



# CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

4529 Malabar Avenue  
Castro Valley CA 94546

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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

<i>Event Calendar</i>					Find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, <a href="http://www.congshirami.org">www.congshirami.org</a> ***All events are held at Shir Ami unless otherwise noted.***
Thur.	Dec.	1	7:00 pm	Shir Ami Board Meeting, held at Shir Ami. Open to all members	
Sat.	Dec.	3	6:30 pm	Potluck Dinner and Movie Night, 6:30-9:30 pm	
Sun.	Dec.	4	9, 10:30 am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am	
Sun.	Dec.	4	12:20 pm	Food Security Panel: 11:45-12:15 with schoolchildren; 12:30-1:15 adult panel. <b>See page 6</b>	
Tue.	Dec.	6	7:00 pm	Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood: Bring in the month of Kislev- check your email for details	
Fri.	Dec.	9	7:30 pm	Erev Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Bryan Zive	
Sat.	Dec.	10	10:00 am	Coffee and Commentaries with Rabbi Bryan Zive	
Sun.	Dec.	11	9, 10:30 am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am	
Fri.	Dec.	16	6:30 pm	Potluck & Kabbalat Shabbat Service & Pre-Chanukah Celebration led by Rabbi Liora Alban	
Sat.	Dec.	17	4:00 pm	Adult Ed. & Havdallah, Jewish Life in Medieval Christian Europe, led by Rabbi Liora Alban	
Sun.	Dec.	18	9, 10:30 am	SCHOOL: Hebrew School, 9 am; Religious School, 10:30 am	
Sun.	Dec.	18	11:30 am	Tot Talk: a program for families with children under age 5. Interfaith families welcome	
Sat.	Dec.	24	First Night of Chanukah		
Sun.	Dec.	25	NO SCHOOL		
Thur.	Dec.	29	7:00 pm	Sisterhood Chanukah Party: dinner and gift exchange	
Sat.	Dec.	31	7:00 pm	Shir Ami's Chanukah & New Year's Eve Party. Sponsored by Shir Ami Sisterhood	
Sun.	Jan.	1	NO SCHOOL		
Thur.	Jan.	5	7:00 pm	Shir Ami Board Meeting, held at Shir Ami. Open to all members	
Sun.	Jan.	8	NO SCHOOL		
Fri.-Sun., February 24-26, Save the date for our 2017 Annual Women's Retreat. See page 7					



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year, we have been using the President's Message to highlight the committees that run Shir Ami. This month, our Finance Committee will be featured on page 3. Below is a message from Shir Ami President, Sara Lamnin.

### President's Message: BE HERE NOW

Now that the election season is finally coming to a close, the future feels uncertain for some, fearful for others, while hopeful for still others. Our area will see new parks; more housing options for those with little opportunity or income; and reform of criminal justice systems. Many local and state measures were approved and others were not, yet one thing is certain, change will result.

What we cannot know for sure, is what changes at the local, state, and national level will really look like... not yet. As such, I encourage us to Be Here Now. Be fully present with the day-to-day and focused on the values you yourself hold as important.

In the Torah portion Parshat Shekalim, each member of the community is commanded to contribute half a shekel to form the foundation of what was needed to create the sanctuary. (Genesis 30:15). Half a shekel given all at once would be hardly noticeable for some and for others, a substantial amount. Author, Mendy Herson noted, "...if I want to be totally present in any situation, I need to rise above my preoccupation with what's happened or what will be, the part of my brain invaded by thoughts of where else I need to be and when. I need to recognize that the person/situation [in front of me] deserves undivided attention... At present, I'm only half the equation [half a shekel]. When I really respect that, I'm ready to be here. In full. For real."

We all have contributions to make to the present. Together, we can make a full contribution – a genuine impact on the issues affecting our community, and support the people we care about. Without including accurate information and the people affected by the situation, we are only half. By focusing on our worry, our guilt, our fear, we are only half.

Worry, guilt and fear are understandable, and, some would say a Jewish birthright. However, these emotions cannot themselves affect the future. Our votes, whether or not they were successful, reflected our solid values. Those values remain and are our half shekel to contribute.

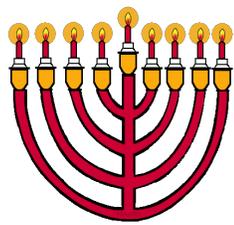
This month, one of the Torah portions is from Genesis (29:1) "Now Jacob lifted his feet and went to the land of the people..." We too can lift our feet once we are clear about the path ahead. For now, Rest. Rejuvenate. Celebrate the season. Be attentive to accurate news sources, and skeptical of propaganda. Understand your values. And then, lift your feet.

For those ready to lift your feet today, there are plenty of places to contribute your half shekel of time and/or finances. There are Jewish and local organizations working on issues related to the environment, inclusion, safety, immigration, hunger, homelessness, women's equality, and much more. Our Social Action Committee is highlighting individual causes on a quarterly basis and their members and I stand ready to assist with additional connections as needed.

B'Shalom (In Peace)  
-Sara

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## CHANUKAH/NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION AT SHIR AMI



For all Shir Ami Members  
(members only)

What: Intergenerational  
Chanukah/New Year's Eve  
Celebration

When: Saturday, December 31,  
2016, 7:00 pm - Midnight

The Shir Ami Sisterhood is sponsoring a party to celebrate the last night of Chanukah and New Year's Eve. All members are encouraged to bring their

menorah and candles to celebrate the last night of Chanukah. We will provide Mediterranean food and some bubbly, games, crafts and music. You can provide appetizers/snacks/desserts and your favorite game(s). Donations (\$\$) will be gladly accepted

A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR

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## COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT: FINANCE COMMITTEE

This month's column is written by Diana Zankowsky, member of the Finance Committee

### Committee Spotlight: Finance

Each of the committees that help to run Shir Ami has been taking a turn at this column; writing to the membership about what that committee does. And now it is the turn of the Finance committee. What do we do for the congregation?

We begin with a description from the website on Non-Profit Accounting Basics (sic); here is what a Finance committee should do:

The role of the finance committee is primarily to provide financial oversight for the organization (Congregation Shir Ami). Typical tasks for small groups (like us) include budgeting and financial planning, financial reporting, and the creation and monitoring of internal controls and accountability.

We are the group that tries to balance the uses of the dues and donations that you give to Shir Ami. We start the budgeting process half-way through the fiscal year, generally around January or February. Each of the various committees that spend money submits their budget to this committee. For example, the Religious Committee would indicate the expenses associated

with our student rabbis and would project the revenue from religious events like the Tu B'Shvat seder.

Once we've received the budgets, the Finance committee assembles them all and determines if our dues structure is still appropriate for all that we want (and need) to do in the following year. We manage to a balanced budget each year.

We report out to the board quarterly, how the synagogue is doing against the budget, both on the revenue side as well as the expense side. These reports and controls help us to help the congregation stay within our annual budget. And we report out to the congregation at our Annual Meeting (usually in May) how we have done for the year.

We are also beginning to take a longer view, developing reports and controls so that we can plan for and execute capital projects, long before they become emergency projects. These projects might include landscaping, paving, painting, or repairing damage to the building.

Controls, reports, plans, budgets – these may sound dry and boring. They are necessary, however, since they allow us to understand ourselves, what's important, what we can do, where we need to focus our resources and where we need to ask for help. All very important information that allows us to be Shir Ami!

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## RABBI BRYAN'S DVAR TORAH

The following is an excerpt from Rabbi Bryan's November Dvar Torah (literally, a "word of Torah"). Bonnie Frey was moved by his talk and requested we print this excerpt in this month's bulletin for those who missed it.

The question moving forward for us at Shir Ami: what now? A mentor of mine suggested we focus our attention locally rather than globally, because these walls represent far more than a synagogue. They provide a safe space, a welcoming haven, a home for so many of us. I've heard countless stories of our community standing up for what is right and just, visiting members in the hospital on a dime, providing financial support to those who need it, cooking and delivering food to individuals who do not have the

time, energy or resources to prepare the meal themselves. I've witnessed the compassion in times of loss and grief. I've shared in moments of elation and pride as a young person accepts Torah into their lives with their proud families looking on. These actions were without hesitation. They were unconditional and they were provided out of love and optimism. We have this opportunity and privilege to continue leading by example and moving forward with hope for each other and a goal in mind: doing what we know to be right and just. We cannot control each other's thoughts, only our own. G. Donald Gale once said, "A pessimist sees a glass as being half empty; an optimist sees the same glass as half full. But a giving person sees a glass of water and starts looking for someone who might be thirsty."

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## RABBINIC INTERNS' CLERGY COLUMN

Chanukah has always been one of my favorite Holidays. Pesach...Yom Kippur....nope. I thought the entire Jewish world revolved around Chanukah. After all, we give and receive presents, come together as a family, sing songs and eat delicious Latkes! Not until my 10th grade Confirmation class did I learn that Chanukah is actually a minor festival, not even mentioned in the Torah!

Don't let the fact that the story of Chanukah doesn't come from the Torah stand in the way of it's message. The Maccabean victory over King Antiochus IV, along with the Menorah's illumination for eight nights act as tremendous miracles that helped solidify the Jewish future. However, one miraculous aspect many forget about was the rededication of the Temple. The word *Chanukah* in Hebrew means dedication. What is it that we are dedicating? A Jewish presence, a new light shining brightly. The holy fires on the altar burnt again in the Beit Hamikdash, from morning to

morning, as prescribed by the Law. The priests were again busily officiating in the old customary ways, and day in, day out they prepared the offerings. Order and peace seemed established. Judea was free and all seemed right with the world.

As we move past the month of *Cheshvan* (which is considered bitter due to it's lack of celebratory holidays) into *Kislev*, we shift the focus of our attention from bitterness to light. May we all remember that miracles occur every day, small or large and we are the ones who make the miracles special. Although the Chanukah story does not come from the Torah, we still hold it dear, and rededicate ourselves to light year after year. May you all contribute to our rededication this year!

Student Rabbi Bryan Zive

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## RABBINIC INTERNS

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2016-2017

Rabbi Liora Alban  
[rabbi.liora@congsHIRAMI.org](mailto:rabbi.liora@congsHIRAMI.org)

Rabbi Bryan Zive  
[rabbi.bryan@congsHIRAMI.org](mailto:rabbi.bryan@congsHIRAMI.org)



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## RABBINIC INTERNS' DECEMBER SCHEDULE

### Dec. 9-11 with Rabbi Bryan Zive

**Fri., Dec. 9, 7:30 pm, Erev Shabbat Service.**

Join with our community for a lovely Erev Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Bryan, full of music, prayer and various inspirational readings in a less formal set up than usual! Most music will be the compositions of Debbie Friedman, the matriarch of contemporary Jewish music.

**Sat., Dec. 10, 10:00 am: *Coffee and Commentaries.***

Join Rabbi Bryan for a lively discussion about the week's Torah portion, Vayetzei. We will focus on Jacob's individual and communal covenant with God. As always, coffee will be served!

**All events will be held at Shir Ami.**

### Dec. 16-18, with Rabbi Liora Alban

**Fri., Dec. 16, 6:30 pm, *Potluck and Kabbalat Shabbat Service, Shir Ami's Chanukah Celebration.***

Come celebrate the Festival of Lights with Rabbi Liora and the entire Shir Ami community! Get your appetites and singing voices ready because we will begin with a special Chanukah potluck followed by a service centered around the theme of light.

**Sat., Dec. 17, 4:00 pm: *Adult Education Class and Havdallah***

Rabbi Liora will be teaching her second adult education class of the 2016-2017 academic year. The year's educational theme is Jewish history and this class will focus specifically on Jewish life in medieval Christian Europe. The class will be followed by a warm Havdallah ceremony.

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## SCHOOL NOTES

On Simchat Torah, Rabbi Bryan blessed our new Hebrew learners. We celebrate this new journey with Liam, Rowan, Connor, Levi and Elijah. On the following Shabbat service, Rabbi Liora welcomed the participation of our older students. It was nice to see Gaby, Sean, Rowan, Jason, Marlo and Hadasah stand up front and lead some prayers. Rachel led a wonderful parent meeting. Parents shared their thoughts about what it means to raise Jewish children. In collaboration with Shir Ami's focus for the quarter, students made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. They decorated a bag and made up a lunch for a hungry person. Jason and Hadasah passed out all the lunches to homeless people in Oakland camps. The food was very much appreciated.

## TOT TALK

**Sunday, December 18th, 11:30 am--** Mark your calendar!. Tot Talk, a free program for the little ones ages 0-5, is designed for children and their parents / caregivers to learn a little bit about being Jewish, to socialize and have fun.

*It's not necessary, but it is always very helpful if you can RSVP your plans for attending Tot Talk. We, of course, always understand that with little ones, plans do change.*

## UPCOMING SISTERHOOD EVENTS

**We will bring in the month of Kislev, on Tuesday, Dec 6 at 7:00 p.m.** We will be learning a "different" Chanukah story. Salad and fruit will be the refreshments. Stay tuned to your email for more information

**Questions?** Contact Jan Dombrower Chimpky at [sisterhood@congshirami.org](mailto:sisterhood@congshirami.org)

## SIGN UP NOW FOR THE 2017 WOMEN'S RETREAT, FEB.24-26

Shir Ami Women's 21st Annual Retreat: *The Joy of Friendship.*

Connect with your Jewish sisters and have a great getaway! Join us for a weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Liora Alban joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are very welcome. See flier on page 7 for registration information.

## SISTERHOOD/ROSH CHODESH, NOVEMBER

Sisterhood had two great events in November. We brought in the new moon of Cheshvan with a lively meeting. Valerie Goldman and Jessica Collett conducted a wonderful program about finding the "light" in the dark month of Cheshvan. We heard about the seeds we could plant from the previous rich month full of holidays. Jessica led a wonderful meditation and Valerie guided an introspective art project where we each focused on what seeds we wanted to plant and what we wanted for the outcome.

We held our 3rd annual Thanksgiving Jewish style later in the month. We heard some very nice readings and prayers about gratefulness, hope, and appreciation read by our hostess, Harriet Skelly. Each of us expressed what we feel gratitude for as we savoured a traditional Thanksgiving meal. The room was full with sisters connecting and enjoying each other's company and the delicious dinner.



## FOOD SECURITY PANEL DEC. 4

The Social Action Committee is sponsoring a Food Security Panel which will be held at Shir Ami on Sunday, **December 4.**

We will start with a session with the schoolchildren from 11:45 to 12:15, and then a **panel discussion from 12:30 to 1:15. Refreshments will be served.**

You will find more details on page 6.

Hope to see you there.



## FOOD SECURITY PANEL, DECEMBER 4

### Food Security Panel at Shir Ami, December 4.

Congregation Shir Ami of Castro Valley is hosting a Panel on Food Security, which will be held at Shir Ami on Sunday, December 4, 2017. There will be a children's program from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and an adult program from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. Refreshments will be served and all community members are invited to attend. Shir Ami is located at 4529 Malabar Avenue, Castro Valley.

Panelists include Alexandra Boskovich, Community Partnerships Coordinator for the Alameda County Community Food Bank; Corina Vasaure, Compañeras Ministry Coordinator for Eden United Church of Christ; Armand Harris, representing the Hayward Hunger and Homelessness Task Force and We Run Food; and Ralph Morales, director of South Hayward Parish's Food Pantry Services. Tom Spitzer, Congregation Shir Ami's Social Action Coordinator, and Secretary of South Hayward Parish's Board of Directors, will moderate the Panel.

Entering the Holiday Season, which is marked by ritual feasts by almost all of the religions and cultures in our community, makes us even more cognizant of the fact that Food Security can be a tenuous concept for many of our community members. By Food Security, we mean that every member of our community has access to a sufficient quantity of nutritious food for themselves and their families without having to incur economic and personal stress. Each of the panelists will talk about the issues impacting food security in the community from the perspective of their agency, and will explain what their agency is doing to improve food security throughout the community.

About the organizations/agencies that are represented on the panel:

- ACCFB is the lead agency focused on alleviating hunger in Alameda County through emergency food helplines, a CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps) outreach program; nutritional education programs; and advocacy programs. ACCFB collects and distributes enough food through a network of 240 strategically placed member agencies to provide 540,000 meals weekly.
- The Eden UCC Comida para Cherryland is a food pantry that has been distributing food to around 225 families per month, the bulk of whom reside in Cherryland. Comida has been serving Cherryland since April, 2012.
- South Hayward Parish (SHP) is a "joint venture" of six congregations with membership in Hayward and Castro Valley that provides support services for families and individuals struggling with economic and spiritual privations, legal challenges, and homelessness. SHP has been serving the South Hayward Community for over fifty years with programs that include a four-day-a-week food pantry.
- The Task Force to End Hunger and Homelessness in Hayward was formed in 2013 with the objective of identifying and eradicating barriers to ending hunger and homelessness in Hayward, California.
- Washington-Eden Food Recovery Cooperative (WE Run Food) is an innovative program that aims to improve the community's Food Security by collecting food that would go to waste and getting it into the hands of agencies that can distribute it to those who need it.
- Congregation Shir Ami is an intimate, inclusive, intergenerational Reform Jewish community that welcomes interfaith families. The Congregation nurtures its members' spiritual growth and cultural identity, and makes Jewish education fun and joyful for children and adults alike. Congregation Shir Ami strives to embody the Jewish values of lovingkindness and righteous action. It punches way above its weight in engaging its members in Tikkun olam, initiatives intended to help "Repair the World".

For more information, contact Tom Spitzer, 415-572-4156 / [tk@spitzer.us](mailto:tk@spitzer.us)

Join us for our 21st Annual

# Shir Ami Women's Retreat: The Joy of Friendship

Friday, February 24 – Sunday, February 26, 2017

At the beautiful San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville

Connect with your Shir Ami sisters and have a great getaway! Join us for this annual weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Liora Alban joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are *very* welcome.

The cost for the weekend is \$265/double room, \$290/single room, \$100/Saturday only (with lunch and dinner).

Please register online at <https://goo.gl/forms/nFFvK3vKpuA6gAts2> and mail your check, payable to Ruth Hartman, the same day. (Mailing address is at the online registration site.)

*Register ASAP, no later than **February 1.***

*Questions?*

*Contact Ruth Hartman: 510-543-6902 or [retreat@congshirami.org](mailto:retreat@congshirami.org)*

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## DECEMBER 2016 YAHRZEIT

### December 9, 2016

Dora Alperovich,  
Frederick Apple,  
Henry Ball,  
Larry Dean,  
Neil Joseph Kellman,  
Lazarus Lewis,

aunt of Irina Druker  
father of Angie Ross  
active former member of Shir Ami  
father of Tyler Dean  
brother of Jessica Collett  
father of Peter Lewis



### December 16, 2016

Sheila Arthur,  
John Blum,  
Ann and Michael Bruser,  
Joseph and Meshka Druker,  
Inez Gautreaux, (pronounced GO-TRO)  
Frieda Greenbaum,  
Tom Manley,  
Isaac Rosenberg,  
Max Schulberg,  
Elina Segel,

long time former member of Shir Ami  
father of Jeff Blum  
active early members of Shir Ami  
grandparents of Alex Druker  
aunt of Toni Schulberg  
grandmother of Diana Zankowsky  
former member of Shir Ami  
grandfather of Alex Druker  
father of David Schulberg  
niece of Lina Teferi

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

Marvin Schuelke,  
Sam Blank,  
Debra Blum,  
Travis Mahoney,  
Loren Simpson,

father of Susan Spitzer  
husband of Ann Blank and long time member of Shir Ami  
mother of Jeff Blum  
nephew of Wendy Crow  
husband of Sidney Simpson, prior member of Shir Ami,  
and cousin of Toni Schulberg

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## THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO SHIR AMI

Judy Ganz  
Sharon Golembo  
Lina Teferi  
Jessica Collett  
Maryann Leshin

Wishing Pat Palmer a "refuah sh'layma" a complete and speedy recovery  
Yahrzeit in memory of Lorraine Golembo  
Yahrzeit in memory Elina Segel  
In Memory of Neil Joseph Kellman  
Yahrzeit of Sidney Leshin

Your donations are greatly appreciated!

Please don't forget to include a note regarding the individuals you're honoring/rememering so that we can include it here. Thank you!