

Yom Kippur Appeal 5780

Erica Phillips, VP Ways & Means

Good evening. My name is Erica Phillips and it is my honor to give this year's Yom Kippur appeal.

This past June, Anshe Sholom held a Volunteer Appreciation Kiddush. I asked board members, committee chairs, staff, and clergy to send me lists of members who had volunteered their time over the past year. Names came pouring in and I was truly surprised at both the number of individuals who gave their time to our shul and the number of distinct ways in which they did it.

Between mikvah attendants, eruv checkers, Torah readers, soiree and SoulCycle event committee members, hospitality providers, and more, I estimate that more than 130 members volunteered almost 8,000 hours of their time in this year alone. Add to that the over 1,000 meals members of our community made and delivered to one another in times of need and you are likely to get close to 10,000 hours spent since last Yom Kippur making our community stronger.

Independent Sector reports that the value of one volunteer hour in 2019 is worth over \$25.00 to the organization for which someone volunteered. With that calculation, our members have volunteered over \$250,000 for this shul. We clearly have a wealth of dedicated members and for that I thank you.

Now it is my job to take that wealth and encourage this amazing community to give financially with the same consistency, generosity, and excitement that they give their time. Just how much stronger financially could we be if we harnessed that "volunteer wealth" into our annual donation dollars?

Now let me be clear. In no way am I trying to have you give money instead of volunteering, nor am I trying to discount the necessity of those hours. Those hours are the engine that makes this community run. But the other thing that makes us run are financial contributions and the Yom Kippur Appeal is this shul's single largest fundraiser.

Now, I know most of you will make a donation happily and are likely to give at about the same level you gave last year. What I am asking tonight is that you allow yourself a few minutes to think more carefully about what personally drives you to give and whether that drive can push you to give at a higher level this year than in the past.

So let's start with what we know. I asked some individuals why they currently donate money to ASBI and I got some wonderful answers - about keeping the community strong, providing a signal that the shul is a priority in their lives, and supporting the operational costs of the shul. Because let's be honest, it takes money to host Shabbat programs and ice cream socials, serve a robust kiddush, cool the building on a hot summer day, repair ritual objects, and employ and support our professional staff. And, of course, they also gave because someone asked them to.

I bet these reasons sound familiar. But remember, I'm trying to get you to think differently this year about your motivations to give and the impact that your contribution can have on this shul over this next year.

So, I have 5 new reasons to share with you, particular to this community in this moment. Five reasons to rethink your past giving and open up the possibilities of what you can do to support ASBI now through this Yom Kippur appeal.

#1. This year, ASBI welcomed 36 new babies, celebrated 8 b'nei mitzvah, saw 10 members get engaged and married, and supported 30 members after the loss of a loved one. If you or your family relied on this community for one of these lifecycle events - if your celebration was amplified or your mourning was supported because the people in this room came out for you - then you give, you give because this year in particular, we were there for you and you give so that next year we can be there for others.

#2. This year, ASBI was a victim of a hate crime. From the tragedy at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh to the rise of anti-semitism on college campuses, we are not immune to this trend in society. If you read or heard about an act of hate this year that felt a little too "close to home", if you came to shul that shabbas following the Tree of Life shooting and felt comfort in seeing how full this sanctuary was and how inspiring Rabbanit Sarna's drasha was and if you are grateful for the off-duty police officers and volunteer committee that spend countless hours keeping this community safe and if you appreciate the security enhancements that are constantly being made to this building, then you give this year in particular so that we have the resources to continue this important work.

#3. This year, ASBI got a new roof, a new sukkah, and are fortunate enough to be holding our kiddush in a renovated JCC gym. We are also in the process of working with architects to develop potential plans to renovate other parts of this building, including this sanctuary. Within this year, decisions will be made about what this community needs and can feasibly spend to make this building, our "home", the best it can be. If this is exciting to you, if you want to help us maximize the potential of this space, then you give this year, so our options and creative thinking are not limited by our resources.

#4. This year, our religious leadership team and staff launched a new Podcast, listened to by over 125 unique people each of its 15 episodes; Mishmar, a new after-school Judaic studies program; Learn and Earn, which inspires ASBI youth to learn new skills; Shabbat Table, a shabbat dinner series made by and for the community; and a community Seder. These were all new initiatives this year, some driven by a steep growth in the number of children in our community, over 300 under the age of 18, and some driven by the creative thinking of our dedicated members. Give more this year if what excites you is reading in the bulletin about new programs and because you understand that with more resources comes new ideas.

And #5. My final reason to give more this year than you did for last year's YKA is that 2020 will be the 150th year of Anshe Sholom. If you were here on Rosh Hashanah, you heard Rabbi Wolkenfeld tell the story of Dov Ber Ginsburg in the summer of 1870 and his straw hat. The founding members of this shul left a legacy and the foundation upon which our shul is built on today. It is now up to us to continue that legacy for generations to come.

It is because of this that I am delighted to share with you the launch of our new Anshe Sholom Legacy Program. We are now poised to build a stronger foundation by accepting and encouraging legacy or planned gifts. Adding a bequest to your will or making ASBI a partial beneficiary to your life insurance are just some of the ways you ensure this community will be here for our children and future generations beyond.

In fact, many of you have already generously named ASBI in your wills or as beneficiaries of your retirement funds. For that, I thank you and hope to use your leadership and forward thinking as inspiration for the community to join you in this special fundraising opportunity.

There we are. Five reasons to consider when making your Yom Kippur contribution this year. It is my hope that something that I said tonight resonates with you - that you are proud of what this community has accomplished this year and inspired to give so it can do more in the year to come and beyond. Just think about what I could say in next year's Yom Kippur appeal if everyone in this room pushed themselves a little farther. And just think about how far this community has come in its first 150 years and how strong we can make it for the future.

There are cards on the back of your chairs that you are welcomed to hand in tonight. You can pass them towards the aisle where they are being collected now. You can also place them in a box in the lobby when you leave.

On behalf of my family, Donnie, Caroline, Leora, and Shai, we wish you and your families a G'mar chatima tova and a happy and healthy new year.