

Yom Kippur Speech (2017)

I am very happy to welcome everyone. I have been honored to serve as your President for the last fifteen months and to speak to you on Yom Kippur for the second time.

When I began my term in July 2016, I was faced with many issues and questions, but none were more significant and perplexing than one particular question that I could not answer. I have been on a quest, a hunt, a mission, for the last year and a half - to solve one simple riddle: that is, why join the JCCP/CBT, or for that matter, any synagogue? One can simply attend services on holidays, weekdays, Saturday mornings, and even participate in any of our various activities without being a member. No one has ever been asked to leave a service or event because they were not a member or were no longer a member and the difference in price that we charge non-members vs. members for services/events is usually insignificant. So the question remains, why spend money and join our synagogue?

At the JCCP/CBT, we are not immune to the trends in the Jewish community at large. Unfortunately, we have experienced declining membership and revenue over the last few years. When I took over as President, we were faced with a large budget deficit, plus an additional one-time \$300,000 charge for capital improvements that we needed to spend to insure and protect the infrastructure of our synagogue. These numbers were alarming and frankly, kept me up many nights worrying about our future. How in the world could we continue to survive when we were spending more than we had in the bank?

We have taken many calculated steps over the last year to ensure that this will never happen to us. Fortunately, we have a new tenant in our downstairs school space. Our financial officers have been working tirelessly to reduce needless expenditures, we restructured our office staff which has included overall salary reductions, our Operations Manager, Rita, has been working with existing and new tenants for our gym, classrooms, and other available space in our building, Rita has carefully been scheduling our maintenance staff so that we are not over-staffed, and we have been collecting monies owed by members and former members that have been unpaid for years. Through this collective effort, our budget deficit should be substantially lower this year. We cannot predict our future; however, it appears that our long-term financial picture is much brighter now than it was a year ago. So when you make a payment or donation to our synagogue, you should know that the money is being carefully spent – not squandered away.

At the JCCP/CBT, as always, we have been very active and will continue to be busy this coming year with some old activities that have proven to be successful, as well as new programming. Just three weeks ago, we had a Friday night program featuring Naomi Less, a noted Israeli folksinger. We had well over a hundred people who ushered in the Sabbath together, while enjoying various Hebrew songs.

There are probably some activities that many of you may not be aware of, that I would like to point out. This is our second year of being part of FLIPPER, which is a combination of six area synagogues who have combined youth activities. In this way, not only have we saved money, but our children have gotten to meet children from other synagogues and participate in

many exciting programs and activities. We continue to offer daily services, both in the morning and in the evening. We continue to have both traditional and egalitarian services on Saturday mornings and on holidays, so that we can meet the expectations and desires of all of our members. We have opened our gym at night for our members and will continue to do so. There will also be evenings when the gym will be open to our children and teenagers for basketball, volleyball, and other activities that will be supervised. We will continue to offer our PIP program, which is a parent-involvement program, that was started a few years ago to assist and teach parents of our pre-Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah children on traditions and services. Anyone is free to attend. We continue to offer food after services on Saturday mornings. Nearly every day of the week, the Group Without a Name hosts various activities including bingo, movies, card games, etc.

So I encourage everyone to get involved. Whether it's attending service, enjoying a breakfast, participating in an exercise class, give it a try.

To continue with all of these activities, we need you. We need your participation. We need your involvement, we need your financial support, and we need your input. If you walk into the building and you see APT selling cookie dough, take out your wallet and buy some dough with your dough. Even if you do not want the calories, they make great presents. If you are looking for a gift, then check out our gift shop. The prices are competitive and you're helping to support us. If you buy something on Amazon - and who doesn't - then, enter the Amazon website through our recently revamped website, and we get a percentage of anything

that is charged. If you eat – and I assume that everyone here eats – then, spend \$100 for SCRIP at one of the many area supermarkets. We get 5%.

So, I believe that after being President for fifteen months, I have finally found the reason why it is important to join a synagogue and in particular, why it is important to join our synagogue. It is not because, financially, it pays to pay a membership fee, but rather if we do not support our synagogue, both financially and through our participation, it simply will not exist. It is important that we have a place to pray, to be together, to enjoy social, educational, and religious activities, and to have a presence in Paramus, New Jersey. These are the benefits of membership and that is why it is important to contribute, to participate, to assist, and to believe in our synagogue.