

Shir Ami News

The Monthly Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami
4529 Malabar Avenue, Castro Valley, CA 94546
(call (510) 537-1787 for a recording of upcoming events)

Please visit our website at

www.congshirami.org

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism Congregations
November, 2007



Nov 2-4	School Shabbaton at Camp Newman	Dec 2	School – Preschool through Confirmation
Nov 9	Children’s Shabbat Service – 6 PM Potluck Dinner – 6:45 PM Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Carla Fenves	Dec 7	Chanukah Potluck – 6:30 PM Shabbat Service – 8 PM Led by Carla Fenves
Nov 10	Adult Ed – 2 PM Taste of Judaism – led by Carla Fenves	Dec 8	Adult Ed – 2 PM Taste of Judaism – led by Carla Fenves
Nov 11	School – Preschool through Confirmation	Dec 9	School – K through Confirmation Chanukah Party
Nov 13	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM	Dec 11	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM
Nov 15	Board Meeting – 7 PM	Dec 14	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Bekah Stern
Nov 16	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Bekah Stern	Dec 15	Adult Ed – 2 PM
Nov 17	Adult Ed – 2 PM Taste of Judaism – led by Bekah Stern Havdalah – 5 – 7 PM	Dec 16	School – Preschool through Confirmation
Nov 18	School – Preschool through Confirmation	Dec 20	Board Meeting – 7PM
Nov 25	No School	Dec 23	No School
		Dec 30	No School

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Congregation Shir Ami Members and Friends,

This month, some news about upcoming happenings at Shir Ami.

The long-awaited arrival of the new Reform siddur/prayerbook, *Mishkan T'filah*. Shir Ami purchased 80 copies of this beautiful, contemporary, gender-inclusive, fully transliterated Shabbat and festival liturgy. We expect to receive our volumes in November and begin using them for our worship services. I have had the opportunity to use the new siddur a few times, and it offers wonderful new depths of reflection, poetry, scholarship, and inspiration. Several members and friends helped us to pay the deposit on these books in 2002 by purchasing dedications. However, about half the books are still available for dedication. This is a lasting and meaningful way to honor a special occasion or the memory of a loved one. Please see the flier in this bulletin, fill it out and return it to make your dedications.

New Adult Education class, *Taste of Judaism*, starting Saturday, November 10, 2-4 pm. This three-session class, led by Rabbinic interns Carla Fenves and Bekah Stern, will offer an introduction to Jewish beliefs, values, and community. The class is open to all, whether Jewish or not, whether Shir Ami members or not. It's ideal for parents raising Jewish children and for anyone who wants to deepen or refresh their understanding of Judaism. The classes are free but registration is required. See flier for more details.

A new *Children's Shabbat service before our Friday, November 9 potluck dinner.* If our regular 8 pm service is too late for your family, bring your young ones to the children's service, stay for supper, and then take the kids home to bed. The Children's Shabbat service starts at 6, followed by our potluck supper at 6:45 and regular Shabbat service at 8 pm. See the flier in this bulletin for your potluck assignment.

Israel-themed Havdalah, Saturday, November 17, 5-7 pm. Join members of Shir Ami and Congregation Beth Emek for a celebration of Havdalah (the ending of Shabbat) and study of Early Zionism with Bekah Stern at the home of Jan Dombrower in Pleasanton. All are welcome, whether or not you are planning to go on the April Israel trip!

The *Women's Retreat, February 22-24, 2008.* Mark your calendars now for our wonderful annual women's weekend in the redwoods. Our theme this year is "Every Woman Has a Story." We'll be exploring our stories through music, art, prayer, discussion, and play. You don't have to be Jewish, nor do you have to be a member of the Rosh Hodesh group to attend. Registration information in next month's bulletin.

I hope to see you at one or more of these events,

Ruth Hartman
510-582-3379
president@congshirami.org

Rabbis' Corner
Bekah Stern
Carla Fenves

Dear Congregation Shir Ami members and friends,

Disaster can strike at any moment. It doesn't seem so long ago that many of our own Bay Area friends and neighbors were evacuated from their homes in the Oakland fire of 1991. Many lost their homes. Many didn't have time to rescue their precious and irreplaceable belongings before they fled for their lives. To this day, when we look east from the Bay toward the Oakland/Berkeley hills, we can still trace the path of the hungry flames.

I write to you from a Southern California that is charred, smoking, and in some places, still burning. Hundreds of thousands of acres have burned. Half a million people were evacuated. It is still unclear just how many thousands of homes have been destroyed. Several people have died. Billions of dollars will be spent before the rebuilding and cleanup efforts are complete. For a frame of reference, the Oakland Hills fire of 1991 burned only 1,520 acres and caused an economic loss estimated at \$1.5 billion.

But there is good news too. Perhaps because residents of the entire Southern California area have been affected by the unseasonable and uncomfortable weather; or perhaps because all residents within an area hundreds of miles wide have seen the sun rise and set orange in a smoky sky and have felt our eyes burning and lungs tightening due to the ash in the air; whatever the reason, the shelters had so many people volunteering their time and bringing food to donate to the evacuees that they had to turn volunteers and donations away at the door. The outpouring of support from communities more distant from the flames has been tremendous. But this does not mean that the opportunities for giving have passed.

Leviticus 19:18 reads, "*V'ahavta l'reiacha kamoachah*—you shall love your fellow as yourself." Here is the biblical source of what is more commonly referred to as the Golden Rule. If we put ourselves in the place of the people who have been devastated by the fires of the last week, what would we want from our communities? How would we want to be supported? What would we need? As they turned volunteers and donations away, the shelters told the would-be givers that at this point what is most needed is cash.

As givers, this is sometimes the last thing we want to give. It feels impersonal. We'd rather give something that marks our donation as coming from us. Money is anonymous. But right now, money is exactly what's needed. On Sunday mornings in our religious school we teach our children the value of *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* is commonly translated as meaning charity, or alms. But the root of the word is *zedek*, which means justice or righteousness. As Jews, we recognize the connection between charitable giving, and restoring balance to an unjust situation. If you're interested in making a donation, click on <http://www.jewishinsandiego.org> and follow the link.

Of course, there are other things we can do to help prevent future disasters like this one. The experts agree that the conditions that fanned the flames this week in Southern California were the result of the climate changes that our behavior has caused. In making the necessary changes to our daily lives to reduce our environmental impact on this earth, we can make a long-lasting difference. Though he certainly did not understand the breadth of his words, Smokey the Bear said it best, "Only you can prevent wildfires."

The Israel Corner

Featured Location *Tel Aviv/Old Jaffa*



On the 4th day of our Israel trip we'll visit Tel Aviv, AKA the Big Apple of Israel. Tel Aviv is a modern, mostly secular, coastal big city, complete with sky scrapers! But a mere 60 years ago, Tel Aviv was a sandy backwater beach town. We'll make a stop at Independence Hall, where on May 14th 1948 Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion delivered Israel's Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. The photos above show

Independence Hall as it was almost 60 years ago on that momentous day, and as it is today—virtually unchanged.

We will also wander the cobbled alleyways of Old Jaffa (above), the small port city that was nearly swallowed by the construction of Tel Aviv! Jaffa is so old that it is mentioned by name as a port city in the Hebrew Bible.

Featured Writing

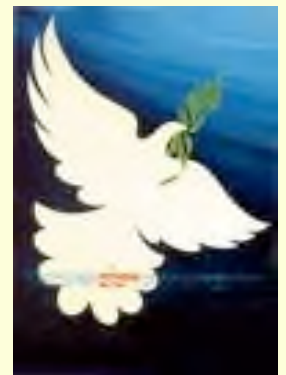
An excerpt from Israel's Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, delivered May 14, 1948

The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first experienced statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, *ma'pilim* [immigrants coming to Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community

controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood...



Welcome to the Israel Corner!

In the interest of learning more about Israel this year—the Jewish year 5768—the year that the State of Israel celebrates its 60th birthday, we've created the Israel Corner. This new section in our monthly bulletin will feature some different writing about Israel, and some information about one of the sites that we'll visit during our



joint congregational Israel trip during Passover 2008.

For more information on the Israel trip click on www.congshirami.org/Pesach_Trip.html or contact Student Rabbi Rebekah Stern at rabbi.rebekah@congshirami.org.



November 4 No School – Shabbaton **November 11 Preschool – Confirmation** **November 18 Preschool-Confirmation**
November 25 No School

There are a couple of events upcoming for school families that I would like to mention. First, on November 9th our rabbinic intern, Carla Fenves, will be conducting a Shabbat service geared specifically for families with young children. The content of the service will be child friendly, as well as the length of the service, about 30-40 minutes. The time of the service, 6 p.m., has also been set in the hopes of allowing families with young children to attend. Following the children's service at 6:45 we will be having a potluck dinner for the entire congregation. As a mother of three children, I am a very low pressure Religious School Director. I **know** how busy you all are. I'm stepping out of my comfort zone to really encourage families to try out this special Shabbat service.

Second, is our Sunday School Chanukah Party on December 9th. As our synagogue president, Ruth Hartman, has been saying in her column, it is important for each member family in Shir Ami to reach out to friends and neighbors to introduce them to our great little synagogue. Our school is going strong (see update below), but it would be nice to have a few more kids to round out our classes. The upcoming Sunday School Chanukah party will be a great opportunity to bring friends to a very kid-friendly event. This party will be held on Sunday, December 9th starting at 10:30 am. Mark your calendars and let your friends know so that they can come. I'm interested in any advice you might have on ways to publicize this event.

Finally, a little update on what our classes are doing. In our preschool class, the emphasis is on art, music, food and fun. This year the kids have decorated pumpkins for our Sukkah, and created their own storybooks telling the creation story. In the K-1 religious school class, the students are introduced to the holidays, to Torah, to tzedakah and to mitzvot and these are presented with music and art projects. For example, as part of the introduction to Torah, the students made their own Torahs. Today, when I walked through they were cutting cloth covers for them, and talking about making crowns. In the 2nd - 3rd grade class they really focus on the joy of Judaism. I've seen learning take place through art projects and amazing conversation. The kids are asking such intriguing questions that the rabbinic interns need to be called in to respond. In the 4th – 5th grade class the kids designed their own architectural Sukkahs, and have been studying communities. In the 6th - 7th grade class, the students are presently learning in depth about the twelve tribes of Israel. It turns out that the breast plate of one of our Torahs depicts these twelve tribes. In the confirmation class, the students are learning conversational Hebrew and some of the elements necessary to define their own levels of observance and beliefs for their Judaism.

Sincerely,

Jodi Switzer Blum

2007-2008 Religious School Schedule
9:15 – 10:30 Hebrew for grades 3 to confirmation
10:30 – 10:50 songtime for all
10:50 – 12:45 Religious School for all
11:45-12:00 Oneg break

Adult Education
Diana Zankowsky

In November, the adult education class, facilitated by Diana Zankowsky, will meet on November 7th at 7pm, at Diana's home. We will be studying from Yearnings by Irwin Kula (Rabbi), published in 2006. This book is available in hardcover, paperback and audio.



This will be our second meeting and it will cover the second section of the book, called "Yearning for Meaning". If you are interested in joining the class, or for address and directions, please contact Diana at dzankowsky@aol.com.

A second adult education offering will begin in November. A Taste of Judaism, a three-part class, created by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), starts on Saturday afternoon, November 10th at Congregation Shir Ami. Please see the flier in this bulletin or click on the link on the homepage at www.congshirami.org, for more information. This is an excellent class for unaffiliated Jewish friends in the community and for non-Jews who are interested in learning more about Judaism.

Shir Ami Theater afternoon at the Douglas Morrison Theatre presents:
The Musical: OLIVER
Starring our own Spencer Blum in the cast!
Please join us on Sunday, November 18th at 2:00.
Tickets are \$15.00 a piece (group rate).

Douglas Morrison Theatre
<http://www.dmtonline.org/>
22311 N 3rd St
Castro Valley, CA 94546
(510) 881-6777

Jan Dombrower has purchased 14 tickets so please contact her to get your tickets as soon as possible – the show is almost sold out. Send a check to: Jan Dombrower, 4892 Saginaw Circle, Pleasanton, Ca. 94588

Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh Group

Jan Dombrower



Sisterhood:

We kicked off our first meeting of the year last month! We were busy planning the year, reviewing the story of Rosh Chodesh, and welcoming the new month of Cheshvan. For our program we shared recipes for Jewish holidays or family favorites. We had Rosh Hashanna apple kugel and honey cake, Passover chocolate/ caramel matzah, Tu B'Shevat compote, and several parve sweets. Not only did we share the recipes, but we sampled the treats as well. We discussed why the Jewish people like to eat and what value we get from eating. We shared how we are transitioning from the past month filled with holidays and reflection to this month of quiet. We ended the night with lighting the candles to bring in the new month,

Sisterhood also had a women's gathering under the Sukkah at the home of Diana Zankowsky. We had soup, salads, and sweets under the Sukkah. We symbolically welcomed friends, family, and foremothers into our Sukkah. We recited the prayer for rain and learned about the text regarding this blessing at Sukkah. We each got a chance to turn over the rain stick. Finally, we performed the mitzvah of shaking the Lulav. This is becoming a new and meaningful tradition for Sisterhood.

Please join us for our monthly Sisterhood/ Rosh Chodesh gathering and events. We are a very welcoming group. If you have never been to a meeting before, please feel free to join us. For any questions or if you need more information please contact Jan Dombrower at Jandom@comcast.net

Next month we will meet to bring in the new month of Kislev. Just as we play dreidle for Chanukah, we as a people like to play and laugh. In preparation for the game playing aspect of Chanukah, Sara Lamnin will host the next Rosh Chodesh gathering on laughter and play. We will discuss the role it has for us in our lives and Sara will pick a few games for us to play. It should be an enjoyable evening of fun and laughs.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov 13th at 7:30 at the home of Sara Lamnin: 2413 Sebastopol Lane, Hayward 94542
Look for a reminder email the week before.

The Tzedakah Box

A Social Action Column

Sara Lamnin

Daryl Berman

Contributed by Julie Greenfield...

“Finding the Strength to Fight Our Fears” from Weekend
Edition Sunday, October 14, 2007 by Terry Ahwal

When I was 11 years old and living under the Israeli occupation, I took a chance and after curfew I ran to visit my grandmother who lived two blocks away from us. On the road, I had to hide under a truck to avoid soldiers who were coming my way. For 20 minutes I lay there in utter fear watching their boots walk back and forth in front of the truck. My heart was pounding so fast and loud that I was afraid one of the soldiers would hear it...

To calm myself,... I remembered the words of my mother... She told us to put our fear and anger aside and pray for the poor soldiers, who were also afraid because they were away from their homes in Israel.

I began to feel bad for the soldiers. I wondered: Where do they sleep and are they afraid of little children like me? What kind of food do they eat? Do they have big or small families? Their voices began to remind me of my neighbors. My fear dissipated a bit as I pictured the soldiers as people I knew. Although my 20 minutes under the truck seemed like an eternity, I believe that shedding my fear literally saved my life.

Thirty-six years later...

After Sept. 11, the Arab and Muslim community segregated themselves because of the level of suspicion directed at them from others. Fear of association because of ethnicity led many to retreat within themselves and their community. They stopped socializing with non-Arab/Muslim colleagues and neighbors. Once again, we allow differences to separate us because of fear.

I believe it is fear we should be fighting not the "other." We all belong to the same human tribe; that kinship supersedes our differences. We are all soldiers patrolling the road, and we're all little children hiding under the truck.

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



A Shirtwaist Tale

A Shirtwaist Tale tells the true story of 30,000 young, mostly Jewish, immigrant women that changed the face of the labor movement by striking for better wages and shorter hours in 1909. Oakland playwright Judith Offer teams up with renowned composer Arkadi Serper to restage this delightful musical seven years after its initial debut. Accompanied by an onstage klezmer band, this vital document of the immigrant history is not to be missed.

- Date, Time, and Cost:
Saturday, November 3, 8:00pm
Sunday, November 4, 5:00pm
Saturday, November 10, 8:00pm
Sunday, November 11, 5:00pm
\$15 members, \$20 public

For more information, visit www.jcceastbay.org, call (510) 848-0237, or email outreach@jcceastbay.org.

Calling All Graphic Artists!

Are you a graphic artist? Do you know someone who is? Shir Ami needs a new logo. We'd love to work with someone who would be willing to design one at low cost. If you can help, or have a friend who might be willing to help, please contact Ruth Hartman.

Used Cell Phones Wanted

Barbara Heimowitz is still collecting used/old cell phones that you leave at Shir Ami and to send them in for cash. You can bring in your cell phones to Shir Ami anytime – just leave them in the box in the kitchen. Any questions? Please call Barbara.

Used Ink Cartridges Wanted

Bruce Skelly is collecting used ink cartridges to trade in for reams of copy paper and other supplies for Shir Ami. Please bring in your used ink cartridges and place them in the box in the kitchen (by the cell phone box). Any questions? Please call Bruce.

The Community Page

November, 2007

Yahrzheits:

November 9, 2007

Fanny Hirsh Engelman, grandmother of Barbara Nemoyten and an early Shir Ami member

Freda Hansen, aunt of Toni Schulberg and Sidney Simpson
Sydney J. Leshin, father of Maryann Leshin
Martin Michelson, brother-in-law of David Schulberg

November 16, 2007

Henry Ball, very active former Shir Ami member
Ada and Jack Rubenstein, mother and father of Ron Rubenstein

Kaddish List: (to be read at all services in November)

Georgie Brooke, mother of Toni Schulberg and aunt of Sidney Simpson
Moshe Vanous, long-time member of Shir Ami
Hyman Abraham Rebotsky, grandfather of Jonathan Zimmerman
Gordon Greenfield, father of Julie Greenfield
Keith Carter, brother of Bruce Carter
Leon Meier, long-time member and one of the founders of Shir Ami
Syd Kramer, uncle of Jan Dombrower

May their memory be a blessing...

Ever wonder how the names read out loud for Yahrzeit and Kaddish at Friday night services get on that list? If you are a member of Shir Ami, and want a personal reminder for the Yahrzeit of a loved one, just send Toni Schulberg the following information: the name of the deceased; the relationship of that person to the member of Shir Ami; the full date (month, day, year) that person died; and whether you want to use the Hebrew or English calendar for their Yahrzeit (Toni will look up the Hebrew date for you). Questions? Call Toni at 278-1695 or e-mail her at toniaps@comcast.net

TODAH RABAH FOR THESE GENEROUS DONATIONS:

- From Judy Ganz: In Honor of the new Carter grandchild, Cameron Levi Carter.
- From Maryann Leshin: In Honor of Sydney Leshin at his Yahrzeit.
- From Ann and Sam Blank : In Memory of Georgie Brooke.
- From Jan Dombrower: In Memory of Georgie Brooke.
- From Ingrid Weinberg: In Memory of Georgie Brooke, Moshe Vanous, and Leon Meier
- From Marci Loss: In Memory of Ruth Bergel at her Yahrzeit.

A contribution to Shir Ami is a great way to honor, remember, or show appreciation for someone special. It's easy. Send a check and note to:

Florrie Finkle
18730 West Cavendish
Castro Valley, CA 94552

Florrie will send a card to the person you are honoring and your dedication will appear on this page.

TODAH RABAH TO OUR ONEG HOSTS

For October 5th: Bower-Niefeld Family

For October 19th: Ross Family

What's Nu?

- Mazel Tov to Rachel Brott and Alexander Katsman on their new home: 25668 Crestfield Circle, Castro Valley, CA 94552,
They have the same phone number: 733-3393
- Mazel Tov to the Ross Family on Daniel and Michele becoming b'nai mitzvah on October 20th!
- Welcome to our new members: Sofija and Simon Blank (and to their son, Konstantin Blank, and their grandson: Michael) their address is: 20462 Glenwood Drive, Castro Valley, CA 94552,

Their phone number is: 881-2023 and their e-mail address is:
sksblank@sbcglobal.net

- For the High Holiday, Ruth Hartman, Diana Zankowsky, and Jan Dombrower made a special visit to Ron Rubenstein at his nursing home. We had a small service reading prayers and singing songs. We ate apples and honey and Diana blew the shofar. Ron, who is unable to come to services at Shir Ami, really appreciated our visit.
- Jan Dombrower had to say good bye to her dear dog, Sofy this past weekend. Sofy fell sick and it was clear she could not go on. She had a wonderful life up until the end taking daily walks, going to the dog park, playing ball, and visiting with neighbors. She will be terribly missed.
- Tyler Dean, and Daniel Finlay who are students at the University of California at Irvine and neighbors in the same apartment complex, did not have to evacuate due to the Fires. A few classes were canceled at the University and the air was very smoky, but everything was okay.
- Healing blessings to Lexi Skelly.
- Mazel Tov to Joel and Julia Nickerson on the birth of their daughter, Ella Rachel Nickerson, born October 20. Visit Ella's website at <http://web.mac.com/jjnickerson> for pictures and updates.
- Michael Markus has joined the Air Force and can receive mail at the following address:
 - AB Markus Michael D.
 - PSC3
 - 1320 Truemper St. Unit 366694
 - Lackland AFB, TX 78236



Shir Ami Contacts

Area code is (510) unless specified

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582-3379

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Barbara Heimowitz
537-2066

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Jodi Blum
881-5672

Religious:

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Oneg Shabbat:

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795-0607

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538-6022

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881-2616

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614-5929

Dues:

Toni Schulberg
278-1695

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635-2898

Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood:

Jan Dombrower
(925) 462-3205

Social Action:

Daryl Berman
538-6022
Sara Lamnin
733-5114

Yahrzeit Listings:

Tonia Schulberg
276-6100

Donations:

General Funds, Special Funds,
Wall Plaques
Florrie Finkle
538-9660



eScrip Families

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If you are not enrolled in the program sign-up today at escrip.com.

Shop Safeway, and earn valuable money for our school or group.

A Special Opportunity Dedicate Shir Ami's New Prayer Books In Honor or Memory



Mishkan T'filah: A New Reform Siddur

Mishkan T'filah, the first new Siddur for the North American Reform Movement in more than thirty years. Including services for Shabbat, weekdays and festivals, as well as other occasions of public worship, and texts for more than a hundred songs, *Mishkan T'filah* reflects the full diversity of our Movement. This new Siddur includes:

- Broad selection of readings including beloved passages from our Reform liturgical tradition and great poetic writings from throughout Jewish history
- Faithful, elegant translations
- Contemporary, gender-inclusive English
- Transliteration following Hebrew prayers
- Theological and stylistic diversity
- Extensive commentaries, source notes and usage guides
- More than 100 contemporary and traditional song texts
- Innovative design in two-page spreads
- Two-color printing enhances usability

Detach and mail to: Toni Schulberg, 16174 Via Arroyo, San Lorenzo, CA 94580

I/we would like to dedicate _____ copies of Mishkan T'filah at \$50 per book.
I enclose \$_____. Please dedicate the book(s) as follows:

1.

2.

3.

4.

My/our name, phone number and/or email address: _____



Annual Kids' Shir Ami Shabbat



Friday, November 9th

6:00 PM

Pot Luck 6:45 PM

Services conducted by Carla Fenves 8:00 PM

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment

A through L.....Salad or side dish

M through Z.....Main dish

Bring a friend

Paresha Vayetze: "And he left..."



Jacob's Dream
after Gustave Doré, 1832-1883

And Jacob dreamed and behold a ladder set up on earth...the top of it reached the heaven...and God said: "The Land whereupon thou liest to thee will I give it and to thy seed..."

Shir Ami Services
Friday November 16th, 8:00 PM
Conducted by
Bekah Stern