



One Ringy-Dingy, Two Ringy-Dingy...

The Give-A-Thon (formerly known as the Gelt-A-Thon) is a key part of CST's new Tradition of Giving fundraiser, which helps us bridge the gap between operating costs and members' pledges. So, what will you do when your phone buzzes on the morning of December 15th?

- (a) Hit the "send to voice mail" button.
- (b) Answer, but pretend it's a wrong number.
- (c) Answer, and have a heartfelt but awkward conversation with a caring volunteer.

The best response is "none of the above." Avoid the call by donating to the Tradition of Giving before December 10th. Donations can be made by sending a check to the office; emailing or calling the office and asking that your donation be charged to your credit card on file; or going online to www.cstsr.org and donating to the Tradition of Giving campaign.

December Scholar-in-Residence Weekend with Isaac & Rabbi Shawna Brynjegard-Bialik

Friday, December 13th 6:15 PM

Rabbi's *Tisch*: Maccabees and Other Super Heroes with Isaac & Rabbi Shawna.

\$18 suggested donation for the catered dinner, please RSVP to the office.



Join us as our scholars-in-residence present an exploration of heroes in Jewish tradition and pop culture. This dynamic visual presentation takes a scholarly look at the stories of the Maccabees and Judith, compares the biblical story of Hanukkah with its Talmudic interpretation, and reveals which super heroes are lighting a *Hanukkah* this season.

Saturday, December 14, 3:00 PM

Paper *Midrash* (Papercutting) Workshop

\$20 per participant, please RSVP to the office.

Join our scholar-in-residence for a hands-on papercutting workshop. You will learn deep Jewish scholarship together with a contemporary reinterpretation of the traditional art of paper cutting, providing workshop participants with the opportunity and tools to make visual biblical commentary — what they call "paper midrash." No experience necessary, you don't have to know



how to paint or draw! We will study, create, share and *shmooze*. You will leave with a masterpiece ready to hang.

Rabbi's *Tisch* with Gabi Moskowitz

Friday, January 10, 6:15 PM.

See page 5 for more information.

Noah and the Kincade Fire

by Rabbi George

As the Kincade fire ravaged northern Sonoma County, synagogues around the world were reading about Noah and “*ha-mabul*”, the great flood, the archetype of natural disasters.

According to the Torah God brought the flood to cleanse the earth of, “lawlessness” or “violence”. God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with lawlessness because of them; I am about to destroy them with the earth.” (Gen. 6:13). The story of Noah is often imagined as a quaint child’s tale; the animals make their way safely to the ark “two by two”, and together with Noah and his family they are saved from the flood. A more sober look at this cosmic reboot paints a different story of utter destruction and leaves us with the haunting question: did the violence and lawlessness of some justify the destruction of everyone and everything?

The Torah is not a history book and it’s theology of a punishing God willing to wipe out all life – the innocent and the guilty – is an anathema to us. Nevertheless, when we view the story in the harsh light of our own experience one



Rabbi George

lesson emerges from the ancient waters of the great flood; how fragile life is, how vulnerable we all are, how some wind and a spark can take everything away and in a heartbeat.

Impermanence is the Buddhist term for this life’s truth, and the festival of *Sukkot* we just commemorated also reflects this reality; the *Sukkah*, the flimsy, temporary dwelling symbolizing the fragility of life. In both religious/philosophic frameworks, it takes a lot of courage (and practice) not to be frightened (shaken to one’s core) by yet another immensely destructive and dangerous wildfire.

We are grateful that this fire was not as deadly and destructive as the last, but our gratitude is mitigated by the sobering realization that these kinds of fires, power outages and fearful nights waiting in the dark seem to be our “new normal”. The Torah’s explanation of the

flood is simple: violence. But the causes of our crisis are the opposite: a complex array of issues that under certain condition coalesce into a “perfect firestorm”.

PG&E’s negligence in not maintaining the power lines is high on the list but we also need to take some responsibility for choosing to live in the beautiful but fire prone hills of Sonoma County. And of course, Climate Change looms large in the background. The Noah story ends with the reassurance of the rainbow, a sign “that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.” (Gen. 9:11-15). We have no rainbow-like fix; the supernatural will not save us, but we can work to save ourselves through preparedness and adaption.

We have no rainbow-like fix; the supernatural will not save us, but we can work to save ourselves through preparedness and adaption.

We were more prepared this time and what a difference that made! As difficult as the evacuations were, many of us are still traumatized by the lack of warning we

experienced in 2017 and we are the ones who actually got out alive! In this fire, no one that I am aware of was caught unaware by the fire. Preparedness was especially evident in the work of the First Responders and Cal Fire. By all accounts their extraordinary responses saved the towns of Healdsburg and Windsor and prevented the fire from jumping the freeway, saving West County from what would have been an unimaginable catastrophe. We have a ways to go but the advances evident in the response to this fire shows that we can and are becoming more effective in dealing with the threat of wildfires.

The Power Outages are a more complex and controversial response; would they be necessary if PG& E did the required maintenance work? What drives their decision to cut power to some and not to others? Why was the one line that sparked the Kincade fire on when the others around it were off? In many ways PG& E fails the preparedness test, but it does seem that some power outages may be part of being prepared going forward. Nevertheless, we need to work with our elected officials to hold PG& E’s “feet to the fire” and demand that they do more to make our power grid safe.

Adaption is our biggest challenge because it demands that we change some of our basic assumptions and the way

we live. Many of us moved to Sonoma County to get away from the crowds and live in the country. Are we ready to rethink building in these more

Are we ready to rethink building in these more rural and fire prone areas?

rural and fire prone areas? I'm not sure but we can at least change the standards so that the homes we build are as fire resistant as possible.

And what about the power, assuming some power outages are necessary? Even if a generator in every home was feasible, it is an environmental nightmare! Solar systems with batteries are promising but only for the relatively affluent. One way or another we can survive the power outages but can we thrive? The cost of the outages in lost revenue and wages is estimated to be approximately 2 billion dollars! Sonoma County is a wonderful place to live but will its natural beauty and charm be enough to keep the businesses and the people they employ here if debilitating wildfires become a regular part of life in the region? We need PG& E's help and we also need to encourage innovation beyond what they can offer like micro grids that can keep the lights

on the next time the wind picks up and there is a fire or a threat of a fire.

We also need to remember the disproportionate cost these fires have on those who can't simply rent a hotel room, afford to eat out, easily replenish their spoiled food or manage without a paycheck. When we think of adaptation we have to consider how the most vulnerable can be made more secure in these times of insecurity. Contributing to the Redwood Empire Food Bank is a great place to start. There is also Undocufund which was set up after the 2017 fires specifically for the immigrant community who were left out of much of the relief provided for the rest of the population. Our partners in organizing, The North Bay Organizing Project are also engaged in helping the most vulnerable recover from the fires in 2017 and now the Kincadee fire as well.

We could say that Noah was prepared – he did build the ark and gather a representative sample of all life – and he did adapt, at least while floating in the ark. The story of Noah as history seems silly to me but it does resonate as a metaphor for what we have to do; reduce the threat of wildfires through preparation and adaptation, so that we don't just survive but thrive in the days, weeks, months and years ahead.

ADULT PROGRAMMING

Bagel Club

Sunday, December 1, 9:00 AM

Sunday, January 5, 9:00 AM

The Bagel Club meets once a month to enjoy a delicious bagel breakfast followed by a speaker, to be announced in an upcoming Chai-Lites. Everyone is welcome to attend. \$7-\$10 donation requested, please RSVP to cstbagelmen@gmail.com or call 707-829-1388 to reserve your seat and brunch.



Ten Paths to God - An Exploration of Judaism Based on the Teachings of Rabbi Jonathon Sacks

Wednesdays, December 4, 11, 18, January 8, 7-8:30 PM

Drop-in Session: \$8 for Members, \$12 Non-Members

Please RSVP to the office.

This series, facilitated by Rabbi George and Rabbi Stephanie, is great for anyone interested in deepening their understanding of Jewish tradition and spirituality.

Utilizing curriculum and materials (including videos) provided by the renowned Rabbi and Jewish thought leader, Lord Jonathon Sacks, we will focus on the following key elements of Jewish life: Identity, Prayer, Study, Mitzvot, Tzedakah & Chessed.

Shomrei Shop

The CST Judaica shop has many new items and gifts for weddings, *B'nei Mitzvahs* and more. The gift shop is open during office hours and on some special occasions listed below:

Upcoming Gift Shop Open Dates:

Sunday, December 15th 9-11am - STaRS & Hanukkah

Monday, December 16th 11am-2pm - JCC Hanukkah Party



Wise Aging with Rabbi Meredith Cahn

Fridays, December 6, 13, 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM

\$18 for Members, \$36 for Non Members.

RSVP to CST office.

This two session class will explore how to find meaning and joy in our journey into our later years. With texts, poetry and liturgy we will engage important questions about our plans, our fears and our joys. Discussion will be based on Rabbi Rachel Cowan, z"l, and Linda Thal's book, *Wise Aging:*



Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit. You don't have to buy it (but it's worth owning). Join the conversation whether you are 55 or 95 or anywhere in between.

Rabbi Meredith Cahn interned at Shomrei Torah with Rabbi George during her rabbinic studies. She works as a spiritual care provider/chaplain at the retirement communities of Spring Lake Village and St. Paul's Towers. She trained with Linda Thal of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality in facilitating Wise Aging groups, and has been leading them for the past three years. She lives in Petaluma with her husband Sam, daughter Olya, three cats and a dog.

Shabbat Service with Andrew Ramer followed by a Potluck Lunch

Traveling the Axis of "Jacob's Ladder":

The Vertical, the Horizontal, and All Points In Between

Saturday, December 7, 10:30 AM

Potluck lunch begins around noon.

Please RSVP to the office with the dish that you will bring.

Join us for Shabbat morning services with special guest Andrew Ramer who will speak during services and lead a discussion during the potluck lunch. Read more about Andrew at www.cstsr.org.

Creating Sacred Space:

A Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Program

Drop-ins are still welcome for the Fall Series dates:

December 8, 15, 22: 4pm-5:15pm, Theme: Hanukkah and Inner Light

Drop-in Session: \$8 CST Members | \$12 Non-Members

Spring Series Dates:

January 12, 19, 26: 4pm-5:15pm

February 9, 16, 23: 4pm-5:15pm

March 8, 15, 22: 4pm-5:15pm

April 5, 12, 26: 4:30pm - 5:45pm

Spring Series: \$80 CST Members | \$120 Non-Members

Drop-in Session: \$8 CST Members | \$12 Non-Members

Please RSVP to the office. All are welcome regardless of ability to pay.

Are we happy? Are we living the life we want to live?

Mindfulness Meditation is the practice of cultivating our attention to the present moment. As we learn to quiet our minds, we see our truth more clearly, and open a path to living a fuller, happier, healthier life. Jewish Mindfulness adds the teachings of our tradition to deepen the meditative experience. This course, led by Rabbi George Gittleman, will include teaching, meditation instruction, and periods of silence.

Talmud Circle: *Tractate Ta'anit* – What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?

Dates: 12/8, 1/5, 2/2, 3/1, 4/5, 5/17, 6/7

Cost: \$200, Time: 1:30-3:30 PM

Register online at www.cstsr.org

The Talmud raises questions about "Holy Men" pronouncing the "meaning" of a disaster. This narrative section of the Talmud, in the words of Julia Watts Belser, "overturns expected hierarchies of gender, piety, and social status to challenge the theological significance of hunger, suffering, and abundance." She writes, "These narratives blunt the moral condemnation inherent in disaster – and suggest that blessing often lies beneath the surface of apparent misfortune." Ahead of Viktor Frankl, who taught, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves," the Talmud asserts that an interpretation of events exercises a powerful influence over experience.

Jewish Literary Circle

FREE, all are welcome, please RSVP to group leader Marian McKenna at chabansky@yahoo.com.

The Jewish Literary Circle, one of the LifeLong Learning programs, meets monthly to read Jewish literature and other published material in an atmosphere of stimulating discussion. Participants choose the reading selections for the upcoming months. Anyone can join anytime.



Upcoming Dates, starting at 6:30 PM:

- Dec. 19 Short Story Listening Evening
Listen to podcast(s)
- Jan. 16 *The Lost Girls of Paris* by Pam Jenoff
- Feb. 20 *A Bride for One Night* by Ruth Calderon
- Mar. 19 *To This Day* by S.Y. Agnon

Office Closures

The CST office will be closed from Wednesday, December 25, 2019 through Wednesday, January 1, 2020.

Please join us for Chinese Food and a Movie on December 25 at 6:15pm. Regularly scheduled Shabbat services will be held on Friday, December 27 and regularly scheduled Torah study and Shabbat services will be held on Saturday, December 28.

The CST office will be closed on Monday, January 20.

Hanukkah, Chinese Food and a Movie

Wednesday, December 25
6:15 PM

Free. Please RSVP to the office.

Save the date for this exciting event; spend the evening at Shomrei Torah enjoying Chinese food and the movie *Keeping the Faith*.



Rabbi's Tisch with Gabi Moskowitz

If You Want to Change the World, Start with a Single Loaf of Challah

Friday, January 10, 6:15 PM.

\$18 suggested donation for the catered dinner, please RSVP to the office.

We are living in a time of tumult, chaos, and uncertainty. We feel compelled to take action, but it can be overwhelming to even know where to begin, and the temptation to hide under the covers and tune out the world can set in.

In this talk, Gabi Moskowitz, a cookbook author and producer of the hit comedy *Young & Hungry*, will discuss the power of starting small, nourishing yourself and your community, and applying the wisdom of a weekly ritual of baking *challah*—a simple mixture of eggs, oil, honey, flour, yeast, and salt that is so much more than the sum of its parts—to empower yourself and those around you to begin repairing the world, one step at a time.



What's Cooking at CST: Rugelach Rules!

Sunday, January 12, 3:00-4:30 PM
Spaces are limited, RSVP to the office today! Bring a rolling pin to class

Yes, you'll have another chance to

learn to make delicious RUGELACH from our baking expert, Ronnie Campagna. This is a hands-on class where you'll learn, bake, eat, schmooze and take home recipes to recreate what you learned. This class is free, space is limited, RSVP today.





Martin Luther King, Jr. Shabbat

Friday, January 17, 6:15 PM

Join us for a moving Shabbat service commemorating the spirit and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This service will feature the CST Choir and include songs of justice and hope as well as music from the Civil Rights era.

L'dor V'dor Program

Sunday, January 26, 9:00 AM

Free breakfast, please RSVP to the office.

Please join us for a L'Dor V'Dor (Generation to Generation) program during Religious School! We learn a lot from our parents and our teachers, and we know that YOU have a lot to teach us too! We want to connect with all generations at Shomrei Torah. Mark your calendar for this special day of breakfast, learning and fun for everyone!



L'DOR V'DOR



YES, YOU COUNT!

Join your fellow CST congregants in conversation and learn how you can make a difference for Social Justice NOW!

Tuesday, January 28, 7:00-9:00 PM

At Congregation Shomrei Torah. Please RSVP to the office if you would like to attend.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world"

- Anne Frank

Are you exasperated by the damage to people and the environment while government is paralyzed? You count in improving the world. Be a force for social justice by taking part – a little or a lot.

Are you ready to take it higher, but you have no time for meetings or joining the CST Social Action Committee, yet giving up in despair is not an option for you? Then mark your calendar for this event, when we'll gather to organize and mobilize CST for greater social justice, with each of us taking on what we can. No more. No less.

What does it take to organize and mobilize

Shomrei Torah? YOU! We'll learn from the pros: Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller from RAC-CA (Religious Action Center) and Susan Shaw from NBOP (North Bay Organizing Project). As you've heard, it's not ours to complete the work, but ours to keep at it.

Join Rabbis George and Stephanie and your fellow CST congregants for what promises to be a high-energy evening of learning and conversation! We hope to see you there.

The Organize and Mobilize Committee (Ellen van den Berg, Larry Carlin, Doris Fried, Alissa Hirschfeld, Stephen Harper, Asher Sheppard)



Congregation Shomrei Torah

2600 Bennett Valley Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

www.cstsr.org

(707) 578-5519

(unless otherwise noted)

FAX (707) 578-3967

Office Hours

Monday–Friday
9:00 AM–12 Noon;
1:00–5:00 PM

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Denise Harrison

Custodians

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Nahir Thomas El Beze



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SHORTY Hanukkah Party

Saturday, December 21st

7:00–9:00 PM

Please RSVP to Youth@cstsr.org

Calling all Shomrei Torah teens!
Celebrate the festival of lights right with
your friends in SHORTY! We're bringing
all the classic Hanukkah shenanigans--
dreidel, latkes, lights, and more!



Shabbat Shaboogie

Friday, January 24, 5:15–6:15 PM

Shabbat ShaBoogie is a very special
Shabbat experience for families with
children 3rd grade and under! Begin with
a short service with music, dancing and
stories - and then enjoy a light dinner
and dessert with all of your new friends!
Shabbat ShaBoogie is a free event but
please RSVP to CST@cstsr.org so we
know how much food to order.

STaRS Sukkot and Simchat Torah Celebrations

We had a great time at celebrating
Sukkot and *Simchat Torah* at STaRS! For
Sukkot each class built a mini *Sukkah*,
learned how to make a salad using
the seven species, wrote blessings for
our *Sukkah*, and got a chance to shake
the Lulav and Etrog. The next week,
in honor of *Simchat Torah*, we made
illustrated Torahs, parade flags, and
got to dance and celebrate inside the
unrolled Torah scroll!



Attention all teens and
parents of teens!

Now is still the time to sign your teen up for
Chaverim, a social/educational program of the
Jewish Community Center Sonoma County
endorsed by our Rabbis. Just go to www.jccsoco.org
and visit the Teen Tab to see information and to
register for 2019-2020 *Chaverim*. The twice monthly
session by grade level features a shared dinner
followed by a great discussion of a relevant issue
through a "Jewish Lens." Call Rick Concoff for more
information at (707)477-9196.

Alumni Gathering & Reunion

Saturday, December 21, 7:00 - 10:30 PM.

**Congregation Beth Ami, \$18 donation
requested.**

Please mark your calendars for our 2nd Reunion
Alumni gathering for Jewish students 21 and older
who attended any Jewish school, synagogue, youth
group, *B'nai Mitzvah* class, Camp Chai Counselors,
or Jewish community group. All synagogues,
and Jewish organizations hosting Jewish teens
welcome. Call Rick Concoff for details or visit the
teen tab at www.jccsoco.org.



Jewish Community Center

SONOMA COUNTY

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Purim Schpiel Casting Call!

Don't throw away your shot to be a part of this year's Purim Schpiel: inspired by Hamilton!

Rehearsals will be held at 6:30pm on January 29th, February 19th, March 4th, and March 8th. The Purim Schpiel will be on March 9th at 6:15pm.

Contact Morgan, youth@cstsr.org to participate or with questions!



The Social Action Committee Takes on the Vote

The Social Action Committee is hard at work at trying to get increased voter engagement through phone banks, texting parties, letter writing and voter registration events. Look for opportunities in Chai Lites to do your part in making this country a safe place for all who live here and have fun while doing it!

Where I'm From

by Max Schneider

I'm from game consoles, from Nintendo and Xbox. I am from the blue walls in my room. Rough, radiating, it is zenful and calming. I am from pineapples, the redwoods in my backyard. Their rough surfaces feeling smoothing against my hand.

I'm from Hanukkah, Shabbat, Passover, Cayden and Barbra Anne. I'm from get goers, and the self-perseverance, from the "Have you done your homework" to "What are you reading?" I'm from Judaism, the Torah and prayers at my temple.

I'm from Poland and Germany, Latkes and Matzo Ball soup. From my grandfather fighting in the Vietnam War and still being here to teach me lessons, and my brother and I hanging out together, talking and playing around.

I'm from Magic the Gathering and Dungeons and Dragons, which I pour all my downtime into making fun creations for my friends and I. From video games that I play when I get bored, to books that I'm reading. I'm from my pets, my big dog named Beau, to my aggressive cat named Thompson. I'm from musicals and music that I listen whenever I do anything.

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TIME SENSITIVE

DECEMBER SERVICES

Friday, December 6

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, December 7

Weekly Torah portion: Vayetzei

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, December 13

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, December 14

Weekly Torah portion: Vayishlach

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Peter Copen*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, December 20

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, December 21

Weekly Torah portion: Vayeshev

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, December 27

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, December 28

Weekly Torah portion: Miketz

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Fran Danoff*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

JANUARY SERVICES

Friday, January 3

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, January 4

Weekly Torah portion: Vayigash

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, January 10

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, January 11

Weekly Torah portion: Vayechi

8:45 am – *Torah study*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, January 17

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, January 18

Weekly Torah portion: Shemot

8:45 am – *Torah Study, led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, January 24

5:15 pm – *Shabbat ShaBoogie*

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, January 25

Weekly Torah portion: Vaera

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi Stephanie*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, January 31

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

See our latest calendar at www.cstsr.org