



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism Congregations
April, 2009



Apr 5	School – Preschool through Confirmation; School Passover Seder	May 1	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin
Apr 10	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone	May 2	Havdalah & Israeli Movie – 7 PM
Apr 11	Community Passover Seder – 5 PM; Led by Suzy Stone; see flier	May 3	School – Preschool through Confirmation
Apr 12	No School	May 10	School – K through Confirmation
Apr 14	Board meeting – 7 PM	May 15	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone
Apr 19	No School	May 16	Adult Ed – 3:30 PM
Apr 23	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM	May 17	School – Preschool through Confirmation; End of Year party Annual Congregation Meeting – 1 PM
Apr 24	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin	May 26	Rosh Chodesh – 7:30 PM
Apr 25	Havdalah & Israeli Movie – 7 PM	May 29	Shavuot , Confirmation, and Teen Grad Shabbat Services – 8 PM; Led by Diana Zankowsky
Apr 26	School – Preschool through Confirmation		

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Shir Ami members and friends,

On March 29 I had the pleasure of substitute teaching with our terrific Confirmation class at Shir Ami. These 8th and 9th grade students (four in attendance on that day) have each made the choice, after becoming bar or bat mitzvah, to continue to spend their Sunday mornings deepening their understanding of Judaism in Diana's class, supporting the Shir Ami Religious School program, and developing as future leaders of our community.

On this day, in honor of the birthday of Cesar Chavez, Julie Greenfield shared with the students an excellent documentary about the Farm Workers movement of the 1960s. After watching the film, Julie led a discussion about the connections between the themes of Passover, the liberation movements of the past, and the challenges that face their generation today.

I was impressed with how astutely our teens understood these connections. We talked about gay rights, immigration, sweatshop labor, anti-Semitism, and school budget cuts. We talked about ways to make real the principle of not oppressing the stranger through our everyday choices.

I felt proud of these students. I felt proud to know Julie Greenfield, who was active in the Farm Workers movement and continues to be an activist for *tikkun olam*, alongside many others, past and present, in our Shir Ami community. I felt grateful to Jodi Blum, Barb Haber, David Schulberg, and Diana Zankowsky who, among others, have been recent champions of our teen programming at Shir Ami.

Do you have a personal story, passion, or cause that you'd like to share with our students? Call Jodi Blum.

Do you love the holiday of Passover and its themes of liberation and commitment to justice, from generation to generation? Join us on April 11 for our Community Passover Seder (flier in this bulletin).

Do you feel inspired by the example of our teens? Save the date, Friday, May 29, for a special Shabbat and Shavuot Confirmation and Teen Graduation service.

Hag Sameach Pesach, Happy Passover to all!

Ruth Hartman

president@congshirami.org

Rabbis' Corner

Matt Dreffin

Suzy Stone

As if the Jewish calendar were not confusing enough, the Mishnah teaches us that there are actually *four* Jewish New Years! Two of them are agricultural in nature: the 1st of Elul is the tithing season for cattle, and the 15th of Shevat (otherwise known as Tu B'Shevat) is the New Year for trees and fruits. But why mark a new year for trees? Well, Tu B'Shevat is comparable to April 15th—tax day—in our current system. On the 15th of Shevat, all tithing and tzedakah was to be completed for the preceding year.

The third Jewish New Year—Rosh Hashanah—falls on the 1st of Tishrei, and as we know, the High Holidays are a time for deep spiritual, emotional, and relational reflection, T'shuva (return), and rejuvenation.

The fourth and final Jewish New Year celebrated in ancient times was the 15th of Nisan, which is Passover. In a way, Rosh HaShanah and Passover are mirror images of one another. Passover takes place exactly half-way through the Jewish calendar and it represents a time for renewed spiritual introspection. While many of us view the High Holidays as a time for spiritual reflection, I am afraid that in all the preparations for Passover, that are so family- and ritually-oriented, we may forget that the days and weeks leading up to Passover are also a time to reflect on relationships to one another, our family, and to God.

One pre-Passover ritual that highlights this spiritual quest is called “B’deekat Chametz,” or the searching for Chametz (leavened bread products). While forbidding ourselves an essential ingredient (yeast) for 8 days may seem too stringent for our modern lives, the rabbis were just as concerned about our “spiritual chametz” as they were about the physical chametz in our homes. In other words, yeast symbolized the arrogance and ignorance that tends to build up within each one of us throughout the year. So this year, even if we don’t refrain from eating chametz during Passover, I encourage all of us to seek out ways in which we can be more humble, and “yeast-free” in the year to come!

One way to do this may be to collect all the leavened products in your home and donate them to a food bank, or put them aside in a specially marked cabinet. That way, each time we see that marker, we can remind ourselves of the non-physical goals we have set for ourselves this spring!

Sincerely,
Rabbi Suzy

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, (at dzankowsky@aol.com) no later than Tuesday after a rabbi's visit. Thank you in advance for contributing to our student rabbis' educations.

Sunday School

April 5th Preschool to Confirmation Schoolwide Seder –there will
be chocolate involved

April 12th and 19th No School Spring Break 
April 26th Preschool to Confirmation- Rabbi Matt
May 3rd Preschool to Confirmation- Rabbi Suzy

There are times when visitors come to Shir Ami, perhaps looking for a synagogue, and I struggle to define why we are so special, why they should come back, and what it means to me.

This March I witnessed some special moments that brought it all into focus.

In March, several of our Shir Ami young adults who are away at college came home for spring break. These are busy young adults with friends to visit and things to do. Stacey Zankowsky made time to come and spin cotton candy at our Purim Carnival. Tyler Dean spent a Sunday morning in confirmation class interacting with our young teenagers. Irene Gilchriese came and helped teach the K-2 Religious School class. This provided a shining example to the young children in our school, and it does not happen everywhere. Many synagogues have difficulty retaining their students post B'nai Mitzvah, but ours spend entire mornings with us during their college spring breaks.

Also, in March Rabbi Matt brought to Shir Ami a special Torah rescued from the holocaust, the Yanov Torah. Sunday morning he presented it to the religious school students. He spread it out on the table, and told the students some of its history. Some questions had been asked and answered, there was genuine interest, and adults were gathered around as well. Then a small voice coming from sort of the bottom of the pack, the voice of Sean Lange a preschooler, "Well aren't you going to read the story?" It was the obvious perfect question and it came from a four year old. Rabbi Matt jumped around to the front of the Torah (turns out he can't read Hebrew upside down) read a passage from the Yanov Torah to the children in Hebrew, and then explained the English translation. It was a truly lovely and touching moment.

Also this month, Hana Hartman and Sophia Blum gave a presentation to their peers during Days of Diversity at Castro Valley High. The title of their presentation was Jews Around the World. I was honored to be able to attend along with Ruth Hartman who had assisted them in their efforts. There were lots of presentations that day, but only a handful given by students. They did a fantastic job and the Chemistry teacher's comment was, "I'll be proud if my daughter turns out like these girls." Ruth and I got in the car to leave, and Ruth said, "The girls would have different lives without Shir Ami." I couldn't have agreed more. My guess is they would be lovely girls just the same, but there is something richer/deeper that they have inside thanks to Shir Ami, the lessons of Judaism, and the examples provided by this community.

As always,
Jodi

Adult Education

Diana Zankowsky

Adult Education

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

Saturday, April 25th, Shir Ami' brings you Havdalah and a Movie. While the movie for this particular date has not been officially chosen yet, it will give us insight into one of *the* dominant forces in the shaping of Israeli culture: The Army. The movie promises to enlighten us on the subject of how Israelis relate to war, their service at such a young age, and the mandatory conscription affects how they relate to each other. See you there! Snacks and a group debriefing will follow.

Rabbinic Intern Suzy Stone will be here for the Community Passover Seder on April 11th. There will not be an adult education session that day.



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.

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:

Sisterhood's pre Passover gathering was so much fun and maybe a start of a new tradition. Fourteen of us were cozy in Jan's home for a Kosher for Passover Pot luck dinner. There were many new recipes made of Matzo and even some of the traditional Passover foods to get us ready for the holiday. We enjoyed Rose Firestone's " Dorothy's "Passover Muffins (made with matzo meal), Nancy Storch's magnificent caramel matzo crunch, Nurgul's wonderful beef borsht, Jan's " don't starve your guests" Gefilte fish appetizer, and Sara Lamnin's fabulous Matzo Brie Pizza for a few examples. In addition to enjoying all the delights we shared the significance of each recipe and recipes were handed out to all.

Next, we brought in the new month of Nisan with a reading, candle lighting and prayer.

The final activity of the night was creating a matzo cover to take home for our Passover table. We used iron- on appliques to decorate the cloths with flowers, frogs, wine and grapes, butterflies, Matzo, and Hebrew word for Passover to name a few. Each woman's creation was beautiful and everyone had a great time with the project. Coffee, Passover desserts, and a lot of visiting ended the evening with everyone having recipes and Matzo covers to take home.

Next month we will bring in the month of Iyar on Thursday, April 23rd at 7:30 at the home of Sharon Golembo in Fremont. Carpool and BART are options for transportation. Iyar is rich in holidays and events such as counting the Omer, Yom Ha'atzmaut, and Lag B'Omer. Come join us for this next Rosh Chodesh and look to email for a reminder and directions.

The Tzedakah Box
A Social Action Column
Daryl Berman, Julie Greenfield, Sara Lamnin

FROM HAGGADAH TO HELPING

“This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all those who are hungry come and eat with us. Let all who are in want share the hope of Passover.”
(Haggadah, “Ha Lachma Anya”)

If you clear your house of Chametz (food items not kosher for Passover), you can bring unopened or fresh items to the local food pantry. Other items can be shared potluck-style with local feeding programs, for example, the Hayward Community Action Network holds a monthly potluck supper for participants and providers of local feeding programs. Help is needed. Contact Sara (510) 432-7703 or saramnin@sbcglobal.net to join in or for more details.

Want to make an honorary donation for those who search for food throughout the year? www.mazon.org is the Jewish response to hunger. Or, follow the example of Congregation Micah in Brentwood, TN who committed to buying one extra package of food each time they went grocery shopping to place in the store’s donation barrels or to the local food pantry. According to the Alameda County Food Bank, the most needed items are Canned Fruit & Vegetables, Canned Meats and Fish, Peanut Butter, Pasta, Beans, Rice, Canned Soup (low-salt), Low-sugar Cereal and Oatmeal, Tomato Sauce, Powdered Milk.

If you need help with accessing donation locations, please contact Julie or Sara.

SOCIAL ACTION ON YOUR SEDER PLATE?

The origin of the Orange on the Seder Plate...

During a 1979 presentation to UC Berkeley Hillel’s women’s group, Hilda Langer, the wife of the local Chabad Rabbi shared her opinion about homosexuality among Jewish women. She classified being a lesbian as a misdemeanor – something to avoid, but with few consequences, like eating bread during Passover. When preparing their seder later that year, the Hillel women reviewed this comment, summarizing Langer’s opinion as ‘lesbians have as much of a role in Judaism as bread does on a seder plate.’ The group decided to create another interpretation of Judaism and placed a crust of bread on their seder plate to show that lesbians very definitely had a place in their observance.

The story spread and ignited imaginations. Some groups expanded their ritual to include women, widows, or others who were marginalized. Many were uncomfortable with the bread symbol as it made the seder plate unkosher for Passover. They substituted open space or an orange for the bread to honor and make opportunities for all those who may feel excluded from traditional seders.

From [Like Bread on the Seder Plate](#) by Rabbi Rebecca Alpert

The Community Page

April, 2009

Yahrzheits:

April 10 , 2009

Betya Druker, mother of Alex Druker
Blanche Fink, very active early member of Shir Ami

April 24 , 2009

May Ganz, former member and mother-in-law of Judy Ganz
Sam Ganz, former member and father-in-law of Judy Ganz
Benjamin Halpern, father of Harriet Skelly
Bernard Nasatir, father of Cary Nasatir
Marjorie Wolf, aunt of Ruth Hartman

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

Jean Skelly, mother of Bruce Skelly
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

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 yahrzeit@congshirami.org

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TODAH RABAH FOR THESE GENEROUS DONATIONS:

- From Judy Ganz: in Memory of Matthew Ganz at his Yahrzeit.
- From Florence Finkle: wishing a speedy recovery to Fran Johnson.
- From Ruth Hartman: a get well wish for Fran Johnson

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, at her address on the temple roster. (If you need a roster, 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:

- March 7th: Angie Ross and Family
- (in particular, thank you for your hard work in making the hamentashen, Angie)
- March 20th: The Hartman-Wolff Family
- March 27th: Rahel and Mike Ruiz

Thank you to Stan and Barbara Heimowitz for organizing and hosting the March 15 Bagel and Lox Brunch, and to guest speaker Gary Wolff for a fascinating talk on California water issues.

Thank you to Barb Haber and her fabulous team of helpers for a fantastic Purim Carnival. It was great to have the Temple Beth Sholom religious school families join us for this year's carnival. Did you see the article in the Daily Review? It's at http://www.insidebayarea.com/dailyreview/ci_11867161.

What's Nu?

- ⌘ Proud mama, Lisa Silver, shares news of daughter, Sophia, being named "Student of the Year" at Independent Elementary School, and being honored at the Castro Valley Unified School District's Board Meeting on 3/12/09. Mazel Tov Sophia!
- ⌘ Our long-time member, Bridget Laky, died on January 10. Very active with the Center for Learning in Retirement, she taught a German class, served on the Tours Committee and facilitated the Special Audiences program for several years. A native of Vienna, Austria, she and her sister were on the last train to Hungary en route to Czechoslovakia and on to Scotland where they reunited with their parents. Bridget eventually attended school in London. In 1946, she settled in the Bay Area, where she studied at University of California, Berkeley. She taught German until her retirement. In San Francisco, Bridget was active with museums, symphony and opera, where she ushered for many years. She also enjoyed making jewelry. Her passion for art led her to Paris, to study in the summer of 1967. She had two sons in her first marriage. A resident of the Sequoias, this energetic lady was in charge of arranging the art display window and managed the gift shop there.

Shir Ami Contacts

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Donations:

General Funds, Special Funds,
 Wall Plaques
 Florrie Finkle
<mailto:donations@congsHIRAMI.org>

Paresha *CHOL HAMOED*

Of the eight days of Passover, the first to and the last two are festival days). The middle four days are called *Chol Hamoed*--"weekdays of the festival," often called "the intermediate days."



Pre-Pasover Seder Services at Shir Ami
Friday, April 10 at 8:00 PM

Led by

Suzy Stone

Congregation Shir Ami
Community-Wide Passover Seder

on Saturday, April 11th, 2009, 5:00 - 9:00 PM

at the Castro Valley Community Center

18988 Lake Chabot Rd., Castro Valley

RSVP by April 1, 2009 on EVITE or to membership@congshirami.org



Shir Ami will be retelling the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery and their redemption. The Evening Service will feature Passover songs and music by Rabbinic intern Suzy Stone and songleader Rachel Brott. A festive kosher-style Holiday meal will be served.

Costs: Shir Ami Members \$25, all children 12 and under \$10.

Adult Non-Members \$30. No charge to military personnel.

Additional contributions to defray costs are appreciated. No Shir Ami member will be turned away because of inability to pay.



Seating is limited ~ please provide the information below

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

No. _____ adult Shir Ami members @ **\$25** = \$ _____ No. _____ adult non-Shir Ami members @ **\$30** = \$ _____

No. _____ children 12 and under @ **\$10** = \$ _____ Additional donation to help defray costs = \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Your Reservation is made by check, payable to Congregation Shir Ami, and mailed with the information above no later than APRIL 1 to:

Congregation Shir Ami

ATT'N: Community Passover Seder

4529 Malabar Ave

Castro Valley, CA 94546

Please include your check; money will not be accepted at the door

Paresha Tazria v'Metzorah (Leprosy and Leper)

This Parshah continues the discussion of the laws of Tumah and Taharah (ritual impurity and purity). The discussion is concerned with health treatments and conditions. Among these are: immersion in the mikvah, circumcision, isolation of patients suffering plague diseases, and decontamination of clothing.



Shir Ami Services

Friday, April 24th, 2009

Led by

Matt Dreffin

(April 21st Yom HaShoah)
(April 28th Yom Ha Zikaron)
(April 29th Yom Ha Atzma'ut)