

\$1 million in pledges to save Boca synagogue

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BOCA RATON — Members of B'nai Torah Congregation saved their synagogue Thursday from financial ruin, pledging \$1 million toward the temple's \$4 million debt.

NCNB National Bank had threatened to foreclose on the Conservative synagogue's loan if the congregation did not raise \$1 million by March 1. But during an emotional meeting in the temple sanctuary, about 400 congregants vowed to take out loans, give up their Israeli government bonds and stretch their finances to ensure the building's future.

"This is miraculous," said synagogue President Jeffrey Deutch, who earlier had said he was "embarrassed to be here on the brink of failure."

Synagogue attorney Ken Lipman earlier told the members that the temple's failure would be a "disgrace to Judaism." He urged them to put off buying a "new Mercedes, BMW, diamond ring or vacation cruise" and donate to the synagogue.

Members approached a microphone at the front of the sanctuary and offered contributions, which ranged from 6-year-old Brian

Levy's \$20 to \$25,000 each from more than 10 families.

The synagogue, which moved from eastern Boca Raton to 6261 S.W. 18th St. six months ago, also received \$1,000 from Congregation B'nai Israel, a Reform synagogue in Boca Raton, and \$9,000 from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

The synagogue has to pay \$45,000 a month for its mortgage and has \$50,000 a month in expenses.

Lipman said the temple will change its management once the financial crunch is resolved. Community business leaders will run the synagogue's finances, while an intensive campaign will be started to attract new members.

Member Larry Juran told the congregation he was torn between donating to Soviet Jewry and his synagogue. "But I firmly believe there is enough generosity in this community to do both," he said, and pledged \$2,500.

Member Joseph Katz said the members were somber as they entered the sanctuary. But hearing their fellow members' willingness to donate, the mood changed to pride, he said.

"Tonight we saw Jews stand up and take responsibility," he said.