



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](#)

JUNE/JULY 2014 (Sivan/Tammuz/Av 5774)

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Shir Ami Summer Service Schedule

This is our summer service schedule with the service leaders listed. We do not expect any changes, but please check the Shir Ami website, www.congshirami.org, or the weekly email blast to confirm. All services begin at 7:30 pm.

June 6	Diana Zankowsky
June 20	Anastasia Zankowsky & Irene Gilchriese
July 11	Harriet Skelly & Jan Dombrower
July 18	Rabbi Sara Shendelman
Aug. 8	Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried
Aug. 22	Diana Zankowsky

Oakland A's Baseball, August 19 Order Your Tickets Now!

Time to order your tickets for Jewish Heritage Night at the Oakland A's. Contact Fred Zankowsky.
Cost \$27 per ticket

The game will be on Tuesday, August 19, 7:00 pm, at the O.com Coliseum in Oakland.

Come see the Oakland A's as they host the New York Mets.



Men's group hike at Lake Chabot

Event Calendar

June/July Bulletin? Isn't the Bulletin published monthly?

We publish the Bulletin eleven times a year, monthly, combining the June and July issue. Please check the Shir Ami website, www.congshirami.org, or the weekly email blast to stay up with any changes that may take place between publications.

Sun.	Jun. 1,	12:00	pm	Annual Membership Meeting lunch and childcare provided
Fri.	Jun. 6,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Diana Zankowsky
Fri.	Jun. 20,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Anastasia Zankowsky and Irene Gilchriese
Wed.	Jun. 25			Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood , our end-of-year event will be hosted by Rita Weikal and Toni Schulberg. Look for more information by email.
Fri.	Jun. 27,	4:00	pm	Shabbat Service at Camp Newman - Cost is \$36 per adult and includes reception and dinner. For details and to register http://newman.urjcamp.org/alumni/reunions/groups/ If you have questions after June 1, call or email Tracey Klapow, tklapow@urj.org , 707-571-7657
Fri.	July 11,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Harriet Skelly and Jan Dombrower
Tue.	July 15,	7:00	pm	Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami , all are welcome
Fri.	July 18,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Sara Shendelman
Fri.	Aug. 8,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried
Tue.	Aug. 19,	7:05	pm	Save the Date, Jewish Heritage Night , the Oakland A's vs NY Mets. Buy your tickets now
Fri.	Aug. 22,	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Diana Zankowsky
Sat.	Aug. 23,	10:00	am	Religious Committee Meeting at the Schulberg Home



President's Message

President's Message for June 2014

Toda Raba Shir Ami,

This will be my final message, as this month concludes my term as Shir Ami's President. It's been a wonderful two years, and I've enjoyed the challenges and rewards of being the Congregation's leader. I'd like to share some insights I've gained as President, and give some thanks along the way.

As I've said before, the key to any good organization is communication. A community is at its best when everybody is talking to each other and working together to brainstorm and share new ideas. While Shir Ami still has room to improve, I believe we've recognized the importance of good communication, and have taken commensurate actions. This is most evident by the fabulous effort given over the last few years in improving our website, www.CongShirAmi.org. Many have contributed their time and attention to its overhaul – most notably David Schulberg, Bruce Skelly, Harriet Skelly, Rose Firestone, and Ruth Hartman – and we now have a communication tool that has improved our Congregation's visibility and efficiency. My thanks to this group and other members who have made it the success that it is.

But good communication is not just the result of a well-functioning website; I would encourage continued conversation and ask you to be open and available to speak with members of the Congregation's Board of Directors, as well as with your fellow members. One message I've told people repeatedly is that whatever the concern or problem is, I (and the Shir Ami Board) want to know about it. As Shir Ami is a community of limited resources, I cannot guarantee that we'll be able to address a raised issue; however, I can guarantee that we can't do anything if we don't know about it. So please... share!

Another insight I've gained is the value of our volunteers. No matter how much you think some folks do at Shir Ami, I can assure you it's far more than you realize. In particular, I want to acknowledge the many members of our Board of Directors. They have done excellent work at helping me keep the Congregation moving forward, tackling whatever job needed to be accomplished whenever I asked for the help. For this, and so much more, they have my gratitude.

One vision I had as President that I'm still working on is that of large, active Committees. We've certainly seen this happen to some degree, but I'm still concerned that the bulk of the work ends up falling to Committee Chair and Co-Chairs, which limits their ability to think and lead strategically.

So, what can you do? I would ask that you reach out to leaders of those Committees you feel an affinity for, and volunteer to help out. Perhaps it's Communication, or Membership Outreach, or Religious practice, or School, or Finance, or... well, you get the idea. Wherever your passion lies, there are folks on the Board who are eager to receive your help and energy. Please don't wait for them to contact you, go ahead and give them a call or send them an e-mail to discuss what you have in mind. I'm certain they'd appreciate it.

Shalom (remember, it also means 'goodbye'),

Jon Zimmerman, President

president@congshirami.org



Welcome, Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler!

Each year Shir Ami welcomes two Rabbinic Interns. Each of these two interns visits Shi Ami monthly: leading services, working with our children in Hebrew and Religious School and serving as our Rabbi for the year. We are delighted that Rabbi Benj will be returning for his second year with us this fall. He will be joined by Julie Bressler, a second-year student. Rabbinic Intern Megan Brudney is beginning her fourth year of study and will thus be moving on in her studies. Below you will find Julie's bio. There is also a poem about our Rabbinic interns.

Julie Bressler

I just found out that I will be serving Congregation Shir Ami next year as your second student rabbi. I am really excited to begin working with you all and to learn more about your community. I have heard great things from Lara Regev and other HUC students! I want to introduce myself with a brief bio.



I grew up in Alamo, so I am so excited to be coming back to this area to work. My home congregation was Temple Isaiah in Lafayette and I could not have asked for a more wonderful congregation to have grown up in. I was an active participant in religious school, the youth programs, camp and more and loved the welcoming, excited Jewish community. I developed a strong Jewish identity particularly as a high school student through serving on the youth group board and traveling to Israel after my confirmation. While at Washington University in St. Louis, I became very involved in various philanthropy efforts including events that supported Children's Miracle Network and the Make a Wish Foundation. Additionally, I was a counselor for the first-year student program at Hillel.

After college, I worked for a non-profit college access organization in St. Louis called College Bound and taught at Temple Israel in the St. Louis suburbs. During my time at College Bound, I realized just how much I missed working in the Jewish community and decided to return back to California to work at Berkeley Hillel as the Engagement Associate. I loved the opportunity to meet with students to discuss their Jewish journeys and work with them to figure out how Hillel can be a source of positive Jewish experience during their college years. I then served as the Program Director for the East Bay Jewish Teen Foundation where my board of 25 teens collectively raised \$34,000 to support organizations combating climate change. We used Jewish texts, such as Pirke Avot and Maimonides' ladder of Tzedakah, to make many of our challenging funding decisions throughout the year. During this time, I also taught at Temple

Isaiah as the coordinator for the K-2 family program and a teacher in the 7th grade and teen programs.

I will be working at URJ Camp Newman in Santa Rosa this summer as a Unit Head. I look forward to meeting all of you soon and thank you so much for the opportunity to be a part of your community.

Best, Julie

A Poem About Our Rabbinic Interns

by Rose Firestone, Congregation Shir Ami
Inspired by Dr. Seuss's *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*

Some are older but most are young.
The last ones were a lot of fun.
Where do they come from? I can't say.
But I know they have come a long, long way.

They stay with us for a year or two,
As they polish the skills of a rabbi's "how to."

We see them come, we see them go.
Some are fast. Some are slow.
Some are high. Some are low.
We almost always watch them grow.
It makes us sad to see them go.

Their time with us seems to quickly pass by.
As we get to know them and upon them we rely.

Don't attempt to compare them, each one's unique.
And by the end of the year their technique has been tweaked.

We have changed them,
And they have changed us.
That's just how it is,
So we don't make a fuss.

The year has passed by, there is no need to cry
As we say goodbye.

And as the new year returns,
We begin again with our rabbinic interns.

Don't ask why.
It's called "make a rabbi."

June 2104 Rabbinic Intern Message

Reflections for Shavuot

As we approach Shavuot, the Biblical holiday of the First Fruits, we reflect on the journey the Israelites have taken to get to this point. A week of weeks ago, we celebrated Passover, our freedom from Egypt—freedom from slavery and freedom from the metaphorical narrow places, *Mitzrayim*, that enslave our minds. While we rejoice in our freedom, we know that freedom is not enough. Without some kind of direction, some kind of vision, we are just like the Israelites wandering through the desert, aimless and vulnerable. But here we are, forty-nine days later, standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is this moment that we remember how we received the Torah. This is the moment that the Israelites transformed from a tribe of a dispossessed minority that used to live in Egypt into God's people. The Torah is both our most treasured possession and the sign of God's Covenant and God's love for Israel.

Our Torah tells us the story of how Moses ascended the mountain to receive the words of God in the book of Exodus. The entirety of Israel was gathered at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain smoked and thundered with the presence of God. A truly magnificent and terrifying image.

Despite the tremendous detail the Torah gives us about this moment, there is a tension in the text that produces a contradiction. On the one hand, it teaches us that God spoke to Moses from heaven when God gave him the 10 commandments. On the other hand, Exodus 19 says that God descended onto the mountain. At first brush, this seems like a contradiction. How can God be in heaven at the same time that God descends onto the mountain? Did God speak from heaven or did God come to earth to give us the commandments?

A midrash from the Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael solves this tension in a creative and beautiful way. The midrash teaches us that when Moses

ascended to the top of the mountain, God caused heaven to descend in order to contain the top of the mountain. To put a visual on it, think about a soft-serve ice cream cone getting dipped into chocolate sauce (except upside-down). What this means is that both texts could be true because while God descended to the mountain, God had brought the heavens down to the top of the mountain, allowing us to say that the Torah was given from heaven.

While this midrash might seem like a creative way of ironing out a contradiction in our Torah, it actually teaches us something very important about our religion. Moses had an encounter with God not because he went up to heaven, but because God brought heaven down to Moses. In a similar way, we do not believe as Jews that we have to strive upward and renounce the world to achieve ultimate redemption or salvation. As Jews we believe that it is our role to be rooted in this world and bring heaven down to us. How can we do that? By observing the commandments: love your neighbor, feed the hungry, do not cast the stranger out of your midst, be faithful to your spouse, and walk humbly. We don't have to seek to transport ourselves away from this world. We have the power to bring redemption for ourselves. On this Shavuot, I hope we all celebrate and feel grateful for *matan Torah*, the giving of the Torah. And perhaps we can all remember that heaven isn't as far away as we think it is if we act as God's partners in perfecting our world.

Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried



Benj Fried
rabbi.benj@CongShirAmi.org

Adult Education INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM CLASS

For some things in life, it is never too late. Somehow, when you were younger, maybe you didn't learn what you'd like to know about the culture and religion of the Jewish people. Perhaps, you grew up in a place where there was no synagogue. Perhaps, you weren't quite ready to appreciate the Jewish education you were offered. Perhaps you were raised in another faith, but have joined a Jewish family and would like to know more about the heritage of those you love. Perhaps you now seek a way to live a fuller and richer Jewish family life. Perhaps you are seeking conversion to Judaism.

Whatever your reason, Congregation Shir Ami's Introduction to Judaism offers you a time and place to broaden your Jewish awareness. This course can help you acquire a basic Jewish vocabulary. You can gain intellectual and experiential knowledge of Judaism as well as the skills necessary to "do Jewish." Intro is designed to be a meaningful, educational experience for any person interested in knowing and understanding Judaism and Jewish life.

Included in the Introduction to Judaism course are the following concepts:

- Birth
- Concepts of God
- Conversion to Judaism
- Death and Mourning
- Israel and Zionism
- Jewish Culture
- Jewish History
- Jewish Holidays
- Marriage and Family
- Personal Responsibility
- Repentance and the Path of Righteousness
- Worship and Spirituality

The class will be taught by Diana Zankowsky at Shir Ami and will begin at 9 am on June 7th. It will meet additionally on June 21st, July 12th and 26th, and August 9th and 17th. There is no cost for the class except for the purchase of the required text: "Every Person's Guide to Judaism" by Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff. Please email Diana (religion@congshirami.org) with any questions and to confirm your attendance. The fall schedule will be set at the end of August.

Annual Membership Meeting, June 1

Slate of Shir Ami Board of Directors 2014-15:

President: Harriet Skelly
Vice-President: Sara Lamnin
Secretary: Melanie Einbund
Treasurer-Receivables: Vicky Sapper
Treasurer-Payables: Jon Zimmerman
Trustee #1: Jon Zimmerman
Trustee #2: Marion Kramer
Trustee #3: Toni Schulberg
Communications Committee Co-Chair: Ruth Hartman
Communications Committee Co-Chair: Rose Firestone
Religious Committee Co-Chair: Diana Zankowsky
Religious Committee Co-Chair: David Schulberg
Membership Outreach Committee Co-Chair: Barbara Heimowitz
Membership Outreach Committee Co-Chair: Bonnie Frey
Membership Lifecycle Committee Chair: Jan Dombrower
School Committee Co-Chair: Jane Steele
School Committee Co-Chair: Rick Goldhoff
Building & Grounds Committee Chair: Milt Palmer
Religious Events Committee Chair: Pat Palmer
Sisterhood Chair: Jan Dombrower
Men's Club Chair: Peter Lewis
Adult Education Committee Co-Chair: Valerie Goldman
Adult Education Committee Co-Chair: Sam Krantz
Social Action Committee Chair: Tom Spitzer
Member at Large: Marlene Lamnin
Member at Large: Jeremy Templeton
Member at Large: Rita Weikal



MEETING NOTICE!

Annual Shir Ami Membership Meeting
Sunday, June 1, 2014, 12 Noon at Shir Ami

Lunch will be provided

Agenda:

Accomplishments for 2013-2014
Election of 2014-2015 Board of Directors
Presentation and vote of 2014-2015 budget
Breakout Discussions on
School Vision, Social Action, and Gardening

Child-care/supervision will be provided



Shir Ami Information

Donations as of May 21, 2014

- Daryl Berman and Lilly Erickson,
In Memory of Daryl's father, Morris Berman
- Jon Zimmerman and Sara Lamnin,
In Memory of Jon's grandfather, Hyman Rebotsky
- Alex and Irena Druker,
In Memory of Alex's mother, Betya Druker
- Judy Ganz,
In Memory of her father, George Berenstein
- Judy Ganz,
In Honor of her daughter, Marla Ball,
receiving her MBA



Out-going vice president, Harriet Skelly and out-going president Jon Zimmerman.

Shabbat at Camp Newman, June 27



Congregation Shir Ami Shabbat at Camp Newman

Members and staff are warmly invited
to share a Shabbat at Camp Newman!

Reception with our Camp Directors,
Shabbat dinner, singing and dancing

For details visit:

[www.newman.urjcamp.org/
alumni/reunions/synagogue](http://www.newman.urjcamp.org/alumni/reunions/synagogue)



Friday, June 27th

Important Notes for Visitors:

- We are asking **all visitors** to make a minimum contribution of \$36 per adult (at the time of registration you will be directed to our donor webpage)
- Online registration is required
- We discourage parents from visiting their child in session, for this may make other children feel sad and cause problems in the cabins
- Anyone under the age of 18 **MUST** be accompanied by their own parent **at all times**



For questions, please call or email:

Tracey Klapow, tklapow@urj.org
(415) 392-7080x13 until June 1st
(707) 571-8641 after June 1st

Shir Ami Accomplishments 2013-2014



CONGREGATION
SHIR AMI

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2013-2014 Achievements and Milestones

- Convened lay-led summer Shabbat services
- Had outreach table at Castro Valley Pride Festival
- Participated in visitor's Shabbat evening at Camp Newman
- Held successful Labor Day BBQ and fundraiser
- Welcomed nine new member families
- Held High Holiday services and break-the-fast
- Welcomed two new Rabbinic Interns
- Hosted "Rescue in the Philippines" movie event at Castro Valley Library
- Held successful year of Shir Ami Hebrew & Religious School
- Introduced new "Tot Talk" program for families with young children
- Hosted Sukkah Decorating Party and Sukkot-Shabbaton sleepover
- Held Holiday/Shabbat services for Sukkot, Chanukah, Purim and Passover
- Held successful Chanukah Faire & Boutique fundraiser
- Held special Chanukah Celebration service
- Co-sponsored Holidays in the Holy Land display at Castro Valley Library
- Hosted successful Tu B'Shevat Seder
- Participated in Martin Luther King day community observances
- Hosted successful Welcoming Shabbat service with Reverend Katie Kandarian-Morris and congregants from Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church
- Visited and participated in Starr King Sunday service
- Participated in South Hayward Parish with 2 SHP Board members
- Continued building our partnership with Rev Arlene and the Eden United Church of Christ by hosting a Community Passover Seder and contributing to the Comida para Cherryland
- Held volunteer appreciation Shabbat service
- Provided camperships for our youth to attend Jewish summer camps
- Participated in regional NFTY youth group and events
- Several members attended URJ Biennial in San Diego
- Offered successful adult education classes including book discussions, text study, Adult Hebrew, poetry, art, philosophy, conversational Hebrew and more!
- Hosted visit from Congressman Eric Swalwell
- Hosted guest speaker Dr. Stanley Wulf on "Two-State Solution" for Israel
- Hosted Cantor-in-Residence Ken Cohen for a delightful and emotional weekend
- Held 18th annual sisterhood retreat and monthly Rosh Chodesh meetings
- Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh joined Women of Reform Judaism
- Held successful Men's Club events, including nature walks at Lake Chabot
- Participated in Jewish Heritage night at Oakland A's Stadium
- Made visits to the sick and infirm; brought meals to member families
- Launched new Shir Ami website
- Held School Purim Carnival, during which over 40 toiletry kits for those in need were filled
- And oh... the Potlucks!

Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood

UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH

Wednesday, June 25

- Hosted by Rita Weikal & Toni Schulberg
- For dinner!
- Look for an email with further details



ROSH CHODESH RECAP

We brought in the new moon of Iyar at the home of Barbara-Ann Lewis. She served a delicious meal of Barley soup (in honor of the Omer), salad, and lumpia.

Everyone contributed to wonderful desserts as well.

We learned about the Omer, the seven week period between Passover and Shavuot, a celebration of harvests. We also learned about the significance of birds during Shavuot and we joined in a wonderful activity of making Origami birds.



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



June/July Yahrzeit List

June 2014 Yarzheit List (as of 05/20/14)

June 6, 2014

Ted Balmforth,	son-in-law of Ann and Sam Blank
Jerry Becker,	early active member of Shir Ami
George Berenstein,	father of Judy Ganz
Lilian Thiel Black,	mother of Melanie Einbund
Sarah Blank,	mother of Sam Blank
Sheila Frey,	mother of Bonnie Frey
Doris Greenfield,	mother of Julie Greenfield
Arthur Kramer,	father of Marion Kramer
Robert Krantz,	father of Sam Krantz
Samuel Manton Thiel,	grandfather of Melanie Einbund

June 20, 2014

Fran Johnson,	long-time member of Shir Ami
Robert Levinson,	lay leader of Shir Ami for many years
Jacob (Jack) Ross,	father of David Ross

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

Bobbie Clark,	sister of Marci Loss
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

July 2014 Yarzheit List (as of 5/21/14)

July 11, 2014

Rose Levine,	wife of Hillie Levine and long-time founding member of Shir Ami
Alyce Nasatir,	mother of Cary Nasatir
David Teferi,	husband of Lina Teferi and father of Rahel Ruiz

July 18, 2014

Naomi Greenblatt,	sister of Hillie Levine
Leo Knopf,	father of Lori Knopf Santora
Deborah Mitchell,	mother of Helen Markus
Hans Schwarzenberger,	father of Barbara Heimowitz
Frances Wolch,	former member of Shir Ami who made the Ark door tiles

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

Bobbie Clark,	sister of Marci Loss
Leona Rosenthal,	mother of Ruth Rosenthal and grandmother of Evelyn, Lisa, and Jacob Carmack

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.