommended caloric intake. I did this in the name of ending hunger. It was a physically exhausting, spiritual enlightening and a downright dirty feat (and I had dirty feet)

Let me tell you about a little about the origins of my plan.

I have a co-conspirator on this mission. **Jon Burbey**, my cousin in law, friend and brother in this quest.

Jon and I run together and have for many years. **We're endurance athletes**. We are 'slow' endurance athletes! In the world of running we're the tortoise. Well more of tortoise/energizer bunny mash-up. We keep going and going and going – but we are NOT fast.

We run marathons and half marathons, 200 mile 24 hour relay races and indoor dirt track races, trail races in the wilderness and ultra-marathons...we dream big and try and achieve big.

Last year on a training run we decided we wanted to fundraise for a cause on our next race. See, we were frustrated with the lack of charitable giving coming from the running community. Don't get me wrong, individually runners (**especially trail runners – the earthy, hippy genre of the community**) are generally fantastic people; caring, warm, environmentally green - they smile and are welcoming, etc... A kindred spirit to Shir Tikvah but not enough organized Tikkun Olam.

Heck we were going to run anyway, why not do our part to better the world.

Our immediate attention turned to hunger and we formed a plan to work with **MAZON**. MAZON, a Jewish response to hunger, is a highly rated, national organization focused not only on providing for hungry people but at the same time advocating for other ways to end hunger. They also focus on raising the consciousness of the Jewish community and using education as tool.

Recently, the **Minnesota chapter of MAZON**, worked (as leadership) on a supplemental budget bill that included funding for reduced priced lunch students to receive a hot lunch at no cost.

You see, in some schools, students whose accounts were low on funds were being turned away at the lunch counter. Their parents couldn't afford to pay the reduced fee so the child went hungry.

In other cases, students got into the lunch line, filled their tray with hot lunch, got to the end of the service counter where they punch in their assigned passcode. If their account was empty or they didn't have enough funds the lunch was taken from the student and tossed into the trash.

These were the rules in some school districts.

Well just last week, on May 20th, **Governor Dayton signed the "Every Child deserves lunch" bill into law.** Never again will a student be denied hot lunch based on the inability of their parents to pay for it! This is important legislation and MAZON led the charge.

The Race Jon and I decided to enter was an Ultra-Marathon. In layman's terms an Ultra-Marathon is any distance longer than the standard Marathon distance of 26.2 miles. Our Ultra-Marathon would be a 50K or 31 miles in length. Of course we had to up the ante more by making it a trail ultra-marathon...and why not go a step further.

Yep we were going to run our **RACE TO END HUNGER** – all 31 miles of it – on the SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL in the SAWTOOTH MOUNTAINS of northern Minnesota. Go big or go home!

One unique thing about endurance athletes is our obsession about fueling properly during a race. We felt a bit conflicted as we determined how much food we would eat, how much to carry with us and how much to rely on the 2 aid stations. Burning that many calories – over 4800 - mandates that you need to replenish much during the run. If you don't then you may breakdown, cramp or BONK.

The running industry makes millions on Endurance nutrition products. Product names like **GU, HAMMER GEL, BONK BREAKERS, CLIFF SHOTS, STINGER GELS, POWER GELS and SPORT BEANS.** We deal in electrolyte tablets and salt tablets. We carbo load leading up to a race and we "super" hydrate a day or two before.

It is essential enough, that we carry Fuel packs that have water bladders and enough pockets to store **boiled potatoes or pretzels, gummy bears or gels.** It is the difference in making it to the finish or hitting a wall. You finish the run or you get a trip to the hospital.

What a strange dichotomy; we we're running this race to raise funds for MAZON...it was our RACE TO END HUNGER and we we're obsessing about the necessary food we needed to consume on the Trail during the race. This contrast or coincidence didn't go without discussion.

We learned quite a bit about MAZON, The Superior Hiking Trail and ourselves...we did it on our own because, well, unfortunately there isn't a **BLIZZARD ULTRA-MARATHON** school.

We worked with MAZON in coordinating the fundraising effort. We relied on family and friends to contribute to our race. We were shocked, Inspired, overwhelmed and humbled at the support we received. As of today we are the largest online fundraisers in MAZON's history.

We raised nearly \$4000 for the one event.

How did the race go? **235 people signed up to run the race.** To our knowledge we were the only ones raising funds for a special cause. There were only **177 official finishers.**

We made it. **Finished in 7 hours and 28 minutes.** I have run an estimated 75 races in my lifetime, maybe more. None meant more to me than this race.

See we could have just run the race. We didn't need to "mess" with fundraising. We didn't need to waste time, energy, pester our friends and family.

The passage from a commencement speech of an important biblical leader – **Bono from the band U2** says it best:

"We can't fix every problem - corruption, natural calamities are part of the picture here - but the ones we can, we must. ...And because we can, we must. Because we can, we must. Amen"

This is how we looked at the RACE TO END HUNGER.

Now the Race is over, muscles have healed, scrapes, scratches and blisters are fading (toe nails are growing back) and our energy level is up again. **Unfortunately HUNGER still exists.** We are happy we did our little part. Many of you helped – your donations and encouraging words inspired us.

We have some information on a table in the oneg hall. Please feel free to stop and look and if you feel inspired, then please take a card describing our Race and how to donate.

...and on this beautiful Shabbat where Devra becomes a Bat Mitzvah and our Shir Tikvah community endorses a new board of trustees... let us remember that Because we can, we must.

Shabbat Shalom.