

My name is Rob Blumberg and I am the President of the Board of Directors for Congregation B'nai Shalom. It is my privilege and honor to give my first High Holiday speech to you, and, of course, my wish for all is to have a sweet, happy, and healthy 5779. Whether you are members here or guests, we are so pleased that you are able to join us today to celebrate Yom Kippur.

I want to express my appreciation to the board of directors and all committee members, and volunteers and to let you know how important your involvement and dedication is. I would also like to thank Rabbi Gurevitz and Rabbi Eiduson, their teams and our Executive Director Steve Winer and his team for ensuring that all the members of our congregation and our guests have a meaningful and joyous experience.

We are now in our 40<sup>th</sup> year as a Congregation. Through the Archive Project led by our volunteers and Rabbi Gurevitz I have had the opportunity to learn about B'nai Shalom before we were even officially a Congregation. B'nai Shalom started as Jewish families seeking to connect with other Jewish families in Westborough. The story of how we went from a few families getting together to celebrate holidays, to becoming a congregation, to building a synagogue, to making it a bigger synagogue to becoming a 450 member congregation continues to amaze me.

Over the last few weeks I reached out to some of the founding families to understand "Why?"

What I specifically asked them was

- Why did you do this?
- Why was this so important to you?
- Why did you put in your time, money and sweat equity?

We talked at length over the phone and shared a lot of stories. What I took away from all the conversations was that their “Why?” is not very different from what me and many others value and appreciate so much as part of the B’nai Shalom community. Just a few of many the “Whys” I collected:

- For ourselves and our family we wanted to have a Jewish connection and identity in our local community. The closest temples were in Framingham and Worcester.
- As we started to meet the other Jewish families from Westborough and the surrounding towns we quickly had a very special bond as Jews
- Jewish life had been a significant part of our upbringing and we wanted to bring that to the Boroughs, where practicing Judaism could feel like home
- It was important to create a place for our children to get a Jewish education and learn about Jewish life. We felt it was our responsibility and our job to educate all of the Jewish kids in the community.
- There is still a lot of social injustice close by and in the world. Having our Synagogue in the center of Westborough on a main road sends an important message to the community that we are here to stay and you need to accept that
- Part of being Jewish is doing your part. If we are not doing are part it is difficult to stand up when we want to address what is wrong in the world

Our gift from these founding families is our Jewish home of Congregation B’nai Shalom. It is a vibrant, and thriving part of Westborough serving members from more than 20 nearby towns. It is a

place where we are able to connect as Jews, gather to celebrate, mourn, make a difference, grow and educate our children.

Our High Holidays appeal ensures that we are able to continue to grow and thrive as a congregation, deliver outstanding programming, meet the needs of our members, and continue as center of Jewish life in the Community.

Unlike most non-profits, we are limited in our fund raising capabilities. We are reliant only on our 450 member families and the guests who join us for services. While there are so many great causes that we all contribute to each year Congregation B'nai Shalom is unique in that our reach is limited to those that are here today. For that reason it is critical that we give to the High Holy Days Appeal to ensure our sustainability and secure our Jewish future.

I challenge those that have given in the past to increase your pledge and those that have never given before to make a pledge today, in essence paying it forward as our founders did when they established this shul 40 years ago.

This year I have three asks of BOTH our congregation and those who have joined us as guests for the High Holiday Services. I am asking for 100% participation in our 40th year High Holiday appeal. I do realize that not every family, every member, and every guest is financially able to contribute to the Appeal. We are asking those that can contribute to contribute an extra \$40 or more in honor of our 40th year that will represent the contribution of a member or a family that is unable to donate. Because one of the core values of our Congregation is to never turn someone away from membership of our congregation because of

limited income. As a community we give so that everyone who wishes to be part of a Jewish community can belong.

I am also asking those of you that have joined us as guests to contribute to the High Holy Day appeal as well because today Congregation B'nai Shalom is also a part of your Jewish connection. We welcome you to join us for events and observances throughout the year. We provide a vibrant hub of Jewish life in your neighborhood and we welcome not only your presence but also your support so that we can continue to provide these opportunities for the whole community.

Finally, on the High Holy Day appeal page on our Web site and in our High Holy Day Appeal mailing we are asking for your "Why?" Writing down your "Why" will remind you of the importance of Judaism in your life and it will help us to learn more about the Congregation B'nai Shalom Community and what is important to you.

I have shared the Why's of many of our founding members. I thought I would also share my "Whys" with you. I have many but I will share a few:

- Stacey and I are lucky to live in Westborough and have our Synagogue just a few short miles from the house. It is great that we can enjoy events at the schools and on the soccer fields with our friends from the temple. Our temple friends and our friend friends are one and the same. It is a lot of what drew us to the town and I volunteer to ensure B'nai Shalom is here for future residents of Westborough and the surrounding areas.
- Many of you may know that Stacey was treated for breast cancer last year. Thankfully she is doing very well now and has a great life ahead of her. So much of our support came from the community

gathered here in this room. My serving as congregational president is our way of paying it forward

- I worry. If we don't do our part as members of the B'Nai Shalom NOW then there won't be a B'nai Shalom for the next generations of families in the area. There are more synagogues closing than forming right now in the Northeast. To sustain our congregation we must have volunteers, donors and an engaged congregation. I believe I am doing my part to ensure the sustainability of B'nai Shalom. And while my children may not settle here my hope is that some congregational president in Philadelphia, San Francisco, or New York or some other place is as passionate as me so that wherever my children land there will have a center for Jewish life like B'nai Shalom near their home.
- I believe my responsibility to B'nai Shalom is no less than the families that founded it, hired a rabbi and built this building. Growing, maintaining and maturing B'nai Shalom is an ongoing responsibility for all of us who call it our home in the Jewish community.

I truly believe that we can reach 100% participation if we all understand our own "Why". Thank you for giving generously it is incredibly important that you do.