

Marilyn Saltzman Rosh Hashanah Speech

Shana Tova. It's wonderful to see so much of our Beth Evergreen family here today! Whether you are members or guests, we are so glad you were able to join us today to celebrate both Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah...a double mitzvah.

Just think for a moment about the power of this day... Jewish communities around our state, country and the world are chanting the same prayers, singing the same songs, and yes, listening to a High Holiday appeal from their president! Luckily, your president will be giving a SHORT speech!

First, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to Neshama Mousseau for all she has done to make the High Holy Days go smoothly at CBE. Neshama works tirelessly for months and the logistics are mind boggling. But her hard work and know-how result in a positive experience for us all. Thanks also to all of our committees for their work on the holidays and all year long: the Ritual Committee, led by the able Nate Walowitz; the Music Committee, led by the talented Marc Isaacson; the Kitchen Committee chaired by incredible Leah Conner; the Building Committee, led by Jim Ottinger; social action, led by Judy Sherman, education led by Randi Murray (who is also co-coordinating childcare with Jill Wildenberg this year), membership led by Joanne Baum and Mitzvah led by Barbara Morris. Also – thank you to the ushers and the Board members for making us feel welcome and handling logistics. Special thanks to Rabbi Jamie and Steve Brodsky for all they bring to our HH celebration.

I mentioned that Jews around the world are gathered to pray together. Unlike monks who may seek solitude on isolated mountain peaks to worship, we Jews are a gregarious bunch. And I know of none more gregarious than those at Beth Evergreen. Whether we're worshipping, playing softball, knitting kippot or studying Mussar, we truly enjoy each other's company. As one of our board members said, "CBE is a fun place to be Jewish." We LIKE each other and we like to be together. And we take pride in being mountain Jewish...a unique breed.

Like many things in life that are already established for us, we may tend to take CBE for granted. The building is here. Our wonderful Rabbi is available whenever we need him for pastoral counseling, for bar mitzvahs, for weddings, for HH services. We have a Jewish community that plays and prays together. But these opportunities did not happen by accident. It took the leadership of a few strong and committed Jews, some who are still members today, to create what we are experiencing here and now.

We have built CBE through legacy, leadership and literacy, turning our Jewish knowledge into practice. In a few moments, some congregants will share their views of these three values, but first, I'd like to set the stage.

First: Legacy. Compared to the history of Judaism, the legacy of CBE is short. A mere 36 years ago, there were only a handful of Jews in our mountain community. But they found

each other (engaging in a Jew hunt, as founder Bernie Goldman fondly called it) and started Beth Evergreen. Our founding fathers and mothers formed a congregation because they recognized the value of nurturing Jewish life in our mountain community and supporting each other. And they thought it was important to build Jewish literacy and a legacy for their children.

When they first started, congregants met informally in each other's homes with lay leaders. Later, the congregation met in the Methodist Church for many years. And finally, the time had come to build a lasting legacy that would serve mountain Jews for decades to come.

Which brings me to Leadership: A group of less than 100 families, led by strong presidents, the board and committees, took the task to heart. In a few short years, these dedicated individuals not only built our inspiring synagogue, but also hired our first full-time Rabbi, Rabbi Jamie. These families donated their time and effort, and significant financial resources – well over \$1 million – to build what we enjoy every time we come to CBE.

And, finally, Literacy: The more I discover and appreciate how hard others before me worked to make CBE a vibrant community, the more committed I become to my volunteer efforts to sustain and grow our congregation. Similarly, as I learn more about my Jewish roots and traditions through attending services and studying Mussar, I am encouraged to expand my understanding and put my learning into practice. Knowledge breeds a thirst for knowledge; commitment of leaders fosters the emergence of new leadership.

It's important to note that over half of our members have joined since we built this inspiring home in 2003. We are now 200 families strong. That's the good news. But we can't ... and don't want to...continue to grow at an exponential rate to ensure our financial stability. It's just not fiscally wise to depend on new member growth to keep us economically sound.

So how do we continue to provide what you value – weekly and holiday services, religious school, adult education, music, special events, social action, lifecycle support? If we **cannot** grow much in numbers, and we **do not want** large dues increases, we have only one choice. So here comes the appeal!

I know that talking about money is an uncomfortable topic, especially at the High Holidays. It may be hard for you to hear, and asking for money is certainly not my favorite thing to do. But today we have a packed house, and it is our best opportunity to reach the majority of the Congregation. Our ultimate goal is to be sufficiently successful to ensure the financial stability of the congregation so we don't have to keep asking.

Your board has thought long and hard about our fund-raising efforts. Our overarching goal is to create a culture of giving, where every member takes pride in his or her

contribution, no matter how small or how large. Our goal is 100 percent participation at your level of comfort, whether you are a founding member or joined in the last month.

Our monetary goals are ambitious yet we believe they are achievable, and all are based on 36, or double chai (for life), to celebrate our legacy of 36 years. The goals:

To raise \$36,000 this fiscal year to ensure our financial stability.

To raise \$360,000 in three years to pay off the mortgage on the building.

To raise \$3.6 million in 10 years to establish an endowment that provides ongoing financial security.

Why raise these funds? I asked the board to jot down some reasons, and their answers ranged from the practical to the sublime. They suggested that paying off the mortgage will free up funds for other programs and stabilize dues. They said it's a mitzvah to give, we have pride of ownership in our building, and we care about our community. And we want to give all the opportunity to participate in the holy work of sustaining sacred communal space (I think that one came from the Rabbi).

Not only are our goals based on the number 36, but so is our appeal as you will notice on the cards on your seat and in the foyer. You may choose to contribute \$360 (less than \$1 per day) this fiscal year to ensure our financial stability. That amount is \$10 less than it just cost me to renew my annual membership in the Evergreen recreation centers. And just a tad more than the veterinary estimate to clean my dog's teeth! If 100 families donated \$360 each, we'd reach our goal! Of course, if you are able, we'd love to see the larger contribution of \$3,600. That's less than \$10 a day.

Notice too that there is an "other" category on the pledge card. We are asking you to open your heart and your wallet and give whatever you are able. No contribution is too small...or for that matter...too large! Your pledge can be fulfilled as a one-time payment or spread over the fiscal year. You can do it as an EFT, credit card charge or even a check!

I spoke of the legacy that our founding fathers and mothers created through their leadership. As we begin a new year, think about what legacy you want to create. What do we want CBE to be 36 years from now? (When, by the way, your president will be pushing 100...and maybe a walker with wheels!)

CBE is what it is today because of the leadership and legacy left by our founding fathers and mothers. I am asking you to take this opportunity to be a partner in our community to honor and continue the work of those who created what we have today.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.