



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism Congregations
March, 2009



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|---------------|--|---------------|---|
| Mar 1 | School – K through Confirmation | Mar 28 | Havdal ^{ah} & Israeli Movie: “Turn Left at the End of the World” –7 PM Women’s Seder – 5 PM at Congregation Beth emek |
| Mar 6 | Shabbat Service and Purim Party 7 PM – led by Suzy Stone | Mar 29 | School – Preschool through Confirmation |
| Mar 7 | Adult Ed – 3:30 PM | Apr 5 | School – K through Confirmation |
| Mar 8 | School – Preschool through Confirmation Purim Carnival – 10:30 PM | Apr 10 | Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone |
| Mar 15 | Bagel & Lox brunch – 10 AM No School | Apr 11 | Community Passover Seder – 5:30 PM; Led by Suzy Stone |
| Mar 19 | Board meeting – 7 PM | Apr 12 | No school |
| Mar 20 | Special Yanov Shabbat & Pot Luck Dinner – 6:30 PM Shabbat Services – 8 PM led by Matt Dreffin | Apr 16 | Board meeting – 7 PM |
| Mar 21 | Havdal ^{ah} & Israeli Movie: “Aviya’s Summer” – 7 PM | Apr 19 | No School |
| Mar 22 | School – Preschool through Confirmation | Apr 23 | Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM |
| Mar 26 | Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM | Apr 24 | Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin |
| Mar 27 | Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin | Apr 25 | Havdal ^{ah} & Israeli Movie – 7PM |
| | | Apr 26 | School – Preschool through Confirmation |

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Shir Ami members and friends,

This month I want share with you an article about the recent Israeli elections written by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. I am proud of the strong, principled stand Rabbi Yoffie takes in this article. I am proud to be a member of the leading progressive Jewish movement in North America.

This article was distributed as part of the **10 Minutes of Torah** program of the URJ, which sends a daily e-mail on a variety of topics: the week's Torah portion, Mishnah, Israel Connections, Delving into T'filah (prayer), and Jewish World. You can sign up for any or all five weekly topics at urj.org/torah/ten/.

The current moment offers great challenges and opportunities for the Middle East. Each of us can study, reflect, and speak out about these issues. In January, Rabbi Suzy led an excellent (and well-attended) adult education discussion on the Gaza war. We are currently considering options for next year's adult education offerings. If you'd be interested in attending adult ed focused on current events, let me know!

I look forward to seeing you at Shir Ami for our annual Purim celebrations and for the special Yanov Torah Shabbat service on March 20th!

Ruth Hartman

president@congshirami.org

Confronting Our Demagogue Rabbi Eric Yoffie

The apologists and the excuse-makers in the American Jewish community have begun their work. No need for concern, they say. Avigdor Lieberman, leader of Israel's Yisrael Beiteinu party, is not really an extremist. He may have some unconventional ideas and have said some unfortunate things, but he is basically a mainstream politician who poses no threat to U.S.-Israel relations or to relations between Israel and American Jews.

Much of the debate until now has focused on whether or not Lieberman can be accurately classified as a racist or a fascist. But this debate is largely beside the point. A far-right politician on the European model, he has risen to prominence at a time of uncertainty and fear by alleging that Israel faces a threat from within. Like other demagogues of this type, he has been sly in his rhetoric so that allegations of racism cannot be established with certainty.

Nonetheless, the thrust of his campaign was anything but ambiguous. His intention was to inflame hatred of Arab Israelis among the Jewish Israeli public. His major policy proposal was a loyalty oath clearly intended to disenfranchise Israel's Arab citizens and turn them into residents without rights. It was an outrageous, abominable, hate-filled campaign, brimming with incitement that, if left unchecked, could lead Israel to the gates of hell.

The challenges posed by the relationship between the Jewish state and its Arab citizens are certainly real. Demagogues thrive by focusing on real issues. It is legitimate to be concerned about the distancing of Arab Israelis from the Jewish state and about ensuring a Jewish majority in Israel. But no one in his or her right mind believes that these problems will be solved by rescinding the Israeli citizenship of more than a million Arabs.

American Jews — the vast majority of whom are strong supporters of Israel as both a Jewish and a democratic state — are dismayed by Lieberman, mostly because he represents values that we abhor. Furthermore, we know that America's commitment to Israel rests far more on shared values than on strategic interests, and thus we see him as a threat to the U.S.-Israel alliance. In addition, there is reason to worry that he will blacken Israel's name among the democratic nations of the world.

It would, of course, be a mistake to obsess about Lieberman and to grant him greater importance than he deserves. Remember that he received only about 12% of the vote, much of it a protest against the perceived weakness of the other major-party leaders. And, it's safe to say, most Israelis find his views utterly unacceptable. Still, Israel's bizarre parliamentary politics could elevate him to a position of real power. What is important, therefore, is for all concerned to do what is necessary to limit his influence and visibility.

If the party forming the next government can keep Lieberman out of the coalition, it should; if not, he should be exiled to the margins of the government, and it should be made clear at every opportunity that he does not speak for Israel.

But American Jewish leaders, too, face a significant test. For all those who claim to speak and lobby on our behalf, who fight anti-Semitism whenever it appears, and who champion Jewish rights everywhere, this is a moment of truth. If we are silent or speak the language of equivocation, we will weaken rather than strengthen Israel's cause. We will also undermine our credibility with our government and with American Jews, who are looking to us for leadership. We do not make excuses for the haters, the bigots and the demagogues who incite against Jews and other minorities around the world, and we must not make excuses when the inciter is one of our own.

Rabbis' Corner

Matt Dreffin

Suzy Stone

One of my favorite Jewish holidays has always been *Purim*. It continuously provided the noisiest and funniest of times. Dressing up in costumes, good treats, and even being raucous in the synagogue... it was quite the treat. It seems that every year my understanding of the holiday grew. First, it was simply a time to dress up; in fact, I used to describe it to my friends as the "Jewish Halloween." As I continued my growth, I learned more of the intricacies of the story of the struggle between Mordechai/Esther versus Haman. Once in college, I learned one is supposed to become inebriated so that we can't tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai!

With the recent advancement of my understanding of Hebrew, I have come to recognize the significance of the holiday through its name. *Purim*, meaning 'lots,' refers to the lottery that Haman held to determine on which day he would attempt to slaughter the Jews. There is another holiday that contains the word *Purim*, and that is *Yom HaKippurim*, the Day of Atonement.

The relation between the holidays is not completely arbitrary. *Purim* comes approximately halfway through the year from *Yom Kippor* and reminds us to take stock of ourselves and how our lives have been progressing throughout this year. There are other traditions associated with the holiday besides feasting on *hamantashen* and acting silly. Purim is a time where we practice the custom of giving treats to friends and neighbors as well as collecting funds to help the poor.

So when you take a bite of your favorite-flavored triangle cookie, shake your gragger at Haman, or put on some special garb...I hope that you will think of that day in the fall where we reflect on how we can improve our lives and the world... and act on them.

Chag Sameach!

Matt

[We'd like to hear from you!](#)

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

Adult Education

Diana Zankowsky

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

This month we will have two movie nights brought to you by Rabbinic Intern Matt Dreffin! In conjunction with the visit of the Yanov Torah, the first Shir Ami movie night will be presenting "Aviya's Summer" (*Ha'Kaitze Shel Aviya*). This story is slightly older, but explores the relationship between a young girl and her mother, a survivor of the Holocaust. Aviya must deal with the tension between her mother and the community as well as her own coming-of-age issues. Winner of the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival and 3 Israeli Silver Menorah awards, the film will give us a glimpse into the Holocaust's place in Israeli society. See you there on Saturday, March 21st at 7pm! Snacks and a group debriefing will follow.

The second Shir Ami Movie night brings for your enjoyment "Turn Left at the End of the World," (*Sof Ha'Olam, Smola*). This movie breaks the notion that world Jewry is homogenous. Set in a desert town in the 1960's, it explores the intricacies of moving to a new country and dealing with neighbors with major cultural differences. Winning two awards out of six nominations by the Israeli Film Academy in 2004, the film promises to enlighten and move you emotionally. See you at Shir Ami on Saturday, March 28th at 7pm! And there will be plenty of popcorn to accompany the movie.



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 lead Torah study on the weekly parash, Tetsaveh and the special Shabbat, Shabbat Zachor, during her monthly visit. The class will meet on Saturday, March 7th from 3:30 to 5pm.

Our on-going 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



Sisterhood:

Rosh Chodesh Adar was a fun night of games! Led by community member, Barbara Feinstein, the group talked about how and what games were a part of their lives growing up. Then, Barbara shared about the role of games in Judaism. This was followed by a fun time playing games.

The new month of Adar was brought in with a reading, a prayer, and candle lighting. The theme of the night was a perfect inroad to the month of Adar, considered the happiest, most joyous month of the Hebrew calendar. There is a motto that when Adar arrives, joy increases. Sometimes (in a leap year) we even need two Adars to contain all the joy. Games, costumes, and storytelling are always apart of this month in which we celebrate the holiday Purim.

Next month we will bring in the month of Nissan. This will take place on Thursday, March 26 at the home of Jan Dombrower in Pleasanton. We will begin to prepare for the Passover holiday. Look in your e- mail as it gets closer to the date for the program and activities of the night.

This month two activities are happening. First, there is a Hamentaschen Bake Night on Thursday, March 5th at the home of Sharon Golembo in Fremont at 6:30. Please contact Sharon to RSVP at 510 795-0607. Secondly, Lisa Silver is in the cast of Kiss Me Kate at the Douglas Morrison Theater. Sisterhood is invited to go on Friday, March 13th.

The Douglas Morrison Theater is located at 22311 N 3rd St Hayward CA 94546 (510) 881-6777 <http://www.dmtonline.org/> Please get your own tickets and join us there.

Women's Retreat

| This year's women retreat was a wonderful experience. Taking place in the redwoods at the Sequoia Conference Center in Ben Lomond we were surrounded by beauty and inspiration. We arrived about 5:00 PM and settled into our cabins. We started out with an ice-breaker followed by Shabbat dinner and Shabbat service.

| We were delighted this year to have our Rabbinic intern, Suzy Stone, join us. Suzy led the Saturday morning service. During this service there was beautiful chanting and reading from the Torah.

The theme of the retreat was Values, Voice, and Vision. Throughout the weekend each workshop touched on this theme helping the women to get clear on their own intentions and desires. We participated in the listening circle, an art project, and some free time on Saturday. When the evening started, we had Havdallah, dinner, and game night. On Sunday morning we had our book discussion and workshop led by Suzy. Lunch followed and we ended with the closing circle.

A big thank you to all the people who made the weekend happen - especially Ruth Hartman, who each year coordinates the retreat. Jan Dombrower, and Diana Zankowsky were also a part of the planning committee. Thanks to Rose Firestone and Harriet Skelly for the art project and Maryann Leshin for leading Havdallah. Many thanks to Diana Zankowsky and Suzy Stone for leading the services and giving the Midrash. Thank you to the breakfast hostesses: Lilly Erickson, Jodi Blum, Nurgul Toktogonov, and Joan Hershberg. Elie Axelroth and Lisa McCann from San Luis Obispo did a great job with snacks.

Much appreciation goes to the workshop and activity leaders- Ruth Hartman, Julie Greenfield, Diana Zankowsky, Jan Dombrower, and Nancy Storch. Thanks to Angie Ross for coordinating the rides and to Sharon Golembo who was instrumental in getting the Rabbinic Intern to come with us on Retreat and for providing her the transportation. Thank you to every one who participated in the weekend making it a big success. If you have never been on the retreat before, please feel free to join us next year. We are a group of very welcoming women who love to connect and share the fun.

The Tzedakah Box
A Social Action Column
Sara Lamnin
Daryl Berman

VASHTI AND ESTHER'S LEGACY: A Look at Women's Rights

From the Religious Action Center:

As we celebrate our victory over oppression, may we also remember those, including millions of women, who are not yet free.

American Jewish World Service's Women's Empowerment Projects

Women living in the developing world often experience the heaviest burdens of poverty due to gender discrimination and social inequality. Through grant making and the Women's Empowerment Fund, AJWS supports programs designed to enable women to become agents of change, empowering them to transform their own lives and create lasting and meaningful change for themselves, their families, and their communities. Visit www.ajws.org and click on "Women's Empowerment."

Amnesty International's Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women

By joining AI's Campaign to Stop Violence Against Women, you will receive information about current women's rights issues around the globe and about local efforts to combat discrimination and violence. Visit <http://www.amnesty.org/actforwomen> for more information.

Ending Violence Against Women in the DRC

Since 1997, residents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have endured the deadliest conflict since World War II. While militants and military fight for land and power, they destroy the lives of the villagers in the areas of conflict. The most frequent war targets are women, with rape as the weapon of choice. In some villages, as many as 90 percent of the women have been attacked. Adding to the physical and emotional trauma is often disease and disability for the survivors. Limited medical care compounds the issues.

V-Day and UNICEF, on behalf of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, have joined with local hospitals and services to provide medical treatment, education, leadership training, and a chance to earn income. www.stoprapeindrc.org

The Union for Reform Judaism has been helping African women through its *Nothing But Nets* campaign, which recently sent 17,500 malaria-preventing bed nets to a refugee camp for victims of violence. <http://urj.org/relief/nets>

Local Needs

 *Thank you for the soap and toiletries!* The South Hayward Parish Food Program has been offering showers to members of our community and deeply appreciates the supplies. Please keep them coming. Socks are also very welcome, all sizes.

 Local grandmothers are knitting hats and scarves for low income and homeless individuals. Knitters and crocheters are welcome. *Yarn donations are needed.* For information contact Sara or Daryl.

 *Saturday, March 7, 6:30pm.* Fundraiser for Marriage Equality Litigation. Concert & Silent Auction, \$10 & up Donations. Rhythm Cultural Works, 2513 Blanding, Alameda. Call Charlene Shores for info 510-538-9722 or www.rhythmix.org

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



Used Cell Phones Wanted

Barbara Heimowitz is still collecting used/old cell phones that you leave at Shir Ami to be sent 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.

The 24th Jewish Music Festival, March 21-April 2, 2009

A program of the JCC of the East Bay with concerts throughout the Bay Area

This year's hopping lineup presents a boatload of artists from Germany, New York, Toronto and the Bay Area. The Festival Week opens Saturday night, March 21st, with Kosher Gospel featuring Joshua Nelson and the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir. Highlights include performances by America's First Lady of Sephardic music, Flory Jagoda; klezmer and bluegrass giant Andy Statman at Yoshi's SF; several concerts celebrating the work of Swiss-American, local composer Ernest Bloch. The Festival is presenting the American premiere of Canadian Yiddish swing sensation Sisters of Sheynville and hosting the CD release party for pioneering, radical Yiddish group Daniel Kahn and the Painted Bird.

Group discounts and info: 510.848.0237 x 118. Tickets go on sale second week of February, 800.838.3006 www.jewishmusicfestival.org

The Community Page

March 2009

Yahrzheits:

March 6, 2009

Esther Cooper, aunt of Ann Blank
Clara Finlay, mother of Todd Finlay
Dalton Gautreaux, uncle of Toni Schulberg
Fannie Heimowitz, mother of Stan Heimowitz
Miriam Levine, mother of Hillie Levine
Elsie Maas, grandmother of Toni Schulberg
Joslyn Miner, former member of Shir Ami, and wife of Syd Miner, past president of Shir Ami
Matthew Zankowsky, father of Fred Zankowsky

March 20, 2009

Esther Carter, mother of Bruce Carter, grandmother of David Carter
James Finlay, father of Todd Finlay
Stella Small, grandmother of Toni Schulberg
Edna Vanous, long-time member of Shir Ami

March 27, 2009

Matt Ganz, long-time member and former president of Shir Ami and husband of Judy Ganz
Ruth Zelezny, grandmother of Julie Greenfield

Kaddish List:(those who have died during the past 11 mos)
(Please read at all services in March)

Bridget Laky, past president and long-time former member of Shir Ami
Zac Cohen, long-time member of Shir Ami
Sheila Arthur, long-time former member of Shir Ami
Lazarus Lewis, father of Peter Lewis
Betya Druker, mother of Alex Druker

May their memory be [for](#) 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 yahrzeit@congshirami.org

TODAH RABAH FOR THESE GENEROUS DONATIONS:

- From Edetha Speceal: a former member of Shir Ami, who lives in Oregon, for her monthly donations.
- From Henry Bennett, Susanna & David Bensinger (Ruth Hartman's mother & step-father), Ruth Hartman & Gary Wolff: Todah rabah for your generous end_of_year donations.
- From friends & family of Zac Cohen: in his Memory, from Don Cohen (his brother), Christine Wright (his life partner), Eugene Zlatunich (a golfing friend), and Jack Margid (a friend from bridge).
- From Ingrid Weinberg: in Memory of Rolf Weinberg at his Yahrzeit.
- From Florence Finkle: in Memory of her mother Tessie Bressler at her Yahrzeit.
- From Fran Johnson: in Memory of her husband Melvin Johnson at his Yahrzeit.
- From Irina & Alex Druker: a donation for a plaque in Memory of Betya Druker.

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. Her address is listed on the Shir Ami roster. If you do not have a roster and would like one, please contact Ruth Hartman. Florrie will send a card to the person you are honoring and your dedication will appear on this page.

Thank you to our Oneg Hosts:

Feb. 6th: The Keil Family (Todah Rabah to Danielle's mom and sister-in-law for their help)

What's Nu?

- ♣ Congratulations to Shashana Markus who was named Athlete of the Week in the February 11th Castro Valley Forum. Shashana is a member of the CVHS Wrestling team and recently placed first at the Peninsula Invitational in Half Moon Bay. She also carries a 4.0 GPA at CVHS. We are proud of you Shashana!
- ♣ Hana Hartman traveled to Washington, DC over the President's Day weekend to join 650 other Reform Jewish teens at the biennial NFTY Convention.
- ♣ Diana Zankowsky and Ruth Hartman attended the URJ Pacific Central West Regional Biennial in Santa Clara in February. There they heard previews of the URJ's ambitious restructuring plan – details will be unveiled this spring. They also attended workshops on leadership, Jewish education, and congregational vision.
- ♣ Over Martin Luther King weekend there was a retreat at Camp Newman Swig called West Coast Party Jr. This was a retreat for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. Four kids from Shir Ami went on this retreat: Adam Blum, Jacob Carmack, Emma Silver and Spencer Blum. There they met 100 other Jewish teens from the west coast. They had a discussion about what is going on in the world and what changes they can make to it so that they have a better future and a better economy. They played some sports like gaga, basketball, Frisbee. They had a lot of fun and hope to have the opportunity to do it again.

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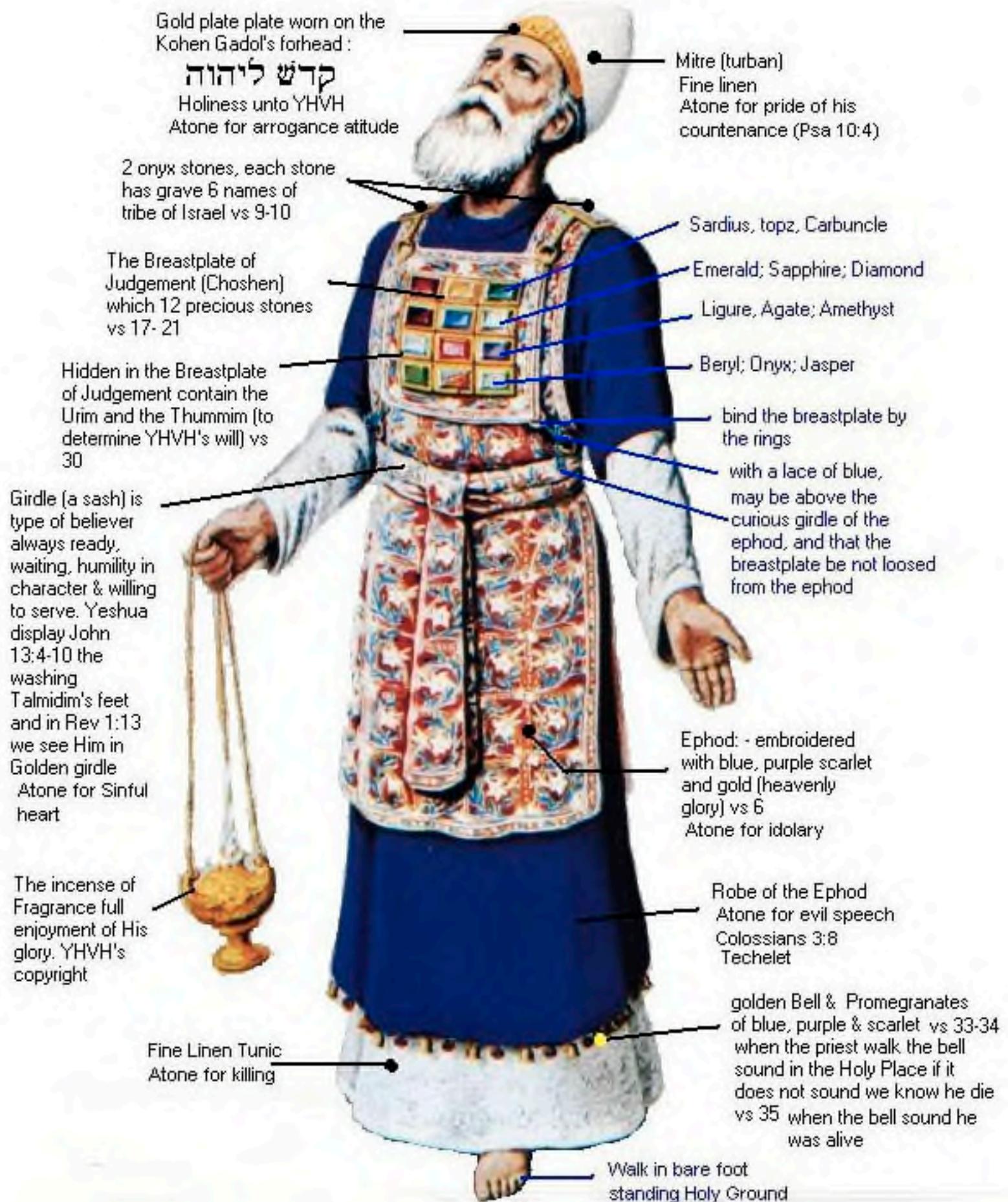
Tonia Schulberg
yahrzeits@congshirami.org

Donations:

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

Paresha Tetzaveh (You <the Children of Israel> are commanded)

Instructions for burning oil in the Temple and specifications for the garb of the High Priest are given in this Paresha



Shir Ami Services, (K to 4th Grade participants) will be led by
Suzy Stone
 on Friday, March 6th, 2009 beginning with a 7:00 PM
Purim Party ~ come in costume!

The Politics of Water: Is there a Water Crisis?



“Water - where we get it - how much water do we have in California - will the water crisis be one of the defining issues of California’s future?”

**This topic will be addressed at a Bagel and Lox Brunch
by Shir Ami Member**

**Gary Wolff, P.E., Ph.D.
Executive Director of StopWater.Org**

**Sunday, March 15th, 10:00 AM to 12 noon at Congregation Shir Ami
4529 Malabar Ave., Castro Valley**

**Cost: Complimentary, no charge, but please reserve with Stan Heimowitz
before March 11th at celebgems@aol.com**

ויקהל

Paresha Vayakhel (Assembled)

Moses assembled the community upon his return from the mountain to teach the Laws which became the framework of Isrealite religious life



Shira Ami **Special Yanov** Shabbat Services and Pot luck

Friday, March 20th, led by

Matt Dreffin

Dinner at 6:00 PM, Services at 8:00 PM

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment

A to N - Main Dish

M to Z - Salad or
Side dish

Come to see and experience Shir Ami's Special Guest:

The Yanov Torah

Around 1980, Rabbi Erwin Herman, 'z'l, was offered a Torah scroll that had come out of the Nazi work camp of Yanov, near the town of L'vov (in present-day Ukraine) by a Russian immigrant. This scroll has an amazing story of courage and faith to share with all of us.

We will be reading from this special Torah during services as well as hearing its touching story of survival.

*Friday, March 20
8:00 pm*

Vayikra (Offering)

The parasha deals with the differing requirements, nature and reasoning for burnt sacrificial offerings.



Shir Ami Services Friday, March 27th at 8:00 PM

will be led by

Matt Dreffin

BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU TO SERVICES

Saturday, April 11th



EXODUS ~ Mark Chagall

Shir Ami Community Seder

Save the Date!

Watch for details