



קול עמי

An Intimate and  
Dynamic Community**RABBI BERKOWITZ MUSES ABOUT “LIFE BEGINS AT 40”**

Some people get nervous about a big birthday, but I’m excited about mine. There is something healing about closing the book on one decade and starting another.

Still, there is some trepidation amongst young adults on the verge of 40, the traditional beginning of middle age, so I thought I’d seek wisdom from generations past.

What’s so special about the number 40? It is used throughout the Bible to indicate a long time: The 40 days and nights of rain in the story of Noah; the 40 days and nights that Moses spent on the mountain receiving the Torah (some say without eating or drinking); and, of course, the 40 years the Israelites were made to wander in the desert. Having lived in seven cities in two different countries over the last 20 years, I certainly understand how a 40-year journey can be a long and winding one.

Some say that 40 years represents a generation, which was why the Israelites were made to wander for four decades. They needed to wait long enough for the generation that left Egypt to be replaced before we entered the Promised Land.

*(continued page 2)***WORSHIP**  
**SERVICES**

**Friday, November 5  
at 7:30 pm.  
(Bornstein Auditorium)**

*erev Shabbat service*

**Saturday, November 6 at 10:00 a.m.  
(Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and  
Torah dialogue*

**Friday, November  
12 at 7:30 p.m.  
(Bornstein Auditorium)**

*“Simcha” Second Fri-  
day erev Shabbat ser-  
vice with Adult Choir*

**Saturday, Novem-  
ber 13 at 10:00 a.m.  
(Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and  
Torah dialogue*

**Friday, November  
19 at 7:30 p.m.  
(Bornstein Auditorium)**

*erev Shabbat service  
with Student Choir**(continued page 2)*

## **WORSHIP SERVICES**

*(continued)*

**Saturday, November 20 at 10:00 a.m. (Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, November 26 at 7:30 p.m. (Bornstein Auditorium)**

*erev Shabbat service*

**Saturday, November 27 at 10:00 a.m. (Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, December 3 at 7:30 p.m. (Bornstein Auditorium)**

*erev Shabbat service celebrating Hanukkah*

**Saturday, December 4 at 10:00 a.m. (Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, December 10 at 7:30 p.m. (Bornstein Auditorium)**

*“Simcha” Second Friday erev Shabbat service with Cantor Leon Sher and the Adult Choir*

*(continued page 3)*

## **THOUGHTS FROM RABBI BERKOWITZ *(continued)***

In his 1932 self-help book, *Life begins at Forty*, Walter B. Pitkin argued that, now that our lifespans had increased significantly, a 40-year-old (with the right attitude) could look forward to many more productive, fulfilling, and happy years of life.

But the rabbis knew, long before Pitkin, that life begins at forty. In Pirkei Avot (5:21), Rabbi Judah ben Tema walks through the ages and stages of lifelong learning. He used to say: “At five years of age the study of Bible; At ten the study of Mishnah; At thirteen subject to the commandments; At fifteen the study of Talmud; At eighteen the bridal canopy; At twenty for pursuit [of livelihood]; At thirty the peak of strength; **At forty wisdom (*binah* or “understanding”)**; At fifty able to give counsel; At sixty old age; At seventy fullness of years; At eighty the age of “strength”; At ninety a bent body”....and it’s all downhill from there!

Jewish learning may start in kindergarten (or perhaps even earlier). But the rabbis seemed to believe there was a special readiness for understanding that came with that fourth decade of life. 17<sup>th</sup> century rabbi Shabbetai HaKohen wrote that one should not begin the study of *kabbalah*, Jewish mysticism, until one had reached the age of 40.

Some of our greatest early rabbis—Hillel, Akiva, and Yochanan ben Zakkai—began their studies at 40 years of age. It is said that, at the age of 40, Akiva was an illiterate shepherd. He happened upon a well that had been hollowed out by water over many years and said to himself, “Is my mind harder than this stone? I will go and study at least one section of Torah.” He went immediately to a schoolhouse—some say he had to learn with the young children—and started with the *alef-bet*. Little by little, as if he were chipping away at a mountain, he learned first the book of Leviticus, then the entire Torah, then the Mishnah, and so on, until he became one of our people’s greatest teachers (*Avot De-Rabbi Natan 6, 12*).

*(continued page 3)*

## THOUGHTS FROM RABBI BERKOWITZ *(continued)*

Akiva's story reminds us that it's never too late to learn something new, or to change one's course in life, if we are willing to take that first step, and then another.

The number 40 is also significant because it is one-third of 120, the lifespan of Moses. When we bless people on their birthdays, we say *ad meah v'esrim*, "May you live to be 120!"

It is said of both Hillel and Akiva that they began their studies at 40, studied and taught for 40 years, then guided Israel with their wisdom for 40 years (*Sifre Deuteronomy* 357). Thus, I'm praying for many more years of learning, teaching, and serving our community.

How am I going to celebrate my arrival at this age of wisdom? I'd like to support some of the organizations that do good work in the world. If you'd like to honor my birthday, please consider donating to the [RAC-PA Racial Justice Campaign](#), the [Women's Rabbinic Network](#), or to the [Kol Ami Rabbi's Empowerment and Vision Fund](#)

Sources:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ask-the-expert-do-i-have-to-be-40-to-study-kabbalah/>

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6248-forty-the-number>



## **WORSHIP SERVICES**

*(continued)*

**Saturday, December 11 at 10:00 a.m. (Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, December 17 at 7:30 pm. (Bornstein Auditorium)**

*erev Shabbat service*

**Saturday, December 18 at 10:00 a.m. (Price Chapel)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, December 24 at 6:00 pm. (Zoom Only)**

*erev Shabbat service*

**Saturday, December 25 at 10:00 a.m. (Zoom Only)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**Friday, December 31 at 6:00 pm. (Zoom Only)**

*erev Shabbat service*

**Saturday, January 1 at 10:00 a.m. (Zoom Only)**

*Shabbat service and Torah dialogue*

**AN EREV SHABBAT TREAT: CANTOR LEON SHER**



On Friday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30 PM please join us as we welcome back one of our favorite artists-in-residence,

Cantor Leon Sher. He'll be joined by Rabbi Berkowitz, Rebecca Schwartz, Fran Surkin and our wonderful Adult Choir for an evening of soulful prayer and song .

**STUDY AT THE SHUL FOR ADULTS: “THE SPYING GAME - CIA VS. MOSSAD”**

Join Ira Cooperman & Alex Miller on Zoom as they discuss major similarities and differences between the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, and the CIA, America's premier intelligence agency.

Mossad was created by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in 1949, after its War of Independence, to meet the demands of the country's security beyond its borders.

The C.I.A., on the other hand, was created by an act of Congress two years earlier, in 1947, primarily because of the Pearl Harbor surprise attack, the beginning of the Cold War, and the need for a group to coordinate U.S. government intelligence efforts.

Both spy agencies collect information from human sources and other means and conduct secret operations, including assassinations.

This Adult Education class, open to members of Kol Ami *and* Beth Sholom, will meet from 7:30 - 9:00 p.m., two Mondays: November 15, and 22.

Please register for the class, which is free, with Elaine Stevens, (215) 635-3110. For further information, email [iracooperman@gmail.com](mailto:iracooperman@gmail.com).

## THOUGHTS FROM GARY TURETSKY, CO-PRESIDENT OF KOL AMI

One of the standard phrases used over the centuries to describe the Jewish people is “the People of the Book.” I only learned recently, after reading an article about this descriptor in the Jerusalem Post (October 29, 2020), that it originated from Islam. In Islam, Jews were categorized as “people of the book” because they possessed an earlier revelation from God which was written down in the Torah.

Of course, the more modern understanding of the phrase simply relates to the fact that Judaism reveres the written word and learning, beginning with the Tanach, the Talmud, other commentaries, and codes of Jewish law. It is noteworthy, as the Jerusalem Post points out, that Jews were among the first to take advantage of the printing press when it was invented in the 15th century, and, in fact, fine examples of rare bibles and prayer books from that period may be viewed at the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Square neighborhood (when I’m not serving as your co-president I volunteer there as a tour guide.)

Dr. Abraham Rosenbach, whose collection of rare books and manuscripts are preserved in his home on Delancey Street, was certainly a prime example of why Jews are known as the people of the book: he dedicated his life to reading, literature, book collecting, and scholarship, and served as President of Gratz College from 1925-1927.

As “people of the book,” the members of Kol Ami have demonstrated their commitment to life-long learning ever since our congregation’s founding more than 25 years ago, establishing and maintaining our religious school and offering a variety of adult education courses. This year, with the adoption by your Board of the new sustaining pledge model, all members share in that commitment to education, and under our Rabbi’s leadership and that of our Education Director, Rachael Simon (with a huge assist from Merle Salkin while Rachael was out on family leave), the religious school has gotten off to a great start in our new home.

Meanwhile, there is much to look forward to when it comes to adult learning this year. Of course, we engage in learning EVERY week through our Shabbat Morning Torah study and the d’var Torah at Kabbalat Shabbat services.

I hope that you, as People of the Book, will want to take advantage of our offerings, whether in person or virtually (depending, of course on the state of the pandemic).

In just a few days Ira Cooperman, our resident adult education “guru” and “spymaster,” will offer, with the technical assistance of Alex Miller, a two-week course on Monday nights concerning the history of the Mossad, Israel’s foreign intelligence service, and its relationship to our nation’s foreign intelligence service, the CIA. I have attended many of Ira’s courses over the years and they are always thought provoking, fun, and a great way to spend time with other Kol Ami members (Ira’s course is open to members of Beth Shalom as well.) Sign up by contacting Elaine Stevens. The first meeting is Monday, November 15!

From the URJ, a beginner’s course in Hebrew literacy is being offered online now through December. These are live sessions with experienced Hebrew educators, coupled with independent practice sessions in between. Familiarity with Hebrew can go a long way to make you feel more at home in the Jewish community and if you want to take advantage of this opportunity the registration information may be found at [reformjudaism.org/learning/judaism-classes/Learn-to-Read-Hebrew](https://reformjudaism.org/learning/judaism-classes/Learn-to-Read-Hebrew).

*(continued page 6)*

## 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

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www.kolamielkinspark.org

### **Facebook:**

https://www.facebook.com/  
kolamielkinspark

## **THOUGHTS FROM GARY TURETSKY** *(continued)*

Another interesting offering from the URJ is a virtual Mikvah tour and learning session on Thursday, November 18, from 8-9 PM . Participants will learn about what happens at an immersion and the reasons, both ancient and contemporary, behind the practice. For more information, go to [on-thego.reformjudaism.org/s/page?name=Just-Add-Water-1](http://on-thego.reformjudaism.org/s/page?name=Just-Add-Water-1).

Additionally, Rabbi Berkowitz, this coming Spring, plans on offering a course from the Women's Rabbinic Network's "Journey to 50" curriculum, celebrating 50 years of women in the Rabbinic, as well as classes on "How to give a D'var Torah" and "How to Lead a Prayer Service," courses designed to give interested members the training necessary to take a more active role in worship services. Look for dates and times in future Bulletins and email Listserv messages from Elaine.

We are the People of the Book. As Harry Wolfson, 20<sup>th</sup>- century Harvard scholar and first chairman of the Judaic Studies Center, reportedly told a colleague who questioned why Jews think they are "so special," "As far as I know, we are the only people who, when we drop a book on a floor, pick it up and kiss it." With that kind of unique reverence and appreciation for books and learning in mind, I sincerely hope you can find the time to utilize your membership to the fullest and participate in the adult education opportunities Kol Ami provides.

Gary



## **THE INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIP DIALOG GROUP ANNOUNCES SCHEDULE FOR THE YEAR**

The Interfaith Relationship Dialog Group (IRD) announces its meeting schedule for this year. The dates are: Tuesday, November 30, 2021; Tuesday, January 4, 2022; Tuesday, March 22, 2022; and Thursday, April 28, 2022. Further information for each meeting will be sent prior to the meeting. Contact Vince and Jane Pace with any questions.

## Welcome Congregant Michael Shapiro



Congregation Kol Ami warmly welcomes new member Michael Shapiro, who joined in December, 2020, which sadly was at the time of his wife's passing. Michael notes that he joined Kol Ami in order to become part of "this amazing community" in which he can be an involved and contributing member.

Michael was born and raised until the age of 9 in Briarwood & Flushing, Queens. His father's family originally came to New York from Russia, and his mother's side of the family hails from Germany and Poland. Prior to his residing in our area in Northeast Philadelphia, Michael lived in several locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, as well as in East Lansing, Michigan.

By profession, Michael has been in sales for 37 years. He states that his work has spanned many incarnations -- from in-home sales to radio, television, print advertising sales, and currently in industrial sales, among other venues. In his personal time, Michael is the head of the household for his three dogs, and he is a poet as well (creatively taking after his father, who is an artist). Michael enjoys writing, fantasy sports, and spending time with his granddaughter. Michael also is contemplating trying to start a charity for research and to educate people as to what led to his wife's death.

Michael greatly enjoys sharing his poetry with others, in the hope of making someone's day a little brighter. He feels that his beloved wife Paula is with him when he writes, saying that there is "one pen, two hands, one mind, one heart." We are happy to have Michael join us, and if we can get to know Paula through his poetry, that will make us that much richer.



### ***MAZAL TOV:***

Ben Adams and Gail Korostoff on the marriage of their son, Jonah to Danielle Brief on October 9, 2021

Eric Gonzalez and Rosalind Holtzman on the marriage of their daughter, Celia to Donna Chesman on October 9, 2021.

# 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/>

## ARTS & CULTURE FUND

### In Honor Of:

**Fran Surkin**  
*Gail Garin*

### In Memory Of;

**Julie Zellat**  
*James and Natalie Dyen*

## DISCOVER ISRAEL FUND

### In Memory Of:

**Irving Korostoff**  
*David Hyman*

## RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

### In Honor Of:

**Rabbi Berkowitz and Rebecca Schwartz for the beautiful *shiva* service for Julie Zellat**  
*James and Natalie Dyen*

### In Memory Of:

**Arthur Alexander**  
*Elaine Alexander*

**Julian Goodstein**  
*Elaine Alexander*

## Irving Korostoff

*Gary and Cheryl Turetsky*

## Julie Zellat

*Gary and Cheryl Turetsky*

## SYNAGOGUE FUND

### In Memory Of:

**Lorraine Brown**  
*William Hyman and Janine Pratt*



## CONDOLENCES

We extend our condolences in loving memory of:

Ishmael Jimenez  
*father of Farah Jimenez*

Peggy Finberg Weiss  
*aunt of Ellen Friedman*

Irving Korostoff  
*father of Gail Korostoff*

Julie Zellat  
*sister of Natalie Dyen*

Abby Overton  
*sister of Michael Levin*

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

