

Shanah Tovah.

The date the same as today, **September 23,... 2006** — or If you want to go old school, really really old school it was 1 Tishri 5767!

A young lady sitting among you, who bears a striking resemblance to me, was just **three years old**. My son, currently attending a Hillel service at college, was only **nine months old**. And I was attending a Rosh Hashana service with several very welcoming people which I did not know.

Just a few weeks before, I read an article in the *Jewish Times* about a new synagogue forming in Western part of Cobb County — one that was preparing to hold its **first-ever High Holiday services**.

At that very first service, I remember sitting next to someone **sharing a book** — as we had limited supplies on loan from another synagogue. There was **energy and excitement in the air** as this group of people, many who did not know each other gathered to pray together, ...reflect together,nosh together,and be Jewish together.

I left that service inspired and excited to be part of something new. I wanted to help plant the roots of what would become **Congregation Ner Tamid**.

And today — 20 High Holidays later — I hope you leave this service feeling what I felt that day: a spark, a purpose, and a sense of belonging.

A lot has happened in these 20 years.

We've lived through a global pandemic. We've welcomed many new families. We've celebrated B'nai Mitzvahs — for both youth and adults — confirmations, weddings, and baby namings. And yes, we've mourned the losses of those dear to us.

We've also seen a disturbing rise in antisemitism — around the world and here at home — in ways many of us have never experienced before. We are witnessing increasing criticism and calls for the destruction of Israel.

All of this — the good and the bad — is a powerful reminder of the importance and need for **Congregation Ner Tamid**.

We need **a safe space** — a welcoming community where people can gather to pray together, ...reflect together,nosh together,and be Jewish together.

Ner Tamid is uniquely positioned to serve Jewish families all over **Cobb County** including **Marietta, Roswell, Smyrna/Vinings, Powder Springs, Acworth and more**. In addition we are

the closest Jewish Community for the fast growing counties of Paulding, Cherokee, Douglas, and Bartow.

With the exception of Chabad ... there are **no other synagogues** between here and the Alabama border. Or between here going up I-75 to the Tennessee border.

There is no question we **fill a critical need** in this expanding region.

And yet — we face challenges:

- We are still **small community with limited resources**.
 - Our space and home has served us well, while at the same time it holds us back.
 - And perhaps most importantly — we are a 20 year old Synagogue where too many people simply **don't know we exist**.
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As we begin this Jewish New Year, we're setting ambitious, and yet achievable goals.

1. Growth — in numbers and in generations.

To move from office space into a permanent home, we need more members — and more **resources**: financial, volunteer, leadership, and educational resources.

We have a strong foundation of **Baby Boomers and Gen X**, but we need to expand our reach to **Gen Y and Millennials**— to meet their needs and gain their engagement in our community.

2. Visibility and Marketing

We need more people to **discover** and have awareness of Congregation Ner Tamid.

That means:

- Growing our social media presence in a **strategic and organized way**.
- Participating in local festivals and events — so people can see us and talk to us.
- Strengthening partnerships with other Jewish organizations.

We're not here to take members from other synagogues — but we **are** here to be a meaningful alternative for those seeking a change or something different.

And finally # 3. Embracing Our Strengths

We are:

- **Welcoming and friendly.**

- **Deeply supportive of interfaith families.**
- And we're located just **5 minutes off the interstate** — in a great location for several traveling here.

These are **real advantages** — and we intend to lean into them.

Now to achieve these goals it takes a village. We're asking you to join us — to deepen the roots of this community we've worked so hard to grow.

And here's how you can help:

- **Spread the word.** For our members we offer a referral credit program which we very recently increased 400+ when a new family joins because of you!
 - **Step onto our Communications Committee** ...arguably the most critical need in our Synagogue is to help shape our social media and outreach strategies.
 - **Volunteer** for upcoming events —the **Kosher BBQ Fest**, our **10th Annual Menorah Lighting**, and other **fundraising initiatives**.
 - And finally if you are not part of the CNT Family yet...**Become a member** — or an associate member. Now is the time to make that connection and to get involved. Now is the time ...to make a difference.
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In Conclusion,

My hope and desire is for you to leave today's service with the same feeling I had 20 years ago:

The feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself with a sense of belonging, purpose and hope.

We want and NEED your energy, your will and enthusiasm to help increase the growth and visibility of a community where people gather from near and far to **pray together**, to **reflect together**, to **nosh together**, and to **be Jewish together**.

As we enter our 3rd decade, let's hope for 5786 to be a pivotal year which...because of you...elevated a strong and thriving Jewish Community called Congregation Ner Tamid.

L' Shanah Tovah.