

## **CBE Installation Sermon Response**

Shabbat Shalom! Thank you, Rabbi Timoner and Rabbi Jacobs, for those really special words. You have already made this night so meaningful.

One of my favorite pieces of Torah comes to us from Deuteronomy as the Israelites are preparing to enter the Promised Land. After 40 years of wandering, they have all gathered together for a moment of reaffirming their commitment to one another and to God. Our Torah reads:

אַתֶּם נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם כְּלָכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

“You stand this day, all of you, before your God יהוה...”

Our Torah then goes on to share that it truly is everyone, the leaders, the elders, people of all genders, children, the strangers who have joined the community, even the woodchoppers and waterdrawers, people who make the community function. All of these people are gathered together, everyone.

We then read:

וְלֹא אֶתְכֶם לְבַדְכֶם

“I make this covenant, with its sanctions, not with you alone, but both with those who are standing here with us this day before our God יהוה and with those who are not with us here this day.”

This moment of covenant not only includes the people who are physically present, everyone in the community, but also those who came before, previous generations who made it possible for them to be there in that moment, and also those yet to come, future generations who will carry on this legacy.

I first encountered this Torah in high school and college, through NFTY, the Reform Jewish Youth Movement, and the URJ Kutz Camp. As I studied this text and others, it was our tradition’s emphasis on building community, on honoring the past, while working in real time to strengthen the future, that inspired me to take this path. Along the way, I’ve been so fortunate to learn from and with incredible family members, friends, teachers, and leaders who empowered a shy, quiet kid from Oklahoma City to pursue a life of service to Judaism, the Jewish people, and the world.

This piece of Torah that celebrates all that we can do together as a community is also at the center of what we are building here at CBE.

I am humbled by the rich history we hold within this community, spanning more than 150 years of Jews creatively and lovingly working together to build something special in Brooklyn. These days, I often find myself asking many of you, “What’s your CBE story?” And it’s so powerful to hear the many ways that each of you, whether it’s a few years or several decades, have committed yourself to this place and community. And if we haven’t had that conversation yet, I’d love to make that happen.

Just as our Torah was thinking about future generations, I too am excited for the future of CBE. This is exemplified by the conversations happening with our New Futures Project, helping us to imagine our community into the future and the impact we will have for generations to come. There are so many visions and ideas for what will come next, and I can’t wait to continue imagining with each of you and then building together to make those dreams come true.

And, holding both the past and the future of this special place, I am beyond grateful for this present moment. For all of us gathered here tonight, across generations, singing and praying and reflecting and connecting with each other. I'm grateful for each and every Shabbat, or holiday, or learning session, or volunteer effort, or meeting, or conversation. Within each of those experiences, I feel so lucky, so fortunate, to be a rabbi in this community. Whether we are celebrating, or mourning, or fighting for justice, or learning Torah, we are, as our welcome statement makes clear, doing something essential; we are living the Judaism of our time. And I couldn't imagine doing that anywhere else in the world.

Thank you, each of you, for welcoming me and my family into this קהילה קדושה, this holy community, over the past few years. I can't wait to see all that we will do together. Shabbat Shalom.