



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

4529 Malabar Avenue
Castro Valley CA 94546

Web: www.CongShirAmi.org
Email: Info@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 All events are held at Shir Ami, unless otherwise indicated.

Find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, www.congshirami.org/monthly-calendar

Sun.	Jan.	1			NO SCHOOL
Thur.	Jan.	5	7:00	pm	Shir Ami Board Meeting, held at Shir Ami. Open to all members
Sun.	Jan.	8			NO SCHOOL
Fri.	Jan.	13	7:30	pm	Erev Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Bryan Zive
Sat.	Jan.	14	10:00	am	Coffee and Commentaries with Rabbi Bryan Zive: study Talmud w/ others over a cup of coffee
Sun.	Jan.	15	9, 10:30	am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am
Sun.	Jan.	15	10:30	am	Parent Meeting. Join other parents from 10:30-11:30 at our school meeting
Fri.	Jan.	20	7:30	pm	A special Shabbat "Shira" Service with Cantor Ilan Davidson. See flier page 5
Sat.	Jan.	21	10:00	am	Shabbat Morning Meditation & Guided Torah Imagery, led by Cantor Ilan Davidson
Sat.	Jan.	21	5:30 6:00 7:00	pm pm pm	Havdalah Potluck Dinner Shira Join us as we bid farewell to Shabbat with food and song, led by Cantor Ilan Davidson
Sun.	Jan.	22	9, 10:30	am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am
Sun.	Jan.	22	11:30	am	Tot Talk: a program for families with children under age 5. Interfaith families welcome
Thur.	Jan.	26	7:30	pm	Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood: Bring in the month of Sh'vat- check your email for details
Fri.	Jan.	27	6:00	pm	Children's Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Liora Alban
Fri.	Jan.	27	6:45	pm	Potluck Dinner. Bring a dish to share and join the congregation for a festive dinner
Fri.	Jan.	27	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Liora Alban
Sat.	Jan.	28	10:00	am	Religious Committee Meeting at the home of Diana Zankowsky. All welcome. Please RSVP
Sat.	Jan.	28	7:30	pm	Winter Concert with the Rabbis: Join Rabbis Liora Alban & Bryan Zive for an evening of song
Sun.	Jan.	29	9, 10:30	am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am
Thur.	Feb.	2	7:00	pm	Shir Ami Board Meeting, held at Shir Ami. Open to all members
Sun.	Feb.	5	9, 10:30	am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am
Sun.	Feb.	12	9, 10:30	am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am
Sun.	Feb.	12	11:30	am	Tot Talk: a program for families with children under age 5. Interfaith families welcome
Sun.	Feb.	19			NO SCHOOL

Fri.- Sun., February 24-26. It's not too late to sign up for our 2017 Annual Women's Retreat. See flier

COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT: MEN'S GROUP

Each month we use this column to spotlight one of the committees (or groups) that help make Shir Ami special. This month's column is written by Art Liskewicz.

Committee Spotlight: Shir Ami Men's Group

The Shir Ami Men's Group had a "spirited" first activity on December 10th. We "brewed up" a great event in going to Drake's Brewery in San Leandro. The five men who were there "hopped" on a fantastic tour and learned about the process of beer production. After the tour, we could not "beer" to leave without a pint for the road. A good time was had by all including Rabbi Bryan who was our "designated driver."

This was just the beginning of many great outings for the men of Shir Ami. A beer tour may not have

appealed to everyone; but, there are many other adventures to experience. It was a pleasure to share a casual day getting to know one another.

Our next event was suggested from the group. We will look forward to visiting the Behring Auto Museum in Blackhawk--date to be determined. I have been given a few other suggestions but would still like to hear other ideas for future events. If you were not on the last email notice, please contact me to update the Men's Roster.

Let's make the Men's Group special. We are on a roll for the new year!

Art Liskewicz

liskewicz@aol.com

SHABBAT "SHIRA" (SHABBAT OF SONG) WITH CANTOR ILAN DAVIDSON

Cantor Ilan Davidson has been delighting audiences and congregations with his infectious spirit and beautiful voice since the age of 5. Growing up in a large Conservative congregation in Anaheim, CA, Cantor Davidson began his formal training at that same young age, under the tutelage of Hazzan Philip Moddel, who produced many Cantors throughout his long career. Cantor Davidson began leading services for his childhood congregation starting at the young age of 7, and continued until his graduation from High School, when he moved on to pursue a career on the stage. During his studies, the calling of his cantorial roots was too strong, and Cantor Davidson decided to forgo the stage for the bima.

After completing his studies in music, Ilan began serving congregation throughout Orange and L.A. Counties, exploring his own theological questions and relationships, until landing at Temple Beth El, San Pedro, in 1994, where he has served ever since. In discovering this community and life cycle oriented Reform congregation, Cantor Davidson "found a community, congregation, and Jewish movement that spoke to my more liberal values, while fully engaging my yiddishkeit and love for Hazzanut."

During his 22 years of service in this nearly 100 year old congregation, Cantor Davidson has expanded the congregations connections to their Jewishness, through our music and liturgy. He has created engaging Shabbat experiences, concerts, adult education, family and childrens' programs, a Jewish meditation community, active Youth, Teen, and Adult Choirs, an amazing band called the Moody Jews, who's Hanukkah CD has rocked the Jewish community, and

just 9 years ago, founded KindredSPIRITS, a world humanitarian aid foundation, which has raised over \$1 million in its short history, through Humanitarian Aid Concerts at such prestigious venues as Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Saban Theatre. Cantor Ilan has also been on the faculty of URJ Camp Newman, since it's inaugural year (with a little break to marry and start a family), and has served as the faculty dean.

With all of these accomplishments, when asked what he is most proud of, Cantor Davidson only speaks of his beautiful besheret, Jodi Davidson, and his two beautiful daughters, Jordan (13) and Zoe (9).

Friday, Jan. 20, 7:30 pm – Shabbat "Shira" Service
Join Cantor Davidson for a festive and musical filled Shabbat service, including an insightful drash, welcoming the book of Shemot (Exodus).

Saturday, Jan. 21, 10:00 am – Shabbat Morning Meditation and Guided Torah Imagery

A great teacher of Meditation once said that the only bad Meditation is the one you never tried. This service is open to all seekers of Meditation, even if you've never "sook." Join us and learn about Jewish Meditation, the "original" mode of prayer. Using chant and guided silence, we transcend the Chol (the mundane) and enter into the Kodesh (the holy). Cantor Ilan will also guide us through a guided meditation in this week's Torah Portion, Shemot.

Saturday, Jan. 21--Havdalah (5:30), Potluck Dinner (6:00) and Shira (7:00).

Join us once again for Havdalah and a Kumsitz sing-along with Cantor Ilan, as we bid farewell to Shabbat.

RABBINIC INTERNS' CLERGY COLUMN

Happy New Year Everybody! No matter how you personally celebrate New Year, there is no doubt that American culture as a whole puts tremendous pressure onto one day of the year—January 1st. This day represents all of our fresh starts, our New Year's resolutions, and our hopes for how the coming year will bring something better to our lives, our country, and our world. Even though it is surely exciting to attend New Year's Eve parties or stay up with our closest family and friends to watch the Ball Drop, I tend to feel deflated once these events are over. On January 2nd, I wake up to realize that the world and I are essentially exactly the same as they were two days ago, despite my high hopes.

Jewish tradition does not place value on January 1st, the first day of the Gregorian calendar. While living in Israel, I was surprised by the lackluster enthusiasm for this day which I typically hold dear. There were few parties or events occurring. My American friends and I ended up creating a small party of our own.

Israelis may feel that they do not need to celebrate January 1st, since Jewish tradition has multiple new years of its own. According to Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1, there are four Jewish new years. The first is Nisan 1, which happens in the Spring and thus corresponds to the season of redemption from Egypt and the birth of an independent Israelite nation. This is the new year for kings and festivals. The first of Elul is the new year for the tithing of cattle. Tithes had to be given for all cattle born between the first of Elul and the 30th of Av. The 15th of Shevat is the new year for the trees. We celebrate this day as Tu B'Shevat, usually by spending time in nature or having special Tu B'shevat seders abundant with fruit. Finally we have Rosh Hashanah, the new year of the Jewish civil calendar when we blow the

shofar, reflect on our behavior during the year prior, and prepare for the year ahead.

Every January 2nd, I feel disheartened as I descend to reality and realize that my limitations and the limitations of the world around me will be carried into the new year. Judaism celebrates four new years, which means there is no room for feeling such disheartenment. Instead, Judaism presents constant opportunities to begin afresh. As we move into the new year, I invite you think of this lesson from Judaism. Even though there is only one January 1st, there are 365 days in the year and each day is a fresh start. If you feel there is a something you have to improve upon, do not wait until a new year begins to make this improvement. Instead remember that there is more than one time during the year that we can better ourselves. Each day is precious and time spent living an unsatisfying life is time we will never get back.

Have a fabulous New Year celebration, but remember not to put too much pressure onto this day. We must persistently evaluate our lives and strive to make ourselves and the world better. It is not just on January 1st that this option becomes available. Rather, the opportunity for improvement is available whenever we feel its necessity.

Student Rabbi Liora Alban

RABBINIC INTERNS 2016-2017

Rabbi Liora Alban
rabbi.liora@congshirami.org

Rabbi Bryan Zive
rabbi.bryan@congshirami.org



Jan. 13-15 with Rabbi Bryan Zive

Fri., Jan. 13, 7:30 pm, Erev Shabbat Service.

Join Rabbi Bryan and the rest of the Shir Ami Community for a beautiful, spiritual and musical prayer service! He will deliver a *D'var Torah* (word of Torah) about the weekly portion, *Vayechi*.

Sat., Jan. 14, 10:00 am: Coffee and Commentaries.

Have you ever wondered when you are supposed to say the *Sh'ma* and why? Ever looked at a page of Talmud and said to yourself, "how could I possibly study this?!" Have no fear...because you can! Study Talmud with Rabbi Bryan and other members of Shir Ami with a nice cup of coffee!

All events will be held at Shir Ami.

Jan. 27-29, with Rabbi Liora Alban

Fri., Jan. 27,

6:00 pm, Children's Shabbat Service-- A service designed especially for children

6:45 pm, Potluck Dinner--bring a dish to share

7:30 pm, Kabbalat Shabbat Service, Come kindle the Shabbat flames and welcome the Shabbat spirit with Shir Ami. Rabbi Liora will be leading a shabbat service and speaking about the Torah portion of the week, *Vaera*.

Sat., Jan. 28, 7:30 pm: Winter Concert with the

Rabbis. Rabbi Liora and Rabbi Bryan will be singing for the Shir Ami community. The concert will begin with a havdalah ceremony. Desserts and coffee will follow. We cannot wait to share some of our favorite melodies with you!

SCHOOL NOTES

On December 4th, a panel of speakers gave a talk about food insecurity. The panel, arranged by the Shir Ami's Social Action Committee, talked to the students for the last half-hour of school. Students were attentive and very respectful. They were thoughtful in their remarks.

On December 18th, we celebrated Chanukah a little early. For the last hour children rotated through four stations. In the kitchen they ate latkes, sufganiyot (jelly doughnuts commonly eaten in Israel during Chanukah) and made an edible dreidel. In the sanctuary they played dreidel. In the back room they had an assortment of crafts to choose from. And in the Finkle Room they listened to stories. Pictures can be seen on the Facebook page.

TOT TALK

Sunday, January 22, 11:30 am--
Mark your calendar! Tot Talk, a free program for the little ones ages 0-5, is designed for children and their parents / caregivers to learn a little bit about being Jewish, to socialize and have fun.

It's not necessary, but it is always very helpful if you can RSVP your plans for attending Tot Talk. We, of course, always understand that with little ones, plans do change.

UPCOMING SISTERHOOD EVENT

We will bring in the month of Sh'vat on Thursday, January 26 at 7:00 p.m.

Stay tuned to your email for more information

Questions? Contact Jan Dombrower Chimpky at sisterhood@congshirami.org

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE 2017 WOMEN'S RETREAT, FEB. 24-26

Shir Ami Women's 21st Annual Retreat: *The Joy of Friendship*.

Held at the beautiful San Damiano retreat Center in Danville

Connect with your Jewish sisters and have a great getaway! Join us for this annual weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Liora Alban joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are very welcome.

Please complete and submit [this form](#) and then put your check in the mail today. The cost is:
\$265 for a double room
\$300 for a single room
\$100 for Saturday only, 9 am - 10 pm with lunch and dinner
Make checks payable to Ruth Hartman and send to address on page.

Email retreat@congshirami.org or call Ruth at [510-543-6902](tel:510-543-6902) with any questions.

SISTERHOOD/ROSH CHODESH,

Dear Sisters,

Our Shir Ami Women's Retreat is coming up soon. Thanks to those who have registered, and we hope the rest of you will join us too.

Each year at our retreat, Diana Zankowsky picks a book for our retreat and leads us in a lively discussion. Here (drum roll!!) is this year's book:

In the midst of a blizzard, in a two-family brownstone in Brooklyn, two babies are born minutes apart. The mothers are the wives of two brothers, sisters by marriage. Rose is quiet and dutiful, married to Mort (the numbers guy); they are the parents of three girls. Helen is married to Abe, the salesman in

the business that the brothers run together. They have four boys. The story is a multi-generational tale, starting with the births at home in a blizzard and covering more than two decades of growth and change in the friendship between the two women.

The book is [The Two-Family House](#) by Lynda Cohen Loigman, published in March 2016. It is available in hard-cover and paperback, in a Kindle version, through Audible and on Audiobook's audio CD. Used copies are available through Amazon and the Alameda County Library has copies for loan.

Happy Reading/Listening!
Your Retreat Planning Team

Photos from a recent Rosh Chodesh event.
More photos on page 7.



 *Shabbat "Shira"* 
A Sabbath of Song



Friday, January 20, 2017

7:30 pm – Shabbat Service

Join guest Cantor Ilan Davidson for a festive and musical filled Shabbat service, including an insightful drash welcoming the book of (Exodus).



Saturday, January 21, 2017

10:00 am - Shabbat Morning Meditation and Guided Torah Imagery

Come learn about Jewish Meditation, the “original” mode of prayer. Using chant and guided silence, we transcend the Chol (the mundane) and enter into the Kodesh (the holy). Cantor Ilan will also lead us through this week’s Torah Portion, Shemot.

5:30 pm – Havdalah / 6:00 - Potluck / 7:00 - Shira

Join us for Havdalah, a Potluck dinner and a Kumsitz sing-along with Cantor Ilan, as we bid farewell to Shabbat.

All events at Shir Ami

Join us for our 21st Annual

Shir Ami Women's Retreat: The Joy of Friendship

Friday, February 24 – Sunday, February 26, 2017

At the beautiful San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville

Connect with your Shir Ami sisters and have a great getaway! Join us for this annual weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Liora Alban joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are *very* welcome.

The cost for the weekend is \$265/double room, \$290/single room, \$100/Saturday only (with lunch and dinner).

Please register online at <https://goo.gl/forms/nFFvK3vKpuA6gAts2> 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: 510-543-6902 or retreat@congshirami.org

JANUARY 2017 YAHRZEIT

January 13, 2017

Zac Cohen,
Darlene Golembo,
Bridget Laky,
Jan (pronounced YAHN) Okoniewski,
Peter Rosenberg,
Helen Rosner,
Earl T. Stebben,

long time member of Shir Ami
sister of Sharon Golembo
past president and long time former member of Shir Ami
husband of Marion Kramer
uncle of Alex Druker
long time active member of Shir Ami
husband of Sharalyn Stebben



January 20, 2017

Tyler Brooke,
Celia Kramer,
George Lange,
Rolf Weinberg,

father of Toni Schulberg
grandmother of Marion Kramer
brother of Mickey Lange
husband of Ingrid Weinberg; a charter member,
and mainstay of Shir Ami for many, many years

January 27, 2017

(no names this service)

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

Marvin Schuelke,
Sam Blank,
Debra Blum,
Travis Mahoney,
Loren Simpson,

father of Susan Spitzer
husband of Ann Blank and long time member of Shir Ami
mother of Jeff Blum
nephew of Wendy Crow
husband of Sidney Simpson, prior member of Shir Ami,
and cousin of Toni Schulberg

Photos from a recent Rosh Chodesh event

