

## **KOL NIDRE APPEAL – 2006**

L'Shana Tova.

Gam Zu LeTova.

It wasn't until just a few short months ago that I better understood what those Hebrew words meant. Listen again please - Gam Zu LeTova. Those are words I heard often back in June – when I was fortunate enough to travel to Israel with others from Congregation Beth Judea. Gam Zu LeTova – can mean ‘this too is for the good’, or ‘everything happens for the best’. But as we heard this phrase through our travels in Eretz Yisrael – Gam Zu LeTova - simply means ‘It's all good’.

Those words, spoken often by our tour guide, Jonaton, came to mean a great deal to me in many ways. I think of those words on a regular basis when I think of Congregation Beth Judea. Yes – it is all good here at Beth Judea. How fortunate we are in being able to say Gam Zu LeTova when it comes to our home here. Let me share a bit with you about why that is. Actually, it is as simple as one word – and that word is ‘you’.

It is because of you that we have been able to thrive as a Conservative Congregation for over 37 years. It is because of you that we continue to practice the principles of Conservative Judaism. You allow us to keep the doors open of our Beit Tefilah, our house of prayer. You allow us to have our Beit Midrash, our house of study. And you allow us to have our Beit Knesset, our house of Gathering. In fact, as you look around today, you should feel proud of how we are celebrating all of those principles together – at this one single moment.

Last year I made a promise at the time of my appeal – and I will do so again. I promise that I am not here to tell you about all of the different opportunities for you to practice Judaism in our hallways. That is something that we publish well and I will leave that to your own personal challenges. It is your decision to bring yourself in our doors, in whatever manner comforts you most. I am here, though, to share a greater message of responsibility as to how our community thrives and why that one simple word, you, is important.

Listen to the words of Helen Keller in respect to those responsibilities that we need to fulfill this evening. She stated the following: “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great

and noble”. So tonight, I believe, it is our chief duty, together, to accomplish a small task as if it was great and noble. Tonight I am asking you to make that commitment to accomplish that small task of a great and noble force. Tonight I am asking for you to make a few commitments.

Let’s talk about that word commitment for a moment. I will share with you something I saw the other day – on a Starbucks cup. Printed on that cup was The Way I See It - #76 and I will paraphrase as follows: “The irony of commitment is that it’s deeply liberating – in work, in play, in love. To commit is to remove your head as the barrier to your life”. Now, how do these words by a New York City Starbucks customer, mean anything in respect to us here at Congregation Beth Judea?

Well, if you really stop to think about it – those words mean an awful lot. How refreshing to hear that in making a commitment one can remove barriers and feel liberated in their actions both to themselves and with others. It is with that mindset that I am asking for you to make a commitment – to yourselves, the Jewish community and to our Beit Knesset, Beth Judea.

Now – what is that commitment I am asking? That commitment is not simply inside that envelope you are holding – for it is really inside of you. Yes – that word I mentioned earlier – you. Inside of you is the opportunity to really make a difference in all that we do here at Beth Judea. As you look at the pledge card in that envelope what do you really see? What do those tabs on that card really represent? How has the bending of those tabs for the last 37 years brought us together here today? What commitment are you willing to make today? I am asking you to bend that tab. Bend that tab makes a statement. Bend that tab that makes a commitment. For all in our community - bend that tab – more so than you ever did before.

And – as you look at that pledge card tonight you may notice something new, something different. Note that very last tab. It is not a financial amount beyond our consideration. It is something far more attainable to all of us. It is a tab that simply asks you to make that commitment to be of service. When I ask you to look inside yourself, to look for that freedom I talked about which comes with commitment, I am asking you to make, perhaps, a new type of promise. A new type of promise that is in addition to that of a financial nature. It is not a promise we can bill you for. It is not a promise that we can send you a reminder to pay. It is not a promise that you can write a check for. However, that last tab – to be of

service - it is a promise, a statement, a commitment for you to be of service to not only yourself but to our community. **You** will choose how to be of service, **you** will take the action to enter our doors. **You** will feel good for having done so and we as a community will be all that much richer for your actions. Now is the time for you to be of service. I am asking you to please bend that tab too.

My family has already bent more than one tab. Your board of directors has already bent more than one tab. It's now your turn to make that decision too. May you all inscribe your own good deeds in the book of life in this New Year of 5767. But before you do so – please remember my opening words. Remember that those tabs **you** bend today will allow us to continue to say, on behalf of Congregation Beth Judea - Gam Zu LeTova – It's all good!

Gmar Chatimah Tova.....