



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

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

MARCH 2014 (Adar I ~ Adar II 5774)

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Shir Ami School visits Urban Adamah

More pictures from the February visit.



Event Calendar

- Tue. Mar. 4, 7:30 pm [Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood](#), hosted by Lilly Erickson, Lina Teferi and Rose Firestone
Come celebrate Adar 2 with us! We will meet at Shir Ami.
- Fri. Mar. 7, 7:30 pm [Shabbat Service](#) led by Benj Fried
- Sat. Mar. 8, 1:00 pm Benj Fried will be holding **"Office Hours"** at [Peets Coffee](#), meeting with congregants
for an informal chat. Contact Benj at Rabbi.Benj@CongShirAmi.org if you are interested.
- Sat. Mar. 8, 3:30 pm [Adult Ed](#) with Benj Fried- Exploring Theology through Art and Text.
- Sat. Mar. 8, 7:00 pm Havdalah and discussion with Shir Ami Men's Group. Open to all *men*, led by Benj
Fried.
- Fri. Mar. 14, 7:00 pm [Purim Shabbat Service](#) led by Megan Brudney.
- Sat. Mar. 15, 2:00 pm [Opposites Attract](#), Purim and Yom Kippur led by Megan Brudney
- Sat. Mar. 15, 4:00 pm Your Presence Is Present Enough! [Workshop](#) led by Megan Brudney. Havdalah, 5:30.
- Sun. Mar. 16, School Purim Carnival, Tot Talk and Mitzvah Project.
- Tue. Mar. 18, 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami; all are welcome.

Fri.- Sun. Mar 21-23, [Cantor Ken Cohen](#) will be Cantor-in-Residence for the Weekend

- Fri. Mar. 21, 6:30 pm Musical Shabbat with guest Cantor Ken Cohen for young children and their families.
- Fri. Mar. 21, 7:30 pm Shabbat Service with Cantor Ken Cohen featuring a discussion on the future of the
Jewish Community in the U.S.
- Sat. Mar. 22, 4:00 pm Study Session with Cantor Ken Cohen. Power of Sacred Song to Transform Your Life.
- Sat. Mar. 22, 5:45 pm Potluck Dinner with Cantor Ken Cohen - Vegetarian.
- Sat. Mar. 22, 7:00 pm Havdalah Sing-a-Long with Cantor Ken Cohen for all ages.
- Sat. Apr. 19, 4:30 pm Community Passover Seder led by Allie Fischman.
- Sat. Apr. 26, Book Discussion, *My Life*, by Golda Meir- led by Megan Brudney.
- Tue. Aug. 19, Save the Date, Jewish Heritage Night- the Oakland A's vs NY Mets.



Photo from
Shir Ami Sisterhood's
Chai Tapestry Retreat,
February 21-23, 2014
More photos on
Facebook



President's Message

President's Message for March 2014

Shalom Shir Ami,

"They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor." – Book of Ester, 9:22.

There are particular times of the year during which our attention is drawn to the plight of those who are hungry, homeless and poor. Certainly, this happens in the months of November and December, when the days start becoming shorter and colder, and the spirit and generosity of the holidays of Chanukah and Christmas moves us to take action. For Jews, this also occurs during the High Holidays – and especially during Yom Kippur – as we contemplate the good and bad we do in the world, and reflect on how to repair ourselves, those we closely interact with, and the community beyond. Another time of the year I like to revisit this theme is during the late Winter and the holiday of Purim.

Most of us think of Purim as the holiday celebrating the triumph of Ester and her uncle Mordechai over the evil Haman, royal vizier to King Ahasuerus. A somewhat lesser known Purim tradition encourages the mitzvah of sending gifts (usually ready-to-eat food) to friends and those in need. It is recommended to give these gifts anonymously. Unlike many traditions, those who are impoverished in body, spirit, or finances are NOT exempt from the obligation. In this way, everyone benefits, both from the act of receiving, but also from the act of giving; of being useful and having something of value to share.

So, what can you do? You can reach out to one of your fellow congregation members, offering support or food. There are also several agencies in our community through which your actions can be magnified to benefit large groups of our underprivileged neighbors. Shir Ami has strong

connections to, and involvement with La Comida para Cherryland (<http://edenucc.com/event/comida-para-cherryland-8/all/>), the South Hayward Parish Food Pantry (<http://southhaywardparish.org/food-pantry/>), and the Alameda County Food Bank (<http://www.accfb.org/>). South Hayward Parish has also recently started a severe weather shelter, which can use your help as volunteers, and with laundry and transportation assistance. For info, contact southhaywardparish@gmail.com.

While these agencies provide the essential needs for survival, I often reflect on the truism that "to survive is not enough". While this phrase is often used in the context of motivating art, music and philosophy, I submit that it can also be used with the concepts of work and feeling useful. Thus, another way to help others is not only to provide them with food and shelter, but with the skills and confidence to enable them to eventually provide for themselves. This valuable mission is one of the primary goals of the Hayward Community Action Network (CAN, <http://southhaywardparish.org/hcan/>), another program run through the South Hayward Parish. Through CAN, individuals who are homeless develop their considerable skills and use them to grow food, cater events, create jewelry and art, and manufacture reusable shopping bags. Consider purchasing these products or services as a way to fulfill the Purim mitzvah. For details, contact haywardcan@gmail.com.

To remind ourselves of this ongoing need, and take action during the festival of Purim, members of Shir Ami are leading a Mitzvah project as part of our annual Purim carnival on Sunday, March 16th. Everyone is encouraged to bring small hygiene items (combs, socks, soap, shampoo, etc), soft granola bars or water bottles to the carnival, where we will be assembling kits to help those in need.

I hope I've given you some inspiration and information that the cause to help others is a year-round endeavor, and that you don't need to only take action at certain times of the year. As with all things worthwhile, it's up to you!

My best for this month,

Jon Zimmerman, President

president@congshirami.org



March 2014 Thoughts for Shabbat Shekalim

The Shabbat of March 1st begins a series of five Shabbatot in which a special Torah portion is traditionally read. Each of these Torah portions has a distinct theme, and the overall arc of these readings is meant to spiritually prepare ourselves for Pesach, the holiday of our freedom and our birth as God's Chosen People. In ancient times, this holiday was not celebrated as we do today over a festive Seder with family and friends at home. The people used to make a pilgrimage from their hometowns all the way to the temple in Jerusalem to make the special Paschal sacrifice to commemorate the holiday. The five special Torah readings that we do over the next couple of months are therefore meant to prepare us to make that pilgrimage. Since we do not live in a time with a functioning temple, this pilgrimage has to be a metaphorical one for us.

The first of these special Shabbatot is Shabbat Shekalim. The reading for this Shabbat comes from the book of Numbers in which the people are commanded by God to take a census. Each person is commanded to pay a half-shekel tax, which is meant to be used for the upkeep of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle or portable sanctuary they people used to commune with God out in the wilderness. In II Kings, we learn that the practice of each person contributing a half-shekel continued when the Jews entered the Promised Land and established the temple. The tax was the way that the community contributed to the upkeep of their religious institutions.

Shabbat Shekalim has two major ties to the holiday of Passover. As the holiday marked a sacred pilgrimage in which every family would come to Jerusalem to make their Paschal sacrifice at the temple, upkeep of the temple is a very significant part of this holiday. Moreover, the holiday of Passover occurs in the month of Nissan, the first month in the Jewish calendar. While Rosh Hashanah happens six months into the year, Nissan is another way in which the Jews mark the New Year, as it is the anniversary of

when the Jews were let out of Egypt. As such, the Jewish "fiscal year" began in the month of Nissan, so it is a time in which we rededicate ourselves to our Jewish institutions.

Membership in our Jewish institutions is incredibly important. It is a way that we support our community through our financial means and through our personal sacrifices of time and energy. Without our personal contributions, our metaphorical half-shekel donation, Jewish life as we know it would cease. The fact that the tax was a half-shekel in the Torah is also of significance. It was a tax small enough that every person could afford it. This tells us that no matter who you are—rich, poor, young or old—your input and your contribution are valued. So as we enter the season of our freedom, I hope that we will all rededicate ourselves to the communities, institutions and charities that we hold near and dear to our hearts.

Student Rabbi Benj Fried



Benj Fried
rabbi.benj@CongShirAmi.org

Rabbinic Interns



Megan Brudney
rabbi.megan@CongShirAmi.org

Have You Read Golda Meir's, *My Life*?

On April 26, Megan Brudney will lead a discussion of Golda Meir's autobiography, *My Life*. This first-rate account of the history of Israel is told through the compelling and modest voice of one of Israel's founders, Golda Meir. Get the book. Read the book.

Adult Education with the Rabbis

Saturday, March 8, Benj Freid

1:30-3:00 pm, Office Hours: Benj will be holding "office hours" at Peets (by Safeway at CV Blvd and Redwood Road). This is an opportunity to have an informal conversation with our student rabbi and to talk about something that's been on your mind. Email Benj at rabbibenj@CongShirAmi.org if you would like to reserve a time slot.

3:30-5:30 pm, Exploring theology through the art of many different cultures. An experiential lesson led by Benj Fried

7:00 pm, Havdalah and discussion with the Shir Ami Men's Group. This activity will be for **men only**.

Saturday, March 15, Megan Brudney

2:00 pm, Opposites Attract: Purim & Yom Kippur
Come examine the many surprising parallels between the joyous celebration of Purim and our solemn observance of Yom Kippur. Learn how these two seemingly disparate holidays can be seen as two sides of the same coin!

4:00 pm: Your Presence Is Present Enough! Workshop
Two of the major mitzvot of Purim are to give special gifts to your friends and to the poor. At this session we'll work on both! Stay tuned for items to bring along.

5:30pm: Havdalah

Saturday, April 26, Book Discussion, *My Life*, by Golda Meir.



Shir Ami Information



Volunteer Gardeners Needed?

Do you remember when Shir Ami had clean-up days twice a year? When we pulled weeds in the parking lot and trimmed the trees and shrubs? Fortunately, we now have a regular maintenance crew doing these tasks.

However, we are still looking for volunteers to spend time at Shir Am-- planting, watering, weeding-- to make our home an even nicer place to be. Contact Milton Palmer at [510-582-6250](tel:510-582-6250), or email Milt at Facilities@CongShirAmi.org. We are a volunteer organization-- everything we are is through our own efforts! Shalom

Casino Night at Beth Chaim in Danville, March 1 info@bethchaim.com

One of our neighboring communities, Congregation Beth Chaim in Danville, will be having a Casino Night Gala the evening of Saturday, March 1st. If you're game, this is a good opportunity to meet and connect with other Jews in the East Bay. Plus, there's no planned Shir Ami activities that day, so no guilt is involved! Enjoy yourselves... [Click Here for a Full Flyer and RSVP card](#)



Photos from
Sisterhood Retreat,
February 2014



Vayikra (Offering)

The parasha deals with the differing requirements, nature and reasoning for burnt sacrificial offerings.



Shir Ami Services Friday, March 7th at 7:30 PM
will be led by
Benjamin Fried

BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU TO SERVICES



**Purim at Shir Ami ~ 7:00 PM, Friday, March 14th !
Services will be led by
Megan Brudney**

**Come in costume, come for fun
AND invite a friend to come with you!**

Cantor Ken Cohen, March 21-23



Join Your Friends at Congregation Shir Ami for
A Weekend of Jewish Music & Spirit
with Special Guest

Cantor Ken Cohen

Cantor Cohen's weekend residence at Shir Ami will include:

- Conversation— Discovering what our sacred wisdom holds for your Jewish soul
- Spiritual Renewal—Be lifted by inspiring Jewish prayer
- Singing—Sharing fun, musical experiences as a spiritual family



Featured Events with Cantor Ken

Friday, March 21

- 6:30 pm A Fun Musical Shabbat Experience for young children and their families
7:30 pm Shabbat Service, featuring a discussion on the future of the Jewish community in the U.S.



Witnessing the contraction of the modern American synagogue, Cantor Ken Cohen began to explore what lies in the hearts and minds of Jews of all ages in the hope of reinvigorating synagogue life by holding a new conversation. Over the past 2 years he's interviewed nearly 200 Jewish 'lights' from across the country, gathering hundreds of hours of audio and video interviews. On Friday night, he'll be sharing their passion, perspectives, and wisdom in a short film and talking about his journey.

Saturday, March 22

- 4:00 pm Study session: The Power of Sacred Song to Transform Your Life
5:45 pm Potluck dinner, vegetarian
7:00 pm Havdalah Sing-a-long for all Ages

Watch your email for more details.

Cantor Ken's visit to Shir Ami is made possible through the generosity of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and the American Conference of Cantors (ACC)

Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood

UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH

Our next Rosh Chodesh will be on Tuesday, March 4 at 7:30 at Shir Ami. We will be bringing in the month of Adar II. When Adar arrives, joy increases. During this month Purim is observed. Co-hosts will be Lilly Erickson, Rose Firestone and Lina Teferi. Please look to your email for further instructions.

Upcoming Sisterhood Dates

Tues., Apr. 1, Nissan
Wed., April 30, Iyar
Wed., May 28, Sivan
Wed., Jun. 25, Tammuz



ROSH CHODESH RECAP

Last month we brought in the month of Adar I. We spent the evening in preparation for Purim. The program was led by Jan Dombrower and Barbara Heimowitz. The theme was channeling our inner Esther and Vashi. We read an article on the two women and then made a list of the qualities each of them possessed. We each shared which woman we were most like. There were a few Esthers and a few Vashtis, but most of us were a combination of the two.

We spent the last half of the night with an easy craft in the tradition of royal "bling" of the times. We decorated mirrors and oval stick pins with tiny crystals and beads. Delicious refreshments and a great time topped the evening.

Women's Chai Tapestry Retreat

We celebrated the 18th year of our annual retreat on the weekend of Feb 21-23. The theme, *Our Chai Tapestry*, was woven throughout the weekend, from our ice breaker through our ending song. We had beautiful, innovative services led by Megan Brudney and Harriet Skelly with text study included. Jan Dombrower shared a drosh detailing the highlights of our last 18 years with all its "blessings and bruising." The weekend also included listening/talking circles, weaving, Havdalah crafts, drama, improvisation, games, book discussion, and workshops. Many thanks to everyone who planned and led activities: Ruth Hartman (event Chair), Rabbinic Intern Megan Brudney, Sara Lamnin, Harriet Skelly, Jan Dombrower, Rose Firestone, and Diana Zankowsky. It was truly a delightful and meaningful weekend. Mazel Tov, Sisterhood, on our Chai retreat!



For more information on Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh, contact Jan Dombrower Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org

March Yahrzeit List

March 2014 Yahrzeit List

(as of 02/13/14)

March 7, 2014

Clara Finlay, mother of Todd Finlay
Matt Ganz, long-time active member and former president of Shir Ami,
and husband of Judy Ganz
May Ganz, former member and mother-in-law of Judy Ganz
Sam Ganz, former member and father-in-law of Judy Ganz
Dalton Gautreaux, uncle of Toni Schulberg,
(Pronounced "GO-TRO")
Miriam Levine, mother of Hillie Levine
Elsie Maas, grandmother of Toni Schulberg
Joslyn Miner, former member of Shir Ami, wife of Syd Miner, and past president of Shir Ami
Matthew Zankowsky, father of Fred Zankowsky

March 14, 2014

Sydney Black, father of Melanie Einbund
Shirley Cooperman, cousin of Melanie Einbund
Faye Felgoise, aunt of Melanie Einbund
James Finlay, father of Todd Finlay
Jean Skelly, mother of Bruce Skelly
Stella Small, grandmother of Toni Schulberg
Sylvia Weingarton, aunt of Stan Heimowitz
Ruth Zelezny, grandmother of Julie Greenfield

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

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.