

# JANUARY 2015 BULLETIN ~Kislev/Tevet 5775



## 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

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### Naming Ceremony, Jan. 9

Did you never receive a Hebrew name? Or perhaps, you would like to give your child a Hebrew name? During his next visit, on January 9, 2015, Rabbi Benj is offering to perform a naming ceremony for anyone in the congregation (who is Jewish) who would like to receive a Hebrew name. Please contact [Rabbi Benj](#) to discuss the details.



### Office Hours, Jan. 10

Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried will be holding "office hours" on January 10. This is an opportunity to meet one-on-one for a private conversation with Benj. Contact Benj at [rabbi.benj@congshirami.org](mailto:rabbi.benj@congshirami.org) to set up an appointment.

### Children's Shabbat, Jan. 23

On January 23rd at 6:00 pm there will be a special Shabbat service designed specifically for our youngest members and their families, led by Student Rabbi Benj Fried. The children's service will be followed by a **potluck at 6:45 pm** and then a service for adults at 7:30 pm.

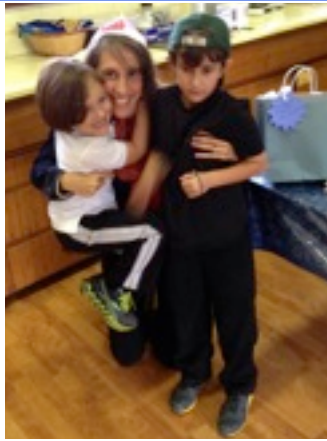
### Looking for Your Donation Receipt?

Contributions to Shir Ami are welcome and treasured. A mailed acknowledgement for your 2014 donation will be sent in January.

### Internet Resources

On [Page 3](#) of this Bulletin, Congregation Shir Ami President, Harriet Skelly, has listed some of her favorite internet resources. To access any of these sites, simply click on the text highlighted in blue and the magic of the internet will take you there.

In fact, this entire Bulletin is filled with links to make it easier for you to access information and to move smoothly throughout the document.



## Event Calendar

You can find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org) !

Thu.	Jan.	8	7:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami, all are welcome
Fri.	Jan.	9	7:30 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Jan.	10		"Office hours" by appointment with Rabbi Benj, email <a href="mailto:rabbi.benj@congshirami.org">rabbi.benj@congshirami.org</a>
Sat.	Jan.	10	3:00 pm	<i>What's a Rashi?</i> , 3-4:30 pm, <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Jan.	10	4:30 pm	<i>The Problem of Suffering</i> , <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj. Havdallah at 6
Sun.	Jan.	11	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	Jan.	11	11:30 am	<a href="#">Tot Talk</a> , a free program for families with children under 5 years old. 11:30-12:30
Wed.	Jan.	14	7:30 pm	<a href="#">Jewish Meditation Group</a> , contact Julie Greenfield, <a href="mailto:meditation@CongShirAmi.org">meditation@CongShirAmi.org</a>
Sat.	Jan.	17	9:00 am	<a href="#">Introduction to Judaism</a> , ongoing class, all are welcome, with Diana Zankowsky
Thu.	Jan.	22	7:30 pm	Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood, hosted by Sharalyn Stebbins and Lisa Steindel-Bryne. Details to follow
Fri.	Jan.	23	6:00 pm	6:00 pm Children's Shabbat; 6:45 pm POTLUCK (bring a dish to share); 7:30 pm Shabbat Service: led by Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Jan.	24	10:00 am	Religious Committee Meeting over brunch at Diana Zankowsky's home. Please RSVP by email to <a href="mailto:religion@congshirami.org">religion@congshirami.org</a>
Sat.	Jan.	24	3:00 pm	<i>Mishna and Midrash</i> , 3-4:30 pm, <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Jan.	24	4:30 pm	<i>Judaism and Parenting</i> , <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj. Havdallah at 6
Sun.	Jan.	25	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	Feb.	1	11:00 am	Religious School/Tu BiSh'vat Celebration
Fri.	Feb.	6	7:30 pm	<a href="#">Welcoming Shabbat</a> Interfaith Service with Shir Ami's Rabbi Julie Bressler and Senior Pastor Chuck Horner from Calvary Baptist Church

**Fri.-Sun., Feb. 20-22, Shir Ami's Women's Retreat, *Reflect and Connect*.**

At San Damiano Retreat Center; cost \$240; contact Ruth Hartman with questions, 510-582-3379 or [events@congshirami.org](mailto:events@congshirami.org)



Dear Shir Ami Community,

## **Do You Have 10 Minutes?**

Our congregation as a member of the URJ (Union for Reform Judaism) is delighted to partner with the URJ to bring opportunities for Jewish study right to your inbox. Five days a week, the URJ publishes **Ten Minutes of Torah**, a daily email. We want to encourage you to join the thousands of others who open their email to:

- study a commentary on the week's Torah portion,
- read about a significant moment in Jewish history,
- connect with life in Israel,
- or learn about an upcoming holiday.

In just ten minutes, you can add to your Jewish knowledge. You can even read Ten Minutes of Torah on the go with your smart phone or tablet. [Sign up today](#) for this special version of Ten Minutes of Torah. Be sure to include our congregation's name and location. You can indicate which days/topic you wish to receive. It only takes 10 minutes a day to get started on a lifetime of Jewish learning. I hope you check it out.

I also want to share with you some online resources that I use/read frequently that cover many areas of Jewish living including great recipes, activities for families to do for each Jewish holiday along with an explanation of the traditions and meanings of the holiday, parenting, current events and much more:

- [ReformJudaism.org](http://ReformJudaism.org)
- [URJ.org](http://URJ.org)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)
- [InterfaithFamily.com](http://InterfaithFamily.com)

Resources specific to Social Justice/Tikkun Olam:

- [Religious Action Center](#) (RAC)
- [Hazon](#)
- [Fair Trade Judaica](#)
- [Repair the World](#)
- [Be' Chol Lashon](#) (Globaljews.org)
- [Israel Religious Action Center](#) (IRAC)
- [Keshet](#) (LGBTQ Jewish news & Resources)

Magazines & Newsletters:

- [The Jewish Daily Forward](#)
- [Tablet Magazine](#)
- [Jewniverse](#)
- [The Pluralist](#)

Facebook Pages:

- [Sprout East Bay](#)
- [510 Families](#)

I invite you to share with us your favorite Jewish sites and we can publish them in a future bulletin. You can send me an email at [president@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:president@CongShirAmi.org) with your information.

Happy New Year,

Harriet



# Rabbinic Interns' Page

Benj Fried, January Clergy Column

## A Modest Proposal

One of the most controversial values that traditional Jews hold is the value of *tz'niut* or modesty. While there is no commandment in the Torah about wearing modest dress, the value of modesty has been used by many to legislate standards for clothing. Orthodox communities are well known for long skirts, black coats, and wigs for married women. Some members of the community take the standard so far that they show active hostility towards people who do not meet their standards of modesty. A couple years ago, many of us were very disturbed by the story of Naama Margolese, an 8-year-old girl who lived in Beit Shemesh. Her family had made aliyah, and they were modern-Orthodox. Naama confessed that she was afraid to walk to school because a group of Ultra-Orthodox boys harassed her by calling her abusive names, spitting on her, and saying she was a prostitute for her immodest clothing. How an 8-year-old girl could appear to be immodest is beyond me. Furthermore, the Ultra-Orthodox have made an active push to eliminate the faces of women from billboards, advertisements, and the public sphere to conform to the value of *tz'niut*.

The concept of *tz'niut* is a very difficult one for people in liberal communities to accept. While it is generally a good idea not to be overly flashy or risqué in our clothing choices, when people try to enforce standards of modesty what results is usually a deeply sexist standard that conveys in certain communities very negative and repressive feelings about sexuality. The question then remains whether the concept of modesty can be applied in our lives, or whether it is a relic of a community with different values than our own.

While modesty in the sense of policing the way people dress does not speak to us in the Reform movement, I think that modesty in a wider sense is a very important value to impress on our children. When we have a modern conversation about modesty, we realize it's not about covering

our knees and hiding our bodies. It is about the way we live: our speech and our behavior.

When we think about the way that social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, make our personal lives so public, the concept of modesty is all the more important in our day and age. When people post their thoughts on social media, anyone can look at them. Keeping modesty in mind, then, helps us avoid unnecessary self-disclosure. Now, we should never be unfriendly and closed off from each other. But at the same time, we should avoid having loud phone conversations out in public or revealing the minutiae of our private lives to loose acquaintances or strangers. Practicing *tz'niut* then is about maintaining a nuanced sensibility in which our self-disclosure is not automatic or senseless, but rather thoughtful and deliberate. Our thoughts and our innermost feelings should not be treated cheaply and put on display for just anyone to see and gossip about. We should think deliberately about who the people are who are deserving of our trust and who would appreciate our self-disclosure to them.

I think the lesson of *tz'niut* is an important one, and it is one that only we can teach our children. Living in a modest way helps create a good and balanced life in which boundaries that protect us are shaped and in which deep, intimate friendship becomes a possibility.



**Rabbinic Interns, 2014-1015**

Benj Fried [rabbi.benj@congshirami.org](mailto:rabbi.benj@congshirami.org)  
Julie Bressler [rabbi.julie@congshirami.org](mailto:rabbi.julie@congshirami.org)

# Adult Ed/Lifelong Learning

## Adult Learning w/ the Rabbi

### **January 10, with Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried**

#### **3:00-4:30 p.m. What's a Rashi?**

Ever wonder who this Rashi guy is that everyone seems to talk about in their sermons? Come learn about some of the most important interpreters of our Torah. Learn some of the techniques that our rabbis and medieval commentators used to interpret the Torah, and let's have some fun with our own interpretation of the text.

#### **4:30-6:00 pm The Problem of Suffering**

Have you ever wondered about the problem of suffering? Have you asked where God is in suffering? Or how we can help each other through our suffering? Come to this class, as we look at the book of Job and see what it can teach us about our own lives. We will try to answer the questions of where suffering comes from, how can we react to it, and how can we derive meaning from it. Most importantly: how can we be a caring community for each other?

Havdallah at 6.

### **January 10, "Office Hours" with Benj Fried**

Benj will be holding "office hours" to meet with congregants one-on-one by appointment. Email Benj to schedule a time. [rabbi.benj@congshirami.org](mailto:rabbi.benj@congshirami.org)

### **January 24, with Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried**

#### **3:00-4:30 p.m. Mishnah and Midrash**

Come learn about the earliest works of rabbinic literature. How did rabbinic law take its shape? What were some of the earliest forms of Biblical interpretation? This will be a lot of fun and help you understand some of the earliest history of our people.

#### **4:30-6:00 p.m. Judaism and Parenting**

We invite the whole congregation, but in particular those with young families, to join us for this event. We will look at Jewish text and discuss what does Judaism have to teach us about what it means to be a good parent. We will be excited to hear your voices and learn what values you bring to the table. Babysitting will be provided for children

Havdallah at 6.

## Introduction to Judaism

The Introduction to Judaism class met in mid-December. We discussed the holiday of Chanukah and issues of assimilation contrasted with separateness.

**Our next meeting will be on January 17.** We will meet at Congregation Shir Ami. We will look a little at the minor holiday of Tu BiSh'vat and mostly at an overview of Jewish literature.

Throughout the school year, we will be meeting only once per month, intentionally on a Saturday when the rabbinic interns are not in town. The schedule follows:

February 14

March 28

April 1

Dates may have to change; check the congregational calendar at [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org) for the latest information.

**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. If you haven't yet attended but want to join, please email Diana ([religion@congshirami.org](mailto:religion@congshirami.org)) with any questions and to confirm your attendance.



# Community Information

## Jewish Meditation Group

Next group: **Wednesday, January 14, 7:30 pm**

A group for practice of Jewish meditation and spirituality. Held at Congregation Shir Ami the second Wednesday each month on a drop-in basis. Exact format to be decided by group; probably to include guided meditations, silent meditation, chanting, movement, and drash (a talk). No meditation or Jewish religious experience necessary. Free to members; by donation from non-members. For more info, contact Julie Greenfield; [Meditation@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Meditation@CongShirAmi.org)

## Camp Tawonga

Camp Tawonga is a Jewish, residential summer camp. Camp Tawonga is American Camp Association accredited, and has a staff/camper ratio of 1/1.5. Tawonga's 2015 program dates are available on our website and registration opens in December! Tawonga's beautiful 160 acre property is located right outside Yosemite National Park in Stanislaus National Forest. Tawonga offers camp sessions as well as teen leadership, a teen Israel trip, and adventure travel programs for 2<sup>nd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Tawonga also offers weekend family camps.

Join us for a Camp Tawonga information session in your neighborhood. Meet Camp Tawonga Directors to learn about our great programs, and get all your questions answered. Snacks and activities for kids provided! Tell a friend! Bring a friend! [More information and RSVP here.](#)

415-543-2267, [www.tawonga.org](http://www.tawonga.org),  
or [info@tawonga.org](mailto:info@tawonga.org)

## Yahrzeits

### January 2015 Yahrzeit List (as of 12/19/14)

#### January 9, 2015

Joseph Bressler,	husband of Florrie Finkle
Zac Cohen,	long time member of Shir Ami
Darlene Golembo,	sister of Sharon Golembo
Bridget Laky,	past president and long time former member of Shir Ami
Peter Rosenberg,	uncle of Alex Druker
Helen Rosner,	long time active member of Shir Ami

#### January 23, 2015

Tyler Brooke,	father of Toni Schulberg
Cecilia Kramer,	grandmother of Marion Kramer
George Lange,	brother of Mickey Lange
Earl T. Stebben,	husband of Sharalyn Stebben

#### Kaddish List (those who have died during the past 11 months)

Lorraine Golembo,	step-mother of Sharon Golembo
Harry Yoseph Mitchell,	brother of Helen Markus
Bobbie Clark,	sister of Marci Loss



## School Notes

On Friday evening (Nov. 21) Sean, Gabi, Rowan, Leah and James did a very good job participating in the shabbat services. Each student read individually and they sang prayers collectively. Diana and Benj collaborated in the organization of this service.

You will notice a new succulent garden in front of Shir Ami. On Sunday, Dec. 7th, all the students and staff participated in the planting. They had a great time and were very excited to show their parents which ones they planted. Thanks to Todd Steele for prepping the garden.

Chanukah was the theme on Dec. 14th. Every class, including Tot Talk, learned about the holiday and made something. The youngest children made edible dreidels, the preschool and first graders made cute Moose-menorahs. The older children made menorahs from wood and nuts.



## Tot Talk, January 11

The next Tot Talk will be on Sunday, January 11 at 11:30 am-12:30 pm. Come join us and enjoy a time of fun and Jewish learning as you connect with other families with young children.



*Welcoming Shabbat*

*Interfaith Service, Feb. 6*

## Welcoming Shabbat/Sabbath Services



*Join Student Rabbi Julie Bressler from Congregation Shir Ami and Senior Pastor Chuck Horner from Calvary Baptist Church to discuss how we put our Faiths in Action.*



**All are Welcome to attend the following:**

Friday, February 6, 2015 – Congregation Shir Ami

4529 Malabar Ave, Castro Valley

6:45 to 7:15 pm – Drop-in Orientation of synagogue & service

7:30 pm – Shabbat service, followed by oneg (snacks)

Saturday, February 7, 2015 – Congregation Shir Ami

Afternoon (TBA) – Joint Adult Education session regarding how our faiths approach study of the holy texts, followed by Havdallah - a beautiful, short service to conclude Shabbat

Sunday, February 8, 2015 – Calvary Baptist Church

28924 Ruus Rd, Hayward

Morning (TBA) – Services with Calvary Congregations

**For more information, call (510) 432-7703**

**or e-mail: [ledorvdor@yahoo.com](mailto:ledorvdor@yahoo.com)**



*Sisterhood Retreat, Feb. 20-22*

Join us for our 19th Annual

**Shir Ami Women's  
Retreat:  
Reflect and  
Connect!**

Friday, February 20 – Sunday, February 22, 2015

At the beautiful San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville

Connect with your Jewish sisters and yourself! Join us for a weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are *very* welcome.

The cost for the weekend is \$240.

Please register online at <http://tinyurl.com/o9sctyj>, and mail your check, payable to Ruth Hartman, the same day. (Mailing address is at the online registration site.)

*Register ASAP, no later than **February 1.***

*Questions?*

*Contact Ruth Hartman: 510-582-3379 or [events@congshirami.org](mailto:events@congshirami.org)*

# Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh

## UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH

The next Rosh Chodesh will be on **Thursday, January 22 at 7:30 pm** to bring in the month of Sh'vat. It will be hosted by Sharalyn Stebbens and Lisa Steindel-Byrne. Details of location will be in upcoming email.

## ROSH CHODESH RECAP

### Thanksgiving, Jewish Style

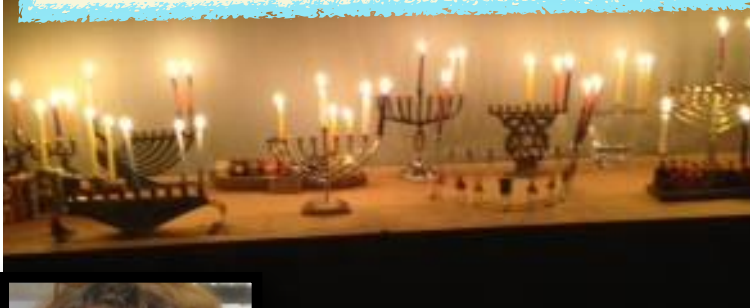
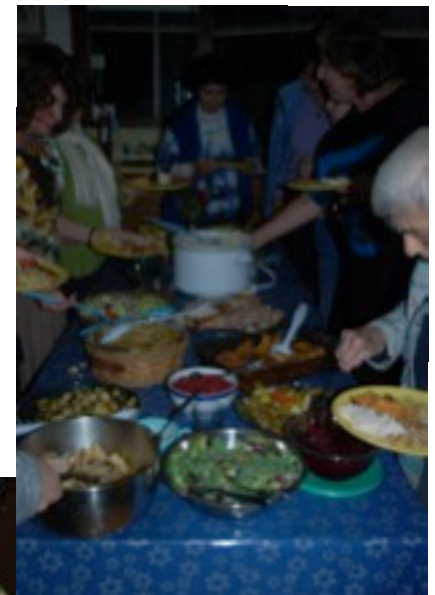
On Sunday, November 23, Sisterhood celebrated the new month of Kislev, hosted by Harriet Skelly and Diana Zankowsky. The program was entitled "Thanksgiving, Jewish Style." Diana presented the idea that Hanukkah was established as an 8 day holiday in the days of the Maccabees because they were unable to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. We also learned about the connection between Sukkot and Thanksgiving and how this secular holiday celebrates values that are a part of Judaism - gratitude, giving to those in need, etc. We then enjoyed a delicious Thanksgiving dinner with all of the trimmings!

### Hanukkah Celebration

On the second night of Hanukkah, our sisterhood gathered for our annual Hanukkah, latka eating, menorah lighting, and gift exchange celebration.

Held at the beautiful home of Bettina Skehan, we had a wonderful meal of salads, latkes and desserts. We lit eighteen menorahs for the second night and one extra menorah in honor of the Women of the Wall, joining in spirit with other women around the world doing the same.

A lively gift exchange was next. This year there was a record number of "stealing" gifts as the packages were very desirable. A lot of laughing and frivolity ensued as we enjoyed this traditional game.



For more information on Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh, contact Jan Dombrower [Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org)