



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

4529 Malabar Ave.
Castro Valley, CA 94546

Email: info@CongShirAmi.org

Web: www.CongShirAmi.org

Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley is an intimate, intergenerational Reform Jewish Community that welcomes interfaith families.
Affiliated with the [Union for Reform Judaism](#)

NOVEMBER 2013 (Cheshvan~Kislev 5774)

In This Issue

(Events are links, just click)

Event Calendar	2
Welcome New Members! Nov. 8.....	2
President's Message.....	3
Rabbinic Interns' Page.....	4
Adult Education with the Rabbis	5
Donations, October 2013.....	5
Chanukah Faire & Boutique, Nov. 17.....	6
Shabbat Pre-Chanukah Service, Nov. 22.....	7
Congressman Swalwell, Nov. 23.....	8
Chanukah Potluck & Light Menorahs, Dec.1 ...	9
Shir Ami-- More Information.....	10
Shir Ami's New Hebrew Learners	10
Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood	11
Events in the Community	12
November Yahrzeit List.....	13

Chanukah & Thanksgiving

The first night of Chanukah is November 27, the Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving. So get ready to eat your cranberry sauce with your latkes.

Shir Ami is holding our second annual Chanukah Faire and Boutique on Sunday, November 17. There will be craft and gift items for sale by local artists, activities for the kids, food (latkes, of course!), and a silent auction. This fundraiser was a huge success last year. Join us for the fun!

Other Chanukah-related events: on November 9, Rabbi Benj will be discussing "What is Chanukah?" at his 4 pm adult ed. On Sunday, December 1, Shir Ami will have a Chanukah potluck and menorah lighting celebration.

Don't miss [Congressman Eric Swalwell's visit](#) on November 23 at 1pm



Event Calendar

- Sun. Nov. 3 11:30 am **Tot Talk**, held once a month, is FREE and is open to all families with children under 5 years old. Bring your young child and join the family fun.
- Wed. Nov. 6 7:30 pm. [Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood](#). At the home of Sharon Golembo
- Fri. Nov. 8 7:30 pm **Shabbat Service honoring new members**. Led by Benj Fried.
- Sat. Nov. 9 10:30 am [Men's Club Walk & Discussion](#) at Lake Chabot. Led by Benj Fried
- Sat. Nov. 9 4:00 pm [Adult Ed. Discussion: What is Chanukah?](#) Led by Benj Fried
- Tue. Nov. 12 7:00 pm **Board of Directors Meeting**. All are welcome.
- Sat. Nov. 16 1:00 pm **Event at Southgate Community Center: [End Hunger and Homelessness](#)**
- Sun. Nov. 17 11:00 am [Chanukah Fair & Boutique](#). Open to the public. Invite your friends and neighbors. Remember, First Night of Chanukah begins November 27, the eve before Thanksgiving!
- Fri. Nov. 22 7:30 pm [Shabbat Service](#) led by Megan Brudney
- Sat. Nov. 23 1:00 pm [Congressman Eric Swalwell](#) will visit Shir Ami and recap his recent visit to Israel
- Sat. Nov. 23 2:00 pm [Text study](#), led by Megan Brudney
- Sat. Nov. 23 4:00 pm [Conversational Hebrew](#), with Megan Brudney, followed by Havdallah at 5:30 pm
- Sun. Dec. 1 6:00 pm [Chanukah celebration: potluck and candle lighting](#).
- Fri. Dec. 6 7:30 pm **Shabbat Service**, led by Benj Fried
- Tue. Dec. 17 7:00 pm **Board of Directors Meeting**. All are welcome.
- Fri. Dec. 20 6:30 pm **Potluck Dinner at 6:45 / Shabbat Service at 7:30** led by Megan Brudney



Welcome New Members! Nov. 8

Join us at Shir Ami on Friday, November 8 as we honor these new members and welcome them to our congregation.

- * Rita Weikal
- * Helene & Darwin Paz and their son, Edison
- * Amy & Kayvon Haghighi and their daughters, Azam and Ada
- * Jeremy & Dennise Templeton and their sons, Connor and Caelan
- * Debbie Schriber
- * Elayna Contreras and her son, Alex
- * Liane Carmi & Donna Katrina Orpilla and their son, Jacob
- * Karl Felperin



And our newest members

- * **Kelly and Laura Lepkowsky and their sons, Rowan & Liam**

President's Message

Shalom Shir Ami,

This month, I would like to tell you about some of activities going on at Shir Ami, and events coming up in the next few months. With the High Holidays and fall festivities behind us, you might think things are slowing down at Shir Ami. Well, this couldn't be further from the truth, as you'll soon see.

First, I want to acknowledge several new programs and planning groups. Our Tot Talk program – organized by Bonnie Frey and Harriet Skelly, and which began on October 6th – has already started to engage the newest members of our Congregation. This program is aimed at helping families with young children get a head start on learning about, and developing an appreciation of Jewish heritage and customs. It is open to anyone interested and so I would ask for your help to spread the word to the broader community. Friends, neighbors, relatives... all are welcome!

Speaking of new members, since July, Shir Ami has gained a total of 9 new members, and we currently stand at a total of 58 member-units. This is a tremendous accomplishment by our Membership Outreach Committee, led by Barbara Heimowitz and Bonnie Frey, and I wish to thank them for all their hard work. To make a stronger connection with these new additions to our Congregation, we've kicked off a New Member Ambassador program. Our Ambassadors will be volunteers tasked with building one-on-one relationships with each new member, helping them learn about Shir Ami, and act as a resource for information.

Shir Ami's outreach efforts are also underway to engage with the broader Castro Valley/Hayward community. Planning groups for two upcoming events – the Chanukah Faire & Boutique on November 17th (Barbara Heimowitz, Harriet Skelly, Valerie Goldman, Debbie Schriber and Vicky Sapper) and the Welcoming Shabbat service (Diana Zankowsky, Harriet Skelly, Sara Lamnin, Marion Kramer and, of course, Student Rabbi Benj Fried) on February 7th – had kickoff meetings and have made excellent progress in preparing for their respective events. In addition, Shir Ami's Communications Committee has formed a specialized Marketing Team to help with advertising on these and other future events. I wish to thank the

volunteers for this new effort – Rita Weikal, Bettina Skehan, Vicky Sapper and Nancy Liskewicz – who will no doubt help improve our organization and practices in this important aspect of outreach.

The programs I've mentioned so far are helping to expand the Congregation outward, both in terms of membership and community engagement. But Shir Ami is also improving in an inward sense. Our new Finance Committee, led by Treasurer-Payables Melanie Einbund, is organizing members of the Congregation to take a more in-depth look at our yearly financial reporting practices. This group will serve to not only make Shir Ami's finances more transparent to its members, but to also train future generations of our Treasurer officers and ensure that they have the knowledge they need. Also on the financial front, our Officers (myself included) and Trustees have met to take a closer examination of the Congregation's long-term finances and make sure that we have adequate reserves for future anticipated, and unanticipated needs. Both of these efforts have just started, but I know that they'll put us on the road to improved fiscal responsibility.

I've only mentioned a portion of the planning and activities that are going on at Shir Ami; there are, of course, many more in the areas of Religious practice, Communications, Adult Education, etc. If any of what I've mentioned interests you, please don't hesitate to contact me to learn how you can be more involved. And if there's something you'd really like to see that I haven't mentioned, please let me know as well. What we accomplish as a community is up to all of us.

Toda Raba v'Shalom (Thank you very much and I wish you peace),

Jon Zimmerman, president@congshirami.org



What We Learned from the Pew Survey

As many of us know by now, the Pew Trust came out with a survey last month giving us a picture of Jewish life in America. Much ink has been spilled on its findings, and much of that has spelled out doom and gloom for the future of the Jewish people. I think it is important for us to put all the histrionics aside and think critically about what we learned from this study.

One of the most notable statistics from the survey was that nearly one in four Jews does not identify as Jewish religiously whatsoever, and when you look at the Millennial generation, that statistic rises to nearly one in three. Over half of Jews married in the last decade were married to non-Jews, and one in five of the children of intermarried couples identified as having strong Jewish identity. Roughly one third of Orthodox Jews become Conservative or Reform, one third of Conservative Jews become Reform, and one third of Reform Jews drop out of religious observance all together. There is very little movement in the opposite direction.

None of these statistics is surprising, and none of them contradicts what we already knew about the state of American Judaism in the 21st century. These statistics teach us that the new reality for our Jewish institutions is that Jewish identity and Jewish association is not a given for Millennials. If we do not make Judaism accessible and something they cherish, then it will not register on their radars. We also learn that Reform Judaism, more than any other movement, is the frontier between observance and non-observance. Our movement catches the people who become disenchanted with more traditional Judaism, and it has the lowest bar of entry for those who have little or no Jewish background. Because of our unique position, we have unique opportunities and challenges to welcome those who would not otherwise have a Jewish home to go to.

That being said, as Reform Jews, we should not rest on our laurels. Because we have the lowest bar of entry of any of the movements, the converse is also true: we have the lowest bar of exit. What does this mean for us? It means that we have to be constantly aware that membership in our institutions is not something to take for granted. In a time when intermarriage has become the norm, we cannot afford to alienate those couples or their children.

We have to make special efforts to not only include their children in our community life, but also make the non-Jewish spouse feel welcomed and appreciated as a valuable member of our community. Our Reform institutions also have to provide meaning for people in all walks of life. It is not a sustainable model for our synagogues exist only to give people b'nai mitzvah, weddings, naming ceremonies, and High Holy Day services. Judaism is not just about these events (though they have the potential to be incredibly meaningful). When our institutions operate in the way that they truly should, they create a Judaism that has the power to give people deep and rich meaning, a community of friendship and support, and a lifetime of challenging and engaging education in tradition, culture, and text.

This Pew study did not inspire dread and fear in me that Judaism is going to die out. Our institutions certainly have to adapt to this new reality, but in my heart of hearts, I know that Judaism is far too meaningful and important to die out. So in the end, I hope this study will inspire us at Shir Ami to continue to embody the best of inclusiveness, community, and warmth and continue to make Jewish community not an expendable part of our identity but an integral part of our lives.

Benj Fried

Rabbinic Interns



Benj Fried
rabbi.benj@CongShirAmi.org



Megan Brudney
rabbi.megan@CongShirAmi.org

Adult Education with the Rabbis

Saturday, November 9

Men's Club Walk and Discussion

November 9th, 10:30 am.

The Shir Ami Men's Club will meet with Rabbi Benj Fried in the parking lot of Lake Chabot at 10:30 am for a walk and discussion about spirituality in nature followed by lunch together.

What is Hanukkah?

Join Rabbi Benj from 4:00 to 5:30 pm at Congregation Shir Ami in an exploration of "What is Hanukkah?" The rabbis in the Talmud had to ask this exact question, and it's one that we are still struggling with. Is this a holiday about religious freedom? Or is it a holiday about religious fervor? What is this miracle of the oil all about? What do Israelis think about Hanukkah? Come to adult ed, and we will sift through our ancient sources and some modern ones as well to think about how we can make meaning out of our holiday. The class will conclude with Havdallah.

Saturday, November 23

Text Study, a Hero's Journey

From 2 to 3:30 pm Rabbi Megan Brudney will lead a text study session on the hero's journey – a closer look at Joseph in the Torah and other sources.

Conversational Hebrew

From 4 to 5:30 pm, Rabbi Megan Brudney will lead a class on modern (conversational) Hebrew. This class is accessible to all. It is fun and does not require the ability to read the Hebrew Aleph Bet. The class will conclude with Havdallah.

BOOK DISCUSSION coming in December

Now is the time to start reading the book for December's book discussion. On December 7th. Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried will be discussing the book, The Sabbath, by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. There is a copy at the Shir Ami Library and the book is available through the Link+ service at the Alameda County Library.

Donations, October 2013

Shir Ami thanks the following for their generous contributions in October

- Marci and Michael Loss. In Memory of Ruth Bergel, Mother of Marci
- Shir Ami Sisterhood, In Memory of Deborah Mitchell, Mother of Helen Marcus. In Memory of Leona Rosenthal, Mother of Ruth Rosenthal and Grandmother of Evelyn, Lisa, and Jacob Carmack

Sometimes we receive a special note with a donation

- A note from Lori Dreffin:

Enclosed is a donation representing our appreciation for all your warm congregation did when Matthew was a Rabbinical intern. We visited twice, when he was in Los Angeles, once for a Passover Seder, and enjoyed our time in Castro Valley.

Sincerely, Lori Dreffin

- Edetha Speceal, who lives in Oregon, contributes every month. Here is part of a note from her: *[The Bulletin] is very important to me as it is my only connection to my people (Jewish) as life is for me presently. I live in government housing. I came to Salem from Israel to be with my brother here. (May he rest in peace)*
There is a very special place in my heart for Shir Ami. When I lived in Hayward and Shir Ami Congregation was there for me with open arms for me and my children. Ha-Shem's blessing to all of you and to the whole world of peace between all mankind & nations.
Much love, Edetha

Chanukah Faire & Boutique

Sunday, November 17th

11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

4529 Malabar Ave, Castro Valley

Fundraiser for...

Congregation Shir Ami

- Craft Items & Holiday Gifts by Local Artists
- Fun Activities for Kids
- Chanukah Food
- Chanukah Items
- Silent Auction... And More!

Questions? Contact:
info@congshirami.org

510-220-3345

Everyone Welcome!





Chanukah is coming very soon!

Shir Ami services will be celebrated on Friday, November 22nd
led by
Megan Brudney

This is a good time to invite friends and relatives to see and
learn Shir Ami's program and appeal

Remember Shir Ami's food basket



**A Conversation
with
Congressman
Eric Swalwell
*California's
15th District***

**Saturday,
November 23rd,
1 PM at Shir Ami
*All are welcome to
attend!***

Eric Swalwell, the newly elected Representative for California's 15th district will be visiting Congregation Shir Ami to talk about his recent visit to Israel and the Middle East.

This visit offers our community a great opportunity to interact with the Congressman, learn about his views on U.S. Foreign Policy with Israel, and let him know the thoughts and concerns we have as American Jews. Please join us.





*Chanukah Pot Luck and Menorah Lighting
at Shir Ami!*

Sunday, December 1st at 6:00 PM

led by

Diana Zankowsky

Bring your Menorah!

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment

A to F Side dish, dessert, help wth clean-up

G to Z Main dish

Shir Ami-- More Information

Please read: [Changes to eScrip account!](#)

Credit card purchases at Safeway no longer earn rewards for your charity of choice (Shir Ami). Cash, check or debit card purchases still earn rewards, so if you can, please consider these payment methods when shopping at Safeway.

Shir Ami's New Hebrew Learners

Congratulations to Shir Ami's New Hebrew Learners

On October 25th we celebrated Shir Ami's new Hebrew learners. We have both children and adults who are learning Hebrew. Thank you to **Shir Ami School** for ensuring the education of our youth, and thank you to **Judy Ganz** for teaching another class for adult learners of Hebrew. This is the third class Judy teaches each week!



Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood

UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH

Our Next Rosh Chodesh will be on Wednesday, November 6 at 7:30 at the home of Sharon Golembo. We will be bringing in the month of Kislev. This month celebrates miracles and oil. We will be doing a simple craft involving oils and enjoy the taste of oils salad dressings. We will have a discussion about miracles. Please bring a salad with your favorite dressing. Stay tuned to your emails for a reminder and more information.

ROSH CHODESH RECAP

In October, we brought in the month of Cheshvan. Our hostess and program leader, Rita Weikal, led a wonderful discussion about our foremother, Rachel, considered the mother of Israel and therefore during this month of her Yahrzeit we celebrate Jewish Mother's day. Co-hostess, Jan Dombrower, reviewed the story of Rosh Chodesh. We made a list of attributes of "Mother" and shared which of those attributes we possess. We also enjoyed autumn refreshments.

Finally, we voted unanimously to join the international organization, WRJ, the Women of Reform Judaism. We received the following warm welcome from the WRJ, Pacific District "Chai Life" online bulletin:

Pictures from last month's gathering



Welcome! The WRJ Pacific District proudly welcomes **Congregation Shir Ami Sisterhood** as our newest women's group. Shir Ami is located in Castro Valley, California, not far from Hayward, in Northern California. We are thrilled to have you join us and look forward to meeting you in San Diego at the WRJ Assembly.

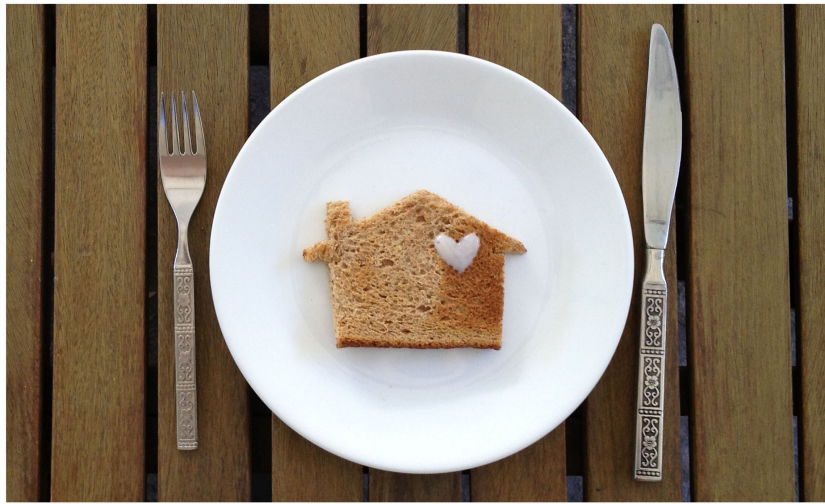


You Have a Place at the Table

Book to Action: Ending Hunger and Homelessness in Hayward

The Hayward Task Force to End Hunger and Homelessness invites you to discuss this issue with guest speakers and fellow community members. Get inspired to take concrete action to end crisis, decrease waste, and increase stability in your community. Help end hunger and homelessness locally through lessons learned in *Tattoos on the Heart* by Gregory Boyle and local programs. The answers are within our reach. Take simple actions to make lasting change.

For More Information:
510-881-7700
sally.thomas@hayward-ca.gov
or 510-432-7703
saralamnin@gmail.com



Saturday, November 16th 1pm - 4pm
Southgate Community Center
26780 Chiplay Ave., Hayward, CA 94545



The Women of Temple Beth Torah

Proudly Announces Our Annual

Hanukkah Gift Fair



Sunday, November 3, 2013
10:00am to 2:00pm



- ❖ Handcrafted Jewelry
- ❖ Handmade Clothing & Scarves
- ❖ Artwork
- ❖ Children's Toys and Dolls
- ❖ Bath & Body Items
- ❖ Movie and Sports Memorabilia
- ❖ Judaica
- ❖ Other unique holiday gifts

Kosher Hot Dogs



Freshly Baked Goodies and Confections



Soft Drinks & Coffee



Delicious Potato Latkes



42000 Paseo Padre Parkway, Fremont, CA 94539
(510) 656-7141 <http://www.bethtorah-fremont.org>

November Yahrzeit List

November 2013 Yahrzeit List

(as of 10/20/13)

November 8, 2013

Henry Ball,
Joseph Forman,
Freda Hansen,
Lazarus Lewis,
Ralph Loss,
Martin Michelson,

very active former member of Shir Ami
father of Lorraine Lewis
aunt of Toni Schulberg
father of Peter Lewis
father of Mike Loss
brother-in-law of David Schulberg

November 22, 2013

Dora Alperovich,
John Blum,
Ada & Jack Rubenstein,
Max Schulberg,

aunt of Irina Druker
father of Jeff Blum
mother and father of Ron Rubenstein
father of David Schulberg

Kaddish List (those who have died during the past 11 months) (read at both services)

Leona Rosenthal,

mother of Ruth Rosenthal and grandmother of
Evelyn, Lisa, and Jacob Carmack

Deborah Mitchell,
Stephen Slavin,
Kevin Keil

mother of Helen Markus
long-time close friend of Nate Einbund
husband of Danielle Keil, father of Sarah, Gabriella and James,
and son-in-law of Vicky Sapper

Susan Weinberg Andersson,
Tom Manley,

daughter of Rolf & Ingrid Weinberg, and former member of Shir Ami
former member of Shir Ami

Do you have a name you would like to have read for Kaddish at Friday services?

Is there someone for whom you'd like a Yahrzeit reminder letter? The process is simple. **Please email Toni Schulberg** (yahrzeit@CongShirAmi.org) and include your name, the name of the person who died, their relationship to you, the date they died (month, day, year in the English calendar), and whether you want to use the English or the Hebrew calendar for your reminder. Toni will send the reminders as requested.



Baking for the *Rescue in the Philippines* event.