

APRIL 2015 BULLETIN Nisan/Iyyar 5775



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

Event Calendar Find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, www.congshirami.org

Sat.	Apr.	4	4:30 pm	Community Passover Seder with Rabbi Benj Fried, held at Eden United Church. Reservations required. Email events@CongShirAmi.org
Sun.	Apr.	5		NO SCHOOL
Wed.	Apr.	8	7:00 pm	Shir Ami's 50ish Anniversary Celebration Planning Meeting , 7:00-9:00 pm
Sat.	Apr.	11	7:00 pm	Shir Ami's Saturday Night at the Movies , check weekly email reminder for event details
Sun.	Apr.	12	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew School, 9-10:30; Religious School, 10:30-12:30
Wed.	Apr.	15	3:00 pm	First session of 6-week study of Pirkei Avot (see page 4), held weekly at Bodi's Java
Thu.	Apr.	16	7:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami , all are welcome
Fri.	Apr.	17	7:00 pm	Pre-K to 3rd grade participatory Shabbat Service with Rabbi Benj Fried. Bring your children to this family-friendly service honoring volunteers- note early start time of 7:00 pm
Sat.	Apr.	18	3:00 pm	Visions of Peace with Rabbi Benj Fried
Sat.	Apr.	18	4:30 pm	Yehudah Poliker & Songs of the Shoah with Rabbi Benj Fried
Sun.	Apr.	19	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew School, 9-10:30; Religious School, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	Apr.	19	11:30 am	Tot Talk , a free monthly program for families with children under age 5 to connect and have fun
Wed.	Apr.	22	7:30 pm	Jewish Meditation Group , contact Julie Greenfield at meditation@congshirami.org for details
Thu.	Apr.	23	7:30 pm	Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood , Hosted by Barbara Heimowitz & Melanie Einbund. Look for details in your email update.
Fri.	Apr.	24	7:30 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Julie Bressler, celebrating Israel in commemoration of Israeli Memorial Day and Independence Day
Sat.	Apr.	25	6:00 pm	Book Club Discussion , Ari Shavit's <i>The Promised Land</i> with Rabbi Julie Bressler
Sat.	Apr.	25	7:30 pm	Dinner & Happy Israeli Movie Night with Rabbi Julie Bressler. After our book discussion, stay for dinner, popcorn and a movie! (Dinner will likely be order-in pizza, details later)
Sun.	Apr.	26	TBD am	School Field Trip to Camp Newman , details to follow (Tot Talk families invited)
Fri.	May	1	7:30 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Benj Fried
Sat.	May	2	6:30 pm	Potluck Dinner at Shir Ami , come celebrate Rabbi Benj Fried's last weekend with us!

The weekend of May 1-3 is Benj's last weekend with us after 2 years. We will miss him. Julie will be back next year.

Photo from Purim School Carnival 2015.
Look for more purim photos throughout the Bulletin



President's Message

Editor's note: This column was written by guest contributor Diana Zankowsky. Diana is a long-time Shir Ami Board Member and currently serves as Religious Committee Co-Chair.

Dear Shir Ami Community,

Harriet Skelly always begins her President's column with "Dear Shir Ami Community". As her guest editor this month, I began my column in the same way. And then I hesitated. What really is a community? How do you know that you are in one? What makes one work?

I looked up "community" in the dictionary but the definition was sterile and incomplete:

"a social, religious...or other group sharing common characteristics or interests..."

I can see Shir Ami in this definition, but we are so much more. A community means warmth, camaraderie, shared humor as well as shared difficulties. None of these qualities come through with this definitional description.

In February, 24 women went to our Shir Ami 19th annual Women's retreat. On Saturday evenings, we always have our zany performance for ourselves, complete with silliness and laughing. This year, right after the play, Jan Dombrower learned that her mother, Beatrice, had passed. Immediately, the mood changed and all the women rallied around and for Jan,

providing her with the support she needed at that moment. That's community, both laughter and tears, and being there for each other.

Purim is always a crazy holiday and especially during the carnival, with costumes, games, lots of sugar and high energy among the children. Usually the adults run the activities. This year, however, I saw the students helping their peers to learn a game and making sure no one was left out. I saw students painting each other's faces. And students brought their own toys as gifts for each other, instead of prizes bought by the adults. This is community, raising children to help and to look out for each other!

These are just two of the many examples of Shir Ami working best as a community: when many participate and are involved. Our rabbinic interns are amazed always at how involved our community is. And the fact that our membership has grown from 49 families to 70 shows that even newcomers feel a sense of community and want to be a part of the warmth, camaraderie, shared humor as well as shared difficulties that is Shir Ami.

L'Sholom
Diana
Zankowsky



Photo of Diana
at Women's
Retreat in
February

Shir Ami's 50ish Anniversary Planning Continues

The initial planning meeting of Shir Ami's 50ish Anniversary celebration was well-attended and productive. The next planning meeting will be

Wednesday, April 8th, 7 pm at Shir Ami

Whether you are new to Shir Ami or are a long-time member, we invite you to come with your perspective.

RSVP to events@congshirami.org if you're able to attend. If you are unable to attend, but would like to be part of the planning and on a committee, also RSVP so we can count you in!



Rabbinic Interns' Page

Rabbinic Intern Bulletin Column – April

Passover in an Unexpected Place

Bashana Haba'ah B'Yirushalayim! Next year in Jerusalem! These excited words complete our Passover Seders each year. When we live 10,000 miles from Israel, this exclamation is largely a dream, especially when really we love and cherish our Passover traditions at home. As many of you know, I spent last year living and learning in Jerusalem. When I said these words at the end of my family's seder in 2013, I teared up when I realized these words were true. I would be spending Passover in Jerusalem. I would finally be living this dream. At that moment, I had no idea that I would actually choose to fly away from Passover in Jerusalem, to spend the holiday in tiny communities throughout the Former Soviet Union.

Every Pesach, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (the rabbinical school that Rabbi Benj and I attend) sends rabbinical, cantorial, and education students on a service trip to the Former Soviet Union. I was lucky enough to be one of the selected students to participate in this program during my year in Israel. We visited Jewish communities that were once under Soviet oppression and have since been able to create a revitalized Jewish identity within their communities. Though these communities once boasted nearly 80% Jewish populations, they never recovered after being decimated during the Holocaust. Today, these communities contain populations of several dozen to several hundred Jews, and the remnants of their old neighborhoods and thriving Jewish presence are largely invisible to the average citizen.

While there are so many stories I can share from this trip (and will happily chat with anyone about them during my next visit!), I'll just share one here. Our final seder took place in a very small town in Belarus, Baronovich. Baronovich is located about two hours outside of Minsk and rarely has interactions with Jewish professionals or access to Jewish ritual objects, food and other supplies we take for granted. Though once a city with a nearly 80% Jewish population, hardly anyone remained after the Holocaust. Those who live there now are largely the descendants of those who had escaped and returned after the war or those who moved to the town for its various factories and job opportunities. Now a community of a few hundred, they meet weekly for religious school and send nearly all of the young people to a region-wide camp. The religious school teacher proudly shared with me that she has known most of the young adults in the community since they were toddlers and was so pleased that they come back to the seder each year.

This first generation of young adults has created their own club and meet regularly to not only have fun and socialize but also learn text and tradition. Their religious schools and camps have a strong focus on education and knowledge, particularly because many of their parents and grandparents grew up without any Jewish education or culture due to the Soviet ruling structure and the illegality of practicing Judaism in public. For this community, the themes of freedom and slavery are much more complicated as their recent, and even current, history is full of restrictions and silencing. Parents and grandparents are joining their children and learning about Judaism for the first time. After over twenty years, this community is thriving and developing the next generation of its leadership through dedication to prayer, tradition and connection.

Early on, it was clear that this seder would be special. Though we had experienced beautiful and meaningful seders in our previous two communities, the Jewish community of Baronovich brought an additional level of excitement and engagement. Four generations were present at the seder, and each group added something different. The young children were eager to answer our questions and show their knowledge of the Exodus story. Given their interest, we moved through *maggid* (retelling of the story) as essentially a call and response and a series of questions. To my amazement, the children knew almost every answer or offered insightful guesses and questions to those they were unsure of. When we asked for the heroes of the Exodus from Egypt, I was impressed and happy that the children included Miriam and Aaron in addition to the traditional answers of Moses and God – it showed a true understanding of the complexity and breadth of the story. The young adults in the back had brought their own haggadot that included the music for various tunes and songs that they led us in with enthusiasm and passion. It was in this moment that I felt my strongest connection to Jewish peoplehood and the global Jewish community. We were able to share this holiday because of our common language as a religion and a people. Here I was, ten thousand miles from home, in a country in which I had to speak through a translator, being able to sing with this community because we all knew the same tunes for the four questions and Dayenu. The words of Dayenu remind us of God's many miracles to the Jewish people, and this was one for me. I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to serve and learn with these communities, and I count it as an honor and gift I will not soon forget.

Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler

Adult Ed/Lifelong Learning

Saturday, April 17, with Benj Fried

3:00 pm, *Visions of Peace:*

Israel has been in the news a lot lately. In this class, we will look at what peace means for Israel. We often talk about peace, but not everyone has the same peace in mind. We will look at four different versions of peace in order to better understand our own impressions of the Israeli/Palestinian situation

4:30 pm, *Yehudah Poliker & Songs of the Shoah*

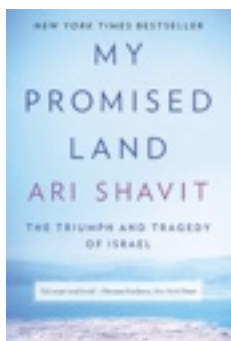
In honor of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust memorial day, we will look at the music Israelis listen to during this somber day of remembrance. Yehuda Poliker and Yaakov Gilad, both the children of Holocaust survivors, wrote an album that deals with the trauma of second-generation survivors. We will listen to the music and study the songs to understand the way the Holocaust haunted the children and grandchildren of survivors.

Saturday, April 26 with Julie Bressler

6:00 pm, *Book Club*

Discussion

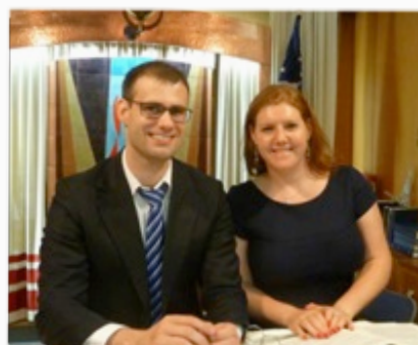
Join us for a discussion of Ari Shavit's complex and powerful book, ***My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel.*** Shavit combines historical material with narrative and anecdotes in what The Wall Street Journal called "one of the most



nuanced and challenging books written on Israel in years." Please bring your questions, reactions and an open mind to what will surely be a lively discussion! We will conclude with Havdallah.

7:30 pm, *Dinner & Happy Israeli Movie Night*

After our book discussion, stay for dinner, popcorn and a movie! We will watch a film highlighting Israel's more light-hearted film industry. Film title will be released closer to the date - stay tuned!



Rabbinic Interns, 2014-1015

Benj Fried rabbi.benj@congshirami.org
Julie Bressler rabbi.julie@congshirami.org

Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers

Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 pm at Bodi's Java, 6-week class begins April 15

Pirkei Avot, translated as Sayings/Chapters/Ethics of the Fathers, is a slender six-chapter book, traditionally studied as a chapter per week during the weeks between Passover and Shavuot. It contains many famous sayings, such as: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"

We will begin a 6-week class studying *Pirkei Avot*, starting on April 15th. This will be a 1-hour class that will meet at Bodi's Java on E. Castro Valley Blvd. at 3 pm on Wednesdays. Copies of the text can be found in our previous prayer book, Gates of Prayer, or may be purchased online or at any Judaica shop. If you purchase a book, please try to get a contemporary translation.

This class will replace the "Introduction to Judaism" class. The last class was held on March 28th. The *Pirkei Avot* class is open to all members of the congregation.

If you have any questions, either about the text or about the class, please contact Diana Zankowsky at religion@congshirami.org.

School Notes

On March 1st the older students had an opportunity to be in the kitchen. They made hamantashen. Then they practiced their Purim spiel with Mike Kasin. (Thank you Mike for the spiel and helping the kids.) The younger students made cards for Jan, practiced their poem and finished a project on mitzvahs.

On March 6th Shir Ami had a great intergenerational Shabbat service. The service included the whole congregation from our oldest members to the younger ones. In the middle of the service all the children were able to perform what they had practiced. Our youngest students sang a song, the first graders recited a poem and our third through seventh graders with some adults put on a Harry Potter Purim spiel. They did an amazing job considering they only had an hour to practice.

We had a great turnout for our annual Purim Carnival. Children were able to play with old fashion wooden toys. Thank you to Bill and Rose Firestone for bringing them and organizing a group game. There was the mitzvah project, face painting (thank you Sarah), donuts on a string (thank you Jeremy), head bowling (thank you Todd), bracelets and lanyards (thank you Marlo) and ice cream sundaes. A special thank you to all the members who donated items for our mitzvah project. Sara reported "we had a goal to fill 20 bags but we filled 54. That is three times the Chai or Life Affirming amount of 18".

On Friday March 13th eight families got together for a potluck dinner. A big thank you to Danielle Kiel and her family for hosting the first Chavara family night.

Camp Newman Family Fun Festival & Open House in Santa Rosa April 26th, 11am -3 pm

Here is the [link to the webpage](#) Free admission. This is an opportunity to explore the possibilities of Jewish summer camp for your family (there is a small charge for the barbecue).

Pre-K to 3rd grade participatory Shabbat Service April 17th 7:00pm.

The new date for the Pre-K to 3rd grade participatory Shabbat Service is scheduled for April 17th at 7:00pm. We welcome you all to come and bring your children to this family friendly service that will also be honoring volunteers at Shir Ami.

Tot Talk

Next meeting, Sunday, April 19, 11:30 am

Tot Talk, originally scheduled for April 26, has been rescheduled to April 19 so that families can attend Camp Newman Fun Day, We hope that you can make the adjustments to your calendars and join us on the 19th. Tot Talk families are also encouraged to join us at Camp Newman on April 26th as well.

Tot Talk is a free program, meeting monthly, for families with children under age 5. Tot Talk provides a Jewish connection in a fun atmosphere. Questions? Contact Bonnie@congshirami.org

Community Information

Jewish Meditation Group

Next meeting: **Wednesday, April 22, 7:30 pm**

A group for the practice of Jewish meditation and spirituality. Relax, center yourself, and connect with the divine spark within! Held at Congregation Shir Ami the fourth Wednesday of each month. Includes guided and silent meditation, chanting, and sometimes movement. One hour long. No meditation or religious experience necessary. \$5 donation requested of non-members; free to members. Led by Julie Greenfield. Contact Meditation@CongShirAmi.org

Condolences

Last month Louie Cohen died. Our condolences go out to Cary Nasatir & his extended family. Louie was his uncle. Louie's 2nd wife, Shelly Cohen (whom some of the long time members of Shir Ami remember), was influential in bringing the Nasatir family into Shir Ami.

Toastmasters at Shir Ami

Develop and hone your communication skills at Toastmasters. We meet at Shir Ami on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month from 7:15 to 8:45 pm. Open House on April 30th. Join us for some fun!

T'ai Chi Chih/Qi Gong

Tuesdays, 5-6pm at Shir Ami

Cost: \$10 each session (\$5 for Shir Ami members) A 12 week class with David Schulberg. (Drop-ins welcome). For more information contact David.Schulberg@comcast.net.

Prayer Books for the High Holidays

מחזור לימים הנוראים
משכן הנפש
MISHKAN HANEFESH
Machzor for the Days of Awe



Congregation Shir Ami will be purchasing new prayer books for our High Holy Days services. This new machzor, called **Mishkan HaNefesh**, will have modern and gender-equality content, similar to our current Shabbat prayer book (Mishkan T'filah) and an evolution from the High Holy Days machzor we've been using for several years, Gates of Repentance. It will contain updated translations, elucidating essays, rich commentary, and a beautiful selection of poetry. Mishkan HaNefesh provides an environment for those of all backgrounds to find meaning in the High Holy Days.

For a limited time, members and friends of Shir Ami have the opportunity to sponsor one or more of these two-volume sets (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Each regular print set may be sponsored for a donation of \$50; large print and pulpit editions are also available for sponsorship. Each volume of the set may be dedicated separately (or both may have the same dedication) and the donor may choose the message. Mishkan T'filah was also underwritten by our members and friends in this manner. Your donation is a great way to recognize important people and events in your life and a legacy to pass on to future generations at Shir Ami.

To sponsor a set of Mishkan HaNefesh prayer books, please fill out and send in the form on the next page. For questions please contact mishkan@congshirami.org, or call Jon at 510-220-3345.

Mishkan HaNefesh – continued

Minimum donations (# available): Regular Set - \$50 (85), Large Print Set - \$75 (15), Pulpit Set - \$100 (4), Music Edition - \$150 (1)

Inscription suggestions:

In Honor Of... Friends, Teachers, Rabbis, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation,
Wedding, Anniversary, Baby Naming, Graduation, Ordination, Birthdays
In Memory Of... Family Members, Lost Friends, (deceased) Public Figures

Examples:

Dedicated by Jon Zimmerman In Honor Of the 50th Wedding Anniversary of Ruth & Walter Zimmerman

Dedicated by the Lamnin Family In Honor Of the Ordination of Rabbi Suzy Stone

Dedicated by Jon Zimmerman In Memory Of Grandfather Hyman Rebotsky

*To sponsor a set of Mishkan HaNefesh prayer books, please fill out and send in the form below by **May 15, 2015:***

To: HHD Prayer Book, c/o Congregation Shir Ami
P.O. Box 2099, Castro Valley, CA 94546

Enclosed is a check for \$_____ for _____ set(s) of Mishkan HaNefesh
(for multiple sets, please include as many types & inscriptions as appropriate)

Name: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Set Type (Regular/Large Print/Pulpit/Music): _____

Inscription #1: _____

Inscription #2: _____

Inscription #3 (for large print set): _____

Donations: February & March 2015

February 2015

Marcia Loss In memory of Paul Berger and Bobbie Clark
Society of Toxicology Re R. Becker
Judy Ganz In memory of Matthew Ganz
Judy Ganz In memory of Sam Ganz
Judy Ganz In memory of May Ganz

March 2015

Judy Ganz In memory of Jan Dombrower's mother, Beatrice
Hartman/Wolff In memory of Jan Dombrower's mother, Beatrice
Melanie & Nate Einbund Yahrzeit of Faye Felgoise, Melanie's Aunt
Melanie & Nate Einbund Yahrzeit of Shirley Cooperman, Melanie's cousin
Melanie & Nate Einbund In memory of Jan Dombrower's mother
Sisterhood In memory of Beatrice Dombrower
Skelly Family Yahrzeit of Benjamin Halpern, father of H. Skelly,
Skelly Family Yahrzeit of Jack Skelly, father of B. Skelly
Skelly Family In memory of Beatrice Dombrower
Sidney & Sandra Jacobson In honor of of Toni and David Schulberg who were most
gracious lending them their lovely home
Vicky Sapper In memory of Beatrice Dombrower



Yahrzeits *(as of 03/20/15)*

April 17, 2015

Sidney Black, father of Melanie Einbund
Betya Druker, mother of Alex Druker
Blanche Fink, very active early member of Shir Ami
Benjamin Halpern, father of Harriet Skelly
Jack Skelly, father of Bruce Skelly
Marjorie Wolf, aunt of Ruth Hartman
Ruth Zelezny, grandmother of Julie Greenfield

April 24, 2015

Bernard Nasatir, father of Cary Nasatir

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

Beatrice Dombrower, mother of Jan Dombrower
Lorraine Golembo, step-mother of Sharon Golembo
Harry Yoseph Mitchell, brother of Helen Markus



Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh

UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH-

Thursday, April 23rd at 7:30

- To be hosted by Melanie Einbund and Barbara Heimowitz, we will bring in the month of Iyyar
- Check your email for more information as we near the 23rd



ROSH CHODESH RECAP

Our Sisterhood met on March 18th in celebration of the month and of Jan Dombrower's mother.

We enjoyed Chinese food and celebrated the life of Jan's mother, Beatrice. Again, we shared the privilege of being part of this extraordinary community of loving, supportive, and fun women who embody the spirit of *sisterhood*.

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