

Dear Fellow Congregants,

We thought it appropriate to publish our remarks from Yom Kippur. Whether you're receiving this for the first time or whether you heard it on Yom Kippur, we hope that you can relate to this in some way and find inspiration to give back to our wonderful community in any way that speaks to you. There is no shortage of pathways to volunteer and support all of the great things at CBE. Even though we say it below, we want to reiterate our enormous appreciation to everyone who made this year's High Holidays so special -- despite the deep challenges of the pandemic. We identify many of them below and we hope that you will take any opportunity you can to thank them and show your appreciation. Of course, we welcome any feedback you have for us as we move into 5782 with great hope and inspiration fueled by those around us at CBE. Please feel free to email us at President@BethElohim.org.

Enjoy!

-Jaymi Formaggio & Chuck Pollak, CBE Co-Presidents

L'Shanah tova Umetukah. As we embark upon 5782, we feel compelled to tell you how lucky you are as a congregation: For the next two years you get two Presidents for the price of one! You should know that, while Jaymi and I have graciously agreed to share the very lucrative President's salary 50-50, it seems that we're also sharing the responsibilities 75-75. So, it's a bargain for you all, really.

Being the first Co-Presidents in CBE's history, we don't really have a playbook for how to do this; so, we're still figuring it out. Still feeling our way through how to divide up some of the responsibilities. . .and I'm not only talking about which one of us gets to answer the call when someone needs a 4th for mahjonn – seriously, call either of us.

Throughout the High Holidays, we have thanked and will continue to thank many people for the work they do that makes this community possible. To start, we would like to thank two people: Immediate Past President David Leers for all his support during the peaceful transition of power, as well as his service to the congregation as President during a time of great uncertainty. I am sure it is lost on *no one* that even two people are struggling to fill his shoes. We'd also like to thank Rabbi Mike for his partnership, passion and support the past several months and we look forward to building on that going forward.

I [Chuck] would also like to thank my Co-President. Jaymi, you are a warm and caring collaborator and leader. You help keep me balanced, focused and laughing – a crucial part of this job. We were great friends before this little adventure and I am happy to report that, after a whole 124 days on the job, that friendship is stronger than ever. It is my honor to serve this community with you.

Don't worry... I [Jaymi] will get to thanking Chuck later... Last night, we heard from Rabbi Mike about the value *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh: All Jews are Responsible for One Another*. I am sure we have all grappled with what this means. We heard a few ways of thinking about this last night.

First of all, in our minds, all our members who form our Jewish community-- whether Jewish or not-- are included in the concept of *Kol Yisrael*, the Jewish People.

As we understand it, *All Jews are Responsible for One Another* does not indicate that we are NOT responsible for those not part of our Jewish community. Many of our other Jewish values demonstrate our commitment to treating all humans as being created in G-d's image, to repairing the world-- not just our little piece of it. Our CBE family proves this in so many ways-- when Sara Levine sewed and delivered face masks for group residence homes, when Barbara Frank Michaelson

continued organizing Community Supper at Mt. Cavalry throughout the pandemic, when Sue Abrams drives immigrants to court and ICE appointments. However, the concept of *All Jews are Responsible for One Another* is a call to strengthening the bonds *within* our community.

Rabbi Mike's drash last night reminded us of the recognition within Judaism that this [synagogue] is a communal endeavor. We see community everywhere at CBE, regardless of whether you are here in the sanctuary or at home on Zoom. It all starts right here.

Last year, we thought it was difficult to move High Holiday services online, but this year we discovered that hybrid services were even more challenging -- the best and the most complicated of both worlds at the same time. Consider the work that has been done by Rabbi Mike, Cantor Sarra, our Ritual Chair, Elaine Braun-Keller, and, of course, Judy Kramer - together with the choir, Cindy Silverman and Mike Stark -- to create services that reach everyone and create days which truly bring us a sense of awe. We cannot begin to describe the Herculean tasks accomplished by our amazing new synagogue administrator, Shoshana Zuckerman; our dedicated clergy assistant Lori Lafayette; and our VP of Programming, Leslie Knight. Think about the physical and technical setup that has been planned and executed using the expertise of tireless Operations volunteer George Morton, with the on-site assistance of Danny Marder.

But it is not just for High Holidays that our congregation demonstrates *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Baze*. We see this in the weekday mincha minyan, which joins most days to provide a community check-in for some and support during mourning for others. We see these bonds when congregants show up on zoom for shiva, even after a full day of staring into a camera for work. We see this when a small army of congregants magically appears to assemble and deliver goodies for Chanukah and Purim to all CBE members. We see this when our clergy, staff and lay leaders go above and beyond to ensure that b'nai mitzvah can be celebrated safely in backyards.

We take responsibility for one another in a moment when many people are tempted to look out only for themselves. In contrast, our Covid Task Force-- now led by Neal Silverman-- has met

every 1-2 weeks for the last 18 months, discussing extremely complex issues and making difficult, emotionally-charged decisions about how to keep our community active while keeping us all safe-- especially our most vulnerable congregants.

We take responsibility for one another through the efforts of our Chesed Committee. At a time when people were panic-stricken with the haphazard process of scheduling their covid vaccines, our Chesed committee-- under the leadership of Emily Blumberg-- reached out to congregants to offer assistance. They scheduled vaccines and even arranged transportation, to ensure that no one was left behind. Their efforts were so successful that they were able to take what they learned and assist countless people in the wider community in receiving a covid vaccine.

We take responsibility for each other's well being in other ways as well. Former ELC Director Susan Perry and current ELC Director Wendy Damsky, along with Les Kramer, showed up for our preschoolers and their families, making sure they had safe, high quality early childhood education. As we held our collective breath, they executed a nurturing preschool program while instituting strict covid safety protocols-- with no transmissions of covid last year.

Beth Goldstein and our amazing religious school teachers, with incredible support from Lindsay Rosenman and the School Committee, showed up to create an enriching virtual religious school supplemented with creative outdoor gatherings to foster community for our children and young families. As if that wasn't enough, Rabbi Mike and Beth showed up to create our first confirmation program in many years, as our 10th graders reaffirmed their commitment to Judaism and to their Jewish community.

Adult education took responsibility for our intellectual growth, moving exciting speakers and enriching classes online. Sisterhood and Brotherhood showed up with countless opportunities to connect socially -- virtually with book group, wine and bourbon tastings and breakfast speakers, in person with outdoor movie gatherings, knitting for a cause and hiking. Na'aseh showed up for one

another as well as the wider community, working on responses to anti-Semitism and racism, feeding the hungry, and standing up for justice everywhere.

Many of you, here in person and on Zoom, have showed up for other Jews, have showed up for this community. We thank our past and current Membership Chairs: Randi Taylor, Frank and Linda Cohen, as well as our dedicated membership committee; and we are proud to join them in welcoming new and returning members, people who joined *in a pandemic*, people who knew that their initial experience of CBE would be quite different. They saw the value in being part of this community, in being part of this communal mission, and committed their support. We welcome, and welcome back: Marilyn Leeds and David Salomon; Rob & Kaori Lindeman with Midori, Momoko, and Akira; Elizabeth Deutsh & Brian Rosen with Anika, Ari, and Zane; Edward & Nancy Kleiman; Nichole & Edward Silver with Imogen and Tobias; Sarah Levitsky & Ryan Hartman; Deanna Carlton & Gil Propp; Matthew Valleau; Mara and Jonathan Epstein with Hannah, Lily, and Sophia; Rainy Stanford & Jac Mestel; Irene & Philip Wachsler; Alyssa & Hal Jacobs with Andrew, Gabriel and Joshua; Jessica Rosenblatt and Taylor Curtis with Aaron and Solomon; Stacy and Ken Walker with Grace and Avi. We are so fortunate to have you as a part of our community.

How do we continue to embody the value of *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeih: All Jews are Responsible for One Another?* What will that mean in 5782, a year which has started with such anxiety, such uncertainty? We think it means that our community needs to be stronger than ever. We need to continue to take care of one another and step up to help one another. We are all so stressed, so stretched-- how do we make this happen? It is simple-- we do what we can.

When preparing to write these remarks, Jaymi and I asked Rabbi Mike for some pointers. One of the key things he suggested was to make it personal. Tell a story that people will connect with. Intuitively, that made sense and we set aside time to talk about our BIG stories. But, when Jaymi and I sat down to think about this, we stared at each other for a bit, shrugged and admitted

that neither of us felt like we had a great story to tell. We laughed about that for a bit, but as we talked about our own experiences with how we each started giving ourselves to this community, a light bulb started to glow. You see, our stories are not BIG stories. Nothing grandiose. Instead, our stories are really quite simple; but, we discovered, also perfect.

My [Chuck's] story starts almost 15 years ago when I didn't really know anyone at CBE. I more-or-less tagged along with Lauren to a Sisterhood event at the Acton Jazz Café, where I met a great group of Sisterhood members and a couple of their spouses. Soon after, we attended a Share-a-Shabbat dinner at the warm and welcoming home of Linda and Denis Friedman where we met more people. Soon after that, one of those people came up to me at a Friday night Oneg to say hello. . .then others did the same thing at another Oneg maybe a few weeks later. Soon, merely familiar faces became friendly ones as they greeted Lauren, Sara, Sam and me at different CBE events. Eventually, someone asked me about getting involved in something. It didn't have to be anything big, she explained, but there are many ways to be involved. You should know. . .Sue Wachter. . .that I really appreciated being asked. Thank you for reaching out.

So, I accepted that invitation and took on a Member-at-Large role on the Board, which led to a pretty full CBE resume - including a CBE Board member, a Brotherhood board member, a Shpieler (one and done, sorry), an event planner, an event helper, a softball coach (Go Tribe!), an usher, working the prize table at the Purim Carnival (probably my favorite of them all), and. . .well. . .look at me now! Sue, I don't know whether to thank you or blame you!

My [Jaymi's] story is similarly simple. When I joined CBE with a kindergartener and preschooler, many years ago, I checked the box that I would be interested in School Committee. Those of you who served with me on School Committee at that time can attest that I was a pretty lackluster member. I came to meetings... when I could. I brought bagels for Teacher Appreciation brunches. We contributed to an oneg or two. Once, we were asked to host an Israeli-themed

dinner... so we did. As the years passed, my family made many connections at CBE-- through the school, Sisterhood and Brotherhood and of course the Purim Shpiel (lost count of all my cameos)! As our lives changed, our interests and ability to contribute changed too. So, when I was asked to step up and serve as School Committee co-chair, then Education Director Search Committee chair, and then VP of Education in somewhat rapid succession, I said yes. Finally, when I was asked to be President, I said, "Absolutely not, are you crazy?" But then, I was asked to come on board with Chuck as Co-President, and I said, "Actually, that sounds wonderful." And forgive me the brief tangent here in saying that this has already become such a fun, meaningful, productive partnership. Chuck, thank you for working with me, making me laugh, and keeping me sane. Thank you for making it possible for me to give back to this community in this co-capacity.

We are by no means saying that your road will – or should – lead to the board – and certainly not the CBE Presidency– although, if you're interested, we hear there will be an opening (or two) in a few years--

The point is this: It's not complicated. It's actually very simple to live out our values, to demonstrate that *All Jews are Responsible for One Another*.

- If you're involved, reach out to someone. . .introduce yourself. Learn something about them, invite them to join you for an event or a service. Sometimes that's all it takes to get someone involved. To get them started. To make them feel welcome and part of the community.
- If you're not yet involved – or, if it's been a while – and someone asks you to help or to be involved with something – know that we welcome you, we want you and we need you for this community to survive and thrive. Start small. Maybe with a friend. Attend something. When you get that email from Hospitality Chair Marcy Hoban, asking for a greeter or zoom host, try to say yes. When Chesed asks for a meal for a congregant in need, try to say yes. Offer to zoom host that adult

education session you thought looked pretty interesting. Attend one of the many sukkot gatherings, listed on our website and on the flyer in the community court-- or bring a picnic, enjoy Klezmer music and dance with the Torahs on Simchat Torah.

Remember, even simple can be impactful. *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh, we are responsible for one another.*

You will all soon receive that annual mailing kicking off the High Holiday Appeal. You know it's coming. It does every year and this year will not disappoint. In that letter you will read about a values-based campaign conceptualized by our super-creative VP of Development, Emil Ray. You will have the opportunity to nominate CBE Heroes whom we will recognize throughout the year in the Star-Lite. As part of the Appeal, you will have the opportunity to honor those heroes with donations. Please think of those people who have shown up for us - or, maybe, for you. Maybe your hero is someone that we've already mentioned, or maybe it's the person sitting a couple of seats away -- or in the next box on your screen. Nominate them, and support our community in their honor.

Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh. Yes, it applies to financial giving, to taking pride in sustaining this Jewish community. Of course we are hoping to reach our monetary goal so we can continue to provide for the needs of this community. We seek 100% participation in this appeal – because every contribution is valuable no matter the size. Every contribution demonstrates a commitment to be responsible for your Jewish community.

Yet. . . *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh* applies more -- as Rabbi Mike talked about last night -- to how you **show up** for your community. While we hope for 100% financial participation, the true measure of our community will be how we show up for each other in the years to come. As Rabbi Mike said, “our lives are richer, more meaningful, fully-dimensional when we’re in community.”

We realize that this means different things to different people. We each have our own interests, our own needs, our own passions. Some of you may be looking for a Jewish early

childhood experience, or a religious education for your children. Others may want more adult education or cultural experiences. You may feel drawn toward tikkun olam and long for a community with whom to work toward social justice. Yet others may be looking for a social outlet. Or, maybe you have a lot going on right now and have other priorities. That's okay, because if all of us do our part to sustain this community and maintain its vibrancy, then we'll be here waiting for you when you're ready to jump back in.

Our connection to CBE is relational – not transactional. We are here because we believe in this Jewish community and that we are responsible for one another. It's not enough for each of us to support the community when we need something. We must support this community because we know that others need something.

May you each be inscribed for a good year. L'shana tova.