



Jewish Community Center of Paramus  
Congregation Beth Tikvah  
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## **A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner**

Friday May 10, 2024 ~ Parsha: Kedoshim

### **Farewell to our Rabbinic Intern, Sami Vingron**

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

*Last Shabbat, the JCCP/CBT sponsored a kiddush luncheon in honor of our Rabbinic Intern and his many contributions to the synagogue over the past two years. I would like to share my remarks which I delivered at the event.*

I want to take a moment to thank and acknowledge our Rabbinic Intern, Sami Vingron for his two years of service to the JCCP/CBT. Sami has taught in our Hebrew school, led Shabbat services, and shared *Divrei Torah* and sermons. He has participated in our High Holiday services, and accompanied me on various life cycle events throughout the community. I like to think that I've taught Sami a few things about how a Rabbi serves his congregation, and interacts with his synagogue community and beyond. I am grateful for his interest and his passion, and his willingness to laugh at my jokes, which while not a requirement for the job, is nonetheless always appreciated. Sami is blessed with tremendous intelligence and energy, a desire to learn, to grow and to teach about our heritage and traditions. I am confident that he will make his mark, and be an invaluable source of wisdom and leadership in his new position at Hillel of [Deutschland](#).

Sami will graduate from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America on May 16. During the commencement exercises he will receive his Master's degree and his Rabbinic ordination. Rabbi Kogen and I have been invited to participate in Sami's ordination ceremony. I thank him for this honor.

I'd like to reflect for a moment on all that I have learned from Sami. We met over Zoom in February of 2022 when we began our search for a new intern. He was studying in Jerusalem at the time. After our first meeting, I told the Religious Committee that he was our guy. When they interviewed him, they readily agreed. Since he began his responsibilities with us, we have spent several hours a month talking about almost every area of the Rabbinate, the challenges facing world Jewry, Israel -- you name it. We have agreed and disagreed on important issues. He has certainly broadened my perspective.

I'd like to tell you a story. My entire career, I have taken a rather dim view of the future of Jewish life in Europe. I haven't spoken about it much in recent years, but old timers will likely remember articles and sermons about my concerns for the future of the Jews of Europe and my belief that our priority must be to bring as many of those Jews to Israel and North America as possible. Make no mistake, there is a part of me that believes that as intensely as I did since the early 1990's when Jews could for the first time leave the former Soviet Union freely. But what I also knew was that despite that strong belief, Jewish communities, in the face of tremendous pressures and challenges, were carrying on and making a difference. They were freely choosing to live as Jews, and needed strong leadership to continue to grow. From the very beginning, Sami described himself to me as a patriotic German Jew who was determined to return to his home in Berlin and serve his community there. He taught me about the possibilities of Jewish life in Europe, and to get over my preconceived notions of the potential for Jewish life in places that I had spent my career encouraging Jews not to go to. Or in other words, he showed me how wrong I was. For that I thank him.

Sami, I have had the good fortune to work with seven different interns. Each was special in their own way. I'm going to miss our daily conversations, your trust and support, your ability to communicate so effortlessly in different languages, and your tremendous intellect. I want to thank you for all you have shared and taught. It is always hard to say goodbye. I am comforted by my confidence in the impact of your

Rabbinate on those who will learn from you, and the gift you will share with Klal Yisrael. You have made a real difference.

May you go from strength to strength!

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner