

CONNECTION

Kollel 24th Anniversary Celebration, *It's Happening,* Arrives with a Twist

A lot has been happening at the Kollel in recent months. With construction of the Kollel Torah Center completed in late 2020, the Kollel's new home was ready at last, and the spacious, beautiful building has quickly emerged as a center for Torah learning and Torah living in Denver. Learning for men, women and children of all ages and backgrounds, along with a multitude of community programs ranging from dance classes to parenting classes, are attracting Jews from across the greater Denver area.

At the same time, the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor in Greenwood Village is growing busier by the day, with learning and classes for adults and children offered throughout the week; new space has been acquired to expand the Torah Center.

To put this bustling picture of growth and vitality into two words: IT'S HAPPENING. And that will be the focus of the Kollel's 24th Anniversary Celebration in 2022. But this year, it comes with a twist.

"Having already held two major events in the past ten months – a Chanukas Habayis Dedication Event which featured Rabbi Malkiel Kotler along with singer Eitan Katz, and a *Hachnasas Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll Inauguration) with Joey Newcomb providing lively music and singing – we will not be having our regular Celebration event," explains Kollel Director Rabbi Moshe Heyman.

Instead, the Kollel's 24th Anniversary Celebration, *It's Happening*, will tie together the Kollel's annual crowdfunding campaign with a gala Purim Celebration. The crowdfunding event, hosted on the Kollel's own online platform to avoid overhead fees, will take place on Monday-Tuesday, March 14th-15th, and every dollar raised will be tripled by generous matchers. This will be followed two days



It's Happening
**24th Anniversary
Celebration**

A CROWDFUNDING
CAMPAIGN

Monday, March 14 - Tuesday, March 15

\$675K • 36HRS • 3X

Celebration of
A NEW ERA OF TORAH

Celebration of
A NEW SEFER TORAH

NEW OPPORTUNITIES
Celebration of

NEW TORAH GROWTH
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TAKE IT HIGHER!
A Celebration of Purim

THURSDAY, MARCH 17
Join the community for a gigantic
Purim Celebration at 6:30PM
at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center
following your Purim seuda
MUSIC! DANCING! REFRESHMENTS!

later by a community-wide Purim Celebration at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center, featuring music, dancing, and refreshments, on Thursday evening, March 17th at 6:30 pm.

"We will be raising \$675,000," says Rabbi Heyman, "to continue the growth and expansion the Kollel has brought to all parts of the Denver community. Because we are not having our usual Celebration, this unique event will be our largest community-wide appeal of the year to enable the Torah learning, Torah teaching and Torah living of the Kollel that continues to make an ever-larger impact on an ever-expanding number of Jews in the greater Denver area."

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Inauguration of New Torah Scroll Brings a Family Full Circle

A *Hachnasas Sefer Torah* (Torah Scroll Inauguration) is not an unusual occurrence. Less common, though, is the background of the *Sefer Torah* that was completed and celebrated last Sunday at the Denver Community Kollel.

The *Sefer Torah*, commissioned by three generations of one family – the Sperber, Aragon and Singer families – was a culmination of a decades-long journey of a family following the horrors of Holocaust.

It is thus not surprising that for many, this *Hachnasas Sefer Torah* was not just a celebration, but a very emotional experience of coming full circle. "This was truly the highlight of my Jewish journey and of my life," said Hannah Sperber.

"Many people I spoke with expressed that they had no words for this event," says Rabbi Ari Aragon. "Our Sages tell us that the final words of the Torah were written by Moshe with tears. The final letters of this *Sefer Torah* were also written with tears, so high was the emotion. People left the room to cry."

The *Hachnasas Sefer Torah* featured the renowned Joey Newcomb, whose lively and engaging singing created an unforgettably exhilarating atmosphere as the Denver community danced the *Sefer Torah* up the block to its new home in the West Denver Kollel Torah Center *Bais Medrash*.



The Aragon-Sperber-Singer Family

"There was a huge amount of energy; besides feeling the floor shake from the dancing, the excitement and the joy were also palpable," said Kollel Director Rabbi Moshe Heyman.

Rabbi Yaakov Meyer of Aish of the Rockies noted that the Aragons now have a new child, and Mrs. Sperber a new great-grandchild – their *Sefer Torah*. "[This] child will last for generations and generations, as long as they keep studying the Torah."

"Watching my father write the final letter of the Torah, I felt how much *mesiras nefesh* (sacrifice and dedication) it took the generations of our family to get to this point," said Chaya Sarah Singer, daughter of Jesse Aragon. "In that room, you could feel part of something larger than yourself, an eternal connection to Hashem through the Torah."

"There was a sense of connection on so many levels," said Pennie Aragon. "Eternal connection with Torah, with our family, and with the Jewish People to Hashem."



Procession dancing the Torah to its new home



Dancing at the Kollel West Denver Bais Medrash



Three generations of Aragons with their *Sefer Torah*: Jesse Aragon (left), Rabbi Ari Aragon, and Reb Ari's son Daniel



Bringing the new Torah into its home

Kollel Torah Center Chanukas Habayis Dedication Event

An estimated 500 people joined the Denver Community Kollel for a Chanukas Habayis Dedication Event for its new Kollel Torah Center on Sunday afternoon, August 15th. The opening of the Torah Center, after nearly 24 years of the Kollel bringing Torah learning, Torah teaching and Torah living to Denver, is the realization of a dream years in the making, and was thus aptly referred to as "A Celebration of Torah."

The impact of the Kollel on Denver Jewry is summed up by Kollel President Rabbi Zev Beren. "When I am judged after 120 years as to whether I used the money Hashem entrusted me with wisely, I am confident that my support of the Denver Community Kollel will be a big eternal *zechus* (merit) for me and my family," remarked Rabbi Beren.

The Dedication Event was graced by the presence of Rabbi Malkiel Kotler, Dean of Beth Medrash Govoha, who addressed the overflow crowd.

Rabbi Kotler observed that in a number of places, the verse of "*V'hi no'am Hashem Elokeinu aleinu*," "May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon us," is invoked in connection to the Divine Presence residing among the Jewish People. This reality of connection to Hashem exists today, continued Rabbi Kotler, in the *bais medrash* (study hall).

"It is the biggest *geshmak* (pleasure) in the world," said Rabbi Kotler. "Whoever comes into the *bais medrash*, learns in the *bais medrash*, is connected with the *bais medrash*; their families are connected with the *bais medrash*... it's an exalted life.

"If a person comes to the Kollel, learns in the Kollel... is connected with the *yungerleit* (Kollel scholars)... his home becomes part of that *bais medrash*. We can call it a *chanukas habayis*, not only of the *bais medrash*, but of the whole community."

Mr. Jeff Weiskopf of Monsey, NY also travelled to Denver for the event and addressed the crowd. Mr. Weiskopf played a leading role in the creation of the Torah Center, giving his support in numerous ways. Mr. Weiskopf discussed the impact of a Kollel on the community. Besides being role models for others and learning with community members, said Mr. Weiskopf, there is another side to what they accomplish. Kollel members, he said, also build the community in the long-term, taking positions as Torah teachers, community rabbis and the like. "I cannot imagine what Denver would look like without these families – men and women totally devoted to a strong and vibrant future," he said.



Rabbi Malkiel Kotler addresses the crowd



Dancing at the Chanukas Habayis



Eitan Katz leads a kumtitz

Internationally acclaimed singer Eitan Katz provided musical inspiration during the Dedication Event with spirited music to accompany joyous dancing and a beautiful, heartfelt *kumtitz*.

"The Chanukas Habayis just blew me away," said Bob Weiss, a member of the building committee and longtime supporter who has been learning with the Kollel for over 20 years. "Incredible people – the Kollel leadership, the *yungerleit*, Rabbi Kotler, Eitan Katz – an incredible building, incredibly diverse group of attendees from all across Denver, an incredible event."

KOLLEL MEMBERS TAKE

"An integral element of the Kollel's mission is preparing its scholars for future leadership roles in the community," says Kollel Dean Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab. "It's gratifying when a Kollel Scholar transitions into a position of leadership, be it as an educator, in the rabbinate, kosher supervision, or any other field where he impacts the community. But it's especially gratifying when a Kollel Scholar takes such a position within the Denver Jewish community. This is the fullest realization of our goal, as our scholars put down roots and continue to make a difference in the lives of so many."

Despite two years of COVID, several Kollel members have moved into positions of leadership in the Denver Jewish community.



Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky
Rabbi, Aish Kodesh

Aish Kodesh was started about five years ago by Donny Basch as a small Friday night *minyan* in East Denver that offered a deeply engaging and uplifting style of *davening* (prayer service) for both adults and children. Kollel alumnus Rabbi Akiva Stern became an integral part of the *minyan* very early on and soon was asked to provide *divrei Torah* (Torah thoughts) and take on a rabbinic role. The hard work and effort invested by Donny and Rabbi Stern soon attracted large crowds of Jews of all backgrounds and levels of observance. The *minyan* began to expand its offerings, holding services on some holidays as well as on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky, at the time living in West Denver, would join on occasion, usually for special events such as Shavuot, as well as to lead the prayer services during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Eventually, the *minyan* grew to the point where it made sense to create an official *shul* (synagogue), and Aish Kodesh was thus born in late 2020. Rabbi Karnowsky was invited to join Rabbi Stern as co-rabbi of the congregation, and the Karnowsky family relocated to East Denver in early 2021.

"Rabbi Karnowsky has a tremendous amount of knowledge, charisma, and heart to offer, and we *know* that bringing him aboard will be a tremendous catalyst for growth in the coming months and years!" read a part of the email shared in December 2020 with Aish Kodesh membership.

Rabbi Karnowsky continues to serve as Bais Yaakov of Denver's Director of Development, a position he has held for three years, and he remains part of the Kollel's afternoon internal study session, as well.

Under the joint leadership of Rabbi Stern and Rabbi Karnowsky, Aish Kodesh offers *minyanim* for all Shabbos services, a Shabbos morning kiddush, a weekly summer family *Shalosh Se'udos* (Third Meal), and a musical *havdala*. Holidays and events on the Jewish calendar, be it Tu B'shvat or Sukkos, are celebrated in an enjoyable and elevating fashion. Torah learning events take place, as do special programs from Women's Night Out to a sunrise *shacharis* (morning service) on Lookout Mountain.

"Aish Kodesh is a warm shul of joyful service of Hashem and *ahavas Yisrael* (love of fellow Jews)," says Adam Leventhal. "Rabbi Karnowsky and Rabbi Stern make every person feel welcome, sing and *daven* so beautifully, and share such inspiring Torah thoughts."

"Entering Aish Kodesh," says Rabbi Karnowsky, "it is beautiful to see people of all ages and stages with such apparent camaraderie and unity. We are always looking for new opportunities, and we look forward to exciting new initiatives as we progress."



Aish Kodesh sunrise shacharis on
Lookout Mountain



Rabbi Akiva Stern (left)
and Donny Basch

POSITIONS IN COMMUNITY



Rabbi Shmuel Halpern
Rabbi, DAT Minyan

Rabbi Shmuel Halpern assumed the position of Rabbi of DAT Minyan in July 2021. Rabbi Halpern helps organize and oversee *minyanim* there, teaches Torah, both through classes and the written word via emails and printed materials, and provides pastoral care.

"The shul is flourishing under [Rabbi Halpern's] leadership," says Dr. Terry Samuel. "During his tenure, we have acquired a permanent location. *Minyanim* are well attended, and many come to hear his *divrei Torah* (words of Torah) specifically. He heads the *minyan* with a quiet confidence and strength based on his knowledge of Torah."

"Rabbi Halpern exemplifies kindness, humility and commitment to Torah and mitzvos," says Dr. Marc Avner. "We are so grateful and blessed to have such an exceptional person leading our community."

"The Kollel provides so many opportunities for its members to develop in so many areas," says Rabbi Halpern. "From in-depth Torah study and developing halachic expertise under the tutelage of [Kollel Dean] Rabbi Sommers to learning invaluable oratorical, writing, and teaching skills, from gaining lessons in interpersonal interactions to hands-on experience in researching and presenting material in a high-caliber, professional manner, the Kollel fosters the growth of a Scholar's sense of communal responsibility and stocks his tool kit for the future."

"The Kollel approach is conducive to helping its families settle here in Denver," continues Rabbi Halpern. "Having built relationships within the community, and having lived in Denver for a number of years, it makes sense for a Kollel family to look here for a job when it is time to move on from full-time Kollel study. It is a valuable service for the institutions that are benefitting from the talents of Kollel Scholars and for the broader Jewish community, as well."



Rabbi Nesanel Kipper
Director of Development, Hillel Academy of Denver

Rabbi Nesanel Kipper has been at the forefront of new and exciting programming in Southeast Denver for several years, taking his success to new levels with his appointment as the Kollel's Programming Coordinator last year.

In recent weeks, Rabbi Kipper accepted a position as Director of Development at Hillel Academy of Denver; he will begin following Pesach.

"The Kollel has given me the opportunity to not only sit and learn among a likeminded group of *yungerleit* (scholars) committed to learning and growing in Torah, but also to be involved in the community on so many different levels, which I believe provided me tremendous opportunity for growth," says Rabbi Kipper. "Whatever I manage to accomplish and grow going forward is due to the foundation which I have

gained in the Kollel."

In his new capacity, Rabbi Kipper will use his talents and experience to help create exciting new programs in the Hillel Academy community, to work with and cultivate both old and new donors, and to expand Hillel Academy's fundraising events.

"After experiencing consistent growth for many years, we are excited that Rabbi Kipper will be joining Hillel Academy to help us move to the next stage of our development," says Hillel Academy Executive Director Mordechai Hoffman. "He brings with him exceptional warmth and wisdom, and we look forward to welcoming him into the Hillel Academy family."

"I am excited and looking forward to working for Hillel Academy," says Rabbi Kipper. "I feel privileged to be a part of an institution like Hillel, which is a cornerstone of our community, and to help in bringing the school to new levels of greatness."

Rabbi Ari and Esty Sommers Relocating to Denver

Rabbi Ari Sommers, son of Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne and Tzippy Sommers, is moving to Denver along with his wife, Esty, and their three-year-old daughter Sara. They will live in Southeast Denver.

Reb Ari will join the Kollel internal *bais medrash* sessions for one *seder* (study session), and plans on studying with members of the broader Jewish community for the rest of the day.

"My hope is not to just learn with community members, but to help advance and foster the idea that Torah study is a major focal point of one's daily schedule and life," says Reb Ari.

"We are excited to have Reb Ari join the Kollel and for the unique opportunities for Torah study and Torah growth he will offer the community," says Kollel Director Rabbi Moshe Heyman. "We are looking forward to great things from this new generation of the Sommers family."



Rabbi Ari and Esty Sommers
and their daughter Sara

Content Creation Project Expands with Grant from Rose Foundation

During the past several years, Rabbi Shmuel Halpern has been working extensively on a Content Creation Project to more effectively and efficiently bring the enormous reservoirs of Torah present in the Kollel to a wider audience. While many of the Kollel's classes are available on the Kollel website, Rabbi Halpern envisioned a separate site that would offer a variety of content, both audio and visual, that would appeal to wider swaths of Jews.

Initially working with a micro grant from Rose Foundation in 2020, Rabbi Halpern launched a Kollel podcast platform, Mile High Torah, that featured a variety of podcasts from various Kollel Scholars and alumni. These podcasts are available on many streaming platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Amazon Music, and can also be accessed from the Kollel website.

In addition, Rabbi Halpern took advantage of the *Digital Marketing in the Jewish World* training course offered by Rose Foundation in partnership with Ignite, a digital marketing agency, enabling him to gain a much better understanding of social media marketing, storytelling, content creation and the like.

In late 2021, Rose Foundation provided a second, significant grant to continue developing impactful content creation. Currently, Rabbi Halpern, with the assistance of Mr. Reuven Sommers, is working on creating an independent website to host the content – which includes written, audio, and visual – along with several initiatives that will produce impactful and meaningful content. One initiative, an informative and thoughtful yet fun podcast titled *The Biker and the Rabbi*, is a collaborative effort of Rabbi Halpern and Mark Margolies, founder of BenMar Radio, and it is already available on streaming platforms such as Spotify.

"The Content Creation Project continues to evolve," says Rabbi Halpern, "and we are looking forward to offering unique, out-of-the-box content that will attract new and diverse Jews from across the Denver area and beyond to connect with Torah and Judaism through this digital media. We are most grateful to Rose Foundation for their confidence and generosity in providing us with this opportunity, and we look forward to sharing great things in the future."



Chavrusah Connection

Rabbi Yosef Melamed and Jared Danziger

"When I lived in NYC, to me, the very ether felt Jewish, and so even though I was living a mostly secular life (I grew up with holiday observance, kosher "style," and little Jewish education), I experienced very little social or internal pressure to affirm my being as a Jew," says Jared Danziger.

In 2017, Jared moved to Boulder, a very different experience. "Over time, I began to feel uncomfortably cut off from any Yiddishkeit." Jared found the Kollel's website, and filled out the contact form, asking if there were any suggestions for beginner's Torah study. "My first contact with the Kollel was through Rabbi Fleisher," he relates. "I would have been perfectly satisfied with a good book recommendation, but he answered without hesitation, 'You get nowhere by yourself.'"

Rabbi Fleisher invited Jared to the West Denver Kollel Torah Center, then on Wolff St., and introduced him to Rabbi Yosef Melamed. Jared was interested in learning halacha, as well as learning to read Hebrew. Rabbi Melamed suggested they learn *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, a Hebrew text, easy-to-learn halachic compendium, which would incorporate both goals.

The pair began learning in the summer of 2019. "It didn't take long for me to realize how serious Jared was about the learning," says Rabbi Melamed. "He would come in each week with copious notes and questions on both the Hebrew of the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, as well as very pointed questions on the material." The two progressed to Mishna and then Talmud, studying some other subjects such as exploring *Shemone Esrei* and *Tehillim* (Psalms) along the way, and they are currently immersed in Tractate Bava Kamma.

"I am regularly amazed at Rabbi Melamed's ability to call upon a secondary source or another page in Talmud to provide insight into the subject at hand. I am continuously grateful for his patience. Even more so, I'm grateful to his family, as the time he spends learning Torah with me is, obviously, time he spends away from them."

"I don't stop to being inspired by Jared's thirst for Torah knowledge and his dedication, come what may," shares Rabbi Melamed. "There were many times and various challenges that presented more than a valid excuse to skip a week, but it was out of the question for him. That includes our first winter learning, when Jared was working in Vail, CO, and he would commute up to two hours each way to learn for just one hour and then head right back to Vail!"

"I have also greatly gained from Jared's breadth of worldly knowledge, both in a

general sense, and specifically in the realm of learning. We have studied many a fascinating topic in halacha or other learning that I would not have had the chance to really think about or look into otherwise.

"Jared is a growing person in all regards, and it's been my privilege to witness and participate in that growth as a *chavrusa* and as a friend."

"Learning Torah is an opportunity that I simply was not granted growing up," says Jared. "Learning, for me, has facilitated both an improved understanding of the mechanics of keeping many mitzvos and an increased appreciation for the importance of doing so. Furthermore, it brings me into intellectual contact with all of the generations – depending on your perspective, it's a fairly short history."

"For me, the Kollel's open door represents a real investment by the Denver community to make Torah accessible," continues Jared. "Millions of Jews in America come from a background like mine – what can we take from my experience to bring more of them this opportunity?"



Rabbi Melamed and Jared Danziger in 2019

Live On/LIFE & LEGACY™ Members Speak

The Kollel's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY™ Members have varied reasons for the decision to leave a planned gift for the Kollel. Two members share their thoughts:



Joshua Close,
Senior Level SAP Full Stack
Architect and Developer,
Samsonite

Since discovering the Denver Community Kollel about 10 years ago, my family and I have grown in our Yiddishkeit, connected to the Denver Jewish community, and have seen our children thrive in the local Jewish school. I attribute much of this to the Kollel's successful mission of sharing the *emes* (truth) of Hashem's Torah with individuals and families like mine. The connection to Torah, which the Kollel provides, is a powerful means to awaken the potential

of a Jew. This is the reason I wanted to partner with the Kollel in the Live On/Life & Legacy program, knowing and praying that they can connect other Jews to their *mesorah* (tradition), as they did for me and my family.



Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher,
Senior Educator, Denver
Community Kollel

Since joining the Kollel over 14 years ago, I have seen the Torah revolution it has helped lead throughout Denver. The Kollel's impact affects every demographic of Jewry, and I would like that impact to continue far into the future. To that end, my wife and I have made a planned gift as part of the Live On/Life & Legacy program so that we can be a part not only of the Kollel's vital and sacred work today, but even after we are no longer here.



LIVE ON
BUILD YOUR JEWISH LEGACY
An initiative of ROSE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



The Kollel recognizes and thanks its Legacy Society members:

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For more info or to discuss becoming a Legacy Society member and leaving a lasting impact for future generations, contact rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

It's Happening

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Boys learning at Night Seder in West Denver Kollel Torah Center



Internal study session at the Kollel



West Denver Kollel Torah Center during summer break



Rabbi Nosson Schoss delivers a shiur at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center on Chol Hamoed Sukkos



Night Seder at Southeast Kollel Torah Center



Dance class at Kollel Youth Center



Mrs. Avigail Steinharter delivering a parenting class at Kollel Education Center



Preschool summer camp in Kollel Youth Center



Preschool and kindergarten children enjoyed a summer carnival in the Kollel Youth Center



Rabbi Chaim Gross teaching at Talmudo Biyado Night Seder program for boys at Southeast Kollel Torah Center



Programming Coordinator Rabbi Nesanel Kipper with Talmudo Biyado participants on trip to The Edge



West Side Avos Ubanim trip to Top Golf



Yeshiva Toras Chaim of Denver Menahel Rabbi Naftali Seidenfeld speaking on Hoshana Rabbah night