



קול עמי

An Intimate and  
Dynamic Community

## Thoughts from Rabbi Berkowitz....

### *Holiday Cycles Old and New*

Every spring, we experience the intersection of an ancient holiday cycle and a modern one. In late spring, we celebrate Shavuot, the culmination of the *shalosh regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals, for which the ancient Israelites made the trip to Jerusalem to make offerings at the Temple.

These three festivals—Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot—each commemorate peak moments in our people’s sacred story. Pesach is the holiday where we remember the Exodus from Egypt and our liberation from slavery. Shavuot recalls the giving of the Torah to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. And Sukkot is a reenactment of our forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

Shavuot is typically celebrated in a number of ways: honoring our young adults by celebrating their confirmation; staying up “all night” studying to prepare ourselves to receive the Torah (this ritual is called a *tikkun leil Shavuot*); and consuming an abundance of dairy products.

## WORSHIP SERVICES

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

(Bornstein)  
Rebecca Songs service with Adult and Student Choirs  
“Simcha” First Friday Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Saturday, May 4 at 10:00 a.m.**

(Price Chapel)  
Shabbat service and Torah study

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

(Bornstein)  
Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Saturday, May 11 at 10:00 a.m.**

(Price Chapel)  
Shabbat service and Torah study

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

(Bornstein)  
“TAG Talk” Kabbalat Shabbat service with guest speaker Cheryl Rice

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

(Price Chapel)  
Shabbat service and Torah study

## **WORSHIP SERVICES**

*(continued)*

**Sunday, May 19 at 4:00 p.m.**

(Zoom Only)  
Healing service

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

(Bornstein)  
Kabbalat Shabbat service

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

(Bornstein)  
Bat Mitzvah of Sarah Rothman

**Friday, May 31 at 7:30 p.m.**

(Bornstein)  
Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Saturday, June 1 at 10:00 a.m.**

(Bornstein)  
Bar Mitzvah of Harry Rubin-Reynolds

**Friday, June 7 at 7:30 p.m.**

(Bornstein)  
“Simcha” First Friday  
Kabbalat Shabbat service

**Friday, June 7, 14, 21, and 28 at 7:30 p.m.**

(Bornstein)  
Kabbalat Shabbat service

## **Rabbi’s Message** *(continued)*

This year, we will be celebrating Shavuot with our neighbors at KI. On Erev Shavuot, we are invited to participate in a joint confirmation service, as one of our 10<sup>th</sup> graders, Alexandra Kraemer, is confirmed along with her Quest Noar class. This service will be held at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, in the KI sanctuary.

And whereas most *tikkun leil Shavuot* study sessions happen in the evening, this year we are trying something different. On Shavuot morning, June 12<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., we will join our friends at KI for a day of study with me, Rabbi Ben David, Cantor Amy Levy, and others on the topic of “Revelation and Ruth.” I’ll be teaching about “Chosen Family in the Book of Ruth,” and how this traditional Shavuot reading can be read as a celebration of female friendship, inter-faith families, surrogacy, and adoption.

These holidays have been celebrated by our people for thousands of years. But in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new cycle of holidays emerged between Pesach and Shavuot, in a 49-day period traditionally known as the *Omer*. These holidays commemorate critical moments in our people’s modern history, and are an integral part of the contemporary Israeli calendar.

These holidays center around *Yom Ha’atzmaut* or “Independence Day,” which celebrates the moment when David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, announced the creation of the State of Israel. This year, the OYR Kehillah will celebrate this holiday by hosting Israeli poet Adi Keissar on May 15<sup>th</sup> (see our Religious School news for more information).

*(Continued page 3)*

## Rabbi's Message *(continued)*

*Yom HaShoah*, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, is situated exactly between Pesach and Yom Haatzmaut. This is meant to honor those who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began on the first night of Pesach in 1943. In Israel, this holiday is observed through a national moment of silence, during which a siren sounds, cars stop in the middle of the road, and the entire country stands still. It is a very powerful thing to watch.

Our annual Kehillah observance of Yom HaShoah will take place this year on Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m. at Old York Road-Temple Beth Am. We will have the opportunity to hear from Holocaust survivor George Marcus, and to see an exhibit of WWII artifacts curated by Dr. Gilbert Tabby z"l.

*Yom HaZikaron*, or Memorial Day, occurs on the eve of *Yom Haatzmaut*. This is an opportunity for Israelis to remember soldiers who died defending the State of Israel. This holiday feels very different from the American Memorial Day, as nearly everyone in Israel serves in the military, and most people know someone who has been killed in the line of duty.

Finally, we have a lesser-known holiday called *Yom Yerushalayim*, which celebrates the reunification of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War in 1967. This was also when Jewish Israelis first gained access to the Kotel, or Western Wall.

These modern holidays have a special resonance this year, after the attacks on October 7<sup>th</sup>. We have experienced both existential threats to the State of Israel and increased anti-semitism around the world. This has been a year of heightened emotions and divisiveness around our relationship to Israel. May we take these moments in our calendar as opportunities to foster our connection to the land, people, and history of Israel, and to nurture our hope for a future of justice and peace in Israel and around the world.



## A MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT BEN LONG

Like many of us, my wife and I were chatting about the menu for our upcoming Passover seder. This year the Passover story is especially poignant given the continued chaos in the Middle East and Ukraine. Of course the concept of freedom rings true for Jews everywhere – but it applies to everyone, everywhere.

Anticipating the holiday also got me thinking about how the role of synagogue president relates to the story, specifically with Moses as an example of the challenges of leadership. Like Moses – although our challenges can't be compared to his – the presidents who have served our congregation have helped guide Kol Ami through a myriad of challenges: from literally starting a new community, to being homeless, to owning a home only to have to sell it, to rabbinical and staff transitions. We've also had to withstand the headwinds facing Jewish congregations across the country like declining membership post Covid, and affiliation rates.

Justin and I get to share the role of leader, with ample help from all the Trustees and staff, to guide Kol Ami through the current challenges we grapple with as a community due to our own declining membership: growing deficits, declining religious school enrollment, few new members to attract along the Elkins Park corridor, and others. We have invested in marketing to gain greater exposure for our events, and the recent surge in attendance at services and programs shows the strong commitment of our remaining congregants. It's like discovering glowing embers after a fire; they can spark a flame but will eventually die out if not fed.

The synagogue leadership, as well as Justin and I, are hard at work trying to find the "kindling" to feed that flame so our congregation can continue to shine its light brightly. We are searching for and hopefully creating effective and innovative paths for reaching the "Promised Land" of a healthy and dynamic congregation; staying the course will only result in more time spent wandering in the desert.

We are honored to serve and humbled by the contributions made by so many people to ensure our fire is fed. May this Passover be meaningful to you and yours.



REBECCA SONGS SERVICE  
CELEBRATING

Rebecca's

CHAI ANNIVERSARY

Friday, May 3, 2024 at 7:30 PM  
BORNSTEIN AUDITORIUM

Featuring our Adult & Student Choirs  
Celebrating their Chai Anniversary, too!

This special musical service will showcase the original music of our very own Cantorial Soloist, Rebecca Schwartz.

Rebecca, an award-winning Jewish composer, has written and co-produced five albums (four spiritual and one secular), several singles, two songbooks, and has written and recorded songs to help teach autistic children. Her music which we've come to love and appreciate as a regular part of our service repertoire at Congregation Kol Ami, has made its way all over the world through presentations at conferences, and publications in *Shalsholet's First International Festival of New Liturgical Music*, *Kol Isha* (Women Cantors' Network), and with Transcontinental Music.

Please join us  
and sing along!



## RELIGIOUS SCHOOL NEWS

After what felt like a whirlwind spring, we are already wrapping up the school year. March and April were certainly busy. We visited the Weitzman Museum to learn about, among other topics, how Jewish activists impacted social movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some students saw rare artifacts from the Holocaust at the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center. We also participated in a lively Chocolate Passover Seder.

As our attention is directed towards Yom HaZikaron and Yom Haatzmaut, I must acknowledge that this year has presented unforeseen challenges, beginning with the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 and the war in Gaza. Students began to report experiencing antisemitism more than ever before during my time at Kol Ami.

While this was happening, the small size of our Religious School became an asset. Providing a safe space where each student feels secure and heard comes naturally to us, and students were drawn to Religious School each week as a place where they could simultaneously be proud to be Jewish, concerned about the State of Israel, and wrestle with complex feelings about the conflict. Our students hold many views on the war in Israel and Gaza. I have tried my best to ensure that Kol Ami students always feel comfortable expressing them constructively and without judgment. Such a space does not exist for many young Jews outside of our community, and I am happy to continue to provide this during the summer months.

I hope to continue to be a resource for students to express themselves, to ask questions, and to unpack the conflicted and complex feelings that they may have about the war in Israel and Gaza. Students should continue to feel free to reach out to me over the summer months.

For my part, I will be continuing to learn and develop Kol Ami's Israel Education with the Venture Israel Fellowship through this November. I am looking forward to providing several opportunities for Israel Education this month alone.

(continued page 7)

## RELIGIOUS SCHOOL NEWS (continued)

We have plenty of events before the end of the school year. Please mark your calendars:

- Sunday, May 5, 10:00am: Israel's Story Through Poetry program for fifth through seventh grade AND adult members. Please reach out to me if you would like to participate.
- Sunday, May 12: NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
- Wednesday, May 15, 6:30pm: Through Her Words: Mizrahi Judaism with Israeli Poet Adi Keissar
- Thursday, May 16, 10:30am: Kol A-Minis Yom Haatzmaut
- Sunday, May 19, 11:00am: End-of-Year Ceremony for Students in Kindergarten through Seventh Grade



## CONDOLENCES

We extend our condolences in loving memory of:

Beth Bernstein  
*Beloved member of our congregation*

Michael Feldman  
*Brother of Nancy Feldman Kirsch*

Adele Fricker  
*Beloved member of our congregation*

Frances Schleifer  
*Mother of Marlene Schleifer*

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

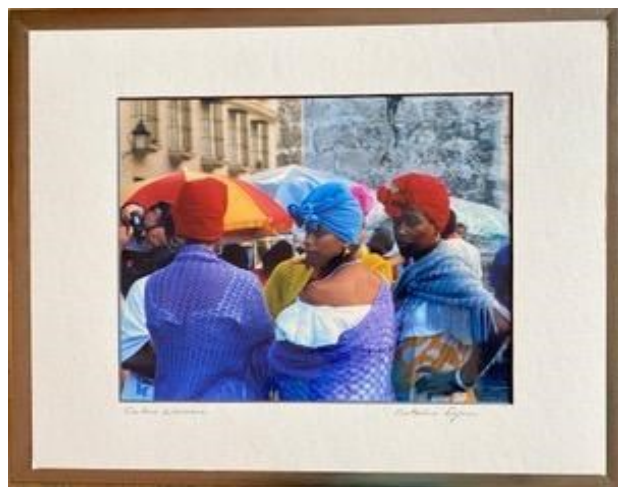
**BUY A PRINT - SUPPORT THE SYNAGOGUE**  
**SUNDAY, MAY 5<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**  
**FEATURING ARTISTS**  
**CAROL WIT AND NATALIE DYEN**  
**VIEW PRINTS ♦ NOSH ♦ CHAT ♦ SUPPORT KOL AMI**

**Carol Wit**, artist and Kol Ami Congregant, started creating at a very young age using stamps and lipstick on walls to her parent's chagrin. By junior high school she channeled her love of drawing using pen and ink, and later, while pursuing a professional education, discovered printmaking as the perfect art method. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) from San Francisco Art Institute in San Francisco, CA and M.Ed in Expressive Therapy (Art Therapy) from Lesley College in Cambridge, MA. For over forty years her artwork has been shown in numerous galleries, private collections and juried shows located in PA, NJ, MD, FL, MA, and CA. Carol is a member of the Cheltenham Printmaking Guild and the American Color Print Society. Carol's imagery evokes emotions and thought through a spectrum of colors, the interplay of line, shape, texture, and space. Her one-of-a-kind prints (Monotypes) and Etchings range from abstract to expressionistic realism.

**Natalie Dyen** took a somewhat circuitous route to the world of photography. To avoid being photographed, she *stepped* behind the camera and remained there for many years. Her father was a superb painter, but unfortunately, she inherited none of his artistic skills. Photography gave her the opportunity to become an artist because it didn't require her to make sketches, mix colors, or draw straight lines. All she had to do was keep her eyes open, knowing that wherever she looked there was an extraordinary picture hidden somewhere, waiting to be discovered. Her task as a photographer was to find it. Natalie's photos feature images from around the corner and around the world. All but one were taken with a film camera.

Carol and Natalie are selling their works with half the proceeds going to Kol Ami.

**Sunday May 5th, Community Room**  
**CASH OR CHECK ONLY**





## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

### **Caring Congregants Committee**

Tuesday, May 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Chairs: Natalie Dyen and Elaine Gershenson

### **Membership Committee**

Thursday, May 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Chair: Alan Wohlstetter

### **Social Action Committee**

Thursday, April 2 at 7:15 p.m.

Chair – Shelley Chamberlain



## **Knitting/Crocheting Group**

Join members Linda George and Shari Johnson for a monthly knitting group. Mark your calendars for the following dates. The Group meets from 5 to 7 p.m. the second Monday of each month. Location TBD.

**May 13**

**June 10**

**July 8**

**August 12**

**September 9**

**October 14**

**November 11**

**December 9**

### 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**

Bulletin Editor

janetfalon@gmail.com

**Please send correspondence to:**

**Congregation Kol Ami**

**8231 Old York Road**

**Elkins Park, PA 19027**

**quetions@kolamielkinspark.org**

**Website:** [www.kolamielkinspark.org](http://www.kolamielkinspark.org)

**Facebook:**

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

## 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](mailto:benl321@comcast.net), 610-659-7378) or me ([makingheadlines1@comcast.net](mailto: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

# Through Her Words: Mizrahi Judaism

## Featuring Israeli Poet Adi Keissar



Join Congregations Kol Ami, Beth Sholom, and Adath Jeshurun for an evening with Adi Keissar,

Israeli poet, artistic director, journalist and lecturer based in Tel Aviv.

She will discuss her experiences growing up in Israel, her family's Yemenite background, becoming a poet, and how personal identity impacts culture in Israel.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15 | 7:30PM**

**BETH SHOLOM CONGREGATION**

**8231 OLD YORK ROAD, ELKINS PARK, PA**

**REGISTER AT [HTTPS://BETHSHOLOMCONGREGATION.SHULCLOUD.COM/FORM/ADI-KEISSAR.HTML](https://bethsholomcongregation.shulcloud.com/form/adi-keissar.html)**

### About Adi Keissar

Adi Keissar, an Israeli poet of Yemenite descent, is the founder of the popular *Ars Poetica*, a project which initiated a new wave of Mizrahi poetry for the masses in the form of readings combined with Middle Eastern music and dancing.

The author of four books of poetry, Keissar is the recipient of literary prizes from the Israeli Writers Association, the Ministry of Culture, the Bernstein Foundation and *Saloona* magazine. Keissar is also an artistic director, journalist, and a lecturer based in Tel Aviv.

Born in Jerusalem, she holds a B.A. in film and television from Hadassah Academic College, as well as an Open University B.A., and an M.A. in screenwriting from Tel Aviv University.

### Venture Israel Fellowship

Our speaker is brought to us through the Venture Israel Fellowship, a project of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia in partnership with the Jewish Learning Venture. The fellowship program nurtures a diverse network of Jewish professionals eager to create robust and engaging programs that focus on the dynamic complexity of today's Israel through the lens of Jewish identity and its evolution.



**Jewish Federation**  
of Greater Philadelphia



**Jewish Learning Venture™**



**BETH SHOLOM**  
CONGREGATION • ELKINS PARK PA



**CONGREGATION**  
ADATH JESHURUN

KolAmi

# TAG TALK)))

## How 2 WORDS Can Change the WORLD

In this TAG, Cheryl Rice Wohlstetter, will share the inspiring story of how a chance encounter with a woman in a grocery store turned into a global movement to spread kindness and create positive connections.



**YOU MATTER**

In 2016 Cheryl founded the You Matter Marathon a global kindness and community- building program.

Cheryl is a leadership coach and author of the memoir, *Where Have I Been All My Life?*

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024  
AFTER OUR 7:30 SHABBAT SERVICE  
(APPROX 8:30 start time)

BORNSTEIN AUDITORIUM  
AT CONGREGATION KOL AMI  
8231 OLD YORK ROAD,  
ELKINS PARK



# 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**

### **In Memory Of:**

#### **Adele Fricker**

*Caring Congregants  
Committee  
James and Natalie Dyen  
Alan and Elaine Gershenson*

## **SYNAGOGUE FUND**

*Jeffrey Solomon  
Jane Tausig and Abby  
Binder*

### **In Honor Of:**

**My granddaughter,  
Lucy Kolar, and her  
performance in  
“Frozen”**

*Ira Cooperman*

### **In Memory Of:**

#### **Jack Bender**

*Craig and Sharon Myers*

#### **Donald Chamberlain**

*Michael Silverman and  
Robin Rifkin*

#### **Ruth Cohen**

*Michael Silverman and  
Robin Rifkin*

#### **Adele Fricker**

*Nigel Blower and Julie  
Cohen*

#### **Henry Kanter**

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#### **Dora Levin**

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*William Hyman and  
Janine Pratt  
Michael Silverman and  
Robin Rifkin*

#### **Sadie Zulkow**

*Craig and Sharon Myers*