



**Kol Nidre Appeal – 5777
October 8, 2017**

By Arnie Goldberg

Shana Tovah. I am again deeply honored to stand before you as President of this inspiring institution and to make my second Kol Nidre appeal. I thank you for your good wishes, support, and kind words throughout my term. I thank each of you for being a part of Congregation Beth Judea – from members whose families have been affiliated with our community for multiple generations, to those of you who are here for your first Kol Nidre service. If I missed asking forgiveness from anyone, for any wrong I might have done to them, please accept my apology. As president of the Congregation, I also ask for your forgiveness for any hurtful actions or words, that may have come from our staff, officers, or Board of Directors. We are not a perfect group, but we do try to learn from our mistakes and strive to better our congregational family, and our Jewish community.

As I look ahead to the end of my two-year term as your President on June 30th, 2017, I have begun to reflect on the past five years, I am reminded of the French saying “the more things change, the more they stay the same”. As an example, if you recall 2008, the Presidential election, the economy, the Middle East and terrorism were the major issues of the day. Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan were in the news daily, and while we had yet to learn of Isis, we were all too familiar with radical terrorist groups. So while it appears that the French expression may describe the world around us, Beth Judea defies that expression. I hope you will agree that we have become a far better place.

Our Community is strong, our membership stable, and our school is one of the best in the Chicagoland area. Our new Focus on Families program has been well received and is continuing to grow. We have two daily minyanim. Our B’nai Mitzvah program is strong and the students who complete our Hebrew school program and B’nai Mitzvah training are well versed in Jewish traditions and in reading Torah and Haftarah.

I am also pleased that our support for the State of Israel has never been greater thanks to our Israel committee. Last year in addition to several speakers discussing various topics regarding Israel, we had our largest contingent of delegates to the AIPAC convention in Washington D.C. Further, I am extremely excited for those Congregants who will be going on our generational trip to Israel starting on December 19th. There will be four B’nai Mitzvah celebrated during this trip by the 47 participants. This will be our second Congregational trip in just over two years.

Our Programming over the last several years has attracted high attendance as we have attempted to meet the varied interests of our community with festive holiday programs, renowned speakers, participation in social justice projects, and many Jewish communal programs

to enhance engagement and cooperation.

As to infrastructure, our building maybe older, but we have remediated many physical problems and are setting aside monies for replacement of major components. We have a new roof, repaved our parking lot, new carpets, chairs, lights, and a security system. The parsonage is in tip top shape and being actively used for youth activities and programs.

We also know how to have a good time together and enjoy ourselves as experienced by those who have attended our Purim Masquerade.

Most importantly, we consistently and professionally attempt to meet the spiritual needs of our Congregants by giving complete support when they face difficult times. Our Hesed committee, along with our Helping Hand committee, are there for those who need assistance. Our clergy is top notch when helping those who have lost a loved one and are in need of spiritual guidance.

On December 3rd, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of our Hazzan Roger Weisberg with a Dinner and Concert featuring Cantor Alberto Mizrachi along with other Cantors from the Chicagoland area. This tribute will mark the beginning of the countdown to the 50th Anniversary of our Congregation in June of 2018. I hope everyone will support this celebration.

As strong as I believe our Synagogue is today, we still face many challenges! Over the next few years we will be concerning ourselves with major issues. As President I had the opportunity to meet with many other Conservative Congregation Presidents. One thing I learned was that the challenges we face here in Long Grove are not unique to us. Whether it is non-affiliation, attendance on Shabbat, interfaith marriage of our children, aging Congregants, or financial and dues issues, and we are not alone in seeking solutions to our problems. Maybe the biggest test that we, as a Conservative Congregation face, is secularism and non - affiliation. Many families of all ages believe that they are Jewish simply because they live in a Jewish neighbor, practice Jewish traditions, attend family holiday dinners, and maintain a Jewish household. They are representing an essentially non-religious approach as the synagogue has always been the centerpiece of Judaism from the days of the First Temple.

The fact that many families do not deem affiliation with a congregation as a key component of being Jewish has caused membership numbers to decrease not only in our Congregation but also at many other Congregations. That, along with financial concerns, has many families reevaluating their affiliation with a synagogue. At CBJ, in addition to our long term decrease in membership we are also faced with an aging congregation. Over 60% of our member families are over sixty years of age. Not only are a lower percentage of younger families choosing not to affiliate, but also the demographics of Buffalo Grove, Long Grove and Arlington Heights are changing. I frequently hear that many younger Jewish families are moving to the City, east to Deerfield, Northbrook, and Highland Park and North to Mundelein and Vernon hills.

I did not accept the position as Executive Vice president and then President just for the honor of the position. It is an arduous job, but knowing that we are making progress to meet the

challenges we face is extremely rewarding.

The Professional staff, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors are keenly aware of our challenges and are trying to resolve them. Our Focus on Family program coupled with our step dues program has attracted more new families this year, than in the last two years. Our K class is 30% larger than last year's class. This clearly shows the results of our efforts to attract new young families.

We have formed a Strategic Planning committee which has been working on a road map for our future. One definite change is that the Hazzan will be retiring as of June 30th 2018. This may seem a long way off, but in essence, it is closer than we think. We want to be prepared for the next chapter at Beth Judea.

So on this Yom Kippur Eve I set before you the same challenge that Moses set before the Israelites as they entered the Promised land. Moses was prohibited by God from entering the Promised Land. As he said goodbye he gave the Israelites a challenge. I set before you this day, life and prosperity, or death and adversity. Our Kol Nidre Appeal is the major yearly fund raiser for CBJ. This is our shul, this is where we come back to hear the Shofar, this is where we come for aufrufs, baby namings, b'nai mitzvah and this is where we come to say Kaddish for those loved ones we have lost; we need to maintain our synagogue, to make certain that it is here for future congregants. Your gift will assist in sustaining our Congregation and will continue to give CBJ life and prosperity. It is now the time to give. I ask you to recall the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel "do as much as you can, and then just a little more". For those members who have not made a Yom Kippur gift in the past please consider giving this year; and for those who have given please consider increasing from pledge from last year by folding down the next highest tab.

On behalf of the Staff, the Executive Committee, and the Board of Directors, I wish everyone shana tova u-metukah, a good and sweet year, and g'mar hatimah tovah. I pray that all our members and their families are inscribed in the book of life for a year of health, happiness, peace, and prosperity, thank you again for allowing me to serve as your President, the role of a lifetime.

Arnie Goldberg
CBJ President