

Communal Shabbat Vision, Principles & Guidelines

April 2019

Let's go, let's travel to greet Shabbat, for she is a wellspring of blessing.

-Lecha Dodi



Kol Halev Communal Shabbat Vision

March 26, 2019

Shabbat as a Living Value for the Kol Halev Community and its Members. At Kol Halev, we recognize Shabbat as one of the great spiritual treasures of our people's tradition. It provides an opportunity for rest, renewal and joy. *The notion of carving out a dedicated period of time each week* in order to nourish our spirits and engage with life at a deeper level seems to many of us the perfect spiritual antidote for our otherwise non-stop, media-saturated lives. We affirm the teaching from Rabbi Arthur Green, contemporary scholar of Jewish thought, that

*[In light of] how incredibly fast the pace of our lives has become . . .
Shabbat is needed now more than ever. . . It may be the best gift we
have to offer the world . . . but in order to offer it to the world, we first
have to reclaim it for ourselves.*

We encourage our fellow members to explore this practice of regularly and intentionally disengaging from daily routines and obligations and proactively seeking out those experiences that feed our souls.

Kol Halev Strives to Create an Inclusive Community. As a community, we seek to make Shabbat meaningful and engaging for all of our members. Our vision of Shabbat, then, is informed by our commitment to creating an inclusive communal experience. Together we explore both traditional and innovative avenues for engaging with Shabbat.

While individual Shabbat experiences can bring spiritual nourishment into each member's life, we believe that there are uniquely compelling dimensions of Shabbat that are available only when we gather as a community and can draw energy and comfort from one another as individuals as well as members of Kol HaLev and the Jewish people.

The presence of each person contributes to the joy of a Kol HaLev Shabbat. There are many ways to be present: members may lead or co-lead a service, lead or participate in Torah Study, teach in our Hagiga (Youth Education) program, serve as a greeter or Kiddush host, join the Celebrations *Aliyah* to share good news, or offer the name of a friend or loved one for the *Mi Sheberach* (prayer for healing) or for a *yahrzeit* memorial. Equally important to Kol Halev's communal Shabbat experience are those members who attend a service and listen, speaking only to add their voices to communal prayers. Our community also welcomes those who may decide to join us for before or after service activities, such as Torah Study, Mindful Jewish Practice Meditation or for Kiddush, when we gather to enjoy the rituals of blessing the wine and the challah; and sitting down to eat and talk with others.

The Kol Halev Vision: The Evolving and Balancing of Individual and Communal Spirituality with Ancient and Modern Traditions. The Kol HaLev Shabbat experience incorporates the commitment to explore new routes to a meaningful Shabbat that balance individual spiritual connections with the voices of our ancient and modern traditions. We do this through learning, praying, relaxing, self-reflecting, appreciating beauty – and occasionally including brand-new approaches. As the ancients argued, Shabbat is a foretaste of the holiness of the world to come. Members and guests are invited to share in the experience of awe, delight, belonging, gratitude and harmony which have nurtured Jews for centuries.

Shabbat Principles and Guidelines

Shabbat is a time for joy and a time to explore and express our spiritual practices. The following principles are meant to increase the opportunity that we have to experience the joy of Shabbat as a community. This guide is not meant to affect members' individual decisions about their observance in their homes or outside Kol HaLev. It is meant to suggest a framework for deepening our collective spiritual practice. Accordingly, Kol Halev encourages dialogue within our community to discuss, learn and ultimately discern whether a communal activity honors the spirit of Shabbat as affirmed in this document.

The following principles and guidelines illustrate the Kol Halev Shabbat vision.

1. Kedushah - Kol Halev recognizes the historical and spiritual significance of the Torah, of creating holy space, and of working to connect to the Divine. The actions of our members reflect our sense of awe, wonder, and appreciation for the gifts of Jewish traditions.

2. Welcoming - Kol Halev is a home for a broad spectrum of Jewish traditions, and as a congregation, we are committed to being a welcoming community.

What does this look like at Kol Halev?

- **Welcoming Begins at “Hello”.** Members greet each other and guests with warmth.
- **Welcoming Means Offering Prayer Book Access to All.** We use a Reconstructionist prayer book which is based on the traditional Hebrew liturgy. Shabbat services are conducted in a mixture of English and Hebrew. Most prayers done in Hebrew are also available in transliteration and in English so everyone can participate. Explanations for customs and practices within the Jewish tradition and particular to Kol Halev are offered within the prayer book text and by the service leader.
- **Welcoming Offers Knowledge.** We have created a Glossary of Hebrew Terms to guide people through the Shabbat service terminology, and to offer opportunities to learn about Kol HaLev’s, as well as traditional, practices .

3. A time apart - The Kol Halev community respects Shabbat as a time apart, a time when many of us choose to disengage from work and other routine activities in order to engage in prayer, spiritual practice, celebration, learning, creative and restorative activities, and connection to our community.

What does this look like at Kol Halev?

- **Refraining from Kol Halev Business Conversations on Shabbat.** We ask that people have Kol Halev business conversations with staff and lay leadership during the week so that all members can participate in a restful Shabbat.
- **Shabbat Services are a Tech-Free Zone.** We recognize that some in our community take Shabbat as a time to refrain from screens and photography. Therefore, within services, in order to create holy space and time, everyone is asked to refrain from these activities.
- **Members receive information during the week.** To respect the Shabbat practices of all, members and staff are asked to refrain from sending non-urgent emails regarding official Kol Halev business on Shabbat.
- **Accentuate the Positive.** Many of our community members hold passionate political and/or social justice perspectives which inform their experience of Shabbat. Many others prefer to keep the political arena separate from their Shabbat practice. In order to highlight Shabbat as a foretaste of the world to come, Kol Halev focuses on accentuating shared values rather than differences.
 - **Shabbat Announcement Boundaries.** In light of these realities, Shabbat announcements about, or participation in, politically-oriented activities at Kol HaLev will be limited to those which are formally connected with Kol HaLev. Such announcements include matters related to Greater Cleveland Congregations plus any other activities which have been, on a case-by-case basis, officially endorsed by our community leadership.
 - **Post-Kiddush Organized Political Discussions.** There may, however, be politically oriented conversations organized to take place following Kiddush at the discretion of the Adult Education Committee, or other body within Kol HaLev, providing that such discussions take place outside of the cafeteria so that it does not infringe on the Shabbat experience of those who choose not to participate.
 - **Personal Conversations: A Question of Courtesy.** For all informal personal conversations, we simply encourage people to offer each other the courtesy of confirming whether or not political conversations are an acceptable part of their Shabbat practice.

4. Evolving relationship with Shabbat - We believe that Kol Halev can provide a context for members to develop an ongoing and evolving relationship with Shabbat and to their own spiritual practices.

What does this look like at Kol Halev?

- **Variety of Shabbat Service Formats.** By offering a variety of service types, members can explore different approaches. Service leaders are encouraged to use the Kol Halev weekly email update to describe in advance the type of service which attendees can expect.
- **Traditional Shabbat Practices...A Dialogue.** We recognize that our community is in dialogue with traditional practices and benefits from understanding their origins and development.
- **Ritual Garb...A Matter of Personal Choice.** Some members and guests find that their experience of holiness is enhanced by ritual garb, such as kippah and tallit. These are optional and are available as appropriate for those who would like them.
- **Education...Building a Legacy.** We offer learning opportunities on Shabbat. The religious school for our children is conducted simultaneously with our Shabbat service and includes age-group appropriate thematic curricula developed by the Kol Halev Educational Director and taught by a volunteer staff. The religious school also offers a Tot Shabbat program several times a month. We also offer learning opportunities for adults, such as Torah study and Lunch and Learn. Our religious school and adult education guidelines are consistent with the Shabbat Practices and guidelines outlined in this document.

5. Participatory Prayer – We embrace communal Shabbat prayer as an activity that we create together rather than one that is performed by specific individuals and see it as one important vehicle for connecting with one another as human beings, and with the inherent value of each human life.

What does this look like at Kol Halev?

- **Participating in Group Aliyot...Truly a Blessing.** We invite members and guests to participate in group aliyot to encounter each other, to share celebrations, and to share personal connections to Torah through thematic aliyot and Rabbi's blessing.
- **Music to Engage the Soul.** Music is used to enhance the service experience, which may include percussion instruments. We use vocal and instrumental music to provide a shared experience which occurs on physical, psychological and spiritual levels.
- **Get Creative! Develop a Rabbi-Supported Shabbat Service.** Members are encouraged to work with the Rabbi to co-create and co-lead--or even be the *sole* leader for--a Shabbat service. Kol Halev offers a variety of service types so that our community can explore different approaches. Our evolving Shabbat practices include: musical

Shabbat, mindfulness, discussions, lunch-and-learn, lay-led and Rabbi-led services, Torah study, and Shabbat outdoors in nature.

6. Respect and Inclusion - The Kol Halev community is inclusive of the many ways people celebrate Shabbat. We understand inclusivity requires awareness of and respect for the range of members' Shabbat practices and will make every attempt not to exclude any members when planning community events. As community members, we will assist in implementing these suggested practices in respectful and considerate ways.

What does this look like at Kol Halev?

- **Observing Shabbat Your Way.** We recognize and support the diverse backgrounds which influence how members choose to celebrate Shabbat.
- **Experience a Kol Halev Shabbat Your Own Way.** At Kol Halev, people will come and go throughout Shabbat morning in order to connect to those opportunities that best feed their souls. While some people choose to spend the entire morning at Kol Halev, others come just for one or two aspects of our shared Shabbat such as the Torah study, meditation, schmoozing in the hallway, Shacharit, Torah service, or joining the community for a relaxing kiddush after services.
- **Shabbat Service Attentiveness--A Consideration for All.** In striving to be inclusive at Kol Halev, we understand that one's personal practice of engaging in prayer may distract others from their practices. To build community and demonstrate thoughtfulness, each service participant works to remain aware of how their own personal activity impacts those around them. Additionally, extended conversations among members and guests detract from the congregation's attentiveness to the Shabbat service and are conducted away from the service.
- **The Kol Halev Community Strives for Shalom Bayit (communal harmony).** We recognize that in our diverse community, individual perspectives may be in conflict with Kol Halev Shabbat Practices and Guidelines causing moments of discomfort. In our effort to practice shalom bayit, our members realize that what we receive from being a part of our community outweighs the challenges associated with individual discomforts. However, when appropriate, the Rabbi and the Religious Practices Committee will act as arbiter.
- **Accessing Jewish Approaches to Conflict Resolution.** Our community continues to explore Jewish approaches to constructive conflict resolution, and the tools presented in those sessions are used in a thoughtful manner. Our *Standards for Decision Making* serves as a guideline to support conflict resolution related to Shabbat practices.