

THE SHOFAR

TOURO SYNAGOGUE



FALL 2025

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A Message from Rabbi Bauman

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From Our President



The Moment is Now

A Message from Kevin Wilkins

To Our Inspiring Congregation:

Welcome home! I hope that your transition back to a busy fall is smooth and that your summer was filled with many moments of joy and meaning. I often say that life is defined by a series of special moments. It's when time seems to pause, even if just for a heartbeat, and you're fully present with whatever is happening.

What makes a moment special isn't its duration, but its quality of attention. It's when the usual mental chatter quiets and you're simply there - whether witnessing something beautiful, feeling a strong emotion, making a connection, or even just noticing the way light falls across a wall. These are all *Shehecheyanu* moments, when we know we're in the presence of something sacred.

Moments become meaningful when they shift something within us, no matter how subtly. When life becomes vivid rather than just mundane and passive, whether we recognize the significance as it happens or sometime later looking back – **it's those moments that help define who we are, what we value, and what we aspire to achieve.**

For my own family, so many of those cherished moments happened at Touro Synagogue, a place we call home. This home was established in 1828, almost 200 years ago, when the founders of what would become Touro Synagogue started one of the first Jewish congregations outside the original 13 colonies.

From those humble beginnings, **Touro has evolved into a**

vibrant, dynamic beacon of life and hope in our community.

We are guided by our core values of transformative prayer, expansive thought, fearless engagement, and love. We are truly a Beit Knesset, a home for gathering in community to experience the fullness of life together. **And together, we have created this thriving, holy community, filled with love, acceptance and hope,** one where we can live our unique Jewish identities – with pride.

Today, Touro is having a moment. While many faith based organizations and houses of worship are shrinking, Touro stands as a model for congregational growth. Research from the Union for Reform Judaism actually validates this fact, suggesting that members of thriving synagogues share many of the same experiences that Touro is familiar with:

- *They have a strong sense of belonging and are proud of their affiliation.*
- *The synagogue plays a central role in their lives, and they feel a personal responsibility to help it achieve success.*
- *They feel comfortable and at home.*
- *They think that the environment is an excellent fit for them, and would recommend the synagogue to a friend.*
- *They consider their annual financial commitment an investment in the synagogue community.*

This is what I see when I look around our congregation. Since becoming President, I have had the privilege of meeting with many congregants, some who have been here for generations, others who are new. I am inspired by our congregation that is filled with so many people who are making a real difference in our community. I see members who are deeply connected to one another. I see people who show up – not just for services, but for each other. I see a community that feels a sense of ownership in our shared future.

This moment for Touro Synagogue is an important inflection point. We are a growing congregation of 730 families – the largest we have ever been. And while growth is both exciting and unique in the faith-based space, it is also a real responsibility. We are seeing the addition of many younger families with children who will be educated here. We run several youth education programs with a total enrollment of over 220 students. And that is in addition to our focus on lifelong learning for all of Touro's adult members. We also care so much about our magnificent city and fellow New Orleanians - how we help address community issues is really important. Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, is in the oxygen of this congregation.

Importantly, **this moment is defined by a new footprint for our congregation:** one that is broader – and now needs to go deeper. With more members of diverse perspectives sharing a larger tent than ever before, we must now ensure that both the depth and breadth of experience at Touro Synagogue continues to build, strengthen, and impact this community to meet such a moment.

With that in mind, we will focus on seven key priorities over the next two years.

- **Strategic Planning:** It is time to update our 5 year **Strategic Plan**, originally completed in 2020. We will update our priorities, ensuring that we continue to deliver against our mission given our new footprint and the resulting need to go deeper with our programs, synagogue work, and community initiatives.
- **Meaningful Relationships:** With our new footprint, we will continue to focus on our congregant relationships so **all feel welcome and part of the community**. This means ensuring that everyone has their own special, meaningful, and unique experience at Touro and can engage in many powerful ways. We will continue to expand the very successful Ambassador Program to ensure that everyone feels connected in a real way.
- **Our Youth:** We will **focus on our children** - building Jewish identity via a world-class education platform. We are overjoyed that Rabbi Lily Kowalski has joined our clergy team as Rabbi Educator. Her leadership will be instrumental as we continue to enhance and innovate around our educational offerings.
- **Tikkun Olam:** We will continue to **expand the impact of Tikkun Olam**, deepening our commitment to repairing the world. We work hard on climate issues, food insecurity, and reproductive rights, to name just a few areas of focus. *See pages 20-21 to learn more about the Tikkun Olam programming.*
- **Bicentennial Celebration:** We will begin preparing for **our upcoming 200th Anniversary** in 2028 – a milestone that few American synagogues ever reach. This will be a very important moment for Touro, creating innovative experiences that celebrate the last 200 years while laying the vision for the next 200 for Jews in New Orleans, the Southern Region, and the globe.
- **Operations:** We will complete the implementation of our **operational audit** designed to streamline processes and systems to ensure that the work we do is done as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Learn more about Touro's committees and task forces on page 23. If you'd like to get involved and support these important endeavors, please reach out by visiting tourosynagogue.com/contact or call the Touro office at 504-895-4843.

And finally, and perhaps most important, we will ensure that Touro Synagogue is financially sustainable. You have recently received an overview of the Touro Annual Commitment program where we are asking our congregant households, who are able, to support Touro at the cost per household level of \$2750. While our congregation has grown and our programming is robust, the truth is **our revenue has not increased accordingly**. Membership contributions currently make up 52% of our total revenue - far below the recommended benchmarks of 80% for financially healthy congregations.

Therefore, in order to continue offering our valued spiritual, educational, and communal experiences needed to support our new footprint, we must collectively increase our annual support. To learn more about this program or to join the conversation around generating diversified revenue streams and growing our endowment, please visit tourosynagogue.com/contact to reach out to Beth Lavin, Gary Sernovitz or Kendall Scales Glade.

The moment is now for Touro Synagogue. Let's move forward together to maximize who we are. The beauty of our renovated building, the sacred spaces that we share where we can worship, learn, reflect, grieve, celebrate, and find joy. The growth and robust nature of our congregation. The impact we can make in our community - locally and globally. And most important, the education of our youth to ensure that their Jewish identity is developed with pride and joy.

I look forward to working with all of you as we, together, write the next chapter of Touro's incredible and inspiring story. And may this new year be filled with love, peace and joy for all of us, and may we share so **many Shehecheyanu moments to come**.

L'shalom,

Kevin Wilkins, President

Together We Thrive

Touro Synagogue Annual Commitment

Your support helps sustain everything we love about Touro Synagogue – weekly worship and Shabbat dinners, Jewish education for over 220 children, the upkeep of our majestic buildings, and so much more. As you reflect on your annual commitment for the coming year, we ask that you consider giving generously, at a level that is both meaningful and aspirational for you. Learn more on pages 6-7 and feel free to reach out to Kevin Wilkins at president@tourosynagogue.com any time.

Together We Thrive

Touro Synagogue Annual Commitment

Facing the Moment

While our congregation has grown and our programming is robust, our revenue has not increased accordingly. Membership contributions currently make up 52% of our total revenue – well below the recommended 80% benchmark for a financially healthy congregation. **This gap challenges Touro's financial sustainability.** Though we efficiently manage our lean budget, the size and vibrancy of our community require a budget that supports meaningful investment in our people and programs.

Congregations of 700-800 Households

Congregations with Dues

Congregations with Voluntary Commitment

Touro Actual 2024

0 \$1M \$1.5M \$2M
Total Annual Contributions



Given our current contributions level, our budget functions more like that of a 500-household synagogue.

Current:

Our current Annual Support only covers 52% of our budget.

Supporting Our Growth

730

Households

250+ New Households Since 2019!

We have always asked our members to give generously and at a level that is meaningful to them. And we continue to do so, offering an incredible range of opportunities for involvement at all stages of life. **Membership contributions enable Touro to thrive 365 days a year.**

Your Support Provides:

- Pastoral Care from Our Dynamic Clergy Team
- Opportunities for Lifelong Learning and Engagement
- Upkeep of Our Historic and Majestic Buildings
- Weekly Worship and Shabbat Dinners
- Jewish Education for 220+ Children
- Connections to Tikkun Olam Initiatives

And so much more!

Let's rise to meet this moment, together.

“I support Touro financially because it is a way to ensure that we can continue being here for one another, for the Jewish community, and for our city.”

- Stacey Weinreb Lutz, Board Member

Moving Forward Together

To sustain our buildings and vibrant community, the average annual amount of revenue we must raise per household is **\$2,750**. Touro is proud to be a home for over 700 Jewish households (more than 1,800+ individuals!), some of whom can give at or above this level, and some who cannot. In order to foster a sense of belonging among us all, regardless of financial capability, **it is crucial that those who are able to support Touro at the cost per household do so**. It's one of the most meaningful ways we live our values. As you reflect on your annual commitment for this year, please consider the cost per household and the patron levels below. We need your generosity and intention in order to make Touro work for all.

Your 2025-2026 Annual Commitment:

Member Support Level	Annual	Monthly
Cost Per Household	\$2,750	\$229/mo*

Patron Support Level	Annual	Monthly
Ozrim Helpers <small>Cost per Household + Cover Part of an Additional Household</small>	\$3,660+	\$305+/mo*
Bonim Builders <small>Cost per Household + Cover an Additional Household</small>	\$5,400+	\$450+/mo*
Tomchin Supporters	\$7,200+	\$600+/mo*
Amudim Pillars	\$10,000+	\$833+/mo*
Giborim Heroes	\$18,000+	\$1,500+/mo*

If the cost per household is not within your reach this year, please consider a meaningful increase from your past support. Some suggestions:

- New Members and Young Households: \$1,800+ or \$150+/month*
- Out-of-Town Members: \$720+ or \$60+/month*
- Students: \$250+ or \$21+/month*

*Payment amount based on 12 monthly payments.

\$2,750

Cost per Household

\$229/month*

Goal:

We need Annual Support to cover 80% in order to sustain our operations.

Submit Your Pledge Online!



Please Scan the QR Code or Visit
TouroSynagogue.com/AnnualCommitment

We're excited to introduce ShulCloud, our online membership portal. With a ShulCloud account, you'll have access to a membership directory, manage your payments, and more!

Credit Card and E-Check Options Available.

Please contact the Touro Synagogue Office at 504-895-4843 if you need assistance accessing your account.



A Time of Blessed Wrestling & Renewed Hope

A Message from Rabbi Bauman

Dear Touro Synagogue Family,

This past July 1 was my sixth anniversary of being your Senior Rabbi. It is the honor of my life to serve this warm and generous community, and it is a joy and privilege to recommit for another five years. Our board members, committee and task force

chairs, ambassadors, volunteers, and so many active community members remind me every single day what is possible to build when we all work together.

You are reading my words during the period of time that is the runway for the High Holidays. By that, I don't only mean a time of logistical preparations such as we do at Touro to receive the thousands of Jewish souls who come home during these days, nor such as we do in our homes to prepare to host and feed and welcome loved ones and friends. I also mean a runway for spiritual wrestling, worthy of our name *Yisrael*, those who wrestle with God.

During these weeks before Rosh Hashanah, we descend onto this runway by remembering the saddest days in our people's history, the destruction of our Temple in Jerusalem in both 586 BCE and 70CE and our subsequent expulsions from so many other lands after that first exile. We spend these late summer days in a state of collective mourning for the ways we thought our lives would be and aren't. But we also ascend from this runway toward a spiritual rebuilding, a mindset that embraces life's uncertainties and commits to seek out meaning and joy anyway. This intellectual, emotional, and soulful wrestling match between reeling from destruction and rising to rebuild plays out both collectively and individually, and we enter the new year both exhausted from it and hopefully exhilarated by it, ready to marshal new forces to meet the challenges before us, whatever they may be. At least, that is the process prescribed by our tradition.

The Talmud, Taanit 7a, tells the story of the daughter of the Roman emperor who said with disdain to one of our greatest teachers, Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Hananya, "*Woe to glorious wisdom such as yours, which is contained in an ugly vessel.*" She's complaining, "*How pathetic that your rich Jewish tradition is brought into the world by such an imperfect messenger as you.*" She wants purity. She wants the Instagram-worthy picture of a person or community whose IRL image matches the inspirational messages contained within. She's disappointed in Rabbi Yehoshua's humanness and the incoherence of his presentation of himself.

Rabbi Yehoshua responds to her and even ultimately to the emperor by reminding them that just as wine cannot be aged in a pristine silver cask but rather needs an earthen one, so

too is wisdom brought to life only through someone who is humble, someone who feels that they have much to learn, someone who is striving, someone who is wrestling. The person who approaches deeply sought-after truths is someone who has worked for them and who has been weathered by them, and that process is inherently messy. Seeking meaning, joy, and righteousness through uncertainty and pain requires authentically assessing what we thought our lives would be and why they aren't, and then taking a step forward. That wrestling is not pristine silver but rather messy earth and maybe even a bit ugly, but it is the only vessel through which sacred wisdom, compassion, and goodness can be born.

This kind of wrestling has never before been glamorous, and this moment in our Jewish lives is no different. Like we have always done, we ask big questions but take small actions because that is all a single person can do. We cohabitate with vulnerability and hope, trauma and joy. We reject the easiest answers because we know they are inept, even as we long for the certainty that lets us rest. Committing to an aspirational and authentic Jewish existence means wearing that weariness on our faces and bodies as we wrestle every day to live with integrity and dignity. Despite what the emperors' children of the world say about us, despite the pervasive narrative that people ought to be completely coherent in their beliefs and values all the time, our tradition reminds us that we are imperfect messengers battling mightily for wisdom, so if we're weary, it means we're doing it right. Is it glamorous to live this way? No, it is not. Not for Rabbi Yehoshua, and not for us. But is it honorable? It is.

I do not enter this fall and the High Holidays certain of much. I weep for our people and all people. I yearn for a sense of safety and civility among us that seems farther away than ever. I cannot see or even imagine the Promised Land in the thick fog of war and polarization. But however uncertain of the destination I am, I do still trust the process, and I hope you will join me in doing so. The pathway for a return to our highest selves and the deepest parts of our souls has long ago been discovered, the runway built. So let us continue to journey together, descending into memory and ascending into hope, accompanying each other through the turbulence, and never forgetting that we are not alone.

As I begin my seventh year with you, I am more convinced than ever that what we do with and for one another, even in the most humble and mundane of interactions, is the sticky, sacred stuff that will keep us strong and resilient in the face of an always uncertain future. For that reason, it is enlivening to continue to build this synagogue family together every day.

May the final weeks of 5785 be a time of blessed wrestling and renewed hope for all of us.

L'shanah Tovah,
Rabbi Katie Bauman

Special Upcoming Shabbatot

First Shabbat at Touro

Shabbat morning is a sacred time of the week. In contrast to our non-stop culture, our tradition urges, *actually commands*, us to pause for 24 hours and experience another way of being. Shabbat observance generates its own delight, and *First Shabbats* of the month at Touro Synagogue will be a shelter for learning, prayer, and the nourishment that comes from community. **Below is our *First Shabbat* schedule and upcoming dates for fall:**

9:00am Shabbat Shiur*

Sacred Text Study led by Touro clergy.

*Held every week unless otherwise noted.

9:30am Shabbat Rocks

A Shabbat prayer and learning experience for tots and their grownups, led by Touro Synagogue Educators. This program is intended for children ages 0-4.

10:00am Shabbat Shacharit

A kid-forward, musical, multi-denominational, lay-led minyan rooted in tradition **led by Chavurat Or'Leans**.

10:35am Kehillah KIDoshah

A Shabbat prayer and learning experience for big KIDS, led by Touro Synagogue Educators. This program is intended for children ages 5-12.

11:30am Communal Shabbat Lunch

Sponsorship opportunities are available! To sponsor a monthly Shabbat lunch, please visit tourosynagogue.com/sponsorship.

Upcoming Dates:

September 6

November 1

Shabbat Sukkot: October 11

December 6

*2nd Shabbat this month!



Celebrate Shabbat Come One, Come All!

Shabbat at Touro is a time of reunion, community, and inspiration. From the presence of our sweet children to the beautiful and prayerful music to the delicious meal, each Shabbat evening is filled with meaning, warmth, and comfort.

Interested in sponsoring a Shabbat dinner or pulpit flowers for the congregation? Honor or remember a loved one, or celebrate a simcha with a tax-deductible sponsorship donation. For more information, please visit www.tourosynagogue.com/sponsorship or call the Touro office at 504-895-4843.

Upcoming B'nei Mitzvah

Sunny Magnolia Walsh

August 29, 2025

child of Jenna and Jon Walsh

Emaliya "Emzi" Finger

August 30, 2025

child of Davida Finger and Joshua Lichtman

Liam Connor Katz

September 13, 2025

child of Paige and Andrew Katz

Owen Zachary Rosenblat

September 20, 2025

child of Jacqueline and Brad Rosenblat

Adam Landesman

October 18, 2025

child of Elizabeth Ellent and Derek Landesman

2025/5786

High Holy Days

A Snapshot of the High Holy Days at Touro

More details to follow!

Selichot: A Meditative Beginning to the Season

Saturday Evening, September 13

*A special presentation from Dr. David Slucki of Monash University, Melbourne, Australia:
The Significance of Jewish Humor*

Rosh Hashanah: Celebration of the New Year

Monday, September 22 - Tuesday, September 23

Tashlich at the Batture: Casting Away and Starting Anew

Tuesday, September 23

Shabbat Shuvah: A Sabbath of Turning

Friday, September 26

With guest sermon by Dr. Ilana Horwitz of Tulane University, followed by community singing

Kever Avot at Hebrew Rest Cemetery:

Bringing Our Ancestors Into the New Year

Sunday, September 28

Yom Kippur: The Day of Atonement

Wednesday, October 1 - Thursday, October 2

Community-Wide October 7 Commemoration

Saturday Evening, October 4

A conversation with Lee Yaron, author of 10/7: 100 Human Stories

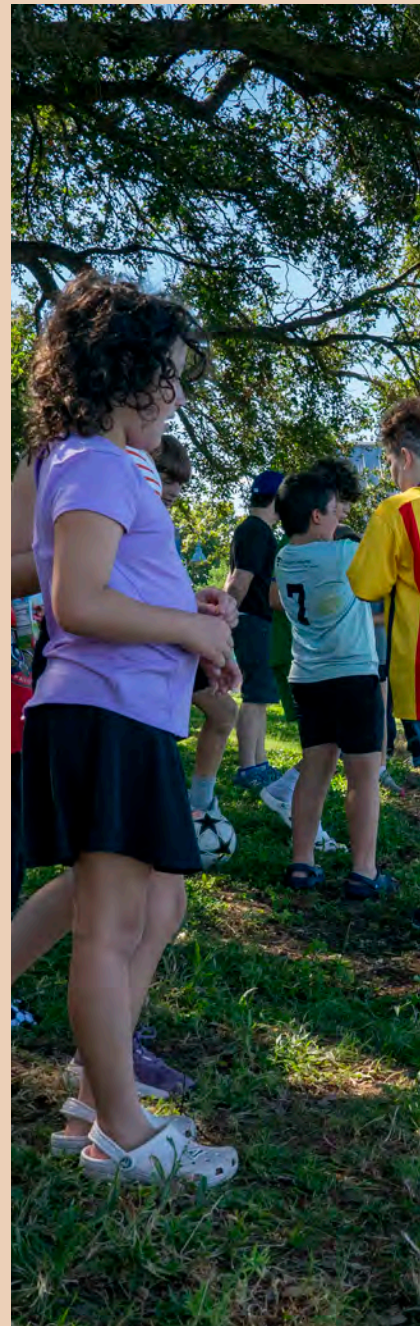
Shabbat Sukkot, The Time of our Rejoicing

Friday, October 10

Simchat Torah: Starting Over

Monday, October 13

A celebration with Panorama Jazz Band



Shabbat Shiur: Elul Series

A Spiritual Preparation for the High Holidays

Saturdays in September

Enjoy bagels and coffee, and engage in sacred text study with our clergy. We will engage with the Torah portion of the week, ideas that help us prepare for upcoming holidays, and foundational texts of our tradition.

Beit T'filah



Simchat Torah Celebration

Monday, October 13

Our Touro family will gather to celebrate our return to the beginning of the Torah! We'll celebrate the end of the Torah cycle with a festive service, special programming and moments for children, hakafot (marching) around the sanctuary, and the exuberant music of Panorama Jazz Band.

Let it all go! Join us for Tashlich at the Batture on Tuesday evening, September 23.

Beit Midrash

Lifelong Learning

The Sacred Tradition of Torah Study

Our Mishnah teaches: תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם - Talmud Torah k'neged kulam. Among the righteous deeds we can perform, human actions whose principle is perfectly Divine, the study of Torah is foundational. Our Jewish religious tradition elevates engaging in books and learning to the level of prayer, and our ability to do so is considered a gift from our Creator. This culture of passionate engagement with texts and ideas is as transformative for adults as it is for children, which is why lifelong learning is a pillar of our community and a deep commitment of our synagogue family.

Below are a few of the many opportunities for adult learners in the 2025-2026 / 5786 year. They take the form of traditional text study, guest lectures, book discussions, age and stage cohorts, Hebrew language courses, consideration of contemporary issues facing the Jewish world, and more. We will share more information as each opportunity draws near. Unless otherwise noted, Touro Synagogue lifelong learning opportunities are free of charge and open to all, with RSVPs requested.

In the midst of so much cynicism, polarization, and alienation, let us ground ourselves in our most time-honored tradition, the sanctification of Torah and learning.

Cohort Experiences

Foundations Of Judaism with Touro Synagogue Clergy

An Introductory Course of Study for those Considering Embracing Judaism through Conversion

Embracing Judaism is our annual program at Touro for those who are not Jewish but, after spending some time participating in Jewish life, are considering choosing Judaism for their religious identity. If you have ever wondered if Judaism could be your spiritual home, this program is a great next step! Embracing Judaism includes formal and experiential classes, cohort building, engagement in communal Jewish life, and meetings with clergy.

Two Opportunities to Learn More!

Yom Kippur - Thursday, October 2:

Afternoon Panel Discussion: Sharing our Jewish Journeys

Sukkot - Wednesday, October 8:

Information Session and Orientation for New Participants

Embracing Judaism Course | Tuesdays on Zoom, 7:00pm

Oct 28; Nov 4, 11, 25; Dec 2, 9; Jan 6, 13, 27; Feb 3, 10

INTERSTELLAR FAITH

*Jewish Themes and Values
in Science Fiction and Fantasy,
with Rabbi Lily Kowalski*

Wednesday Evenings | 7:00pm
November 5, December 10, January 14

Three sessions. Countless connections.

In this upcoming three part monthly series, Rabbi Kowalski invites you to dive deep into the Jewish DNA of your favorite sci-fi and fantasy stories, guiding us through the Jewish themes and values woven throughout these beloved stories. We'll zip across galaxies, history, and the multiverse, bringing together the most ancient parts of Judaism with the infinite possibilities of what could lie in our futures. Exploring questions of identity, ethics, and spirituality, no fandom is off-limits—we'll explore Star Trek AND Star Wars, Harry Potter AND Lord of the Rings, Marvel AND DC, and more! No PhD in either Jewish studies or science fiction (or science fact) required either—just curiosity and an appreciation for great tales, universal themes, and wonder. ***Jump into the unknown, suspend your disbelief, and be prepared to be amazed!***



Ongoing Series at Touro

Shabbat Shiur: Sacred Text Study

with Touro Synagogue Clergy

Weekly on Shabbat Mornings, 9:00am

Enjoy bagels and coffee, and engage in sacred text study with our clergy. We will engage with the Torah portion of the week, ideas that help us prepare for upcoming holidays, and foundational texts of our tradition. *Join us for our special Elul series throughout the month of September! More information on page 11.*

Parenting Through a Jewish Lens

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Sunday Mornings, 10:00am

First Session: Sunday, September 21

Raising Jewish children is a unique challenge, especially in today's world, and especially if parenting through a Jewish lens is unfamiliar because of being raised in a different faith or without strong Jewish communal experiences. On select Sunday mornings, we will gather with other parents of Jewish children to unpack the most complex aspects of this commitment and to explore ways we can enrich our own understandings of and connectivity to Jewish tradition.

Touro Synagogue Book Club

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Wednesday Evenings, 7:30pm

First Discussion: Wednesday, October 8

Reading: *October 7: 100 Human Stories* by Lee Yaron

Join us for the first Touro Book Group meeting of the year to delve into *October 7: 100 Human Stories* by Lee Yaron. Come ready for insightful discussions and meaningful connections. *Refreshments provided.*

News and the Jews:

A Lunch and Learn for Prime-Timers

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Thursdays, 12:00pm

First Session: Thursday, September 11

The most pressing news stories of our day challenge us as human beings and as Jews. Each session will focus on a story from the recent news cycle, viewed through a Jewish historical, cultural, and ethical lens.



Coming in 2026!

Beginning Hebrew Reading for Adults

with Cantor Kevin Margolius

Exploring Death and Dying in Judaism

with Touro Synagogue Clergy and Community Leaders

Israel: What Now?

with Israel Educator Elhanan Brown and Touro Clergy

Understanding the Book of Judges

with Rabbi Todd Silverman

Stay tuned for more information in our Winter 2025 issue of The Shofar.

Register Online!



Scan the QR code to register for courses online or visit TouroSynagogue.com/Learning



Our Children, Our Builders

A Message from Rabbi Kowalski

Dear Touro Family,

We all get one chance at a first impression. You learn a lot about a new place from your introductions and initial interactions. And I have to say that my first impression of Touro Synagogue is absolutely smashing!

Rarely do I get to be a proverbial fly on the wall during one of the most important events of the year – the Annual Meeting. What an absolute privilege. When the schedules overlapped and I was invited to join you back in May on that day, I left struck by three valuable and meaningful aspects.

Firstly, the incredibly warm reception from staff and lay leadership, many of whom I had previously met during my interview here. I am indebted to Immediate Past President Laura Levy, President Kevin Wilkins, Search Committee Chair Beth Lavin, and our clergy team here at Touro not just for inviting me and welcoming me, but also for making it virtually impossible to remain that fly on the wall. I had come to observe, listen, and witness what was helping make Touro what it is, and instead, in the best way possible, I was thrown right into the fray, as it kind of should be. There is no way to be merely a spectator here at Touro, and in true testimony, one does not want to be – Touro is nothing if not a community to get actively involved in immediately.

Secondly, the report documents Kevin shared with the congregation during his address both excited and intimidated me. Seeing the increase in our community, staggering numbers over the past years, at a time when many other religious organizations are not experiencing the same, was impressive and invigorating. There it was, in plain text and sharp graphics, exactly why this new position of Director of Education and Family Engagement was needed, and here it was for me to see exactly what I had been brought on to guide, shape, and enhance. The growth and expansion of our community

over the last 10 years is remarkable. The vibrancy we bring to our programming, educational offerings, and community organizing is palpable. It was a clear demonstration of our shared core values of fearless engagement and love enacted in real time statistics.

Thirdly, engrained in my mind is the culminating vision of the youth, our children, the future of Touro, of New Orleans, and of Judaism writ large, parading around the sanctuary, buoyed up by music and smiles and high fives all around. I was so struck by this, it brought a tear to my eye. Our youth are the reason we do what we do together, in many cases; it is not merely about what we create for ourselves, but what we manifest and hope for our future, and for the generations that will come after us. In all the annual meetings I have attended in my life, this was certainly a novel and welcome sight, touching my heart immensely.

“ It is not merely about what we create for ourselves, but what we manifest and hope for our future, and for the generations that will come after us.”

As a member of your clergy team and your new Director of Education and Family Engagement, please know I take the weight of responsibility, of holding the future in our literal and proverbial hands, with the utmost care and respect. Indeed, education of our youth, of all of us, is both the foundation we build upon and also the aspiration we seek to forge our future together. As it says on the

cornerstone of the Grant Meyer Garden Pavilion, “Not only your children, but also your builders” (Talmud Bavli, Brachot 64a). I look forward to building, to learning, to growing together with all of you. If we have not had a chance to connect already, please reach out to set up a time to speak with me or check out some of our upcoming events, listed below, for some great face-to-face interactions in the coming weeks.

Kadima, forward, on to a great new year!

Rabbi Lily Kowalski, RJE



Maya Shaar
Associate Director of Education
& Family Engagement

Youth & Teen Programming

Upcoming Events

Aug
23

PreK-2nd Grade Havdalah & Snoballs | 6:00pm-7:00pm

- Students & Parents

Confirmation Kickoff Gathering | 6:00pm-7:30pm

- Students & Parents

Aug
27

3rd-6th Grade Welcome to Uptown Hebrew | 5:15pm-6:15pm

- Students & Parents

Aug
31

PreK-5th Grade Yamim Yafim Open House | 11:00am-12:00pm

- Students & Parents

Sep
3

Uptown Hebrew (Regular Session) | 4:30pm-6:00pm

- **3rd-6th Grade students** will kick off the year with their first Uptown Hebrew class of the semester.

PreK-5th Grade Curriculum Night | 6:00pm-7:00pm

- **3rd-5th Grade students** will stay after Hebrew and be joined by PreK-2nd Grade students for Pizza & Movie Night!
- **Parents of PreK-5th graders** are invited to a special Curriculum Night with Rabbi Kowalski to learn more about our new curriculum, *ShalomLearning* as well as what's in store this year at Yamim Yafim.

6th-7th Grade Dinner and Learning | 6:00pm-7:00pm

- **6th-7th Grade students** will eat dinner together and dive into their first class session of the year.

6th-7th Grade Family Session | 7:00pm-7:30pm

- **Parents of our 6th-7th Graders** will join their children for a short session to hear about the vision, goals, and expectations for the year ahead.

Sep
7

PreK-5th Grade Yamim Yafim Opening Day | 9:30am-12:00pm

- **Welcome Back!** First day of Yamim Yafim. *Students Only.*

Sep
10

Uptown Hebrew In Session | 4:30pm-6:00pm

- **3rd-6th Grade** Uptown Hebrew continues

8th-9th Grade Yamim Yafim Opening Day | 6:00pm-7:30pm

- Students Only

Junior & Senior Jewish Studies Seminar Opening Day | 6:00pm-7:30pm

- Students Only



Touro Teens



Our Future Is Right in Front of Us Touro Teens Are Leading the Way

"We just can't seem to keep our high schoolers active and engaged"...is something we often hear from a lot of our anxious colleagues. But spend a Sunday morning, Wednesday afternoon, Friday night, or any number of holiday celebrations or services at Touro Synagogue and you'll quickly see that we don't have any such problem here!

We are so excited for another year of continuing growth with our teen programming, and to build on the successes of the past few years by offering a host of opportunities and experiences to fit all sorts of interests. Fostering their personal and spiritual growth, providing a training ground for professional development, and encouraging experience and conversations that help them along the way to college and beyond – this is what we love and are committed to doing for our emerging leaders as they find their place in a community that loves and supports them.

Be sure to check out all of the different ways that Touro Teens can get involved and have a lot of fun!

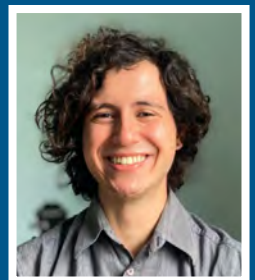
Get Involved!

These opportunities listed here are just the start. There is so much to explore and so many ways to find your place in our Jewish community.

Ready to jump in? Have some questions about anything or everything? Contact Rabbi Silverman or Aaron Rothko to get the ball rolling!



Rabbi Silverman
Associate
Rabbi



Aaron Rothko
Hebrew and Music Educator
and URJ CLASP Fellow

TASTY Fun at the Pelicans Game



L'Taken Trip to Washington, D.C. is coming up in March 2026!

TASTY & NFTY Southern

TASTY (Touro and Sinai Temple Youth) is the youth group partnership between us and our friends at Temple Sinai up the street. Now in its third year, TASTY's board of teen leaders invite all of you in 9th-12th grades (and sometimes 8th graders too!) to join us for lots of fun throughout the year: holiday celebrations with plenty of delicious food; social outings and activities like bowling, mini-golf, and "Friendsgiving"; tikkun olam community service opportunities that serve those in need (and totally count as documented service hours), and much more!

TASTY is just one of the many youth groups that make up our Southern Region of NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth). NFTY Southern regional events like Fall Conclave (this year in Pensacola, FL) and Spring Kallah (at Jacobs Camp in Utica, MS) are not to be missed! There are also experiential learning opportunities for different grade levels each year, including our **10th/11th Grade trip to the L'Taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington, D.C., coming up in March 2026!**

Madrichim and Morim Teaching Assistant Opportunities

Madrichim

Sundays at Yamim Yafim

(Open to all 9th-12th graders)

Remember those cool teenagers who used to help out in your Sunday school classroom? Well now it's YOUR turn to be just like them! Whether you've worked with kids a lot in the past or are brand new to it, the Madrichim teaching assistant program is a great chance for anyone who wants to build or hone their teaching skills, and make an enormous impact on the lives and development of our littlest learners.

Orientation on Sunday, August 24

Opening Day on Sunday, August 31

Morim

Wednesdays at Uptown Hebrew

(Open to All Post-B'nei Mitzvah Teens)

Admit it...you kind of liked conquering Hebrew in pursuit of your B'nei Mitzvah service – right? Well then dust off your Alef-Bet knowledge, brush up on your vowels, and join our team of Uptown Hebrew teachers on Wednesday afternoons! Not sure you remember enough after all this time? Don't be so sure – reach out right away and let's build our team of Morim (teachers) together!

Orientation on Wednesday, August 27

Opening Day on Wednesday, September 3

Opportunities for Continued Learning

We want to make sure that any time our teens choose to spend at Touro Synagogue is meaningful, relevant, and fun – especially considering how busy everyone's lives and schedules are. Be sure to keep an eye on *The Shofar Blast*, Touro's weekly Youth E-newsletter for learning opportunities designed specifically for you!

- **6th/7th Graders**
- **8th/9th Graders**
- **10th Grade Confirmation Class**
- **Junior & Senior Seminar in Jewish Studies**

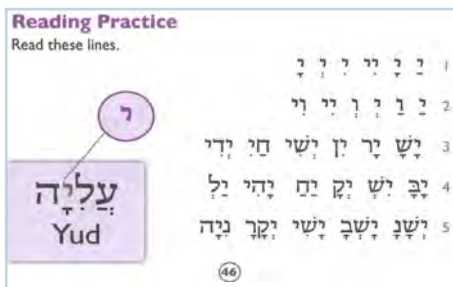


Cantor Kevin Margolius

Uptown Hebrew

We are thrilled to welcome our new Hebrew learners to join our returning students and dedicated team of teen reading coaches and teachers on Wednesdays. Hebrew is a part of our tradition that connects us to both our ancient heritage and to Jews all around the world today. The skills that our Uptown Hebrew students learn help unlock doors to a deeper, richer, and more fulfilling Jewish life. At Touro Synagogue, kids especially rely on their Hebrew learning as they begin preparing to become B'nei Mitzvah – a process which requires daily practice that is made easier and more enjoyable by developing strong reading skills early on.

All of our **3rd-6th grade students and parents** are invited to join us from **5:15pm-6:15pm on Wednesday, August 27 for a Welcome to Uptown Hebrew night**, but below is a quick overview of what we hope to accomplish this school year.



Alef: Learning to Read

Alef - Learning to Read: Our beginner students work on mastering the consonants and vowels of the Alef Bet (Hebrew alphabet), as well as some of the basic reading rules that help them assemble these building blocks into sounds; we call this skill “decoding.” Each week, our Uptown Hebrew class session begins with an opening ritual and some whole-group prayer practice, followed by time in small groups at three learning stations:

- **Reading Practice:** *one-on-one or in small groups with a teacher*
- **Activity Station:** *students work with flash cards, practice writing on dry-erase boards, and complete activities that help address any reading difficulties*
- **T’filah Station:** *students work independently using smart tablets and interactive recordings to practice prayers from the Shabbat service.*



Bet: Strengthening Skills

Bet - Strengthening Skills: Once students have learned the Alef Bet, the next step is to practice using their decoding skills regularly so they can rely upon them for accurate reading. The three goals of this class are **accuracy, fluency, and speed** – the key components for successfully transitioning from sounding out syllables to reading entire sentences and paragraphs. The weekly structure of this class is similar to the Aleph class.



Gimel & Dalet: Reading to Learn

Gimel & Dalet - Reading to Learn: This is where the magic *really* happens. Students in this phase use the skills they have now mastered to begin reading comprehension— knowing the meaning of the words they sound out. For this class, our program uses *Mitkadem*, a self-paced curriculum which teaches vocabulary, basic grammar, and some of the “big picture” ideas regarding the Shabbat-related Hebrew our students encounter most often. It is incredible to watch our kids blend these skills to understand the meaning of entire paragraphs without an English translation. Words they hear often in services become “ah hah!” moments as they begin to recognize their meaning.

To end each week of Uptown Hebrew, all of our classes join together for a brief evening t’filah service where we sing and pray together. This provides a fantastic opportunity for individual and small groups of students to not only practice what they’re learning, but also how to be prayer leaders – a preview of what it will be like on the morning of their B’nei Mitzvah service!

We can’t wait to welcome our students back for our special orientation night on August 27 and our first full day on September 3, and to watch all of them learn and grow throughout the year.

Yasher Koach on 10 Years at Touro, Rabbi!



Rabbi Silverman with Session 2 Campers - Summer 2024

A Spiritual Nosh

An Exciting Message from Rabbi Silverman



Dear Touro Synagogue Family,

During my annual week-long visit to Henry S. Jacobs Camp this summer, I got to hang out with many of our camp-going kids in one of the most fun sacred places in the world. It was a joy to watch them

reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, be curious about Jewish ideas, try out new activities and skills, and do what is healthiest: unplug a little after the busyness of the school year behind them while re-energizing for the school year ahead. Every kid deserves that kind of opportunity; frankly, every adult does too.

It's in that vein that I want to share with you my intention **to take a three-month sabbatical from mid-October until mid-January following the upcoming High Holy Day season.** As announced at our Annual Meeting in May, during that time I'll be pausing my work at Touro Synagogue to rest and re-energize, to reconnect with family members and dear friends, to travel and study and learn about things that have held my heart's attention both recently and for many years – **and then to joyfully return to New Orleans and Touro Synagogue and continue serving this incredible congregational family** once again. The opportunity and privilege to take this time for my own well-being and spiritual renewal is a true blessing, and I'm grateful beyond words to Touro's past and present

leadership for extending it to me so graciously through my current contract.

The tradition of professional sabbatical originates from agricultural laws found within our sacred texts. In multiple places, Torah mandates that after six years of intensive cultivation, fields must be allowed to lay fallow – to rest without interference while whatever they grow naturally can be feasted on. During my time away from Touro Synagogue and New Orleans, I'll be doing just that: permitting my heart, mind, and body to lay fallow for a little while, and to spiritually nosh on what instinctively springs forth in that space. I look forward to sharing details of my plans with you all as they become more concrete, and then to reflect on my travels, studies, and experiences once I return.

Of course I'll miss being here for plenty of important and sacred moments in our congregation's and members' lives during that time, but I'm absolutely confident that the rest of Touro's clergy, professional, and lay leadership team will make it as seamless as possible. And of course there's still plenty of time between now and when I depart following the High Holy Days, so don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

With much love and gratitude to you all,

Rabbi Todd Silverman

Repairing the World

Tikkun Olam

Tikkun Olam, or “Repairing the World” is a central value of Touro Synagogue. We work together and with community partners to maximize our impact in New Orleans and beyond. Touro’s Tikkun Olam committee is gearing up for another year of social justice action with many opportunities for engagement. Here’s a quick look at what we accomplished last year and what we have in store for the coming year:

Climate Action Task Force

Led by Touro members Penny Freistadt and Larry Gottfried, our Climate Action Task Force has created and submitted a Climate Action Plan with actionable goals to reduce Touro’s environmental footprint. Audits of our buildings’ appliances, systems, and waste stream have already been completed. We look forward to other events such as tree plantings, a Climate Fest to educate our community, and exploring solar options for our building. A new plan will be submitted in January 2026 to both the Board and the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition.

Reproductive Rights

In partnership with the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), Touro hosted a special Reproductive Rights Shabbat in November. The event, A Celebration of the Generations Who Have Fought for Reproductive Rights, included readings from Touro congregants and those from our sister congregations woven into our Shabbat Evening Service. We were also pleased to host a moving performance by Artivism Dance Theater and provide resources to the congregation with dinner. We will continue to partner with NCJW and other community organizations to advocate for reproductive rights and freedoms.

LGBTQ Advocacy

Touro remains committed to supporting our LGBTQ congregants and advocate for the community where necessary as we watch developments at the state and federal level.

Family Support

Touro will be exploring ways to assist new parents, young children and NICU families in need. Look for more information after the High Holidays.



Immigration

Touro is partnering with the Jewish Federation to better understand the current legal challenges facing immigrants and explore ways we can protect both our community members and our own civil rights. Stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to learn more and get involved through volunteering.



Combating Hunger

Touro members of all ages worked to help combat hunger in our communities. Our children decorated bags for our annual High Holy Day food drive. Our teens were instrumental in helping weigh and load donations and together we collected just over 2,000 pounds of food and supplies! Board member Anna Labadie coordinated with Yamim Yafim students and parents to meet throughout the year to assemble and package sandwiches that went to community fridges. Extra food from Shabbat dinners was also packaged and brought to these fridges throughout the year. Touro will continue to partner with Broadmoor Community Food Pantry, Second Harvest, and The First 72+ to address food insecurity. Be on the lookout this fall for freshly decorated grocery bags for our 2025 High Holiday Food Drive - we are aiming to collect 2,000 pounds of food again this year!

Voting Rights

Touro members participated in Together Louisiana's Pledge to Vote campaign, led by Touro member Mary McCormick. The bipartisan campaign encouraged congregants to make a plan to vote in local, state, and federal elections to improve voter turnout. Touro continues to work with the Emerging New Voices and Voters Coalition and Together New Orleans to support our community in voter engagement, registration, and participation.

If you want to learn more about Touro's Tikkun Olam initiatives, reach out to co-chairs Chris Lorenzen at chris.lorenzen.nola@gmail.com or Sara Gershen at saragershen@gmail.com.

Caring and Mitzvah

Celebrating and Supporting Our Members

The Caring and Mitzvah Committee helps the Touro community celebrate and support members during lifecycle events, sacred occasions, as well as health and wellness challenges and other difficult times. Caring and Mitzvah seeks to build an engaged and connected congregation that generously supports each other.

The Caring and Mitzvah initiatives include:

Meal Trains

Providing meals to families who recently welcomed new babies, along with members during times of illness, recovery, and when other short-term meal support is needed or requested.

Memorial Trees in Israel

Planting trees in Israel serves as a tribute and a heartfelt expression of sympathy for member families grieving the loss of a loved one.

Welcoming New Babies

Sending a "Welcome to the Touro Family" onesie and hand-written note to all member families in celebration of new babies.

Funeral and Shiva Support

Offering support as requested to those organizing and sitting shiva following the loss of a loved one, as well as providing usher support to the synagogue staff when hosting large funerals and memorial services on-site.

We're here for you.

If you'd like to get involved or if the Caring and Mitzvah Committee can support you or someone you know in the Touro community, please contact our Caring & Mitzvah Co-Chairs, Ellen Kempner and Alix Paige Loomis by visiting touro synagogue.com/contact.



A Message from the Hebrew Rest Cemetery Association

Since 1881, Touro Synagogue and Temple Sinai have cooperated to meet the burial needs of congregants and others in the New Orleans Jewish community. The two synagogues own Hebrew Rest Cemetery Association, which operates the three Hebrew Rest Cemeteries in Gentilly and Dispersed of Judah Cemetery on Canal Street.

The cemeteries are sacred places of remembrance, honoring our loved ones and preserving our community's history. To fulfill our mission to care for these cemeteries in perpetuity, we need your support. Many of you and your families have purchased perpetual care for the grounds of individual burial spaces. Beyond our perpetual care obligations, we must maintain and repair all of the property, including lawns, shrubbery, sidewalks, and fences. We also have many graves of indigents and persons who were buried before perpetual care was offered. We are fortunate to have land for expansion, which requires investment to develop.

Please consider making a gift to sustain this meaningful legacy. Your kindness helps us honor the past and safeguard the future. Gifts may be made by check to Hebrew Rest (6227 St. Charles Avenue, 70118) or through our web site at www.HebrewRest.org.

The cemeteries are open for visitation every day except Saturday from 8:30 AM until approximately 5:00 PM. Security is provided at Hebrew Rest from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM every Sunday. The cemeteries are closed on major Jewish holidays.

Sincerely,
Hebrew Rest Cemetery Association, Inc.
(504) 615-7207
hrcanola@gmail.com

Supporting Our Vision & Values

Touro Synagogue Committees & Task Forces

The engagement of our congregation is the beating heart of Touro Synagogue. We have a diverse and talented congregation filled with people who want to make a difference in our community—and there are many ways to do so at Touro. Detailed below are the committees and task forces whose work is critical to the building of our culture and to supporting the vision and values of our organization. Committees are ongoing groups with sustained responsibilities essential to managing the organization, whereas task forces address a specific issue or project with a clear endpoint. **If you are interested in learning more or possibly supporting this work, please reach out to the Co-Chairs at tourosynagogue.com/contact or call the Touro office at 504-895-4843. Thank you for everything you do to make Touro who we are and who we hope to be!**

Our Committees

Open to All Members Unless Otherwise Noted

Building and Grounds

Maintains Touro's building and property and establishes guidelines for facility use
Chair: Anna Labadie; Vice-Chair: Jill Israel

Caring and Mitzvah

Supports Touro members during lifecycle moments and times of need
Co-Chairs: Ellen Kempner and Alix Loomis

Governance

Monitors compliance with the bylaws, policies, and procedures of Touro Synagogue
Chair: Ally Lestelle

Interiors & Art

Maintains and elevates the warmth and welcoming atmosphere of Touro's facilities
Chair: Jenny Zurik

Jazz Fest Shabbat

Plans and executes one of Touro's largest flagship events
Co-Chairs: Ann Kaufman and Dodd Loomis

L'Chayim – Special Events

Plans the celebration and recognition event honoring extraordinary leadership within the community
Co-Chairs TBA

Membership

Welcomes new members and fosters membership engagement through orientation, integration, and meaningful programming
Chair: Julie Koppman

Nominating

Identifies and nominates Touro congregants to serve on the Board of Trustees
Chair: Laura Levy

Philanthropy and Financial Sustainability

Encourages and facilitates philanthropic support and identifies diversified revenue streams for the benefit of Touro Synagogue
Co-Chairs: Gary Sernovitz, Beth Lavin, and Kendall Scales Glade

Security

Ensures Touro is a safe space for all congregants, staff and guests
Co-Chairs: Lawrence Haber and Sara Gershen

Tikkun Olam

Builds programming to support social justice initiatives
Co-Chairs: Chris Lorenzen and Sara Gershen; Advisor: Erika Zucker

Youth Education and Lifelong Learning

Assists and supports Touro Synagogue's youth educational programming and lifelong learning opportunities
Co-Chairs: Liz Gottfried and Jeffrey Fingerman

Finance (Board Members Only)

Oversees Touro's budgeting process and monitors financial health
Chair: Kendall Scales Glade

Our Task Forces

Open to All Members Unless Otherwise Noted

Annual Commitment Assessment and Restructure

Ensures the congregational revenue adequately supports all of Touro's offerings
Co-Chairs: Jeffrey Fingerman and Kathy Shepard

Bicentennial Planning

Oversees the planning of Touro's 200th anniversary celebration
Co-Chairs: Kathy Shepard and Gary Sernovitz

Organizational Effectiveness

Ensures that all processes and systems are as effective and efficient as possible
Chair: Kendall Scales Glade

Strategic Planning

Leads the development process of Touro's 5-year strategic plan
Co-Chairs: Beth Lavin, Megan Yellin and Lawrence Haber



Rabbi Katie Bauman

Senior Rabbi

Cantor Kevin Margolius

Rabbi Todd Silverman

Associate Rabbi

Rabbi Lily Kowalski

*Associate Rabbi and
Director of Education
and Family Engagement*

Rabbi David Goldstein

Rabbi Emeritus

Kevin Wilkins

President

Kurt Jostes

Executive Director

Sarah Tucker

Director of Operations

Anna Federline

Director of Communications

Maya Shaar

*Associate Director of Education
and Family Engagement*

Beka Cole

Clergy Administrative Assistant

Donna Provetera

Finance

Dana Lieber

Events Coordinator

Aaron Rothko

*Hebrew and Music Educator
and URJ Clasp Fellow*

Chanel Wickem

Facilities

Cathy Joseph

Facilities

Touro Synagogue

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