



Kol Nidre Appeal 5778

by Sidney Mathias

As I came to the synagogue tonight I looked up to the sky. I also walked around our synagogue building. I am here to report that contrary to rumors we are hearing, the sky is not falling and the synagogue is not falling apart. I say this both physically and figuratively. Our members are holding up the sky and our members are holding up our synagogue. We are collectively keeping our synagogue together as we always have in the past.

We are still here.

And with much joy, we will be celebrating our 50th anniversary this year. We are going to celebrate our achievements and our history. We are planning monthly events starting on December 3rd with a "Morning to Remember" program led by Rabbi Klatzker and culminating in a major celebration on April 29, 2018. Please join us in the planning and the celebration of these events.

Within these 50 years we have faced financial struggles, changes in clergy, differing visions for new and improved facilities, and expansion of programming to remain vital and inclusive. Each of you has contributed in different ways to ease us through these struggles and changes. We counted on you in the past and we count on you to be part of our future growth and change.

Finances, clergy, facilities, programming, inclusiveness... these are more than words..

This is the structure that holds us together..ever evolving, ever changing, holding strong **ONLY** with your help and support.

We are still here.

And yet there are big elephants in the room of suburbia that effect CBJ, that I know you are all aware of.

The numbers of non-affiliated sadly continues to grow.

Our community continues to show increased diversity of people of differing faiths and backgrounds.

We have met the challenges of the past and we remain strong. We at Congregation Beth Judea do not turn anyone away.

We are as strong as our members. That's why I am hopeful about our future. I am looking forward to seeing what we will achieve together.

We are still here

This is a year of great change for CBJ. We welcome our new clergy and look to the future. Please be a part of this change and attend our focus groups on October 22nd and 24th to gather input and ideas regarding our new clergy.

We are a composite of over 500 families. Over 1000 individual members.

Each of us has differing needs and expectations.

Each of us contributes in different ways.

I am asking you tonight to think not only of the needs and expectations of you and your family, but to also think of the needs of our synagogue as a whole.

We need your financial support, your volunteerism, your optimism, and your commitment, in order for CBJ to continue and to thrive.

Tzedakah has seen us through from generation to generation, for over 5,000 years. And yet it comes down to each of us to give, to commit, to donate. Through our individual generosity, we as a people have survived. Let us continue this age old tradition.

We are still here.

My friends:

So What is a synagogue? What is this vision we have?

Let's take a moment to really think about this?

A synagogue is a place where we come together spiritually and physically to share our past, our present, our future, our heritage, our judaism, our G-d.

A synagogue is a place where we share joy and sadness.

A synagogue is a place to comfort and be comforted.

A synagogue is a place where parents rediscover themselves through their children, and children discover themselves through their parents.

A synagogue is a place where people who don't know each other become friends.

A synagogue is a place where people who already know each other become friends.

A synagogue is a place that can sometimes feel more like home than home does, if you let it.

A synagogue is a place where they treat you like family, even when you'd rather be treated like a guest.

A synagogue is a place where you can say you are from when visiting the sick or bringing food to the needy for Maot Chitim.

A synagogue is a place where people don't think about getting; rather, they think about giving, of themselves and of their time.

Please add to our vision.

As we have done in the past, tonight you have received an envelope with 2 cards inside. It is important to our synagogue that you return both cards with your kind donations of time and funds. There are both essential for our growth.

Our world today faces tremendous challenges. We see actions and rhetoric that shock us to our core. We see anti-semitism all over the world including the United States and especially on our college campuses even here in Illinois. You see the signs and hear the chants. You see and hear them on television. I saw and heard them in person while at rallies sponsored by the Jewish Federation. Jews must defend the right of Israel to exist as Israel deals with threats from unrest in the Middle East. No matter our partisan beliefs, we continue to hope and pray for a world filled with peace and understanding. As a synagogue we find solace in our solidarity and in our strength. We reflect upon our beliefs, actions, and commitments. What can we do to make our world a better place. What do we believe in? Do we believe in the sustainability of our Synagogue, its dedication to the Jewish People, Torah, Learning, Tzedakah, and human dignity and rights. Tonight we look to G'd to inspire us to lead the way. But we also need to look deep within ourselves. How can each of us make a difference for our synagogue.

I learned some wisdom from our son Rabbi Elliot Mathias, this week that I'd like to share with you tonight.

There is something strange about Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the year. It is the New Year in the Jewish calendar and also the Day of Judgment, Yom Ha-Din. Really, you would think that the Day of Judgment should be the last day of the year not the first day of the year. When you think about it, when you take a test you take it at the end of the year if your being judged on what you learned and what you accomplished up until that point. So you take a test at the end. You don't take a test on the first day of school. You take a test at the end of the school year. So why is Rosh Hashanah the first day of the year, the Day of Judgment? So I heard a wise Rabbi once say that we are making a mistake about Rosh Hashanah. We mistakenly think that Rosh Hashanah is judging us on our past. Really it is judging us on our

future. It is judging us on this Rosh Hashanah who we want to be this coming year. Who is that person that I want to be this year. How do I want to become greater? How do I want to make a bigger difference in the world? How do I make a bigger impact in the world? How do I make a bigger difference to the Jewish People? That's what we are being judged on. The idea of Rosh Hashanah is to stand before G'd and say G'd forgive for what I did before. I fell short. I didn't live up to the person I want to be. I didn't accomplish what I wanted to accomplish. But I am committed this year to become greater, to accomplish more, to do more and to make a bigger difference in the world. It is that commitment that we are being judged on this Rosh Hashana. And we at Congregation Beth Judea are focused on the future. We are focused on being greater and more effective. To enable our synagogue to be a place where we all want to be to provide for our spiritual needs, and social needs, and our need to help others. We want to be judged on our future. We understand that we can become greater and accomplish more.

We choose to be here because we have learned that our synagogue matters. This place matters to young families looking to immerse their toddlers in Judaism. It matters to seniors meeting friends at our events. It matters to families whose children participate in services or recite the Ha Motzi at home. It matters to couples celebrating an auf ruf or baby naming in the same synagogue where they were bar or bat mitzvahed. It matters to someone who is sick and receives a call from our clergy or our Hessed committee, and it matters to every person who wants to say kaddish. Whatever your needs, your synagogue family is here for you, to help, to comfort, to offer ideas and to pull you up. These are not just words. We have caring members who have become your friends and are concerned for your well-being. Let us know what we can do for you. The value of CBJ lies with the people who are sitting around you. They are the ones who open their arms and put them around you, who deliver food to your door when you are ill, the friends who drive Hebrew school carpool with you. Here, you are always surrounded by family, by people who support you through life's most difficult challenges, and celebrate life's joys with you as well.

So today, each of us needs to make a choice. You cannot leave the decision until tomorrow, next week or next Yom Kippur...and you definitely cannot leave the decision to other members of the community. If you agree that our synagogue matters...you need to choose to support our synagogue and invest in its future.

We are still here.

We are here for you just like you are here for us. That's who we are.

The majority of funds received from your Yom Kippur pledges allows us to reduce dues for those in need. It is the Kol Nidre funds that enable us to help maintain membership for those in financial need. Without your past donations, some families would not be here today. Without your donations and pledges today, some families may not be here next year. Remember, that gifts are like "scholarships" for members who can't afford to pay full dues.

We appreciate what you given in time and money in the past. We would not be here after 50 years without those generous donations of time and money. I am asking everyone here to

increase your monetary and time donations by at least 10%. If you are a first time giver, please consider giving a meaningful gift.

Please take your pledge cards, turn down a tab for a contribution amount, turn down a tab for giving of your time and pass the cards to the ushers.

On behalf of myself, my wife, Rita and our family, and on behalf of the officers, our entire Board and our professional staff, l'shana tova umetukah, a happy, healthy and sweet New Year.

May this coming year be a year of blessing and success and together may we all continue to hold up the sky and our synagogue.