

Good Yuntif,

Not too long after I became the President of CBI, my brother and I had a long visit on the phone, each filling in the other about our lives. After learning that I had become the new president of the congregation he asked me if the reason I'd taken the job was to make up for our not being Jewish enough growing up. I was stumped for a moment. In the modern world, 'are you Jewish enough?' seems like it might be the 5<sup>th</sup> question at Seder, or maybe it's just what the child who knows not what to ask, asks. I took a moment to consider how to answer my brother and then it hit me, Beth Israel is my home and my family, and my job as president is to look after both.

That's the heart and soul of my presidency. I want to spend the next year and a half stewarding our congregation, caring for our members, staff, clergy, and our buildings. As I walk through our congregation's buildings, I see reminders of all aspects of my life. I see my daughter standing on the bimah, next to Judy Mullinix, wearing high heels as she prepared for her bat mitzvah. It was quite a sight—Lele in shorts, a t-shirt, and 4-inch heels, holding the little Torah, practicing

walking down the bimah steps. Can you imagine her tripping on the aging carpet? I could, and the possibility of her fall panicked me! And when I stand in Smith auditorium, I can see where her first CDC classroom and playground were. I found a photograph the other day of Lele and Emily Baker playing in their first ‘new building’ classroom—high heels on one and socks on the other, with no carpet on the floor. First, we didn’t have carpet, then we had carpet, and then it needed replacing. An interesting cycle of life, but a very real one.

Another of my strongest CBI memories is tied to a conversation that I had with Rabbi Folberg. I was still in graduate school when he and I talked about our congregation’s need to grow, and he asked me to help make the growth possible. He asked for my support at a time when I assumed that I wouldn’t be staying in Austin—grad school was meant to take me away from here. He showed me that it didn’t matter if I was a transitory or permanent member of CBI, what mattered was the change that I could make in that moment in time. Investing in CBI’s future, regardless of whether I would raise my children here or not, meant that I had the opportunity to invest in the potential of our congregation. The

donation I made was a commitment to the future of our congregation, and if Rabbi Folberg hadn't asked for my help, I wouldn't have seen myself as a link in the chain.

A decade or so later, having returned to Austin and raising my daughter here, Milton Smith, of blessed memory, sat me down to talk about giving again to the building fund. In those days I was a not-so-young mother of a young child, and the education building was the center of our lives. Giving to the building fund wasn't an abstract concept any longer, it was an investment in my family's future. So, I dug in and gave again—as did many, many other families. L'dor v'dor was a very real concept for me, and my donation was all about making sure that my daughter would always have a congregational home. At that moment in time, I was focused on our immediate life and the immediate needs of CBI.

I am no longer the 25-year old who joined the congregation to have a place to say kaddish for my mother. I am now the 55-year old who can reflect on my decades of membership and the role that Beth Israel has played in my life. Although my mother died very young, my father is a

feisty 92-year old. I'm working on the assumption that I too will be a feisty nonagenarian. I wonder, who will say kaddish for me? Just as I couldn't foresee my return to Austin after graduate school, I cannot know if my daughter will return and settle here. What I do know is that this place, this home, must continue to flourish long after I am gone. It is incumbent on me to ensure a healthy future for our home.

I stand before you, asking that you make the same financial commitment to Beth Israel that I've made. Please consider making a donation to our operating fund so that we are able to maintain and repair these buildings, and please consider ways in which you can carry forward your legacy to the congregation. Before you leave tonight, please take a moment to fill out the card in your machzor, letting us know if you would like to discuss an immediate or legacy donation, and whether you would like to volunteer to become a member of the Capital Campaign committee that we are in the process of forming.

This Yom Kippur we stand side-by-side as one family reciting the Viddui, asking God's forgiveness for sins that *we have not committed*; I stand with each of you because it is my responsibility to share your

burdens and help alleviate your pain. In much the same way, *I need your help* sharing in the burden of keeping these buildings in good repair. We must ensure that Congregation Beth Israel is here so that we can worship, celebrate, and, yes, mourn together. Whether you have need of these sacred spaces in the coming years isn't the point; the point is that we must stand together as one family solidifying the future of our congregation for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

Please fill out your insert card and return it to an usher on your way out or go to the link on our website and make your commitment to our future.

Shana Tova