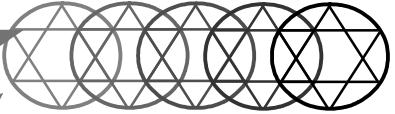


---

# Tikvah Talk



Vol. 32 Iss. 4

Congregation B'nai Tikvah Walnut Creek, CA

December 2012

---

## From Where I Stand

By Rabbi Raphael Asher



Our democracy is a wonderful thing – if you can abide the demonization, the distortions, and the farce of American-style political persuasion. I often quote Rev. Martin Luther King, Senior who, in his closing benediction at the 1976 Democratic Convention, began with the words, “We have come to a serious moment.” Having regarded all the confetti, the balloons, the debates, and the bumper-stickers, MLK’s father gently chided the electorate to grow up and fulfill our Nation’s mission of brotherhood and mutual concern.

We have come again to a serious moment – the business of economic survival and economic justice, the terrors of climate change and Ayatollahs with nuclear weapons, civil rights for the homeborn and the stranger within our midst (i.e. marriage equality, immigration reform, healthcare, and Guantanamo). We have been bombarded over the last 6 months with what the Colbert Report refers to as the slogans and political instincts of “truthiness.” And it’s time now to sharpen the social critique in search of political truths.

I was heartened this election season with stories of a few of our B’nai Tikvah families who engaged in the process of political canvassing. Whether knocking on doors for national or local candidates, whether in gated communities or trailer parks, they all came back with a fuller picture of peoples’ concerns, of where and how they live.

The mezuzahs on our doorposts can serve many functions, but one is to remind us that behind all the political placards that vie for attention in our neighborhoods live multidimensional families with real problems and concerns. Let this be the season when our religious decorations are less a point of personal pride and more an effort to shed light on our tenuous social fabric.

*ORA V'SIMCHA, may there be light and joy in our homes and in our neighborhoods at this upcoming Festival of Chanukah.*

---

## Reflections...

By Cantor Jennie Chabon



I am thrilled to dedicate my article this month to introducing you to Maggid Jhos Singer, my dear friend and colleague who will be teaching and preaching at B’nai Tikvah in the coming months. I have been wanting to get Jhos to B’nai Tikvah for a long time now, and finally we are all going to have the opportunity to learn from him. Believe me when I tell you that his classes are not to be missed! He is a hilarious, deep, insightful and incredibly engaging teacher. Jhos is not a rabbi but rather, a *maggid*, which literally means a “teller.” The title of *maggid* was used in the early Hasidic movement to describe a person of learning who was skilled in storytelling, preaching, counseling, teaching and singing. In Jhos’s own words:

*“We tell stories and secrets, we tell jokes and tales. We preach and sing, cajole and challenge. We pray, petition and pastor. A maggid can take a sliver of text, tease it, fluff it, peel it, twist it, and shade it to reveal layers and layers of meaning. Ask a maggid a simple question and whatever you do, don’t expect a simple answer. In fact, don’t expect an answer at all. Maggidim [plural of maggid] think circuitously, sing freely, dance passionately, and eventually may even get to the point.”*

His bio - Jhos Singer has served as the spiritual leader for the Coastsider Jewish Community since 2000. Being a preacher rather than a legalist, he claims a place in Judaism’s maggidic tradition. That said, he decided he should also pursue a more standard education and earned a Master’s degree in Jewish Studies from the Graduate Theological Union. Jhos also holds an undergraduate degree in music from UCLA, and spent many years working in a variety of occupations: oceanographic researcher, music teacher, fire fighter, symphonic percussionist, and barista. He lives in Berkeley with his lovely wife, Julie Batz, and their three wily teenagers.

Jhos is teaching on three Sunday mornings and he will be the guest speaker for February’s Shir Joy service. So, please mark your calendars - Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am (**for Men of CBT only**), Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am, Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm for Shir Joy as a guest speaker, and Sunday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. (See page 6 for a description of the classes.)

**Congregation B'nai Tikvah** is a Reform congregation which, through personal attention, provides to its members an extended family. The congregation fulfills its members' spiritual needs, fosters their Jewish identity, promotes the perpetuation of Judaism and its members' Jewish education, and encourages a commitment to full participation in Temple life.

**Raphael W. Asher, Rabbi**  
**Jennie Chabon, Cantor**  
**Stephen Richards, Cantor Emeritus**  
**Judy Blum, Temple Administrator**  
**Phil Hankin, Director of Education**

**Temple Office (925) 933-5397**  
**Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9:00 - 5:00**

**Fax (925) 933-6833**

**E-mail: [office@tikvah.org](mailto:office@tikvah.org)**  
**Website: <http://www.tikvah.org>**

#### CONGREGATIONAL OFFICERS

President	John Rubenfeld
Vice President	Tina Guterman
Vice President	Glenn Gould
Vice President	Jenifer Paul
Secretary	Bob Stern
Treasurer	Todd Goldman
Past President	Lisa Wenger

#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bob Canter	Chuck Eisner
Alan Gould	Dan Laporte
Amy Lichtenstein	Idelle Lipman
Barbara Loebel	Bruce Meyers
Rayna Ravitz	Harry Wittenberg
Mary Ann Wittenberg	Todd Young

#### ***Upcoming B'nai Mitzvah***

**Jillian Varona**  
*Daughter of Samantha and Emil Varona*  
*Saturday, December 1*

**Meghan Bristow**  
*Daughter of Jodi and Steve Robinson*  
*and the late Daniel Bristow*  
*Saturday, December 8*

Shabbat Services begin at 10 am.  
The Congregation is invited to attend.



Men of CBT's Bocce Ball Event (clockwise from top left - Art Mancini, Art Korn, Harry Wittenberg, Alan Schwartz, Bruce Presnick, Dan Laporte, Walt Blum, Bob Grossman)

#### ***Tikvah Talk***

***Tikvah Talk*** is published 11 times a year and is distributed free of charge to anyone expressing an interest in Congregation B'nai Tikvah. All news items are due the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Please submit articles electronically, if possible, to Congregation B'nai Tikvah, at **[office@tikvah.org](mailto:office@tikvah.org)** (subject *Tikvah Talk*) or by mail to 25 Hillcroft Way, Walnut Creek, CA 94597, (925) 933-5397.

## **President's Message**

By John Rubenfeld

So many things happening:  
 Capital Campaign.....Honoring our charter members and our newest members.....  
 Chanukah...Bar / Bat Mitzvah Participation & Family Dynamics for Interfaith Families on December 9<sup>th</sup>, Men of CBT, Book Sisters...

Your generous contributions from the High Holiday appeal resulted in reducing our principal balance by nearly \$60,000. By paying this portion down, we'll save \$36,000 in interest expense over the next 10 years. With the end of the year quickly approaching and the opportunity for tax write offs, it's not too late to donate more toward our outstanding balance. If we can generate \$100,000 that will be amazing! As for the "It Takes a Shtetl" drive, we have over \$75,000 in pledges. That's a good start, but we need more of us to participate. During the next few of months, we will continue to reach out to you with opportunities for helping the community support the obligations of our "second home."

In my October article, I applauded our charter members' courage to take that first "big" step in creating our community. Clearly, without you, CBT wouldn't exist!! Tributes in my Tikvah Talk are certainly nice gestures, but as the old line says, "action speaks louder than words." Therefore, I cordially invite all of you to attend our Friday night Shabbat service on December 14<sup>th</sup> to honor and show our gratitude to these brave families that forever changed our lives. On behalf of the community, we thank you for all that you've done!

In many customs it's traditional not only to pay homage to our long-established families, but to welcome our newest ones as well. Therefore, on Friday December 7<sup>th</sup>, we will be officially welcoming the families that joined our community during the past year.

Last month, the Men of CBT sponsored three diverse events in three days. First, during Friday night Shabbat service on November 9<sup>th</sup>, they invited a member from the German Consulate who spoke about the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kristallnacht as well as some non-publicized accounts. The feedback from attendees (over 80) was moving and enlightening. The following night, David Specland, Mike Cohn, Bob Canter (The CBT Trivia Guys) hosted our ever-popular Trivia Night. In fact, we had a record number attend. There was so much fun and energy throughout the evening. First time ever, we had a Gangnam Style dance off!! You never know what's in store at the Trivia Night. Lastly, on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Men of CBT held a bocce ball event in Livermore. Another well attended event. I want to thank Harry Wittenberg (President of the Men of CBT) for coordinating these events. We look forward to your future programs!!

As we continue profiles on our Past Presidents, we are reflect-

(continued on page 7)

## **Turn It, Turn It, Turn It Again**

By Phil Hankin, Director of Education

### **Memories**

During the celebration of my son's Bar Mitzvah this past September, our Rabbi allowed us to perform the traditional "Torah generational pass" as my son received the Torah in a symbolic passing down through the generations of the ancient scroll. Since it is not customary in our synagogue to do this, the Rabbi allowed us

this opportunity to do so in order to honor my grandfather, who is still alive and in relatively good health at 97. This brief public display was the ultimate example of L'dor VaDor. I would not be the person and educator that I am if it were not for the Jewish foundation that my grandparents and parents forged for me over the years. It is through their examples of how they lived their lives that I learned the real life lessons that can be found in the Torah. It is my hope that my children will feel the same as they grow, age, and begin raising families of their own.

I tell you this story because memories are very powerful and in some instances the ones that keep people Jewish. As a Jewish educator who is entrusted with the responsibility of creating memories for the young people of the synagogue, it is my hope that you, the adults of B'nai Tikvah, continue the process of building powerful Jewish memories for your kids and grandkids. It is not just what happens in the shul but it is also what happens at home. Since it is Chanukah time and the celebrations that surround holidays are some of the most distinctive memories one can have, how many of you can remember lighting the Chanukiah on a dark, December evening and then parading around the house singing Ma Oztur? Pesach seders from your childhood? Purim costumes? Planting trees on Tu B'shevat? Sitting in your sukkah on Sukkot? The more we keep memories like these alive the more we remember where we come from. This can only help guide us in our life long Jewish path, no matter which path we choose. Honoring our elders and our past is one of the greatest mitzvot that we can do. As the time changes and it gets darker earlier, keep the light of your past alive within you and your children.

Chag Sameach!!

Over 30 CBT students attended the Fall Kallah weekend at Camp Newman in Santa Rosa.

## Sisterhood News

By Rayna Ravitz, Sisterhood President

### Wednesday, December 5 - Sisterhood Chanukah Party at CBT 6:30 pm

Meet for a potluck dinner – dairy or vegetarian only - **no meat**. Make no sew blankets for Children's Hospital, bring an unwrapped toy for "Toys for Tots." If you did not receive the Evite and would like to come, contact me at: [raynaravitz@gmail.com](mailto:raynaravitz@gmail.com).

### Sunday, December 16 – Book Sisters at Blake Home 10 am

"I feel bad about my Neck" by Nora Ephron. Potuck brunch – no rules. What is your favorite chapter in this book? Our discussion will revolve around each person's favorite.

RSVP: [Raynaravitz@gmail.com](mailto:Raynaravitz@gmail.com).

### Sunday, January 6 – Trip to Contemporary Jewish Museum

Exhibit of "The Radical Camera 1936-1951"

We'll have a docent led tour beginning at 11:00 am.

We will be privileged to see this wonderful exhibit of work by the members of the New York Photo League. Their work contributed to the rise of documentary photography as an art form and to the tradition of social activism as a function of the arts.

This exhibit features the League's collective portrait of a city, and the photographic style and interests that were developed.

In August 1938, the Leagues mission stated, "Photography has a tremendous social value—the photographer has the responsibility to record a true image of the world as it is today".

Life Magazine was established in 1936, the same year as the Photo League. This was a time when photography was becoming a more accessible medium and its use in journalism grew enormously.

With hand held cameras, photographers were able to capture more candid images. The League's aim was to expose difficult conditions in the city and affect a positive change through photography in depression-era life. The League's other mission was to teach photography.

This is an exciting exhibit, and the work was trend setting. It is also a look at a different time period, and a time in photography, before technology changed the world yet again.

We'll meet at Walnut Creek BART. Please let me know if you would like to drive and how many you can accommodate. The cost will be \$15 (for entry and docent fees). RSVP to Susan Friedman at: [SusanBFriedman@aol.com](mailto:SusanBFriedman@aol.com) by December 21<sup>st</sup>.

### Sunday, January 13 – Lecture "Subversive Scripture, Tales from the Bible that'll make you say 'What'" 10 am

### Friday, January 18 - Sisterhood Shabbat at CBT 7:30.

Thursday, February 28 – "Singing in the Rain" Lesher Center  
I have reserved tickets for \$40 each (regular is \$55). While I was writing this I received a call from the Lesher Center asking me if I was bringing a small army to a show again this year. Timing was perfect! I will send out an evite but try and bring a check with you (made out to CBT) for \$40 to the Chanukah party. I want to be sure we can sit together and get the special rate.

### TBD – Jewish Film Festival and Dinner

### Sunday, March 17 – Women's Seder in our Social Hall 4 pm

### TBD - Lots of great books to be calendared for discussion.

## Social Action

By Tina Guterman, Social Action Chair

Thanks in large part to Jared Goldin and Lisa Wenger for their huge efforts to once again help make Winter Nights a successful experience for all involved. Many thanks to **all CBT congregants** who participated in all aspects of Winter Nights. Everyone's assistance was very much appreciated by Shell Ridge Community Church with whom we partnered in this endeavor.

### Upcoming

#### \*\* Contra Costa Food Bank Drive through December:

This year B'nai Tikvah is participating, along with many other local synagogues, in an annual Holiday Dinner Drive. We are proud to support the Contra Costa Food bank in providing healthy food and *hope* to families facing hunger during their holiday season, and help the food bank reach their holiday needs. *Last month every CBT family received a flyer in the mail about this Holiday Food Drive. Please help us reach our goal of distributing thousands of food bags by sending in a donation of any amount that is right for you made out to the Contra Costa Food Bank in the return envelope provided in the mailing.*

**\*\*Tu B'Shevat Planting Event:** Mark your calendar for Sunday morning, January 27<sup>th</sup> for a planting event in observance of Tu B'Shevat. Details to follow shortly.

Trivia  
Night's  
Mike Cohn  
reading  
questions  
with David  
Speckland  
looking on

### **Welcome to our new members...**

Maya Bronsky

### **Welcome back....**

Natalie Fay

Arthur Mancini

## **Contributions**

### **GENERAL FUND**

In memory of Yuri Moskalenko  
*Rakhil and Naum Sadetskiy*  
In memory of Benjamin Edelman  
*Miriam and Stanley Newman*  
In memory of Stanley Val Goldin  
In memory of Ben Ettelson  
*Trish and Jared Goldin*  
In memory of Ruby Goodfriend  
In memory of Martin Goodfriend  
*Dutchy and Jerry Hankin*  
In memory of Doris Levine  
*Vicki and John Anderle*  
In memory of John Sutherland  
*Monica Salusky and John Sutherland*  
In memory of Ann Christian  
*Joni and Mal Vineberg*  
In memory of Marni Levine  
*Kimberly and Brian Zagon*  
In memory of Marjorie Shuer  
*Mery and Jerome Chaney*

### **RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND**

In honor of Jordan's Bar Mitzvah  
*Deborah and David Levy*  
In memory of Hilda Stone  
*Sharon and Hugh Tama*  
In honor of Lizzie's Bat Mitzvah  
*Bryna and Bob Miller*  
In honor of Hayden's Bar Mitzvah  
*Stacey and Jeff Neustadt*  
In honor of the birth of our son Ryan Daniel  
*The Chazanoff Family*  
In honor of Jocelyn's Bat Mitzvah  
*Deborah and Michael Schoenholz*  
In honor of Sam's Bar Mitzvah  
*Susan and John Rubenfeld*

### **CANTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND**

In honor of Jordan's Bar Mitzvah  
*Deborah and David Levy*  
In honor of Lizzie's Bat Mitzvah  
*Bryna and Bob Miller*  
In memory of Sidney Schwartz  
*Cindy Turner and Brian Schwartz*  
In honor of Jocelyn's Bat Mitzvah  
*Deborah and Michael Schoenholz*  
In honor of Sam's Bar Mitzvah  
*Susan and John Rubenfeld*

### **MORDOH/NADJARI HOLOCAUST EDUCATION FUND**

In memory of Dorothy Welch  
*Zaffy and Denis Welch*

### **GENERAL FUND FOR CANTOR'S MUSICAL PROGRAMS**

In honor of Cantor Jennie Chabon  
*Deborah Robison and Dennis Cohen*  
In memory of Sydney Rapoport  
*Cookie Svingos*  
In memory of Herman Roth  
*Sharon and Ron Brown*

### **CANTOR STEPHEN RICHARDS MUSICAL ENRICHMENT/CHOIR FUND**

In memory of Judy Silver  
In memory of Sidney Solomon  
In memory of Adele Morse Platt  
*Marjorie and Cantor Stephen Richards*  
In memory of Harriet Gardner  
*Carol and Allen Teitelman*

### **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

In memory of Esther Appleberg  
*Idelle Lipman*  
In memory of Ameda Weiss  
In memory of Leon Weiss  
*Elizabeth and William Roberts*

## ***Shalom Connection***

Mazel Tov to:

Linda and David Katzen on the marriage of their daughter Amy to Melody Chan  
Martha and Michael Chazanoff on the birth of their son, Ryan Daniel

The winning Trivia Team displays their trophy and Rocco's gift card

## **Men of CBT**

By Harry Wittenberg, President

Two Exciting Months For The Men of CBT!

Men of CBT has had an exciting two months of activities and fellowship. In October we had an Open House which attracted 14 CBT members who came to learn more about the group, schmooze, and plan new activities. Following a successful Open House, the group had a retreat at the Wittenberg house with Rabbi Asher, discussing our connections with the likes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

November was equally active in our sponsorship of the Friday Night service and oneg commemorating Kristallnacht with a representative from the German Consulate sharing his stories about growing up in post-war Berlin and his relations with the Jewish Community there. The following night we had a table for Trivia Night. We came in last but had a great time! We wrapped up the month with a wonderful afternoon playing bocce ball and having brunch at Campo Di Bocce in Livermore.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, the group will hold our regular Sunday morning gathering with Maggid Jhos Singer giving a lecture called "How The Grinch Stole Chanukah And Gave It Back." If you haven't joined us yet, please come to our December meeting and see what we're all about. If you'd like more information, contact me at [wittenb1@comcast.net](mailto:wittenb1@comcast.net).



### **MAKE "NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM" PART OF THE NEW YEAR!**

Discover an Israel beyond the headlines. With our unique itinerary that allows you to choose from up to five excursions each day you can create your own journey and follow your passions.\*

Your Trip. Your Israel. Join Us.  
**THE EAST BAY COMMUNITY TRIP TO ISRAEL  
APRIL 10 - 19, 2013**

To learn more about our exciting itinerary and subsidies: [jfed.org/Israel2013](http://jfed.org/Israel2013) or 510.318.6453.

\*Our excursion options: The Geopolitical Landscape, Social Action, Arts & Culture, Historic Israel (great for first timers!) and Innovations: Green and Hi-Tech.



The Jewish Federation  
The Jewish Community Foundation  
OF THE EAST BAY

**Congregation B'nai Tikvah**

## **Learn with Jhos Singer**

### **The Grinch who Stole Chanukah - a new twist on the "December Dilemma"**

**For Men of CBT Sunday, December 16 at 10 am**

Jews face December with a strange blend of trepidation, excitement and a dollop of envy. Why? What are the origins of our own December holiday? How does it really stack up to "the other guys'" winter shindig? Is there a way to understand ourselves and our gentile friends and family better by looking at Chanukah with new eyes?

Is Chanukah just an American version of a Christmas wanna be holiday? In this workshop we will explore what it means to bring light into a time of darkness and why Chanukah is actually perfect for just such an endeavor and an important contribution to not just Jews but all Americans.

### **Subversive scripture, Tales from the Bible that'll make you say: "What the...!?!?"**

**Sisterhood invites all - Sunday, January 13 at 10 am**

Years ago I was teaching a 6<sup>th</sup> grade religious school class at a large, liberal synagogue Hebrew school. We got to the story of Lot and his daughters and, since it deals with somewhat sensitive themes, I decided to alert the parents of my students that we would be studying a slightly off-color subject in the upcoming week. An uproar ensued. The parents were incensed and at least one parent insisted that what I was teaching couldn't possibly derive from the Torah.

The rabbi of the congregation assured them that it was indeed from the Torah. This episode in my career led me to compile a series of teachings that are often skipped over, ignored, or otherwise swept under the rug. In this class we will pull them out of their dank caves and examine them in the light of day, proving that there is a lot more to the Torah than Matriarchs and Patriarchs and lots of sand.....

### **Kabbalah on One Foot**

**Men of CBT invite all - Sunday, March 10 at 10 am**

Hillel the Elder is famous for saying that he could teach the entire Torah while standing on one foot. He says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the whole Torah, the rest is just commentary, now go study."

With just a wee bit of chutzpah, I would follow Hillel by saying that I can teach the whole of Kaballah while standing on one foot: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

All the rest is just commentary. In this class we will study that deceptively simple line to reveal wisdom on the literal, figurative, interpretive and mystery levels. We will use musical, literary, graphic and numerological techniques to reveal kabalistic messages embedded in this well known opening line. Come and see.....

---

## **President....**

---

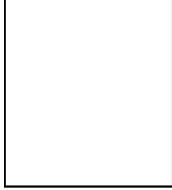
(continued from page 3)

ing on our third and fifth Presidents. With great sadness, our fourth President, Steve Jaspan, passed away in 1999.

Our third President, Chuck Eisner, is also a charter member. In addition to his Presidency, Chuck was our Treasurer for 3 years, he's currently on our general board and a long-time member of our finance committee. Personally, Chuck has been a great mentor and role-model for me (even though he's a Dodger fan). If you recall my October article we profiled his wife Pat. Obviously, the Eisners have been involved in practically every major event, decision and milestone. We are truly fortunate to have them part of our shtetl!

Mike Weintraub is also a long-time member of CBT. He, Paula and their son, Scott, joined CBT early on. From the beginning, Mike was very active in many of the "big" decisions (i.e. purchasing our sanctuary, transitioning to a computer base system, etc.) In my brief meetings with Mike, I've always come away with great admiration of his commitment to our community and many accomplishments.

### **Meet Chuck Eisner**

I had the honor of following Marc Usatin and Barry Slavin, serving as the Temple's third President from 1987 to 1989. My wife Pat and I had joined CBT in October 1981 after attending its initial High Holiday services led by Rabbi Asher at the old JCC on Creekside. As we had two pre-school children at the time, we were drawn by the opportunity to join a new Reform congregation with young families our age where we could more easily meet new friends, a welcome alternative to the larger Reform temple in the area. I soon was cajoled (willingly) into joining the Board, becoming Treasurer (doing the books and writing all checks manually from our dining room table, with bookkeeping assistance from Pat) before becoming President. My two year term was a period of rapid growth in membership, religious school enrollment and commitment of our members; in addition, in mid-1988 (just 7 years after our founding) we closed escrow on the purchase of our own building; it was both a culmination and a new beginning.

In the 1980's, there was a spirit of youth and vibrancy in the Temple; we were a young congregation of families with children and a Rabbi our own age, but also a good mix of older and wise congregants (who had built their own temples in the past) to provide guidance. Our members had very busy lives, building careers and families, participating in school and extracurricular events with their children (soccer, swim team, etc.) in addition to participating in Temple activities; with all going on, the Temple became a primary focus in many of our lives. And we had the audacity to go out on a limb and seek to purchase our own building from the Assembly of God less than three years after our founding.

We entered escrow to purchase the church property in approximately late 1983, with the intent of taking ownership within a year or two. But it took the church much longer than expected to obtain approvals and raise the money to build its new facility in Alamo, so it was mid-1988 before escrow finally closed and we took ownership. That gave us time to raise funds in our first capital campaign led by Marc Usatin; the delays also allowed our purchase liaison, member Steve Weiner, to renegotiate the price on a couple of occasions to a lower figure because the church failed to deliver in a timely manner. As part of the purchase agreement, from early 1984 to mid-1988 we held our services at the church on the first and third Friday nights of each month (and later second Friday's for family services), using our own Torah - on permanent loan from Temple Emanuel in San Francisco - and Ark, as well as on selected Saturday mornings for sporadic B'nai Mitzvot and school grade services. During this period our religious school was held Sundays and Wednesdays at the new JCC on Tice Valley Blvd. Once we took ownership, we remodeled the Sanctuary into our own, creating our enduring symbol, the iconic "Star within a Circle" over the Bima, and celebrated having our own facility for services, religious school, meetings and social gatherings.

By 1989, our membership had grown to over 150 families, many with two or three children in religious school, so we were bursting at the seams with over 200 students in grades K to 7, double sessions on Sunday and separate weekday classes on Tuesday and Wednesday (yes, we had traffic issues then, just as today!) We were a young, vibrant and growing community. Rabbi Asher had become full time, we had a cantorial soloist at every service, our membership was increasing, our school was bursting and our students were beginning to celebrate B'nai Mitzvot with regularity.

After achieving ownership of our own facility, allowing us to consolidate our school, social and adult education activities in one central location, we turned to growing the temple internally, and I was pleased to transfer the gavel to Steve Jaspan, of blessed memory, our fourth President. Steve had been an invaluable friend, resource and consultant as First Vice President during my term, and was a terrific leader as President from 1989 to 1991; those years involved continued expansion of programs and Religious

(continued on page 13)

Last year Contra Costa Midrasha started a new tradition. We created a Day of Service to happen on Veteran's Day. Now, for the second year in a row, we had a hugely successful event. This year's Day of Service was created and lead by our teens, doing a full day of service for others.

I spent the summer with some teens planning this year's Day of Service. They landed on the idea of a carnival very early in the summer, but we kept getting stuck on the "who is it for?" question. When we started talking about partnering with Shelter Inc, they got really excited. We spent a morning meeting with their volunteer coordinator. She really challenged them to think about the families they would be serving. After that meeting our teens got really excited about creating not just a day of fun, but a day that would enable the children there to see them as friends, people they could trust.

This Fall, almost 30 CCM teens joined in the "Carnival, Plan a Day of Service" elective class. For the months of September and October they planned a mini carnival for the families and children who live at Shelter Inc's transitional housing facility in Antioch. And on Veteran's Day, November 12 (when most of our teens don't have school), 16 Contra Costa Midrasha teens, 5 of their parents and 2 of our educators ran a mini Carnival for the 19 families who live at this space. They had booths like face painting, art making, bean bag tossing and cookie decorating. We served lunch. We ended the day with a surprise visit by two "Acro-Yoga" instructors, who helped "fly" the kids.

The day was deeply inspiring for all of us. It was an amazing thing to look around the outdoor courtyard and see our teens interacting and taking care of the children there. At the end of the day, the teens shared some of their favorite moments. Here's just a small sample of what I heard:

*"One kid was decorating a cookie, making it so beautiful with lots of colors. I told him how much I liked it. And then, he shoved the whole cookie in my mouth. 'Here,' he said, 'you enjoy it!'"*

*"I really liked how much the kids loved just throwing bean bags. It made me realize that you don't need a fancy ipad or video game to have a good time."*

*"I let the kids paint my face. I ended the day with a face as bright and colorful as the kids we played with."*

A highlight for me came at the end of the day. I was coming out of the kitchen area and heard the sound of laughing children. I turned a corner to see our teens on the playground with the children who lived at the site. Some were giving "piggy back" rides, others were playing on the slide, face painting was still happening, bubbles were being blown and a few teens were having a hula hoop contest with some younger kids. It was clear to me that our teens had been so kind and giving of themselves during our day, that these younger children had grown to trust them. One teen then shared this with me, "I came outside and a kid asked me, 'you're my friend, right?' I said, 'of course.' They felt that way in just a few hours. Amazing." Agreed.

The best part of these Days of Service has been the unexpected outcomes. Sure, our teens get to plan and then execute something of their making. That alone is quite important. But to hear a teen end the day saying how much a day of service helps them to appreciate and feel grateful for their home, their family, their ipad and their parents exceeded my own expectations.

Please join us in celebrating our teens and Contra Costa Midrasha on March 2, 2013. It's the night of our annual fundraising event!



# DECEMBER 2012 Kislev - Tevet 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<b>1</b> *Vayishlah Torah Study 9:00 am Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Jillian Varona 10:00 am
<b>2</b>  Chanukah in the Gift Shop!  Religious School  Camp Newman Promotional Visit! 9:45 am - 10:15 am  Hebrew Boot Camp I 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	<b>3</b>  Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm	<b>4</b>  Chanukah in the Gift Shop 4:00 pm  Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	<b>5</b>  Jewish Coalition for Literacy 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  Sisterhood Chanukah Party 6:30 pm	<b>6</b>  I Have a Teshuvah: Reform Responsa & the Logic of Jewish Law 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm  Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>7</b>  Family Shabbat Service - New Members Honored "Refuat Hanefesh" (A Healing of Spirit) 6:30 pm	<b>8</b>  *Yayeshev  Chanukah - 1st Night  Torah Study 9:00 am  Tot Shabbat 9:00 am  Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Megan Bristow 10:00 am
<b>9</b>  Chanukah - 2nd Night  Chanukah in the Gift Shop!  Religious School and Hanukkah Zimriah  Bar/Bat Mitzvah Interfaith Family Discussion 10:00 am  Hebrew Boot Camp I 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	<b>10</b>  Chanukah - 3rd Night	<b>11</b>  Chanukah - 4th Night  Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	<b>12</b>  Chanukah - 5th Night	<b>13</b>  Chanukah - 6th Night  Rosh Hodesh - Tevet  I Have a Teshuvah: Reform Responsa & the Logic of Jewish Law 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm  Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>14</b>  Chanukah - 7th Night  Shabbat Service - Choir! Charter Members Honored at Services! 6:30 pm	<b>15</b>  *Miketz  Chanukah - Last Night  Torah Study 9:00 am  Shabbat Service - 6th graders participating 10:00 am
<b>16</b>  Religious School Book Sisters 10:00 am  Men of CBT - "The Grinch Who Stole Chanukah - and Then Gave It Back!" 10:00 am  Hebrew Boot Camp I 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	<b>17</b>  Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm  General Board Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>18</b>  Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	<b>19</b>  Education Committee Meeting 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm	<b>20</b>  I Have a Teshuvah: Reform Responsa & the Logic of Jewish Law 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm	<b>21</b>  SHIR JOY 7:30 pm	<b>22</b>  Vayiggash  Torah Study 9:00 am  Lay Led Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>23</b>  NO Religious School	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>  (Office closed)  NO Religious School	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>  Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>29</b>  *Vayehi  Torah Study 9:00 am  Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>30</b>  NO Religious School	<b>31</b>					

# JANUARY 2013 Tevet - Shevat 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 (Office closed) NEW YEARS DAY NO Religious School	2	3	4 Family Shabbat Service "Refuat Hanefesh" (A Healing of Spirit) 6:30 pm	5 *Shemot Torah Study 9:00 am
6 Religious School Sisterhood to CJM Hebrew Book Camp II 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	7 Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm	8 Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	9	10	11 Rosh Hodesh - Shevat Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	12 *Va'era Torah Study 9:00 am
13 Religious School Sisterhood sponsored: "Subversive Scripture. Tales From the Bible That'll Make You Say 'What'" 10:00 am Hebrew Book Camp II 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	14 Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm	15 Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	16 Education Committee Meeting 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm	17	18 SHIR JOY - Sisterhood Shabbat 7:30 pm	19 *Bo Torah Study 9:00 am
20 NO Religious School	21 MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY - Commemoration @ Civic Park 12pm 12:00 pm	22 Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	23	24	25 Shabbat Service 6:30 pm Tu b'Shevat Oneg 7:30 pm	26 *Beshallah/Shira TU B'SHEVAT Torah Study 9:00 am
27 Religious School Tu b'Shevat planting Hebrew Book Camp II 12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	28 General Board Meeting 6:30 pm	29 Religious School 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	30	31		

Save the Date!

Saturday, March 23, 2013

"A Night on Broadway"

CBT's Annual Fundraiser!

Fall Kallah at Camp Newman

# THE UNDER ONE TENT JEWISH BOOK CONTRA COSTA JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL

**Sunday, December 2, 10:00 AM**

## Foxes in the Vineyard

*A Bagels & Book Program*

Michael Cooper, M.D. discusses Templars, Nazis and the battle for Jerusalem in this historical novel set in 1948.

**Venue and Sponsor:** Cong. B'nai Shalom

**Sunday, January 6, 3:00 - 5:00 PM**

## Master Puppeteer Jen Miriam with Her Amazing and Fabulous Puppet Performers

**Venue:** Contra Costa Jewish Day School

**Sponsors:** PJ Library, Cong. B'nai Shalom, Gan Ilan and Contra Costa Jewish Day School

**Saturday, January 12, 5:00 PM**

## How Do We Know Right from Wrong

Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger, author of *Our Religious Brains*, explores what cognitive science reveals about belief, morality, community and our relationship with God.

**Venue and Sponsor:** Temple Isaiah

**Looking Ahead: Wednesday, April 17**

**The Bar Mitzvah and the Beast with Matt Biers Ariel** **10:30 AM** at Temple Isaiah and **7:30 PM** at Beth Chaim. In this humorous and poignant memoir, we follow 13 year-old Yonah as he celebrates his rite of passage with a family bike ride from San Francisco to Washington, D.C.

Admission is free unless otherwise specified. For more information and directions to venues:  
[www.jfed.org/bookfestival](http://www.jfed.org/bookfestival) or call 510.318.6453.



**[www.jclread.org](http://www.jclread.org)**

Next Contra Costa session

Here at CBT

December 5, 2012 1 – 4 pm

The Jewish Coalition for Literacy (JCL) recruits and trains volunteers to become reading tutors in the San Francisco Bay Area's under-resourced PUBLIC elementary schools. Tutors are matched with a K-3 grade student, and the pair spends the semester or school year developing a strong relationship while building literacy skills. JCL engages our volunteers in tikkun olam, healing the world, and welcomes all members of the community—students, seniors, parents and professionals—to participate in the lives of at-risk children, providing the confidence and the strategies that will enable them to become successful readers. The ability to read is a vital tool to participating in our economic mainstream. If you would like to register or get additional information, please go to [www.jclread.org](http://www.jclread.org) (and click on trainings) or call Samantha Hodges, Program Associate at 415 369-9978 ext. 106.

The three hour training session conducted by the Jewish Coalition for Literacy (JCL) reminds you why you love reading and teaches you how to help others acquire reading fluency and comprehension skills. No experience necessary - just a willingness to help and complete the training.

Fall Kallah at Camp Newman

## **Record Turnout for Annual B'nai Tikvah Team Trivia Night!**

A record 14 teams of trivia nuts turned out on Saturday evening, November 10<sup>th</sup>, to try their hands and heads at the Annual B'nai Tikvah Trivia Night.

The veteran squad "La Triviata," captained by Lauren Westreich, took the top prize for the third consecutive year with an impressive score of 83.5 [out of a possible 100 points]. The team from Acalanes High School, co-captained by long-time congregant Arnie Hoffman, finished second, with a score of 81.5.

In addition to the championship trophy, the winning La Triviata team won a \$100 gift card to Rocco's Ristorante and Pizzeria, generously donated by Rocco Biale. Each player on the Acalanes team went home with a bottle of wine for their efforts.

This year's Team Trivia Night netted over \$2,400 which will be donated to our Capital Campaign to help pay down the Synagogue mortgage.

Mike Cohn served as the emcee for the evening. Bob Canter and David Specland, along with Mike, composed the 100 questions covering movies, sports, history, geography, literature, current events, music, food and other topics.

This year's Trivia Night also featured a Gangnam dance-off which netted the winner a Starbucks Gift Card.

Special thanks to Lance Canter and Annette Cohn for helping to set up and score, and to Amy Lichtenstein for helping to set up as well. Al Gould and the Men of CBT generously donated drinks.

And thanks to the many CBT members, friends, and guests who helped make this year's Team Trivia Night the most successful ever!

A 4<sup>th</sup> grade Family Ed program included unrolling of the Torah.

## **Online Communications Committee**

Work continues on the updated B'nai Tikvah website and we need your help. If you have photos you like us to consider for inclusion on the website, please e-mail them to [photos@tikvah.org](mailto:photos@tikvah.org).

Not all photos will be used with the launch of the site, but we hope to build a photo library that we can draw from to keep the site fresh. Photos from events including Religious School and B'nai Mitzvahs are especially 'needed. Contact Dan Laporte at 925-285-7954 with questions. Thank you!!

## **Open Houses and Events**

### **Kindergarten - 8th Grade Open House & Academic Celebration**

Sunday, December 2, 3:00-5:00 pm  
An opportunity to meet our faculty, parents and students and see our exciting academic program! Children are welcome!

### **Middle School Open House & Science Night**

Tuesday, January 29, 6:00-8:30 pm  
An evening for students and parents to learn about our middle school which offers outstanding academics, small class sizes and a dynamic faculty.

### **Kindergarten - 8th Grade School Tours**

Wednesdays, December 12 and January 16, 9:00-11:00 am  
Visit our classrooms in action! Join us for one of these tours or call to set up a private tour at a convenient time.

### **Bridge Kindergarten Class Tours**

Wednesday, December 5 and Friday, February 1, 9:30-10:30 am  
Perfect for students whose birth dates fall after the school cutoff date or who need more time before starting elementary school.  
Tour is held in the classroom at Congregation B'nai Shalom in Walnut Creek.

### **For further information and to RSVP:**

Contact Amy Wittenberg, Admissions Director,  
[\(925\) 284-8288](mailto:amyw@ccjds.org)  
[www.ccjds.org](http://www.ccjds.org)

---

## **Upcoming Family Events at Congregation B'nai Tikvah**

### **FRIDAY NIGHT FAMILY SERVICE and NEW MEMBER RECOGNITION EVENT Friday, December 7 at 6:30 pm**

Please join us for our Family Shabbat service this month when we recognize more of new members. This wonderful service is held on the first Friday of every month at 6:30. Welcome Shabbat with other families with an evening of music and friendship. After services, please stay to schmooze and nosh as we hold a special Oneg Shabbat in our Social Hall. We will be decorating cupcakes!

### **TOT SHABBAT - Saturday, December 8 at 9 am**

Please join Cantor Chabon for our Tot Shabbat service. Come see the Torah up close. Enjoy singing and a story in a small setting. All ages welcome - from babies on up! The service will be followed by a small oneg.

### **Come celebrate Chanukah as a community with our Choir and honoring our Charter Members!**

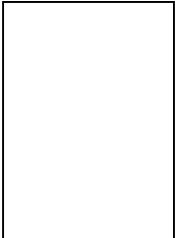
#### **Friday, December 14 at 6:30 pm**

Join us for an evening of celebration with our choir!! Bring your Menorah and candles to light as we celebrate the 7<sup>th</sup> night of Chanukah together as a community. We will also be honoring our charter members who founded Congregation B'nai Tikvah in 1981. A festive Chanukah oneg will follow services.

---

## **President....**

School at our new Temple House, an increasing number of B'nai Mitzvot and Shabbat services, the Rabbi's first sabbatical (when services were led by Rabbi Sam Broude, retired from Temple Sinai), and continued growth in membership. We were in the process of maturing from childhood to our teen years.



### **Meet Mike Weintraub**

Barry and Ronna Slavin asked Paula and me to join them at a Peoplehood (no separate Brotherhood and Sisterhood in those days) event and Nancy Solomon persuaded us to switch from a larger synagogue to this much smaller one, Congregation B'nai Tikvah.

Barry was either then, or about to be President of the Congregation. We liked the young personable Rabbi Asher and others we met, so we made the switch and Barry and Mark Usatin got me involved before the ink was dry on the temple application-and it was a ball point pen! The big issue then was how we could purchase a church at the top of a hill in Walnut Creek. I helped with some what-ifs and together with other leaders of the congregation helped start the process of buying the property that is now home to CBT. Then, quickly, I was on the Board, Executive Board and President.

Some accomplishments were:

- Conversion of a paper based accounting system to a PC based system. Early on it was my home computer until CBT could afford to buy a computer.
- Developed a rudimentary data base of our membership.
- As our membership grew it was important to keep everyone engaged and we needed more funds, so we tried to put more "fun" into fundraising by doing events like a scavenger hunt in San Francisco. We loaded up a school bus for a Magical Mystery Tour and gave everyone a Magical Mystery Tour cap and list of things to find and then meet back at a restaurant in Chinatown by 6pm.
- We wanted people to show up for services and other events, and stressed that you "Gotta Be There" or you'll miss out.

We had a fabulous Board with everyone doing great things, but Kathy Weiner was especially fantastic. If the by-laws would have allowed, Kathy would have had the title of co-president.

We were small enough that everyone knew one another. We were all young and didn't know what we didn't know-kind of like a bumblebee. The aerodynamics of bumblebees are such that they cannot fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that, so they fly. We were young doctors, lawyers, mothers, fathers, employees of large and small companies, and business people. We didn't know how to do everything needed to run a congregation, but we didn't know that, so with unbridled enthusiasm, we did it. We all hoped, wished and worked hard for what is now CBT.

Be careful what you wish for, because wishes do come true.

Congregation B'nai Tikvah  
25 Hillcroft Way  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 71  
Walnut Creek, CA

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

For membership information, please contact the Temple Office.

