



קול עמי

An Intimate and
Dynamic Community**THOUGHTS FROM RABBI BERKOWITZ**

Earlier this spring, the language-learning app Duolingo released a module on conversational Yiddish, and I decided to give it a try. My grandmother knew Yiddish, but rarely used it in full sentences. She called my security blanket a *shmatte* (rag), the merchandise at the thrift store where she worked *dreck* (junk), and my little brother a *nudnik* (pest). When speaking of someone else's choice of partner, she might say *azai kop, azai dekel*, "Such a pot, such a cover!" (or *azai tuchas, azai shmatte*, which I will not translate). When we were older, she taught my cousins and me some of the curses, my favorite being, "May you grow like an onion, with your head in the ground and your feet in the air!"

I didn't find many of these colorful phrases on Duolingo. Neither did I see what I consider to be the most important of Yiddish expressions: *Mann Tracht, Un Gott Lacht*.

"We plan, and God laughs."

Once again, the start of the school year and the celebration of the High Holy Days are being impacted by the spread of COVID-19. While last year, this was certainly frightening and frustrating (and perhaps a couple of choice Yiddish phrases were used), this year is difficult in its own way. Because we thought this year would be different. Because we thought this was going to be over by now. Because we had plans.

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WORSHIP
SERVICES

**Friday, September 3
at 7:30 p.m.**

"Simcha" First Friday
erev Shabbat service

**Monday, September
6 at 8:00 p.m.**

erev Rosh Hashanah
service

**Tuesday, September
7**

10:00 a.m. – Rosh
Hashanah service

2:00 p.m. – Rosh
Hashanah Family ser-
vice (home of the Sel-
kirk family)

(rain location: virtual)

**Wednesday, Sep-
tember 8 at 6:00
p.m.**

Tashlich at Wall Park

**Friday, September
10 at 7:30 p.m.**

erev Shabbat service

**Saturday, Septem-
ber 11 at 10:00 a.m.**

Shabbat service and
Torah dialogue

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**Wednesday, September 15
at 8:00 p.m.**

Kol Nidrei service

Thursday, September 16

10:00 a.m. – *Yom Kippur*
service

2:00 p.m. – *Yom Kippur*
Family service (home of the
Selkirk family)

(rain location: virtual)

3:30 p.m. – *Yom Kippur*
Study Session

4:30 p.m. – *Yom Kippur* Af-
ternoon service

5:30 p.m. – *Yizkor* and
Neilah Concluding service

**Friday, September 17 at
7:30 p.m.**

Board Installation *erev Shab-*
bat service

**Saturday, September 18 at
10:00 a.m.**

Shabbat service and *Torah*
dialogue

**Monday, September 20 at
7:00 p.m.**

erev Sukkot service

**Friday, September 24 at
7:30 p.m.**

erev Shabbat service

**Saturday, September 25 at
10:00 a.m.**

Shabbat service and *Torah*
dialogue

**Monday, September 27 at
7:00 p.m.**

erev Simchat Torah service

THOUGHTS FROM RABBI BERKOWITZ (*continued*)

We planned for this High Holy Days to be a triumphant return to in-person worship, a joyous gathering in our new space. Even as we prepared our virtual options, we planned for a full sanctuary, as well as the return of big family dinners and lively neighborhood break-fasts. Even though, as of this writing, we still plan to be in person, much of what we had on planned will need to be reconfigured. Our celebration will, once again, be subdued.

We plan, and God laughs.

We can take some comfort in the idea that our people have been speaking this phrase for generations. Our ancestors faced many challenges and trials, and many of their own plans had to change in a heartbeat. They celebrated Shabbat, festivals, and life cycle events in ghettos, in prison camps, and on the battlefield.

Even in the most chaotic times and places, our people have kept up the rhythms of the Jewish year, because these rituals bring shape to our lives, and give us a cause to rejoice, even when things are difficult.

Though there may have been years in our own lives when we could have pretended that everything was within our control, the past few years have taught us what we should have already known: Life is messy and unpredictable. We have to be ready to adapt at a moment's notice. And because we can never truly plan for everything, we have to embrace every possible opportunity to come together—even virtually—when there is something to celebrate.

And we do have quite a lot to celebrate this Rosh Hashanah: The beginning of a new year, of course. The promise of an exciting new chapter in our new home on the Beth Sholom campus. And most of all, that no matter how many plans get thrown out the window, we still have each other to walk with us through all the messiness.

We plan, and God laughs. But hopefully, this year, we'll have a chance to laugh, too.

WELCOME BACK TO A BRAND-NEW YEAR OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOL!

The Jewish month of *Tishrei*, which typically falls in September, is traditionally a time for new beginnings. We enter the month on Rosh Hashanah pledging to be new people, better at treating others with kindness and compassion, and hoping for blessings in the new year. We repent for the mistakes we've made in the previous year and emerge from Yom Kippur with a new sense of purpose. At the end of the month, we gather to begin reading and studying the Torah again with fresh eyes and ears.

This year, the month of *Tishrei* will be ripe with new beginnings for our Religious School students. Not only will their community take root in a new home, but they will be reunited in person for the first time since March 2020. This reunion may feel both exciting and overwhelming.

For this reason, Religious School teachers will focus on the many social-emotional lessons that Judaism has to offer as we start the year. While both Hebrew learning and our typical values-based curriculum remain important, we at Kol Ami Religious School are committed to prioritizing building our community and ensuring that each student feels confident in their place in it.

To this end, I encourage all students to immerse themselves in our community by celebrating the fall holidays at our evening services rather than attending Wednesday courses this September. While Religious School students will not attend Wednesday afternoon classes until October 6, I hope that they will be active participants in the holiday services listed below.

On a personal note, by the time this writing is published, I will be on parental leave experiencing a new beginning of my own as a parent of two. I am confident that, in my absence, Rabbi Berkowitz, Elaine Stevens, Merle Salkin, and the several volunteers who have stepped up to help will provide a warm, rich learning environment for our students. Please contact either Rabbi Berkowitz or Elaine Stevens for questions on how my leave will be covered.

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WELCOME BACK TO A BRAND-NEW YEAR OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOL! (continued)

Please mark your calendars for the following important dates:

- ◆ Tuesday, September 7, 2:00pm: *Rosh Hashanah* Family Service, recommended for students grades K-5
- ◆ Sunday, September 12, 10:00am: First Day of Religious School, grades K-7
- ◆ Wednesday, September 15: No RELIGIOUS SCHOOL- Yom Kippur
- ◆ Thursday, September 16, 2:00pm: *Yom Kippur* Family Service for Students K-5
- ◆ Monday, September 20, 7:00pm: *Sukkot* Service- please attend INSTEAD OF Wednesday classes
- ◆ Monday, September 27, 7:00pm: *Simchat Torah* Service- please attend INSTEAD OF Wednesday classes
- ◆ Wednesday, October 6: First Wednesday of Religious School
- ◆ 4:30-6:00pm: Grades 3-6
- ◆ 6:30-8:00pm: Grades 7-10

Shana tovah!

Rachael Simon



MAZAL TOV:

to Mark and Karin Kaplan on the birth of their grandson Ezra Asher Gordon on August 16, 2021 to parents Andrew and Molly Gordon.

to Gabriel and Orly Maravankin on the engagement of their son, Daniel to Leah Goldsher.

to Anthony and Patricia Shore on the birth of their grandson, Henry Everett Clarkshore on August 6, 2021, son of Lucy Shore and Tracy Clark.

to Fran Surkin on the marriage of her son, JJ to Alison Volkert on August 14, 2021

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Let's begin with a question: Why did you originally join Kol Ami? And if you, like the two of us, are returning members and not newbies, why have you continued your membership?

Recently, similar questions were asked of members of over 130 Reform congregations in a survey conducted by the Union for Reform Judaism as part of an ongoing effort to determine best practices for congregations that hope to grow and prosper. The answers received are worthy of consideration as we move forward into a new year and transition into a new home.

As to the first question, 37 percent of the more than 27,000 congregants who responded to the survey said they joined their synagogue because of an educational program being offered or because they needed a synagogue for a lifecycle ritual (*B'nai Mitzvah*, wedding, etc.).

However, when the same congregants were asked why they remained members, that statistic dropped to only 17 percent. In fact, the data generated by this survey revealed that the reasons congregants retain their membership change as what is meaningful to them at the synagogue changes. For example, while 27 percent of respondents originally joined because their synagogue's approach to Judaism appealed to them, 37 percent remained members for this reason. Only 8 percent reported joining because of the significance of worship services to them, but 12 percent reported remaining as members for this reason. Significantly, the survey found that 6 percent gave as their reason for joining "the people in the congregation community", but that number rose to 13 percent for those who gave this as their reason for staying.

Clearly, whatever brings congregants in the door initially, keeping them involved and retaining them as members requires something deeper and more substantial than simply being the provider of religious schooling or a venue for a baby naming. As the URJ concluded from their survey, to survive and grow, congregations must cease "seeing our members as customers; we must treat them like family members who are looking to be nurtured and guided by what the synagogue has to offer."

We agree with the URJ that to attract and retain members those members must be treated like family. We believe that has always been an important priority of Kol Ami: to be a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone is valued and members' needs for spiritual and communal growth are recognized and met in meaningful ways.

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SYNAGOGUE LEADERSHIP

Main Office

215-635-3110

Rabbi Leah R. Berkowitz

215-635-4182

Rabbi Elliot Holin

Founding Rabbi

215-882-0017

Ben Adams, Co-President

Gary Turetsky, Co-President

Jeffrey Margasak, Vice

President

Ben Long, Treasurer

Morgan Selkirk, Secretary

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

**IN RESPECT OF *SHABBAT*,
THE OFFICE CLOSSES AT
3:00 P.M. ON FRIDAYS.**

Elaine Stevens

Executive Director

215-635-3110

Rachael Simon

Director of Education

215-635-7106

Rebecca Schwartz

Cantorial Soloist

215-572-6094

**Please send correspondence
to:**

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Website:

www.kolamielkinspark.org

Facebook:

[https://www.facebook.com/
kolamielkinspark](https://www.facebook.com/kolamielkinspark)

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR *(continued)*

We also believe that making that priority a reality is an ongoing process, and we commit ourselves during this coming year to the continuing effort, with our staff and Board, to make our synagogue that place where all our members know that they are valued, respected, and welcome.

That work started earlier this year with the adoption by our Board of the new sustaining pledge policy, rejecting membership dues as an outdated remnant of a time when synagogues did, indeed, see members as customers for High Holy Days tickets and religious school. Now, after understanding the financial needs of the synagogue, all who pledge as much as they reasonably can are welcome; the dues relief process, a real barrier for many to membership, has been eliminated; and the responsibility for Religious School funding is recognized as something to be borne by all, as educating the next generation is a benefit for all.

This new year, let us all strive to help, in any way we can, to build on these efforts. Let's make Kol Ami and our new home the welcoming place we all want it to be. A place where members join and stay, for reasons varied and changing but, above all, because they are treated like family. If we do that, we have no doubt that along with our dedicated and inspirational Rabbi, world-class musical programming, and exceptional educational programs for young and old, Kol Ami, the congregation we love, will grow and prosper for many years to come.

L'shanah tovah tikateivu. May you have a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Gary and Ben

CANTORIAL SOLOIST REBECCA SCHWARTZ ONCE AGAIN ACHIEVES RECOGNITION



A hearty *mazal tov* to our Cantorial Soloist, Rebecca Schwartz!

Her original songs, *You are Near* and *Y'varech'cha*, have been selected from hundreds of submissions to be included in the first two volumes of a new series, Transcontinental Music's *Mikraei Kodesh (Songs of Lifecycle and Sacred Moments)*. Rebecca's music will be published, one in each, both in the first and second "MK" volumes.

Volume I will be published in winter 2021-22 and Volume II is scheduled for release in winter 2022-23.



CONDOLENCES

We extend our condolences in loving memory of:

Daniel Richard Baker
father of David Baker

Ethel Rabinowitz
aunt of Barry Steinbrecher

Lois Bender
mother of Craig Myers

Samuel Reiter
father of Sara Reiter

Lorraine Brown
mother of Gregory Brown

Ellen Norman Stern
beloved member of our congregaton

Robert Cooperman
son of Ira Cooperman
brother of Lisa Kolar

Bennett Fishbein
father of Joel Fishbein

May their memories forever be a blessing in the midst of our people.

Kol Ami Contributions

We thank the following individuals for their generous donations to Kol Ami Funds. To make a donation, send it to Congregation Kol Ami, 8231 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA 19027 and indicate to which fund it should be applied, or visit our website at <https://www.kolamielkinspark.org/donate/>

ADULT EDUCATION FUND

In Memory Of:

Ellen Norman Stern

*David and Shelley Chamberlain
Merle Salkin*

DISCOVER ISRAEL FUND

In Memory Of:

Daniel Richard Baker

David Hyman

Bennett Fishbein

David Hyman

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

In Memory Of:

Daniel R. Baker

*David Baker and Irene Levy Baker
David, Shelley, Michael, Brian and
Marissa Chamberlain*

Robert Cooperman

Mark and Karin Kaplan

RABBI'S EMPOWERMENT & VISION FUND

In Memory Of:

Daniel Richard Baker

Mark and Karin Kaplan

SYNAGOGUE FUND

In Memory Of:

Helen Adelman

Stanton and Merle Salkin

Daniel Richard Baker

*Bruce and Ellen Asam
William Hyman and Janine Pratt
Daniel Mahler
Marshall and Ilene Schafer
Gary Sender
Elaine Stevens
Alan and Cheryl Wohlstetter*

Stephanie Cohen

Elaine Stevens

Bennett Fishbein

*Jeffrey Cohen and Ellen Friedman
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Craig and Sharon Myers*

Mildred Levin

Alvin Turetsky

Isaac Soren

Stanton and Merle Salkin

Ellen Norman Stern

*David Baker and Irene Levy Baker
Jeffrey Cohen and Ellen Friedman
Barbara Hoffman
Natalie Packel*

Isadore Turetsky

Alvin Turetsky

