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# Tikvah Talk

Vol. 31 Iss. 3

Congregation B'nai Tikvah Walnut Creek, CA

November 2011

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## From Where I Stand...

By Rabbi Raphael Asher



November's Torah readings include the epic drama of Abraham and Sarah. Close and repeated readings reveal the complexities of Abraham being a "father of many nations," and the emotional loadings of forging a covenant with God. Sons Ishmael and later Isaac are both circumcised by their father and tread lonely life-paths in his footsteps. Arabic and Israelite nations both wrestle with their inheritance and sadly still can't disentangle their jealousies and conflicts.

Rabbi Prof. Reuven Firestone from Hebrew Union College will begin a 4-part series later this month to help us understand the history and mythic essence of this conflict. On Sunday, November 13 at 4 pm at B'nai Shalom, he will engage members of all 4 congregations of Central County as he tries to frame a historical context to a drama that confounds the Middle East but constantly rips at the heart of the Jewish community. Those who attend should be prepared not so much to debate the relative merits of Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, but to examine the dynamics of this family feud.

Prof. Firestone is the author of An Introduction to Islam for Jews, Jihad: the Origin of the Holy War in Islam, and the forthcoming Death and Resurrection of Jewish Holy War. My hope is that, where as so many lectures on these subjects are just provocative that this series will be thought-provoking and instructive, creating more light than heat.

(For more details, see the flyer on page 13.)

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## Reflections...

By Cantor Jennie Chabon



(Cantor's Chabon Drash on Yom Kippur Morning)

I would like to begin today by asking you all to picture your car or your purse or bag--something that goes with you wherever you go--and to think of all of the unnecessary junk you carry around with you: the random scraps of paper, sweatshirts, old gum wrappers, receipts, extra pencils and pens, crumbs, all of the little things that clutter your life. Think of how good it feels to clean out your car or your bag, how wonderful it is to glance in there and to see space and order. I always feel like I can think more clearly when my life is organized and clean.

Now imagine doing that for yourself. Think of one thing in your life, one burden that you are ready to let go of, something you've been carrying with you for a long time. Imagine being freed from that burden. It could be a habit you've been trying to break, like biting your nails, or it could be much bigger, a fear you've been holding onto that doesn't serve you anymore. It doesn't matter how you manage to release it. Just let it go, and imagine how you would feel to live your life without it following you everywhere you go.

We all have plenty of personal baggage--shmutz on our souls, if you will—and we're very good at holding onto that grimy, shmutzy baggage as if our lives depend on it. But what if we don't need it anymore? What if we can actually just let it go? What would life be like if we decided to choose the path of joy instead of the path of burden?

When Steve and I first got married, he pointed out to me—in the most loving way possible, of course—that I had a pretty terrible habit of which I was not aware. We could be sitting together, laughing, having a great time, when the phone would ring and when I answered it, I would suddenly turn into someone sad and blue. "How are you?" a friend would say. "Oh, I'm OK" I'd answer, even if just seconds ago I'd been really happy. It was as if my default emotion was sadness or angst, whether or not that was actually how I was feeling. It took a long time-- with lots of gentle reminders by my husband--for me to not only stop and think before answering the question "how are you", but also, and even more importantly, to be OK with my answer being, "I'm good!"

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**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	Lynda Webster
Vice President	Tina Guterman
Vice President	Glenn Gould
Secretary	Bob Stern
Treasurer	Todd Goldman
Past President	Lisa Wenger

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Karl Bemserfer	Bob Canter
Chuck Eisner	Alan Gould
Dan Lapporte	Barbara Loebel
Bruce Meyers	Jenifer Paul
Rayna Ravitz	David Specland
Mary Ann Wittenberg	Todd Young

## **Upcoming B'nai Mitzvah**

*Bat Mitzvah of Ilana Levy*  
*Daughter of Jeff Levy & Shauri Levy*  
*Saturday, November 12*

*Bar Mitzvah of Zachary Wiesenthal*  
*Son of Debbie & Steve Wiesenthal*  
*Saturday, November 19*

*Bat Mitzvah of Tessa Hoffmeister*  
*Daughter of Alysia & Stephen Hoffmeister*  
*Saturday, November 26*

### **Mazel Tov!**

**The Congregation is invited to  
 join the families for Shabbat services  
 at 10 am.**

### **And a special Mazel Tov to**

*Alexander Young, son of Lori & Todd Young*  
*who will become a Bar Mitzvah in Hawaii on Monday, November 21*

Join Cantor Chabon  
 for Tot Shabbats  
 on Saturday Mornings

November 12  
 December 10

9 am  
 CBT Chapel/Library

### **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.

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## President's Message

By John Rubinfeld



What spiritual and uplifting high holiday services! From the enlightening “Am I really here?” drash from Cantor Chabon, the familiar melodies of the *avinu malkeinu* and *unetaneh tokef* prayers, the thought-provoking Interfaith sermon by Rabbi Asher and to the resonating and powerful shofar blowing by Michael Maroney during Rosh

Hashanah. And then for Yom Kippur, listening to the moving sounds (both instrumental and vocal) of the Kol Nidre prayer, the heartfelt and touching Yizkor service and the culmination of “sealing of the book” during our concluding service. What a great way to start the new year!!

I sincerely appreciate all of your feedback from my two speeches. I guess baby pictures will always be a great “ice breaker.” After listening to your feedback, you’ve confirmed to the board and me that we need to continue to ask you what will enhance our community. Therefore, in the next few weeks, several of our board members will continue to reach out to more of the survey respondents.

At Yom Kippur I spoke about fundraisers and the importance of either participating in or supporting them. Well, I want to thank all of you who joined us and/or sold tickets for our restaurant walk. We raised over \$14,000! I want to thank Dan Lapporte and all the members who organized this event. Additionally, we had an excellent turnout for our Israeli wine-tasting fundraiser. Big kudos go out Julia Babka-Kurzrock for putting this together!

Remember, it’s not too late to join us for Trivia Night, Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup>. Also Lori Young and Juleen Lapporte could use your help for our annual fundraiser, A SUMMER OF LOVE, February 25. Other fun events on the horizon are a poker night and Purim Carnival to name a few.

This month our two board member profiled are the co-chairs of our Ritual Committee: Mary Ann Wittenberg and Bob Canter.

Mary Ann is a breath of fresh air and should be a familiar face during Shabbat and all special holiday services (she organizes many of ‘food’ events!) Her biggest task, our recent break-the-fast gathering, was done with such feeling - she always wants to be sure everyone has someplace to go for the holidays!. During our board meetings, her contributions and positive nature are well-appreciated. We are truly fortunate to have her part of our community as well as representing you.

Bob is probably one of the most well-liked and recognizable members we have from teaching your 5<sup>th</sup> grade children in our religious school, sitting on the bimah for 99% of the b’nai mitzvahs, or co-hosting Trivia Night. As a long time board mem-

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## Turn It, Turn It, Turn It Again

By Phil Hankin, Director of Education



Our 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> graders just returned from URJ Camp Newman’s Fall Kallah. While they were there, I engaged them in an activity that made them think about how one defines a Jewish Community. They were presented with the following scenario:

You are to establish a new community far beyond planet Earth. The planet (Planet Peh) has the same atmosphere as Earth, and there is adequate plant and animal life. There are also farms already established to supply food. You will be the first Jewish community on the planet. Your challenge is to set an example for future Jewish settlements.

### Stipulations:

Since there are fifty families going with you, you only have a limited amount of space left on the ship you will be taking to your new home and you can only bring 100 pounds total of Jewish items. You can’t bring everything and everyone. Decide on which items/people you will need to bring in order to establish a Jewish community:

- ☆ TORAH - 40#
- ☆ BIBLE - 30#
- ☆ Candlesticks - 3#
- ☆ Candles - 2#
- ☆ Kiddush Cup - 3#
- ☆ Shofar - 3#
- ☆ Menorah (7-branched) - 5#
- ☆ Chanukiah (9 branched) - 8#
- ☆ Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) - 5#
- ☆ Rabbi - 35#
- ☆ Cantor - 25#
- ☆ Song Books - 2#
- ☆ Jewish Calendar - 10#
- ☆ Siddur - 20#
- ☆ Haggadah - 10#
- ☆ Talmud - 30#
- ☆ An Israeli dance instructor - 10#
- ☆ Religious school teachers - 15#
- ☆ Jewish cook book - 5#
- ☆ Neighborly love - 15#
- ☆ Tzedakah - 15#
- ☆ Tikkun Olam - 20#
- ☆ Kosher wine - 2#
- ☆ Kosher butcher - 5#
- ☆ Dreidel - 2#
- ☆ Matzah - 2#

(continued on page 7)

## Upcoming Events:

### Wednesday, November 16, 2011 - 6:30 pm - Book Sisters

"The Cookbook Collector" by Allegra Goodman. Potluck dinner (dairy or vegetarian) in the Social Hall before the discussion.

### Wednesday, December 14, 2011 6:30 pm - Sisterhood Chanukah Dinner

Bring a dish to share for a potluck dinner (no meat) - we'll make our no-sew blankets for the Social Services at Children's Hospital. Jeanne Appelbaum will be coordinating the blanket project. We also decided to participate again in the Adopt-A-Family program. Cookie Svingos and Amy Lichtenstein will coordinate gifts for the family. We'll send out more information on this as soon as we have a family.

### Thursday, January 19, 2012 - 6:30 pm - Book Sisters

"Petroplus" by Anna Ullrich. Potluck dinner (dairy or vegetarian) in the Social Hall before the discussion.

Rayna Ravitz  
[raynaravitz@gmail.com](mailto:raynaravitz@gmail.com)



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## The Contra Costa Jewish Book & Arts Festival

...Our 23rd year begins November 5!



at the Contra Costa JCC

### **Portnoy's Restraint: An Hour's Journey through Jewish-American Fiction**

While to the general public Portnoy's Complaint represents the quintessential work of Jewish-American fiction, there are other novels which share the spot light. Award-winning writer **Rebecca Spence** will reveal the high points of Jewish - American fiction, examining such authors as Cynthia Ozick, Nathan Englander, Nicole Krauss and, of course, Philip Roth.

**Sunday,  
November 6,  
2:30 pm**

**Congregation B'nai Tikvah is a proud sponsor of this event!**

**Admission: \$8. Tickets will be available at the door & at**

**[www.jfed.org/bookfestival](http://www.jfed.org/bookfestival).**

**For more information: 510.318.6453 or [riva@jfed.org](mailto:riva@jfed.org)**

**Presented by**  **Cong. B'nai Tikvah**



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## ***President's Message...***

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*(continued from page 3)*

ber, he brings a calming demeanor and provides wonderful insight. We are also fortunate to have Bob's wife, Lance, work in our temple office as our bookkeeper.

### ***Meet MaryAnn Wittenberg***



Greetings, I'm Mary Ann Wittenberg, co-chair of the ritual committee and a member of the general board of B'nai Tikvah. This is my third year on the Board but my family and I have been members of B'nai Tikvah for 11 years. You may know my husband, Harry, who started the Tikvah Tones (and is the bass player) and is currently leading the Men of CBT Group.

My background includes 30 years in Special Education with the Oakland Public School and am currently the special education teacher in the school program at Children's Hospital Oakland. I'm originally from Southbridge, Massachusetts, having moved to California in 1979. Besides work, my focus is my family made up of three children: Max (23), Lucia, aka Sunflower (20), and Ethan (17). Max lives in Tahoe and works at a couple of resorts as well as leading dog sled tours. He also travels to Colorado to teach mountaineering classes at his former school Colorado Mountain College and is preparing to work for a heli-guide ski touring company (oy, a mother should never have to worry about her children!) Lucia is a student at Humboldt and is teetering between sustainable agriculture and or geologist (soil science – go figure). Our youngest, Ethan, is a senior at Miramonte High School and is planning for college to study music and music production.

My journey to B'nai Tikvah was both a literal one as well as a spiritual one. The literal journey was moving from Oakland to Orinda in 1999. When we moved to this side of the tunnel we were looking for a synagogue that was "just right" in size and welcoming to interfaith families. Both Harry and I are first generation Americans. Harry's parents emigrated from Poland/Germany after WWII and he was raised in a conservative Jewish home. My parents emigrated from Italy at the same time and I was raised as a Catholic. We soon realized that though our religious backgrounds were very different, our cultural, political and family values (and love of food) were very much the same. After 26 years of marriage, 13 of them in Orinda (and a lot of up's and downs!) we found ourselves as an interfaith family with 3 children who we chose to raise in the Jewish faith. As the non-Jewish partner, I found CBT to be the most welcoming of synagogues (and believe me, we tried a few!) Beyond being a community that that made no judgments, it acknowledged and respected my past. I was immediately encouraged to participate and shown great appreciation for what I contributed. I realized over time that in many ways I was really living a Jewish life so eventually went through conversion with Rabbi Asher, culminating with my Bat Mitzvah which was shared with other great women in the temple last year.

I started my volunteer efforts in the temple with the religious school and volunteering in fund raisers. I soon learned that participating in the Ritual Committee was a great way to learn about the hows and whys of Jewish holidays and religious practices. I can't encourage my fellow temple members enough to get involved. If you have a particular holiday or practice that interests you, enjoy party planning or food preparation, are energized by hands-on projects or maybe want to recreate a special memory from your past (bubbe's latkes?), please contact me. We can make it happen.

### ***Meet Bob Canter***



I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA and my family was a member of Temple Sinai there, an old and well-known Reform congregation where I celebrated my bar mitzvah and other simchas, although my family was only nominally active. I went to college in Washington, DC with the hope of joining the State Department as a member of the Diplomatic Corps. That didn't work out, so I ended up going to Library School and received my Master of Library Science degree, and then worked as a research librarian for a major Washington, DC law firm for three years. It was in Library School where I met my wife, Lance. We were married on New Year's Day, 1977.

My "renewed" Jewish odyssey began when our son Mitch was elementary school age. Lance and I looked for a congregation in Contra Costa County and found a real home at B'nai Tikvah after attending a Peoplehood event in 1986. We felt very comfortable and welcomed by Rabbi Asher and everyone and joined the Congregation and have been active and loyal members ever since. Both of our kids attended Religious School here and our daughter, Beth, was in Ellen Fasman's first-ever 4th grade class!

*(continued on page 12)*



## Contributions

### GENERAL FUND

In memory of Leon Rabinowitz  
*Laurie and Steven Rabinowitz*  
In memory of Lynn Billy  
*Wendy and Dale Billy*  
In memory of Peisah Sadetskiy  
In memory of Avrum-Moyshe Dadetskiy  
In memory of Sara Sadetskiy  
*Rakhil and Naum Sadetskiy*  
In memory of Erwin Ferer  
*Paula Reinman and Sandy Gross*  
In memory of Harry Saul Winchell  
*Bari Winchell*  
*Tal and Jonathan Winchell*  
In memory of Doris Levine  
*Vicki and John Anderle*  
In memory of Gerald Kowitz  
*Leslie Kowitz and Eric Roswall*  
In memory of Norma Klapper  
*Barbara Klapper*  
In memory of Benjamin Edelman  
*Miriam and Stanley Newman*  
In memory of Jerome Berres  
*Kimberly and Brian Zagon*  
In memory of Dr. Alan Roberts  
*Chelsea and Glenn Wechsler*

### RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

In memory of Charlotte Gilman  
In memory of Stanley Gilman  
*Carol Reif and Jeffrey Gilman*  
In memory of Howard Kaplan  
*Kelly and Aaron Kaplan*  
In memory of Hilda Stone  
*Sharon and Hugh Tama*  
With thanks to Rabbi in honor of Miranda and Ben's wedding  
*Michelle and Ted Hochstein*  
In memory of Anatole Shepievker  
*Regina and Oleg Tachkov*  
In memory of Zachary Michlen Stadt  
*Leslie and Howard Sturtz*



Dee Hirsch and  
Kim Zagon on  
the bridge at  
Tashlich.

### GENERAL FUND FOR CANTOR'S MUSICAL PROGRAMS

In memory of Aaron Lopp  
In honor of the Gottfried family joining CBT  
*Jenifer and Benjamin Paul*  
In memory of Esther Appleberg  
*Idelle Lipman*

### CANTOR STEPHEN RICHARDS MUSICAL ENRICHMENT/CHOIR FUND

In memory of Judy Silver  
*Marjorie and Cantor Stephen Richards*

### SOCIAL ACTION FUND

In memory of Lily Maslow  
*Michael Fischer*

### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In honor of the birth of Eve Juliet Ravid  
*Jenifer and Benjamin Paul*  
In honor of the Ravitz's social hall dedication  
*Susan and John Rubinfeld*  
In memory of Evelyn Moulton  
In memory of Louis Dienst  
*Gloria Kemna*

### TREE OF LIFE

Twinning of Louis Polcin with Shem Alaluf (z"l)  
October 29, 2011  
*The Polcin/Guterman family*

## CHANUKAH

BEGINS DECEMBER 20

**SHOP the CBT Gift Shop**  
**CHANUKAH BOUTIQUE**  
**for ALL of your Chanukah needs!**

**Sunday, December 4, 11, and 18**  
**9 am - noon**

**Largest Selection of Menorahs.....CDs &  
Cassettes of Great Chanukah Music  
Beautiful Wrapping Paper &  
Decorations.....Candles.....Gelt.....Draydels  
Books, Jewelry, and other Wonderful Gifts**

**Plates, Napkins, Cups, & All Your Party Needs  
plus LOTS more!!!**

**All Proceeds from the Boutique  
Go To Support YOUR Synagogue!**

## Turn It, Turn It, Turn It Again.....

(continued from page 3)

- ☆ Challah – 2#
- ☆ Tallit – 5#
- ☆ Sofer - 10#

Some questions to ponder as you make your decisions:

1. What makes a community Jewish? How does one define “Jewish community?”
2. Were your decisions motivated by budget or what you believed would be best Judaically?
3. How would your choices change if you did not belong to a Reform synagogue?

How would your choices change if you were not going to Planet Peh, but you were part of the initial settlers of San Francisco almost 200 years ago?

Hopefully you will not have to make this choice in your lifetime but the choices you do make now will affect your family lineage. May we never be put in that situation.

## REFUAT HANEFESH

“Refuat Haefesh,” (Healing of Spirit),  
is a new description  
for those monthly Friday evening services when  
we'll include a “mi sheberach”  
for restored health.  
These are connected with the  
announcing of the upcoming  
New Moon (Rosh Chodesh)  
on the following dates:

November 25  
December 23  
January 27  
February 17  
March 16  
April 20  
May 18  
June 15

## Shalom Connection

### CONDOLENCES TO

Richard Harrit and family on the loss of his father,  
Arthur Harrit  
Jay Davis and family on the loss of his mother, Arlene Davis  
Lisa Wenger and family on the loss of her step-father,  
Charles Woodward  
Jeff Arnold and family on the loss of his father, Jerry Arnold  
Ron Holland and family on the loss of his father,  
Leo Hotkowski

### MAZEL TOV TO:

Shari and David Safianoff on the marriage of Michael to  
Suzanne Houston  
Flo and Loren Burns on their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary



Learning to put on a tallit at Morning T'filah.

## Welcome to our New Members

Rose Cohen and Emiliano Berenbaum  
Sofia 8/24/2007  
Maia 9/6/2010

Eve and Jeffrey Lowenstein  
Noah 9/23/2004  
Serena 3/31/2006

Pearl and Samuel Oliner

Rickie and Sandy Shaller

The first big news to share with you is that we have officially changed the date of our Annual Event. Please mark your calendars for Saturday evening, March 24, 2012 for Contra Costa Midrasha's annual fundraising event. This year we're trying something a little bit different – a chocolate themed event with chocolate tasting, chocolate infused drinks and food and lots of chocolate items for auction bidding. The evening will also include dancing, featuring the music of B'nai Tikvah's house band, "The Tikvah Tones," lots of schmoozing and plenty of celebrating. Please join us that night at Beth Chaim Congregation in Danville. *(Note: If you had marked your calendars for November 5<sup>th</sup>, feel free to erase the date, replacing it instead with March 24<sup>th</sup>.)*

This Fall also brings the onset of Contra Costa Midrasha's new "Hands-On Food Adventures." This series of cooking workshops, field trip and community service work aims to engage our Midrasha teens in eating, cooking, giving and growing with Jewish flavor, tradition and teachings. The Fall schedule of events include:

October 16<sup>th</sup>: Challah making workshop!

November 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Food Explorations that will take us to the AgPark Farm in Sunol, the Contra Costa Food Bank and making Shabbat dinner for ourselves.

The program is open not only to enrolled Contra Costa Midrasha teens, but any Jewish teens interested in food, service or fun times with friends. For more information about this program, please visit our website at: <http://ccmidrasha.com/hands-food-adventures>

We're also trying a new Tikkun Olam program this semester, partnering with Shalom Bayit to "adopt a family" for the Chanukkah season. In this capacity our teens and parents will be purchasing items and gift cards for a family to make their holiday season very special. This is giving our teens a focus for their tzedakah donations this semester, as well as an opportunity to learn about Shalom Bayit's programs and mission. We welcome support and donations from the community for this program. Join us on December 7<sup>th</sup> at Midrasha for our "wrapping party" - bringing gifts to contribute, wrapping paper or just your sturdy hands.

We invite you to visit our website for information about new programs, new photos or to join our mailing list: [www.ccmidrasha.com](http://www.ccmidrasha.com). For questions about our program, contact the Contra Costa Midrasha office at 925/944-4701 or [office@ccmidrasha.com](mailto:office@ccmidrasha.com).

36 of our 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> graders attended the Fall Kallah at Camp Newman.



# NOVEMBER 2011 Heshvan - Kislev 5772

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b> Religious School	<b>2</b> Religious School	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Family Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>5</b> * Lech Lecha CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Trivia Night! Shabbat Service - 6th graders participating 10:00 am
<b>6</b> Religious School CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival - CBT sponsored event 2:30 pm CBT Book Group @ CCJCC 3:30 pm	<b>7</b> CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm	<b>8</b> CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Religious School	<b>9</b> CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Religious School	<b>10</b> CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>11</b> CC Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>12</b> * Vayera Tot Shabbat 9:00 am Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Ilana Levy 10:00 am
<b>13</b> Contra Costa Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Religious School Men of CBT 10:00 am Reuven Firestone Lecture @ B'nai Shalom 4:00 pm	<b>14</b> Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm	<b>15</b> Religious School	<b>16</b> Contra Costa Jewish Book & ARTS Festival Religious School Book Sisters & Dinner 6:30 pm Religious School Committee Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>17</b> Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>18</b> SHIR JOY 7:30 pm	<b>19</b> *Hayyei Sarah Shabbat Service - Bar Mitzvah of Zachary Wiesenthal 10:00 am
<b>20</b> NO Religious School	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> NO Religious School	<b>23</b> NO Religious School	<b>24</b> (Office closed) THANKSGIVING	<b>25</b> (Office closed) Shabbat Service "Refuat Hanefesh" (A Healing of Spirit) 6:30 pm	<b>26</b> * Toledot Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Tessa Hoffmeister 10:00 am
<b>27</b> NO Religious School Rosh Chodesh - Kislev	<b>28</b> General Board Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>29</b> Religious School	<b>30</b> Religious School			

Have YOU visited the Tzedaka box in our Lobby?



Donations made by December 31 will benefit the Contra Costa Food Bank to support those in need, particularly, at the holiday season.

This quarter's recipient selected by the CBT Board of Trustees.

SAVE THE DATE -  
FEBRUARY 25, 2012  
"A SUMMER OF LOVE"  
CBT'S ANNUAL GALA

# DECEMBER 2011 Kislev - Tevet 5772

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>1</b> Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>2</b> Shabbat 'Pizza' Dinner 5:30 pm Family Shabbat Service - 5th graders participating 6:30 pm	<b>3</b> * Vayetze Morning Minyan 10:00 am Midrasha Havdallah 7th graders 6:00 pm
<b>4</b> Religious School Chanukah in Gift Shop 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	<b>5</b> Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm	<b>6</b> Religious School	<b>7</b> Religious School	<b>8</b> Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>9</b> Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>10</b> * Vayislach Tot Shabbat 9:00 am Shabbat Service - Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>11</b> Religious School Chanukah in Gift Shop 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	<b>12</b> Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm General Board Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>13</b> Religious School	<b>14</b> Religious School URJ Biennial Sisterhood Chanukah Dinner & No-Sew Blankets 6:30 pm	<b>15</b> URJ Biennial Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>16</b> URJ Biennial Shir Joy 7:30 pm	<b>17</b> * Vayeshev URJ Biennial Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>18</b> Religious School & 2nd Annual Chanukah Zimriah! URJ Biennial Chanukah in Gift Shop 9:00 am - 12:00 pm Men of CBT 10:00 am	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Chanukah - 1st night NO Religious School	<b>21</b> Chanukah - 2nd night NO Religious School	<b>22</b> Chanukah - 3rd night Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	<b>23</b> Chanukah - 4th night Choir participating "Refuat Hanefesh" (A Healing of Spirit) 6:30 pm	<b>24</b> * Miketz Chanukah - 5th night Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>25</b> Chanukah - 6th night NO Religious School	<b>26</b> (Office closed) Chanukah - 7th night New Member Event @ Rabbi's	<b>27</b> Chanukah - 8th night NO Religious School Rosh Chodesh - Tevet	<b>28</b> NO Religious School	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>31</b> * Vayiggash Morning Minyan 10:00 am

## SHABBAT "PIZZA" DINNER at CBT FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

Dinner 5:30 pm Family Shabbat service 6:30 pm

Adults \$10 / Children \$5 Reservations due Monday, November 28

Please send your check into the Temple Office with "Pizza Dinner" and date in the memo section or sign up on-line in the Members' Only section.

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## Reflections...

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(continued from page 1)

What is it about being human (or American, I might argue), that makes us feel like happiness is indulgent? That having a restless soul is somehow more valid or valuable than being at peace? I am certainly not arguing that we should all walk around pretending to be happy, or that there isn't deep value in soul searching—on the contrary, I am the master (to a fault!) of deep soul excavating and I am constantly trying to find ways to become a better person. I value all of our human emotions, and I can't even imagine what the foundation of my friendships would be if my friends and I were happy all the time. But I do wonder if in our quest to understand ourselves and to address every ache of our hearts and souls, we haven't actually lost our way.

According to Rabbi Alan Lew, *alav hashalom*, Rebbe Nachman said that when the soul hears its name being called and begins its journey back to God, "God immediately begins to raise up impediments, because God knows that it strengthens the soul to overcome impediments, and because it is human nature—it is the nature of the soul—to yearn for precisely that which is difficult to attain." (*This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*, p. 184)

It is human nature to yearn for precisely that which is difficult to attain, to long for challenges, to ache for a little bit of heartbreak so that we can grow. God even facilitates this process by making it difficult to stay on a Divine path! So, if that is true, if we do yearn for challenge and growth, why in the world do we make it even harder on ourselves to be alive by insisting on being afraid of being really, truly happy?

We all know that today is about *teshuvah*, about return, about repentance and forgiveness. We are all unfortunately well acquainted with disappointment, failure, loss and heartache and the incredibly hard work we have to do to recover from those dark times of life. But today is also and equally about what happens *after* we go to the place of examining our deepest faults, *after* we try to forgive ourselves and the people we love; it is also about the joy and elation we feel at Neilah. We sit in shul together all day, hungry and tired, examining ourselves, not as , to quote the prophet Isaiah from the Haftarah we'll hear later this morning, "an exercise in self affliction," but rather as a path to accessing parts of ourselves that we cannot normally access. We reenact death as a way of imagining—just for a day!—what it would be like to be at the end of life and to look back and review our lives.

What words do you hope to hear people use to describe you? What words do you hope to use to describe your *own* life? Do you want to be known as someone who was so devoted to personal growth that you were incapable of embracing happiness? As someone who was so afraid of your deepest, darkest places that you did everything you could to hide from them? Or do you want to be known as someone who knew how to navigate through life's challenges with grace, who loved to laugh, who knew sorrow but didn't allow it to take over your life?

These are the questions we are supposed to be asking ourselves today. What do you need to do in the short time that you have on this earth to live how you want to be living? To be the person you want to be? It sounds so simple, but it's so hard!

On Rosh Hashanah I said that these holy days are not about fear, and I think that that is even more true today. Awe—definitely, but not fear. Unless by fear you mean the fear of not living up to your potential, the fear of not embracing the beautiful and complicated person that you are. The fear of not understanding that God and the people in your life love you not only despite your faults and your dark places, but *because* of them. That kind of fear is a terrifying idea, indeed.

There is a quote that I often to turn to when I need to be reminded of my potential. It is by Marianne Williamson, and it is called Our Deepest Fear. This is what she says:

**Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.** (*from A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*)

The world is aching for a better year. God is aching for a better year. *May we all join our voices in heartfelt prayer as we yearn together for growth and healing and as we insist on cultivating not our darkness but our light.*

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## ***President's Message...***

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*(continued from page 5)*

My wife, Lance, is a familiar name and face to most congregants, not only for her distinctive first name (she was named for a great-uncle) but for her over 21 years as a B'nai Tikvah employee, and for bringing a variety of friendly dogs, large and small, to the Temple Office.

Rabbi Asher asked me to Chair the Ritual Committee in 1987, following Dr. Marc Usatin. I reluctantly accepted but came to love the position and this also helped me to reconnect to my Jewish roots. I am now back as Ritual Co-Chair with Mary Ann Wittenberg. My other B'nai Tikvah activities have included:

- Member of the Synagogue Board of Directors
- President of the Temple Brotherhood
- Member of the B'nai Tikvah I Softball team from 1992-2001; team captain the last 5 of those years
- Chaired Cantorial Search Committee and Religious School Director Search Committee (but not for our current Cantor or Director of Education!)
- Teacher representative (along with Ellen Fasman) on the Director of Education Search Committee
- Co-author and co-emcee (along with Mike Cohn and David Specland) of the B'nai Tikvah Trivia Nights
- Member of the B'nai Tikvah Trivia Team that has represented our Congregation at the Temple Isaiah Trivia Night
- Usher and helper at High Holyday Services since 1990
- Along with Lance, we're members of one of B'nai Tikvah's longest-surviving Chavurot, Chavurah Chutzpah.

But my proudest B'nai Tikvah involvement has been serving as the 5th Grade Sunday teacher in our Religious School since the 2001-2002 school year. My teaching experience has deepened my own Jewish roots and identity. But more important, it has led to forging some very deep and lasting friendships with our kids and their families. One off-shoot of this is that I know share the bima with a large number of our bar and bat mitzvahs and have the opportunity to be a small part of the service and share a happy memory or story with them. I never tire of doing these "bima duties" which has produced a treasure trove of very precious and special memories.

Lance and I both are in LOVE with Israel and traveled to Israel with Rabbi Asher and other congregants in 2008 to celebrate Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We were both very proud when our daughter, Beth, moved to Israel in August of 2009 and has now become an Israeli citizen. Lance and I visited her over Thanksgiving last year and ponder the possibility of a move to Israel ourselves sometime in the future...

I may be originally from Pennsylvania and Lance from north Florida, but we have both found a real home, and many friends, at Congregation B'nai Tikvah.



Thanks to our Sukkah crew (Steve Rabinowitz, Steve Kaplan, Jonathan Winchell, Todd Young, Gary Zupo, David Small, John Rubinfeld) and to the decorators (pictured 1-r Idelle Lipman, Laurie Rabinowitz, Susan Friedman, plus Leah Eskenazi, Mary-Ann Wittenberg, Lauren Goldberg, Mitzi Moskovitz, Julia Babka and students) plus to Irene Korn for purchasing some beautiful new colorful adornments with Gift Shop proceeds.



# An Introduction to Islam for Jews

With Scholar-in-Residence Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Ph.D.

Rabbi Dr. Reuven Firestone is professor of medieval Judaism and Islam at Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, Senior Fellow of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California, and founder and co-director of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement in Los Angeles. Author of seven books and over eighty scholarly articles on Judaism, Islam and their relationship with one another and with Christianity, Rabbi Firestone has lived in Israel and Egypt. He received his Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from New York University.



## Join us for this important four-part series:

**Sunday, November 13, 4:00 p.m.**

The Abrahamic Family Feud:  
Its Aftershocks for Judaism and Islam  
Cong. B'nai Shalom, 74 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek

**Friday, January 20, 7:30 p.m.**

Islamic Fundamentalism and the Arab Spring  
Cong. B'nai Tikvah, 25 Hillcroft Way, Walnut Creek

**Sunday, March 25, 4 p.m.**

How Do We See Each Other?  
Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

**Sunday, April 29, 4 p.m.**

Jews and Muslims in Dialogue  
Beth Chaim Cong., 1800 Holbrook Drive, Danville

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**The B'nai Tikvah Trivia Guys Present**

**TEAM TRIVIA NIGHT 2011!**

**Saturday, November 5, 2011**

**Doors Open @ 6:30 p.m. Play starts @ 7:00 p.m.**

**Over 100 fun, brain-challenging questions**

**Entry fee \$150 per team; teams of up to 6-8 players**

For questions or more information  
contact The B'nai Tikvah Trivia Guys –  
Bob Canter, Mike Cohn and David Specland  
at [TheCBTTriviaGuys@gmail.com](mailto:TheCBTTriviaGuys@gmail.com)  
or call the Temple Office, 925-933-5397.