

Rabbi Stone
September 19, 2012

After celebrating my first Rosh HaShanah at CBB I want to say start the new year off by saying two things. First, I feel incredibly humbled and grateful to be serving such a warm and compassionate community. The last few months at CBB have been a true blessing and I can't wait to share many more months and years with all of you as a community. The second thing I want to ask is: "Will you forgive me?" I know this sounds quite drastic, seeing as I have only be here for two months, but during this time of year, I want to ask all of you, in advance for your forgiveness if (or when) I forget your name.

When I first arrived at CBB many people asked me—"how are you with names?" I would answer: "Good...I think!?" But now, having encountered at least 1,000 new people in the last two months, I need to amend my answer and say, "I am fair with names." I don't say this as a source of pride, but as an acknowledgement of an area of growth. However, in the meantime, I wanted to address this in a public forum because while I may not always remember your name or face, I will almost always remember the content of our conversation.

I say this because I take my role as a Rabbi very seriously and I believe that is a sacred privilege to serve this community and I don't want anyone thinking—"Wow, I just had this very profound conversation with the Rabbi and now she doesn't remember my name! She must not have really cared about what I said."

The truth is that I care very deeply, its just that my memory has not caught up to my heart. Therefore, in these days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur I am taking a risk with all of you and trying to be profoundly honest because I want all of you to know that I am only human. I strive to be great, but I will falter. I am bound to make mistakes, to forget your name, or something else that I cannot even foresee in these early days of my rabbinate—but as a human being, not as a rabbi, I am asking for your understanding, compassion and forgiveness for the mistakes that I bound make—either knowingly or unknowingly.

There is a prayer that was crafted in the Middle Ages by a Jewish spiritual leader that we read each and every high holiday season. It is a prayer called Hineni—Here I am. It is a prayer composed specifically for clergy members, which basically says: "Behold, me of little merit. Who is fit for such a task-- to pray for and on behalf of our people? Dear God, let my congregation not falter on my account, nor I on theirs." It is one of the only moments in our entire High Holiday liturgy that we, as clergy, separate ourselves out from the rest of the community in order to ask for a little extra mercy and compassion at this sacred time of year.

I hope that you can grant me a little extra compassion and understanding during the first months of my time here at CBB. And most importantly, as I said on Rosh HaShanah, I hope everyone has a Shanah Tovah—a GOOD, healthy and meaningful new year!