

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
December, 2007



Dec 2	School – Preschool through Confirmation	Jan 6	School – K through Confirmation
Dec 7	Chanukah Potluck – 6:30 PM Shabbat Service – 8 PM Led by Carla Fenves	Jan 8	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM
Dec 8	Adult Ed – 2 PM Taste of Judaism – led by Carla Fenves	Jan 11	Shabbat Shira Service – 8 PM Led by Bekah Stern
Dec 9	School – K through Confirmation Chanukah Party	Jan 12	Adult Ed – 2 PM
Dec 11	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM	Jan 13	School – Preschool through Confirmation
Dec 14	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Bekah Stern	Jan 17	Board meeting – 7 PM
Dec 15	Adult Ed – 2 PM	Jan 20	No School
Dec 16	School – Preschool though Confirmation	Jan 20	Tu B’Shevat Seder & Dinner – 5 PM; Led by Diana Zankowsky
Dec 20	Board Meeting – 7 PM	Jan 25	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Carla Fenves
Dec 23	No School	Jan 26	Religious Committee Mtg – 10 AM Adult Ed. – 2 PM
Dec 30	No School	Jan 27	School – Preschool through Confirmation

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Congregation Shir Ami Members and Friends,

I was raised in an unaffiliated home. Both my parents are Jewish, but we never belonged to a synagogue or any other Jewish organization. My sisters and I never attended a Jewish summer camp, and we were often among just a small handful of Jewish children in our schools. Our Jewish identity was defined more by being different than by any larger sense of belonging.

But in spite of their aversion to organized religion, my parents did try to communicate a sense of pride in being Jewish. Every year my mother would come to school with a menorah and tell the Hanukkah story to my classmates. And when my children were in elementary school in Castro Valley, I did the same, as I know many of you did and still do.

Even though it deals with a violent battle against forced assimilation, the Hanukkah story is somehow universal and very appealing. I think it's the message of hope, of the determined few prevailing against the powerful many, of light in a dark time. It's the growing brightness as we count the nights, the spirit of play, and the simplicity of the celebration.

At Shir Ami, we have two Hanukkah events every year. On Friday evening (December 7 this year, starting at 6:30 pm) we have our Hanukkah potluck supper. Each family brings their Hanukkiah and lights it on the table. Our school children are preparing to lead us in the candle blessings this year, and to sing a few Hanukkah songs for us before our 8 pm Shabbat service. During that evening's service, we'll be welcoming and honoring the five new members, both singles and families, who have joined Shir Ami since this time last year. Then on Sunday, December 9, we'll have our annual Religious School Hanukkah party, complete with latkes, edible dreidels and fun Hanukkah crafts. I hope you'll join us for these celebrations, and bring your friends and neighbors to share in the warmth of Hanukkah.

Happy Hanukkah to you, and thank you for helping me and my family find the sense of Jewish belonging that I missed as a child,

Ruth Hartman
president@congshirami.org

Rabbis' Corner

Bekah Stern

Carla Fenves

Dear Congregation Shir Ami members and friends,

As Jews approach the darkest days of the year, we celebrate Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. We light the menorah's candles and create *or* (light) in memory of the miracle of the jug of oil that burned in the Temple for eight days. That jug of oil not only lit the Temple over two thousand years ago, but it continues to shine and inspire us today.

Light is a powerful symbol in Judaism. For example, in a recent "Taste of Judaism" class, a participant brought up the concept of *or l'goyim* a light among the nations. We read in Isaiah 42:6-7: "I have called you in righteousness, and have taken hold of your hand, and kept you, and set you for a covenant of the people, for a light among the nations. To open the eyes of the blind, to bring the prisoners out from the dungeon and to bring those who sit in darkness out of the prison-house." God's covenant with the Jewish people demands that we pursue justice in the world. In this prophetic text, being a light among the nations means modeling holy work.

What does it mean for us as Jews today to be a light among the nations? How can we work to kindle our world's light? Rabbis usually love to jump to all of the metaphorical meanings behind this biblical phrase, but in this case let us take a moment to literally translate the concept into modern terms. We have the power to physically bring light into the world by replacing our old incandescent bulbs with new compact fluorescent bulbs. The fluorescent bulbs are four times more efficient and can last eight times longer. They reduce energy consumption and the electric bill.

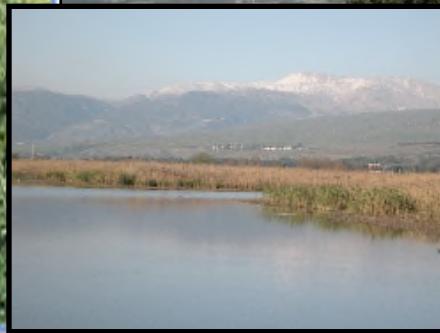
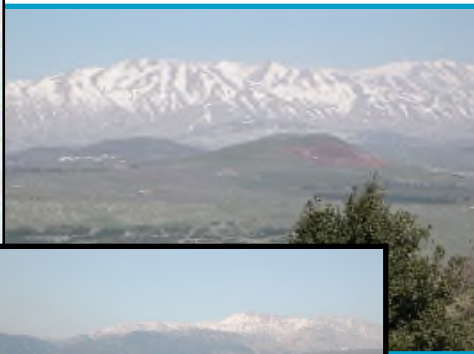
Just as the Maccabees rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem, we can rededicate our planet's energy. Just as they made the oil last for eight days, we can make our light bulbs last eight times longer. May we be blessed with renewable light that can be passed down *l'dor v'dor* from generation to generation.

Carla Fenves



The Israel Corner

Featured Location *The Golan Heights*



In the renewed effort that began this week to reach a lasting peace agreement between Israel and her neighbors, the region known as the Golan Heights will surely be discussed. Israel has governed the area that it eventually annexed since the Six Day War of 1967.

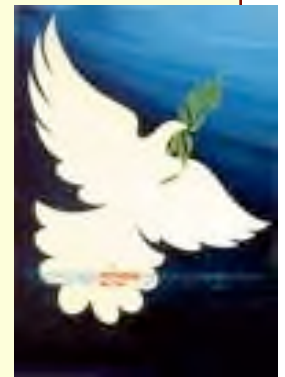
The region is in the northeast of the county and is dotted with picturesque farms on green rolling hills. It looks a lot like Northern California! In April we'll hike to the Jilaboun Waterfall (above), spend some time exploring some of the area's archeological finds, and meet soldiers serving on Israel's northern border with Lebanon.

Featured Writing

Excerpts from *Cherry-Picking in the Golan Heights* from the Blog *An Unsealed Room: A Window on Life in Israel*. (<http://allisonkaplansommer.blogmosis.com/history/012399.html>)

The north is so beautiful, peaceful and calm, that if you didn't see Hebrew and Arabic on the signs and the terrain wasn't so rocky, you might think you were in Napa Valley or Provence or Vermont -- it's all waterfalls, wineries, country guest houses, good cafes and restaurants, kayaking down the Jordan River, and breathtaking scenery. In the winter, there is skiing, too...

What did we do? We hiked in the Dan nature preserve, splashed in the stream, we drove around the Golan Heights and went to a "pick your own cherries" orchard -- the cherry harvest season only lasts for a month or so. We stopped on the Golan Heights at an observation point and my 6-year-old got to crawl inside an old Syrian army bunker overlooking the whole Upper Galilee...



Critical Israel Trip Deadline Approaches!

It's make-or-break time for the Passover 2008 Israel trip. **The deadline for applications and deposits is only a few weeks away: January 4, 2008.** If you have been considering joining us on the trip and have not yet sent in your application and deposit, please do so today! If you have any questions or concerns that are keeping you from signing up, please take this opportunity



to contact Student Rabbi and trip coordinator Rebekah Stern at rabbi.rebekah@congshirami.org. To download the registration form, click on http://www.congshirami.org/Attachments/SABE_Trip08.Reg.PDF. For more information about the trip click on http://www.congshirami.org/Pesach_Trip.html. We hope you'll join us for Passover in Israel!



December 2nd – Preschool –Confirmation
December 9th Chanukah Party all grades invited
December 14th Shabbat Services with 4th-7th grade
December 16th Preschool-Confirmation
December 23rd –No School
December 30th –No School

A couple of calendar notes: All of the school students have been learning the Chanukah candle lighting blessings and some Chanukah songs. This is an idea from one of our teachers to give the kids a simple way to participate in the Chanukah Shabbat Services. Children's participation will be during the potluck portion of the evening. If you've never had the opportunity to attend the Chanukah potluck, it is very fun to see the different family menorahs all being lit together.

Please note that although December 9th is not listed as an official Preschool date on the calendar, the preschoolers **are** most certainly invited to the Chanukah Party.

Also, on December 14th, our 4th through 7th graders will be participating in Shabbat services with Rabbi Rebekah Stern.

This month, Jan Dombrower has kindly agreed to be interviewed for my continuing series profiling our Shir Ami teaching staff. Jan is teaching the second and third graders this year. She has used her wonderful creativity to teach Shir Ami students for the last seven years. This creativity is continuing from her college days where she was a Theatre major. Outside of Shir Ami, Jan works as a child and family counselor specializing in play therapy. Her weekday job requires similar imaginative and inventive skills that she calls into use teaching Shir Ami students. Jan has a son, Tyler, who is a junior at U.C. Irvine. Tyler is majoring in Psychology with a minor in Jewish Studies. Jan is also the facilitator for the Rosh Chodesh women's group at Shir Ami. She loves the connection of women together sharing spirituality, fun, and laughter.

I asked Jan what she enjoyed about teaching, and her answer was the inquisitive nature of the children, and that so much of what you put into teaching you get right back from the students. Some of her favorite projects have been the Moosenorah, Creation Wheel, and acting out the Ten Plagues. She also finds a way to coordinate the year's lessons with things like Time Lines and Scrap Books. Jan has also been a great help to our Shir Ami teens - facilitating their work with the chugim art projects.

Thanks, Jan.

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 December, the adult education class, facilitated by Diana Zankowsky, will meet on December 5th 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.

please contact Diana at dzankowsky@aol.com.

This will be our third meeting and it will cover the third section of the book, called "Yearning for The Way". If you are interested in joining the class, or for address and directions,



A second adult education offering will continue in December. The third class of A Taste of Judaism, a three-part class, created by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), will be held on Saturday afternoon, December 8th 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.

Once we have completed A Taste of Judaism, the adult education classes will continue on Saturday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00 pm pursuing topics of interest to the class.

Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh Group

Jan Dombrower



Sisterhood:

Sara Lamnin hosted a really fun Rosh Chodesh as we welcomed the new moon and month of Kislev. After learning about the new month and saying a blessing for a Chodesh Tov (A good month), Sara led us in a discussion about Judaism and humor and play. We learned there are many references to humor in the Torah. We picked out words of humor from a variety of writers, philosophers, and humorist and shared their words with acknowledgment and laughs. After, we played the game 'Jewish Apples to Apples', had refreshments, and visited. We designed a square for Sara's Chupah quilt from Sisterhood. Sara and Jon will be married under the finished Chupah when all the squares from her friends and family have been collected. Please mark your calendars for Sara's shower on Wednesday, February 6th.

Please join us for the annual Sisterhood Chanukah party on Tuesday, Dec. 11th at the home of Jan Dombrower, in Pleasanton. We will meet at 7:00 for a dinner of latkes, salad, and soup. We will have a Menorah lighting and gift exchange as well as bringing in the new month of Tevet. Please bring your Menorah and candles for the 8th night. Please bring a wrapped Chanukah gift (\$15.00/\$20 Maximum) for the gift "steal" and exchange game. Please bring either soup or salad to share.

Address 4892 Saginaw Circle,
Pleasanton, Ca. 94588
Ph: 510 406-6553

Stay tuned for a reminder email with directions.
Hope to see you there.

Youth Group News

Leah Hartman



Hey Teens,

First, thank you to those who came to our movie night last month. We've decided to make it a monthly event in hopes that attendance will grow. It'll be the third Saturday of every month, which makes the next one December 15th. I know that this is CVHS's Winter Ball, but the idea of a monthly event is that it doesn't matter if you miss one now and then so I expect to see CVHS students in January. Other, non-movie-centered events are in the works.

Speaking of January, our Tri-Regional event, named "Aint No Party Like a West Coast Party," is on January 18-21. This event, which will involve NFTY SoCal and NFTY North West as well as our own Central West, is extra-long so we can have extra-much fun. No, seriously, it's 2 times as much NFTY for only 1.5 times the price--and more importantly it's an opportunity to meet NFTYites from other regions (in case Central West's California, Nevada, Utah, Hawaii, and Mongolia weren't enough for you!). We've been fighting to bring back our Tri-Regional event for a long time. So don't miss it. Forms are online at nfty.org/cwr.

Also, January 5th is PARTY's Black and White Ball, a NFTY winter formal in Burlingame. This is a good way to meet regional members without committing to a whole weekend.

That's about it for this month. I hope to see some of you this weekend at Fallinter. (Unfortunately, the registration deadline for this regional event has passed.) We will be having a formal dance on Saturday night, so bring something fancier than jeans but less fancy than a prom dress. See you soon!

Your RCV,
Leah Hartman

The Tzedakah Box

A Social Action Column

Sara Lamnin
Daryl Berman

Martin Luther King Day is on its way. Join congregation and community members to stand up for equality and to walk for peace. Gather at Hayward City Hall on Monday, January 21st, 2008 at 9am.

Anyone who is interested in participating in a Shir Ami reading or song during the event please contact Sara: (510) 733-5114 or ledorvdor@yahoo.com.

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



A Hanukkah Invitation

Temple Beth Sholom in San Leandro warmly invites the members of Congregation Shir Ami to join in the lighting of their menorah each night of Hanukkah. They will be lighting the menorah on the roof of their building at 642 Dolores Ave. every night from Tuesday, December 4th through Tuesday, December 11th at 6:00 PM.

Start the Year with a Song!

Mark your calendar now for this joyous event – **January 8th**. Bay Area Midrasha in Oakland will again start the year with rousing and inspiring Jewish music. They will host the delightful and talented singers of Magevet, the Jewish Chorus from Yale University, in a concert made possible by generous sponsoring donors with the help of the Cantor's Music Fund of Temple Sinai. The Magevet concert will begin at 8:00 pm in the Sanctuary of Temple Sinai. The community is invited to join with Midrasha students and families in this continuing celebration of Oakland Midrasha's 18th year! Bring your guests, family, and friends. General admission is \$9.00; advance tickets are \$7.00. All Midrasha students are free.

A Night of Illusion Theater

On Saturday night, **January 26, 2008**, Fremont's Temple Beth Torah proudly presents "A Night of Illusion Theater" featuring renowned Bay Area magician/illusionist Michael Stroud. This will be an entertaining evening of thought provoking grand illusions for ages 3-103. For more information including great bargains on advance purchase pricing as well as online ticket orders, please go to <http://www.tbtevents.com>.

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.

**The Community Page
December, 2007**

Yahrzheits:

December 7, 2007 (Chanukah Service)

*Dora Alperovich, aunt of Irina Druker
John Blum, father of Jeff Blum
Freda Coleman, mother of Zac Cohen
Larry Dean, father of Tyler Dean
Rose Permison, mother of Joel Permison
Max Schulberg, father of David Schulberg*

December 14, 2007

*Ann and Michael Bruser, active early members of Shir Ami
Joseph and Meshka Druker, grandparents of Alex Druker
Inez Gautreaux, mother of Sidney Simpson and aunt of Toni Schulberg
Elisabeth Levin, mother-in-law of Ruth Levin
Jan Okoniewski, husband of Marion Kramer
Rose Permison, step-mother of Joel Permison
Isaac Rosenberg, grandfather of Alex Druker*

**Kaddish List: (to be read at both services in
December)**

*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 Ruth Hartman and Gary Wolff, dedicated 2 of the new prayer books: In Honor of their daughters, Leah and Hana Wolff Hartman.*
- *From Rose Levine: In Memory of her parents: Maurice and Anne Aranowitz at their Yahrzeit.*
- *From Rose and Hillie Levine: Congratulating Bruce Carter and family on the birth of Cameron Levy Carter.*
- *From Ann and Sam Blank: In Honor of the birth of Cameron Carter.*
- *From Jan Dombrower: In Memory of Georgie Brooke.*
- *From Ingrid Weinberg: In Honor of the new grandchild, Cameron Carter.*
- *From Bruce and Harriet Skelly: In Honor of Judy Ganz, for teaching the adult Hebrew class.*

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 November 9th: Maryann Leshin

For November 16th: Lisa Silver

What's Nu?

- *Have you heard about the giant Israeli flag that broke a world record? Filipino entrepreneur Grace Galindez-Gupana said she decided 2 years ago to produce a giant Israeli flag as a testament to her love for Israel and the Jewish people and as a celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Israel. To read more about it go to this link:*

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071126/ap_on_fe_st/odd_israel_giant_flag

Shir Ami Contacts

Area code is (510) unless specified

President:

Ruth Hartman
582-3379

Membership:

Barbara Heimowitz
537-2066

School:

Jodi Blum
881-5672

Religious:

David Schulberg
276-6100

Oneg Shabbat:

Sharon Golembo
795-0607

Newsletter:

Harriet Skelly
538-8105

Newsletter mailing:

Lily Erickson
538-6022

Scrip/eScrip:

Lisa Silver
881-2616

Community Page:

Lori Knopf Santora
614-5929

Dues:

Toni Schulberg
278-1695

Invoices/Payables:

Maryann Leshin
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



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Israel and Its Neighbors

Where Do We Go From Here?



Featured Speaker
Dr. Ra'anana Gissin

Former senior advisor
to Israeli Prime Minister
Ariel Sharon

Join us for Havdalah, coffee, and dessert
7:00p – 9:00p
Saturday, December 1, 2007

Sponsored by the Jewish
National Fund of the
San Francisco Bay Area

Hosted by
Congregation Beth Emek
3400 Nevada Ct, Pleasanton

*For more information, contact Elyse Maltz at elyse522@comcast.net
or Charlotte Salomon, 925.462.7279, csalomon@lwtech.com*



A Taste of Judaism: Are You Curious?

Unaffiliated Jews, Interfaith Couples Anyone curious about Judaism

- For unaffiliated Jews who want to connect to a Jewish community
- For non-Jews who want to learn about Judaism
- For anyone who wants to know more about Jewish traditions

Congregation Shir Ami, Project Welcome of the Union for Reform Judaism and the Building Jewish Bridges of the Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay are sponsoring three classes, to be held at Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley, California in the afternoons of November 10th and 17th and December 8th. The classes will give you an opportunity to learn about Jewish spirituality, Jewish values and Jewish community.

Admission is free. Registration is required. Contact Dawn Kepler at 510-839-2900 x347 or by email at dawn@jfed.org.

Classes will be taught by Rabbinic Interns Rebekah Stern and Carla Fenves.



Chanukah Celebration and Potluck

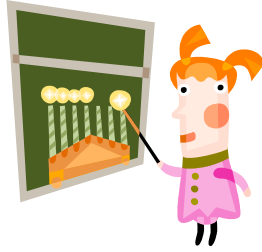


**A Service honoring our 5 newest members
Friday, December 7 at Shir Ami**

**Latke Tasting and Dinner at 6:30 PM
Candle Lighting, (bring your Menorah) and Service at 8:00 PM
Conducted by
Carla Fenves**

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment

A through L....Main Dish
M through Z....Salad or side dish



What: Children's Chanukah Party

**Where: Congregation Shir Ami
4529 Malabar Avenue
Castro Valley, CA**



**When: Sunday, December 9th
10:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

**Who: Shir Ami Members and Unaffiliated Families
looking for a way to Celebrate Chanukah**



**Activities: Chanukah Crafts, Dreidel Games,
Singing, Chanukah Treats**

With any questions contact: Education@congshirami.or

PARESHA VAYIGASH:

“And he went up...”

Joseph’s Journey into Egypt



Joseph reveals his identity to his stunned brothers and forgives them for selling him into slavery so many years before, stating that sending him to Egypt was a part of the Divine plan to prepare for their survival from the famine.

Shir Ami Shabbat Services
Friday, December 14th at 8:00 PM

Conducted by 5th Grade to Bar/Bat Mitzvah
and
Bekah Stern

Bring a friend!

**Join Us for the *Twelfth* Annual
Shir Ami Women's Retreat**

“Every Woman Has a Story”

Friday, February 22 – Sunday, February 24, 2008

At the beautiful Sequoia Retreat Center
Ben Lomond, California

You are warmly invited to join in this weekend of connection, worship, creativity, inspiration, and play. This retreat is a great way to get closer to other women of our community in a beautiful and relaxing setting. Newcomers are *very* welcome.

All Shir Ami women are encouraged to attend. Friends are also welcome. Please register by January 20. Questions? Call Ruth Hartman at 510-582-3379 (ruth@wordcraft.com).

Name/address: _____

Congregation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I enclose a check for \$255 (first price increase in 6 years), OR

I enclose a deposit of \$ _____. I will pay the balance on _____.

I need a ride.

I have the following special needs (mobility, dietary, etc.):

Make check payable to **Ruth Hartman and mail by 1/20/2008 to:**
18850 Cull Canyon Road, Castro Valley, CA 94552