



**Kol Nidre Appeal – 5770
Tracy Cirone, President**

I would like to start out with a story I heard about an American investment banker who was at the pier of a small coastal village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The American complimented the man on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

"Only a little while."

"Why didn't you stay out longer and catch more fish?"

"With this I have more than enough to support my family's needs."

"But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a nap with my wife, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my friends, I have a full and busy life."

The American scoffed, "I am an ivy league MBA and I can help you. You should spend more time fishing; and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat: With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Soon you would have a fleet of fishing boats. First you will sell directly to the processor, and then you will open your own cannery. Soon you would control the product, processing and distribution. Eventually, you would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to the big city where you will run your ever expanding enterprise."

The fisherman asked, "But, how long will this all take?"

"15 to 20 years."

"But what then?"

The American laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions."

"Millions?...Then what?"

"Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a nap with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your friends."

My fellow congregants and guests, it is an honor for me to speak to all of you on this, the holiest night of the year, and to share my thoughts on Judaism and on Beth Chaverim Reform Congregation with you.

We are a people of tradition. At many synagogues the Yom Kippur appeal is basically a "State of the Synagogue" speech, where the president reviews how well the synagogue has done during the past year, and then thanks the clergy and congregation for their contributions to the temple's success. Tonight I'm not going to give a State of the Synagogue speech as this was recently presented at special meetings and the annual congregational meeting last spring. My philosophy is not to dwell on past accomplishments but to look towards the future.

We all work so hard. We focus on financial security—and yet, like the fisherman, deep down we know that the things that are really important don't cost anything at all. And since we'll all end up in the same place—which may or may not be a small coastal fishing village, the idea is to make what we do on the way **there** meaningful.

The fact is we probably have enough of what we really need to get by already. If we stay focused on the important things, we probably even have more than enough. What are the important things? Family, community, love, and learning. Should “money” be on this list?

Well, money is important, but it has its limitations. However, without money our Jewish community here would fail. Of course, for Beth Chaverim to be successful in its role of perpetuating Judaism to future generations, it must be **more than** a home base for Jews during the High Holy Days. What else does a temple have to be, and what else does it have to do to guarantee Jewish survival? I've been struggling with these two questions a lot in recent months, and tonight I want to offer some answers.

What our temple has to be is that special kind of place that people want to come to. I see this happening all the time here at Beth Chaverim. I see the absolute joy in the faces of new parents when they bring their newborns and young children to be named. I see the pride of parents when their child is bar or bat mitzvahed. Our temple reached a wonderful milestone recently with our first two weddings during the past six weeks. And yes, I also share the sadness and grieving of those who have lost loved ones.

But life cycle events are not the only times that we celebrate our lives and our Judaism as part of our warm and welcoming community. Have you ever experienced the chaos and the complete excitement of a class Shabbat dinner and service? Or the nachas of a consecration service or of a confirmation class graduation? How about the ruach, and the amazing spirit when our teens get together, like when they ran the Purim carnival last year? Or the spirituality of a Sisterhood Passover Seder?

What we have to do is to fulfill a need that can't be fulfilled elsewhere. What is that need? It's the need to have meaning in our lives, to know that our lives are worthwhile and have value. How can our temple do that? Our mission statement describes it this way: we will provide the Jewish community with a forum for experiencing the religious, cultural, and celebratory aspects of Jewish life...by providing Jewish religious education to our children and providing our members with an active Jewish community in Loudoun County. I want to share my thoughts on why is it absolutely critical that we work together to make this vision become a reality.

This mission to bring meaning to people's lives is a huge responsibility and a great challenge. At Beth Chaverim, we've been doing this for 13 years. How can we be sure that we will continue to do it right, and do it well? One way is simply to ask. And that's what we've done with congregational surveys and congregational meetings. Well, we didn't actually ask the question, “Has Beth Chaverim brought meaning to your life?” But we did ask opinions about our religious services, about our religious school and adult educational programs, and about various other programs and activities that we offer as well as rabbinical needs. And we asked about new programs and services that you'd like to see.

Only by listening to and understanding your needs, desires, and concerns, can we effectively plan and offer services and programming that will bring meaning to our lives. And only by bringing meaning to our lives in the environment of a warm and welcoming community, can Beth Chaverim achieve its role of perpetuating Judaism to future generations.

The reality is that Beth Chaverim, although we have grown much over the years, is still a small congregation. We all need to work together, in partnership, if Judaism is not only going to survive, but to thrive in Loudoun County. By your participation you not only grow yourself, you become a role model and an inspiration for your children to pursue their Jewish heritage; and thus we perpetuate our Judaism l'dor v'dor, from generation to generation.

In this vein and in closing, I'd like to share the following passage that I'm sure you'll enjoy. As I read this, please imagine that you are hearing these words from your child or grandchild:

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator, and I immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you feed a stray cat, and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I heard you say a prayer, and I knew there is a God that I could always talk to, and I learned to trust in God.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick, and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give of your time and money to help people in our community and I learned that we all must share—for those of us who have something should give to those who don't.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I learned most of life's lessons that I need to know to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I looked at you and wanted to say, "Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking."

I hope that I've taught my sons, when I thought they weren't looking, that volunteering in Jewish organizations, such as serving as president at Beth Chaverim, is one way to give back to my community, and one way to help strengthen Judaism for the next generation.

So tonight, as we move into the final day of prayer and repentance, and we look for our last opportunities to perform tzedakah before the Book of Life is sealed, I'm asking you to help fulfill an ambitious vision for our synagogue: a vision of Beth Chaverim as a spiritual home which comforts and nurtures its members and which instills a love of our Jewish heritage that inspires all of us to grow and to prosper on our Jewish journeys.

To make this vision a reality, please consider making the following commitments. Commit to come to services more regularly. Commit to attend adult educational programs. Commit to volunteer your time and effort. And last, but certainly not least, make a financial commitment. The programming we now have in place as well as our rabbinical and educational services requires financial resources and volunteer resources. And, as you are probably aware, our ongoing expenses already strain our income. I won't take the time now to explain why the funds raised from our Campaign For Our Future are so critical to our financial health, but they are. We really do need your help, and what better time than on Kol Nidre to step forward and be counted with your donation?

I pledge to you that I will do everything in my power to lead Beth Chaverim to a bright and successful future. Now I'd like you to pledge to support the vision of Beth Chaverim. Think about the amount that you can easily pledge, and then give a little more. Remember, when you think no one is looking, the people you love the most are watching and learning from what they see you do!

On behalf of my husband Joe and our boys Neal, Richard and Ethan - may you be well-inscribed and sealed in the book of life for a year of meaningful wealth – may you have enough tuna in your boat, and enough time to enjoy your family and friends, and may you have a year of health and a year of peace.

L'Shana Tova.

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