

Beth Emet Mitzvah Appeal 5783

Nisan Chavkin | January 29, 2023

Thirty years ago this month, Sarah and I were married in the sanctuary. Rabbi Knobel *z”l* officiated, and we danced in this very room. Our daughters played here when they were in preschool and both their Kabbalat Mitzvah celebrations were here. We wrote our names on that back wall at the start of the renovation—the acoustics are so much better now. Yesterday morning we celebrated Shabbat in the Weiner Room. This morning the Sunday Minyan prayed in the Beit Midrash.

Why is Beth Emet so integral to our lives? Fundamentally, this congregation taught us *how* to be Jews. Beth Emet is a place for all kinds of Jews. Beth Emet supports us in learning how to pray and to study and to act in the world as Jews. It teaches us from the great traditions of our people and helps us develop new traditions as well. Here, all the voices in my family are heard.

Beth Emet community offers a model for Jewish life that resonates with us for many reasons. Building a life of meaning. Creating opportunities for joy. But today I want to focus on a reason that Representative Schakowsky might frame as democracy.

Here at Beth Emet we *participate*. We do not wait for the Rabbi to tell us what to do. (On our good days, we also listen to the Rabbi, but that is another conversation.) If

someone has an idea, they are supported in trying it out. Some of the greatest parts of Beth Emet were started by all of us. With the support and guidance of our brilliant *Klei Kodesh*, members started the soup kitchen, and Kahal, and Sunday minyan, and our burial society. Congregants working with *Klei Kodesh* tutor our Kabbalat Mitzvah students as they prepare their thoughts on the Torah portion. All of us, together, teach classes, lead services, and engage in acts of *tikkun olam* in the greater community.

In this regard Beth Emet is a rare place. I talk with our young people, those in college and in their 20s. I hear about how they search for a synagogue and how hard it is for them to find a place like Beth Emet. A place where they can participate. A place where their voices are heard.

Beth Emet believes in *participatory* Judaism: when there is a need, or we are needed, we respond. Well there is a need now. As Rabbi London said, we need help in funding our congregation as we ramp up our activities following the pandemic. Beth Emet needs support from all of us.

I will end where I began. I have the privilege of working with some of our young people – teaching them to sound shofar, helping them to prepare for becoming *kabbalat mitzvah*. They need our congregation *now* so that they can build the Jewish community of the future. They need us to be Beth Emet. To participate. So please give now.