

Shana Tova.

Ask yourself, can you envision your CBE future? It might sound audacious on Yom Kippur but I can envision our future. Today, this congregation stands at the nexus of what the future **was** forty years ago and what our future **will be**. Forty years ago, fifteen families put forth a vision, dedicated their spiritual selves and invested their personal financial resources to establish Congregation Beth Emeth. That future has been realized and it is up to us, the more than 350 member families and related Jewish community to put forth the vision for our collective future.

The fifteen founding families' had vision. They envisioned a place of worship for the Jewish community and a means to provide Jewish education for their children and their peers. Look around CBE and you will see that vision has come to life.

This is why this year's annual appeal is especially important to us. Near the very center of our family's life here in Northern Virginia is our Jewish life that we have built and it emanates from the relationships formed here at Beth Emeth.

Our family's story of Beth Emeth is very similar to many of those who are members here today. Julie and I visited CBE with our six month old daughter Lindsey for a Family-Shabbat. We attended the event with other friends of ours who were at the same juncture in their lives...first time parents looking for a synagogue and a greater Jewish community to tap in to as our lives evolved, our family grew and our spiritual and

social needs expanded. As we lingered in the CBE foyer after the service we were approached by another young family who were new parents and CBE members. They asked if we were members and we replied “we were looking”. We exchanged phone numbers and email addresses that evening. A couple of weeks later we found ourselves enjoying a Shabbat dinner at their home. That encounter launched our CBE relationship and a dear friendship that has spanned 16 years. Today, many of our closest friends are members of the Beth Emeth community.

Our two children Lindsey and Ryan have grown within the walls of this structure. Both began their early childhood education at BEECC, rising through religious school, and then standing on this bimah to perform their Bat and Bar Mitzvah.

Those are but a few examples of how we were able to enrich our lives and the lives of our children with their Jewish education from the services and opportunities provided by this synagogue. But perhaps the most poignant moment of our relationship with CBE was when Julie’s father passed away. The Beth Emeth community filled our home with support for Julie and our family, demonstrating the compassion of this great congregation that is bound together by this institution, Beth Emeth.

Last week, in her annual President’s speech to the congregation, Fran laid out five areas of focus for the coming year (see Fran I was listening). Two of those focus areas resonate with our appeal to you; Sustainability and Engagement. Herein lies what Julie and I envision as our future. A

congregation built on member and community engagement and a commitment to sustain its financial future.

My personal decision to volunteer to be the annual appeal chair addressed one of my most pressing personal dilemmas. I've learned with time that my personal connection with the Northern Virginia Jewish community hinges on my involvement with Beth Emeth. Each year I attend CBE high holiday services and I see this sanctuary filled to the back of the room, an active teen tent and our educational center buzzing with our youngest holiday observers. At this time of the year I feel a part of a larger Jewish community. But this moment is just that, a moment in time. When the high holidays end, to me our Jewish community seems to recede.

At other times of the year when I come to a few Saturday morning services I see the same small group of congregants time and again and I ask myself what would CBE look like without them? They are the ones who keep the vision of our founding members alive. My sense of connection turns to a sense of concern for who is going to be the next active CBE generation? This is what drives my purpose to become more engaged with CBE. What drives your purpose for being here? What is compelling about CBE to you?

We can offer you many ways to find meaning in your relationship with CBE. Our congregation provides social programming and spiritual enrichment through our community outreach clubs of Sisterhood and Men's Club, over 55 programming through Hazak and our young adult group Techilah. Additionally, Beth Emeth relies on the lay leadership

and volunteering opportunities that complement the compensated staff to keep this congregation moving forward. There are volunteer opportunities for spiritual lay leaders that read from the Torah and Haftorah every week, we have volunteer floor gabbais, committee leaders, kitchen staff and ritual volunteers that make our services run smoothly. These volunteering opportunities not only provide the means to become more deeply engaged with CBE, these positions also provide a means to save valuable financial resources while creating value to our members and the community alike. In fact, it is important that we acknowledge our volunteers. Thank you to those who take on these volunteer positions because you represent the spirit of engagement felt throughout our congregation. Your level of involvement is an example of how we can help CBE sustain itself.

Last week, Fran asked for 18 minutes of your time. Julie and I ask for more time from all of us and I expect more from myself with the hopes that my connection with and commitment to CBE will lead to more opportunities to sustain our congregation. Will you join in? To Julie and me this is an appeal effort all of us can undertake regardless of financial ability. However, engagement through volunteerism alone does not resolve our overall financial needs.

The annual appeal is a financially sustaining exercise born out of the funding shortfall caused from the dues we as members can afford to pay and the required funding that creates the programming, the education, the scholarship and the worship value provided to our members and the greater Jewish community. Our annual appeal funds ensure the synagogue's annual operations, as we have grown accustomed to, go

unaffected. Our appeal dollars are financially vital to ensure we maintain our commitment to provide these services. This critical need is where we seek your direct financial help. Our membership and community has demonstrated year after year its commitment to funding our operations. We ask that you help sustain us again this year. Julie and I know we can achieve our goal. Earlier this year CBE undertook a similar effort with a fundraising exercise to enhance our security infrastructure. Not only did our congregation meet that fundraising goal, we significantly exceeded the goal. Our investment in the new security infrastructure amplified our commitment to keep CBE HERE TODAY and HERE TOMORROW. This annual appeal is no less important to that commitment, please help to the extent of your financial abilities.

Let me pause here to share with you the second part of our vision. An annual appeal that extends a financial commitment to that beyond our basic operating needs. One that creates opportunities to add service, enhance and expand our congregation footprint, extend more services to our community that excite and entice membership growth. Our vision of engagement and sustainability go hand-in-hand and we ask you for your commitment on both fronts. This is not a vision that happens overnight. It happens with involvement, commitment and an understanding of how we build a roadmap to financial vitality. We are committed to this effort, will you join us?

It has been a little over ten weeks since Julie and I penned our annual appeal letter to the congregation. I am happy to announce that we have raised about 60% of our total goal of approximately \$145,000. We want

to extend a sincere Toda Raba to those of you who have made your pledge and ask to those of you who are planning or even considering making a pledge to do so today.

For those of you who wish to sustain our congregation, ushers will be coming through the sanctuary to collect your pledge cards. If you wish to pledge online you may do so through the CBE website or contact the main office to make your pledge. I hope you can find a way to be more engaged with CBE throughout the year and find meaning in your relationship with CBE.

It has been forty years since our founding families put in motion their vision for CBE. Today, we are able to stand on that visionary foundation and create our own future knowing we have the opportunity to write our next 40 years of CBE history. Ask yourself, what does **your** CBE future look like?

Thank you and Chag Sameach!