

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, 2008



Dec 5	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin and 5 th grade – Bnai Mitzvah class	Jan 4	School – K through Confirmation
Dec 6	Havdalah & Israeli Movie – 7 PM	Jan 9	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin
Dec 7	School - Preschool through Confirmation	Jan 10	Havdalah & Israeli Movie – 7 PM
Dec 10	Adult Ed – 7 PM Book Study Group	Jan 11	School – Preschool through Confirmation
Dec 12	Chanukah Potluck Dinner – 6:30 PM Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone	Jan 14	Adult Ed – 7 PM Book Study Group
Dec 13	Adult Ed – 3:30 PM	Jan 15	Board Meeting – 7 PM
Dec 14	School – Preschool through Confirmation; Chanukah Party	Jan 18	No School
Dec 18	Board Meeting – 7 PM	Jan 19	MLK Interfaith March – 10 AM Hayward City Hall
Dec 21	No School	Jan 23	Interfaith Shabbat Service – 8PM Led by Suzy Stone
Dec 27	Sisterhood Sponsored Community Chanukah Party – 7 PM	Jan 24	Religious Committee Mtg – 10 AM Adult Ed – 3:30 PM
Dec 28	No School	Jan 25	School – Preschool through Confirmation
		Jan 27	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Shir Ami members and friends,

In honor of the eight days of Chanukah, I want to share with you eight things I love about Shir Ami's Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood:

1. **Inclusiveness:** Women from all kinds of Jewish and not-Jewish backgrounds come together in our group to celebrate and explore what a Jewish women's community can be and can mean to us. We welcome everyone with open arms, including unaffiliated women and our sisters from other area synagogues.
2. **Deliciousness:** From cookie exchanges to cheesecake tastings to potlucks, there is always something good to eat at a Rosh Chodesh meeting. (How could it be otherwise?)
3. **Talent:** All the programs at our monthly meetings and annual retreats are led by members of our own group. We teach each other Jewish history, culture, ritual, and music, as well as yoga, dance, arts and crafts, literature, and lots more. We are a very diverse, talented group of women!
4. **Culture:** We join together to attend plays, films, and concerts in the Bay Area community. What fun to go with a group of friends!
5. **Generosity:** We are a caring support network for our community. We bring meals to congregants in times of personal need. We share in simchas and perform mitzvahs for our members, such as wedding showers, healing circles, and sympathy scrapbooks. We give tzedakah in honor of our members. We offer camperships to Shir Ami youth. We provided a grant to help launch a Rosh Chodesh program for middle-school girls.
6. **Learning:** All of us have expanded our Jewish knowledge through the Rosh Chodesh group. We study holidays, lifecycle events, and texts. We experience Jewish rituals from around the world. Many of us have chanted Torah for the first time at our annual retreat.
7. **Adventure:** It can be a little daunting to commit to a whole weekend away from home. But every year, first-timers join us in the beautiful Santa Cruz mountain redwoods for our wonderful retreat. There we are joined by friends from San Luis Obispo, and sometimes other local congregations, to create and experience a Jewish women's space that is found nowhere else. (See the flier and registration information for this year's retreat, February 20-22, in this Bulletin.)
8. **Leadership:** No tribute to the Rosh Chodesh group would be complete without acknowledging our very special leader and guiding spirit, Jan Dombrower. Jan is creative, caring, organized, fun, vulnerable, generous, and wonderful. She has been at the heart of this group for more than a dozen years. Thank you, Jan!

It would be great to have a men's group at Shir Ami. If you'd like to start one, please contact me or Noah Markus. The URJ's *Men of Reform Judaism* organization (www.nftb.org) offers lots of resources to help you get started.

I hope to see all of you at our (pre-)Chanukah potluck dinner and Shabbat Service on Friday, December 12, and at the Community-wide Chanukah party, sponsored by—you guessed it!—the Shir Ami Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood, on Saturday, December 27 at Shir Ami. Happy Chanukah!

Ruth Hartman

president@congshirami.org

Rabbis' Corner

Matt Dreffin

Suzy Stone

This year December 1st falls on the fourth day of the Hebrew month of Kislev. And you know what that means...Chanukah is right around the corner! Each year, on the 25th of Kislev, we celebrate the victory of the Jewish army, known as the Maccabees, against the Greeks. Even though this holiday has become one of the most popular celebrations for modern-day Jews, its origins are shrouded in mystery.

Some holidays, like Passover and Sukkot, are described by the Torah. Other holidays, such as Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, originate in the Torah, but are truly expanded upon, and made into the holidays that we know today, by the Rabbis. But unlike these holidays, the celebration of Chanukah is not described in the Torah, nor by the Rabbis in much depth.

This makes Chanukah one of the most unique celebrations in the Jewish year. The origins of the story of Chanukah come from a text known as the Book of Maccabees. The Book of Maccabees is one of many texts found in a collection of writings known as the Apocrypha. In Greek, Apocrypha means: "Those having been hid away." This refers to the fact that they were "hidden away" and not canonized in the Hebrew Bible with the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings.

Unlike the Torah, the Apocrypha, especially the Book of Maccabees, is written like a history book. It begins in 322 BCE when Alexander the Great conquers Israel. For almost 200 years, the Jews lived under Greek rule without much conflict. But when Antiochus Epiphanes IV came to rule in 175 BCE, he outlawed many Jewish practices (including circumcision and Shabbat), and forced many Jews to worship pagan idols. But on the 25 of Kislev of 165 BCE, Judah and the Maccabee army recaptured Jerusalem and defeated Antiochus and his army.

So while we *now* know where *most* of the details about Chanukah come from, the Book of Maccabees never mentions the famous cruse of oil that lasts eight days instead of one! So where do the rest of the Chanukah traditions come from? In order to find out more, I hope that you will join us for our Chanukah celebration on December 12th starting at 6:30 pm.

Suzy

Feedback: The Good and the Difficult

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Los Angeles is the graduate school that our student rabbis attend. In the interests of helping our students learn and grow while at their student pulpits, the school has asked us to provide regular, written feedback to the students and their advisors. Diana Zankowsky (dzankowsky@aol.com) will collect and convey that feedback. Please communicate both positive and corrective feedback to Diana, no later than Tuesday after a rabbi's visit. Thank you in advance for contributing to our student rabbis' educations.



Dec. 7th Preschool to Confirmation
Dec. 14th Chanukah Party for Preschool to Confirmation
Dec. 21st No School Winter Break
Dec. 28th No School Winter Break

Place: Front Entrance Congregation Shir Ami
Date: Sunday, November 16th
Time: Approximately 11:00 a.m.

Sounds Heard:

From the Kitchen . . . Preschoolers making cookies and discussing the process of rolling dough and the fact that the cookie cutters had shapes they recognized as being Jewish.

From the back of the sanctuary . . . Kindergarten to 2nd Graders making challah and talking about making braids with the dough and using a challah cover to prevent the bread from being jealous when the juice is blessed first.

From the back classroom . . . 3rd and 4th graders engaged in a discussion of Shabbat and the meaning behind the lighting of candles.

From the Finkle room . . . 5th, 6th and 7th graders debating which prophet had qualities worthy of election to a leadership position.

From the front office . . . Torah being chanted as a Bar Mitzvah student and tutor worked together.

Coming through the back door . . . confirmation student voices from the garden discussing the diaspora and where their ancestors came from.

As always,

Jodi

Adult Education *Diana Zankowsky*

In December, Congregation Shir Ami will continue to offer several different adult education classes and gatherings.

Come join Rabbinic Intern Matt Dreffin on December 6th, for Havdalah and the film *Bikur HaTizmoret* (The Band's Visit). This is an award winning film considered "the Israeli movie of 2007." On an ordinary day, an Egyptian Police band arrives in Israel with the intention of playing at the opening of an Arabic Museum in Israel. Due to language miscommunications, they end up in the wrong town, stuck for the night because the bus does not come until the next morning. An interesting series of events unfolds as each member interacts with the locals. Winner of 7 Israeli Oscars, it was to be Israel's representative as the best Foreign Film nominee except it was deemed to have too much English. Snacks and a group debriefing will follow.

Our once-monthly book study group will continue our study of Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts, edited by Barry W. Holtz. Last month we studied the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden. This month, on December 10th, we will conclude our study of the first chapter, The Biblical Narrative, pages 31-81. This text, recommended by the URJ as one of the best books, will help us to learn how to read and study Bible, Midrash, Talmud and other writings. Please email Diana Zankowsky, dzankowsky@aol.com, to learn the location of the class.



Judy Ganz continues to teach the weekly "Learning Hebrew through Prayer" class, for those who already have basic literacy skills. Please contact Judy at jbganz@aol.com if you are interested in joining.

Rabbinic Intern Suzy Stone will discuss Parashah Vayishlah during her adult education session on the Saturday, December 13th from 3:30 to 5pm. During this week's Torah study, we will be learning some new, and old, techniques for studying Torah vis-à-vis this week's Torah portion-- Parashat Vayishlach. Specifically, we will be studying the reunion of estranged brothers – Jacob and Esau – in order to investigate one example of a truth and reconciliation process in Jewish text and tradition.

Our ongoing monthly class for adults interested in conversion to Judaism will continue to meet on Saturdays. Contact Diana Zankowsky, dzankowsky@aol.com, for more information or if you are interested in joining.

Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh Group

Jan Dombrower



Last month sisterhood went on a field trip to see *Fiddler on the Roof* with our own sisters: Lisa, Emma, and Sophia Silver in the cast. After a few adjustments with seating, everyone enjoyed the musical. We were able to greet the cast outside after the play including saying congratulations for a job well done to the Silvers. Special thanks to the Schulbergs who generously and creatively solved the seat assignment mix up.

This month, Sisterhood is sponsoring the Family Chanukah Party on Saturday, December 27th. Please look for times and reminders of the party throughout the month online. We are expecting to have delicious food and latkes, and to celebrate Chanukah, Havdallah, and Rosh Chodesh with rituals and a live band. There will be fun for the whole family. You don't want to miss the spectacular menorah lighting on this seventh night. Everyone please bring your menorahs so we can have Chanukah lights ablaze! Hope to see everyone there.

We planned our schedule for the year and have many great programs to offer. We will be having a game night and a special pre-Passover program this year. Watch the bulletin for upcoming Rosh Chodesh gatherings.

Our annual retreat is coming up on Feb 20-22 in the Santa Cruz mountain area. All women of Shir Ami and our surrounding communities are welcome to come. We are in the planning stages now for an exciting, meaningful, and fun weekend. Please see the flyer in this bulletin. Hope you can join us.

The Tzedakah Box
A Social Action Column
Sara Lamnin
Daryl Berman

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE DECEMBER DAZE

The Progressive Jewish Alliance suggests actions you can take to help others anytime of year. In these challenging times, collaboration, innovation, and creative compassion can build bridges so that we may all support each other.

Just Travel

Become an aware traveler. Through the “kosher travel” campaign, travelers can support equitable working conditions for hotel staff. Visit <http://hotelworkersrising.com/index.php>

Guiltless Gelt

To find “fair trade” products that support local economies, try looking for ‘fair trade’, ‘sweatshop-free’ and ‘sustainably grown’ labels on products before you purchase them.

Or, if you prefer online shopping, visit <http://www.agreatergift.org> (you might want to search for “chocolate coins” if you are looking for gelt) or click to <http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/greenpages/> or <http://www.sweatfree.org/shoppingguide.html>

For more information email bayarea@pjalliance.org or call 510-537-8640.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Martin Luther King Rally and Peace Walk,
January 19, 2009 9:30am.
Hayward City Hall, 777 B Street.

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



HOLIDAYS IN THE HOLY LAND: A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY

Ruth Hartman will be one of the featured speakers at the following event. All members of the Shir Ami community are warmly invited to attend!

Castro Valley Library, December 15, 2008, 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

The public is cordially invited to join in a special Holiday celebration, Holidays in the Holy Land: A Celebration of Diversity, at the Castro Valley Library, on Monday, December 15, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Members of Castro Valley Citizens for Middle Eastern Awareness, a group of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women will present an informational program, accompanied by a beautiful display in the library lobby, representing the ways in which important holidays are celebrated by the three major religions of the Middle East. This is the eighth year the group has provided a holiday display for the library. Members will talk about items in the display and their significance to the respective culture.

The group has presented educational and cultural programs at schools and community organizations throughout Castro Valley. Refreshments will be served courtesy of the Friends of the Castro Valley Library. The Castro Valley Library is located at 20055 Redwood Road and is wheelchair accessible. For more information, contact the library at (510) 670-6280 or see events at www.aclibrary.org/branches/csv.

CARY NASITIR AND THE KlezTones

The Mighty KlezTones of Temple Isaiah will be performing at Stoneridge for Chanukah on **Dec 28th @ 4:00**. This is an event from Chabad House of the tri Valley with Rabbi Raleigh Resnick.

The Community Page

December, 2008

Yahrzheits:

December 5, 2008

Dora Alperovich, aunt of Irina Druker
Henry Ball, very active former member
Freda Coleman, mother of Zac Cohen
Larry Dean, father of Tyler Dean
Rose Permison, mother of Joel Permison, former member of Shir Ami

December 12, 2008 (Chanukah Service)

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
Isaac Rosenberg, grandfather of Alex Druker
Max Schulberg, father of David Schulberg

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

Betya Druker, mother of Alex Druker
Sy Mouber, long-time former member of Shir Ami
Chris Partridge, son of Ricki Weintraub (Baird), former members of Shir Ami

May their memory be a blessing...

Ever wonder how the names read out loud for Yahrzheit 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 Yahrzheit 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 Yahrzheit (Toni will look up the Hebrew date for you). Questions? Call Toni at 278-1695 or e-mail her at yahrzeit@congshirami.org

TODAH RABAH FOR THESE GENEROUS DONATIONS:

From Marcy and Michael Loss: in Memory of the Yahrzheits of Marcy's mother, Ruth Bergel, and Michael's father, Ralph Loss.
From Maryann Leshin: in Memory of Sidney Leshin at his Yahrzheit.
From Muriel Small: in Memory of Inez Gauteraux at her Yahrzheit.

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 14th: Rose and Bill Firestone
For November 21th: The Blum Family in honor of Spencer's Bar Mitzvah

TODAH RABAH

To Jan Dombrower, for all her shopping and keeping Shir Ami well stocked with all our oneq supplies.

To Barb Haber for her work on the planning committee for the Shabbaton weekend.

Thank you to Harriet Skelly for substituting as Principal of the Sunday School on November 23rd.

TODAH RABAH FROM MARLENE LAMNIN:

Dear Friends at Shir Ami,

I want to thank you all for your prayers and get well wishes, and the Sisterhood for their generous donation the Susan B. Komen fund in my name. Having people care about your well-being and actively contributing to it is a very special blessing. My family and I deeply appreciate all your good wishes and actions.

Cordially,

Marlene Lamnin

What's Nu?

Jan Dombrower and David Chimpky went on the Blues Cruise for seven days in October and on a trip to Long Beach to visit Jan's parents for her father's 90th birthday.

Congratulations to Spencer Blum on his Bar Mitzvah and Mazel Tov to Suzy Stone for leading her first Bar Mitzvah service.

Traveling for the Thanksgiving holiday:

- Leah Hartman, Irene Gilchriese and Stacy Zankowsky, all former teachers in the Sunday School, traveled home to their families for the long weekend.
- Debbie and Michael Heimowitz came into town and stayed with their parents for the weekend.
- Tyler Dean came home and joined his mother, Jan Dombrower, for a lively weekend.
- Sharon Golemba and her children, Brenda and Eric, went on a cruise visiting Mexico and then flew to Chicago to join family for Thanksgiving.

Rabbi Sharon Gladstone Clevinger was a student rabbi at Shir Ami for two years, from 1999 to 2001. She is now the assistant rabbi at Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley, MA

(http://www.bethelohim-wellesley.org/about/asst_rabbi.php). She had a little girl, Madeleine Dahlia Clevenger, on June 27th at 9:18pm, 8lbs. 6oz. According to Rabbi Sharon, Maddy is amazing and you can see about a gazillion pictures of her by following this link:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/jclev19>

Recovering at home from surgeries: Sherie Kidwell and Gil Gilchriese. Best Wishes for a speedy recovery.

Diana Zankowsky participated in the South Hayward Parich interfaith service last month.

Daryl Berman protested at the School of the Americas in November.

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Julie Greenfield
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Yahrzeit Listings:

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Donations:

General Funds, Special Funds,
Wall Plaques
Florrie Finkle
mailto:donations@congshirami.org

Paresha Vayetze (<Jacob> went out)



Marc Chagall, 1887-1985

"The ladder represented Jacob's mission of bridging the spiritual world he had enjoyed until this point, and the physical world he would encounter in the house of his uncle, the deceptive Laban".

Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum

Shir Ami Shabbat Service

Friday, December 5 at 8:00 PM

Led by

Matt Dreffin

Participating students -- 5th grade to B'nai Mitzvah

Paresha Vayishlach (<Jacob> sent <messages>)

Chanukah Potluck and Latke Tasting Event!



*Friday, December 12th at Shir Ami!
Potluck at 6:30 PM, Services at 8:00 PM
Led by Suzy Stone*

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment
M to Z ----Main Dish or Latkes
A to N ---- Salad or side dish

Watch for details

Saturday, December 27th

Save the Date

Sisterhood-sponsored

Chanukah Party



Save the Date!

And the survey said: You asked for assistance in the areas of synagogue membership, leadership development, and development and fundraising. We have responded with a regional Consultation Kallah that will include in-depth three- and six-hour seminars conducted by Union for Reform Judaism and HUC–JIR professionals on:

- * Creating a Vision for Your Congregation’s Future: Strategic Planning, Value Driven Decision Making, Creating the Next Generation of Synagogue Leaders, Dale Glasser, Union for Reform Judaism
- * Growing Your Temple’s Membership: A Three Seminar Integrated Approach to Building and Sustaining Synagogue Membership, Vicky Farhi, Union for Reform Judaism
- * Leadership Personalities from the Babylonian Talmud: Models of Communal Leadership for a Changing World, Rabbi Aaron Panken, HUC-JIR
- * Helping Your Congregation Weather Economic Uncertainty, Steve Doochin, Union for Reform Judaism

Other weekend opportunities include Pre-Kallot Seminars:

- * An opening Friday Lunch-Program that will focus on Amy Asin's report and next steps for the PCW
- * Youth and Education Professional and Lay Leadership Track—Portraits of Learning: What does it reveal? What might it inspire?
- * Rabbis, Cantors and Executive Directors Track—Text, Tradition and Transformational Leadership: Talmudic Approaches to Changing Synagogue Life, Rabbi Aaron Panken, HUC-JIR as well as Special Interest Affinity Breakfasts and Discussions and Congregation-led workshops on Sunday.

We encourage you to send those synagogue leaders who would most benefit from the seminars being offered.

Faculty

Rabbi Daniel Frelander · Rabbi Aaron Panken · Dale Glasser
Steve Doochin · Vicky Farhi · Nancy Katz, Artist in Residence
Learn more about the Consultation Kallah, Santa Clara, CA
February 6–8, 2009

Pacific Central West Council
Union for Reform Judaism

Online registration will be available by early December. We will notify you when registration is open.

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

**Finding My Voice
Exploring My Values
Creating My Vision**

Friday, February 20 – Sunday, February 22, 2009

At the beautiful Sequoia Retreat Center
Ben Lomond, California

You are warmly invited to experience this weekend of
friendship, worship, creativity, inspiration, and play.
A great way to expand your Jewish women's connection.
Newcomers are *very* welcome.

Questions? Ruth Hartman: 510-582-3379 or ruth@wordcraft.com.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Congregation: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I enclose a check for \$275, OR

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

I need a ride.

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

Make check payable to **Ruth Hartman** and mail by **1/15/2009** to:
18850 Cull Canyon Road, Castro Valley, CA 94552