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Beth El Hebrew Congregation

3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304

Attention: Becky McMurry

Mailname

Address 1

Address 2

City, State Zip

Re: Annual Free Will Dues Commitment

Dear Primary First Name and Secondary First Name,

Beth El Hebrew Congregation is a sacred Jewish community for all who seek connection, meaning, and healing. As a vital part of our Congregation’s family, I hope you feel that we are working hard to keep you connected—spiritually and technologically—to our Clergy, to each other, and to the greater Jewish community. As I finish my two terms as President, I am grateful for your continued support.

**At this time each year, we ask you to renew your annual Free Will dues commitment to financially sustain our Beth El community. This is a critical step in planning for our future as a Congregation.**

Much has changed since the pandemic began in the Spring of 2020, but our Free Will dues model still continues to be our primary source of revenue. We depend on it for financial sustainability as it comprises nearly 70% of the funds we receive. While we are seeing some signs that previous sources of revenue are beginning to recover from the pandemic, they continue to lag well behind pre-pandemic levels. That being said, we have made progress in replacing some that we lost to the pandemic, created new sources of revenue, and have seen a small net increase in our membership. However, it is your generous membership dues contributions that will remain the single most important element of our ability to operate.

As we plan for the new synagogue fiscal year, we also anticipate increased expenses due to our desire to continue to improve on our great programming, educational offerings, and facilities and grounds. Unfortunately, inflation and other economic headwinds are likely to impact our operating expenses, which makes your dues contributions even more critical as our community grows.

When I made this request last year, our fellow members supported Beth El generously and those commitments helped us to offset the multifaceted challenges of rising operating and capital costs coupled with the inflationary economic realities we are now facing. Happily, we are close to meeting our budgetary goals.

***We need your Free Will dues commitment this year to ensure we can continue to meet our budgetary needs in order to build and grow our wonderful community.***

Please note as you read this letter, and as you eventually decide to make your dues commitment, each year we calculate our Member’s financial contribution in three parts added together: (1) Your Free Will dues commitment; (2) a $175 fee for the Building Improvement Fund; and (3) $175 fee for Security. The Building Improvement Fund and Security Fees are not optional and will be added to the dues commitment. Please see below for more background concerning these fees.

We recognize that our members have different giving capacities and are at different stages of their lives. Through ups and downs, the Beth El community is here, ready to lift you up and walk with you through life’s seasons. We thank you for giving what you can to keep our community alive and thriving.

**A tax-deductible sustaining pledge of at least $3,100 per member family unit for the upcoming year** will help us meet our financial needs.

We understand that not all will be able to meet the sustaining pledge amount of our voluntary Free Will dues program. We simply ask that each member contribute what they are able to. However, if you cannot commit to the full sustaining pledge amount of $3,100, we hope you will consider giving $100 more than you pledged last year.

***Since we only ask families to pledge what they can, our Free Will voluntary model only works if those families who can give more than the sustaining pledge do so.***

We appreciate the generosity of those who are able to meet this call to go above and beyond the sustaining pledge amount. To help determine your commitment level, we have attached a useful chart. Many families use the metric of 2% of annual income as a base for your donation.

**We are all in this true act of Tzedakah as one congregation and together we will continue to build on our communal commitments to Chesed (loving kindness), Mishpacha (family), Mesorah (tradition), Chochmah (wisdom), Yisrael (Israel), and Tzedek (justice)!**

Please reach out to me if you have any questions or needs. We are grateful for your contribution and ongoing support.

L’Shalom,

Alan J. Cohn, President



***A Note About Fee Increases***

*Building Improvement fees pay for our capital expenses. Just this past year, we had significant unanticipated costs related to our HVAC systems making major investments in our facility. These fees, along with generous support from the Permanent Endowment Fund, helped to pay for these unexpected costs. As our building ages, we need to prepare for these expenses to increase.*

*In addition, we must continue to invest in security needs.* ***According to the ADL, there were a total of 3,697 antisemitic incidents reported across the U.S. in 2022****; the highest total since the ADL began its tracking. Making sure we can continue to meet our safety needs is essential and our highest priority.*

*Based on the increasing costs of equipment and materials and our commitment to capital and security needs, we have slightly raised these fees. As noted above, these fees are a requirement of membership and are in addition to your Free Will dues commitment. We appreciate your understanding and support.*