



קול עמי

An Intimate and
Dynamic Community**Thoughts from Rabbi Berkowitz....***I am a Jew because...*

Whenever I welcome a conversion student into the covenant of the Jewish people, I invite them to read a poem “Why Am I A Jew,” by 20th century French Jewish writer Edmund Fleg. You might be familiar with this text from the Shabbat morning service in *Mishkan T’filah*:

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands no abdication of my mind.

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel asks every possible sacrifice of my soul.

I am a Jew because in all places where there are tears and suffering the Jew weeps.

I am a Jew because in every age when the cry of despair is heard the Jew hopes.

I am a Jew because the message of Israel is the most ancient and the most modern.

I am a Jew because Israel's promise is a universal promise.

I am a Jew because for Israel the world is not finished; [we] will complete it.

*(continued page 2)***WORSHIP**
SERVICES**Friday, January 5 at
7:30 p.m.****(Bornstein)**

“Simcha” First Friday
Kabbalat Shabbat service

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

Shabbat service and
Torah study

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

Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Saturday, January 13
at 10:00 a.m. (Zoom
Only)**

Shabbat service and
Torah Study

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

Kabbalat Shabbat service

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WORSHIP SERVICES

(continued)

**Saturday, January 20 at
10:00 a.m.**

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and To-
rah Study

**Friday, January 26 at
7:30 p.m.**

(Bornstein)

Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Saturday, January 27 at
10:00 a.m.**

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and To-
rah Study

**Friday, February 2 at
7:30 p.m.**

(Bornstein)

"Simcha" First Friday
Kabbalat Shabbat service
with Adult Choir

**Saturday, February 3 at
10:00 a.m.**

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and To-
rah Study

(continued page 3)

Rabbi's Message *(continued)*

I am a Jew because for Israel [humanity] is not yet fully created; [we] are creating [them].

I am a Jew because Israel places [the] unity [of humankind] above nations and above Israel itself.

I am a Jew because above [humanity], image of the divine unity, Israel places the unity which is divine.

Whether we have recently chosen Judaism, or we trace our Jewish ancestry back to Sinai, it is always an act of courage and hope to stand up and say proudly, "I am a Jew." This has been especially true in the last few months following the October 7th attacks in Israel. We have endured physical assaults on our people in Israel and an increase in antisemitic rhetoric at home. We strive to maintain our fierce support for Israel, and also to hold Israel to the standards of moral conduct during this conflict. We are experiencing what Rabbi Sharon Brous calls an "existential loneliness," as those we usually consider our partners in pursuing justice were silent in the wake of this devastating attack. We have even experienced conflict within our families and our communities about the facts on the ground and the best way forward. But still, we persist and persevere, saying proudly, "I am Jewish."

In times like these, I worry that the most common answer to "Why be Jewish?" is "Because our ancestors suffered and died at the hands of their persecutors, we are still surrounded by those who hate us, and we can't let our enemies win." If we are going to truly survive and thrive in generations to come, we need to have an answer rooted, not only in our stubborn will to survive, but in the belief that our tradition is both eternal and relevant, and that it has the power to shape and transform our lives.

So as we begin a new secular year, I ask us to consider how we might fill in the blank: *I am a Jew because...*

And whatever our reason might be, let that point us in the direction of how we will be Jewish in 2024.

(continued page 3)

Rabbi's Message *(continued)*

If we are Jewish because of our people's treasure trove of wisdom, how will we engage with Jewish learning in the coming year?

If we are Jewish because of the warm embrace of community, what will we do to make sure that more people, of diverse backgrounds and communities, have access to our community in the coming year?

If we are Jewish because of the beauty of prayer, how will we bring more mindfulness and gratitude into our lives in the coming year?

If we are Jewish because of our people's commitment to justice, how will we pursue justice in the coming year?

If we are Jewish because our parents or grandparents were Jewish, how will we nurture the next generation in the coming year?

If we are Jewish because we celebrate the modern miracle that is the establishment of the State of Israel, what will we do to secure a safe and peaceful future for Israel and its people?

And if we are, in fact, Jewish because of our people's history of wandering and persecution, what will we do to combat isolation, ignorance, and oppression in the coming year?

As we begin a new secular year, may our answers to these questions guide us in our quest for a richer and more meaningful life. May we follow the call from Dr. Deborah Lipstadt's to be joyous in our embrace of Judaism: "May you embrace it because it is yours. May we all embrace it because it is ours."



WORSHIP SERVICES

(continued)

Friday, February 9 at 7:00 p.m.

(Bornstein)

Religious School *Kabbalat Shabbat* service with Student Choir

Saturday, February 10 at 10:00 a.m.

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and *Torah* Study

Friday, February 16 at 7:30 p.m.

(Bornstein)

Kabbalat Shabbat service

Saturday, February 17 at 10:00 a.m.

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and *Torah* Study

Friday, February 23 at 7:30 p.m.

(Bornstein)

Kabbalat Shabbat service

Saturday, February 24 at 10:00 a.m.

(Price Chapel)

Shabbat service and *Torah* Study

Let's Celebrate Rebecca's 18th Year at Kol Ami

by Rachel Ezekiel-Fishbein

A notice recently came up on Facebook reminding me of my son Danny's Bar Mitzvah at Kol Ami a full 18 years ago. Danny was only Rebecca's second b'nai mitzvah with our congregation (Leah Cohen was her first). I can't help but laugh remembering how worried I was about this "new" cantorial soloist and how she would handle our simcha.

Eighteen years and a multitude of lifecycle events and holidays, Student and Adult Choir services, Shabbat services, and Martini Havdalahs later, it is clear that Rebecca truly represents the voice of our people. Even as empty nesters, whose children have long graduated from the Student Choir, Joel and I shed a tear every time we listen as Rebecca leads the Student Choir in L'dor Vador.

On Thursday, May 9, 2024, our congregation – current and former members and friends of our community and Rebecca – will come together at Uva Ristorante Italiano in Richboro to celebrate Rebecca's Chai Anniversary with a magical evening of music, dining, love and friendship.

Rebecca's Chai Anniversary Celebration marks our congregation's first major social event since pivoting online during the pandemic. It promises to remind us all of how much we love being together and why we chose to build our Jewish community together.

Tickets and program book ad prices are purposely being kept as affordable as possible to encourage participation in this event by as many current and former congregants as possible.

We hope to motivate Rebecca's former B'nai Mitzvah, Student Choir, Preschool and Religious School students to attend by providing subsidized, half price tickets for young adults. Every member is invited to send Rebecca a two-line congratulatory message in the program book – for free! Larger ads will be available for a fee.

Sponsorship opportunities to offset event costs range from \$180-\$5400 and a *Purchase a Ticket for a Chaver (Friend)* donation program invites you to donate \$100 to cover the cost of another person's ticket.

If you are interested in learning about sponsorship levels, please reach out to Ben Long (benl321@comcast.net, 610-659-7378) or me (makingheadlines1@comcast.net, 267-679-2463). Every level supports our young adults and helps cap our ticket price at \$100.

I bet one of your friends is on the event committee and we welcome you to join us, too. You can email, call or text me to talk about how you can get involved in the celebration.

In the coming months, please watch the ListServ for your invitation, sponsorship packages, information about the program book and other fun ways to honor Rebecca. Please RSVP quickly, as space is limited.

Don't miss this heartwarming chance to gather with your friends from Kol Ami to celebrate the important part Rebecca has played in making Kol Ami our spiritual home and beloved community. Together, we'll share our cherished memories and honor the important places Rebecca holds in all of our hearts, while we create new memories of a special evening together.



SAVE THE DATE

THURSDAY | MAY 9, 2024

JOIN US FOR A CELEBRATION FILLED WITH MUSIC, DINING, LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

IN HONOR OF OUR BELOVED REBECCA SCHWARTZ



Rebecca's
CHAI ANNIVERSARY

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON

WHAT'S UP AT OUR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL?

As we begin the (secular) new year, there is much on the horizon. We are looking forward to incorporating new rituals into our Religious School routine; applying our Jewish education to social justice issues; and welcoming family members for several family programs.

Last month, we began our Hanukkah celebrations with our annual Kol A-Minis Hanukkah Celebration for children ages five and younger. The children sang, snacked, created art, and played with other young children. We loved welcoming both new and returning Kol A-Minis!



WHAT'S UP AT OUR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL? (continued)

Our Religious School community also gathered to celebrate Hanukkah together with a version of dreidel centered on social justice and a reaffirmation of our commitment to social justice. Our students in seventh grade and older finished the semester with Hanukkah movie nights, during which we discussed the representation of Jews in the media while enjoying the Hallmark Channel's take on Hanukkah.

At our Family Hanukkah Program last month, we began a new ritual as a Religious School: Students and families created their first Tzedek Boxes. These small boxes will house written entries that document our work towards both social justice and community-building. Students will document their good deeds throughout the year, and we will open the boxes to read about and reflect upon our work at the end of the academic year. We are thrilled that we have been able to partner with Tzedek Box to offer this new ritual.

This month we will welcome families of students in kindergarten through fourth grade, as well as seventh grade, for separate family education programs. Families will participate in in-depth learning in small groups tailored to their specific children's classes. I am looking forward to exploring new topics with you! Please see the dates below to mark your calendars for your child's family education program.

In February, several of our high school students will participate in the Religious Action Center's L'Taken Social Justice Seminar. Students will travel to Washington, DC to work with other Jewish teens from across the country on studying social justice issues before lobbying members of Congress to act on issues important to the Jewish community and to the students personally. Many participants are also participating in the Religious Action Center's youth fellowship and/or returning to the seminar for the second time. We have seen their leadership skills and advocacy skills deepen along with their commitment to Jewish values, and we couldn't be more thrilled.

Please mark your calendars for the following events in January and February:

Sunday, January 7, 10:00 a.m.: Seventh Grade Family Education Program

Tuesday, January 9, 7:30 p.m.: Religious School Committee Meeting via Zoom

Sunday, January 14: NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Wednesday, January 28, 10:00 a.m.: Kindergarten through Fourth Grade Family Education Program

Friday, February 7, 7:00 p.m.: Religious School Erev Shabbat Service with Student Choir

Sunday, February 18: NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Friday, February 23 through Sunday, February 26: L'Taken Social Justice Seminar

MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT BEN LONG

As I write this, we are pulling out our menorahs in anticipation of celebrating Hanukkah. I have always enjoyed the “festival of lights” and a nice fried latke or donut, but this year seems different, as with many things. since October 7.

This year I see the lighting of the menorah more about shining the light of truth on the situation in Israel and the horrors wrought by Hamas, as well as the bubbling up of deep-seeded antisemitism here and on many campuses our kids call home. Today we are bombarded by AI-doctored images, half-truths and flat-out lies created to manipulate opinion to a certain side, to the point where many people cannot agree on what are actual facts. As an example, I am sickened by the current debate on whether or not Israeli women and girls were raped by Hamas, as the physical evidence alone should be sufficient.

I know that many of us in our community are concerned or even scared about putting out our lawn signs in support of Israel or lighting a menorah in the window or doing anything that gives us away as being Jews and I understand that, too. I am also struck by the sight of tanks flying the Israeli flag and my heart bursts with pride. Our world was upended in October and the road ahead will be difficult, but our grandparents knew difficulty firsthand, too, and we can aspire to their strength and tenacity.

Light can be a powerful tool to expose the truth as well as being a sign of resiliency. The phrase “never forget” may take on a new meaning and maybe even act as impetus for all of us to rededicate ourselves to supporting our local and distant Jewish communities, Israel, and even our own Jewish identities. We are, after all, still here, right where we belong.

May your holidays and new year be filled with joy and peace for all. Be safe, be vigilant and shine your light brightly for all to see,

Ben



Kol Ami members Karen Gurmankin and Elaine Gershenson (2nd and 3rd from right) joined representatives from Keneseth Israel and Old York Road Temple Beth Am in a conversation with Representative Ben Sanchez about CeaseFirePA's Common Agenda to End Gun Violence. This meeting is part of a gun violence prevention initiative from the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism--Pennsylvania.

SYNAGOGUE LEADERSHIP

Main Office

215-635-3110

Rabbi Leah R. Berkowitz

215-635-3110

Rabbi Elliot Holin

Founding Rabbi

215-882-0017

Justin Krik, Co-President

Ben Long, Co-President

Linda Jacobs, Vice President

Gary Sender, Treasurer

Ronit Sugar, 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

215-635-3110

Rebecca Schwartz

Cantorial Soloist

215-572-6094

Janet Falon

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

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Caring Congregants Committee

Thursday, February 1 at 6:00 p.m.

Chairs - Natalie Dyen and Elaine Gershenson

Membership Committee

Thursday, January 18 and February 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Religious School Committee

Tuesday, January 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Chair – Rachael Simon

Social Action Committee

Thursday, February 8 at 7:15 p.m.

Chair – Shelley Chamberlain



KOL AMI WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE

Please bring new or gently used winter coats, jackets, hats, gloves, scarves to Elaine's office at the synagogue, to be donated to those in need this winter.

Any questions please call Ronit Sugar at 215-208-7027.

Art Sale/Fundraiser was a Success!



We are happy to report that the Art Sale/Fundraiser for Congregation Kol Ami, arranged by congregant and artist Cheryl Turetsky with the help and encouragement of Elaine Stevens, Executive Director, was successful. Many congregants visited our community room on December 3 to admire the prints on display, schmooze with their friends, and enjoy some light snacks and coffee. In all, congregants purchased nine of Cheryl's prints raising \$500 in contributions to Kol Ami's synagogue fund. Thank you Cheryl for sharing your beautiful artwork with us and to everyone who helped support the synagogue. (If there are members who were unable to participate on the 3rd and who would like to view Cheryl's prints and possibly buy one to contribute to the fundraiser, you can reach out to her at 267-210-9981 or cheryljgt@gmail.com).

CONDOLENCES

We extend our condolences in loving memory of:

Donald Chamberlain
Father of David Chamberlain

Ruth Cohen
Mother of Jeffrey Cohen

May their memories forever be blessings in the midst of our people



The Kol Ami Rainbow Alliance recently decided to turn their yearly strategic planning meeting into a Friendsgiving dinner! The Rainbow Alliance is made up of LGBTQ+ members and allies in our Kol Ami community. Stay tuned for some great opportunities to join them in the new year.



Join us for the 17th annual

Tu B'Shvat Community Seder
at Congregation Kol Ami, Fischman Auditorium
Wednesday, January 24, 6:30–8:30pm

Learn, be inspired, sing, taste symbolic fruits and nuts, drink four cups of wine and enjoy a delicious vegetarian dinner in celebration of the New Year of trees.

Community participation with song leader Ellie Kaplan

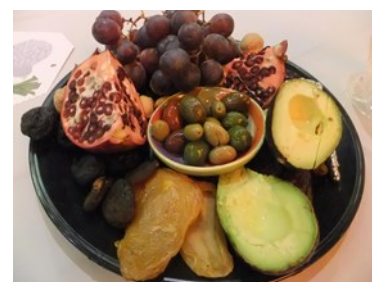
The Hazon Tu B'Shvat Haggadah

Designed to help you think about your responsibility towards the natural world on four different levels: physical space, community, world, and spirituality. The Haggadah offers texts, poems, questions, and activities to spark conversation around our Seder tables related to one of these four levels of responsibility. What can we learn from this ancient tradition about ourselves and our earth? Give some thought about your goals for 2024!



Seder is Open to Friends & Family

- \$5 per person contribution to cover seder plate costs
- Free for children under 13
- Registration required. [RSVP](#) with number of adults and children, by January 17th.
- Bring your own reusable or bio-compostable place settings: dinner and dessert plates, and spoon, fork, drinking cup, wine glass, and napkin. Plates can be scraped before packing to take home at the end of the evening. We will have scrape trash cans.
- Bring KOSHER wine to share with your table – both white and red are needed for the Seder.
- Bring Grape juice as non- alcoholic alternative.
- Doors open at 6:00pm. Dinner/ Seder starts promptly at 6:30pm @ Congregation Kol Ami, 8231 Old York Road, Elkins Park.



Like to help with preparation? [Sign up](#) to make a kugel, salad, cookie, or bar type dessert with a fruit/nut theme and/or help with set up beginning at 5:00pm. Any item prepared must be accompanied by a serving utensil and ingredient list.

Upcoming...



Create at Kol Ami! Making Art as a Spiritual Practice

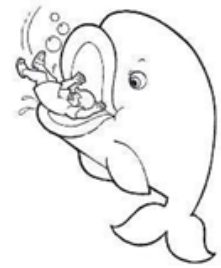
Sunday, January 28, 2024 1-3 p.m.

Join Rabbi Berkowitz and art therapist and mixed-media artist Mindy Jacobson-Levy for an afternoon of art-making for its own sake. Using the model of the [Jewish Studio Project](#), we'll explore how different types of artistic practices can be used as tools for learning, reflection, self-care, and creative play—all grounded in Jewish text. Come explore with us in a fun, safe, accessible, and judgment-free environment, where artistic skills are not expected or required. Take a creative leap of faith with us!



COMING IN FEBRUARY!

Adult Education with Cantorial Soloist, Rebecca Schwartz: Haftarah Chanting Program



Congregation Kol Ami is excited to offer haftarah chanting (trope) classes for adults. Those who enroll will learn how to read and identify haftarah trope signs and how to apply them. We will be studying verses from the book of Jonah. This will be fun, help with Hebrew proficiency, and allow you to participate in chanting haftarah at the synagogue during Yom Kippur afternoon (optional).

There will be a total of ten hour-long classes, and you must be able to read Hebrew. Classes will be held via Zoom on Wednesdays, February 7 through April 10 from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m. Please RSVP to Rebecca Schwartz at rebeccasongs@verizon.net so you can receive the Zoom link and materials needed.

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Are you young-ish, old-ish, new-ish, well-seasoned-ish? Please join your fellow congregants for an ISH and Women's Connection evening of socializing at the home of Julie Cohen and Nigel Blower, Saturday, February 10th, 7:00 pm.

Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share and BYOB.

RSVP to Julie at julie@juliecohencoaching.com. Address will be provided in response.

We look forward to getting together!



WHAT HAPPENS TO WOMEN'S BODIES AS THEY AGE?

On Thursday, February 29, at 7:00 p.m., the Kol Ami Women's Connection (formerly LOCA) is sponsoring a Zoom program featuring Dr Kanli Jiang, an OB/GYN at Athena OB/GYN in Abington. She will answer questions about what happens to women's bodies as they age.

You will be asked to submit questions, which will be answered (without revealing your identity) by Dr Jiang. More information to come.



SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 28 AT 7:00 PM FOR AUTHOR PRESENTATION

The Women's Connection is also sponsoring a presentation by author Janis Robinson Daly, whose novel, "The Unlocked Path," was inspired by her discovery that her great-great-grandfather was a founder of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. The novel features a determined young woman in the late 1800s who battled sexism and discrimination to become a medical student. "The Unlocked Path" was a #1 New Release in US Historical Fiction on Kindle.

This will be a Zoom program. Details to follow.



SAVE THE DATE — APRIL 23

Last year we shared our Second Night of Passover with Keneseth Israel Congregation. Join us once again for the second night on Thursday, April 23.

Further details will be forthcoming.

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 :

[//www.kolamielkinspark.org/donate](http://www.kolamielkinspark.org/donate)

ARTS & CULTURE FUND

Ruth Cohen

*Caring Congregants Committee
James and Natalie Dyen*

DISCOVER ISRAEL FUND

In Memory Of:

Ruth Cohen

David Hyman

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Susan Popkin

In Honor Of:

**Rabbi Berkowitz for officiating
at the wedding of Adam Schio-
witz and Colleen Gallagher**

Robert Schiowitz and Ronit Sugar

**B'Not Mitzvah of Sophia and
Rebecca Krik**

Alan and Elaine Gershenson

In Memory Of:

Donald Chamberlain

*Alan and Elaine Gershenson
Caring Congregants Committee*

Ruth Cohen

Alan and Elaine Gershenson

Tom Godo

Caring Congregants Committee

Sonny Meles

*Bean Meles, Robin Eisenberg and
the Meles Family*

SYNAGOGUE FUND

*Cheryl Turetsky – Art Show Fund-
raiser*

In Honor of:

**Robert Schiowitz and Ronit
Sugar on the wedding of their
son, Adam to Colleen Callagher**

Alan and Elaine Gershenson

Our Wedding

*Adam Schiowitz and Colleen Gal-
lagher*

**Joel and Rebecca Schwartz on
the wedding of their son, Jef-
frey to Leila Naitove**

Alan and Elaine Gershenson

In Memory Of:

Marion Brettell

William Hyman and Janine Pratt

Ruth Cohen

Craig and Sharon Myers

Joseph Gartenberg

Gary and Cheryl Turetsky

Tom Godo

Alan and Elaine Gershenson

Adam Hoffman

William Hyman and Janine Pratt

Mary Meller

Craig and Sharon Myers

Lillian Schafer

William Hyman and Janine Pratt

Frances Turetsky

*Alvin Turetsky
Gary and Cheryl Turetsky*

Minnie Turetsky

Alvin Turetsky