

Installation Shabbat – David Levine – May 10, 2019

Shabbat Shalom.

I am so honored that you all could join me on this special Shabbat and I thank you each of you for your support and friendship.

For the past months, weeks and days everyone has been asking me.

- Are you ready?
- What do you want your Presidency to mean? What's your vision?
- More recently. Did you write your speech? **Ummm, No soon, I promise. No really, I promise...**

Here I am tonight being installed as the next President of Anshe Emeth and **you** can blame Susan Kohn. I am told she wanted me on the temple board when she became President in 2007.

Truthfully, I need to thank Susan. Susan believed I would make a difference and become a valued member of the Anshe Emeth leadership and has supported me all these years. I hope I can make Susan proud.

In the past few weeks I met with Rabbi Bazeley. My Rabbi calmed my nerves and brought me to a realization that I do need a vision for Anshe Emeth. I thank Rabbi Bazeley for his good counsel and I look forward to our future together building our community.

Who am I and how did I get here?

David Levine is a recovering Conservative Jew and a crier. Yes a crier, I just do. I get choked up and emotional at the stupidest things.

I am of the chosen few who can say they were born in Weehawken NJ. I carry that badge of honor proudly. You will hear it in my speech tonight. Cawfee, water, mustard are my tells.

In 1969 my family moved to Leonia, NJ. We joined Congregation Sons of Israel. It was a small conservative congregation of 125 families in its prime. This became my 2nd home. I shared this home away from home with good friends, lifelong friends.

Congregation Son's of Israel was our domain. We attended Hebrew School, youth group, and most importantly we hung in

“THE YOUTH Lounge”. That magnificent youth lounge in its 1970's wood paneled cinder block splendor. It contained a Pool Table, a Stereo and the important Bean Bag chairs. We would discuss at length; the very things teenagers discuss. It was our safe space, our home our Shul.

My parents Muriel and Al became involved at Sons of Israel. Mom worked on committees and became Sister Hood president. She was one of their TOP fund raisers. Temple events always became a family affair, my sisters and I all did our part to ensure Mom's success. (Lisa, Noah, Caleb, and Tami, please take note.)

My dad would come to some services, and events, but he loved coming **late** to Sunday morning minyan. He would join the **men**, for Bagels, after a morning at the Gun Range. **Sadly it was only men in the 70's at Minyan.** Occasionally, Rabbi Block would ask dad to bring in the pistols for him to see.

I would like to tell you a little bit about my first Rabbi.

Rabbi Zelick Block is truly special man and has taken part in most of my important life cycle events. Including my Bar Mitzvah, Confirmation, marriage to Lisa and the renewal of our wedding vows. He also mourned with me and officiated the funerals of both my parents. Rabbi and I have some history.

Rabbi Block realized I was struggling in Hebrew School. He decided that I should take classes with him and 3 other kids. I was never made me feel like I was in the "special" class and he made sure that I enjoyed Hebrew School. I became Bar Mitzvah.

Sons of Israel, my **Community, my family.** My dad died when I was 15. My Rabbi, my community, my shul family was there to support us.

I was Confirmed and I stayed all the way through High School, just like our kids here at Anshe Emeth.

Fast forward to 2000. My mom had recently passed. Tami my sister (or Aunt Tami as many of you know her), moved with Lisa, Noah, Caleb and I to East Brunswick. We were happy in our new home, but we longed to find our community.

There's that word again. "Community". We enrolled the boys at the "Y" in highland park. We made some new friends, the Schiffman's and the Friedman's. I became involved on the Board of the "Y". It was great, but it wasn't our community.

Then I met this amazing lady, Ann Zaur Taub. If you knew Ann, you can imagine the conversation.

Ann and I met when I was on a sales call at Rutgers right before Rosh Hashana. She asked where I would be attending services. "I'm going home to my Shul in Leonia." You need to come to Anshe Emeth, Ann said. There is nothing like my temple and Anshe Emeth will be your HOME. Ann was so right.

In 2003, we followed the Schiffman's and the Friedman's to Anshe Emeth. The boys were enrolled in Hebrew School and we found ourselves in MAP class.

MAP class....Rabbi Miller's great experiment and program. Get new congregants all in one room. Let them build bonds with each other, teach them and they will be active community members and leaders.

The bonds we made in MAP class still exist today and I guess the leader part worked out too.

Each of the Levines started to find their way at Anshe Emeth. David do you want to chair the Purim carnival? Cook Mitzvah day dinner? Hey Lisa, do you want to lead MAP class? Lisa will you join the Board of the CDC?

Noah and Caleb. They found their “pied piper”. Her name is Cantor Anna Ott. She grabbed my boys and sent them down the Music Rabbit hole. Cantor Ott fanned the flames of Jewish Song in their souls! And we all got to experience the music of Noah and Caleb.

It didn’t stop at music for the boys. Noah and Caleb both were active members and leaders of AETY and the graduated Anshe Emeth Hebrew High school.

We all got involved, including Tami. Tami is involved with The Women’s Spirituality Group, Community Seder and has many other commitments here at Anshe Emeth.

If you haven’t noticed already, I have a theme a vision. **Community.**

It’s not my vision, it’s our collective vision.

The transition committee and I heard this over and over during the Rabbinic Transition process. Temple members kept telling us Anshe Emeth is their community. Their home and family.

This is an hour of change.

Within it we stand uncertain on the border of light.

Shall we draw back or cross over?

What lies before us?

You will recognize this prayer from the siddur in front of you, the Mishkan T’efilla.

I stand here tonight and ask you to join me to make our Anshe Emeth community even stronger.

Take the leap with me! As we enter Anshe Emeth’s 160th year.

Let’s build community that just doesn’t talk about what it has already done, but what it can be.

Let’s build community that wants to grow and change.

Let’s build community that is inclusive and welcoming of all including the **LGBTQIA+** community.

Let’s build community that extends past the boundaries of these sanctuary walls to protect and champion the immigrant.

Let's build a community that continues to build relationships and support the surrounding interfaith community.

Shall We Draw Back, My Brother, My Sister, or Cross Over?

I am positive that my Community, my Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple family will be bold enough to step out of the "border of light" and join me on this journey.

Our Community our family needs to grow, change and evolve to ensure our future.

Clear eyes, Full hearts, Can't lose

I look forward to working with Rabbi Bazeley, Rabbi Glasser, Cantor Ott and Heather Kibel, to make this call to action a reality. With the support of the executive board Ina, Allison, Dave, Maurice, Amy, and the board of trustees. We will be calling on to join us to build and strengthen our community in new and exciting ways.

Thank you to our Rabbi Emeritus Bennet Miller whose vision for 44 years led Anshe Emeth with passion and purpose.

Thank you to Daryl Lipkin my friend and all the past presidents who have kept the Anshe Emeth Community Strong and vibrant.

Thank you to my wife Lisa and my sons Noah and Caleb, they are my life's greatest gift.

Each of you the Anshe Emeth Member makes our community important, special and unique.

"This is an hour of change."

Ina and Jerry thank you for organizing the wonderful Shabbat dinner tonight.

And to Sara Levine, (my temple wife) - Thank you for your good counsel and support.

Shabbat Shalom

