

CONGREGATION KOL AMI CONNECTIONS

MARCH/APRIL 2024 Adar I/Adar II/Nisan 5784

www.kolaminj.org



THE RABBI TEACHES

By Ariel D. Milan-Polisar

There's a midrash about a man named Nachshon ben Aminadav, one of the princes of the tribes of Israel. As the Israelites were standing at the foot of the Red Sea, with the hoofbeats of Pharaoh's approaching armies echoing behind them, Nachshon understood something that Moses did not. He knew that God had led the Israelites out

of Egypt, but was waiting for the people to take a role in their own redemption. Nachshon understood that God would not part the sea until someone moved toward his or her own redemption, and was willing to risk their lives to bring about salvation.

So, Nachshon jumped into the waters of the Red Sea. At first everyone looked at him in wonder and awe. "What are you doing?" his family shouted. But he paid no mind. He knew exactly what he was doing. He waded out farther and farther, until water covered his knees. Everyone stood in silence and watched. Then he waded farther still, until water covered his shoulders. Then a few more steps – and only when the water had covered his nostrils and Nachshon could no longer breathe – only then did the sea split and the Israelites crossed into freedom.

We tell this story and laud Nachshon ben Aminadav as a hero of deep personal faith, but this is also a story of the responsibility of freedom. Nachshon took this responsibility seriously, stepping up when nobody else did and acknowledging that everyone has a part to play in ensuring freedom. This was his.

As we approach the holiday of Passover at the end of April, we not only look back at our history and tell the story of where we've come from, but we also look forward to the work we still have left to do. What is your role in our Congregation Kol Ami community and in the greater world in ensuring personal and communal freedoms for folks who are still struggling? What can you do with your own freedom to help others feel free and safe to be who they are, and live in peace?

As Nachshon showed us, the first steps are often the hardest, but also most important. In this season when we celebrate liberation from slavery in Egypt, what are your first steps to helping ensure another person's freedom? As Rabbi Dalia Marx writes, "We write the story of our lives, as individuals and as a people, and it is within our power to be redeemed even from difficult and disheartening situations. We can – and therefore we must – leave our best fingerprint on the world."

Congregation Kol Ami 2024

Tribute Weekend

honoring
Rabbi Jerome P. David
and **Steve Janove**



Join us in celebrating
their outstanding and tireless contributions
to Congregation Kol Ami & our community

Friday, April 12
7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service & Oneg

Sunday, April 14
6:30 pm Tribute Dinner, Dessert & Entertainment
\$180 per person ~ RSVP by March 29

Event Tickets on Sale Now!
Place a Tribute Journal Ad or Name Listing by March 29
to celebrate our honorees and their good works.
Sponsorships also available.
For complete event information, visit: www.kolaminj.org.

CONGREGATION
KOL AMI
קול עמי



FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Eric Hurwitz, President

The theme of this edition of *Connections* is “Freedom,” and the timing is apt. Purim is almost upon us – a time when we commemorate the triumph of freedom over oppression. Freedom has always been at the core of our Jewish identity. From the biblical story of Esther to our own experiences as Jews in America, our history is intertwined with the pursuit of liberty.

We are privileged to live in a country that upholds the principles of religious freedom, granting us the opportunity to practice our faith without fear or prejudice.

America, a melting pot of cultures and religions, has provided us with a unique environment to practice our faith freely. Our founding principles safeguard religious liberty, granting us the freedom to worship, observe our traditions, and express our Jewish identity. This freedom is a gift, one that we must cherish and nurture. Being a Jew in America means embracing the freedom to express our identity and celebrate our traditions. It means finding strength in our shared history and values, while also embracing the diversity within our community. We are a mosaic of different Jewish backgrounds, each contributing to the richness of our collective tapestry.

However, the freedom we enjoy today should not lead us to complacency. Events in recent months have shown us that the fight for freedom is far from over. We have witnessed a distressing increase in antisemitic incidents both globally and within our own nation. It is our moral duty, as Jews and as Americans, to stand united against this hatred and bigotry. Opposing antisemitism is not only about protecting our own community; it is about upholding the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity upon which our nation was founded. By actively opposing antisemitism, we send a powerful message to the world: that hatred and discrimination have no place in our society, and that unity and respect are our guiding principles.

Purim, with its themes of freedom, courage, resilience, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil, serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility. Just as Esther bravely stood up to Haman’s plot to annihilate the Jews, we too must use our voices to speak out against antisemitism, educate others about our history and traditions, and foster understanding among different communities.

As a Reform congregation, we are called to be agents of change. We have a long-standing commitment to pursuing social justice, spreading love, and fighting for equality. Let us continue to be a beacon of light, engaging in interfaith dialogues, promoting inclusivity, and working towards a more equitable society. So, this Purim, let us celebrate the freedom that we enjoy as Jews in America, while also recognizing the work that lies ahead.

Wishing you all a meaningful and joyous Purim celebration.



Join Our Network... Kol Ami’s new Networking Group meets the first Thursday morning of each month from 8:30-10:00 am. Join us to make more “Connections!”

FROM THE EDITOR

Marlene Dworkin



Several years ago, I was invited to a Passover Seder and was asked to bring an item that represented freedom to me. First of all, I was very excited to not be cooking for our extended family for the first time in more than twenty years. That was freedom itself! Secondly, I was really intrigued to be attending a modern Seder that wasn’t going to be relying on only reading from a traditional Haggadah. We were all going to be discussing our freedom objects, right? Ahh, but what to bring?

This Seder was taking place in Chicago so it would have to fit into my suitcase along with my clothes and the gluten-free mandel bread I was bringing (freedom from stomach pain for some). Ever practical, I thought about bringing a t-shirt with an artful representation of the American flag. As corny as it may sound, I don’t take for granted that we live in a country where we can express our feelings and opinions, especially with our votes.

On a more personal level, I considered my car keys – they give me the personal freedom to go wherever I NEED to go and wherever I WANT to go. Sometimes I am content to stay home, especially on a rainy day to read or work on household chores. Other times, I get *shpilkes* and I need to get on the road, the destination not always clear. I can breathe easier once I’m moving forward.

The item I took with me, a family heirloom, is one of my most prized possessions. It is a photo, originally black and white now yellowed through the years, of my grandfather and great uncle on a ship as they made their way to America from Germany. They left in January, 1924. Somehow, they are standing front and center amongst hundreds of people. They came first and, six years later, my mother arrived with my grandmother, a cousin, and great aunt.

My mother told me her parents had applied for an exit visa twice and were denied both times. They decided they would apply one more time and if they were denied the third time, they would stop trying. Fortunately, the third time was the charm and they were allowed to leave Germany. I often stop to think what would have happened if they had been denied that third time. I look at this photo of my grandfather, who I never knew, and my great uncle, who I did know, and appreciate all that my family did to come to America for me.

FAREWELL TO SHIRLEY CHESS

By Joyce Hoff

As I became the President of Temple Emanuel in 2005, I remember thinking about the awesome responsibilities ahead of me. My mantra was *'I am standing on the shoulders of those who came before me.'* Those leaders were all admirable. Only two women had been President prior to my serving as President, Shirley Chess and Bess Soffer, both of blessed memory.



I want to take this time to remember Shirley Chess who passed away on December 14, 2023. As Temple Emanuel's first female President, Shirley served the congregation from 1980 to 1983. I met Shirley in the 1990's as my family joined the congregation and I got involved in leadership positions. She was a very active Past President. She chaired the Ritual Committee for 20 years! Shirley took on the role of Chair of the Holocaust Torah Restoration project. It was very important to her that everyone in the congregation had an opportunity to write at least one letter with our Torah scribe. As you can imagine, it was a very large project and that Torah is still in our ark today. She was also the recipient of the first Lifetime Achievement Award at Temple Emanuel and later honored with the Keeper of Light award.

Known for the memorable hats she wore for the High Holy Days, Shirley lived her Judaism. As a senior adult, she learned Hebrew and became an adult Bat Mitzvah. Family was so important to Shirley. She and Al, her husband of over 60 years, raised three sons. They were blessed with seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

"If there is a word, one word, to describe Shirley Chess it would be beautiful. Shirley was beautiful, classy, stylish, elegant, cared about her appearance, was always well put together, and often wore red. She was also a beautiful person in that she cared about people and was always there to help, to listen, to show empathy and concern. Shirley had a very good mind, a mind of her own and she told it like it was. Shirley was smart, and wise, and visionary, and I was honored to work with her," remembered Rabbi Jerry David.

Shirley was a great example of distinguished leadership to me and to all who came after her. She will be sorely missed by everyone who knew her.

A JOURNEY INTO JEWISH FOOD

Have you ever wondered about the history of your favorite Jewish food? Or eaten the delicious food from Mia's Meals or The Kibitz Room and wondered how you might make it yourself? Join Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar for a three-part series about Jewish food – its history, origins, and what it says about the Jewish people. You will then cook a few different recipes together in the Kol Ami kitchen. Each class will focus on a different genre of Jewish food: Ashkenazi, Sephardic, or Israeli. You will be able to take a plate home with you, or eat together with the class in the library. This series will take place on these three Wednesdays: April 3, 10 & 17, 10:30 – 11:45 am. This series is for Kol Ami members only and class size is limited to 20, based on the capacity of the kitchen. The cost is \$18 per person for the series, to cover the costs of food and equipment. Registration is required by March 27. If the maximum is reached before then, registration will close, so sign up ASAP!

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE



Our strategic planning journey has taken a significant step forward with the establishment of six task forces, each dedicated to a crucial aspect of our congregation. As previously shared, these task forces are led by Co-Chairs, supported by our staff, and comprised of three to five congregants. Here is a brief overview of the task forces:

1. **Ritual and Spirituality:** Exploring the richness of our rituals and spiritual practices.
2. **Education:** Enhancing our commitment to lifelong learning for individuals of all ages.
3. **Membership, Engagement, and Belonging:** Fostering a sense of belonging and engagement within our community, ensuring that every member feels valued.
4. **Leadership and Volunteerism:** Strengthening leadership and volunteer opportunities to empower our congregational family.
5. **Finance, Building, and Philanthropy:** Securing the financial foundation of our community, maintaining our physical space, and expanding our philanthropic efforts.
6. **Marketing and Communication:** Elevating our presence and effectively communicating the essence of CKA to our current and potential members.

On January 5, all task force members gathered for a workshop, setting expectations, and engaging in exercises to prepare for their work ahead. The initial work for these task forces is to conduct an analysis of our internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats that may impact CKA. This involves speaking with members, committees, and collecting internal/external data.

The goal is to create a visionary statement for each task force, providing a "north star" that guides purposeful and meaningful action planning. All vision statements will be inspired by our overarching Congregation Kol Ami Vision:

"We are a dynamic, inclusive, and nurturing community and find holiness in being fully present for one another through life's ordinary and extraordinary moments. We seek to find bold purpose and deep connections through the creative exploration of avodah (prayer), Talmud Torah (Torah learning), tikkun olam (repairing/healing the world), and acts of g'milut chasadim (loving kindness). The wisdom of our Jewish tradition empowers us to re-imagine our lives, inspiring personal growth and encouraging a deeper understanding of who we are as individuals and as a congregational family."

Thank you for staying connected and engaged in this transformative journey. Your input, support, and commitment are vital as we collectively shape the future of Kol Ami.

Jessica Manelis and Allison Snyder
Strategic Planning Co-Chairs

BLOOD DRIVE



Congregation Kol Ami held a Blood Drive on December 14, and it was a huge success. I would like to thank all of our blood donors. Twenty-six pints of blood were collected. There were four first-time donors and four Power Red donors. During a Power Red donation, you give a concentrated dose of red cells, the part of blood used every day for those needing transfusions as part of their care. This type of donation uses an automated process that separates your red blood cells from the other blood components and then safely and comfortably returns your plasma and platelets to you.

All donors received a \$10 Amazon gift card. Our blood drive helped over 75 patients in need of life saving blood supplies during the winter holiday season!

Sisterhood sponsored the blood drive for the first time, and I would like to thank the following Sisterhood volunteers who greeted our donors and handed out snacks: Pam Austin, Pamela Barroway, Judy Feldman, Sharyl Fidoten, Beth Gamel, Penny Jacoby, Sheryl Levin, Liz Levine, Janet Moss, Paula Sacks, Denise Weinberg, and Nancy Weiner. A special thanks goes to Tracy Goldberg for recruitment communications and volunteering as well.

The next blood drive will take place on Wednesday, May 22 from 2:00-7:00 pm. Look for registration in May.

Karen Ginsburg
Kol Ami Red Cross liaison

KULANU



Congregation Kol Ami has a vibrant and growing LGBTQIA+ community and we are constantly looking to innovate and bring modern Jewish opportunities to our membership. In alignment with our mission, Kulanu will be sponsoring a three-part series of queer Torah study this spring with Rabbi Milan-Polisar. We will meet on the first Wednesday of March, April, and May at 7:30 pm in the chapel.

Our aim through this program is to provide space for LGBTQ+ Jews to gather for learning and worship in a way that will enable us to bring our full selves to the table. Our study will be an open place of active inclusion and acceptance over tolerance. By our nature, we bring a queer perspective to all facets of our lives, including our individual Judaism and the internal reflections and emotions that come from our Torah study. Kulanu and Congregation Kol Ami will help us to enhance our individual understanding of the meanings of Torah as we examine our scripture through an LGBTQ+ lens.

We believe there is potential for tremendous healing in such a setting for our LGBTQ+ congregants. While many of us are blessed to have supportive friends and family, there are equally as many who have not had such a healthy support network around us. Religion is often weaponized against the queer community, and this is only worsened by the lack of queer representation in religious texts and the lack of re-examination of texts from a queer lens. We are grateful for the opportunity for this program to exist as its own entity as the result of a desire to provide healing, community, exploration, and representation for the queer community at Kol Ami. Join us as we bring our LGBTQ+ perspectives into the discussions and interpretations of Torah.

If you would like more information about this program or about Kulanu, please contact Melissa Firstenberg at melissa.firstenberg@gmail.com.



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Sheri Greenblatt *Director of Education*

"If you want to be happy, do not dwell in the past, do not worry about the future, focus on living fully in the present." This quote from author Roy T. Bennett embodies exactly what we are trying to do in the Religious School with amazing programs for all ages.

Our sixth graders made beautiful Yads during our Yad workshop. The fifth graders had our very first shul-in at our synagogue where we bonded over prayer, food, and fun. Our congregation hosted the second Tri-County Teen Summit with speaker Pamela Schuller and it was great to see over 200 teens here in our building! Also, our Hebrew High School students (see right) returned from the L'Taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington, DC. We are so proud of them for their persuasive and passionate speeches written on topics that they chose. They then presented those speeches to their Senator or Representative on Capitol Hill. Great way to get their voices heard!

We are now getting ready for Purim. Our 6th-12th graders have been hard at work preparing for our Purim Shpiel, *The Megillah of Oz*. Even our younger students have a chance to be involved as "Junior Shpielers." We are excited to invite all our Religious School families to join us on Sunday, March 24, for a morning of dressing up, watching our Purim Shpiel, the presentation of the Ravi Bloom Mensch Award, and having a great time at our Carnival. Watch your emails for more information.

As we end the month of March, we head into springtime and the holiday of Passover. The Religious School will celebrate together with our school-wide Passover program on Sunday, April 21, before we leave for Passover break. We would love to get parent volunteers to help with this beautiful day at the school. Reach out to me (SGreenblatt@kolaminj.org) if you are interested.



Upcoming Events

To register, or for more information
on these and other programs, visit:
www.kolaminj.org/events

MARCH

ECC & RS Art Show

Friday, March 1 – Sunday, March 3

First Friday

Friday, March 1, 6:15 pm

Enjoy pre-service refreshments.

Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, March 1, 7:00 pm

We celebrate March anniversaries.

Torah Study

Saturdays, March 2, 16, 23 & 30,

9:00 am (Hybrid; Scholar-in-Res. on Mar. 9)

Spice Up Your Judaism

Saturdays, March 2, 16, 23 & 30,

10:15 am (Hybrid; Scholar-in-Res. on Mar. 9)

Havdalah at Home

Saturday, March 2, 7:00 pm

(Off-site, various congregant homes)

Candy Bar Bingo

Sunday, March 3, 4:00 pm

Monthly Mussar Moments

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar

Monday, March 4, 12:00 pm (Zoom)

Talmud Talks

Led by Rabbi Lewis John Eron, Ph.D.

Tuesdays, March 5, 12, 19 & 26,

11:30 am (Zoom)

Men's Club Lunch

Wednesdays, March 6 & 20, 12:30 pm

(Off-site; contact allanpep@yahoo.com.)

Caring for Our Aging Parents As We Care for Ourselves

Wednesday, March 6, 6:00 pm

Support Group facilitated by Rabbi Ariel
Milan-Polisar & Eileen Winter, MSW, LSW

LGBTQIA+ Torah Study

Wednesday, March 6, 7:30 pm

Kol Ami Networking Group

Thursday, March 7, 8:30 am

Yiddish Shmooze Group

Thursdays, March 7 & 21,

10:30 am (Zoom)

First Thursdays:

The Poet Prince of Granada

Led by Dr. Laurie Hohwald

Thursday, March 7, 7:30 pm (Hybrid)

Scholar-in-Residence Weekend:

Let Us All Breathe Together

Spiritual, insightful study and exploration
with Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg.

Friday, March 8

7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service

Saturday, March 9

9:00 am – 3:30 pm Three Shabbat

Learning Sessions, plus Schmoozing and
Lunch (Come to part or all of the day!)

Sunday, March 10

9:30 am Concluding Brunch

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, March 9, 10:30 am

Bar Mitzvah of Matthew Specter

Daylight Saving Time Begins

Sunday, March 10

Hebrew High School

Teen Speaker Summit

Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 pm (at Beth El)

Adult Education:

Yes, We've Heard of Them, But Who Were They, Really?

Led by Rabbi Richard Address

Three Wednesdays, March 13, 20 & 27,

10:30-11:45 am (Hybrid)

Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, March 13, 7:30 pm

Shabbat Mishpacha (Family)

Service: Grade 4 Shabbat

Friday, March 15, 7:00 pm

Men's Club Retreat (Atlantic City)

Friday, March 15 – Sunday, March 17

Braid. Spice. Cook!

with the Challah Prince

A Jewish Food Series presented by the

Sisterhoods of Kol Ami, Beth El, and TBS.

Wednesday, March 20, 7:00 pm

Idan Chabasov bakes art with challah.

Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, March 22, 7:00 pm

We celebrate March birthdays.

Purimpalooza:

Megillah Reading & Retro Dance Party

Saturday, March 23, 7:00 pm

Adults 21+ dance through the decades.

Purim!

Sunday, March 24

9:15 am Shushan Perks Café

10:15 am Purim Shpiel: Megillah of Oz

Starring Religious School 6th-12th graders

11:30 am – 1:30 pm Purim Carnival

Boomers Lunch: Ponzio's

Tuesday, March 26, 1:00 pm

Caring Caps Spring Stitch

Wednesday, March 27, 7:00 pm

Shabbat Evening Service:

Friday, March 29, 7:00 pm

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, March 30, 10:30 am

B'nai Mitzvah of Rebecca Shapiro
and Callen Zaum

APRIL

Adult Education:

A Journey into Jewish Food

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar

Three Wednesdays, April 3, 10 & 17,

10:30-11:45 am (Limited space available.)

Men's Club Lunch

Wednesdays, April 3 & 17, 12:30 pm

(Off-site; contact allanpep@yahoo.com.)

Caring for Our Aging Parents As We Care for Ourselves

Wednesdays, April 3 & 10, 6:00 pm

Support Group facilitated by Rabbi Ariel
Milan-Polisar & Eileen Winter, MSW, LSW

LGBTQIA+ Torah Study

Wednesday, April 3, 7:30 pm

Kol Ami Networking Group

Thursday, April 4, 8:30 am

Yiddish Shmooze Group

Thursdays, April 4 & 18,

10:30 am (Zoom)

Upcoming Events

To register, or for more information on these and other programs, visit:
www.kolaminj.org/events

Tot Shabbat Dinner & Service

Friday, April 5
5:15 pm Family Dinner
6:00 pm Shabbat Service

First Friday

Friday, April 5, 6:15 pm
Enjoy pre-service refreshments.

Shabbat Evening Service: Boomers Shabbat

Friday, April 5, 7:00 pm
We celebrate our Boomers Social Group and our April anniversaries.

Torah Study

Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20 & 27,
9:00 am (Hybrid)

Spice Up Your Judaism

Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20 & 27,
10:15 am (Hybrid)

Women's Seder

Sunday, April 7, 2:00 pm

Boomers Book Club: Once We Were Slaves

Sunday, April 7, 7:00 pm (Zoom)

Monthly Mussar Moments

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Monday, April 8, 12:00 pm (Zoom)

Talmud Talks

Led by Rabbi Lewis John Eron, Ph.D.
Tuesdays, April 9 & 16, 11:30 am (Zoom)

Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, April 10, 7:30 pm

First Thursdays (on the Second Wednesday): The Sacred Earth

with Rabbi Andru Kahn
Wednesday, April 10, 7:30 pm (Zoom)

Tikkun Olam Shabbat Dinner

Friday, April 12, 5:15 pm

Tribute Weekend: Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, April 12, 7:00 pm
We honor Rabbi David & Steve Janove.

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, April 13, 10:30 am
Bar Mitzvah of Eli Zimmerman

KAFTY Sr. Shul-in at LTY

Saturday, April 13 – Sunday, April 14
(Off-site)

Boomers Hike at Haddon Lake

Sunday, April 14, 10:30 am

Tribute Weekend: Tribute Dinner

Sunday, April 14, 6:30 pm
We celebrate the good works of
Rabbi David & Steve Janove.

Chrain Gang Horseradish-Making

Monday & Tuesday, April 15 & 16,
7:00 pm

Pajama Storytime

Wednesday, April 17, 6:00 pm

Braid. Spice. Cook! with the Spice Detective

*A Jewish Food Series presented by the
Sisterhoods of Kol Ami, Beth El, and TBS.*
Wednesday, April 17, 7:00 pm (Beth El)
Yaniv Cohen unlocks the power of spice.

Men's Club Seder

Wednesday, April 17, 7:30 pm

Shabbat Mishpacha (Family) Service: Grade 6 Shabbat

Friday, April 19, 7:00 pm

Shabbat Havdalah Service

Saturday, April 20, 5:45 pm
Bar Mitzvah of Kyle Mogell

KAFTY Kids Bowling Bonanza

Sunday, April 21, 12:30 pm

Pesach: First Seder

Monday, April 22

Shabbat Evening Service:

Friday, April 26, 7:00 pm
We celebrate April birthdays.

Pesach: Concluding Service

Monday, April 29, 10:00 am



We Mourn...

Dr. Richard Bogutz

husband of Ruth Bogutz

Sue Engelman

mother of Jim (Gaby Fish) Engelman

Milton Fineman

cousin of Murray (Barbara) Fineman

George Frumkies

great uncle of Amy (Jason) Sonstein

Sol Gantz

father of Erica (Rich) King

Alan Golboro

grandfather of Amy (Andy) Sussman

Harry Jaroslaw

father of Joseph (Holly) Jaroslaw

Edwin Jeffreys

father of Scott (Debbie) Jeffreys

Loretta Rochelle Katz

sister of Len (Toby) Berman

Helene Ludwin

aunt of Steve (Sheryl) Levin

Benjamin Perloff

son of Kathy & Michael Perloff

Christina Scurti Perloff

daughter-in-law of Kathy &
Michael Perloff

Alan Richter

brother of Joanne Cohen

Alfred Silverman

father of Stacey (Barry) Gladstein

Mel Zimmerman

father of Adrienne (Rich) Goldenberg
grandfather of Ryan Goldenberg &
Matt Goldenberg
partner of Eleanor Stofman

Lists are inclusive from the last issue of Connections through February 15, 2024.

CONGREGATION
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LIFE CYCLE

Mazal Tov to...

Janet Berson

on the birth of her grandson,
Elliott Quinn Carlton

**Laurie Kaplis-Hohwald &
Robert Hohwald**

on the birth of their granddaughter,
Cassandra Celeste Hohwald

Brandi Mosko

on the naming of her daughter,
Sawyer Cook

Sonni & Dan Rapp

on the birth of their son,
Wyatt Everett Rapp

Merle Steinberg

on the birth of her great-grandson,
Nolan William Carter

Sherri & Jason Turner

on the engagement of their son David
to Jessica Gregory

Eileen Winter

on the birth of her granddaughter,
Nell Sienna Winter

SHALOM FROM SISTERHOOD

Congregation Kol Ami Sisterhood came together for a wonderful paid-up membership brunch with Sisterhood friends on Sunday, January 21 (photos right). Amy Bodofsky chaired the event, with expert food preparation and set-up assistance from Tracy Goldberg, Lisa Weiser, Debbie Thomson, and Beth Kern. The event was complete with a mindfulness/yoga discussion led by Nancy Davis. We offered a kugel cookoff competition that featured a tasting of sweet and savory homemade kugels brought in by members. We voted for our favorites and Tracy Goldberg and Sara Honovich became winning kugel queens. The kugels were awesome! We appreciate all the helpers who contributed to the event.

Upcoming Events:

Braid. Spice. Cook! a Jewish Food Series presented by the Sisterhoods of Congregation Beth El, Congregation Kol Ami, and Temple Beth Shalom, will be held in three parts. Please see the back cover for details, discounted rates, and sponsorship opportunities.

Our **Women's Seder** will be held on Sunday, April 7 at 2:00 pm. Merle Steinberg has creative ideas to help us celebrate the freedom we obtained so long ago and the freedoms we cherish today.

If you are interested in becoming involved in Sisterhood, please contact SisterhoodPresident@kolaminj.org, attend an event, and share ideas.



BURKETT/ELITE GRADUATES

By Charlotte Silver-Cohen

Being a Jewish young adult in America can be confusing. Being involved in my synagogue and other Jewish programs throughout my life has given me the freedom to be more comfortable with my Jewish identity. Whether it was being at a Jewish day school from pre-K to second grade, switching to Religious School one to two times per week, involving myself in BBYO, and even becoming a *Madricha*, I have been heavily influenced by my Jewish community. Each step of my Jewish career has led me to be free to express my form of Judaism.

I have been immersed in our local Jewish community for my whole life. There was no doubt in my mind I would graduate from Hebrew High School. I was one of eleven people in my graduating class. When I graduated, I was lucky enough to be honored with two gifts from the synagogue: a certificate to teach Hebrew school (because I was a *Madricha*) and a Burkett Membership. When it was announced to the class that we would be receiving this membership, at first, I did not know what it was. Then someone went into detail about this special membership that allowed us to become full members of our synagogue for ten years after we graduated for free. This gift was the best gift I got from my Hebrew High graduation. It allowed me to continue my Jewish journey where I was most comfortable.

Coming back to our synagogue as an adult, things feel different in a good way. After the unification, I was approached about being a Religious School teacher. I agreed, of course, and I love it. It gives me the freedom to teach the next generation how amazing our home is and all the great things that come from it when you stay here long term. I am honored to be a part of the Burkett/ELITE membership, and now, the committee, to help others understand why this amazing membership can lead to the freedoms anyone could want in a synagogue home.



Homecoming Shabbat... Kol Ami Burkett/ELITE graduates and high school seniors met for tapas-style snacks and shmoozing before our December 22 Shabbat service.

Let's Celebrate Purim!

Join us for a night of funky beats,
and retro treats as we dance through the decades!

PURIM PALOOZA

Megillah
Reading &

Retro Dance Party

Featuring DJ Cousin Donnie

**MARCH 23
7:00 PM**

Dance to the rhythm of the '70s,
break it down with '80s classics,
and get jiggy with '90s hits!
And, dress in your favorite decade's attire!

Registration required to attend.
www.kolaminj.org

This FREE event is open to Kol Ami Members, 21 and over.
Refreshments will be served.

KOL AMI Many Voices,
One Community.
קול עמי

1101 Springdale Road Cherry Hill, NJ 08003 | 856.489.0029 | www.kolaminj.org



An Evening of Wits and Giggles... Comedian Andy Pitz had everyone in stitches and got them primed for Mentalist Eric Dittelman, who wowed the crowd with his extraordinary abilities at this January 27 event.



Game Night...

On February 10, a crowd gathered in the Social Hall for the fun- and laughter-filled second annual Game Night, hosted by Danielle Friendenthal and David Horowitz.





Day of Service... So many members of all ages participated in projects at Kol Ami and around the community for MLK Mitzvah Day on January 15. We are truly a congregation that takes *tikkun olam* to heart!



Clue You In... KAFY Jr. youth group members (Grades 6-8) displayed daring skills during their January 7 Escape Room Challenge.



Men's Club Show and Tell Brunch...

Members not only shared a February 11 bagel brunch, but also shared personal stories about items near and dear to their hearts.



From Generation to...

Marylee Alperin enjoys Pajama Storytime with her granddaughter and great-granddaughter!



Readership is up!

Ashley Hahn pauses to enjoy the Jan./Feb. issue of *Connections*!

Let's Celebrate Purim!

Somewhere over the rainbow, the fun begins!

Click your heels and join us

SUnDay, March 24

SHushAn Perks Café

9:15 – 10:15 am in the Rotunda

PuRiM SHpiel – 10:15 – 11:30 am
in the Sanctuary

PuRiM CaRNiVaL
11:30 am-1:30 pm

In the Kol Ami Social Hall

Games! Prizes! Crafts! Bounce House!

Come in Costume. Food & Fun.

Open to the Community.

Earlybird Pricing by March 17: \$15 per child ages 3+

After March 17: \$20 per child ages 3+

Children under 3 and Adults are free

Tickets: www.kolaminj.org

Sponsorships available

SHALACH MANOT FOR GOOD

This Purim, Congregation Kol Ami has elected to work with the charitable organization, Friends of the Israel Defense Forces. Your donations will support the delivery of *shalach manot* to the brave soldiers serving in the Kedem Battalion, part of the IDF's Search and Rescue Brigade. To learn more about their military operations and to let them know they are not alone, please consider contributing via:

<https://justgiving.com/campaign/kolamisupportskedem>

March/April B'NAI MITZVAH



Matthew Specter

March 9

*Son of Lisa & Richard Specter
Brother: Isaac*

My name is Matthew Specter and I am in 7th grade at

Voorhees Middle School. I love to play soccer, video games, listen to music, play with my dog Maggie, and hang out with my friends. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I volunteered with an organization called Leveling the Playing Field. LPF collects gently used and new sports equipment to redistribute to kids in under-resourced communities so they can participate in sports. I've been able to volunteer in the LPF Philadelphia area warehouse to sort equipment and am collecting gently used sports equipment to donate. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah has made me feel closer to my family, our Jewish traditions and even more proud to be Jewish.



Rebecca Shapiro

March 30

*Daughter of Sofya & Igor Shapiro
Brothers: Sam & Mikey*

I enjoy playing tennis and I am on a competitive dance team. I go to Marlton

Middle School and I am in 7th grade. My Bat Mitzvah project is making sandwiches and donating them to a local homeless shelter. Being a Bat Mitzvah means a lot to me because I can learn more about my Jewish heritage and be closer to my parents.



Callen Zaum

March 30

*Son of Anna & Jared Zaum
Brother: Nathan*

I am in 7th grade at Voorhees Middle School. In my free time I enjoy playing

soccer and playing the trumpet. I also love to participate in theater and drama club. For my Bar Mitzvah project I have been working within the community to help the elderly and disabled. I think it's important

not to forget some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah means becoming an important and equal part of the Jewish community.



Eli Zimmerman

April 13

*Son of Heather & Judd Zimmerman
Brother: Korey*

I am in 7th grade at Voorhees Middle School where I'm involved with the

band (playing percussion) and drama (stage crew). I am also a Lego, train and model car building fanatic who loves video gaming and hanging out with friends and family. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I chose to volunteer my time at the Lions Gate assisted living facility in Voorhees. While there, I spend time with the residents playing games like Bingo and doing crafts with them. It makes me feel good knowing that I am helping to brighten their day just by spending time with them. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah means that I become a Jewish adult and am responsible for more things. I am excited and very proud of myself because this is a huge accomplishment and I have put in a lot of the hard work and preparation.



Kyle Mogell

April 20

*Son of Victor & Tiffany Mogell
Siblings: Makayla & David*

I am in 7th grade at Beck Middle School.

I have a dog named Addie. I enjoy playing ice hockey, I play for the Flyer's Youth team in Voorhees and I play for Cherry Hill middle school hockey too. I love going to Flyers games, playing Xbox, and hanging out with my friends. I chose to collect hockey equipment for my Bar Mitzvah project. I am collecting equipment that will be donated to The Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation for kids that would like to play hockey but cannot afford the equipment and skates they need to play. My Bar Mitzvah means to me that I am becoming an adult and I am learning to have a better understanding of my Jewish religion.

MEN'S CLUB NEWS

By Michael Feist

Passover has always been my favorite holiday. As a child, I of course enjoyed Chanukah and the eight nights of presents. As an adult, I have come to appreciate the High Holy Days. Passover has always been the one holiday to which I have looked forward the most. I have incredibly fond memories of celebrating at my Nana's house, following along from the kid's table as my Grandad led the Seder. I recall chanting prayers and singing songs ranging from *Chad Gadya* to *America the Beautiful* – both of which could be found in our Haggadah. I remember searching high and low for the *afikomen* with my sister and cousins and the reward we all got at the end – even when we weren't successful. Grandpa Mike never knew what page we were on – although I think he might have just been doing it for the laugh. It's the laughter that resonated from our Passover table that I still remember to this day and, as I host Passover at my house, I try to ensure is part of our service.

Passover is of course a celebration of freedom. While we all read from the Haggadah, I imagine that everyone's Seder is just a little bit different – which I think is exactly how God intended it to be. We all have the freedom to put our own fingerprints on our services and our Passover tables. In my house, we blend traditions from my family with those from my wife's family and we create new ones in the process. Now is as important a time as any to celebrate the freedoms we have, given the peril so many of our Jewish brothers and sisters currently face, perhaps especially on Passover.

Passover at Men's Club is a celebration of freedom as well – a combination of traditions brought to Kol Ami from legacy synagogues and legacy leaders. The Men's Club 'Chrain Gang' will once again be making horseradish so you can include one or both of our strength/spice levels on your Seder table. Lastly, Men's Club will be hosting

our annual Seder on Wednesday, April 17. Be on the lookout for registration details. *Chag Sameach!*





EARLY CHILDHOOD

Laura Hoffman

Director of Early Childhood Education

Freedom and Freedom of Choice for Young Children

As parents, we know that it's important to give children freedom and to know when it's appropriate for them. As parents and teachers, we can facilitate how children explore their

environments without always telling them what to do or how to play.

At our Early Childhood Center, we believe that all children should have the freedom and opportunity to choose how they learn through exploration and experiences. Our teachers work within this guideline to help them explore their space safely, and to learn as they play.

Our philosophy is that children learn through play and therefore thrive through play-based learning. According to our Brightwheel (childhood education management) sources:

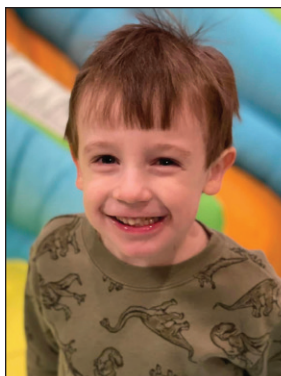
Play-based learning is a powerful approach that has gained significant recognition in early education programs. Instead of relying solely on traditional teaching methods, play-based learning embraces the innate curiosity and creativity of children to foster their development. By engaging in purposeful play, children not only acquire essential academic skills but also develop crucial social, emotional, and cognitive abilities.

This doesn't mean that children can empty every shelf and run around the classroom. It means that teachers guide play by providing materials to be used as children go through their day. Art materials, games, toys, and other manipulatives enhance a theme or holiday, and give children more understanding of the world around them.

As we approach Passover, our holiday of freedom, we further embrace the freedom of choice for our children. We encourage curiosity and exploration and find happy children discovering their own strengths.

ECC Notable Dates:

- **ECC Art Show** is Friday, March 1.
- **ECC Fashion Show** is Sunday, March 17, 4:00-6:00 pm.
- Registration for **School Year 2024-2025** is open.
- Don't forget to register for **Camp Sunshine 2024!**



WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

In times of happiness or sadness, Congregation Kol Ami offers a variety of ways to share your wishes and thoughts with others. Contributions may be sent to the synagogue office as well as completed online. For a complete list of funds and tzedakah opportunities, visit www.kolaminj.org.

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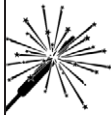
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We LOVE TO SWIM.



Lions Gate Pool Club. From L to R: Ruth Gross, Lois Goldberg, Lilyan Cralle,
Harriet Gersen, Gilder Alsher Not pictured: Shirley Srolovitz and Florence Siegel



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Go green and drop off your clean, dry,
plastic bags/film* at the main office
during regular business hours. Our goal of
collecting 500 pounds of plastic will earn
us a beautiful, new composite bench.

Visit www.kolaminj.org/trex for full details.

*Please continue to recycle your hard plastic at home.

PLEASE PATRONIZE OUR SPONSORS

You, too, can advertise your business or service! Connections, Congregation Kol Ami's bimonthly, home-delivered
source of information, is great for various advertising needs. For rates, please contact Info@kolaminj.org.



Braid. Spice. Cook!

A JEWISH FOOD SERIES presented by the Sisterhoods of Congregation Beth El, Congregation Kol Ami & Temple Beth Sholom

We KNEAD you! Join us to spice up your Spring as you learn cooking secrets from three renowned Jewish chefs:



@challahprince
Idan Chabasov
Wednesday, March 20
7pm at Kol Ami



@thespicedetective
Yaniv Cohen
Wednesday, April 17
7pm at Beth El





@busyinbrooklyn
Chanie Apfelbaum
Wednesday, May 8
7pm at TBS

 Catch them on Instagram!


Tickets: www.kolaminj.org | **Questions:** Caryn Lieberman - caryn@kolaminj.org

Congregation Kol Ami Presents
Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

 Eat
  Learn
  Reflect

Let Us All Breathe Together

Join Us for a Weekend of Mindfulness & Positivity with Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg!



Join Us! March 8-10

Relax, restore, and breathe with us. Our guest scholar will help us explore, meditate, and find our own spirituality and wisdom within.

Friday, March 8
7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service
Pre-service refreshments (6:15 pm).
Open to the community.

Saturday, March 9
9:00 am – 3:30 pm Three Shabbat Learning Sessions (hybrid) plus in-person **Shmoozing and Lunch**.
Come to one or come to all of the sessions.
Open to the adult community.

Sunday, March 10
9:30 am Concluding Inspirational Brunch Open to adult congregants.

Registration is required:
www.kolaminj.org
Sponsorships (\$180 per person) support this weekend and include a copy of Rabbi Weinberg's book. No charge for events.
This weekend is a gift to the community, supported by the Helen and Leon Weinberg Scholar-in-Residence Endowment Fund.