

# THE SHOFAR

## TOURO SYNAGOGUE



WINTER 2025-2026

Touro Annual Fundraiser

# L'Chayim!

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the 5786 L'Chayim Award*

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New Courses This Season

*Hava Nagilah!*  
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Pre-Chanukah Celebration with Yamim Yafim  
Consecration & 6th Grade Chagigat Siddur





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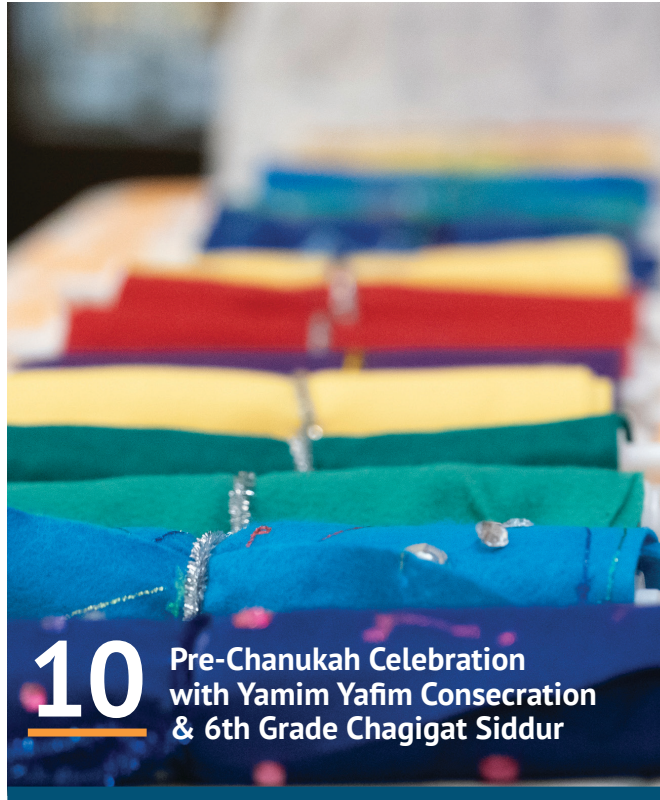
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## From Our President



### One Sacred Community

#### A Message from Kevin Wilkins

Friends,

I hope you are feeling renewed and inspired after our richly meaningful High Holidays at Touro Synagogue and in the broader Jewish world. Thank you to our incredible clergy and staff for creating the space for all of us to reflect and pray together. I witnessed

something truly remarkable throughout the High Holiday services: a sanctuary filled with congregants gathered as one sacred community. I also witnessed our vibrant family services, watching our children's faces light up as they engaged with our traditions. These moments reminded me why community has always been at the heart of Jewish life.

What I saw during the High Holidays reflects what makes Touro extraordinary. At a time when our world feels increasingly fractured and polarized, Touro offers something essential: a sacred space where congregants from diverse backgrounds come together united by shared values of transformative prayer, expansive thought, fearless engagement, and love. We provide what so many are desperately seeking—a true spiritual home where people feel genuinely known, where children develop Jewish identity with pride and joy, and where everyone can make a real community impact.

Now, as we move into the new year, there is much going on at Touro Synagogue. I want to share updates that reflect our commitment to deepening and expanding our community:

**Membership**—Our Ambassador Program that supports our growing membership base continues to thrive with several exciting developments. We're introducing **Embedded Ambassadors**, who will regularly attend ongoing Touro programming (Torah Study, Lunch & Learn, Adult Education, etc.) and help welcome those new to these programs. The **Initial Contactors**, who reach out to new congregants to connect, answer questions, and offer support; the **Social Hosts**, who plan casual congregant meet-ups; and the **Greeter Groups**, who ensure all feel welcomed, are all very active.

**A reminder to please make your contact information viewable in the ShulCloud membership directory.** If you need help accessing ShulCloud, tutorial resources are available through the office. Once set up, follow the simple steps to make your profile visible to other congregants. Doing so helps us all know and support one another.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all who participated in High Holiday ushering, challah delivery, and member phone calls—these actions are vital for building connections. If you

would like to become an Ambassador or learn more about the program, please reach out to Julie Koppman, Membership Secretary ([juliekoppman@gmail.com](mailto:juliekoppman@gmail.com)).

**Security**—Thanks to our professional staff and lay leadership, we achieved a safe and welcoming High Holiday season. We held professional security training for congregant volunteers, increased our volunteer numbers, and now have robust capacity for professional and congregant security volunteers at all Touro events. Your safety remains our highest priority. To learn more or to join our security efforts, please reach out to Co-chairs Sara Gershen ([saragershen@gmail.com](mailto:saragershen@gmail.com)) or Lawrence Haber ([lawrence.haber@ochsner.org](mailto:lawrence.haber@ochsner.org)).

**Tikkun Olam**—Our Tikkun Olam work continues to expand. During the High Holidays, we collected an incredible **3,000 pounds of food**—a new record!—which went to Broadmoor Food Pantry, First 72+, and Second Harvest. Looking ahead, we have several exciting initiatives:

- **Diaper Drive** in November addressing a big need in Louisiana
- **Yamim Yafim Sandwich Making Activities** restarting this fall, with sandwiches distributed to community fridges around New Orleans
- **Nine Street Trees** being planted on all three sides of campus in early December, thanks to the Parks & Parkways 2025-2026 Tree Planting Grants Program
- **Oyster Shell Bagging Event** through Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) on December 13
- **"Tuba Shvat" Tree Planting Event** with S.O.U.L. NOLA on January 31—brass band included!

To learn more about our Tikkun Olam initiatives, please see pages 18-19 or reach out to Co-chairs Chris Lorenzen ([chris.lorenzen.nola@gmail.com](mailto:chris.lorenzen.nola@gmail.com)) or Sara Gershen ([saragershen@gmail.com](mailto:saragershen@gmail.com)).

**Caring and Mitzvah**—At Touro, caring for one another is at the heart of who we are. Our Caring and Mitzvah Committee continues to expand their vital work. Each act of kindness—a meal, a thoughtful note, a visit—is a mitzvah that brings love, light, comfort, and connection to our community. If you would like to join this sacred work, please contact our Co-chairs Ellen Kempner ([ekempner55@gmail.com](mailto:ekempner55@gmail.com)) or Alix Loomis ([alixpaige@gmail.com](mailto:alixpaige@gmail.com)).

**Youth Education and Lifelong Learning**—Our educational programs are thriving. The community has over **230 children and teens enrolled** across all youth education offerings:

- **Yamim Yafim (Sunday mornings):** 175 students in pre-K through 5th grade learning Jewish values and living and loving Jewish life



- **Uptown Hebrew (Wednesday afternoons):** 86 students learning to read and reading to learn Hebrew
- **Yamim Yafim (Wednesday evenings):** 40 6th and 7th graders preparing for B'nei Mitzvah and developing Jewish literacy skills
- **Post-B'nei Mitzvah programs:** fostering and enhancing positive Jewish identity for 50 teens, including 13 in Confirmation and 11 in Junior/Senior Seminar

And our **lifelong learning programs** offer something for everyone. The innovative framework for the curriculum includes: entry points like Adult Hebrew for beginners and Shabbat Shiur Sacred Study; in-depth examinations of Jewish topics such as our upcoming Book of Judges course and our continued study of the Land and People of Israel; and ongoing dialogue through book clubs and our continuing series on Jewish Ethics. There are also goal-oriented classes in which you can work toward an Adult B'nei Mitzvah or a process of conversion. To learn more about our youth and adult programming, please see pages 14-15 or reach out to Co-chairs Jeffrey Fingerman ([jeffrey.fingerman@gmail.com](mailto:jeffrey.fingerman@gmail.com)) or Liz Gottfried ([lizgottfried@gmail.com](mailto:lizgottfried@gmail.com)).

**L'Chayim Celebration—Save the date for Sunday, February 1, 2026!** Touro Synagogue will present the prestigious L'Chayim Award to **Jill and Dave Israel** for their extraordinary service to the Touro Synagogue community. This will be a special celebration that will also serve as our major fundraiser for 5786. Many thanks to Joy and Andy Braun and Caroline and Jeff Good for co-chairing this meaningful event. More details to come!

**Financial Sustainability**—Touro's broader, deeper footprint requires something essential from all of us: financial support to achieve sustainability. I'm deeply grateful to the many congregants who have responded to the Touro Annual

Commitment. Early results show remarkable support: with over a 50% response rate this far, **total contributions are up significantly**, with one in three increasing by more than 30%, and one in ten more than doubling their annual contribution.

For those who haven't yet made a commitment, we ask that you make one that is meaningful and aspirational. For 2025/26, the cost per household is \$2,750 or \$229/month. For those who can give at or above the household level, please do so, as these contributions build a strong and secure future for all Touro members.

#### Important Dates

- **December 12:** Chanukah Celebration with Yamim Yafim Consecration and 6th Grade Siddur Ceremony (p.9-11)
- **December 13:** Oyster Shell Bagging Event with CRCL (p.19)
- **January 31:** Tu B'Shevat Tree Planting Event (p.19)
- **February 1:** L'Chayim Celebration honoring Jill and Dave Israel
- **February 27:** Installation of Rabbi Kowalski (p.13)
- **Mardi Gras 2026:** Shabbati Gras! and parade watching at Touro (p.20-21)

We stand at a remarkable moment. Touro is thriving, expanding, and deepening our impact. Together, we're not just maintaining a synagogue—we're building a legacy that will inspire Jewish life in New Orleans and beyond for generations to come. In 5786, may you continue to find space at Touro Synagogue that is meaningful to you and your family, and may you experience it in full.

Warm regards,

Kevin Wilkins  
*President, Touro Synagogue*

**L'Chayim!**

LET'S RAISE OUR GLASSES TO THE 5786 L'CHAYIM AWARD RECIPIENTS

**Jill & Dave Israel**

L'CHAYIM AWARD DINNER | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 6:00PM

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW!



# High Holiday Highlights



*Thank You for Another Beautiful Year!*

What an unforgettable High Holiday season! We had a lovely time celebrating with such an active and passionate congregation. Thanks to all those who made this year truly special.







## Shining a Bright Light Ahead

### A Message from Rabbi Kowalski

Dear Touro Family,

As of the writing of this message to all of you, we are poised on the brink of the month of MarCheshvan, so named for the *mar*, bitterness, it contains due to the fact that it is the only month in the entire Jewish calendar that has absolutely no holidays. The hustle and bustle and intensity of Tishrei fully behind us now, Cheshvan comes in as the season truly begins to change, inviting us to pause, take a breath, and recalibrate for the rest of the year that has only just begun. We cannot fully appreciate the pause that times like Cheshvan or Shabbat reinforce for us until we come through all the busyness that precedes it, finally pause, look back, and are able to utter “Wow, look at what we did!” And wow—look at what we did! In the past few months, the hallways have returned to their fullness of sounds and sights, amply filled with children of all ages on Sundays and Wednesdays, each and every age span touched, encouraged, and guided into the spirit of a new year. Our classes are full of both people and learning, as our new curriculum has guided us through the values of *teshuvah*, repentance and return, and *b'tzelem Elohim*, being created in the Divine image, each of which are crucial to orienting us to start afresh and move forward.

This is an important fact to remember, because the pause of Cheshvan only does its best work when it is used to spur us towards further action moving forward. We are steadily moving forward through the end of the secular calendar year, anticipating the strength and fortitude we find in the wintertime and with Chanukah. We take this time to rededicate

ourselves to the causes most important to us, finding our own inner strength and capacity to keep moving forward. We will honor those values on December 12, 2025, as we celebrate Consecration—the welcoming of our youngest and newest members of Yamim Yafim—and Chagigat Siddur for our 6th graders, when they receive their very own prayer book from Touro, an important step in the process of becoming B'nei Mitzvah. It will be a jam-packed weekend as that is also our last Sunday of Yamim Yafim for the semester, at which point we will pause again before we come back in January, at the turn of the secular year, again refreshed and ready to continue moving forward together.

This continual, perpetual movement forward, always moving towards something, is an imperative of humanity - we must continue striving to attain what we are capable of. And we know here at Touro, we are capable of so much together. Looking back on the past four months, I almost cannot believe all we have accomplished already, and I am excited by what the next four months holds as well. By then, of course, it will be time for another bulletin, and so that is another message for another time.

Until then, may we continue to move from strength to strength, from frenzy to pause and back to frenzy again, with a solid sense of responsibility, our own inner strength and fortitude, shining a bright light ahead to light the way.

Rabbi Lily Kowalski, RJE





# Yamim Yafim Consecration

*A Special Blessing for Our Kindergarten Class and New First Graders*

**Friday, December 12, 2025 | 22 Kislev 5786**

**6:00pm in the Main Sanctuary**

*Followed by Congregational Chanukah Celebration*

*See Page 10 for more information!*

Eleanor Adcock  
Korbon Arnold  
Maxwell Alexander  
Noa Boileau  
Matilda Brackin-Bernard  
Franklin Brown  
Xyla Brown  
Mae Cohen  
Elyse Conable  
Louis Ehrenwerth  
Remy Fraiman  
Emily Friedmann

Karen Gelini  
Alexandra Goehring  
Miles Jacobs  
Hunter Jelin  
Phillip Kottle  
Julian Kullman  
Austin Kupperman  
Meyer Lieber  
Vidalia Long  
Ari Marks  
Teddy Marks  
Jackson Metcalf

Theo Nichols  
Shayna Rose Novetsky  
Axel Nutik  
Hudson Plost  
Sylvia Rosenbloum-Rubin  
Ophelia Schwartz  
Hannah Seltzer  
Noah Townley  
Ezra Tucker  
Ruth Wainer  
Natalie Wiener

## Chagigat Siddur Students

Yakir Adelman  
Tatum Alltmont  
Audrey Buchtel  
Mosiah Chartock  
Addison Cibley  
Eliezer Finger

Benjamin Good  
Henry Hammer  
Eleanor Herlands  
Louis Hill  
Orli Horwitz  
Liora Kaplan  
Meier Krane

Eli Lowenburg  
Samuel Marks  
Emily Mintz  
Sadie Romero  
Azalea Rufo  
Nathan Ziffer

*Please let us know if you notice any Yamim Yafim families missing from the list above so that we can ensure everyone is included.*



# Chanukah Sameach!

## Pre-Chanukah Celebration and Yamim Yafim Consecration

With Chagigat Siddur for 6th Graders

Friday, December 12, 6:00pm

Join us for a joyful Shabbat service made even sweeter as we offer a special blessing for our kindergarten class and new first graders!


Along with their classmates and families on the bimah, each of them will be officially welcomed into our community of learners by our clergy and congregation, and receive a special gift to mark this joyous occasion.

**Chagigat Siddur:** 6th graders will receive their very own prayer book from Touro, an important step in the process of becoming B'nei Mitzvah! **Learn more about our Consecration and 6th Grade students on page 9.**

### Pre-Chanukah Celebration

Following Shabbat Services

Let's celebrate Chanukah (a little early) with a fried food fest of deliciousness following services on Friday, December 12. Enjoy fried chicken, latkes, a sufganiyot bar, Chanukah games, songs, & more!

 **Members: \$18/Adults \$10/Kids**  
**Non Members: \$36/Adults \$18/Kids**  
RSVP at [TouroSynagogue.com/Chanukah](https://TouroSynagogue.com/Chanukah) or scan the QR code.

We don't want anyone to miss out on this beautiful simcha because of financial concerns. Please let us know privately if you need assistance.



## Chanukah Candle Lighting Guide

Chanukah lasts for 8 nights, and on each night, we light one more candle than the night before. Arrange the lights in your hanukkiyah (menorah) each night starting with the rightmost branches, and the shamash (helper) light in its place.

Place the hanukkiyah where many people can see it, ideally near a window or door.

On the Shabbat of Chanukah, kindle the Chanukah lights first and then the Shabbat candles.

Light the Shamash—the helper candle—first using it to kindle the rest of the Chanukah lights; say or sing the blessings below:

### Blessing 1

ברוך אתה, יי  
אלהינו, מלך העולם,  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam,  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik  
ner shel Chanukah.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all,  
who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to  
kindle the Chanukah lights.*

### Blessing 2

ברוך אתה, יי  
אלהינו, מלך העולם,  
שעשה נסים לאבותינו ואמותינו  
בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam,  
she-asah nisim laavoteinu v'imoteinu bayamim  
hahaim baz'man hazeh.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all,  
who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors  
in days of old at this season.*

### First Night Only

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, שהחיינו  
וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam,  
shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man  
hazeh.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all,  
who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought  
us to this season.*





## Special Upcoming Shabbatot

### First Shabbat Mornings at Touro

#### 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

### Winter 2025/2026 Dates:

December 6

January 10

### Debbie Friedman Shabbat & World AIDS Day

*Sponsored by JPNOLA*

Friday, December 5, 6:00pm

Join us for a special Shabbat service sponsored by JPNola honoring World AIDS Day through the music and legacy of beloved Jewish composer Debbie Friedman. Led by the Touro choir, this evening will weave together her powerful songs of healing, hope, and community with reflections on the enduring impact of the AIDS crisis and the ongoing call to compassion and justice.



### Celebrate Shabbati Gras!

Friday, February 6 - Saturday, February 7

Friday, February 13 - Saturday, February 14

Learn more about Mardi Gras at Touro on pages 18-19.

### Upcoming B'nei Mitzvah

**Zella Mazie Mardon**

**November 8, 2025**

*Kimberly Sherman and Steven Mardon*

**Pehya Zoe Simon**

**November 15, 2025**

*Ilyssa Parker and Germaine Simon*

**Dylan Charles Hoffman**

**December 6, 2025**

*Allison and Philip Hoffman*

**Amos George Alpert**

**December 20, 2025**

*Henry and Katherine Alpert*

**Araya Jolie Horwitz**

**January 10, 2026**

*Ilana and Robbie Horwitz*

**Franklin Solomon Theis**

**January 17, 2026**

*Laura Reeds and Peter Theis*

**Curtis Herman Glade**

**January 24, 2026**

*Leah and Darryl Glade*

**Louis Byrne Levine**

**January 31, 2026**

*Dani and Vanessa Levine*

**Major Tyrone Creecy Smith**

**January 31, 2026**

*Dani and Vanessa Levine*

**Alexander "Alex" Gabriel Penn**

**February 21, 2026**

*Elena and Ethan Penn*

**Sebastian Henry Rodrigalvarez**

**February 28, 2026**

*Elizabeth Herman and Luis Rodrigalvarez*



**Touro Synagogue Cordially Invites You  
to Celebrate the Installation & Blessing of**



## Rabbi Lily Kowalski

*Associate Rabbi and Director of Education and Family Engagement*

**Friday, February 27, 2026 | 10 Adar 5786**

**6:00pm in the Main Sanctuary**

*Followed by a Celebratory Shabbat Dinner*

**Joined by Mentor and Leader Rabbi Matthew S. Cutler, D.D.  
of Congregation Gates of Heaven, Schenectady, New York**

*Rabbi Cutler will share an inspirational message during our Shabbat evening service  
and will teach Torah during Shabbat Shiur on Saturday morning, February 28.*



**Rabbi Matthew S. Cutler, D.D.** ("Rabbi Matt") has served as the spiritual leader of Congregation Gates of Heaven since 1995. A passionate teacher and community builder, he is known for his ecumenical leadership and commitment to making Jewish learning accessible beyond the classroom. He co-founded Schenectady Clergy Against Hate, serves as a Schenectady County Chaplain, and sits on the board of the United Way of the Greater Capital Region. Rabbi Cutler was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City in 1990, where he also obtained his Master of Arts and Hebrew Letters. He graduated with honors from the State University of New York at Binghamton, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in History and Judaic Study.

***"I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from  
my students I have learned more than from all of them."***

Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 7a;  
Makkot 10a



# Lifelong Learning

## ★ New Offerings at Touro

### Jewish Baking Class

with Touro Member Patricia Luria

Sunday Mornings | 11:30am

January 25; February 22; March 15; April 19

A hands-on class for anyone who would like to learn how to bake traditional Jewish treats in an approachable, uncomplicated way! Over a series of 4 classes, we will learn to make bagels, bialys, rugelach, and Israeli chocolate hazelnut swirl cookies (café cookies). Recipes, samples, and lots of opportunities for practice will be provided. *Space is limited!*

### Understanding the Book of Judges

with Rabbi Todd Silverman

Thursday Evenings | 6:30pm

February 26; March 5, 12, 19

Our Israelite ancestors traversed the desert...bid farewell to Moses as the epic story of Torah drew to a close...crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land...and then what? Come explore the Book of Judges and examine the sacred stories and episodes from a period of Jewish history and narrative marked by cycles of disobedience, oppression, and deliverance from myriad dangers, as well as the humanity and heroic actions of some of Judaism's most interesting leaders.

### Exploring Death and Dying in Judaism

with Touro Synagogue Clergy and Community Leaders

Wednesday Evenings | 7pm

March 18, 25; April 1, 15

There is no experience more universal or yet more mysterious than dying. During this multi-week course, we will explore the ways that Judaism encounters death, from a logistical and spiritual perspective. Issues such as Jewish law around care for a body through burial, Jewish mourning rituals, Jewish theologies on the afterlife, and the creation of ethical wills will all be included.

## Register Online!



Scan the QR code to register for courses online or visit [TouroSynagogue.com/Learning](https://TouroSynagogue.com/Learning)



## A Deep Dive into Jerusalem

With Israel Educator Elhanan Brown

Sunday Mornings on Zoom | 10:00am

January 4, 11, 18, 25; February 1, 8\*

We will explore the significance of Jerusalem, from ancient history to modern politics, religion, and culture. Through these conversations, we will learn how Jerusalem stands at the heart of the Jewish story and remains central to Israel's identity today, as well as being a focal point (and flash point) for so many important global, religious, and cultural conversations that are urgently needed in this moment.

*Save the Date for Elhanan's In-Person Visit: March 3-5, 2026*

\*Class at 9am on February 8



## 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*

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—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!



## Cohort Experiences

### Hebrew Reading for Adults

with Touro Member Diane Zimmerman

Sunday Mornings | 10:00am

Dec 7, 14; Jan 11, 25; Feb 1, 22; Mar 1, 8, 15, 22

Ever sit in the sanctuary and wish you felt more comfortable reading the Hebrew words of our prayers? Or perhaps you took a Hebrew class as a child or even more recently but want to refresh or relearn Hebrew decoding? Or perhaps you have felt intimidated to put the Hebrew letters on the page into sounds? Come join our class! Our Adult Hebrew Learners will learn to recognize the letters of the Hebrew Alef Bet, become comfortable decoding Hebrew words and learn to apply this knowledge to words found in our prayer books. **Regular attendance and practice are encouraged! Space is limited.**

### Embracing Judaism: Conversion at Touro

with Touro Synagogue Clergy

**Registration for the 25/26 Cohort is Open!**

Tuesday Evenings on Zoom | 7:00pm

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

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.



## Ongoing Series at Touro

### Touro Synagogue Book Club

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Evenings | 7:00pm

Come ready for insightful discussions and meaningful connections. *Refreshments provided.*

**Next Discussion: Monday, November 10**

**Reading: October 7: 100 Human Stories** by Lee Yaron - guided by Touro Member Dr. Ilana Horwitz

**Looking Ahead: Wednesday, January 28 - Heart of a Stranger: An Unlikely Rabbi's Journey of Faith, Identity, and Belonging** by Rabbi Angela Buchdahl

### Jewish Ethics Series: Judaism in the Modern Technological Age

with Touro Member Sara Gershen

Select Wednesday Evenings | 7:00pm

**First Session | A Jewish Conversation About AI: November 12**

*Is AI changing what it means to be human?* Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here. It is in our web searches, our social media algorithms, our homes, and in the palms of our hands. It may even be in our synagogues. What do Jewish teachings have to say about the current use of AI? And what do they say about defining our humanity compared to machines that can mimic it? We will use the Identity/Crisis Podcast Episode, "Staying Human in the Age of AI", to help guide our discussion. Please join us for the first part of this multipart series on Jewish thought on AI. **(Future Dates: January 14; March 11)**

### Lunch and Learn for Prime Timers

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Thursday Afternoons | 12:00pm

**Upcoming Sessions: November 13; January 22; March 26**

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.

### 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.

### Parenting Through a Jewish Lens

with Rabbi Katie Bauman

Select Sunday Mornings | TBD

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 thick 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.





Maya Shaar  
Associate Director of Education  
& Family Engagement

## Youth & Teen Programming

### Upcoming Special Events

Nov  
9

**5th Grade B'nei Mitzvah Planning Meeting | 9:45am-10:45am**

- For Students & Parents. Please contact the office to RSVP!

Dec  
12

**Yamim Yafim Consecration and 6th Grade Chagigat Siddur | 6:00pm**

- During Shabbat Services

Dec  
14

**Yamim Yafim Celebrates Chanukah! | 9:30am-11:00am**

- For Pre-K-5th Grade. Special schedule and dismissal at 11:00am!

Dec  
17

**Teen Chanukah Celebrations | 6:00pm–7:30pm**

- For 6th-12th Grade

Jan  
4

**PreK-5th Grade Yamim Yafim | 9:30am-11:00am**

- **Welcome Back from Winter Break!** Special schedule and dismissal at 11:00am.



### Important Reminders

*Please note there will be NO Yamim Yafim or Uptown Hebrew on the following dates:*

- November 23, 26, 30 | Fall Break
- December 21, 24, 28, 31 | Winter Break
- January 18 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 8, 11, 15, 18 | Mardi Gras Break





## L'Taken Social Justice Seminar | March 2026



**Attention 10th & 11th Graders:**  
Registration is Open for the L'Taken Social Justice Seminar

Join the 2026 Delegation! March 13-16, 2026 | Washington, DC  
Space is Limited - Sign Up Today at [rac.org/LTaken4Registration](https://rac.org/LTaken4Registration)



Rabbi Silverman  
Associate  
Rabbi



Aaron Rothko  
Hebrew and Music Educator  
and URJ CLASP Fellow

### A Message from Teen Leadership

Dear 10th and 11th Graders & Families,

We are excited to once again be part of the **L'Taken Social Justice Seminar in Washington, D.C.** this school year—one of the best high school experiences for so many of our Touro and Sinai teens who have participated in the past! Our delegation will be attending the L'Taken Seminar during the weekend of **March 13-16, 2026**, and you won't want to miss out on this remarkable experience. The time to sign-up is now—**registration is open and our limited number of spots will fill up fast!**

If you aren't familiar with the L'Taken Social Justice Seminar and all that it entails, you can find an overview of the weekend with lots of details below. Please take a few minutes to read it thoroughly right away, and then ask whatever questions you might have — or get busy registering yourself!

When you're ready to register, do so at [rac.org/LTaken4Registration](https://rac.org/LTaken4Registration) or scan the **QR code above**. **DON'T HESITATE ON THIS**—the seminar's organizers have set a hard deadline for the registration process, and although there is plenty of time before it closes on **December 22**, it's best to get it taken care of right away. The submission form won't take very long at all, and our youth programming team is available to answer questions or help out however you need.

We really hope you will seriously consider participating in this remarkably unparalleled experience, and then start filling out your forms right away!

With lots of excitement,

Rabbi Silverman, Aaron Rothko, and Team TASTY

**"Going to L'Taken was such a meaningful experience for me as I was able to learn more about how to make change and actually see it in action. The opportunity to go to our country's capital and write something I am passionate about and relate it to my Judaism is an experience I am forever grateful to have had."**

~ Sydney Alltmont, Country Day Class of '26





# Repairing the World

# Tikkun Olam

Tikkun Olam is a central value of Touro Synagogue. We work together and with community partners to maximize our impact in New Orleans and beyond. From record-breaking collections to new partnerships and hands-on projects, we're stepping into 5786 with energy, purpose, and community spirit. Here's a look at what we've accomplished — and what's ahead!

## High Holiday Food Drive

This year's High Holiday Food Drive brought in a record **3,000 pounds of food**—our largest collection ever! Donations were shared among Broadmoor Food Pantry, First 72+, and Second Harvest, supporting families throughout the New Orleans area. Thank you to everyone who donated, sorted, and delivered!

## Yamim Yafim Sandwich Making

We're thrilled to restart our sandwich making activities again this fall! Our Yamim Yafim students and families continue to help feed our neighbors, one sandwich at a time.



## Restoring Our Coast

Touro is proud to participate in Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana's (CRCL) **Oyster Shell Bagging Event on December 13!** CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program recycles shells from participating New Orleans-based restaurants and uses them to restore oyster reefs and shoreline habitat across Coastal Louisiana. As a volunteer, you will help prepare the shells for future restoration. To learn more and sign up, please scan the QR code or visit [crcl.org/volunteer](http://crcl.org/volunteer).

## Immigrant Support

Conditions for our immigrant neighbors are becoming more dire by the day as the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement increases in New Orleans. Hardworking people and longtime residents of our city are experiencing intimidation and fear at a rising level of intensity, one that we as Jews uniquely understand because of our painful history. Touro is convening a team of congregants who would like to work on this issue, particularly offering support to those of our neighbors who are living amidst terror of being separated from their loved ones in a moment's notice, every day. If you wish to be involved, please contact Anna Herman at [aherman@urj.org](mailto:aherman@urj.org) to be sure you receive notice of upcoming meetings, trainings, and educational opportunities.



## Collection Drive for Babies & New Parents

*In Partnership with Saul's Light*

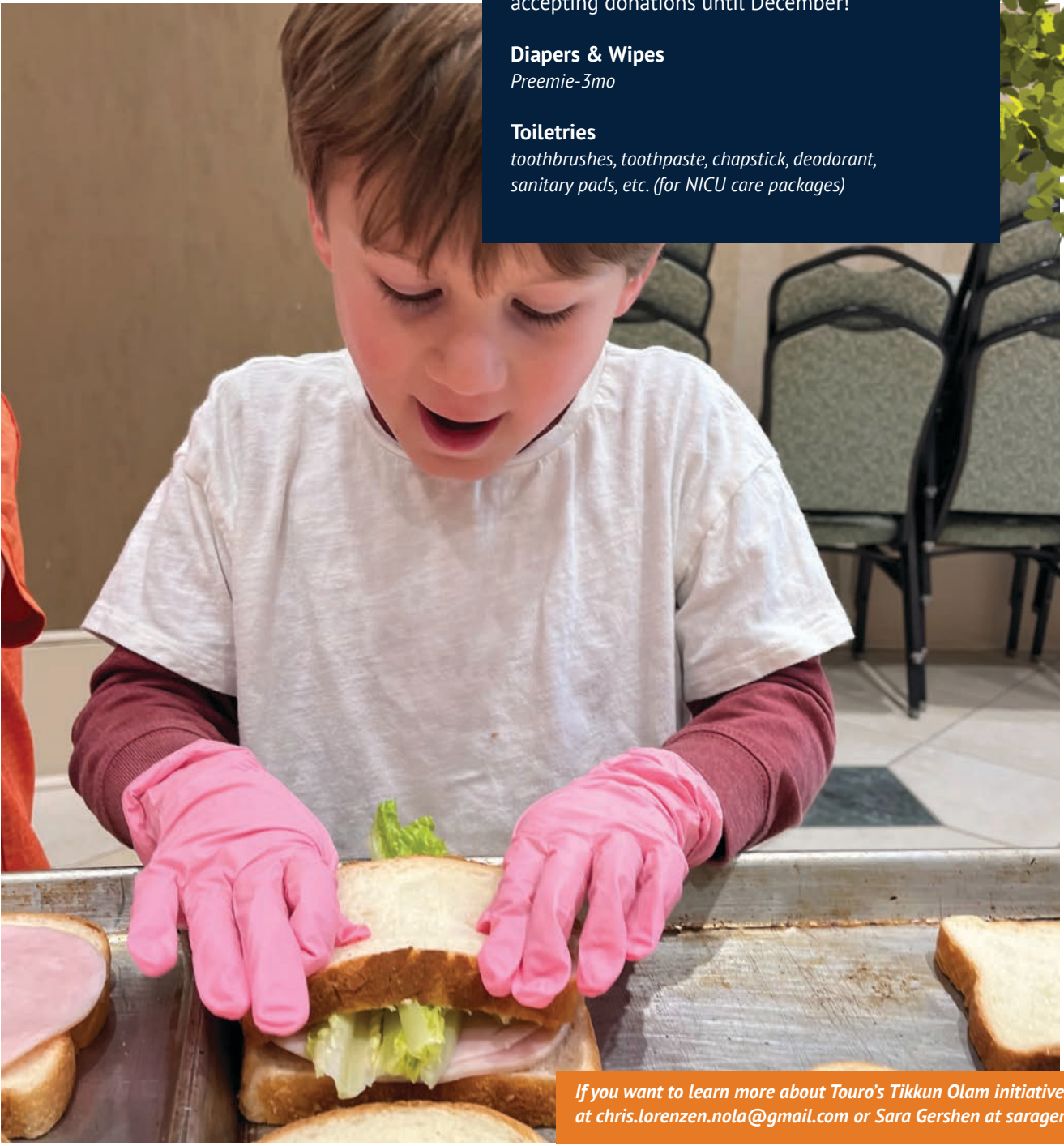
Recognizing the increased need in our community, we are switching gears and collecting the following for babies and new parents in partnership with Saul's Light. Please drop off your donations in the collection bin located in the Shushan Assembly - Monday through Friday from 9:00am - 5:00pm. We are accepting donations until December!

### Diapers & Wipes

*Preemie-3mo*

### Toiletries

*toothbrushes, toothpaste, chapstick, deodorant, sanitary pads, etc. (for NICU care packages)*



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](mailto:chris.lorenzen.nola@gmail.com) or Sara Gershen at [saragershen@gmail.com](mailto:saragershen@gmail.com).

## Tu B'Shvat Celebration: *Tuba Shvat!*

**Save the Date! January 31:** We'll celebrate the New Year of Trees New Orleans-style with S.O.U.L. NOLA, complete with tree planting and a brass band! Our "Tuba Shvat" celebration will honor creation, community, and the joy of renewal. Bring your dancing shoes and your planting gloves! *Stay tuned for more details.*

## Greening Our Campus

Thanks to a generous GNOF grant, and the dedicated efforts of Teri Hunter, Beth Lavin, and Kurt Jostes, we'll be planting **nine new street trees along all three sides of our campus** this December. Stay tuned for details on Tree Planting Day and how you can join in!





# Hava Nagilah!

## It's Mardi Gras Mitzvah Time at Touro



### *We Can't Do It Without You!*

Touro Synagogue is blessed to have, quite literally, a front row seat to the biggest, most colorful, most creative party in the world, and that gives us both responsibilities and opportunities to increase the joy.

As many know, Mardi Gras at Touro is a time of unique delight when we combine our Shabbat observance with the spirit of New Orleans during **Shabbati Gras**; a time of community and connection as we enjoy parades together comfortably and safely **within our Touro campus**; and most importantly, a time of service and loving kindness as we host our **Krewe of VIPs**, those with disabilities or special needs who view Mardi Gras parades from our accessible platform.

Under the leadership of Juan Gershanik, Hal and Kathy Shepard, and other devoted volunteers, we are expanding a strong team of congregants who are committed to creating this experience for the congregation and our Krewe of VIPs. **Even if you've never been involved before, please consider starting a new tradition this year. Mardi Gras at Touro is a gift we give each other!**

### *Below are the ways to plug in and do a Mardi Gras Mitzvah!*

#### **1 | The Grandstand Building Team**

We are seeking volunteers to help assemble the wheelchair-accessible stands outside the sanctuary on Monday, February 2 and to disassemble them on Wednesday, February 18.

#### **2 | The Security and Hospitality Team**

Parade viewing with a purpose! We are seeking volunteers to welcome members at the gate of Touro to ensure that everyone who comes in receives a wristband and is checked in on our list, for security reasons. This includes receiving payments from non-member guests who have not paid in advance.

#### **3 | Krewe of VIPs Host Team**

It is our honor each year to host the Krewe of VIPs, and we are seeking volunteers who can welcome and chaperone the group, making sure they and their families have everything they need to enjoy the parades.

**Scan the QR Code or email Sarah Tucker at [stucker@tourosynagogue.com](mailto:stucker@tourosynagogue.com) to sign up!**





## Touro Parade Schedule 2026

Below you will find a schedule of when the synagogue will be open for members who would like to join the revelry of Carnival in New Orleans. Please note, the parades roll in light rain. The officials will only postpone if the weather is predicted to be severe. The local TV and radio news stations (such as WWL Radio) broadcast the hour-by-hour updates. You can also use the Parade Tracker App to track the parades. Touro will still celebrate Shabbat even if the parades are cancelled due to inclement weather. **Feel free to bring your coolers and snacks! Remember, no pork, shellfish, or glass (except that which you are bringing for recycling) allowed.**

### Friday, February 6

4:00PM Gates open for parade watching  
5:00PM Shabbat prayers and candle lighting followed by Krewe of Oshun and Cleopatra

### Saturday, February 7

9:00AM Shabbat Shiur  
10:00AM Gates open for parade watching:  
Krewe of Pontchartrain, Choctaw, and Freret  
*Stands are reserved for Krewe of VIPs*

### Thursday, February 12

4:30PM Gates open for parade watching  
Krewe of Babylon, Chaos, and Muses  
*Stands are reserved for Krewe of VIPs*

### Friday, February 13

4:00PM Gates open for parade watching  
5:00PM Shabbat prayers and candle lighting followed by Krewe of Hermes, d'Etat, and Morpheus

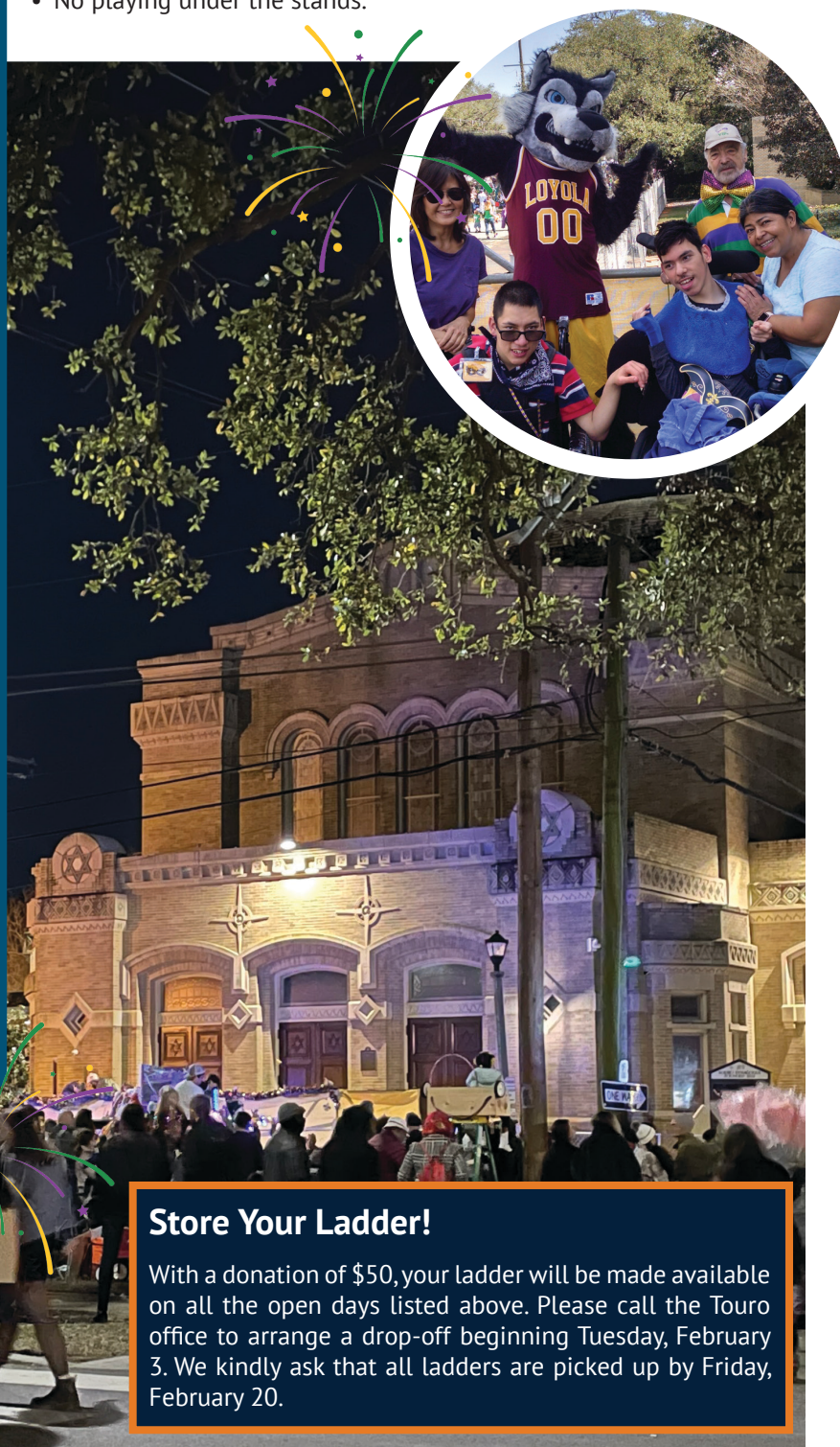
### Saturday, February 14

9:00AM Shabbat Shiur  
10:00AM Gates open for parade watching  
Krewe of Iris and Tucks  
*Stands are reserved for Krewe of VIPs*

*Touro's facility will be closed for all other Uptown parades that are not listed on this schedule.*

## Our Mardi Gras Guidelines

- Non-members must be accompanied by a member at all times. Each non-member will be charged \$20 at the door; \$10 for non-member guests under 5 years old.
- Members must remain on site as long as their guests are present.
- Access will be limited to the areas behind the fence, the Bowsky Garden, Shushan Assembly, and chapel bathrooms.
- Coolers are permitted. Coolers must be kept outdoors.
- No pork, shellfish, or glass allowed.
- No smoking.
- The building and property grounds must be respected by all members and guests, and all trash must be disposed of properly.
- No playing under the stands.



## Store Your Ladder!

With a donation of \$50, your ladder will be made available on all the open days listed above. Please call the Touro office to arrange a drop-off beginning Tuesday, February 3. We kindly ask that all ladders are picked up by Friday, February 20.



# Together We Thrive

## Touro Synagogue Annual Commitment | 2025-2026

“I support Touro because it has been a meaningful part of my family’s life for generations, and because I want to ensure it’s here for generations to come.”

- Beth Lavin, 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
<b>Ozrim   Helpers</b> <small>Cost per Household + Cover Part of an Additional Household</small>	\$3,660+	\$305+/mo*
<b>Bonim   Builders</b> <small>Cost per Household + Cover an Additional Household</small>	\$5,400+	\$450+/mo*
<b>Tomchin   Supporters</b>	\$7,200+	\$600+/mo*
<b>Amudim   Pillars</b>	\$10,000+	\$833+/mo*
<b>Giborim   Heroes</b>	\$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.



### Submit Your Pledge Online!

Scan the QR Code or Visit [TouroSynagogue.com/AnnualCommitment](https://TouroSynagogue.com/AnnualCommitment)

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





# Thank You, Patrons!

*A heartfelt thank you to our Patrons who contribute Annual Support above the sustaining level.  
Your generosity at the Patron level helps make our sacred community accessible for all.*

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*and other anonymous donors*





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