

---

# Tikvah Talk

Vol. 31 Iss. 4

Congregation B'nai Tikvah Walnut Creek, CA

December 2011

---

## *From Where I Stand...*

By Rabbi Raphael Asher



I'm just reading and can highly recommend Peter Gay's biography of Freud: A Life for our Time. Although many of Freud's theories of psychoanalysis have been challenged or refined, the evolution of the science that swirled around him in the early years is fascinating particularly because of all the Jewish personalities that participated. Gay (originally "Freilich") posits that Freud was most insightful about outlining the techniques of the therapist to best serve the client. The couch, the ambience and his guidelines for active listening were all ground breaking.

Freud's central caution to his fellow analysts, the main obstacle to psychological progress, was impatience. If there was any potential for the "talking cure," it would not be a quick fix. No less than a marathon, both doctor and client would have to trust in the twists and turns of the long run.

In addition to all of its more explicit teachings about freedom and faith, Chanukah can also be a wonderful lesson in patience. Night after night children and parents need to moderate their gift-giving and receiving and wait 8 nights for their menorahs to reach full glow. All ages need a subtle reminder of incremental progress over time in our lives.

The Joseph Story, which often coincides with Chanukah, is perhaps the longest and slowest drama in the Torah. Joseph's growth from boyhood dreams and trauma to grown-up sovereignty and understanding spans multiple chapters in Genesis, almost as long as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob put together. There's quite a bit to analyze of family dynamics and Joseph's internal struggle that make

*(continued on page 7)*

---

## *Reflections...*

By Cantor Jennie Chabon



I love it when Hanukkah falls at the end of December. Not because it gives me extra time to prepare or because my kids are on vacation then, but because it feels like Hanukkah is supposed to be celebrated on the darkest nights of the year.

Of course, when it falls close to Thanksgiving, we still light candles once it's dark outside, but somehow, it feels darker and more appropriate when those very same candles are lighting up our nights once we have officially crossed over into winter. This year, winter solstice falls on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, the third night of Hanukkah. On the fourth night, Friday night, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, our choir will be singing at Shabbat services and the whole congregation is invited to bring your Hanukkiah to light at the start of services. This is a beautiful tradition that we started a few years ago, and it truly creates a warm and festive feeling in the sanctuary to have the room filled with candles, songs and blessings.

Last year, when I was driving Ezra to school one morning, he looked out the window and saw store after store with Christmas decorations hanging in their windows. He said, "Wow mommy, so many people celebrate Christmas! Why aren't there more Hanukkah decorations up?" It was the first time my son realized that something so important and vital to his being was so poorly represented in the world. Though it made me sad for him to have that realization at 5 years old, it did give us the chance to talk about how very few Jews there are in the world, and therefore how important it is to keep our traditions alive. Celebrating Hanukkah and creating our own family traditions around the holiday are ways of doing just that.

I never really understood the magic of Hanukkah until I had children. Of course, part of the magic for them is presents, but we try hard in our house to make it about so much more than that. They each light their home-made hanukkiah, and they love to sing Hanukkah songs and to gather with friends and family to celebrate. We decorate the house together and we try to do something different and special each night. Though it is a minor holiday in our calendar, it is a beautiful one, all about light and joy and survival. My hope is that in our little house in Oakland, we are creating lasting memories in our children that they will take with them when they grow up and move out into the world. This year, as you light your Hanukkiah each night, may the increasing light that fills your home also fill your heart and your spirit, and may that light last you through the long days of winter ahead.

**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

**SLEEPING BAGS FOR  
WINTER NIGHTS**

Thanks to everyone who helped provide sleeping bags for the Winter Nights program. CBT and Shell Ridge Community Church combined to raise enough money to purchase 60 sleeping bags. Our Shell Ridge partners ordered customized name labels, which one of their patient congregants with sewing skills attached to each bag. We stored the bags at CBT until the Winter Nights program was ready to start handing them out to their guests. Each guest receives a sleeping bag to use while staying at the shelter and to take along when the guest finds permanent housing. So far, Winter Nights has distributed about 25 bags, and we've heard that the bags have been very popular with the guests.



The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, which operates Winter Nights, is grateful to CBT and Shell Ridge for taking on this responsibility for this year and for the future. We hope to be able to host the shelter again sometime soon, but in the meantime, it's great to know that we can contribute to the comfort of the guests in a meaningful way.

**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 Rubinfeld



When I look back over my childhood, my most memorable holiday/festival was Hanukkah - from lighting the candles and reciting the prayers, making latkes, singing songs, playing dreidel to eating more gelt than the candy I ate the day after Halloween. As I watch my son and his friends experience the same enjoyment, it brings back

those fond memories. Another wonderful tradition at CBT is our Hanukkah Shabbat service which will be held on December 23<sup>rd</sup> to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> night. Some of the night's main attractions are the Cantor and choir leading us in many of the traditional Hanukkah songs, the Rabbi spinning a wonderful tale and all the children lighting their candles (I don't know what's brighter - the candles or their eyes). It's an incredible site to witness. Then for the oneg, latkes upon latkes piled up to the ceiling for everyone to indulge. Hanukkah brings out the child in all of us. I encourage you to bring your family and celebrate with fellow shtetlites.

Also, if you're a fan of our Shir Joy Shabbat services, then you don't want to miss December 16<sup>th</sup>'s service. Cantor Chabon is due in January for the blessing of her third child. On behalf of the congregation, we wish her and the baby a safe, healthy delivery! Don't despair, she'll return in the spring ready to fill our sanctuary full of song, joy and energy. (Cantor Chabon's next Tikvah Talk article will introduce Fran Burgess, a Cantorial soloist, who will be 'covering' during her leave.)

To those families who joined in 2011, the Rabbi and his wife Jennifer welcome you to their home on Monday afternoon, December 26<sup>th</sup>. If you have school age children, please encourage them to bring their menorahs and dreidels. This is great opportunity to get to know your fellow new members, the Rabbi and the board in a warm and casual setting.

This month our two board member profiled are Barbara Loebel and Bob Stern.

Barbara, her husband, Bear Begelman, and their two sons Zachary and Dylan have been members of B'nai Tikvah for 11 years. She has been a board member for 6 years. Barbara is our resident marketing expert. She finds so many ways (print, internet, flyers) to reach out to current and prospective members as well as Jews throughout greater Diablo area about upcoming speaker, holiday or community building events. She brings a positive outlook to our meetings and is a strong advocate of improving the overall congregation experience. We are very lucky to have her part of our community!

If you have children in the religious school, then it's very likely you know Bob and Julie Stern. With five boys, Nathaniel, Harrison, Elliot, Spencer and Cooper, they are literally keeping our

*(continued on page 5)*

---

## Turn It, Turn It, Turn It Again

By Phil Hankin, Director of Education

### Big Jewish Ideas



Go back in time to when you were a school-aged child. When did it become apparent that you were in school with other kids who were not Jewish? When they found out that you were Jewish, what kind of questions did they ask you? Whether it was holiday related or religious oriented, how equipped were you to answer their questions? Could you explain why you celebrated Hanukkah instead of Christmas? Could explain why you were eating Matza during Pesach? As you aged and moved on into high school, and as the questions became more intricate, could you explain the difference between the Old and New Testament? Could you explain to your friends why you were not allowed to attend a school event (football game, dance, etc.) on a Friday evening? Could you explain to your friends the difference in belief between the Jewish concept of God and the Christian belief in Jesus? What is the difference between Brit Milah and Baptism? There are many other items that many of us struggle with even as adults.

What is it that makes us uniquely Jewish? Is it the way we dress? Is it our language? Since the middle of the previous century in America, Jews moved away from the clustered Jewish urban communities in order to assimilate into the greater suburban societies. This movement made it difficult to distinguish who was Jewish and who was not. The more the new suburban Jews blended into the societal framework, the harder it became to live a Jewish life. The pull was so strong to become like the "other" that traditional Jewish customs faded with time. Eating uniquely Jewish (i.e. keeping Kosher) became less important. Keeping Shabbat became less of a priority. Outwardly celebrating Jewish holidays became uncomfortable. Schooling children in Torah, Hebrew, and Jewish traditions began to fade. As life became more comfortable in the majority, it became less recognizably Jewish.

That brings us to today. How does one define oneself as being Jewish? How does one build a strong Jewish identity? Is it synagogue affiliation? Is it keeping a traditional Jewish home? Is it providing children with uniquely Jewish educational experiences by enrolling them in a Jewish Day School and/or Jewish summer camp? Is it emphasizing the importance of marking a child's growth as a Jewish adult through life-cycle events (Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Graduation, etc.)? Is it emphasizing the importance of visiting Israel either as a family or sending your child on a sponsored teen trip or Birthright trip?

The struggle of retaining a Jewish identity is a huge burden. The answers are not easy. The competing factors within our lives complicate matters even more. There are more choices and more commitments that tug at our precious time. What we

*(continued on page 7)*

Our Book Sisters' pick for November was "The Cookbook Collector." We had a very lively discussion for a book we found to be complex. Susan Friedman led us through a terrific discussion for a book that we had strong feelings about. Most of us missed something in the reading that came up in the discussion and made the book much more interesting. And we always love some perspectives when the book is not well-received. The potluck dinner was especially interesting with a darling turkey challah as a special treat made by Marsha Cohn. Great job ladies!

I look forward to our Chanukah party and that potluck.

## Upcoming Events:

### **Sunday, December 4 2-4pm - Football Sunday Knitting**

Let's meet at Fashion Knit on Ygnacio Valley Road and knit together. You will receive a 10% discount on anything you buy at that time. RSVP: [Raynaravitz@gmail.com](mailto:Raynaravitz@gmail.com) by December 2.

### **Wednesday, December 14 7pm - Chanukah party**

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 Applebaum will be coordinating the blanket project. We decided to participate in the Adopt-A-Family program. Cookie Svingos and Amy Lichtenstein will coordinate gifts for the family. We'll send out more information to the email list as soon as we have a family. RSVP: [Raynaravitz@gmail.com](mailto:Raynaravitz@gmail.com)

### **Sunday, January 8 9:15am - Legion of Honor Museum**

We will take a tour of "Pissarro's People." This exhibit of Impressionist Art focuses on people and their work and lives, rather than landscapes. This is an exciting opportunity to see this collection. Camille Pissarro was a mentor to Cezanne, Paul Gauguin and Georges Seurat. He was born into a Jewish family in St. Thomas in the Caribbean, in 1830, a Dutch colony at the time. He moved to Paris to paint in the 1850's and remained there the rest of his life. He was instrumental in organizing the group of artists who became known as the Impressionists, a name that began as an insult and then became a badge of honor.

Cost: \$12 adults, \$10 seniors (65+) . Time: Tour 11 a.m. Lunch to follow at the museum's Cafe.

RSVP: Please send your check to Susan Friedman by Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> @ 4495 Sweet Shrub Ct, Concord 94521

Email: [SusanBFriedman@aol.com](mailto:SusanBFriedman@aol.com). Drivers needed for this outing. Please let Susan know if you are willing to drive.

We will meet at B'nai Tikvah at 9:15 a.m.

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

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

### **Thursday, March 1 8 pm - Legally Blonde**

Sisterhood will attend this play at the Leshner Center. Lital Abrahams, a CBT member and graduate of our Religious School is in the cast. We got group rate tickets for \$36. Please send a check to the Temple, note that it is for Sisterhood - Legally Blonde, by December 15.

### **March date TBD - Jewish Film Festival**

As we have in the past few years, we will meet for dinner and go to the movies together.

### **Friday, March 16 7:30 pm - Sisterhood Shabbat**

Sasharet, an organization helping Jewish women with Breast and Ovarian cancers will be our tzedakah box recipient for January-March. We have asked for a speaker for this evening from the organization. Sisterhood members will participate in the service.

### **Wednesday March 28 6:30pm - Book Sisters**

TBD:

Challah Baking class with Jennifer Rosenberg

Eugene O'Neill Museum

Genealogy class

Rayna Ravitz



---

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

---

*(continued from page 3)*

school afloat. What a surprise, while I was Chairperson for the Religious School committee, Bob was on the committee for two years. When I was elected President, my first act was to persuade Bob join me on the board. Despite raising five boys, a full time job, military reserve assignments and coaching his sons in baseball, he decided to be part of our leadership team. I know we are extremely fortunate to have his insight, ability to find solutions and his straightforward approach. However, most importantly, I want to thank Julie for allowing Bob to take on another role!

### ***Meet Barbara Loebel***



I was born In Uruguay to European immigrants. We moved to California in the late 50's where we settled in Oakland. I started my career in retail jewelry sales and quickly went to wholesale. I grew a business here in Northern California mainly with specialty stores. I then moved on to consulting and helping small apparel and accessory companies grow.

As well as business for profit, I have assisted in the non-profit sector. I am a recent graduate of Leadership Contra Costa through the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce.

I have been a National Sales Director for several companies over the years and responsible for the entire sales budgets and growing their businesses. I currently work at the Contra Costa Times in the advertising department.

I am married to Bear Begelman, a shop teacher at Acalanes High School and together we have two boys in college, Zachary and Dylan. We have lived in Walnut Creek for almost 20 years and pride ourselves in being involved in our community as well as our synagogue. I have been a member here for almost years and on the Board of Directors for over 6 years.

### ***Meet Bob Stern***



I have been a member of B'nai Tikvah for about 10 years and recently joined the board (after serving on the religious school committee for a number of years) as secretary and liaison to the Union for Reform Judaism. I live in Walnut Creek with my wife of 21 years, Julie, and our five wonderful boys: Nathaniel, 16; Harrison, 12; Elliot 10; Spencer 8; and Cooper 5. Won't deny the obvious--we lead a busy life. Nathaniel continues his Jewish studies in the local Midrasha program and Harrison, Elliot and Spencer all attend CBT religious school. Cooper's up next.

My Jewish-American roots are strong. I was born in Chicago where our family lived in the Roger's Park area, a predominately Jewish neighborhood on Chicago's north side, and attended Temple Emanuel. I did, however, spend most of my childhood growing up in Beachwood, Ohio, a predominantly Jewish suburb on Cleveland's east side. I grew up in a Reform Jewish household and celebrated my Bar Mitzvah and Confirmation. Julie and I met as students while attending The Ohio State University (okay, we met in a bar at Ohio State) where we both earned our bachelor's degrees in Buckeye Football. Just kidding. We got married soon after graduation from college and after launching our careers in Julie's home town, Columbus, Ohio, job offers brought us out to the Bay Area in 1993 where we've remained ever since. First in San Francisco and in 2000 to Walnut Creek.

While Julie and I are an interfaith couple, we are committed to raising our boys in the Jewish faith and tradition - a major reason we joined B'nai Tikvah. But what also attracted us to B'nai Tikvah nearly a decade ago were the people, the sense of community, the size and number of interfaith families in the congregation and the religious school program. We have seen B'nai Tikvah grow over the years and look forward to seeing our congregation evolve even more with a growing sense of community and participation by more congregants.

Currently, I am a product marketing manager for Trimble Navigation, Ltd. and serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the California Army National Guard.

---

## **Contributions**

---

### **GENERAL FUND**

In memory of Yuri Moskalenko  
*Yelena Yaltanskaya and Doba Moskalenko*

In honor of Rayna and Richard Ravitz naming of the social hall  
*Cookie Svingos*

In honor of Louis Polcin's Bar Mitzvah  
*Florence and David Miller*

In memory of Leon Weiss  
*Elizabeth and William Roberts*

In memory of Stanley Val Goldin

In memory of Ben Ettelson  
*Trish and Jared Goldin*

In memory of John Sutherland  
*Monica Salusky and John Sutherland*

In memory of Daniel Bristow  
*Jodi Robinson*

In memory of Ruby Goodfriend

In memory of Martin Goodfriend  
*Rosalie and Jerome Hankin*

In memory of Marjorie Shuer  
*Mery and Jerome Chaney*

In memory of Linda Paul

In memory of Ethel Weiss  
*Flo and Loren Burns*

In memory of Oscar Haimowitz

In memory of Adam Richter  
*Joyce and Harry Moebius*

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

In memory of Phyllis Lutzker  
*Ann and Stuart Lutzker*

In memory of Stanley Kaplan  
*Kelly and Aaron Kaplan*

In memory of Beatrice Begun  
*Jay Begun*

In honor of Louis' Bar Mitzvah  
*Tina Guterman & Doug Polcin*

In memory of Doris Levine  
*Vicki and John Anderle*

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

In appreciation of the High Holiday Services  
*Arlene and Jonathan Horowitz*

In honor of Louis' Bar Mitzvah  
*Tina Guterman and Doug Polcin*

In memory of Sidney Schwartz  
*Cindy Turner and Brian Schwartz*

In memory of Hilda Bloom

In honor of Louis Polcin's Bar Mitzvah  
*Susan and John Rubinfeld*

### **JAMES COHEN MEMORIAL FUND**

In memory of Goldie Cohen  
*Sally Cohen*

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

In honor of Flo and Loren Burns 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary  
*Susan and John Klein*

In memory of Sidney Solomon  
*Marjorie and Cantor Stephen Richards*

### **ABRAHAM NIVER SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

In memory of Bernard Marcus  
*Patricia and Lorry Marcus*

### **ROSE AND SAM USATIN MEMORIAL FUND**

In memory of Ethel Weiss  
*Debbie and Marc Usatin*

### **CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

In memory of Ethel Weiss  
*Lance and Bob Canter*  
*Rick Chakoff*  
*The City of Concord Employees*  
*Pat and Chuck Eisner*  
*Tina Guterman and Doug Polcin*  
*Diane and Victor Leventhal*  
*Susan and John Rubinfeld*  
*Nancy and Arthur Solomon*  
*Pat Viera*

### **TREE OF LIFE**

In Living Memory of Ethel Weiss  
*Judy and Walt Blum*  
*Jackie Chakoff*  
*Rayna and Richard Ravitz*  
*Marjorie and Cantor Stephen Richards*  
*Bonnie and Mark Tornheim*  
*Carol and Ira Wallis*

In Living Memory of Marilyn Friedman  
*Sharon Brandes and family*

### ***Shalom Connection***

#### CONDOLENCES TO:

Ellen Duree and family on the loss of her mother,  
Miriam Kudish

Sharon Brandes and family on the loss of her sister,  
Marilyn Friedman

Florence Specland and family on the loss of her mother,  
Ethel Weiss

Joe Weiss on the loss of his wife, Ethel

#### MAZEL TOV TO:

Tracy and Jeremy Lieb and family on the birth of Zoe Violet

Ronna and Barry Slavin on the birth of granddaughter,  
Mabel Eileen Martin

---

## ***From Where I Stand.....***

---

*(continued from page 1)*

for good psychological discussion.

In addition to wishing you all a Chanukah of light and joy, “ora v’simcha,” I urge you to join our Saturday morning minyans on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> in the Library for a Freudian or just a human encounter with the Torah.

(No RSVPs necessary, but let me know if this piques your interest or you can help with the Kiddush.)

### **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:

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

---

## ***Turn It, Turn It, Turn It.....***

---

*(continued from page 3)*

choose to prioritize in our life affects our children and their Jewish future. Much the same that our grandparents and parents choose for us, we are now struggling with the remnants of those early decisions. Is synagogue affiliation enough without actively participating in the life of the congregation? Is enrolling your children in religious school enough without making it a priority? Is Bar/Bat Mitzvah the end-all, be-all or is it just the beginning of the Jewish journey? The messages and commitments that you give to your children directly affect the next generation of Jews. By stressing Menschlichkeit and Yiddishkeit and showing your children that having a Jewish Education is not just another “extra-curricular” activity, you are making a strong statement that living a Jewish life (however you define it) is a priority. Especially during the upcoming “December dilemma” season, the more Jewish memories that you can create for your children, the more likely they will recall them when it comes time to making the difficult choices on their own.

*Chag Orim Sameach!!*

---

### ***Welcome to our New Members***

Lori and Hugo Acevedo  
*Ryan McGillicuddy 4.1.1987*  
*Matthew McGillicuddy 7.12.1990*  
*Nathan Acevedo 2.26.2000*

Janet and Leo Brandess

IN LOVING MEMORY

ETHEL WEISS

1923 - 2011  
CBT Member 4 years

This is a season of miracles and Midrasha has been actively participating in a process of making miracles happen!

I am writing this still feeling excited and amazed by Contra Costa Midrasha's first-ever "Day-Long Food Adventure," which happened on Veteran's Day. This day aimed for a hands-on experience of giving tzedakah/doing service. Secondly, we wanted to provide the "farm to table" experience - harvesting and cooking from that bounty.

We began our morning at the AgPark Farm in Sunol, run by SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education). At this site, one farmer gave us a tour of the 18-acre farm, learning about its organic processes, tasting of its produce, replanting some nasturtium seedlings (nasturtium flowers are edible!) and even feeding a few chickens. Another farmer brought us to his plot, where we harvested his "end of season" tomatoes, eggplants, peppers and butternut squash. This bounty allowed us to do a hands-on lesson on Jewish agriculture tzedakah practices, like "ma'aser." Ma'aser is the law requiring a minimum donation of 10% of a farmer's harvest. So, our teens actually counted out the "ma-aser" or 10% of our harvest and carried our bounty back to the bus.



We traveled next to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. The teens had actually decided to donate a majority of our harvest to the Food Bank. So, we carried a box of non-perishables (donated by Midrasha families) and our harvested vegetables to the scale. We donated 75 pounds of food – with 67 pounds of the bounty being vegetables! That was a big pay off for everyone and the smiles on our teens' faces showed how the morning's efforts felt worth it.

The evening found us preparing for Shabbat. Our menu included squash casserole, babaghnoush, a big green salad and sautéed kale, for dessert we enjoyed baked apples. A lot of our dinner's ingredients came straight from the farm that morning – completing our "farm to table" experience. As we began Shabbat dinner, our teens added in blessings of gratitude to the farmers and the farm workers who make our agricultural system work.

It's not often that we get to create such a holistic learning experience for our teens. A big thanks to Emma Wenger from B'nai Tikvah who helped to program the day and Jason Goodman who helped with logistics planning. Contra Costa Midrasha hopes that Veteran's Day will become a traditional day of service learning for our teens into the future. Stay tuned as we plan next year's program, or look out for our Spring day of service, scheduled to happen on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

In other "tikkun olam" news, this December we'll be donating clothes, food and gift certificates to a family we're adopting through Shalom Bayit's annual holiday "adopt a family" program. This is also a first time for Midrasha in doing this program. Items are being donated both by Midrasha families and by classes of teens who are each taking on raising tzedakah to buy at least one item. I'm looking forward to sharing images from December 7<sup>th</sup>, when we'll be wrapping all the gifts we're going to donate!

As you can see, Contra Costa Midrasha has a lot happening this year. Stay updated by joining our e-newsletter, friending us on Facebook or visiting our website – [www.ccmidrasha.com](http://www.ccmidrasha.com). Last but not least, please mark your calendars for March 24, 2012 – the date of our annual fundraising event featuring chocolate!



# 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 Sisterhood "Football" Knitting in WC 2:00 pm - 4:00 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> * Vayischlach 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 NO Service this morning URJ Biennial
<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.

# JANUARY 2012 Tevet - Shevat 5772

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> NEW YEARS DAY NO Religious School	<b>2</b> (Office closed)	<b>3</b> Religious School	<b>4</b> Religious School	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Family Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>7</b> * Vayechi Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Nick Webster 10:00 am
<b>8</b> Religious School Sisterhood - Legion of Honor visit 9:15 am	<b>9</b> Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm Ritual Committee Meeting 7:30 pm	<b>10</b> Religious School	<b>11</b> Religious School	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Shabbat Service 6:30 pm	<b>14</b> * Shemot Tot Shabbat 9:00 am Morning Minyan 10:00 am
<b>15</b> NO Religious School	<b>16</b> (Office closed) MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY - Commemoration @ Civic Park 12:00 pm	<b>17</b> Religious School	<b>18</b> Religious School Religious School Committee Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>19</b> Book Sisters 6:30 pm	<b>20</b> Shabbat Dinner 6:15 pm SHIR JOY / Asher Memorial Lecture - Reuven Firestone 7:30 pm	<b>21</b> * Vayera Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Hallie Unger 10:00 am
<b>22</b> Religious School	<b>23</b> General Board Meeting 6:30 pm	<b>24</b> Religious School	<b>25</b> Religious School Rosh Chodesh - Shevat	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Shabbat Service "Refuat Hanefesh" (A Healing of Spirit) 6:30 pm	<b>28</b> * Bo Shabbat Service - Bat Mitzvah of Katie Assael 10:00 am Poker Night! 7:00 pm
<b>29</b> Religious School	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Religious School				

## Join CBT in the first Annual TEXAS HOLD 'EM TOURNAMENT

Saturday, January 28, 2012  
from 6:30 pm to when one player is left standing.

Two player levels - "Professional" (or those who think they are) & Casual players

Entry Fee includes catered dinner and beer, wine and soft drinks,  
\$3000 in chips with one rebuy (should you be unlucky in a few hands)

Cash payouts



Space is limited - \$100 by December 31, 2011  
\$125 once 2012 begins if seating is still available.  
First 75 to sign up are in!

Make check payable to CBT - send to the Temple Office  
Members can sign up on line through the Members' Only section of our website..



# 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!**

## NEWLY CREATED AFTER-SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Starting Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, CBT's Religious School will be offering an after-school Hebrew enrichment program, entitled Hebrew "Boot Camp." The details of the program are as follows:



1. Class will be held from 12:15pm-1:15pm.
2. Each "set" of classes will be held in 5-week blocks.
3. Current CBT Religious School teachers will be teaching.
4. Classes will be "leveled" - regardless of which grade your child is in, students will be placed together by Hebrew ability.
5. Cost of each 5-week session will be \$90.

Students are expected to bring their own lunch to eat before the class begins.

So far, we have two sections of 3 students each and we are looking for other individuals who wish to supplement their Hebrew learning. If you feel that your child is behind in their Hebrew learning, or if you are unable to attend class on a regular basis, please look into registering your child for these sessions. Additionally, if we have enough interest in having your student (and/or yourself) learn conversational Hebrew, we will also start a special conversational Hebrew section.

If you have any questions, or wish to register your child, please email Phil Hankin ([philhankin@tikvah.org](mailto:philhankin@tikvah.org)) with the following:

- Session I - Dec 4-Jan 29 (no session on Jan 22 - teacher staff meeting)
- Session II - Feb 5-Mar 18 (no session on Mar 4 - Purim Carnival)
- Session III - April 1 - May 13

Each class must have a minimum of 3 students to be viable. Sign up now by contacting [philhankin@tikvah.org](mailto:philhankin@tikvah.org).

## MEN of CBT!

We had two successful get togethers in November. On Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup>, the rabbi hosted the regular Men of CBT meeting and discussed The Holocaust, Yom Hashoah, and got commitments from some of the guys to distribute Yahrzeit candles to members. Folks who were there really enjoyed Rabbi's talk and just getting to know each other.

The second event was a poker night at Steve Unger's house. As usual, it was a lot of fun relaxing, playing poker, and getting to know each other more. It looks like we have the energy to have a monthly Poker Night. Please let me know your interest in attending and we can let you know when the next one is. We're going to try for another one on a Thursday evening in December.

Our next meeting is on **Sunday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 10 am in the Social Hall**. This next meeting will include discussion on what activities the Men of CBT can do to help the synagogue, activities to do together, and finally, I would like to tell the story of my family's life in Russia during WWII.

See you all then.  
Harry Wittenberg

# MORE PRAYERBOOKS NEEDED FOR OUR SANCTUARY

Don't miss an(other) opportunity to order a bookplate  
to be placed in a Mishkan T'filah.



To have a bookplate placed in memory of a loved one  
or in honor of a happy occasion,  
please detach the form below and return  
to the Temple office with a check for \$36 each.



Presented to Congregation B'nai Tikvah  
by

\_\_\_\_\_ *(please print)*

Circle one:            in honor of            in memory of

\_\_\_\_\_ *(please print)*

## DO YOU GROCERY SHOP? DO YOU SHOP ON LINE?



ARE YOU REGISTERED FOR ESCRIP?  yes  no  
ARE YOUR CREDIT CARDS UP TO DATE?  yes  no  
IF NO, WHY NOT??

*Reminder!!!*

eSCRIP is an effortless (& safe) way for you to shop & CBT to benefit.  
It takes a minute to sign up or update your information.

For every \$ you spend, we receive a %.

Do you shop on line at **AMAZON, BARNES & NOBLE, EBAY, EBAGS, EXPEDIA,  
NORDSTROM, LANDS END, COLDWATER CREEK, SHOEMALL, SHOEBUY?....the list goes on..**

If so, log on to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com), and download **AutoEARN™**  
so that everytime you shop, CBT will automatically get a %.

**Your credit / debit cards must be registered before shopping!**

Not registered yet? Go online to [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) to register, update your credit  
and banks cards or for more information.

Congregation Bnai Tikvah is the Group Name (no apostrophe)  
or CBT'S Group ID # is 136550472

**PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THIS EFFORTLESS ON-GOING FUNDRAISER!!!**

# 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

**Admission: \$18**

**All four events: \$36**

Go to [www.jfed.org/bookfestival](http://www.jfed.org/bookfestival) to register  
or call 510.318.6453.

### Sponsors:

BETH CHAIM CONGREGATION



congregation b'nai shalom

TEMPLE  
Isaiah



Congregation  
B'nai Tikvah

### In partnership with:



The Jewish Federation  
The Jewish Community Foundation  
OF THE EAST BAY



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.

## *CHANUKAH at CBT!*

**GIFT SHOP OPEN FOR ALL OF YOUR CHANUKAH NEEDS**  
SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 11, 18  
(see details on page 11)

**SISTERHOOD CHANUKAH DINNER & NO SEW BLANKET PARTY**  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 7PM

**CHANUKAH ZIMRIAH IN OUR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

**& ON THE 4TH NIGHT OF CHANUKAH FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23**  
**BRING YOUR MENORAH & CANDLES TO THE 6:30 SERVICE**  
CHOIR SINGING  
ENJOY LATKES DURING THE ONEG!