

L'shana tova.

We, more than any group in history or geography, live in a time and place of the entrepreneur. We admire the people who are willing to commit their time and money for something they believe in. We admire their willingness to work hard, to gamble, and to have a belief in the future.

We don't even think of it as just American, we think of it as almost uniquely Californian. Smart, savvy, and with such a belief in the future.

In the early 60s, a group of Jewish spiritual entrepreneurs decided that Marin needed a Conservative synagogue so they started one. They spent five years in a proof of concept mode until in 1967, they felt they had a sustainable and marketable product and—moving out of the proverbial garage—they took their financial savings and purchased land with plans to build a synagogue.

These families, entrepreneurs, if you will, saw something they believed in, so they created it, invested in it, and worked probably night and day to make it happen. Not because they had an exit strategy for capitalizing on their investment but because they knew it would make them and their families and future generations better—richer in a different way.

Fifty families put up \$200,000 in 1962. Today, that would be 50 families raising \$1.6 million. We're here tonight because of those 50 families being Jewish entrepreneurs.

My parents were founding members of Beth Am in Los Altos Hills in the 60s. My grandparents and great grandparents were lifelong members of Emanuel in San Francisco. Religious? Not by any stretch of the imagination, even for San Francisco Jews. If they were in any synagogue twice a year, it was a good year.

But they always financially supported synagogues. They knew that Emanuel and Beth Am had to be sustained.

The Jews in Palo Alto and Stanford have a shul tonight, in part, because of my parents. I'm here tonight because of what Jews I never met did back in the 60s. Simply, I'dor v'dor, generation to generation.

There are many people here tonight who have been Kol Shofar entrepreneurs, from those who made the initial investment, to those who have financed growth (Rounds A, B, C... you might say) and made us who we are today.

I didn't join a synagogue until I was about 45. I thought it was something that my parents and grandparents did. It was their responsibility. They were of the generations that took care of those sort of things. It seemed like such an "adult" thing to do.

But I've come to understand that for me and many of us in this room, we now are those generations that need to be the investors.

The previous generations, they've have done their part. They saw a need and worked and invested to make the Bay Area an incredibly vibrant, innovative Jewish place. Kol Shofar is now one of the crown jewels—we're considered the Bay Area

synagogue with the most innovative programming.

We're on the cusp of incredible innovation and changes in the practice of Judaism in this country. Will our children and grandchildren's community look exactly like ours? I'm willing to bet not. But we owe it to these next generations to leave them the tools and the places with which to innovate.

It's our turn to carry the vision forward. The people who have been supporting this synagogue for 20, 30, 40 years, they've done their part. It's now our turn.

The people who got us here tonight didn't financially support the synagogue because they "used" it like a gym membership. They didn't stop supporting their synagogue after their children became b'nei mitzvah. They supported it because they knew that it was their turn to keep the *ner tamid*, the eternal light burning.

Like the generations before them, they understood that they were the links in a chain stretching back thousands of years. I mean this literally, not figuratively.

The literalness of this struck me the first time we took our children to Israel and were at the model of the Temple in Jerusalem and the guide was explaining how the Levites stood on the steps of the Temple singing the 15 blessings. I'm a Levison. Those Levites were my ancestors. That is about as literal as it gets.

If the Jews before us had dropped the responsibility for that chain, we wouldn't be sitting here tonight.

Thanks to them, we are in this sacred space tonight.

Just as Yom Kippur follows Rosh HaShannah in our Jewish calendar, the High Holy days will be followed by the annual appeal, asking for your support of Kol Shofar. It feels a bit jarring to be in the midst of this spiritual time and be brought back to the mundane matter of money. But it's like the sound of the shofar. It's a wakeup call. For many of us, this the hard work—the stretching that pushes us beyond our comfort level. But if not us, then who will do it?

The annual appeal keeps the doors open. These funds are for operations—keeping the lights on and the food flowing and the rabbis guiding and inspiring us.

In addition, we will be launching a new campaign to pay down the mortgage for our wonderful building.

So when you are contacted about these campaigns, please stop and remember what others before us have done for us and what legacy you want to leave for those who come after us.

May our children—and the children of other Jews who we don't even know but who will come to live in or visit Marin—may they look back and thank us for playing our financial part in keeping our tradition vibrant and resilient so that they may continue it for their children and grandchildren.

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