Yashar koach Sadie and Luke - you both taught us beautiful and deep Torah this morning. It was incredible to watch you weave in and around similar ideas and texts, and arrive at different, but complementary conclusions.

Luke, you taught us about the resilience in and commitment to Torah study as a means of passing our Jewish traditions forward. That we should be careful not to just love Torah when it comes easy or makes sense to us, but that when it's hard, confusing, and uncomfortable, that is when we need to lean in and try to make meaning of what we are learning and hold it all.

And Sadie, you helped us see the poignance in being lost, in being in the darkest place, and in finding our way out from there, writing a new story and a next chapter, not giving up or walking away, but going deeper into Torah, turning toward what is hard, and to believe that we will, with resilience, find our way through.

I think in a very real way, you have, together, taught us a message for this time in the history of the Jewish people. A teaching about the strength we need to not walk away from what is hard, even when it is complex and confusing, and a sense of hope that if we do press on, there's a way forward even from our darkest, most tangled, moments.

It's been a very difficult week to be a Jew in America. In Boulder and DC, we have been through two shocking, violent, antisemitic attacks, one of them fatal and one leaving 12 people injured and many more traumatized. With perpetrators who stated that they attacked Jews in America as a response to Israel's actions in Gaza, which is unequivocally antisemitic. There were also weeks on end in which elected and non-elected leadership flirted unabashedly with public Nazi salutes. And recently, a United States Congressman quoted Nazi propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, without batting an eye. And during Passover, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's home was attacked by an arsonist for his support of Israel. And I could list more.

Friends, whether you are Jewish or not, CBE members or our beloved guests here, just know that, even in the midst of the profound joy of today's *simchahs*, our hearts are heavy. These acts are a manifestation of rising antisemitism in our country. And whether you're feeling sad, angry, afraid, confused, skeptical, even betrayed, it's all so legit. And made more complex as we try to make sense of what's happening here. Some will assert that the most dangerous antisemitism is coming from the left and some will say no, it's from the right. But, perhaps in a moment of humble clarity, we might see that there is no victory in either claim, but rather, as Michael Koplow, the Chief Policy Officer of Israel Policy Forum, wrote this week, "It is critical that even as we have our preferred answers, we open ourselves up to the basic truth that today's antisemitism is multivariate. Yes, this one thing is responsible for it, and so are these other things that may supply less convenient answers." Koplow names as culprits: anti-semitic and anti-Zionist incitement. He names White supremacist replacement theory. He names the ongoing war and suffering in Gaza and the West Bank.

These are not words of permission, but rather of lament. They do not justify, for there is no justification. They ask us just to hold the complexities of the reality we are living through today. And we can do that. And we must do that if we are to find a way forward.

Because many Jews are holding their children closer, and wondering: so what is this? Is this the beginning of something much worse coming? Or is this the moment that we wake up, that the world gone mad wakes up, and pulls ourselves back from the brink?

I want to suggest that as dark or as lost as this moment feels, that we are not powerless today to be part of deciding that this is the moment that we pull ourselves back from the brink. And that's mostly what I want to talk about this morning.

Often I feel the weight of speaking in this room, with young people here, absorbing the difficult things we sometimes have to say. But today, I think yours are some of the most important ears in this room. Because when hate is rising - toward any people or religion or racial group, I want you to know that we are never powerless. That there are many things we can do to turn the tide away from hate and violence, to find our way out, and to begin to write a next part of the story.

So I want to offer four possible ways forward - some are in our hands, and some are asks we need to make of others. None are easy, but then, who expects this to be easy?

First: there is inciting and dangerous language being used by some at protests. Not by all, not at all protests, and not all words. But slogans calling to "globalize the Intifada," or using the phrase "by any means necessary," - these are serious words that can erupt into violence when a person decides to take them at face value. There are many words used by people seeking to help the Palestinian people, which can be used to call for an end to this war, to call for a Palestinian state, and to critique the Israeli government, without tipping over into a call for violence on one's Jewish and/or Zionist neighbors. And if you are a person of any faith and you hear language that incites violence toward, or calls to isolate, Jews please be the one to stand up and say that this language is unacceptable. That these words are a spark and the flame is growing. And let me be very clear - we at CBE also cry out against the suffering of innocent Palestinians and call for an end to this war. AND, we need your brave allyship where the words have become carelessly or purposely inciting.

Second, and a great deal of this wisdom is something I'm so grateful to have learned from our own member, Amy Spitalnik, who is the CEO of the Jewish Council on Public Affairs, is that we need to be able to count on a full-throated response from the federal government to put in place proven mitigators of antisemitism and hate of all kinds. For example, our current administration needs to be increasing Non-profit Security Grants, which are resources that communities need to provide safety for Jews and other people of faith who want to gather to express our, and their, moral and religious voices. And we need deep investment in, and not the gutting of, preventive measures that help to stop extremism and hate crimes before they happen, like the Hate Crimes Prevention Grants, which work through proven projects of education and bridge building. And to strengthen things like a responsibly run Office of Civil Rights, which is tasked with protecting

Jews and other students of faith on campuses. And to speak boldly against the normalization of Jewish conspiracy theories among elected leaders and others in positions of power, and desisting from inflammatory language about other peoples as well. We can all be advocating for these methods and policies, which are tested, effective, and in some cases, transformational.

Third is for Jews who are confronted by antisemitism, and that is to lean into the hard conversations, as individuals or as communities. When someone at work, or in our movements, or in our inboxes, says something hateful or ignorant or hurtful, instead of walking away, to turn toward them and express our heart and invite a deeper engagement. This takes our willingness to be vulnerable and our capacity to be brave and resilient. To tell our story - of who we are, what we care about, what hurts us, what has shaped us. And also to ask them the same. This might be the most infuriating thing you hear me say - maybe what you feel is angry or what you want is vengeance, and this sounds naive. But when organizations pull out of a program because there are Jews or Zionists participating, what laws will fix that? What punishment will help us build trust? It is only the chance to talk, to see each other's humanity, to practice empathy, that might turn such a tide. And it's not flashy and it's not a quick fix and it won't be immediately successful every time, but this is the worthy work of building bridges, for we need each other now more than ever.

And finally, number four. A critically important way to address antisemitism is to keep being who we are, to live our proud, authentic, beautiful, joyful, compassionate, Jewish lives out loud. To celebrate here today two young people who have embraced their Judaism because it's awesome. And deep. And to march at Pride and stand up for others. And to keep calling for the return of all the hostages and for an end to the war in Gaza. And to keep working for the Israel of our dreams. And to make Jewish tradition alive in how we live our lives out in the world.

It doesn't make Jews safer to ban Haitian asylum seekers from coming to the United States. It doesn't make us safer to gut higher education of its foreign students. It doesn't make Jews safer to undermine the core tenets of our democracy. But there are things we can do, these things that are very much reflective of the ways that we, as CBE, always try to show up in the world, that could pull us back from the brink.

I know that sometimes it can feel like we're all alone, and I hear the cries of: where is everyone? Where is their outrage? But we are not all alone. And it matters that we know that. This week, also with the work of the JCPA, sixty Civil Rights organizations who are part of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, declared: "We must reiterate that the targeting of Jews because of the actions of the Israeli government, or because of their real or perceived relationship with Israel, is antisemitic. And it is unacceptable. We unequivocally stand against this rising antisemitism." Listen for the voices of loving allies that see us and let us see them back, and let us stand with them when their sisters and brothers are targeted, and let us dream in solidarity of the ways out of this dark time together.

In this week's Torah portion, parshat Nasso, we find the Priestly Benediction, which is the most ancient blessing we have. Aaron, the High Priest, bestows it on the people. Y'varech'cha

Adonai, v'yishm'recha, he says. May God bless you and keep you safe. These words prompt the commentators to ask: why now? Why do we start praying for our safety now? Haven't we needed that blessing this whole time? And the commentator Chizkuni teaches that it is at this point in our story, now that the Israelites have organized themselves, now that each tribe has been given their flag and their trumpet, that they see that the Canaanites, a nearby nation, has taken notice of them. And a fear develops between these peoples, a fear that leads to violence.

And so this blessing is introduced at this moment in our story. And perhaps it is fitting for us, too:

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha - may God bless us and keep us safe.

May we, each of us who feels vulnerable, no matter our faith, may we recognize the blessings we have in one another to make each other safe, and may we choose those blessings over fear.

Ya'er Adonai panav eilecha veechuneka - May God's light shine upon us and give us grace.

May we remember to see ourselves and each other as illuminated in God's light, granting us grace enough to come to each other with patience, with love, with empathy and curiosity, and with a commitment to each other's humanity.

Yisa Adonai panav eileicha vayasem l'cha shalom - and, through our fears and our courage, through our listening and our resilience, through our bridge building and our solidarity, may we truly all be blessed with peace.

Luke and Sadie, I want to tell you how proud we are of the Torah you taught us this morning which casts light onto a dark path. You looked at one of the most difficult passages in Torah and you asked us to not walk away, you demanded that we grapple with that which is hard, lean into our ability to navigate through it, and to find ourselves on the other side, more committed to our tradition, and to writing its next chapter. You each have wisdom that runs deep and I pray that we call on your teachings as we travel the path ahead of us, and make our way with courage toward safety, toward light, and toward peace. Shabbat shalom and indeed, yashar koach.