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Yom Kippur Speech
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Shana Tovah! I feel incredibly humbled and honored to be standing before you today as Anshe Emeth President. It's only been four short months since my installation, but I assure you my feet are solidly planted and my devotion to the temple is absolute! Thank you for giving me the opportunity to steer our ship for awhile. My sight-line is steady and with my dedicated team of fellow Officers and Trustees, I can assure you our temple is in capable hands.

On Shabbat eve, we recite a prayer that begins with the words Lamdeini Elohai. Teach me, oh God, a blessing, a prayer. Teach me to see, to breathe, to know, to hope. These four elemental actions -- seeing, breathing, knowing, and hoping -- work harmoniously together to help us be present in the here and now AND to help give us a vision with which to plot a course into the future.

Many businesses and non-profit organizations are creating vision statements. Vision statements define a business' purpose -- why it exists, what it stands for, what it works for, and what makes it unique. The vision becomes the guiding principle for how the organization operates. Employees and volunteers work to fulfill the vision, and they share it with the outside world to engage and encourage others to share that vision.

Anshe Emeth is no different. In early June, at the annual Board Retreat, our Trustees began the process of creating a vision statement for Anshe Emeth. The vision will define who we are today and it will mark a course for who and what we want to be in our future.

Lamdeini Elohai-- Teach me to see. Writing our vision statement requires us to see clearly things that are current or close to us, as well as things that are more distant. We need to see and consider what is working well and what needs improving. Seeing with clarity helps us to envision a future, put us on a path to remain loyal to our ideals, and address issues that may derail us from our goals.

Lamdeini Elohai -- Teach me to breathe. Breathing is life. Breathing is cleansing. Breathing isn't just about the transfer of air in and out of our lungs. Breathing is also about pausing. It's about slowing our pace and paying closer attention to the spaces between moments in time. We live in such a stimulus-laden world today. There is great value in just stopping ... and taking deep breaths...and finding clarity of thought.

More than ten years ago, we dreamed of a beautifully renovated sanctuary and building ... and new spaces in which to congregate, worship, learn, and build community. We dreamed it, it became a reality, and we rejoiced! In the years that followed, we relished in our accomplishment even while our mortgage was threatening to strangle us. About three years ago, it was time for us to take a breath -- a long, deep breath. A cleansing breath. BREATHING gave us pause to consider

what Anshe Emeth could be, if only we could lift the tremendous weight that was bearing down on us! With devoted lay and professional leaders and a loving, generous membership behind us, we released the albatross that was our mortgage and a bright, fresh, and exciting future for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren was revealed! We have already made substantial payments toward the mortgage, so much so that our monthly payment is lower by almost half---dropping from \$11,000 to \$6,000. Our mortgage will be paid off in the next four years, not in twenty or thirty or more as was once presumed. We continue to make large payments toward principal as pledges are paid and we are able to re-amortize the remaining mortgage each year. Just as we start each New Year with a clean slate, so did we wipe the Anshe Emeth slate clean with the success that we made of L'hibanot. I am incredibly proud of all of us!

Lamdeini Elohai – teach me to know. To know is to understand something or to have a complete idea or skill. We gain knowledge through our learning, our experiences, and our mistakes. When we've mastered something we are able to impart it to others so that they can know too. Knowledge is power if we use it in the right ways. For penning our vision statement, knowledge is paramount.

Here's what we know. Synagogues all over our nation are falling on hard times. Memberships are aging. Demographics are changing and young Jewish families are not affiliating with synagogues as they have in the past. Temple members who are struggling to afford full dues are forced to leave because their temple cannot afford to carry them. Other temples are losing members to disinterest because they cannot provide stimulating programming to keep members interested and involved. With reduced memberships and therefore reduced dues, some temples cannot pay for full time clergy or support a religious school. Some congregations are even closing their doors, BUT NOT AT ANSHE EMETH! We are a vibrant community and we continue to attract new members. In any given week, one-thousand Anshe Emeth members are using our building for praying, learning, programming, and committee work. Our Gan preschool now has 31 children enrolled, where just 2 years ago, there were only 7 and our lay leaders feared having to close its doors. Our congregation sends more high school juniors to Israel for a semester of learning with the Eisendrath International Exchange program (or EIE as it is fondly referred to) than any other synagogue in our nation. Our Religious School has a brand new dynamic curriculum and an interactive white board in each classroom which brings the outside world in. Our generous members donate over \$100,000 to the annual appeal each year to bridge the gap between our dues revenue and our operating expenses. If you have not yet made your pledge to the annual appeal, please join my husband Jeff and me, the Officers and Trustees, and your fellow congregants and make your pledge for 5776.

So you see, we are not laboring or struggling, we are thriving!! This is what we know.

With all of this goodness going on at Anshe Emeth, what do I know as your President? I know that we are in a period of strength right now which gives us the unique opportunity to look inward to reflect on what we can do to keep ourselves current and relevant. With the belief that we need to brand ourselves, we now have a refreshed logo with a new design and new colors thanks to Alan Brooks. We have a completely new website which launched just three days ago. Take a look, it is

outstanding! We have Laura Gordon, Alan Brooks, Heather Kibel, Rabbi Bazeley and a team of volunteers to thank for designing, creating, and writing the text for the site. We also have a growing social media presence. Please like us on Facebook.

We have three new committees that are already alive with energy. The first is a Communications Committee which will work to make Anshe Emeth more visible to the community-at-large. Our new communications committee, co-chaired by Randi Friedman and Tracy Fink, will use every opportunity to share our story and promote our activities instead of letting those opportunities slip by.

The Resource Development committee is new here as well. Co-chaired by David Levine and Susan Kohn, the committee will create a time-line of special events and projects that will help us close the budget gap each year. The committee will also ensure that volunteers are in place and offered support while planning these events and projects.

And finally, our new Tikkun Olam committee is being co-chaired by Fred Kaimann and Robert Stern and will be working to help us fulfill our personal and communal commitment to the repair of the world, seeking justice in our home towns, counties, state, country, Israel and world.

This is our temple, collectively. It's mine, it's yours, it's ours. I encourage you to find a committee whose work sparks an interest inside you. Check out our beautiful Program Book for more information about every exciting opportunity we offer at Anshe Emeth and feel free to join us at an upcoming planning meeting. We welcome and encourage your ideas, in fact we are eager to hear them!

Lamdeini Elohai -- Teach me to hope -- To hope is to cherish a desire with great anticipation and expectation. Hope is about our dreams and aspirations. Hope is about envisioning what can be and what we wish it to be. Our hope is in the hands of our future leaders.

Here at Anshe Emeth, we have something that other synagogues only dream of. At any given time, we have a President in place and we know who our next two Presidents will be. This is unheard of in other temples and they envy what we have created. The truth is, our lay leaders want to serve, they are honored to serve. They are waiting to serve. To help us in achieving a continuation of this effort, we developed a program that is also rare in Synagogue life. We call it The Joshua Project and we developed it three years ago. The Joshua Project is a leadership training program that helps us achieve depth in our leadership pool by grooming our synagogue's future lay leaders. We have a compelling curriculum and the class meets twice a month for ten sessions. So far, more than 50 congregants have participated in the program, and this fall we will welcome our fourth cohort. Past participants have gone on to hold positions of leadership at Anshe Emeth to include fundraising coordinators, committee chairs, Trustees, and Officers. We place our trust and hope in them to guide us and help shape our future.

It is my distinct honor to say 'thank you' to so many of you who give tirelessly of your time and your energy! Volunteers are the backbone of our organization and without them, we simply could not exist. Thank you to our volunteers who raise their hands and offer to help in every area of Anshe Emeth life. They cook, they clean, they sing -- they sort, they carry, they build -- they mosaic, they call, they answer -- they stuff, they post, they design, they dvar, they read, they type, they budget, they endow, they fundraise....well I could go on and on but we have a service to get to! On behalf of the entire congregation, thank you for all you do to keep Anshe Emeth alive with your enthusiasm and activity.

I'd like to thank our devoted Officers and Trustees who plan and carry out our mission and do it with a smile. We are already a cohesive team and for that I am truly grateful.

Thank you to our outstanding clergy, Rabbi Miller, Rabbi Bazeley and Cantor Ott, for supporting us and teaching us, for guiding us and for giving us the space and knowledge to grow as human beings.

Thank you to our incredible professional staff, Alyson Bazeley & Inna Shepard, who are caring for and teaching our children when we are not with them. Thank you to our remarkable Executive Director, Heather Kibel, who keeps our organization running smoothly and who manages our hardworking Administrative staff Uma, April, Meredith, Jen, Ann and Rose. I honestly don't know where we'd be without Heather, who by the way studied for and passed a rigorous exam earning herself a distinction as Senior Member of NATA, the National Association of Temple Administration. Our entire staff may be small but they are mighty and we thank them for all they do to keep Anshe Emeth moving forward.

Thank you to our custodians, Zoraida, Osmin and Jim for making Anshe Emeth sparkle each and every day. You are our unsung heroes.

At the October Board meeting, our Trustees will use their sight, breath, knowledge, and hope to adopt a vision statement for Anshe Emeth. We will do this with you in mind. We vow to stay true to our ideals and our history, lest we jeopardize the vision our founders had for us. We will keep our identity. We will take into consideration the needs of our temple community. We will write the words that will steer us into our vibrant, productive, successful, and bright future. We look forward to sharing that vision with you so that we may all join together in its fulfillment.

Shanah Tovah! May it be a joyful, healthy and sweet year for you, your families, and for Anshe Emeth.