



# CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

November, 2009

Nov 1	School	Dec 6	School
			
Nov 6 6PM	Kids Shabbat Services	Dec 11 6:30 PM	Chanukah Potluck
			
6:45 PM	Potluck/Oneg	8:00 PM	Shabbat Services led by Matt Dreffin
	Regular Shabbat Services - Led by Matt Dreffin	Dec 12 7 PM	Havdalah & Movie Night
8 PM			
Nov 7 7 PM	Havdalah & Movie Night	Dec 13	School
			Chanukah Party
Nov 8	School	Dec 15 7:30 PM	Rosh Chodesh - Chanukah Party
			
Nov 14 1 PM	Adult Ed - Intro to Judaism led by Diana Zankowsky	Dec 17 7 PM	Board Meeting
			
Nov 17 7:30PM	Rosh Chodesh	Dec 18 7 PM	Shabbat Services led by Suzy Stone
			
Nov 19 7PM	Board Meeting	Dec 19 10 AM	Bat Mitzvah Sarah Keil
			
Nov 20 8 PM	Shabbat Services led by Suzy Stone	Dec 22	School
			
Nov 21 3:30 PM	Adult Education led by Suzy Stone		
			

Congregation Shir Ami, 4529 Malabar Ave, Castro Valley CA 94546 - (510) 537-1787

[www.CongShirAmi.org](http://www.CongShirAmi.org) - [info@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:info@CongShirAmi.org)

Affiliated with the [Union for Reform Judaism](http://www.unionforreformjudaism.org)

**President's Message**  
*Ruth Hartman*

Dear Shir Ami members and friends,

I have two exciting pieces of news to share with you this month.

First, a new mission statement (our first ever?) for our congregation. Every organization should be able to articulate its mission. The five volunteer committee members who wrote our mission statement (Bonnie Frey, Diana Zankowsky, Jon Zimmerman, Julie Greenfield, and myself) held just one meeting. We started our work by considering the list of key words that you generated at our Annual Membership Meeting last May. We were pleased to discover a consensus about the core values of our community that made the task of creating the statement easier than we expected. Here it is:

*Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley is an intimate, inclusive, intergenerational Reform Jewish community that welcomes interfaith families. We nurture our members' spiritual growth and cultural identity, and we make Jewish education fun and joyful for children and adults alike. We strive to embody the Jewish values of lovingkindness and righteous action. Shir Ami is a place where people feel wanted and where they want to be.*

What will we do with our mission statement? We'll use it to communicate to others about who we are. We'll feature it on the home page at [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org), and on membership brochures and other outreach materials. We'll also use it to help guide decision-making by the Board and committees. I'd love to hear how you like it—please write and let me know.

Second big news: With your help, we are moving forward on some significant and much-needed upgrades to our beloved building. We are renovating both bathrooms, and have recently completed several needed electrical repairs. Many thanks to the Blum, Haber, and Keil families for their generous support of the bathroom renovations in honor of their children's upcoming bnai mitzvah. Thanks to Gary Wolff for donating the water-saving dual-flush toilets. Thanks to Marion Kramer for underwriting the electrical work. Thanks to Toni Schulberg for project managing the work. And thanks to all the Shir Ami members whose participation in e-Scrip and generous financial pledges this summer made these improvements possible.

B'shalom, Ruth

## Rabbis' Corner

*Matt Dreffin*  
*Suzy Stone*

“The best laid plans of mice and men,  
Go often askew.”

- *Robert Burns, 1785*

Sometimes, we think we have our lives completely planned out. With our calendars and various personal digital assistants we conceive of a track on which to follow. But as the saying goes, all the planning can be thrown for a change in the blink of an eye. Sometimes we see these differentiations as positive. Other times, we can see them as frustrating: roadblocks on our paths to success. The dark can become so heavy that we think, “Why God? Is there something I could have done differently? What is the reasoning behind changing my life in this way?”

When I finished my first year in Israel. I saw exactly how the next 5 years would work out. I was happy and content having accomplished so much in a foreign land. As my very good friend dropped me off at the airport, he slipped me a small copy of the Book of Psalms, saying that it is supposed to bring protection. I stuck it in my backpack, and have made it a practice to read it every time I take a trip. With all the unexpected surprises, I have found myself exploring the book outside of my excursions. One particular line caught my attention.

Psalm 145, also known in our morning liturgy as *Ashrei*, contains the line “*Karov Adonai l'chol korav*,” which translates as “Adonai is close to all who call unto God.” Besides the interesting play with consonance, the message of this line is encouraging. Psalms approves of questioning the reasoning behind life. We may not get any answers, but by calling out to God, we can find ourselves closer to the divine. Even though we may not fully understand the divine plan, we can at least take solace knowing that our inquiry is not only allowed, but can be beneficial.

Matt

### We'd like to hear from you

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Los Angeles is the graduate school that our student rabbis attend. The school, in the interests of helping our students learn and grow while at their student pulpits, has asked us to provide regular, written feedback to the students and their advisors. That means that they want to hear from us after EVERY visit by each of the student rabbis. Diana Zankowsky has taken on the job of Lay Advisor and she will collect and convey that feedback. Please communicate both positive and corrective feedback to Diana, (at [dzankowsky@aol.com](mailto:dzankowsky@aol.com)) no later than Tuesday after a rabbi's visit. Thank you in advance for contributing to our student rabbis' educations.

## Religious School

School is off to a wonderful start. Classes are bustling with enthusiasm and the glitter is already flying! We started a new program this year to improve and reinforce Hebrew vocabulary. At each segment of the day, Hebrew, Song Time and in Religious Classes, we review the vocabulary and incorporate it into the lessons. Please ask your student about the vocabulary words each week.

In addition to the vocabulary reinforcement, we have chosen as our themes this year – Torah Study and Holiday Observance. Each week we will focus on a holiday or a specific Torah story or concept. The entire school will be studying the daily theme at an appropriate level for the class, incorporating the theme into the projects and discussions. This provides another opportunity for you to talk with your student about Religious School and perhaps, share your thoughts on the theme as well.

This time of year is filled with holidays. Your student is gaining depth of understanding about the High Holy Days, Sukkot and Simchat Torah. Many of you have preschool projects coming home that reinforce the objects and themes of the holiday. My student is older, and is coming home talking about meaning of the holiday and her personal observance. It is gratifying to see, and to know that the teachers are intent on making this progression of knowledge happen with every topic, culminating with informed and reasoned personal decisions.

The other feature of this time of year is the variety of youth retreats happening at Camp Newman. The variety of Jewish Youth organizations to which our students belong create retreat time to create a Jewish environment in which the students can explore Jewish thought, culture and friends. The weekend of November 13-15 is the Fall Kallah at Camp Newman for 4<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Go to <http://newmanswig.urjcamp.org/yearround/retreats/fallkallah/> for more information. North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) brings together Reform Jewish Teens. The first NFTY retreat is the weekend of November 20-22. See Hana Hartman or Sophia Blum for more information about NFTY.

And, now, for all the (dull but necessary) administrative details:

- Please return your **registration package** if you have not already done so.
- We made **refrigerator magnets** to help keep track of the school dates and school Shabbat services. If you don't have one, please ask for one when you pick up your child.
- Parents are asked to **sponsor School Onegs** in support of our students. Judy Brackin is the Oneg Coordinator for the school this year. If you have not contacted her please sign up soon – her email is [justjc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:justjc@sbcglobal.net).

### November School Dates and Themes are:

November 1 – Adam and Eve  
November 8 – Noah and the Flood  
November 22 - Tower of Babel

Warmest Regards, Barb and Jodi

## Adult Education

In 5770, Congregation Shir Ami will have several different adult education offerings.

**Introduction to Judaism:** We will be expanding our on-going monthly class for adults interested in conversion. We are now welcoming any member of our community interested in learning more about Judaism. We will continue to meet on Saturdays. Our next meeting will be on November 14<sup>th</sup> from 1 pm to 3 pm. At this class, we will continue to look at our liturgy in the Mishkan T'fillah and we will begin a discussion on practicing holidays in an interfaith household, aka, the December Dilemma. Contact Diana Zankowsky, [dzankowsky@aol.com](mailto:dzankowsky@aol.com) for more information.

**“What does *GOD* have to do with it? Jewish Perspectives on Life, Death and the Afterlife”** In this year’s adult education class, Rabbi Suzy Stone and the class will be exploring this topic as it relates to Jewish perspectives on life, death, and the afterlife. The next class of the 5-part series will meet at Shir Ami on November 21<sup>st</sup> from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm. In this class we will conclude the discussion of Jewish views of the afterlife and begin to discuss Jewish rituals and observances related to the loss of loved ones.

The series is geared for an introductory level conversation, but all knowledge levels are welcome!

**Adult Hebrew:** Judy Ganz continues to teach the weekly “Learning Hebrew through Prayer” class, for those who already have basic literacy skills. Please contact Judy at [jbganz@aol.com](mailto:jbganz@aol.com) if you are interested in joining.



**Movies:** Shir Ami’s Havdalah and Israeli Movie evening brings to you this month *Time of Favor* ( This brilliantly .) רדסה directed film swept the Israeli Academy Awards in 2000, winning 5 out of 6 nominations. The movie was praised for its accurate depiction of the complexities of Israel, particularly within the setting of the ultra-religious Zionist settlers’ movement. It poignantly exposes the push and pull of religious and secular power struggles. It promises to be an enlightening experience. See you at 7pm!!!

# Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh Group

*Jan Dombrower*



## **Sisterhood:**

We all gathered under the Sukkah at Diana Zankowsky's home for last month's Sisterhood meeting. We started out by doing the mitzvah of shaking the Luluv and etrog after reciting the blessing. Then, each woman invited a Ushpizin, a guest, into the sukkah such as a mother, grandmother, relative or friend. The Sukkah felt full with loved ones that we were connected to.

We followed these rituals with a harvest filled dinner. Women brought dishes made with squash, pumpkin, spinach, apples, and corn to name a few. It was quite delicious and filling.

We planned the calendar for the year filling each month with an activity, hostess, and refreshment host. We ended the evening making a craft of Hamsas that we decorated with blessings for the Sukkah with festive stickers on them.

When they were finished, we strung them up and made a garland of the Hamsa blessings and hung them in the Sukkah. This will be a decoration for the Sukkah which can be put up each year.

For next month's gathering we will bring in the new month of Kislev.

The Sisterhood meeting will be led by Nancy Storch at Aran's Color & Glaze Studio in Castro Valley, CA - at 3330 Village Dr, Castro Valley, CA 94546. (This is a new address).. Mothers and daughters are all invited. We will meet at 7:30. We will select a pottery piece to paint and then leave it to be glazed and picked up later on. Nancy Storch will give us some painting tips, help, and ideas as she is an artist herself.

Look in your email for an announcement about the upcoming Aran's studio gathering as Nov 17 approaches.

## The Community Page November, 2009

### Yarzheits:

#### **November 6, 2009**

Fanny Hirsh Engelman, grandmother of Barbara Nemoyten and an early Shir Ami member  
Freda Hansen, aunt of Toni Schulberg  
Sidney J. Leshin, father of Mary Ann Leshin  
Martin Michelson, brother-in-law of David Schulberg

#### **November 20, 2009**

Henry Ball, very active former member of Shir Ami  
Dora Alperovich, aunt of Irina Druker  
Ada & Jack Rubenstein, mother and father of Ron Rubenstein

### Kaddish List: (To be read at both services in November)

Jack Farbstein, uncle of Ruth Rosenthal  
Sarah Leona Markus, grandmother of Noah Markus  
David Sapper, father of Danielle Keil  
Alyce Nasatir, mother of Cary Nasatir  
Jacob Ross, father of David Ross  
Doris Greenfield, mother of Julie Greenfield  
Jack Skelly, father of Bruce Skelly  
Jean Skelly, mother of Bruce Skelly  
Bridget Laky, past president and long time former member of Shir Ami  
Zac Cohen, long time member of Shir Ami

### **May their memory be a blessing...**

Ever wonder how the names read out loud for yartzheit and kaddish at Friday night services get on that list? If you are a member of Shir Ami, and want a personal reminder for the yartzheit of a loved one, just send Toni Schulberg the following information: the name of the deceased; the relationship of that person to the member of Shir Ami; the full date (month, day, year) that person died; and whether you want to use the Hebrew or English calendar for their yartzheit (Toni will look up the Hebrew date for you). Questions? Call Toni at 278-1695 or e-mail her at [Yartzheit@congshirami.org](mailto:Yartzheit@congshirami.org)

### **TODAH RABAH FOR THESE GENEROUS DONATIONS:**

From Ingrid Weinberg: in Rememberance of her father, Karl Meininger, at his Yahrzeit.  
From Rose Levine: in Honor of her parents, Maurice and Anne Aranowitz, at their Yahrzeit.  
From Sharon Golembo: in Memory of her mother, Beatrice Harrison Golembo, at her Yahrzeit.  
From Ruth Hartman: in Honor of the 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Rose and Hillie Levine.

From Fran Johnson: in Memory of her father, Gustov Kurz, at his Yahrzeit.  
From Marci and Mike Loss: in Memory of Marci's mother, Ruth Bergel, and Mike's father, Ralph Loss, at their Yahrzeits.

A contribution to Shir Ami is a great way to honor, remember, or show appreciation for someone special. It's easy, send a check and note to Florrie Finkle. Her address is included in Shir Ami's roster. Florrie will send a card to the person you are honoring and your dedication will appear on this page.

## TODAH RABAH FOR THE FOLLOWING:

### **Bathroom Remodel:**

A huge Thank You goes to Zalman Sher's "American Electrical" for doing such a prompt and professional job repairing our various electrical problems at Shir Ami. His company is located at 2515 Santa Clara Ave, Suite 201, in Alameda (94501), but if you need electrical work just mention his name so that his receptionist will be sure to book an appointment for him. The office phone number is (510) 548-6992.

Another thank you goes to Toni Schulberg for taking on the job of project coordinator for the bathroom remodeling.

Thanks also to Bonnie Frey for helping with the bathroom remodeling, by painting the outside, front of the building where the bathroom window was removed and to Mickey Lange for picking up and delivering the new toilets.

### **Texas Hold 'Em:**

A huge Thank You goes to Noah Markus for his leadership in making the first Shir Ami Texas Hold 'EM a success. Thanks also go to Barbara Haber, Jeff Blum, David Zankowsky, Lee Carmack, Sharon Golembo and Bonnie Frey for all their help.

We would like to acknowledge the following businesses for their generous donations and ask that the congregation support these businesses:

Dr. Bruce Carter, D.D.S., M.S.  
1866 B St., Hayward  
(510)581-7851

Palomares Cafe  
3779 E Castro Valley Blvd, Castro Valley  
(510)733-5852

AIM Mail Center  
895 B St., Hayward  
(510)538-4000

Golden Spoon Yogurt  
580 Market Place Shopping Center  
4065 E. Castro Valley Blvd, Castro Valley  
(510)397-0324

Shark Shack  
871 B St, Hayward  
(510)881-9969

Jazzy Crafts  
3325 Castro Valley Blvd, Castro Valley  
(510)583-1422

Nancy Storch  
Pleasanton

Knutsens Ice Creamery  
3323 Castro Valley Blvd, Castro Valley  
(510)582-2775

West Coast Sporting Goods  
1855 Alvarado St San Leandro,  
(510) 895-1834

Rudy's Donuts  
3692 Castro Valley Blvd, Castro Valley  
(510) 889-1109

## TODAH RABAH TO OUR ONEG HOSTS

For October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Barb Haber

For October 9<sup>th</sup>: Markus Family

For October 23<sup>rd</sup>: Lisa Silver & Sonny Lal

## What's Nu?

Ruth Hartman and Gary Wolfe are in Spain now. ¡Fantástico!

Diana and Fred Zankowsky traveled to Death Valley and Yosemite for a whirlwind 5-day vacation. Fred rode in the Death Valley Double Century ride, but it was 93 degrees that day, so he only completed 160 miles! Wow!

**The Tzedakah Box**  
**A Social Action Column**  
**Daryl Berman, Julie Greenfield, Sara Lamnin**

**TZEDAKAH OR CHARITY?**

Often interpreted as “charity”, the Hebrew word Tzedakah means “doing the right thing”; motivated by what we are obligated to do rather than by what feels good to do. The expectation is to do whatever we can to help someone in need. Donating time or money should not be done at the detriment of ourselves or our families and donors should have an understanding of the cause, organization, or person they are supporting. The highest levels of Tzedakah are assistance that enables someone to become self-sufficient and acts of prevention. “As the Sages explain: It takes one person to support something before it falls, but after it falls, even five people may not be able to lift it.” Rabbi Shraga Simmons, Aish.com.

[http://judaism.about.com/library/3\\_askrabbi\\_o/bl\\_simmons\\_charityzedakah.htm](http://judaism.about.com/library/3_askrabbi_o/bl_simmons_charityzedakah.htm)

Tzedakah can be fun. And inspiring. And revitalizing. And even, relaxing. Below are a few ways to make a positive difference in your community.

**The Heart of the Bay Summit** at CSU East Bay is an opportunity to learn about recent data collected about violence, homelessness, and health disparities. Participants will develop action plans regarding identified issues. Bring your voice to the table! "Greater than one who does a mitzvah, is one who causes others to do a mitzvah." (Talmud: Baba Batra 9a)  
Inspire sustainable solutions! **Saturday, November 7, 9am to 2:30pm, University Union, Hayward.** For more information: [haywardcan.weebly.com](http://haywardcan.weebly.com) or call (510) 432-7703. **Youth and Adults are welcome.** Parking and Lunch are FREE.

**Keeping the Faith Events, November 1-6.** The United States is a different nation since the November 2008 election. Opportunities exist throughout the country to push for the progress you would like to see in our country. Online discussion groups flourish. Peaceful protests continue. Social Action opportunities abound. If you are looking for opportunities to engage, please contact one of the Social Action Chairs. The Progressive Jewish Alliance, Faith for Equality, Marriage Equality USA, Equality California, Courage Campaign and other organizations are urging individuals to take time at the beginning of November to reflect on the passage of Proposition 8, one year later. More information can be found at:  
[www.marriageequality.org/uploads/images/Blast/KTF.jpg](http://www.marriageequality.org/uploads/images/Blast/KTF.jpg)

**Tarps and Thanksgiving Volunteers Needed.** The Hayward Community Action Network is collecting tarps of any size for individuals who are homeless in Castro Valley and Hayward. Also, a communal Thanksgiving dinner is in development for those who will be without a meal on Thursday, November 26. To volunteer, donate, or for more information, email [haywardcan@gmail.com](mailto:haywardcan@gmail.com) or call (510) 432-7703.

# SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



## Safeway eScrip Renewal

It is time to renew your Safeway eScrip for Shir Ami.

## Shir Ami's Store on CafePress.com

Our latest and greatest fundraiser is our very own store on [CafePress.com](http://www.cafepress.com).

Thanks to the talents of Jeff Blum who designed the stained glass panel in our front door, and David Holsey who developed Jeff's design into our new logo, we have items for sale that have the official Congregation Shir Ami logo.

You may have seen a small sample of them at the year-end picnic where the teachers were given their very own Shir Ami mugs. But wait, there's more. If you go online to our store at <http://www.cafepress.com/CongShirAmi> you will find a wide variety of products, including t-shirts, sweatshirts, hoodies, not to mention cool gift ideas like mugs, travel mugs, note cards, journals, tote bags, and more.

When you purchase an item from our store, 25% of the purchase price goes directly to Shir Ami. Do yourself a favor, and do Shir Ami a favor, by taking a few minutes to go to our online store and start shopping.

## Used Cell Phones Wanted

Barbara Heimowitz is still collecting used/old cell phones that you leave at Shir Ami to be sent in for cash. You can bring in your cell phones to Shir Ami anytime – just leave them in the box in the kitchen. Any questions? Please call Barbara.

## Shir Ami Contacts

President:

Ruth Hartman  
[president@congshirami.org](mailto:president@congshirami.org)

Membership:

Barbara Heimowitz  
Danielle Keil  
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Jodi Blum  
Barb Haber  
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Dues:

Toni Schulberg  
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Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood:

Jan Dombrower  
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Social Action:

Daryl Berman  
Julie Greenfield  
Sara Lamnin  
[socialaction@congshirami.org](mailto:socialaction@congshirami.org)

Yahrzeit Listings:

Tonia Schulberg  
[yahrzeits@congshirami.org](mailto:yahrzeits@congshirami.org)

Donations:

General Funds, Special Funds,  
Wall Plaques  
Florrie Finkle  
[donations@congshirami.org](mailto:donations@congshirami.org)

# Fourteen Years After: Working to Fulfill the Peace Legacy of Yitzhak Rabin

A program featuring a very special guest from Israel

**Yariv Oppenheimer**  
Israel's #1 Peace Activist



Join us as Rabbi Dan Goldblatt Interviews Yariv Oppenheimer  
Along with a panel of local Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith leaders

Wednesday, November 4, 2009, 7:30 P.M.  
Beth Chaim Congregation  
1800 Holbrook Drive, Danville, 94526

RSVP to [admin@bethchaim.com](mailto:admin@bethchaim.com) or (925) 736-7146

On November 4th, 1995, Yariv Oppenheimer stood among hundreds of thousands at a peace rally coordinated by Peace Now in what was then called Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv. Eighteen years old and recently inducted in the Israeli Army, Yariv watched as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin climbed the stairs and gave a stirring speech for peace. Without ever imagining what would happen next, Yariv left for an event with his army unit and in the car heard the shocking news that Yitzhak Rabin had been killed at gunpoint by someone bent on preventing his efforts for peace to succeed.

Yariv says *"that night made me more committed and eager to continue my activity and to fight for peace."* Fourteen years later, he leads the Peace Now movement, coordinator of that fateful 1995 rally.

Yariv Oppenheimer, born in Tel Aviv in 1976, is the General Director and Spokesperson of Shalom Achshav (Peace Now, Israel), the largest grassroots movement in Israeli history. He is a leading political figure and activist who is regularly cited in the Israeli and world press, and is a frequent interviewee on radio and television broadcasts. Oppenheimer was Commander of New Recruits in the Israeli Defense Forces (1995-98), Youth Department Director of the Israeli Labour Party (1998-2002), and has a Law & Public Policy Degree from the College of Interdisciplinary Center of Learning in Herzliya, Israel.