

# BRETT WEISMAN | RABBINIC STATEMENT

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The first time I knew I wanted to be a Rabbi, I was 12 years old and preparing for my Bar Mitzvah. I remember discussing the text of my Torah portion and my tutor said something I now tell each of B'nai Mitzvah students: "Jews have been studying this text for thousands of years and here we are, studying the exact same words, finding new ways to understand and apply these words to our lives." Since then, every decision I have made in life has led me to this moment; to the cusp of becoming a Rabbi. These decisions have led to countless rich and fulfilling experiences, instilling me with a sense of inspired obligation—the opportunity—to serve the Jewish people by engaging in this holy work.

In college, I had the opportunity to work at a synagogue with two tremendous Rabbinic mentors. One was a scholar with a thirst for knowledge from both books and congregants. The other Rabbi was a giant personality whose charisma would light up the room. Through watching them, learning from them, and learning with them, I developed a foundation for how I want to be as a Rabbi. I am an eager learner with a passionate, energetic personality who thrives on relationships and education. Simply put, I love to learn about Judaism, but I love to learn about Judaism with a community.

These past six years have been the culmination of a childhood dream and the most rewarding work of my lifetime, truly capturing my soul's attention. Working at several different Los Angeles congregations and developing deep relationships with congregants and clergy has provided me with a unique perspective in understanding where Reform Judaism is today and the potential this tradition has for tomorrow. Currently, I work with the Center for Youth Engagement at Stephen Wise Temple to reshape and re-invigorate the religious school providing several options for families to create their own inspired path toward Jewish education such as One-On-One tutoring, prayer Hebrew learning, and Torah Study for 2nd-6th graders.

My passion for Jewish education extends to learners of all ages. From tot shabbat to religious school and from young adult engagement to adult education, my goal is to inspire Jews to find their own voice in the greater Jewish conversation and realize their own personal connection with Torah. Encouragement of self-discovery was central in the

development of the curriculum guide, which I wrote for my Masters in Jewish Education. I implemented this curriculum guide at Temple Israel of Hollywood, which culminates with the opportunity for learners to write college application essays about their own unique potential.

I believe that the path forward for Reform Judaism is two-fold. The synagogue must be a House of Prayer (*Beit Tefilah*) and a House of Community (*Beit K'hilah*). The House of Prayer (*Beit Tefilah*) allows us to focus our energy and get in touch with what we—individually and as a community—truly need. This sense of prayerfulness can be achieved in a multitude of different ways, with the ultimate goal of prayer being to move the soul to action. If we feel connected, uplifted, and comforted by prayer, the act of praying becomes fundamental in providing the foundation to do the work of repairing the world, which brings us to the House of Community (*Beit K'hilah*). Cultivating and optimizing a community is done through Human Centered Design. The purpose of Human Centered Design is to identify and respond to the unique needs of individuals. I implemented Human Centered Design when I reached out to each congregant from my student pulpit in Redding, California after the devastating Carr Fires in which numerous congregants lost their homes. I spoke with each congregant to compile their individual needs. With this information, I coordinated with Los Angeles area synagogues to provide support, supplies, an insurance claim seminar and a community meal.

These experiences and opportunities demonstrate the consistent and long-term trust these various institutions bestow upon me to provide meaningful opportunities for Jews to engage with Judaism. I pride myself on my compassion, trustworthiness, dependability, and my commitment to programmatic excellence. I am a person who transforms big ideas into action, inspires the community, while also seeking to respond to the unique needs of the individual with care. It is my greatest hope to become a Rabbi for the Reform Judaism of tomorrow.