

CONNECTIONS

MARCH/APRIL 2025 Adar/Nisan/Iyar 5785

www.kolaminj.org



THE RABBI TEACHES

By Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar

I didn't grow up on a street where the neighborhood kids gathered to play in the afternoons. Ours was a cut through street, so people drove down it faster than they should have, and it was quite hilly with no cul-de-sac. The freedom of wandering around as a kid with no cares in the world wasn't something I experienced until I went to summer camp.

At URJ Eisner Camp in Massachusetts, every day we had an hour-long period called *breira*, meaning freedom. That was the time when the entire camp could go to whichever activity we wanted – we could go to the pool, to the arts and crafts shack, play a sport, or just hang out on any of the grassy spaces with our friends. I vividly remember the feeling (especially on Shabbat when this period was three hours long!) of walking around camp with my friends and feeling free. It felt like the world was my oyster; I had nothing but time, and I was somewhere safe with people who cared about me. The kind of freedom that camp offers is absolutely priceless. It teaches campers how to be independent and how to make good choices for themselves in a safe space.

I am so excited that this summer I get to go back to camp, this time to URJ Camp Harlam in the Poconos, to be on faculty for weeks 5 and 6. I look forward to spending time with our Kol Ami campers who are there, connecting with other Philadelphia-area colleagues, and teaching Jewish values and content to Harlam campers of all ages. This summer I look forward to rediscovering the childhood freedom I experienced at camp for many years. I hope all of us can find a space where we can, for even just an hour, put down the weight of the world, and feel unburdened and free.

CURTAINS UP!
Sounds From Stage & Screen
APRIL 6, 2025

SHOW STARTS AT 7:00 PM
Doors open at 6:30 pm

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KATE BALDWIN & GRAHAM ROWAT

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SCAN ME

Learn more about our *Curtains Up!* performers on our website.

Raffle Prizes too!

Casual chic attire encouraged.



FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Rob Baron, Vice President

What Freedom Means to Me

In celebration of Passover, we will soon gather at our Seder tables to commemorate one of the most defining moments in all of Jewish history – the granting of freedom for the Jews from the oppressive rule of Pharaoh. While I rarely publicly engage in discussions where religion

and politics are intertwined, I find it necessary to briefly share my thoughts about religious freedoms that I feel are quickly becoming compromised by the rule of leadership in our own country. I can't help but think that we have once again arrived at a time in our history where silence IS our greatest enemy in the fight to preserve our religious freedoms.

I believe religious freedom is more than a first amendment right and political concept. It is a foundational pillar of human dignity and a fundamental right that allows me to observe my own faith according to my beliefs and values in a way that is free from persecution or government interference. However, we are seeing shifts in policies and regulations that could impact religious accommodations in workplaces and schools, as well as the recognition of important days such as Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day. These developments raise concerns about the need to remain vigilant in protecting religious freedoms and combating antisemitism.

Fear not, however, because we as Jews are certainly no strangers to enduring and persevering. From Egypt to the Inquisition to the horrors of the Holocaust, history has shown us the dangers of complacency in protecting our freedoms. It is up to us to remain engaged, informed, and proactive in ensuring religious liberty for all. We have also seen the power of resilience. We have fought for the right to worship, to observe our traditions, and to pray when and where we wish. We have learned from our past and we will let "Kol Ami" (translated, the voice of my people) be heard to ensure that history does not repeat.

Freedom is not just a given right – it must be defended. I will continue to voice my right to live as a Jew, free from oppression or fear of retribution. That is what true freedom means, and we must never stop fighting for it. As you look across the seder table at your loved ones next month, I hope you will speak about the injustices of our past and the alarming parallels in the context of our world today. Learn from generations past and inspire the younger generations of the future. Above all else, do not be silent.



FROM THE EDITOR

Marlene Dworkin

Sweet Freedom

My Hebrew name is Malka, which means queen. Of course I identify with Esther at Purim. When I found out that there were different flavors of hamantaschen other than prune, poppy (mun), or apricot, a new world opened to me. Freedom to add any flavor you like: chocolate, cherry, Nutella, peanut butter. You can even put mini M&M's inside. Thank you, Sara Honovich, for that wonderful, eye-opening baking session; I'm looking forward to the next one!

As the youngest of three children, growing up in the '60s with two working parents, I was encouraged to be independent. I was a latchkey kid. Do these exist now? Those were simpler times when we were free to play outside with our friends. Parents weren't worried about knowing where we were at every single moment. We came home when it was dark.

My friends and I did not go to summer camp; it was not the thing to do where I grew up. My first taste of freedom from parental supervision came when I went away to college. My parents offered to buy me a car if I stayed at home and went to community college. I declined the offer. I couldn't wait to live on my own (in the dorm). I adjusted to my newfound freedom really well. I wasn't homesick, learned to do my own laundry, attended most of my classes, made a few close friends, and graduated on time.

Fast forward to motherhood; as a stay-at-home mom, I experienced a new level of freedom when my youngest child, Casey, entered first grade. I now had a full day (from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm) that was my own to fill. I was so excited to have so much free time that I overscheduled myself with classes and activities. It took a little adjustment but I figured it out.

There may have been a dance of excitement in the parking lot as the bus pulled away when both kids went off to summer camp for the first time. I knew they would have an amazing four weeks, plus I had a very close friend who worked at that camp who would look after them as if they were her own children.

Yesterday, at the gym, we were discussing the weather and the predicted snowstorm for the tenth time this winter. My friend of a similar age agreed that we have become a little wiser. If there is nothing truly pressing on our schedules, we feel content to stay inside and let the bad weather pass. We have achieved a certain level of insight and freedom.

To me, freedom means keeping your eyes and your heart open, as you gain experience and wisdom.

INTRODUCTION to JUDAISM

New Series Begins March 10 7:00-8:30 pm

Introduction to Judaism is an engaging multi-session course for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish life. Discover what could be meaningful to you in liberal Judaism.

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Contact Ruth Scott, Director of Member Engagement, at 856-489-0029 or Ruth@kolaminj.org for more information.



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jennifer Stofman

Life is a continuous series of choices, and among the most important is deciding where to place our focus.

Every moment presents an opportunity to direct our energy toward what enriches us or drains us. The ability to choose what we engage with is not just an act of free will, it shapes the quality of our lives.

What we focus on expands. If we choose to focus on growth, love, and possibility, our lives take on a different, more fulfilling trajectory. The world is full of distractions – some are enriching, but many are mere noise, cluttering our mental and emotional space. Awareness of where we direct our attention can mean the difference between a life well-lived or one running on a hamster wheel. Every person, activity, and thought carries energy. When we invite positive energy into our lives – through inspiring conversations, uplifting prayer experiences, and nourishing relationships – we create an atmosphere of joy and purpose.

With many of us stretched too thin, do we take the time to ask ourselves, “Does this interaction add to my life or elevate me?” By being more intentional about what we welcome into our schedules, we can choose the right opportunities that make us whole.

Just as our physical environment can be cluttered with things that do not serve us, our lives can become cluttered with experiences that exhaust rather than energize. Some activities feed our souls, while others merely fill our time. Do we give thought to what replenishes rather than what drains us? Service to others, Jewish learning, time in nature, and meaningful relationships are fuel for the soul. On the other hand, mindless time scrolling, constant busyness, and toxic relationships create inner disarray.

Being mindful of this balance allows us to shift from a state of depletion to one of abundance. If we fill our tanks with what nourishes us, we have more to give to the world.

Community is an essential source of growth, belonging, and shared strength. When we surround ourselves with people who uplift and inspire us, we become stronger, wiser, and more connected. Choosing to be a part of a Jewish community feeds our souls, offering encouragement in times of struggle, and joy in moments of celebration. Our Kol Ami community offers support, wisdom, friendship, and nourishment. The freedom to choose where we place our focus and how we spend our time is a form of empowerment. Every day, we have the opportunity to direct our energy toward that which brings light and meaning into our lives.

The question is: What will you choose today? **Please choose to join us as we welcome two Tony Award Nominated Performers, Kate Baldwin and Graham Rowat on Sunday, April 6. Glen Macnow will emcee “Curtains Up! Sounds from Stage and Screen,” as we honor Cantor Neil Schnitzer.**

STRATEGIC PLAN

Where We Are Today & Next Steps

By Jessica Manelis & Alison Snyder



Congregation Kol Ami has embarked on an important journey to shape our future through the development of our Strategic Plan. This plan, built through thoughtful collaboration and community engagement, is now moving from vision to execution. We are excited to share our progress, next steps, and how each of you can play a role in shaping the future of our congregation.

Current Status

Moving from Planning to Implementation

The strategic planning process led to the creation of six key task forces, each addressing a core area of our synagogue’s future. These task forces have now transitioned into an execution phase, where their initiatives will be carried forward through existing committees or newly formed ones. To ensure success, we have structured an implementation framework that includes:

- **Strategic Implementation Coordinators:** As the former Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chairs, we will oversee progress, maintain accountability, and ensure alignment with our vision.
- **Committee Chairs & Subcommittee Chairs** who will lead specific initiatives and report on their progress.
- **Regular Progress Reporting** to the Board of Trustees and the congregation to keep everyone informed and engaged.

What’s Next?

Join Us for a Town Hall Meeting

To keep our community informed and engaged, we invite all members of Congregation Kol Ami to join us for a **Town Hall Meeting on Monday, March 10**. This session will provide:

- A high-level overview of the Strategic Plan & its key priorities.
- An introduction to the committees and subcommittees leading implementation efforts.
- Opportunities for congregants to ask questions and get involved in various initiatives.

How You Can Get Involved

Our community thrives when everyone has a voice and a role. As we move forward, we encourage:

- **Participation in committees and subcommittees** to help execute key initiatives.
- **Feedback and ideas** that align with our shared vision.
- **Ongoing engagement** through upcoming meetings, updates, and volunteer opportunities.

Looking Ahead

The journey to implement our Strategic Plan is just beginning, and we are committed to fostering transparency, inclusivity, and continuous progress. Through collaboration and active participation, we will ensure that Congregation Kol Ami remains a vibrant, welcoming, and innovative spiritual home for all.

We look forward to seeing you at the **Town Hall on Monday, March 10 at 7:00 pm on Zoom** and continuing this journey together!

We Mourn...

Gloria Barsky
grandmother of Amy (Andy) Sussman

Alex Cohen
father of Sharon Halperin

Joyce Dworkin
wife of Morris Dworkin
mother of Gary (Marlene) Dworkin

Norma Jean Edwards
sister of Kathy (David) Korngruen

Allen Goodman
husband of Sheila Goodman

David Arnold Klein
father of Amy Klein-Rochkind (Eric)

Jack Nover
father of Neal (Teri) Nover

Phyllis Turner
mother of Jason (Sheri) Turner
cousin of Sheila Lever

Sara Weinger
mother of Bruce (Hilda) Weinger,
Jerrold Weinger, and Amy Finke

Mazal Tov to...

Janet Arnold
on the birth of her great-granddaughter,
Elise Asher Arnold

Sarah Laaf & Matt Berns
on the birth of their son, Micah Levi Berns

Debbie & Scott Jeffreys
on the Ordination of their son,
Rabbi Joshua Jeffreys

Morra Molotsky
on the birth of her great-granddaughter,
Ava Robbie Molotsky

Susan & David Olinsky
on the birth of their grandson,
Marcus Hayes Olinsky

Maxine & Mark Pinzur
on the birth of their grandson,
Benjamin Isaac Lev Pinzur

Jennifer & Eric Stofman
on the engagement of their son Jake
to Rena Cuneo

Eleanor Stofman
on the engagement of her grandson Jake
to Rena Cuneo

Marissa Wood-Roletter
on her conversion

April is **DONATE LIFE AWARENESS MONTH**

KOL AMI ORGAN DONOR SHABBAT
Friday, April 4
7:00 pm Shabbat Evening Service
Our Koleinu Choir joins us to recognize Organ Donor Awareness

28th Annual GIFT OF LIFE DONOR DASH
Sunday, April 27
10:30 am The Philadelphia Navy Yard
Join Team CKA for the 3K Walk & Dash to Save Lives!
Register: www.kolaminj.org

Caring Caps
SPRING STITCH

WEDNESDAY
APRIL 9
7:00 pm

Join us for a relaxing evening eating falafel catered by Mia's Meals, drinking wine & crafting.

\$18 per person. Open to current Kol Ami members.
Registration required by April 4: www.kolaminj.org

I am *FAMILIAR* HERE.



Alan Friedman,
Lions Gate resident since 2024

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Upcoming Events

To register, or for more information on these and other programs, visit:

www.kolaminj.org/events

MARCH

Torah Study

Saturdays, March 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29,
9:00 am (Hybrid)

Spice Up Your Judaism

Saturdays, March 1, 8, 15 & 29
10:15 am (Hybrid)

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, March 1, 10:30 am
Bar Mitzvah of Asher Greenspan

Kosher Pickleball: Spring Opener

Sunday, March 2, 9:00 am
(Off-site; advance registration required.)

The History of the Modern State of Israel & the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Presented by Dr. David Mendelsson
Sunday, March 2, 9:30 am (Zoom)
Tunnel Vision of Military Campaigns & War

Kulanu: LGBTQIA+ Torah Study

Sunday, March 2, 9:30 am

The Great Sisterhood Hamantaschen Bake

Sunday, March 2, 1:00 pm

The Rosh Chodesh Experience

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Monday, March 3, 7:00 pm

Talmud Talks

Led by Rabbi Lewis John Eron, Ph.D.
Tuesdays, March 4, 11, 18 & 25,
11:30 am (Zoom)

The Opposite of Love is Not Hate, It's Indifference (Elie Weisel)

Led by Rabbi Jerry David
Three Wednesdays, March 5, 12 & 19,
10:30 am (Hybrid)

Men's Club Lunches

Wednesdays, March 5 & 19, 12:30 pm
(Off-site; contact allanpep@yahoo.com.)

Yiddish Shmooze Group

Thursdays, March 6 & 20,
10:30 am (Zoom)

First Thursdays: Where did it come from? Haman, Amalek & the "Why" of Antisemitism

Presented by Rabbi Laurence Kotok, D.D.
Thursday, March 6, 7:30 pm (Zoom)

Tot Shabbat

Friday, March 7
5:15 pm Tot Family Dinner
6:00 pm Tot Shabbat Service

First Friday

Friday, March 7, 6:15 pm
Enjoy pre-service refreshments.

Shabbat Evening Service with Koleinu: HIAS Shabbat

Friday, March 7, 7:00 pm
Our Koleinu choir joins us for HIAS
Refugee Awareness Shabbat.
We also celebrate March anniversaries.

Purim Shpiel Performance: Estie

Sunday, March 9, 10:00 am

Purim Carnival

Sunday, March 9, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm

Monthly Mussar Moments

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Monday, March 10, 12:00 pm (Zoom)

Intro to Judaism

Mondays, March 10, 17, 24 & 31, 7:00 pm

Strategic Planning Town Hall

Monday, March 10, 7:00 pm (Zoom)

A Journey into Jewish Food

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Two Wednesdays (Space is limited!)
March 12 & April 9, 6:00 pm

Purim, Pizza & Pop

Thursday, March 13
6:00 pm Family Dinner
7:00 pm Family Fun Purim Service
8:00 pm Purim Shpiel: Estie (Annie)

Shabbat Evening Service: Strategic Planning Shabbat

Friday, March 14, 7:00 pm
We honor our dedicated Strategic
Planning Committee volunteers.

March Mitzvah Madness:

Volunteer at BookSmiles

Sunday, March 16, 10:00 am (Off-site)

Community Park Clean Up

Sunday, March 16, 11:30 am (Off-site)

Social Action at MANNA

Thursday, March 27, 10:00 am (Off-site)

Club Noar: End of the Year

Extravaganza (Grades 3-5)

Sunday, March 16, 11:30 am

March Mitzvah Madness:

Community Park Clean Up

Sunday, March 16, 11:30 am (Off-site)

Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, March 19, 7:30 pm

Boomers Lunch: Silver Diner

Thursday, March 20, 12:30 pm (Off-site)

Sisterhood Shop to Donate:

Ava's Closet Boutique

Thursday, March 20, 6:00-8:00 pm

Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, March 21, 7:00 pm

Shabbat Machshava Service

Saturday, March 22, 10:30 am
(in lieu of Spice Up Your Judaism)

Shabbat Havdalah Service

Saturday, March 22, 5:45 pm
Bar Mitzvah of Jake Alperstein

Blankets of Hope

Sunday, March 23, 9:30 am

Men's Club Brunch

Sunday, March 23, 9:30 am

K'ton Glow Mania Bash Sunday,

March 23, 11:30 am (Grades K-2)

ECC Fashion Show

Sunday, March 23, 4:00 pm

Shabbat Mishpacha (Family) Service: Grade 5 Shabbat

Friday, March 28, 7:00 pm
We celebrate our Fifth Graders.
We celebrate March birthdays.

Upcoming Events

To register, or for more information on these and other programs, visit:

www.kolaminj.org/events

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, March 29, 10:30 am
Bar Mitzvah of Zach Goldberg

Shabbat Havdalah Service

Saturday, March 29, 5:45 pm
Bar Mitzvah of Zachary Donahue

KAFTY Sr. Event (Grades 9-12)

Saturday, March 29, 6:00 pm

Sisterhood Seder

Sunday, March 30, 1:00 pm

Chrain Gang Horseradish-Making

Monday, March 31, 5:30-8:00 pm

APRIL

Chrain Gang Horseradish-Making

Tuesday, April 1, 5:30-8:00 pm

Men's Club Lunches

Wednesdays, April 2 & 16, 12:30 pm
(Off-site; contact allanpep@yahoo.com.)

The Rosh Chodesh Experience

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Wednesday, April 2, 7:00 pm

Yiddish Shmooze Group

Thursdays, April 3 & 17, 10:30 am (Zoom)

First Thursdays: An Evening of Remembrance – A Holocaust Story of Survival and Triumph

Thursday, April 3, 7:30 pm (Hybrid)
Presentation led by congregant Ed Skobac about his father's deeply moving Holocaust survival story.

First Friday

Friday, April 4, 6:15 pm
Enjoy pre-service refreshments.

Shabbat Evening Service: Organ Donor Shabbat with Koleinu

Friday, April 4, 7:00 pm
Our Koleinu choir helps us recognize Organ Donor awareness and celebrate April anniversaries.

Torah Study

Saturdays, April 5, 12 & 26,
9:00 am (Hybrid; Apr. 12 Zoom only)

Spice Up Your Judaism

Saturdays, April 5 & 26, 10:15 am (Hybrid)

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, April 5, 10:30 am
Bar Mitzvah of Miles Kahan

Curtains Up! Sounds from Stage & Screen

Sunday, April 6, 7:00 pm
We honor Cantor Schnitzer.
See details on front cover (page 1).



Monthly Mussar Moments

Led by Rabbi Ariel Milan-Polisar
Monday, April 7, 12:00 pm (Zoom)

Intro to Judaism

Mondays, April 7, 21 & 28, 7:00 pm
(No session April 14)

More Than Four Questions

Led by Rabbi Jennifer Frenkel
Monday, April 7, 7:30 pm (Hybrid)

Kulanu: LGBTQIA+ Torah Study

Tuesday, April 8, 7:00 pm

Caring Caps Spring Stitch

Wednesday, April 9, 7:00 pm

Shabbat Mishpacha (Family) Service: Grade 4 Shabbat

Friday, April 11, 7:00 pm
We celebrate our Fourth Graders.

Passover: First Seder

Saturday, April 12

Congregational Second Seder

Sunday, April 13, 5:00 pm
See details on the back cover (page 16).

Passover: Main Office Closed

Monday, April 14

Board of Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, April 16, 7:30 pm

Shabbat Evening Service

Friday, April 18, 7:00 pm

Passover Concluding Service

Saturday, April 19, 10:00 am
Yizkor is recited.

Pirkei Avot: What We Can Learn from Our Sages About Social Responsibility

Led by Rabbi Jennifer Frenkel
Monday, April 21, 7:30 pm (Hybrid)

Kol Kehillah:

Voice of the Community

Friday, April 25, 6:00 pm

Shabbat Evening Service: Boomers Shabbat

Friday, April 25, 7:00 pm
We celebrate our Boomers Social Group and our April birthdays.

Shabbat Morning Service

Saturday, April 26, 10:30 am
Bat Mitzvah of Hayden McElroy

KAFTY Jr. Event (Grades 6-8)

Saturday, April 26, 6:00 pm

Gift of Life Donor Dash

Sunday, April 27, 10:30 am (Off-site)

Boomers Book Club: Hotel Cuba

Sunday, April 27, 7:00 pm

Can We Interest You In...?

The **Scholar-in-Residence (SIR)** Committee is looking for energetic congregants to join us in planning our next SIR Weekend in Spring 2026. If you have any interest in learning about potential scholars or can recommend someone that will enhance our congregational community, we welcome your input. There is no obligation. Our next meeting is Sunday, March 9 at 10:00 am. Contact co-chair Carl Viniar (rebcarlv@gmail.com) or Jack Weinberg (jackweinberg@verizon.net).

Koleinu, Kol Ami's Adult Volunteer Choir is actively looking for a few good lower voices (tenors and basses) to add to our ensemble. Please reach out to Ira Miller (iramiller@kolaminj.org) if you are interested in more information and possibly joining our choir.

BOOMERS SOCIAL GROUP

By Judy Lubetkin

Every year during Passover, Steve and I meet with two of our closest friends for dinner at a local restaurant. We pick a place we know so we can ask for matzoh instead of bread to put on our table. One year, we skipped our usual place, but keeping our custom, we asked for matzah. The new restaurant apologized politely that they didn't have matzah on hand. We ordered meals that allowed us to keep our holiday nevertheless.

The point is, we felt the freedom to go into any restaurant and ask for matzah without fear. In the past, we took this freedom for granted. It never dawned on any of us that we might be opening ourselves up to an experience of antisemitism.

Today, frankly, I may feel comfortable in our local area asking for matzah, but if I were out of town during Passover, I don't know if I'd feel the same. That's one reason why the Boomers group is so important to me.

Join the Boomers and feel the freedom and opportunity to enjoy a wide range of activities, and to meet new people. We hope that our book group discussions, conversations at our monthly dining events, hikes, and community service gatherings let you feel the freedom to expand your acquaintances and enjoy some happy experiences with us!

March 16 – Clean up event/casual hike in Collingswood

March 20 – Lunch at Silver Diner

April 25 – Boomers Shabbat. Anyone who would like to participate as a reader of English or Hebrew, let us know.

April 27 – Book discussion, *Hotel Cuba* by Aaron Hamburger

Kol Kehillah Voice of the Community
Join us for
A Celebration of Judaism
Friday, April 25, 6:00 pm
Our Shabbat programs are open to the community & inclusive of all.
Facilitated by Inclusion Coordinator Adam Roth, MBA, M.Ed.

CONGREGATION **KOL AMI** Many voices. One community.
Sponsored by the Warren & Doris Elias Special Needs Endowment Fund at Congregation Kol Ami. For information, please visit www.kolaminj.org

CONGREGATION **KOL AMI** Many voices. One community.
Sisterhood קול נשים
Women's Seder
focusing on women-
combining our unique perspective
with traditional Jewish values
Led by Rabbi Milan-Polisar, Jill Moghadam & Merle Friedman
Sunday, March 30
1:00-3:00 pm
\$20 per person for Sisterhood members
\$25 per person for guests
RSVP by March 26 at www.kolaminj.org

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SHALOM FROM SISTERHOOD

By Amy Bodofsky

The topic of freedom is one that is revisited every year at Passover seders around the world. In biblical times, the Jewish people endured hardships and slavery in Egypt for years before God sent Moses to lead them on the path to achieving their dreams of freedom. Every year we realize that freedom is precious and something not to be taken for granted. This year we find that we are still waiting for hostages to be released from captivity. We are also waiting for all Israelis to have the freedom to return to their homes and live peacefully and without fear from hostile neighbors. We currently remain hopeful that Jewish people all over the world will have the freedom to lead enriching lives in peace wherever they choose to reside.

Join us at our upcoming Sisterhood **hamantashen baking event** on **Sunday, March 2** where we will enjoy baking and tasting these delicious treats, and celebrating Purim!

On **March 30**, please join us at the **Sisterhood Women's Passover Seder**. This amazing seder will feature a beautiful service designed to bring meaning and enjoyment to all. It will feature delicious Passover foods. Sign up early as this attracts a large crowd and spots are limited.

MEN'S CLUB

By Doug Cohen

As I sat down to write this piece on what freedom means to me, I was reminded of writing essays in school about what I did on my summer vacation. As a child, I had inspirational quotes on my wall, two of which referenced freedom. The first said, "Doing what you like is freedom. Liking what you do is happiness." The other said, "May you always have the freedom to be yourself." With those words, I thought that this submission would be easy, because freedom is such a basic and ingrained concept in our lives... yet I found writing it to be anything but easy.

Freedom has so many meanings, both on a personal and a broader level. Both levels come with limitations. The broader level includes, among other things, the basic First Amendment freedoms (speech, religion, press, assembly, petition), which are not absolute. These freedoms are continuously challenged and subject to constant scrutiny.

On a personal level, I have a variety of interests – theater (acting and going to shows), music (singing, playing music and attending concerts, often at the "Freedom" Mortgage Pavillion!), sports (participating and watching), and so many others. I have the freedom to engage in these activities, but I have family, work, and competing priority limitations. While I am fortunate to have the freedom to do what I want, I do not always have the opportunity. I thought about a recent Men's Club brunch, pickleball was scheduled at the same time. I had the freedom to go to both; realistically, I could only attend one. (I chose the brunch.) Perhaps, then, freedom is not only what we can do but the opportunity to have choices.

Speaking of choices, we hope everyone chooses to once again get their Passover horseradish from Men's Club; be on the lookout for details on how to order.



MARCH 2025
MITZVAH MADNESS
Sponsored by the Congregation Kol Ami Social Action Committee

VOLUNTEER AT BOOKSMILES
Sunday, March 16
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
at BookSmiles, Pennsauken

COMMUNITY PARK CLEAN UP
Sunday, March 16
11:30 am – 1:30 pm
at Knight Park, Collingswood

HELP FIGHT HUNGER AT MANNA
Thursday, March 27
10:00 am – 1:00 pm
at MANNA, Philadelphia

REGISTER ONLINE: WWW.KOLAMINJ.ORG

KOL AMI Many Voices. One Community.

AD-VANTAGE

While placing an ad with Congregation Kol Ami may not be as glamorous as a 30-second television spot during the Super Bowl, advertising with us has its advantages. All of our promotional opportunities provide a direct link to a large audience (over 800 households!) by way of print ads, website listings, direct emails, and more. New advertising packages have been developed to include options for all marketing budgets. Plus, advertising with Kol Ami is tax-deductible (!) to the fullest extent allowed by law.



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KULANU

By Jordanna Cohn

Freedom is bittersweet. This is an odd statement to some. After all, in America we consider freedom synonymous with liberation and joy and, crucially, the ability to live our lives unencumbered by oppression. All these aspects are, of course, true. Yet winning and gaining these freedoms is often fraught with physical and emotional upheavals, requiring the hard work of navigating new realities, and learning to grow and adapt alongside our changed world. As we gain our freedoms a new obstacle takes hold. When will we lose our freedoms?



In Torah, we see these moments all too often. When we recall Joseph, do we think of his brothers selling him into slavery or the moment his power as Grand Vizier in Egypt provided him the means of liberation from starvation for those very same brothers? When we think of Egypt, do we think of it as a boon against famine? Usually, no. Instead, the memories of the long years of slavery in that same land are most prominent in our minds. Still, at Passover, when we remember the exodus, singing at the joy of freedom at last, we are asked to remember the deaths of the first-born sons. Joy intertwined with tragedy.

For the LGBTQ+ community, freedom is connected by a tenuous thread and at the mercy of an ever-shifting society. It's been an uphill battle and, for some, that battle seems Sisyphean; trembling, a boulder moved inch-by-inch up that mountain, debris and other parts keep slipping down, back to the starting point. Although it has been only ten years since the right to marry was given, on a federal level, to the LGBTQ+ community, the attempted rollbacks of rights gained in the last ten years is striking. Our joy is once again intertwined with tragedy, with bitterness, with anxiety and upheaval. Like our ancestors in the past struggling with encroaching oppression, we need to hold on to our identities, our memories, and those we love. We must remember that even in the struggle, one day we'll enjoy our freedoms and our liberties again.



MLK Mitzvah Day... Volunteers of all ages stepped up for this past January's annual day of service benefitting communities near and far. Kol Ami youth, especially, turned out in full force to make tzedakah boxes, bake dog treats, string bracelets for Israeli soldiers, and more.



Rosh Chodesh Experience... It was an afternoon of cultivating personal growth as attendees took part in discussions and created terrariums during this Tu B'Shevat-themed afternoon.



Grade 5 Shabbaton... Students got to see a Torah scroll up close, completed a scavenger hunt, learned to wrap tefillin and tzitzit, snacked, and bonded throughout this special program.



"Ufu Nesharim Ufu" ... On the road to victory, E-A-G-L-E-S!



Super Sunday... Kol Ami members were all smiles while supporting Jewish Federation's annual event.



Comedy Night... Comedians Dan Naturman and Ophira Eisenberg (below) headlined a hilarious evening enjoyed by all.



March/April B'NAI MITZVAH



Asher Greenspan

March 1

Son of Leslie & Adam Greenspan

Sister: Drew

My name is Asher Greenspan and I am a seventh grader at Voorhees Middle School. When I am not in school, I like playing baseball, basketball, flag football, and chess. I also enjoy spending time with my friends and family. For my mitzvah project, I did a Thanksgiving food drive where I collected money and food, went shopping with the money, and donated 50 Thanksgiving meals to the JFCS Food Pantry. I even went to JFCS to personally hand out the food to the clients. It brought me so much joy to see all of those happy people who knew that they were going to have a great Thanksgiving. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah has been quite the experience. It has taught me that hard work will pay off, even if it takes time. This is one of my biggest steps in becoming a Jewish adult. I plan to continue growing my Jewish identity at Kol Ami. It has been a great year and an amazing journey.



Jake Alperstein

March 22

Son of Holly & David Alperstein

Brother: Mason

My name is Jake Alperstein and I am a seventh grader at Henry C. Beck Middle School. I love playing flag football, basketball, hockey and especially soccer. I also enjoy spending time with my friends, listening to music and playing video games. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I volunteered at the Animal Welfare Association. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is meaningful to me because it marks my transition into adulthood and becoming a full member of the Jewish community.



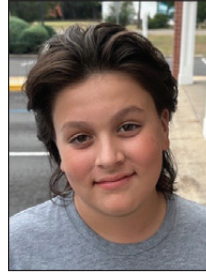
Zach Goldberg

March 29

Son of Caren & Rob Goldberg

Sister: Emily

My name is Zach Goldberg and I'm currently 12 years old and a seventh grader at Voorhees Middle School. I live with my parents, Caren and Robert, my sister, Emily, and my dog, Cooper. Outside of school, I play soccer and am into gaming. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I chose to volunteer my time and visit the elderly. I love learning about history, so I was able to connect through conversation and to keep them company. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is important to me because it means taking a step towards adulthood and having more responsibility and accountability. I realize I have a part in making the world and Jewish community a better place. I also realize every act of kindness, even the smallest things, can make a difference. My goal is to continue the tradition of *Idor vador* and play an important role in the Jewish community.



Zachary Donahue

March 29

Son of Shari & Michael Donahue

Brother: Jake

My name is Zachary Donahue. My parents are Michael and Shari and my older brother is Jake. I enjoy baseball, traveling, cooking and hanging out with my friends (especially street football). I am in seventh grade at Voorhees Middle School. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I am volunteering at the AWA Animal Shelter by working anywhere I am needed. I love animals and it makes me so happy to spend time with animals that are in need. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is incredible for me. It means I will be accepted into the Jewish community as an adult. I get to see the religion that I learned about on Sundays and Tuesdays from a whole new perspective and I get to focus my attention on making sacrifices to make this world a better place.



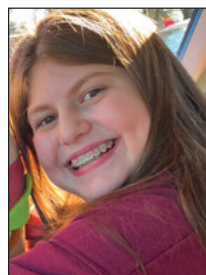
Miles Kahan

April 5

Son of Hillary & Scott Kahan

Brother: Vance

My name is Miles Kahan and I'm a seventh grader at Beck Middle School. I love playing street hockey, hanging out with my cousins and friends, playing sports, and gaming. I also look forward to wheel ceramics each summer at JCC Camps at Medford, and love engaging in conversations with older people. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I am collecting Pop-Its and financial donations to support children in Israel through Negev-Nahalat/Jerusalem Ability, Diversity, Inclusion (ADI). I was excited to learn that Pop-Its were invented in Israel and that they help kids with stress relief and fine motor skills. I'm proud to give back in a way that connects me to my heritage and helps others. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is more than just a milestone, it's a reminder to live by Jewish values. I'm grateful for the support of family, friends, and community.



Hayden McElroy

April 26

Daughter of Stacey & Michael McElroy

Brother: Ben

My name is Hayden McElroy and I am a seventh grader at Beck Middle School in Cherry Hill. My hobbies and interests are reading, art, and animals. I also like spending time with my friends and family. For my Bar Mitzvah project, I am collecting and distributing many items needed for our local animal shelters. I am collecting food, toys, treats, blankets and monetary donations because shelters rely heavily on donations from the community to care for the animals in need. Becoming a Bar Mitzvah means connecting to my Jewish community and heritage and doing my part to help those in need.



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
Sheri Greenblatt
Director of Education

Did you know that during an average lifetime (76.1 years) most people spend 23 years sleeping, 19 years at work, and 7 years traveling, mostly to work? It takes approximately 6 years to cook and eat meals. We are sick for about 3 years, and we spend 2 years in the bathroom/shower. One year of our lives is spent at a place of worship. We all experience the same number of hours in a day, but it's how we use those hours – along with the freedom to choose how we spend them – that makes the difference in how we grow and learn.

It is sad that we don't focus more on the freedoms we have every day to better ourselves, make a difference in others' lives, make mistakes and learn from them.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." This quote emphasizes that true freedom isn't just about having the ability to do whatever we want, but also about having the liberty to make errors without fear of punishment or oppression. This is especially relevant when thinking about children because they are in a constant state of learning and growing. Children need the freedom to make mistakes as part of their development. Mistakes teach resilience, problem-solving, and how to cope with challenges. When children are given the freedom to make mistakes, they also learn responsibility, accountability, and self-confidence. Essentially, it supports the idea that mistakes aren't failures, they're just steps toward growth.

In Kol Ami's classrooms, children are encouraged to take risks and make mistakes, fostering a growth mindset. Our teachers create an environment where errors are seen as valuable learning opportunities. When our students make mistakes, they are guided to reflect on what went wrong and how they can improve. This process helps build resilience and problem-solving skills. Our educators promote independence and critical thinking, encouraging students to view challenges as steppingstones to success.

Mistakes are an important part of life, and freedom means embracing the opportunity to learn from them. Ultimately at Kol Ami, we engender a lifelong love of learning through experimentation, discussion, and reflection.

EARLY CHILDHOOD
Laura Hoffman

Director of Early Childhood Education

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 children explore their space safely, and to learn as they play.

The upcoming holidays of Purim and Passover are about freedom – freedom to be who we are without fear, freedom from persecution, freedom to live in our land peacefully. We want our children to have the freedom to express themselves, make friends, and feel comfortable with who they are.

We encourage curiosity and exploration, and find happy children discovering their own strengths.



BRANFMAN CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

Lynn Branfman & Karen Marinoff, Library Co-Chairs

During Purim, our volunteers at the Branfman Children's Library read the story of Queen Esther, who is married to Ahasuerus, the king of Persia. The young students learn how Queen Esther, given information by her Uncle Mordecai, courageously informs King Ahasuerus of Haman's plans to kill the Jews. Ahasuerus mortally punishes Haman and his hateful sons, and enables the Jews to become free from the destruction planned for them.

The theme of freedom continues in the stories we read about Passover. The Bible says that Moses, with God's help, leads the Jews away from Egypt, and from their lives of slavery, to the Promised Land. When the Jews arrive at their destination, they are able to freely practice their Judaism without fear and deprivation.

Throughout the year, after story time at the Branfman Children's Library, the Sunday School students are able to freely sign out books on any of the many topics offered.

For some Jewish holidays, the children may help decorate the library window. They are able to freely create and showcase their own artwork on these occasions.

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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in memory of Allen Goodman

in memory of the sister of Cookie Weinberg

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Judi & David Weinberg *speedy recovery to Linda Angstreich*

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in memory of Phyllis Turner

in memory of Stacey Kurtz

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in memory of Beverly Ittleman's mother

in memory of Gail Fischer's mother

in memory of Randi Gerstein's mother

speedy recovery to Judith Paul

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James Sell *in memory Railton Sell*
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speedy recovery to Liz Levine
speedy recovery to Tula Kurtz
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in appreciation of the Kol Ami Community for their support
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in memory of Marshall Kresman
in memory of Rebecca Kleidermacher

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Marcia Rose *in memory of Sara Weinger*
Andrew Rosen *in memory of Allen Goodman*

Eileen Winter
in honor of the birth of Maxine & Mark Pinzur's new grandson
in honor of the birth of Renée & Howard Siegel's new grandson
in honor of the birth of Susan & David Olinsky's new grandson
in memory of Marshall Kresman
in memory of Sara Weinger

Michele Zeldner & Ian Wachstein
in memory of Judith (Judy) Wachstein
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in memory of Sara Weinger

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Amy Sonstein for chairing Comedy Night

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Joan & Joseph Cohen
in honor of our family and the Kol Ami Family
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in honor of Diana Maletzky's special birthday
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Daniel Weiner *in memory of Judith Weiner*

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Caryn & Edward Weiss *in honor of Denise & Steve Weinberg's
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in honor of our 54th Anniversary

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in memory of Sara Weinger

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Brona Cohen *in honor of Jaimee Friedman's special birthday*

Gail & Richard Donner

in honor of those helping refugees around the world

Jaye Halpern

in honor of those helping refugees around the world

Rebecca & Warren Levy

in honor of those helping refugees around the world

Nancy & David Oberlander

in memory of Adele Oberlander

in memory of Fred M. Oberlander

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in honor of those helping refugees around the world

Michele Zeldner & Ian Wachstein

in memory of Norma Jean Edwards

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in memory of Jack Nover

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Irving Koffler *in memory of Estelle Corbman*

Lois & Robert Levine

in honor of the Yahrzeits of Henry Schickler and Dorothy Levine

Joel Magnus *in memory of Herbert Magnus*

Sharon & Alan Paisner *in memory of Sophie Forman*

Marsha & Paul Seader

in memory of Philip Seader & Philip Director

Judy Simon *in memory of Sara Weinger*

Stephanie & Andrew Zinn

in memory of Philip Seader & Philip Director

Funds noted by an asterisk () are restricted funds. Contributions listed are inclusive from the last issue of Connections through February 3, 2025. We apologize for any errors or omissions.*

Fulfill the Purim Mitzvah of giving to those in need.
 We invite you to make a donation to IHOC's newest initiative, Serenity House.
Info & Contribute: www.kolaminj.org

THE SUN WILL COME OUT... IN SHUSHAN...
SUNDAY, MARCH 9

PURIM CARNIVAL

11:30 am-1:30 pm In the Social Hall
GAMES! PRIZES! CRAFTS! BOUNCE HOUSE!
COME IN COSTUME. FOOD & FUN.

OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY.
 Earlybird Pricing by March 2: \$15 per child ages 3+
 After March 2: \$20 per child ages 3+
 Children under 3 & Adults are free
 Tickets: www.kolaminj.org

SHUSHAN PERKS CAFE **Estie** the Purim Shpiel
 9:15-10:00 am In the Rotunda 10:00-11:00 am In the Sanctuary

Purim, Pizza & Pop
 Bet Your Bottom Hamantaschen, It's Gonna Be Fun!
THURSDAY, MARCH 13
 Family Dinner 6:00 pm
 Family Fun Service 7:00 pm
Estie the Purim Shpiel
 8:00 pm

Congregational
Second Seder

Enjoy a second night of Passover Seder with your family & Kol Ami friends.

Sunday, April 13
5:00 pm
 Doors open 4:30 pm

Family friendly adult seder with virtual Haggadah, readings and songs. Buffet dinner & dessert to follow.

All ritual seder items will be provided including:
 1 bottle of Kosher for Passover sweet wine, and
 1 bottle of white grape juice per table

You will have the option to pre-purchase additional Kosher for Passover wine for your table, or you may bring your own. Large print Haggadah available upon request.

Register by April 1: www.kolaminj.org
 \$60 Adults & Teen/Tweens
 \$25 Children ages 3-10. No charge under 3



CONGREGATION **KOL AMI** Many Voices, One Community.
 קול עמי
 Congregation Kol Ami | 1101 Springdale Rd. Cherry Hill NJ 08003 | 856-489-0029 | www.kolaminj.org

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