

I would like to say thank you. To Rabbi Englander for gracing us with his teaching and his kind words, to the clergy here today, to the search committee for bringing me in, to the transition team for helping my family and me become integrated into the community and for ensuring that we feel at home right away, to my family, for putting up with me, to everyone who has reached out and connected with us, to everyone who has made us feel so at home in this community, to the incredible staff and clergy here at this Temple.

I am honored and humbled and excited to be following in footsteps of Rabbi Clifford Kulwin, Rabbi Barry Friedman, Rabbi Dr. Joachim Prinz, Rabbi Julius Silberfeld, and those who came before them.

It is a privilege to be here at Temple B'nai Abraham.

It is a privilege to be part of a congregation with such a long and illustrious history, with its unique mix of traditions, customs, and stories.

It is a privilege to be part of a community where families can count back four and five generations, and where those who have just recently joined are as equally part of the family.

It is a privilege to be part of a congregation that has had such a tremendous impact on the direction of this nation.

It is a privilege to be in an independent religious community, where we seek Judaism on our own terms, doing whatever needs to be done to find that balance between tradition and progressivism, to find the best path for making Judaism meaningful and transformative for this and future generations.

It is a privilege to be part of the Temple B'nai Abraham family, and for all these, my family and I are grateful.

The Talmud, tells us that upon our death, we'll be asked 7 questions about how we lived. (Shabbat 31a)

- i. Did we conduct ourselves in our every day lives, and particularly in business, with honesty and integrity?
- ii. Did we make time for spiritual life, for nourishing our souls?
- iii. Did we busy ourselves with Creation, building the coming generations?
- iv. Did we seek wisdom?
- v. Did we learn to discern that which is true from that which is false?

vi. Did we stay positive and work towards redemption, for ourselves, our communities, and the world around us?

vii. Did we stay true to ourselves?

We should, as Jews, be able to say yes to these questions— that we have lived our lives well, in honesty and meaning, and that we've worked to elevate ourselves and the world around us.

We are called to address these questions in our lives, and there's no better way to do so than to do so together, with partnership and support from our extended Jewish family. Here, at Temple B'nai Abraham, we will continually work to address these questions, and together, rise up to be the best Jews, the best human beings, and the best partners with God we can be.

As rabbi, I'm honored to be in it with each of you, to serve as a guide, teacher, and fellow traveler on this path towards holiness and transformation.

It won't always be easy. We're living in times where more is changing, and at a more rapid pace, than ever before. Reb Zalman Schacter-Shalomi calls this Judaism's third great paradigm shift, the last one being at the destruction of the Second Temple and the dawn of rabbinic Judaism (Schacter-Shalom, Zalman, and Daniel

Siegel. *Integral Halachah: Transcending and Including*. 2007: Daniel Siegel, Victoria, BC).

For the first time in history, every Jew is in fact a Jew-by-choice (Schacter-Shalomi & Siegel). Our competition is no longer other religions, it is secularism. And all those who embrace a religious life choose to do so, because it gives them meaning, it gives them a sense of order, it gives them a connection to something greater than themselves.

It is our job at Temple B'nai Abraham to determine the best ways to continue to engage every human being who might come through our doors to find that Judaism that for them — for us — will be meaningful and transformative.

It means that there will be times that we turn to our rich history and embrace the traditions of our past, in coming for prayers and music, in learning as children and adults, in celebrating and supporting each other in all life's transitions and special moments, and in working together towards *tikkun olam*.

It also means that that there will be times where we experiment, where we act as Jewish entrepreneurs, to be innovators and discover new paths in our timeless project.

It means that we need to educate ourselves in traditions of past, and be creative in ideas, programs, and practices.

It means that we need to keep open and playful minds.

It means that we say yes to new ideas and find ways to make them happen.

It means that we connect and engage in constructive, curious, and honest dialogue with each other.

It means that we commit to working with one another in building true lives of meaning and holiness.

I would like us all to remember the creed that Temple B'nai Abraham, under the leadership of Dr. Prinz, crafted and adopted, that continues to resound and ring true in guiding us today.

We believe

We believe in the Jewish people. a people ancient in its history and young in its aspirations.

We believe in Judaism, in a way of life, a faith in God.

Judaism is neither literature nor a romancing nostalgic dream, nor a museum. It is a living reality, here and now.

It has created customs, many of them still so meaningful as to deserve to be kept alive. It has created a piety which can and must be translated into terms of our daily life.

We believe in religion lived and not only preached. We believe that there can be neither sound interpretation of Jewish values nor proper understanding of Judaism without education of the young and old.

We hate hypocrisy and love honest search for the kind of Judaism that will make our people and our basic values survive and live again.

We are neither ashamed of customs so old that their origin is lost in the grey past of our great-grandfathers, nor are we afraid to change the unacceptable and to add the new.

That is why we call Temple B'nai Abraham of Essex County a traditional progressive congregation.

This creed directs us to live an active, vibrant, honest, and relevant Judaism, as a community, and I so look forward to partnering with all of you over the coming weeks, months, and years as we strive for meaning, for community, and for transformation.

TBA INSTALLATION D'VAR TORAH

**We have a whole lot of work to do, in our lives and in this world,
and I so look forward to being with you in sacred partnership.**

Thank you and Shabbat shalom.