

the Connection



Hanukkah Sparkles at Kol Ami: Join Us Dec 13, 15 & 27!

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Cantor Daniel Mendelson
Rabbi Libby Fisher

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Our Story

A Jewish journey is about history. Where you are going, and where you have been. It is about times, and places, and people. It is about quiet moments with oneself and with God. It is about joyous moments spent with others.

Congregation Kol Ami's Jewish journey began in 1923 when the Jewish Community Center of White Plains was formed and land was purchased on Sterling Avenue in White Plains to build a religious school and a temple. As the temple and the school expanded, in 1944 seven and a half acres of land were purchased at Soundview Avenue.

In May 1995 the Jewish Community Center of White Plains changed its name to Congregation Kol Ami, meaning "The Voice of My People". From the start, and continuing today, our purpose has been to nurture the divine spark within, and to connect each of us to a meaningful Jewish journey.

Whatever your "Jewish" is, you'll find it at Kol Ami.

Here, our members-of every age and with diverse backgrounds and identities- are our heartbeat.

Here, we cultivate relationships with family, friends, staff, and clergy.

Here, we are rooted in our synagogue, in our community, in our country and in Israel.

Here, we celebrate Jewish traditions and culture, nourish our souls through music and arts, and explore relationships with God.

Here, we evolve and challenge ourselves.

Here, we worship, we learn, we celebrate, we engage.

Here, we practice Tikkun Olam.

"Kol Ami" means "the voice of my people".

Here, hear your voice.

My Chanukkah

Rabbi Jason Fenster



Sometimes Chanukkah (no matter how you spell it!) gets a bad rap. *It's not a holiday from the Torah*, they say. *It's not a "major holiday,"* whatever that means. But this festival of lights, this

holiday we spend together with family, friends, community, and so many other cultures that have holidays of light during this season, this holiday has incredible potential for meaning and identity.

For many, Chanukkah is a core marker of Jewishness. It's our blue and white holiday when the rest of the world seems to be covered in red and green. It's a symbol we place in our windows to mark our homes as Jewish. It's oil stains on recipe cards that connect us to generations that came before us and meals and treats we share with people we love. And then there's the Chanukkah menorah. Maybe it's the one on a plank of wood with bolts glued to the top that we made when we were four-years-old or the ornate one we bought at the Nachalat Binyamin artist fair in Tel Aviv.

Some may call it a menorah, which loosely translates to "candelabrum." Think of it like tissues and Kleenex®. Menorah is the generic and *chanukiah* the name-brand for the holiday. My dad loves *chanukkiot* (that's the plural). On the eighth night we would take every *chanukiah* we had in the house, even the one that had little oil lamps that looked like they belonged in Aladdin, and we'd light every single one. We'd sing a

song or two, and before we dove into the last remaining presents, we'd take time to just look at the candles (or at least as long as our attention spans would allow).

There's something special about the ritual of lighting those candles. Our sages knew it too. Thousands of years ago, they argued about how we ought to light to sacred candelabrum. Shammai suggested: *A countdown!* From eight candles on the first night down to one candle on the eighth. The candles would let us know how much longer the holiday would last and would mimic the waning light from the miraculous oil. Hillel countered: *Add light!* One candle on the first day, two on the second, and so forth. Ultimately, Hillel's opinion carries the day. The winning argument: we always elevate the sacred, never downgrade. We are a people who always add light into the darkness.

This holiday can be about a great many things. It can be about sovereignty, about standing firm in identity, about the miracle of a small army fending off a global superpower, about the miracle of one cruse of oil lasting eight nights...

For me, this year, my Chanukkah will be about being a bearer of light. Of not resigning to the dark and adding just a little more light, one candle at a time. I will place my *chanukiah* in the window so passersby will see the light and be reminded that miracles can happen. They will remember that even when it is darkest, light, wholeness, justice, and peace will always prevail.

Wishing you and the people you love a season of light, warmth, and goodness.

L'shalom,



A Throwback to the Sounds of Jewish New York

Cantor Daniel Mendelson



Friends, I want to share something with you in the realm of radio...

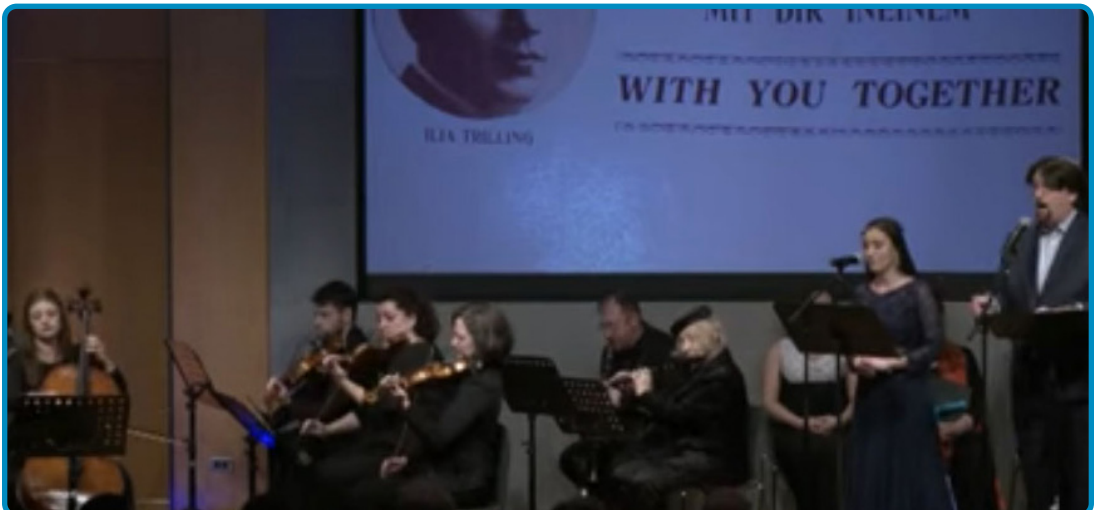
A few Wednesdays ago, I was fortunate to participate in a special program at the New York Public Library. Zalmen Mlotek,

Artistic Director of the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, invited me to join a gifted ensemble of performers to pay tribute to the iconic New York Jewish radio station WEVD. Known as “the station that speaks your language”, WEVD was the soundtrack of Jewish New York for much of the 20th century. WEVD’s original programming featured performances of Yiddish folk and theater music, concert and choral music, cantorial, Hassidic chant, klezmer, and more, much of it composed by legendary Jewish composers and arrangers such as Joseph Rumshinsky, Alexander Olshanetsky, Sholom Secunda, Sam Medoff, Joe Garnett, and Abraham Ellstein.

The station’s massive music library, once thought to be lost and destroyed, has found a new home at the New York Public Library as the David and Ina Shiff WEVD Music Collection. To mark the occasion, Zalmen Mlotek assembled musicians to perform new arrangements from selected pieces, and scholars discussed the station’s history and lasting relevance. I was grateful to duet with Metropolitan Opera Soprano, Tatev Baroyan, on two selections including a *La Traviata* duet in Yiddish! The program was part of the Celebrate 350 Lecture series, a permanent tribute to the anniversary of the arrival of Jews in New York City, and it was a personal treat to be included, along with my father. I encourage you to watch the full program, but our offerings can be found about an hour into the program.

Wishing all of you light, love, and laughter on the way to 2025.

► [Click here to watch program](#)



On Old and New Traditions

Rabbi Libby Fisher



There is so much to celebrate about being Jewish, and I am incredibly proud of so many aspects of our community. This season, though, I am deeply connected to one of our most treasured traditions: our food. We Jews have

contributed some of the most delicious foods to the world – bagels, kugel, knishes, falafel, cholent, jachnun, gefilte fish (controversial, I know), charoset.... The list goes on and on! But this time of year, as you might imagine, I'm excited about two foods in particular, which are of course latkes and sufganiyot, our Chanukah favorites!

Why do we connect so strongly with our food traditions? It's not just because we're Jewish! As human beings, we use our five senses to experience the world, and our "sense memories" are very strong. We're used to talking about sights and sounds, but smells and tastes are just as important to our memory formation. The smell and taste of grandma's latkes (with applesauce or sour cream – your choice) is integral to our Chanukah experience.

When we arrive at the winter holiday season, I think a lot of us are drawn back to our old family traditions, as we should be. But don't be afraid to create some new ones, too! Make memories around a particular cooking or baking project, a new yearly decoration, or even dedicate a day of Chanukah to helping those in need in our greater Westchester area. What might be new for you or your family this year could be an old family tradition before you know it.

In some ways, Chanukah is a holiday of contradictions. It has risen to major prominence today, even though according to the rabbis who built our Jewish calendar, it's considered a minor festival (because it's not biblically mandated). We celebrate with joy and laughter and dreidel, even though the real story of Chanukah is a story of war. But as with all of our holidays, Chanukah is a rich tapestry of history, tradition, and innovations which have come together to build what we know today as our Festival of Lights, reminding us of our dedication to religious freedom and our obligation to bring more light into our world. Whether you prefer sufganiyot or latkes, whether you're a sour cream or applesauce kind of family, no matter how you celebrate, may this season be a season of joy, of meaning, and of light.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Libby".

Exciting Programs Await You at Kol Ami: Join Us!

Judy Sarch & Andrew Levenson



One of our key goals, as highlighted during the High Holy Days, is to create even more opportunities for members of all ages and life stages to connect, learn, and engage with one another. We believe that gathering in smaller groups centered around shared interests fosters deeper bonds and strengthens our community.

To make this vision a reality, we're excited to introduce Circles—special interest groups that cover a broad range of activities. Whether you're interested in Torah study, Shabbat dinners, challah baking, meditation, social action projects, outdoor adventures, or other shared pursuits, there's a Circle for you.

To help us kick off this initiative, we'd love to hear from you. Let us know which Circles spark your interest! Your input will help us fine-tune our offerings and connect you with others who share your passions. You will receive an email with a brief questionnaire and once we have your responses, we can connect you to Circles that are of interest to you.

In other exciting news, we're launching a new app designed to make staying connected easier than ever. This app, called the **ShulCloud Mobile Member App**, will provide you with quick access to our full calendar of events, details about each program, and seamless sign-up options. It is available in both Apple and Google formats, and you use the same username and password from your ShulCloud account.



While the app will be a supplement to help facilitate programming, we strongly encourage you to keep an eye on our weekly newsletter, This Week at Kol Ami, for updates and announcements. It's your go-to source for all the latest news and information about upcoming events and opportunities.

Join us as we embark on providing meaningful and enjoyable experiences. Let's continue to build stronger connections and celebrate our shared journey.

Kol Ami has responded to the call "Give Until it Feels Good". There is still time to make an impact and donate to the Annual Fund by the end of 2024. We hope you will join us. [Click here](#) to donate today!

We look forward to reaching our goal of full member participation!

When Hanukkah Meets Christmas: The Power of Light and Togetherness

Jess Lorden, Executive Director

The last time Hanukkah and Christmas coincided on the first night was in 2005. I remember it well, as our interfaith family was featured in a Journal News article about how we celebrate the holiday season. While none of us particularly appreciated the accompanying photo (see below), it was a delightful experience to be highlighted. Thinking back on that time makes me reflect on the meaning of these holidays overlapping once again this year.

Hanukkah, the cherished Festival of Lights, transcends its historical and religious origins, symbolizing hope, faith, and the triumph of spirit over adversity. The holiday commemorates the miraculous story of resilience, when the Maccabees reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and sacred oil meant for one day burned for eight.

As winter deepens, the glow of Hanukkah candles takes on a poignant meaning, honoring our ancestors' fortitude. Each night, as another candle is lit, the collective light builds, filling homes with warmth and joy. This ritual invites reflection and connection, reminding us that just as light overcame darkness in ancient times, hope and perseverance can prevail today.

Hanukkah's message is universal. When it coincides with Christmas, the shared atmosphere of light and joy is particularly profound. Menorahs and Christmas lights side by side symbolize our shared yearning for peace and unity. Both holidays celebrate the victory of good over hardship and the importance of family, love, and gratitude.

During this overlap, neighborhoods glow with harmony as Hanukkah candles and Christmas lights blend together, creating a landscape of warmth and wonder. Friends and neighbors of different faiths can appreciate one another's traditions and join in celebration.

The real joy of these holidays lies in what they represent—renewed hope, togetherness, and resilience. As families gather around menorahs or Christmas trees, they share a desire for light and hope. Whether it's the steady glow of the menorah or the sparkle of Christmas lights, these moments remind us that even in the darkest times, light connects and guides us forward.

Wishing you much joy, light and hope this holiday season.

Jess



The Lorden family, from left, Sarah, 14, Dave, Robby, 10, and Jess, celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah because Dave is Catholic and Jess is Jewish.

Single vision helps on double holiday

Interfaith families

prayers. And yes, the traditional Christmas meal — you see where the ~~table~~ may be greased up

There is no formula for fitting Judaism and Christianity into one household, especially when the

ish spouse. "We know so many kids who were raised with both religions and had no religion."

"For me, I wanted them raised as something," said Dave Lorden, a

ing an active role. Their 10-year-old son, Robby, is on the same path. The family attends services together, and Dave looks forward to the rabbis' thought-provoking sermons.



Celebrate, Connect, and Shine with Kol Ami's Young Families!

Joele Levenson, Young Family Ambassador



From morning playdates to evening celebrations, our Young Families come together to share in the beauty of Jewish life. We welcome in Shabbat, bid it farewell with Havdalah, celebrate holidays, and enjoy time together in local parks, playgrounds, apple orchards, and beyond. Our group laughs, learns, and connects, united by the shared goal of nurturing Jewish identity and values in our children.

We are a community where friendships grow, memories are made, and everyone is warmly embraced. Join us — you'll feel right at home!

Hanukkah Fun for the Whole Family!

Get ready to celebrate Hanukkah with music, joy, and delicious treats! From crispy latkes to sweet sufganiyot, there's something for everyone to enjoy in this festive season of light.

Kick off the festivities with Friday Night Trivia on December 13!

Join us for a fun-filled evening that promises laughter, connection, and delicious food catered by Liebman Delicatessen. Last year's rousing game of Family Feud had everyone buzzing—this year, it's time to test your knowledge and teamwork with Trivia Night!

And...Don't miss our Young Family Community Hanukkah Celebration on December 15!



Community Hanukkah Celebration

December 15th, 12PM-2PM

Join us for a community
Hanukkah celebration for members,
ECP families and local community families

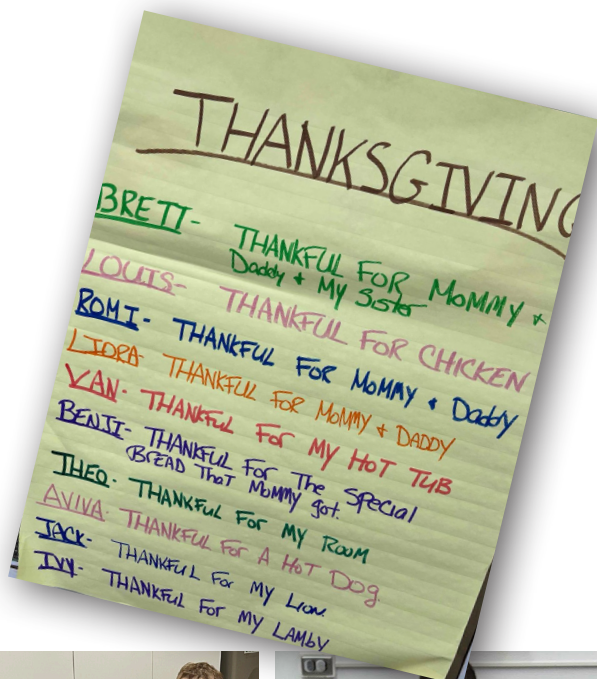
Make a Hanukkah themed craft
Dance and sing-a-long with Tkiya
Build and light a giant Lego Menorah
Compete with friends in Gaga and dreidel games
Enjoy pizza, latkes and sufganiyot

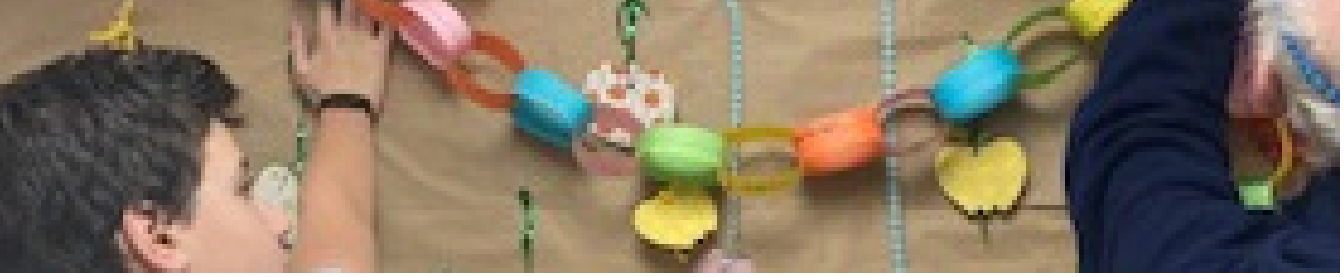
Suggested ages 0-12

[Click here to RSVP](#)

Early Childhood Program Highlights

Our ECP children kicked off the Thanksgiving holiday with joy and creativity! They crafted colorful projects, whipped up tasty treats, shared a festive feast, and filled the air with cheerful songs. It's been a heartwarming celebration of learning, laughter, and gratitude. We're so thankful for our incredible children, devoted teachers, and amazing staff who make this season truly special!





Religious School Highlights

Every year, the Religious School celebrates Sukkot with a vibrant festival, and this year was no exception! We enjoyed a petting zoo, bubbles, music by Itamar's band, crafts, Sukkah decorations, and, of course, shaking the lulav and smelling the etrog. Each student had the opportunity to spend time in one of our sukkahs, fully immersed in our traditions. For our 4th-6th graders, we added a meaningful activity—packing toiletries for our Food Pantry customers. To top it off, we had food trucks for lunch, making it a beautiful day filled with joy and celebration!



Building Connections, Inspiring Change

Melissa Cohen, Director of Youth Engagement



These past few months have been both eventful and profoundly rewarding as I've had the privilege of diving into my role as Youth Engagement Director here at Kol Ami. Our High Holy Days were a

powerful demonstration of community, enhanced by the inspiring contributions of our youth who participated in services and the dedicated high school volunteers who made kindergarten through sixth grade programming a success.

In just a short time, I've seen firsthand the potential of our teens to create meaningful change and deepen connections within and beyond our community. They've engaged in impactful initiatives, such as phone banking for Prop 1 in New York, advocating for expanded constitutional protections against discrimination and the advancement of equal rights for all. Through Better Together, they've built meaningful relationships with our seniors, bridging generations in beautiful ways. Volunteering at the free farmers market organized by Food Web has allowed them to directly address food insecurity, while their time with our Shin shin, Asaf, provided an invaluable opportunity to reflect on resilience and global Jewish identity following October 7th.

Looking ahead, I am excited to continue building on this momentum. The upcoming L'Taken trip to the Religious Action Center will empower our teens to advocate for social justice on a national stage, and the ninth-grade trip through the South will offer a transformative exploration of civil rights history and its relevance today. Additionally, we're planning focused, engaging programs for both our senior and junior youth groups to deepen their connections to each other and our community.

It has been an incredible start, and I'm thrilled to be part of this vibrant community. I look forward to continuing to work with Kol Ami's amazing teens as we create meaningful experiences, foster leadership, and make a lasting impact together.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Melissa".



B'nai Mitzvah

With love and tremendous pride, we look forward to having these B'nai Mitzvah students lead us in worship, carry our sacred scroll through the congregation, and chant from the Torah. We rejoice with them and their families as they share their intellectual gifts by teaching us from the weekly Torah portion and deliver their "D'var Torah."



Max Ilberg, son of Elizabeth and Todd Ilberg, and brother to Joshua and Ethan Ilberg, will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on December 7, 2024. Max is in 7th-grade at Highlands Middle School. A self-proclaimed aspiring engineer, Max is constantly immersed in the world of invention, always building, designing, and exploring new projects. His love for creativity extends beyond the workshop—Max is also passionate about playing the alto saxophone and enjoys baseball, cross country running and skiing. Max spends summers at Camp Walden in Diamond Point, NY, where he cherishes the opportunity to build lasting memories with his friends and fellow campers. For his Mitzvah Project, Max has chosen to support SNARR (Special Needs Animal Rescue & Rehabilitation), a local organization dedicated to rescuing and rehoming dogs with special medical needs—those at greatest risk of euthanasia. Max eagerly anticipates celebrating this significant milestone with his extended family, and friends as he embraces his responsibilities as a young Jewish adult.



Isaac Lipton, son of Shelby and Andrew Lipton and brother of Marcus Lipton, will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on December 7, 2024. Isaac is a 7th grader at Louis M. Klein Middle School in Harrison. Isaac loves playing baseball on the Westchester Heat and enjoys playing soccer and video games with his friends. Isaac spends his summers at Camp Taconic in Hinsdale, MA with his brother and cousins. For his mitzvah project, Isaac raised money to fund a child to participate in the Tolerance Induction Program at the Food Allergy Institute in Long Beach, California. Isaac has life threatening tree nut allergies and has been fortunate enough to participate in this program and is now able to eat some of his most anaphylactic nuts! Isaac is looking forward to becoming a Bar Mitzvah and celebrating with family and friends.



Zoe Robinson, daughter of James Robinson and Jenny Lefcourt, will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on January 18, 2025. Zoe is in 7th grade at Fieldston Middle School in Riverdale. She loves playing softball with her Scarsdale Travel team, the Raiders, as well as playing volleyball on her school team. Zoe is a quintessential camper, and has relished sleep-away camp for the past four summers with her close-knit bunk at camp Walt Whitman in New Hampshire. For her mitzvah project, Zoe has brought her longstanding interest in cooking to a good cause helping fight hunger. Along with a group at the JCC Manhattan, she helps prepare three-course dinners on Sunday afternoons each month, delivering to Homeward NYC, a shelter for young mothers and their children.

B'nai Mitzvah



Drew Schechter, daughter of Kim Reiter and Randy Schechter, was called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on September 28, 2024. Drew is an 8th grader at Louis M. Klein Middle School in Harrison, where she plays lacrosse. She has been attending sleep away camp for the last six summers, where she has made great friends. For Drew's mitzvah project she continues volunteering to support families with food shortages through a few different programs.

Join our next cohort of Kol Ami Adult B'nai Mitzvah!

Becoming B'nai Mitzvah is a pivotal moment in Jewish life, no matter your age. Whether you never had the opportunity to become B'nai Mitzvah due to gender, upbringing, or family circumstance, or you did become B'nai Mitzvah, but you want to reengage with this learning as an adult, or you chose Judaism later in life – this class is for you!

Whatever your personal motivation, this process is about affirming one's place in the Jewish community, contributing to the life and vibrancy of our synagogue, and engaging with a tradition which stretches back thousands of years. Together with Rabbi Fenster, Rabbi Fisher, and Cantor Mendelson, we will build a wide foundation of Jewish knowledge, fostering mental, emotional, and spiritual growth for each student.

This class will begin in January 2025 and culminate in an Adult B'nai Mitzvah Ceremony, which will take place in Spring 2026. (There will be a break over the summer.)

If you're wondering if this class is for you, please reach out to Rabbi Fisher to learn more.





Coachman Thanksgiving Dinner

We are so grateful to everyone who made this year's Coachman Thanksgiving Dinner a resounding success. From those who cooked, served, and celebrated with us on the day of the event to those who generously donated funds, enabling us to send every family home with a pie to sweeten their holiday, your contributions made all the difference.

Special thanks to our 9th-grade Religious School students for creating beautiful table centerpieces, to the ECP teachers and children for assembling candy bags, to our Food Pantry volunteers for putting together toiletry kits filled with essentials, and to the KASA Stitch & Kibbitz crew for knitting warm winter accessories for our Coachman friends.

This beloved tradition is a true community effort, with each person's involvement adding something special. Together, we created an evening filled with love, laughter, and gratitude - proving once again the power of coming together to support and uplift others. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary event!



Kol Ami Points to with Pride

Kol Ami is proud to celebrate our very own Amanda Mazin's remarkable contribution to a critical national conversation. On Friday, November 15, Amanda testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights at the invitation of former congressman and frequent Kol Ami guest, Commissioner Mondaire Jones.

Amanda participated in a distinguished panel addressing the *"Federal Response to Teacher Shortage Impacts on Students with Disabilities."* Drawing on her expertise as a Senior Lecturer and Practicum Coordinator for Special Education, Intellectual Disabilities, and Autism Programs at Teachers College, Columbia University, Amanda delivered compelling testimony on the challenges facing students with disabilities.

Her insights highlighted how the devaluation of the teaching profession—exacerbated by the COVID pandemic—has affected the quality of education for these students. Amanda offered thoughtful, actionable recommendations to the federal government, focusing on improving teacher recruitment, preparation, and mental health support, emphasizing their undeniable impact on student success.

Amanda's testimony exemplifies the values we hold dear at Kol Ami: a commitment to education, justice, and making a difference. We are honored to celebrate her achievement as a community, taking pride in the meaningful change she is helping to create.



WEEKLY WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Friday Kabbalat Shabbat Service 6:15PM

Our weekly Kabbalat Shabbat service takes place in our Main Sanctuary with Rabbi Jason Fenster, Cantor Danny Mendelson and Rabbi Libby Fisher. Kabbalat Shabbat services are also streamed weekly on our website, FaceBook, and Youtube pages.

Saturday Morning Torah Study and Shabbat Service 9:30AM

Bring your creativity and curiosity as we delve us into the depths of Torah and explore the relevancy of these timeless teachings to our lives today. Whether you're a seasoned Torah scholar or completely new to Torah study, there is always something new to discover.

Online: [Click here.](#)

Meeting ID: 964 7214 2409

Passcode: 709665

Dial In: (929) 436-2866

Weekly Torah Portions

DECEMBER 2024

Week ending December 7

Parashat Vayeitzei

Genesis 28:10-32:3

Vayeitzei, meaning "and he went out," refers to Jacob's journey to Haran, his mother Rebekah's birthplace, to escape his brother Esau's wrath over stealing his blessing. On his journey, Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and is given the same promise that God gave Abraham and Isaac, i.e., that he will inherit the land and be blessed. Jacob meets Rachel at the well and works for her father (his uncle Laban) for seven years in order to marry her. Jacob, who deceived his brother Esau, is himself the victim of deception; Laban substitutes Leah (his older daughter) for Rachel. Jacob must serve Laban an additional seven years in order to wed his intended spouse, Rachel. Jacob eventually has a total of twelve sons and decides to return to his homeland.

Week ending December 14

Parashat Vayishlach

Genesis 32:4-36:43

Jacob is now ready to return home after fleeing twenty years earlier, and realizes he will have to reconcile with his brother Esau. On the way, Jacob once again has a dream and encounters a divine messenger. After the dream, Jacob is renamed Israel, meaning "struggles with God." Our narrative leaps forward in time to the moment when Jacob's children are now adults and his daughter, Dina is raped. Two of Jacob's sons Simeon and Levi avenge the crime.

Week ending December 21

Parashat Vayeishev

Genesis 37:1-40:23

Vayeishev begins the final extended narrative of Genesis, the Joseph story. The Joseph story serves as a bridge between *B'reishit* (Genesis)

and *Sh'mot* (Exodus) in that Joseph, his brothers, and eventually his father start out in Canaan but end up in Egypt. The parashah weaves together the themes of family and betrayal, so evident in the early stories of Genesis, with the larger national themes of suffering and redemption that form the backbone of Exodus.

Week ending December 28

Parashat Mikeitz

Genesis 41:1–44:17

This week's parashah continues the story of Joseph at the end (mikeitz) of his prison term. Joseph, who has been Pharaoh's prisoner for two years, is released from jail in order to interpret Pharaoh's perplexing dreams. Joseph is placed in charge of food collection and distribution after his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams reveals that seven years of prosperity will be followed by seven years of famine.

Weekly Torah Portions

JANUARY 2025

Week ending January 4

Parashat Vayigash

Genesis 44:18–47:27

Joseph's brothers are in Egypt to get food to bring back to famine-ridden Canaan. This parashah begins with the brothers unknowingly standing before their brother Joseph, who has become the vizier of Egypt, and Judah asking to be imprisoned in place of his youngest brother Benjamin (whom Joseph framed). Judah, who once convinced his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery rather than kill him, argues for Benjamin (Rachel's only other child) because he fears that any harm to Benjamin would break his father's heart.

Week ending January 11

Parashat Vayechi

Genesis 47:28–50:26

This final parashah in the book of B'reishit brings the first book of the Torah full circle. The family stories of patriarchs and matriarchs culminate in the blessings of Jacob to his sons and grandsons. The centerpiece of this portion is a sequence of twelve blessings delivered by Jacob to each of his sons. Jacob brings his entire family together to hear his words.

Week ending January 18

Parashat Sh'mot

Exodus 1:1–6:1

This week's parashah begins the book of Exodus. In Hebrew, the name of the book and its first parashah is Sh'mot, meaning "names," referring to the names of the Israelites who come to Egypt with Jacob. A new Pharaoh who does not have direct experience with Joseph and his role in Pharaoh's court has taken control of Egypt. The Israelites are enslaved. Moses is born and in turn "gives birth" to the people of Israel.

Week ending January 25

Parashat Va-eira

Exodus 6:2–9:35

In Va-eira, this week's parashah, God speaks to Moses, confirming the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The pleas of the enslaved Israelites have been heard by the Eternal, and God instructs Moses to promise the Israelites' redemption. God also commands Moses to speak to Pharaoh and demand that he liberate the people of Israel. Pharaoh refuses to release the slaves, and God causes plagues on the Egyptians in order to change Pharaoh's mind.

FEBRUARY 2025

Week ending February 1

Parashat Bo

Exodus 10:1–13:16

This parashah begins with a reiteration of God's challenge to Pharaoh to change his behavior, while at the same time making it more difficult for him to do so. The parashah concludes with the freeing of the Israelites from bondage. God tells Moses and Aaron that the people must remember how God freed them from bondage.

Week ending February 8

Parashat B'shalach

Exodus 13:17–17:16

Pharaoh finally releases the Israelites from Egypt, only to change his mind again and chase after them with a force of 600 chariots. God parts the waters at the Sea of Reeds, and the Israelites are freed from slavery once and for all. The Egyptians who are pursuing them are drowned as the Sea of Reeds closes again. The liberated Israelite slaves celebrate once they are safe on the other side, and are led by Moses' sister Miriam in singing and dancing Mi Chamocha.

Week ending February 15

Parashat Yitro

Exodus 18:1–20:23

Yitro, also known as Jethro, is Moses' father-in-law. He observes the toll that Moses' leadership of the Hebrews is taking and advises Moses to delegate some of the responsibility and authority. In this parashah, the people find themselves at the base of Mount Sinai after several weeks of wandering. This is the site where God presents Moses with the Ten Commandments.

Week ending February 22

Parashat Mishpatim

Exodus 21:1–24:18

The word mishpatim means "case laws." This week's parashah continues the presentation of Divine legislation (the Torah) and includes many decrees - comprising civil, criminal, and cultic regulations. The parashah ends with a covenant ceremony on Mount Sinai.

CALENDAR

DECEMBER

Dec 4

Rosh Chodesh Breakfast 9:00AM

Join us for a meaningful and uplifting Rosh Chodesh Breakfast, a cherished gathering to mark the beginning of the new Hebrew month. Rosh Chodesh, traditionally celebrated as a women's holiday, is a time to embrace renewal, reflection, and connection. The launch of this breakfast series offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with friends and clergy, exchange meaningful insights, and embrace the fresh energy and possibilities that each new month brings.

RSVP [here](#).

Dec 7

Tot Shabbat 9:00AM

Get ready to sing, dance and celebrate Shabbat! Join our clergy for a lively, interactive Shabbat service geared to our youngest members. Challah, juice, and snacks provided. After a nosh, stay for Shabbat themed crafts, games, and floor play. Open to the community. All are welcome!

[Click here to register for planning purposes.](#)

Dec 8

Kol Ami Blood Drive 8:30AM – 2:30PM

Donate blood, save lives! Your participation could be the gift of life someone desperately needs. *[Click here to schedule an appointment](#)* and help us make a positive impact together. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Dec 8

Sisterhood Holiday Gift Sale 8:30AM – 11:30AM

Get into the Hanukkah spirit with a festive gift sale featuring Hanukkah candles, beautiful gift wrap, and more to celebrate the season. All proceeds benefit the Sisterhood, supporting our vibrant community.

Dec 8

Sisterhood Sufganiyot Bake 11:30AM

Join Past President Susan Arovas in the Kol Ami Gallery for a family-friendly sufganiyot bake! Kids, parents, and grandparents are all welcome as Susan leads us into the kitchen to fry up these classic Hanukkah treats, filling the air with the sweet smell of celebration. This free event is open to all, and we encourage donations to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum to add a meaningful touch to this joyous gathering. Come for the treats, stay for the community! *[Register here.](#)*

Dec 12

WRJ Donut Tasting Hanukkah Party 7:30PM at Westchester Reform Temple

Join us for the sweetest night of the season! Taste donuts from local bakeries, sip festive drinks, and crown the ultimate champion. Perfect for a date night or a fun evening with friends, this lively event brings together members from both Kol Ami and WRT communities. All are welcome—don't miss the fun!

[RSVP here.](#)

Dec 13

Hanukkah Trivia Synaplex 6:15PM Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 7:15PM Dinner, 8:00PM Trivia Game

Join us for a joyful pre-Hanukkah celebration that promises laughter, connection, and delicious food catered by Lieberman Delicatessen. Last year's rousing game of Family Feud had everyone buzzing—this year, it is time to test your knowledge and teamwork with Trivia Night!

[RSVP here.](#)



Dec 15

Young Family Community Hanukkah Celebration 12:00PM

This fun-filled event is designed especially for kids ages 12 and under! Enjoy live music, interactive games, and dancing with Tkiya, plus Hanukkah-themed crafts and activities that will spark creativity and joy. Kids will love building and lighting a giant Lego menorah and competing with friends in Gaga and dreidel games. And no Hanukkah celebration would be complete without a feast—indulge in delicious pizza, crispy latkes, and sweet sufganiyot.

[RSVP here.](#)

Dec 24

Christmas Eve – Temple Offices and Building Closes at 2:00PM

CALENDAR

Dec 25

**Christmas Day – Temple
Offices and Building Closed**

Dec 27

**Hanukkah Kabbalat
Shabbat & Community
Candlelighting**

6:15PM

Celebrate the 3rd night of Hanukkah with an evening of light, music, and community! Bring your menorahs (candles provided!) to brighten the atrium with a beautiful display of warmth and unity. Enjoy crispy latkes, then join us for a joyful Kabbalat Shabbat service filled with music and spirit. Stay for a festive oneg featuring sufganiyot and holiday treats as we connect and celebrate together. Let's light up the night as one community!

RSVP here.

Dec 31

**New Year's Eve – Temple
Offices and Building Closes
at 2:00PM**

JANUARY

Jan 1

**New Year's Day – Temple
Offices and Building Closed**

Jan 7

**Adult B'nei Mitzvah Class
7:00PM**

Join us for the first session of our Adult B'nai Mitzvah class! This class is for anyone looking to deepen their connection to Jewish traditions, whether you never had the opportunity to become B'nai Mitzvah, want to reengage as an adult, or chose Judaism later in life. Together with Rabbi Fenster, Rabbi Fisher, and Cantor Mendelson, you will build a strong foundation of Jewish knowledge. If interested in

joining, please complete the expression of interest form by [clicking here](#). A full class schedule will be provided on the first day.



Jan 10

**Sisterhood Challah Bake
12:00PM at the Home of
Susan Arovas**

Join Past President Susan Arovas for a warm and intimate Sisterhood Challah Bake! Gather in her home to knead and shape challahs, perfect for your Shabbat table. A special evening of baking, connection, and community.

RSVP here.

Jan 17

**Synaplex Shabbat
Featuring
Rabbi Fred Reeves
6:15PM Kabbalat Shabbat
Service, 7:15PM Dinner,
8:00PM Special Guest
Rabbi Fred Reeves**

Although the election is over, the division that has roiled America society and our local communities will continue because the factors that create that division are still prevalent. Rabbi Fred Reeves will introduce the One America Movement content and approach, introducing the difference between normal and toxic polarization and the neuroscience behind why we act and respond in the world. We will then study Jewish texts together, seeing how our sources have dealt with similar

issues in the past, and we will learn about a communication technique that will help us speak up when members of our community (our friends, our family, our coworkers, our congregation, our political party) behave in a way that contradicts the values and norms that we hold most sacred.

RSVP here.

Jan 19

**Sisterhood Soup Making
10:00AM**

Join Sisterhood in the Kol Ami kitchen to make homemade soup for community members who are ill or homebound this winter. A wonderful opportunity to spread warmth and kindness. *Register here.*

Jan 20

**MLK Day – Temple Offices
and Building Closed**



Jan 26

**Religious School Indoor
Mini Golf
11:15AM**

Back by popular demand! Immediately following Religious School, join your kids for an exciting indoor mini golf adventure—perfect for a winter outing and a great excuse to come in from the cold. The building will be transformed into a giant 18-hole mini golf course, with fun for the whole family, including pre-K kids. Don't miss this action-packed event! Registration information to be shared soon.

CALENDAR

Jan 30

**Rosh Chodesh Breakfast
9:00AM**

Join us for our 2nd Rosh Chodesh Breakfast, a meaningful gathering to celebrate the start of the new Hebrew month. Traditionally a women's holiday, Rosh Chodesh invites renewal, reflection, and connection. This breakfast offers a wonderful opportunity to engage with friends and clergy, share insights, and embrace the fresh possibilities of the month ahead.

RSVP [here](#).

FEBRUARY

Feb 6

**Sisterhood Challah Bake
7:00PM**

**at the Home of
Susan Arovas**

Join Past President Susan Arovas for a warm and intimate Sisterhood Challah Bake! Gather in her home to knead and shape challahs, perfect for your Shabbat table. A special evening of baking, connection, and community.

RSVP [here](#).

Feb 7

**Shabbat Shira Synaplex
6:15PM Kabbalat Shabbat
Service, 7:15PM Dinner,
8:00PM Special Guest
Presentation**

Celebrate Shabbat Shira with a musically rich Kabbalat Shabbat service, followed by dinner and a guest presentation honoring this Shabbat of Song. Join us for an evening of inspiring music and community! More details to come.

Feb 8

**Tot Shabbat
9:00AM**

Get ready to sing, dance and celebrate Shabbat! Join our clergy for a lively, interactive Shabbat service geared to our youngest members. Challah, juice, and snacks provided. After a nosh, stay for Shabbat themed crafts, games, and floor play. Open to the community. All are welcome!

Click [here](#) to register for planning purposes.



Feb 11

**Sisterhood Modern
Art Making
7:00PM**

Join us for a fun and creative evening! This is a great opportunity to socialize, enjoy wine and snacks, and unleash your inner artist while connecting with friends and fellow congregants. All are welcome—bring your friends and neighbors for a night of creativity and community. Mark your calendars now with more details to follow!

Feb 17

**President's Day – Temple
Offices and Building Closed**

February 25

**Torah on Tap
7:30PM**

Join us for the ultimate laid-back evening! Grab a drink, snack on some apps, and just enjoy good company. It's all about connecting, unwinding, and sharing laughs with our clergy and fellow Kol Ami congregants - no lectures, just a great time together (with maybe a cool Torah tidbit to top it off!) Location TBD.

RSVP [here](#).

LIFE CYCLES*

CONGRATULATIONS

To Jess and Dave Lorden
on the birth of their grandson
August (Auggie) Elliott Jo.



To Jess and Dave Lorden
on the marriage of their son
*Robby Lorden to
Rachel Rosenthal*



To Mimi and Steve Southard
on the birth of their grandson
Isaac John Southard



To Betty Heller
on the marriage of her daughter
Jill Heller to Miles Kohrman



To Sherril and Gary Owens
on the birth of their
granddaughter
Simone Isabelle Backert



To Pat Grossman
on the marriage of her son
*Andrew Grossman to
Brianna Larsen*



To Shana and Max Greenwald
on the birth of their daughter
Ruth Hope Greenwald



To Sarah and Ethan Carey
on the birth of their son
August Howard Carey



To Lauri and David Carey
on the birth of their grandson
August Howard Carey



To Myrna Barzelatto
on the marriage of her grandson
Daniel Chaite to Rachel Berglas



To Randy Stein and Jack Berger
on the marriage of their son
Joseph Berger to Maia Alforque

CONDOLENCES

To Jess and David Lorden
and family
on the passing of
Jess' sister-in-law
Joan Essex



To Pat Grossman
on the passing of her cousin
Dr. Richard Silberstein



To Peter and Helena Froyton
and family
on the passing of Peter's father
George Froyton



To Lisa Feld and
Francisco Arsuaga and family
on the passing of Lisa's father
Jan Feld



To Lorraine & David Seicol
and family
on the passing of
Lorraine's mother
Carmel V. Loddo



To Robin Cohen
on the passing of her father
Ralph Sansolo



To Sandy and Madeline Zevon
on the passing of Sandy's sister
Jean Berk



To Susan, David, Jonah and
Aaron Davidson
on the passing of Susan's
grandfather and Jonathan and
Aaron's great-grandfather
Ralph Sansolo



To Beth Green
on the passing of her partner
Alan Lerner

To Albie Katz
on the passing of her husband
Irwin Katz

To Vicki and Roger Adler
and family
on the passing of Vicki's mother
Gertrude Levine



To Mark and Julia Schonfeld
and family
on the passing of Mark's mother
Jeanette Schonfeld



To Howard and Michele Geller
and family
on the passing of
Howard's mother
Val Geller



To Harvey Wacht
on the passing of his wife
Judy Wacht



To Laurie and Ron Cole
and family
on the passing of Laurie's father
Arthur Offenber



To Mimi and Kurt Pressman
on the passing of
Mimi's stepmother
Avra Pressman



To Evan Pressman and
Andrea Flynn
on the passing of Evan's
step-grandmother
Avra Pressman



To our ECP teacher Jen Benalt
on the passing of her father
Jim Herman



To Ellen Sarna
on the passing of her partner
Harold Rose

IN MEMORIAM

Alan Lerner

Irwin Katz

Judy Wacht

**As of November 25, 2024*

DONATIONS*

CLERGY'S DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

RABBI JASON FENSTER

In appreciation
from Susan and Ken Gordon

In appreciation
from Blanche and Ed Fenster

In honor of
Andrew's Bar Mitzvah
from Scott and Michelle Sherman

In honor of
Cori's Bat Mitzvah
from Amanda and Zach Mazin

In appreciation of
the High Holy Day Services
from Ellen and Jon Litt

In appreciation of
the thoughtful sermon and
meaningful High Holy Day
services
*from Michele and Mark
Montague*

In memory of
Jain Hein, and in appreciation of
her memorial service
from Jeremy Hein

In appreciation
from Robin Cohen

In appreciation
from Daniel and Bonnie Tisch

RABBI LIBBY FISHER:

In appreciation of
the Meet & Greet
for Rabbi Fisher at
Jean and Hank Rouda's home

In honor of
Andrew's Bar Mitzvah
from Scott and Michelle Sherman

In appreciation of
the High Holy Day services
from Ellen and Jon Litt

In appreciation
for thoughtful leadership during
High Holy Day services
*from Michele and
Mark Montague*

In appreciation
from Rochelle Odesser

In appreciation
from Robin Cohen

In appreciation
from Daniel and Bonnie Tisch

CANTOR DANNY MENDELSON

In honor of
Andrew's Bar Mitzvah
from Scott and Michelle Sherman

In honor of
Cori's Bat Mitzvah
from Amanda and Zach Mazin

In appreciation of
the High Holy Day services
from Ellen and Jon Litt

In appreciation
for meaningful musical
leadership during
the High Holy Day services
*from Michele and Mark
Montague*

In appreciation
from Robin Cohen

In memory of
Gertrude Levine, and in
appreciation of the support
extended to our family
*from Vicki Adler and the
Adler/Levine families*

ECP FUND

In appreciation
from Carly and Andrew Stern

KOL AMI FUND

In loving memory of
George Kroner
from Vivian Kroner

In appreciation
from Mimi and Stephen Southard

In loving memory of
Stacey's mother,
Florence Winnick
from Robert and Stacey Pushkin

In appreciation of
Lisa Borowitz's kindness
from Patty and Bert Wohl

In appreciation of
the High Holy Days
from Laurie Newman

In loving memory of
Paul & Helen Ackerman,
Gloria Salit, and
William & Sophie Stern
from Mark & Janet Ackerman

In honor of
Nancy Merahn's birthday
from David Simkins

In appreciation of
the High Holy Day
live stream services
from Mindy & Michael Kotzin

In honor of
Nina & Philip Blumenfeld
from Paula Lerer

In appreciation of
the High Holy Day
live stream services
from Beth & Moshe Tomkiewicz

In loving memory of
Carol L. Prince
from Sarah & Theodore Prince

*As of November 25, 2024

DONATIONS*

FOOD PANTRY

In loving memory of
John Shannon, Zoe Shannon's
grandfather
*from Stephanie Freedman
& Zoe's Moving Traditions
colleagues*

In honor of
the Elkin family
from Bonnie & Eric Eilen

In honor of
Bobbi Greenwald's 4th birthday
from Henry Fenster & his family

In honor of
Isaiah Araj's 6th birthday
*from Benjamin Fenster
and his family*

In appreciation of
all those who provided rides to
worship services and evening
events in 5784 when
I broke my ankle
from Myra Oltsik

In honor of
Asher Williams 7th birthday
*from Benjamin Fenster
and his family*

In appreciation
from Uriel Cohen

In honor of
Arthur Pollak becoming
a Bar Mitzvah
from Ellen and Ronald Brown

FUND FOR THE NEEDY

In loving memory of
Jack's mother, Helen Berger
*from Jack Berger
and Randy Stein*

In appreciation
from Sarah Rascoe

In honor of
our Coachman Thanksgiving
celebration
from Erica & Ryan Papir

MUSIC FUND

In appreciation
for the wonderful
High Holy Day streaming
*from Amy S. Rosen & Arthur
Weisberg*

In honor of
the wonderful music at High
Holy Day services and in
appreciation of
Cantor Mendelson and
Carmel Mena
from Sue Lobel

PRAYER BOOK FUND

In loving memory of
Melvin Barlam
from Karen & David Cole

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FUND

In loving memory of
Paul Lawrence Davis, cherished
husband of Susan Davis
from Rena & Alan Steinfeld

RICK KRAVER COLLEGE YOUTH FUND

In loving memory of
Ralph Sansolo, father of
Robin Cohen and grandfather
of Susan Cohen Davidson
from Harriet Kraver

In loving memory of
Alan Lerner, father of Melanie
and Carrie Lerne
from Harriet Kraver

TOM WEINER FUND FOR YOUTH PROGRAMING

In loving memory of
Neil Tucker, husband of Mindy
and father of Samantha and
Melissa Tucker
*from Mindy, Samantha
& Melissa Tucker*



We want to hear from you...

Kol Ami is about the ways we can care for each other in community through major life events. We can all sing and dance, share the joy of bride and groom, or celebrate the birth of a child. When we sing the prayer for healing in the synagogue, we learn who needs a visit or some other source of support. We see the mourners rise for Kaddish and know whom we must comfort. Our passage through life gains much meaning through our connections with other people when we share our most significant transitions.

*As of November 25, 2024