Carrying Your Banner



By Rabbi Yisroel Teitelbaum

Having lived in Indianapolis for just about a year, I can already point to several reasons why this city is especially well-suited for Jewish life and for raising Jewish families. Affordability, tuition vouchers, quality of life, and parnassah opportunities are often the first things people mention—and for good reason. These factors matter. They shape the daily rhythm of family life and allow people to live with stability and peace of mind.

But I believe it goes deeper than that.

As a rabbi charged with the spiritual growth of a congregation, I find myself thinking not only about practical considerations, but about something even more fundamental: meaning, purpose, and the ability of a person to feel that they truly matter.

The Midrash offers us a fascinating insight. When Hashem revealed Himself at Har Sinai, 22,000 angels descended together with Him, with each one carrying its own unique flag. When the Jewish people saw this, they became jealous and desired flags of their own. Hashem responded, "If this is indeed what you desire, I will fulfill your request," and He immediately instructed Moshe to create flags for each of the Twelve Tribes—flags that each tribe would carry as they traveled through the desert.

This raises an obvious question: What was so special about the angels' flags that the Jewish people became jealous of them? And what does an angel need a flag for in the first place?

The Sfas Emes explains that each angel has its own unique mission. No two angels are alike. Every angel has a single purpose, is fully aware of that purpose, and exists solely to fulfill it. When klal Yisrael saw each angel carrying a flag symbolizing its distinct role, they became jealous. They, too, longed to know what their task was, what their avodah in this world was meant to be. They, too, wanted to fulfill something for Hashem that no one else could.

When Hashem saw this deep desire to understand and complete their mission in life, He instructed Moshe to give the Jewish people flags of their own, and to show each tribe what was to be their unique purpose and contribution. Each tribe received its own flag, its own role, and its own path.

And yet, all the Shevatim camped *around the Mishkan*, demonstrating that despite their differences, they were united in a single purpose: living lives shaped by Torah, and service of Hashem.



Members of the community dancing with the rabbi.

This idea does not apply only on a national level; it applies to each individual as well. Every Jewish neshama carries within it a burning desire to know why they are here and what their unique mission in life is.

At times, however, that mission is difficult to identify, especially when one feels like just another face in the crowd.

This, I believe, is what makes Indianapolis truly special.

In a community without overwhelming numbers, there is room for each person to be seen and to make their mark. Every presence is felt. Every contribution counts. More valuable than the business prospects are the "*hashpaah* opportunities"—the opportunities to truly impact and benefit Jewish life. When someone recognizes a need, they don't sit back—they step up and make a lasting impact.

For young families, this can be transformative. It allows parents to model meaningful Jewish living for their children—not as spectators, but as active participants. As the saying goes, children don't learn from instructions (often just the opposite!), but from example.

Indianapolis is not just a place to live comfortably. It is a place where a person can discover their flag—their role, their avodah, and their unique contribution to klal Yisrael.

Looking to carry your own flag? Learn more about Indianapolis at our booth at the (virtual) OU Savitsky Home Relocation Fair on Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST or email youcanjewishindy@gmail.com.

Originally from Silver Spring, Maryland, Rabbi Yisroel Teitelbaum is the rabbi of Congregation B'nai Torah of Indianapolis, Indiana. Rabbi Teitelbaum and his wife, Malka, are blessed with four children.

Jewish Day School and Homeschooling options?

We have a day care and community day school that provides a high performance, low stress education built on Orthodox Jewish principles. Not only that, we have school choice - meaning that you'll receive a state voucher for education in a Jewish school. Prefer to homeschool? Indy supports that too with minimal restrictions.

In Indy, YOU CAN!

Orthodox Centers of Jewish life?

Congregation B'nai Torah (Orthodox Ashkenaz) and Etz Chaim (Sephardi), Indy Kollel, JCC, Indianapolis Jewish Discovery Center, Chabad of Indiana. Amenities include: Kosher Mikvah, Keli Mikvah, Large Eruv.

Looking to live in a warm Jewish community with a Midwest attitude and an affordable price tag? Move to Indianapolis!

To learn more about the Jewish Community in Indianapolis, visit https://www.btorahindy.org or email youcanjewishindy@gmail.com.