

Shalom. Erev Tov, and G'mar chatima tovah. My name is Ben Nadler, and it is my pleasure and honor to serve as the President of Or Hadash.

A few weeks ago, we had our most recent synagogue board meeting. Since we are still near the beginning of the current board's term, we've been kicking off the meetings with some get-to-know-you discussion topics. That meeting's topic was "Describe a way that Or Hadash is different from the synagogue that you grew up going to."

One board member decided to share a nuance about the Kol Nidre appeal. In his hometown synagogue in south Florida, it was a tradition for the ushers to lock the doors when it came time for the Kol Nidre Appeal. They would then go around the room, collect pledges, announce the names and donation amounts, and move on to the next donor. It wasn't until the congregational goal was met, and enough money was raised, that they would unlock the doors and continue on with the service.

Another person in the room, hearing this story, decided to share a similar nuance. I won't say who, but at the shul she grew up in, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, they would just keep reading the Torah. Over and over again, until their goal was met. The record was 42 times. It must have been a recession that year.....You know.....It just hit me that this particular person seems to have the entire Torah memorized, and now I understand why.

As I heard these two stories, and I share them with you now, I have so many questions. Like, how did they get the fire marshall to approve of them locking the doors? And, how did they manage to remember everyone's pledges without writing things down? And where did they come up with 42 Torah readers?

The Kol Nidre appeal is a common tradition. Just like Or Hadash, synagogues all around the world do it. Where we differ from many synagogues is that we have been so incredibly blessed when it comes to our finances. As I shared on Rosh Hashanah, thanks to your generosity, we've been able to completely pay down the loan on our building. And in our 15 year history, we have never run a deficit.

But the monthly payments on our mortgage was just one of our many major expenses. As you've heard in prior years, a successful Kol Nidre Appeal covers about 1/8 of our annual operating budget. Our budget includes a repair and refurbishment expense, so that we can keep our building in good condition. Staff salaries and utilities are also major expenses.

Our funding also allows our chesed committee to provide meals to families when someone is sick or has experienced a loss. It provides for Kiddush luncheons and onegs following services, bagels after minyan, and periodic Shabbat dinners. These are every bit as important, because after all, it is over a meal where community is built, stories are shared, and friendships blossom.

You all have always given from your hearts in order to ensure the financial well-being of Or Hadash. And this year, our appeal has started out well. As of today, we are already at _____ % of our goal. For those of you who have already made a contribution this year, and those of you who consistently support the Kol Nidre Appeal and our other major fundraising efforts, we are so incredibly appreciative. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

For some of you, times might be a little tougher this year. You could be facing a job loss, an illness, or unexpected expenses. If this is you, then don't feel pressure to do anything more than what is comfortable to you. If it's been a difficult year, then do what you can and nothing more.

If you have never given before, or you think you couldn't possibly make a big enough of a pledge to have an impact, let me assure you, you would have an impact. A \$100 gift would pay a teacher to teach a few Machon Chadash classes. And in those sessions could be where one of our children first learns to read from the Torah. An \$18 gift would be enough to pay for half a table of people to eat at a Kiddush luncheon. And it might be that Kiddush luncheon where someone at the table learns that the person next to them is out of work and where they connect on a new opportunity. \$18 will pay for a tray of goodies that can be served at Shiva. And at that Shiva, you could give comfort to a friend as you listen to them tell their favorite stories of a loved one who has just departed.

It is the little acts of tzedakah that, when assembled together, make our community what it is. Just like it is all of the pledges you all make, no matter the size, that make the difference for our financial well-being.

So if you've not yet made a gift this year, please consider doing so. There are several ways you can pledge, and your pledge does not need to be fulfilled until December 31st. If you brought your green pledge card with you, and you circled or wrote in the amount of your pledge, then you can leave the card in the envelope in one of baskets as you leave the gym this evening. You can also fill out the form on our web site or send an email to kol-nidre@or-hadash.org. Or when one of our volunteers reaches out to you, if they haven't already done so, please take their call or reply to their email when you hear from them.

With your help, I'm optimistic that we will reach our goal. Whether we do or not, we won't ever be the congregation that has to lock its doors. And if you're planning to read Torah tomorrow or in the future, you'll only have to read it once. Thank you for the blessing of being a part of our community and for the blessing of giving back to our kehillah.

May you all have a meaningful fast and be inscribed in the book of life, the book of happiness, and the book of good health. G'mar chamitah tovah.