

BE SOMEONE ELSE

Ira L. Goldstein, President

October 11, 2016/10 Tishrei 5777

In East European Jewish folklore, the city of Chelm is an imaginary city of fools, often presented ironically as, "The Wise Men of Chelm." No one really knows the origins of these stories, and the actual city of Chelm in Poland was known for Torah study, but the stories of the Wise Men of Chelm go back centuries.

The Wise Men of Chelm got together one night to try to solve the problem of life. "What is the problem of life?" they asked, and the more they thought about it the more they knew that the problem of life is that everyone has worries. If people didn't have any worries, they reasoned, life would be easy. So the question remained, how to make an end of worries? Well, they thought, why not hire someone else to do all the worrying so everyone can have it easy? It would be a tough job, but they would pay the man well to make up for it. So they all agreed to chip in to pay someone else 50 rubles a month to do all of the town's worrying for them. Everyone was happy with this decision until a flaw was pointed out. "Tell me," said one of the rabbis, the wisest of them all, "If the man is making 50 rubles a month, what has he got to worry about?"

Having someone else to help with things does make it easier, and does solve a lot of worries.

In my September column in our *Chai Times* newsletter I wrote about a video produced by Temple Shalom in Cincinnati. In the video, we meet the most important member of any congregation; we meet "Someone Else."

Someone Else is that wonderful, reliable person who does the things around the temple that everyone knows need to be done, but no one seems to have the time or energy, or enthusiasm to do them. Someone else is always busy at temple and often unseen. She helps in the office. She works on events. She volunteers wherever she is needed.

It isn't that she is the only one doing things at the temple. The staff, the clergy, the lay leadership, they are all busy too. In the opening scene of the video we see the temple board discussing who would be able to staff the oneg that coming Shabbat. Everyone has another commitment and can't do it, so one board member says, "I know, we'll get Someone Else to do it." The other board members think it is a marvelous idea. No more worries.

I've been on the board of Temple Beth Emet long enough to know that there are always things that need to be done at Temple. The office staff, the Rabbi, and the members of board work hard, but we always need Someone Else to step up and help. We ask for volunteers, but too often, the people we ask decline and say "you'll have to get Someone Else to do it."

Sometimes we get lucky. I was talking with one of our new board members last Shabbat and she remarked how her friends couldn't believe she was becoming so active at Temple. She said "I'm not even that religious, but how often can you just turn your head and look behind you for someone else to volunteer when people ask for help?"

Each of us can be Someone Else. Each of us can surprise even ourselves and become more involved in the loving family that is Temple Beth Emet, and surprise ourselves at how rewarding and how much fun it can be.

It is often said that "if you don't ask you don't get," and tonight I am asking each of you to give something of yourselves to something that is bigger than any one of us -- the Jewish community, the Jewish family that is Temple Beth Emet.

The traditional "ask" of the Yom Kippur Appeal is for money, and I do ask you to support Temple Beth Emet financially. The need is very real. Income from membership fees, religious school tuition, and High Holiday ticket sales does not cover our annual operating expenses. This congregation, like just about every congregation, depends on your contributions, large and small, hopefully large -- hint - hint -- from appeals such as this one. And please, as you contemplate the pledge cards in your hands, consider what amount is in your power to contribute. Maybe that amount is \$100. Consider if you can turn down just that next higher tab, and contribute a little more, rather than depend on Someone Else to make that greater commitment. Because each one of you is Someone Else, and all the rest of us are depending on you to support this Temple, just as you are depending on all the rest of us.

In addition to financial support, Temple Beth Emet also needs contributions of your talents and efforts. I've mentioned it before. Everyone has something to contribute to the Temple Beth Emet community, some combination of wisdom, wampum, or work.

I have one more "ask" tonight. Make a commitment to help us grow our family. Bring us a friend or a family, bring us children for our religious school and for our new preschool. Those of you who have joined us for the High Holidays, we invite you to fully join our family. Your payment for your ticket will be fully applied to membership fees.

I know that there are many demands on our time and on our wallets, but each one of us is here in this sanctuary tonight because Judaism means something to us, and Temple Beth Emet, the Temple With a Heart, speaks to us in some special, sometimes indescribable way. Each of us has good reason to support Temple Beth Emet and help it grow.

You met our new preschool director, Elaine Rosenfield, at Rosh Hashanah, and she is really Someone Else. We are just one month into operation and from nothing we already have 13 children attending part time. We are not quite yet covering our expenses, but we are almost there. We hope that our preschool will not only soon generate a financial surplus, but will increase our visibility in the community. Our preschool is not only a resource for existing Temple members, but a conduit for new families to join our community.

One of our newest preschool families comes from Manhattan, and the mom wasn't expecting what she walked into when she came to check us out. Where she was from, space is very limited, and parents are interviewed by the school to see they were worthy to be allowed to give the school thousands of dollars. When she came to see us, she saw children playing and learning, she felt the love and joy, she felt immediately at home, and she says it just felt like the right place for her and her child to be.

Last Shabbat, at our Family Service, one of the dads observed that his young son was never so happy as when he was at Temple Beth Emet on a Family Service night.

We've even had clergy visiting us for some function out of the blue remark that there is a spirituality within our walls that could be felt.

So when I say that Temple Beth Emet speaks to you in some special way, you are not alone. Really, you are not alone, you are with family, you are at home. Rabbi Mark tells us that if we do not know the words as we chant a prayer, it's OK to sing "la la la" the first time, but after that you are part of the family and you need to join in. He explains that when friends came to dinner when he was growing up his mother would tell them that the first time they were guests, but after that they could help with the dishes.

My friends, it is time to do those dishes. You just can not depend on Someone Else. It is time to commit to support Temple Beth Emet with your time and talents. Bring us people to help grow our family. And right now, make a commitment to support Temple Beth Emet financially, because there are only so many times we can turn around and look behind us when the call for help is made, and we can not just depend of Someone Else to support this community. Each of us has to be that Someone Else.

Ushers will be coming down the aisles to receive your pledge cards. Thank you all for being with us, thank you for listening, thank you for your generous support of Temple Beth Emet. May the coming year be a good one for all of us and all the world, and may we all be blessed to gather together again next year. L'Shana Tova.