

Shalom Haverim,

*Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, a Jewish aggadic work (c.700–900 CE), asks a beautiful question, then shares a compelling answer:

"How does one acquire friends? People should acquire friends for him/herself by eating and drinking with them, studying Torah and debating with them, and sharing thoughts regarding Torah and life with them. And when they debate matters of Torah and importance, their friends will respond to them, and thus the bonds of friendship and truth will be strengthened."

Since joining BHBE almost one year ago, we have studied and debated Torah, shared thoughts about life and matters of importance, and definitely ate together; after all, eating is an essential religious and cultural Jewish practice. Through those blessed moments, our bonds of friendship and truth have grown strong.

We need that strength right now, even as we celebrate 62 years of this wonderful community, because we know- I know, that it is far too easy, to go through this time focusing not on what we do have but on what we don't have. The question becomes whether we allow the challenge of the day to define our being and our community.

With high confidence, I can affirm that BHBE has not and will not allow this difficult moment to define us. Instead, we have and will adapt, strengthened by our friendships and communal Torah. This extraordinary Zoom Gala Gala is the perfect example of our fortitude and ability to transform challenges into blessings.

There is much for which to be thankful. As Ben Zoma teaches in *Pirkei Avot* (4:1), wealth is defined by one who is happy with their portion, a measurement that is ultimately left to each of us to determine.

So let us recognize that which we do have, appreciate it sincerely, and express our gratitude. *Modeh ani l'fanekha. . . modim anahnu lakh*. I am grateful . . . we are thankful to You, God, our creator, *al kulam*, for it all, every bit of our friendship, resolve, and community.

With blessings for *simcha* (joy), *shalom* (peace), *briut* (health) and *hatzlahah* (continued success),

Rabbi Nate Crane