

## OCTOBER 2014 BULLETIN ~Cheshvan/Kislev 5775



### CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

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Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley is an intimate, intergenerational  
Reform Jewish Community that welcomes interfaith families.

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism

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On October 17,  
our newest  
Hebrew learners  
received a  
community  
blessing and a  
stuffed torah.

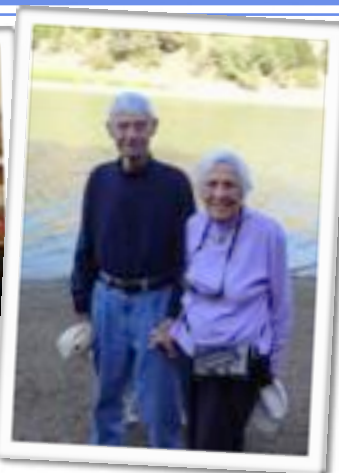
Congratulations  
Marlo, Jason and  
Hadasah.

Walk at Lake Chabot with Rabbi Benj



#### November 7, Rabbi Benj on Interfaith Marriage

Rabbi Benj will be speaking on the  
subject of interfaith marriage during  
his 11/7 service. Does this topic  
speak to you, personally? He  
encourages anyone for whom the  
subject is relevant to come to services  
that night.



## Event Calendar

You can always find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org) !

Sat.	Nov.	1	9:45 am	All Hebrew students invited to meet at Shir Ami to <b>attend Bar Mitzvah at Beth Emek.</b>
Sat.	Nov.	1	1:00 pm	Help decorate Shir Ami for the Holiday/Chanukah Fair event on November 2
Sat.	Nov.	1	3:00 pm	<a href="#">Introduction to Judaism</a> , ongoing class, all are welcome (held at Diana Zankowsky's)
Sun.	Nov.	2	2:00 am	Remember to <b>set your clocks back one hour for Standard Time</b>
Sun.	Nov.	2		No School-- Come and enjoy the Holiday Fair And Boutique
Sun.	Nov.	2	11:00 am	Chanukah/Holiday Fair and Boutique, 11:00 am-3:00 pm
Thu.	Nov.	6	7:00 pm	<b>Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami</b> , all are welcome
Fri.	Nov.	7	7:30 pm	<b>Honoring New Members and Board Installation, Shabbat Service</b> with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Nov.	8	3:00 pm	Text Study: Song of Songs, <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Nov.	8	4:30 pm	Book Club, <i>To the End of the Land</i> by Daniel Grossman, <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj
Sun.	Nov.	9	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Wed.	Nov.	12	7:30 pm	<a href="#">Jewish Meditation Group</a> , contact Julie Greenfield, <a href="mailto:meditation@CongShirAmi.org">meditation@CongShirAmi.org</a>
Fri.	Nov.	14	6/6:30/7:30 pm	6:00 pm, Kid's Shabbat; 6:30 pm, Potluck; 7:30 pm Shabbat Service with Rabbi Julie
Sat.	Nov.	15	11:00 am	Erev Shabbat Liturgy: Kabbalat Shabbat <a href="#">adult learning</a> continues with Rabbi Julie
Sat.	Nov.	15	5:00 pm	<a href="#">Movie Night</a> ( <i>The Gatekeepers</i> ) Discussion and Havdallah with Rabbi Julie
Sun.	Nov.	16	9:00 am	<a href="#">Volunteer at the Food Bank</a> , ages 10 & older. Arrive at Shir Ami by 8:15 if carpooling
Sun.	Nov.	16	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Fri.	Nov.	21	7:30 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Benj and participation of children grades 4-7
Sat.	Nov.	22	3:00 pm	Biblical History: the Prophets, <a href="#">adult learning</a> with Rabbi Benj
Sat.	Nov.	22	4:30 pm	<a href="#">The Niggun</a> , have a spiritual experience as we sing wordless songs with Rabbi Benj
Sun.	Nov.	23	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	Nov.	23	11:30 am	<a href="#">Tot Talk</a> , a free program for families with children under 5 years old. 11:30-12:30
Sun.	Nov.	23	see email for time	<a href="#">Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh</a> at Shir Ami: <i>Thanksgiving, Jewish style</i> . Harriet Skelly host
Fri.	Dec.	19	6:30 pm	<a href="#">Chanukah Pot Luck &amp; Menorah Lighting</a> , bring a dish to share, your menorah & candles

# President's Message

Dear Shir Ami Community,

What a great start to the New Year 5775! We welcomed back Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried and our new Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler. Our Cantor Judy Ginsburgh from Louisiana was a great find for us. I want to thank David Schulberg for the well coordinated and smoothly run High Holy Day services, and Jon Zimmerman for leading a successful cantor search. Thanks to Ruth Hartman for the overall coordination of our Break Fast, to Ruth Rosenthal and her volunteers (see list in this bulletin) for coordinating the setup and cleanup, and to those members and guests who brought food to share. Huge thanks to all of you who collectively donated \$2400 to the Eden UCC Comida Para Cherryland and many bags of food to the South Hayward Parish.

We're delighted to welcome seven new member households into our community:

- Sara Andre
- Wendy Crow
- Jessica Collett
- Michael and Patricia Kasin and their daughter Abby
- Jay Lowman
- Aaron and Rachel Sklar and their sons Elijah, Levi and Asher
- Sharalyn Stebben.

**We will have a special new member welcome at our November 7<sup>th</sup> Shabbat service.** Until then let's show our Shir Ami "audacious hospitality" to our new members by introducing ourselves and getting to know them.

The next two big events scheduled at Shir Ami are:

- **Holiday Faire and Boutique** on Sunday, November 2 from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm. (See flier in this bulletin and on our website.) We will be decorating the temple on Saturday, November 1 at 1:00 pm--please contact Jon Zimmerman at [treasurer@congshirami.org](mailto:treasurer@congshirami.org) if you can help. This is a fundraiser for us, so feel free to invite all of your friends and family to come and shop and eat.
- **Chanukah potluck and Menorah lighting party** on December 19 at 6:30 pm. Bring your menorahs and candles and food to share and friends to celebrate the Festival of Lights together.



I'm looking forward to seeing you,  
Harriet

Harriet Skelly  
[president@congshirami.org](mailto:president@congshirami.org)

## Introduction to Judaism

The Introduction to Judaism class met twice in October. The beginning of October we met in Diana Zankowsky's sukkah. We brought our families and had a good time visiting and shaking the lulav and etrog. We also met at the end of the month and began to study Jewish lifecycle events.

**Our next meeting will be on November 1 at 3 pm at Diana's home.** Please note the change in time and place from last month's Bulletin. We will continue our discussion of Jewish lifecycle events.

Throughout the school year, we will be meeting only once per month, intentionally on a Saturday when the rabbinic interns are not in town. The schedule follows:

December 13      January 17      February 14      March 28      April 11

Dates may have to change; check the congregational calendar at [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org) for the latest information.

**There is no cost for the class** except for the purchase of the required text: "Every Person's Guide to Judaism" by Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff. If you haven't yet attended but want to join, please email Diana ([religion@congshirami.org](mailto:religion@congshirami.org)) with any questions and to confirm your attendance.



# Rabbinic Interns' Page

## Hiding and Revealing Our True Selves

As we finish reading our yearly cycle of Torah and starting all over again at the beginning, I want to talk about one of my favorite *midrashim*, or rabbinic interpretations of Torah. We all know the story of the Garden of Eden—God creates Adam out of the dust of the earth, places him in the Garden, gives him a wife, and gives him only one commandment to obey: do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge. Of course, Adam and Eve disobey this commandment almost as quickly as God commands it, and God forces them to leave the Garden. The scene in which God discovers the disobedience and metes out the punishment is one of particular significance for the rabbis.

In the scene, the spirit of God is traveling in the Garden, and Adam and Eve, having already eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, are scared of God because they know they are naked. In response to their shame, they hide in the bushes and cover themselves up with clothing. When they do this, God asks them *ayeka*—"where are you?" Adam sheepishly comes out of hiding and does not respond to the question of "where are you" with the correct answer *hineni*, "here I am," but proceeds to blame his wife for what he has done. Now, this whole interaction is a problem for the rabbis. After all, if we believe in an all-knowing, all-powerful God, then why would God have to ask "where are you?" Wouldn't God already know? The rabbis tell us not to read the text as *ayeka*, but rather to read it as *eicha* "alas." This is not an inquisitive God asking a question about Adam and Eve's location, this is a lamenting God, distressed that His beloved creations are hiding from him. In this reading of Genesis, it is not the eating of the apple itself that represents the ultimate sin, it is the fact that Adam and Eve felt so ashamed of themselves that they hid from God and ultimately, even from themselves.

Recently the issue of shame and hiding came to the foreground as the beloved Rabbi Gil Steinlauf, the senior rabbi of the largest Conservative synagogue in the DC metro-area, wrote a letter to his congregation in which he said that he discovered that he is gay. Coming out of the closet was a very difficult thing to do for this man, and it would involve a lot of pain. In choosing to live a life of authenticity, he would have to go through a divorce and break up his family. And yet, as we learn from this midrash, the act of hiding and not being true to oneself is ultimately more of a tragedy in God's eyes than anything else. After all, it is well documented that people who hide their identities and don't come out of the closet are more suicidal, get involved in drugs and risky behavior more, and are more depressed and anxious. This isn't just true about people who hide their sexuality. Many

people hide financial troubles, mental illness, depression, or family problems from view because they are ashamed. But the problem is that shame is bad for our health, and God does not want us to live our lives motivated by shame. I hope that we will all use this lesson to live with authenticity to our whole selves, and I hope that we will not be like Adam, and instead answer *hineni*, "here I am," as we go about living.

Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried

## Adult Learning with the Rabbi

### November 8 with Rabbi Benj

#### 3:00 Text Study: Song of Songs

Come learn about the most scandalous book of the Bible, the Song of Songs, and explore modern interpretations of this beautiful and erotic book. See how Song of Songs relates to our book club discussion.

#### 4:30 Book Club "To the End of the Land"

Discuss David Grossman's tragic masterpiece and learn about the Israeli experience in times of armed conflict.

### November 15 with Rabbi Julie

#### 11:00 am Erev Shabbat Liturgy, Continued

Julie will teach another section of Kabbalat Shabbat liturgy, first focusing on L'Cha Dodi, then looking at psalms, poems and ideas that encapsulate the Friday Night service. You did not need to attend the first session, we will be discussing new topics!

#### 5:00 pm Movie Night, Discussion and Havdallah

*The Gatekeepers* tells the story of six former heads of *Shin Bet*, the Israeli government's internal security service. Nominated for Best Documentary at the 2012 Oscars, this film is challenging and complex look at one of Israel's most private institutions. This movie will leave you with new questions and new ideas. We will discuss the film afterwards and then close with Havdallah!

[Adult Learning continued on the next page.]



Benj Fried  
[rabbi.benj@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:rabbi.benj@CongShirAmi.org)

### Rabbinic Interns



Julie Bressler  
[rabbi.julie@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:rabbi.julie@CongShirAmi.org)

## Adult Learning [continued]

### November 22 with Rabbi Benj

#### **3:00 Biblical History: The Prophets**

Benj's theme in adult education this year is looking deeply at Jewish history. He starts out by exploring the Prophets, the people who really created the ethical system underlying Judaism and serve as continued inspiration for Reform Judaism.

#### **4:30 The Niggun**

Come have a spiritual experience as we learn and sing wordless melodies and really get in touch with our spirits.



## Community News

### Thank You, Volunteers

#### Break-the-Fast

Thank you to the following Yom Kippur volunteers who set up, brought food and/or cleaned up under the coordination of Ruth Hartman and Ruth Rosenthal.

Rick Goldhoff, Lina Teferi, Debbie Schriber, Julie Greenfield, Sara Lamnin and Jon Zimmerman, Rita Weikal, Valerie Goldman, Sharon Golembo, Lee Carmack, Diana Zankowsky, Peter Lewis, Lisa Steindel, Jeff Blum, Peter and Lorraine Lewis, Marci Loss, Lina Teferi, Marlene Lamnin, Deena Levine, Sharon Golembo

#### Sukkah Builders

A special note of thanks goes out to those who came out on Sunday, October 5th to help setup the Sukkah. Thanks to Fred Zankowsky, Todd Steele, Tonia Schulberg, David Schulberg, Milt Palmer, Mike Loss, Peter Lewis, Kelly Lepkowsky, Rick Goldhoff and Jon Zimmerman.

### Tot Talk

Tot Talk is a free program for families with young children (under 5 years old) who are seeking a Jewish connection. Tot Talk, held monthly, next meets at Shir Ami on November 23, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm.

### Jewish Meditation Group

Next group: Wednesday, November 12, 7:30 pm.

A group for practice of Jewish meditation and spirituality. Held at Congregation Shir Ami the second Wednesdays each month on a drop-in basis. Exact format to be decided by group; probably to include guided meditations, silent meditation, chanting, movement, and drash (a talk). No meditation or Jewish religious experience necessary. Free to members; by donation from non-members. For more info, contact Julie Greenfield; [Meditation@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Meditation@CongShirAmi.org)

### Sunday at the Food Bank, 11/16

After a hiatus last year due to scheduling conflicts, we will be sorting food again at the Alameda County Food Bank on **Sunday November 16 starting at 9:00 a.m.** Shir Ami members and friends are welcome to participate, provided they are at least ten years of age. It's a good idea to get there between 8:45 and 8:55 to fill out forms, and check in. If you want to carpool, some of us will be departing from the Shir Ami parking lot at about 8:20, and will have room for other passengers; to carpool, plan to arrive at Shir Ami at about 8:15.

If you have done this before, you know that it's a lot of fun, in addition to being quite rewarding. If you have not done it before, I would strongly encourage making this your first time; it's a great group event. You probably want to wear a sweater or sweatshirt, as the warehouse can be cool on cool days, and a pair of light work gloves will serve as protection for your hands.

Tom Spitzer, Social Action Chair



# School Notes

Some wonderful events have taken place in October. On October 5th we had a large turnout for school. The Men's Club gathered bamboo and then set up the sukkah. Inside children were busy learning about the holiday and making decorations to add to the structure. The youngest children (Tot Talk) made yummy edible sukkahs.

We had our 3rd annual Sukkot Sleepover after services on the 10th. Children enjoyed running around outside playing flashlight tag. Michael led a game of Bibbity Bibbity Bop, Elephant and Jello (you had to be there). Then everyone roasted marshmallows and made smores. Some adults thought we would be sleeping outside under the sukkah but the kids had other ideas. So nine children and eight adults slept side by side on the floor of Shir Ami. We bonded further with a breakfast of waffles, donuts, cereal and hot chocolate.

On the 12th we started class in the sukkah by learning the blessing and shaking the lulav. Then the children went inside to learn about the torah in preparation for Simchat Torah. The best part of the day was the field trip to Urban Adamah. This is a Jewish farm in Berekely and they were having a celebration/festival for Sukkot. There were many activities to choose from, such as making pickles, tye dye challah covers, face painting, singing, story telling, grinding wheat to make bread, and riding a bicycle to blend up a fresh smoothie. A great time was held by all.



On Friday Oct. 17th our newest Hebrew learners received a community blessing and a stuffed torah.

Congratulations Marlo, Jason and Hadasah.

Above: In the sukkah

Right: study trip to Urban Adamah, a Jewish farm in Berkeley. In the bottom picture kids are making smoothies by bicycle power.

# Holiday Fair & Boutique

Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

4529 Malabar Ave, Castro Valley



*Fundraiser for...*

*Congregation Shir Ami*

**Everyone  
Welcome!**

- Homemade textiles, jewelry, greeting cards, pottery and more from local artists
- Chanukah items (candles, dreidels, gelt, etc.)
- Fun activities for kids
- Chanukah food
- Silent auction... and More!

Questions? Contact:

[info@congshirami.org](mailto:info@congshirami.org)

510-220-3345





## *Chanukah Pot Luck and Menorah Lighting Party*



*Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm  
led by Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler*

***Everyone is Welcome!***

*Please bring a main dish, side dish,  
dessert or beverage, along with your  
own menorah and 5 candles to light!*



# Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood

## UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH

Our next Sisterhood event will be  
THANKSGIVING, JEWISH STYLE

It will be on  
Sunday November 23rd

We will bring in the new moon of Kislev  
and it will be hosted by Harriet Skelly

We will meet at Shir Ami.  
The time will be late afternoon/ early evening  
The exact time will be sent by email.

## ROSH CHODESH RECAP

Over 20 women met at Diana Zankowsky's house to celebrate in the Sukkah. The event featured a potluck dinner with a "Fall-type" item to share. We also held our annual meeting to plan the year.

In the Sukkah, we each shared the name of someone we would like to have invited to join us inside, if we could do so. We "dwelt" in the Sukkah, where we shook the lulav and etrog, and said the Sh'hechianu blessing showing thanks for celebrating these activities the first time in a year.

We set our Rosh Chodesh calendar for the year, and after a lively discussion, voted to continue our membership in the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ.)

Finally, we created prayer flags as a decoration for the Sukkah, as a way of beautifying a mitzvah, hiddur mitzvah.

["Hiddur mitzvah" means to beautify a mitzvah, to go beyond what's required and to embrace, instead, what brings about delight. Thus, we have **beautiful** candlesticks for Shabbat and **lovely art** on the walls of the sukkah.]

Thank you to our host Diana, and those who were able to attend. It was lovely evening.



For more information on  
Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh,  
contact Jan Dombrower  
[Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org)

# Yahrzeits

## **November 2014 Yahrzeit List**

*(as of 10/14/14)*

### **November 7, 2014**

Anne Aronowitz,  
Ruth Bergel,  
Joseph Forman,  
Ralph Loss,

mother-in-law of Hillie Levine  
mother of Marci Loss  
father of Lorraine Lewis  
father of Mike Loss

### **November 14, 2014**

Freda Hansen,  
Martin Michelson,

aunt of Toni Schulberg  
brother-in-law of David Schulberg

### **November 21, 2014**

Henry Ball,  
Ada & Jack Rubenstein,

very active former member of Shir Ami  
mother and father of Ron Rubenstein

### **Kaddish List *(those who have died during the past 11 months)***

Harry Yoseph Mitchell,  
Bobbie Clark,  
Earl T. Stebben,

brother of Helen Markus  
sister of Marci Loss  
husband of Sharalyn Stebben

### **Do you want to have Kaddish read for a loved one at Friday Service?**

Is there someone for whom you'd like a Yahrzeit reminder? It's easy. Please email Toni Schulberg at [yahrzeit@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:yahrzeit@CongShirAmi.org). Include your name, the name of the person who died, the date they died (month, day and year on the English calendar), their relationship to you and whether you want to use the English or Hebrew date in the reminder to you. Toni will send the reminder as you requested.