



Rabbi David Wirtschafter

RABBI DAVID DINE WIRTSCHAFTER was born in Lexington, Kentucky in 1970. Wirtschafter's father, Dr. Jonathan Wirtschafter, was the founding chair of the ophthalmology department at the University of Kentucky Medical School, and his mother, Carol Lavenstein Wirtschafter, was the founder of Camp Shalom, a Jewish day camp in Lexington. Growing up in Minneapolis, Minnesota after his family moved away from Kentucky, Rabbi Wirtschafter enjoyed participating in activities through his temple and the local Jewish Community Center, including annual musicals staged by his temple youth group. During high school, he also studied for a semester in Haifa, Israel.

Rabbi Wirtschafter completed a degree in English literature at Brandeis University before undertaking his rabbinical studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. On his decision to become a rabbi, he says

"I could credit Camp Shalom, here in Lexington, Kentucky, for putting me on the path to being a rabbi. Having parents that modeled Jewish values and a love of Judaism in the way that they did. I could point to spending a semester during my high school years in the north Israeli city of Haifa, overlooking the Mediterranean, and going to high school there, as a huge influence on my choice to become a rabbi. And studying, by the way, with influential Reform rabbis that I'm still friends with today."

For almost two decades after rabbinical school, Rabbi Wirtschafter held various positions in New York,

California, and Minnesota before returning to the city in which he was born. Rabbi Wirtschafter was hired by Temple Adath Israel in Lexington, Kentucky in 2015, and was drawn to TAI in part due to its commitment to a wide range of social justice-oriented education and programming. Especially since the 2016 presidential election, Rabbi Wirtschafter has been outspoken about issues related to refugees and immigrants, noting that he and his children, Zachariah and Emanuelle, are the grandchildren of immigrants:

"Bigotry is not a Bluegrass value. It's not gonna happen. Get that garbage out of here. We are not a hate state. We might some years be a red state, we might—and some years, be a blue state. But the Commonwealth is not a hate state, and we will not act in hateful ways. Because hate is--is antithetical to Christian values, Jewish values, Muslim values, and American values. Just don't stand for it. If your friends make a distasteful joke that's mean-spirited and aggressive, that has consequences—if they do it in a way that puts someone else in the room down, call 'em out on it."

Rabbi Wirtschafter notes that when it comes to Jewish learning and living

"You're never done. Never stop learning about your faith. Faith is a lifetime commitment."