

rabbi david e. levy

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professional experience

WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE, SCARSDALE, NY | JULY 2012 TO PRESENT

Rabbinic Leadership

Associate Rabbi, July 2015 to Present | Assistant Rabbi, July 2012 to June 2015

Creating community, teaching Torah, and building relationships with and among congregants at a suburban 1,100 family congregation, as a part of a five person clergy team.

- Develop deep relationships based on trust, and the ability to understand where each person is coming from
- Offer Sermons that inspire people of all ages to find meaning in their lives
- Create meaningful life cycle moments including baby namings, funerals, and weddings, combining the beauty of the Jewish tradition with the power of our human connections
- Offer comfort, support, and a pastoral presence for people wherever they are in their life journeys
- Create and manage the many avenues of multi-access engagement: from Visual T'filah, to prayer services, classes and more
- Engage 100 B'nei Mitzvah and their families in a transformative process to ensure they leave our Bimah feeling accomplished and nurtured
- Offer strong abilities to lead and work in partnership with a diverse team, and have stepped up over and over again, including during Rabbi Blake's Sabbaticals
- Teach Adult Education including Torah study, classes, Melton Adult School, and family learning
- Lead our Living with Divorce and Single Parenting group, providing space for people to feel seen and valued
- Create deep experiences for the Free Birds Community, including a trip to Philadelphia, classes, and a variety of other experiences
- Plan and implement immersive travel opportunities for our families, and adults. One such trip has engaged over 50% of the 8th grade through the journey of Civil Rights in the American South
- Work with our philanthropy team, raising over 300,000 dollars to support WRT

Educational Leadership

Jewish Learning Lab Director, July 2017 to Present | Acting Educator, July 2016 to July 2017
Director of Youth Engagement, July 2014 to June 2016

Education provides the opportunity for us to develop our Jewish identity and nurture our humanity. In each of our programs I strive to create a safe and exciting space for learning and growth.

- Supervise, teach, and continually reimagine our K-12 learning program, renamed the "Jewish Learning Lab," an environment of deep engagement and innovation
- Supervise nine full time staff members and a cohort of 30 part time teachers

- Direct a program for over 600 students that meets 7 days a week
- Crafted and implemented a fiscally responsible budget of 1.2 million dollars annually
- Directed a strategic change process for our religious education program which has resulted in new staffing, a new mission statement, a new name, and a new curriculum
- Directed and implemented a WRTeen Initiative Task Force to reimagine the engagement work we are doing with teens: building on successes and finding new avenues
- Planned a pandemic response over 2020-21 that continued to offer in person learning and engagement throughout the year

STUDENT-RABBI POSITIONS

Temple B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills, NJ | 2010 to 2012

The Village Temple, New York, NY | 2009 to 2010

Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple, New Brunswick, NJ | 2009

Temple Emeth, Teaneck, NJ | 2008 to 2009

RELATED PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

Chaplain Intern, Jewish Home & Hospital, New York, NY | Summer 2010

Nitzanim Unit Head, Crane Lake Camp, West Stockbridge, MA | Summer 2008

Asst. Director of Education, URJ Greene Family Camp, Bruceville, TX | Summer 2007

Judaic Studies Teacher, Temple Beth Or, Washington Township, NJ | 2007 to 2008

JCSC Fellow, Hillel at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT | 2005 to 2006

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

Systems Consultant, General Electric, Devon, PA | 2003 to 2005

IT Consultant, Cigna Corporation, Philadelphia, PA | 2002 to 2003

boards, training, and communal involvement

BBYO Jewish Educator, International Convention & Westchester | February 2018 to Present

AIEF Rabbinic Seminar in Israel, AIPAC & AIEF | July 2019

Generation Now Fellowship, Jewish Education Project | February 2019 to June 2021

Young Pioneers Award, Jewish Education Project | Awarded May 2018

Qushiyot Israel Education Fellowship, Jewish Education Project | September 2017 to May 2018

Westchester Area Temple Educators, Co-Chair | July 2017 to July 2018

Scarsdale Drug & Alcohol Task Force, Secretary & Member | July 2015 to Present

URJ 6-Points Sci Tech Board, Development Chair | July 2013 to July 2020

CPE Unit I, Beth Israel Medical Center | June 2011 to August 2011

Community Organizing Training, Jewish Fund for Justice | October 2007 to February 2008

education

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE — JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

Jerusalem, Israel, and New York, NY

Rabbinical Ordination | May 2012

Thesis: *Text Immersion in Masechet Sanhedrin* Advisor: Dr. Michael Chernick

Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters | May 2011

Master of Arts in Religious Education | Mandel Fellow | May 2010

Capstone: *Kiddush Levana: Creating Holy Space for Men* Advisor: Dr. Jan Katzew

DREXEL UNIVERSITY, PENNONI HONORS COLLEGE

Philadelphia, PA

Bachelor of Science in Information Systems, Minor in Business Administration

June 2005 | Magna Cum Laude

References provided upon request.

vision statement

Your daughter reads Black Panther comic books. Your son has a collection of fountain pens. You and your spouse met in New Haven, and we all love Pepe's Pizza. Your father has dementia, and it's hard on your family. You love to bake challah every Friday.

Shma. Listen.

We live in a world that can't stop talking, but rarely do we pause and listen to people. After I ask someone about their parents or their children or the many things they care about, people tell me I have a great memory. I deflect and gently move the conversation along. I know my memory helps, but the crucial detail is that I listen when other people talk. I embrace the opportunity to know you better. If I know you, I can invest in you, and help you grow. That investment is why I am a Rabbi: I want to help people flourish through the transformative power of Jewish living and learning. Everything I do as a Rabbi is in service to this goal.

My route to the Rabbinate was not a straight line. My first step was on Masada at 5:30 am on my 2001 Birthright Israel trip. As I watched the sun rise out of the Dead Sea, I felt connected to the Jewish people in a way I never had before. That moment catalyzed a trajectory that culminated three years later in a call to HUC-JIR from my cubicle at GE.

I still credit that immersive experience as the inspiration to become a Jewish professional. To take my Jewish values into the world. That is why I create thought provoking immersive experiences beyond the classroom for the members of my community. I've taken hundreds of congregants to the Deep South on WRT's annual Civil Rights Trip, led family and teen trips to Israel, conducted multi-generational Jewish Heritage trips to Philadelphia, and more. On these trips, we are challenged to articulate our personal and collective Jewish voice more clearly and think about who we want to be in the world.

As we travel from place to place, I cherish the unscheduled bus time when I can walk the aisles and engage each person in conversation. We discuss Israeli politics in the Golan, surprisingly authentic hummus in Philadelphia, and Southern Jewish life in Selma. I have deepened relationships with congregants on these trips. Relationships that often begin with a chance meeting or a phone call on Friday afternoon as we get ready for Shabbat. The Kaddish list becomes a contact list as I try to reach everyone who is in pain at this moment in Jewish time. I changed the location for Kiddush and Motzi, and moved it from the bimah to the sanctuary exit; all too often, mourners leave before I have a chance to even say hello, and they are the ones who need a comforting presence most of all.

We gather in prayer to remember, and to embrace sacred Jewish time. There is nothing quite like that moment when the entire community comes together as one. When prayer is effective it transcends a melody; it pushes the very boundaries of space and time; and we feel the presence of the Divine. In these moments, people feel their community enveloping them. They know it mattered that they came, and their voices helped make everyone in the room feel whole.

That feeling of being seen and heard is at the heart of the Jewish Learning Lab, my vision for Jewish education in the 21st century. It's our mission to teach young people to think in a "Jewish way," a goal that goes far beyond learning letters of the Hebrew Aleph-Bet. Full time teachers ensure that our program offers quality at every turn. We regularly adapt our curriculum, keeping it malleable and open to experimentation. I want to help students find a connection to their Judaism that will sustain them throughout their lives. During the pandemic, when the JLL was the only in-person Religious School open in Westchester County, I made sure that I was the first and last face our children and families saw when they entered our building. I literally and figuratively took their temperatures, and made sure they felt emotionally and physically safe on our campus.

In the peaks of the Jewish lifecycle, when I meet with wedding couples, converts, new parents, and B'nei Mitzvah families, I state my goal at the outset: to celebrate who they are, why they are special, and how the Jewish tradition can inspire them to find more joy and meaning in their lives. Through listening carefully, I craft a service or ritual with them that creates *Kedushah*, the sense of the sacred.

Listening carefully to congregants and what matters most to them has also been crucial to the success of my work in philanthropic development. Every American makes a donation to something; I want our congregants to invest in their community. My aim has never been to look in others' wallets, but rather to invite them to build a shared dream of a congregation where everyone feels welcome. When we had the opportunity to bring a *Shaliach*, a full time Israeli staff member to WRT, I approached a passionate Zionist congregant to help us and he agreed to fund the entire program for three years. The congregant was thrilled that I knew what was important to him and could help him do something that had a lasting effect on the whole community.

I want to be your rabbi so that I can listen to the needs, spoken and unspoken, in your community. I want to listen to every member of the congregation, so I can understand who you are, what keeps you up at night, what gets you up in the morning. I want to listen to the staff, and discuss how we will partner to fulfill our sacred work. I want to listen to the story of the congregation's financial picture and help ensure that it will be strong for the next generation and beyond. I want to listen to you, each and every one of you, and hear your stories and the shared story of your congregation.

Shma. Listen. Let's do this together, with open ears, and open hearts.