Welcome, Rabbi Riter

This month, we welcome Rabbi Ted Riter to Congregation Shir Hadash as our new Interim Senior Rabbi. Rabbi Riter will be with us for 18 months, as we focus on our transition from Rabbi Aron’s leadership to that of our new Settled Rabbi in 2022, and as we progress through our benchmarking and re-envisioning process.

Rabbi Riter spent 16 years leading synagogues in Southern California (Encinitas and Thousand Oaks), where he created nationally recognized programs in Mussar, leadership development, and youth activities. Interestingly, Rabbi Riter was brought in to support the transitions of each of these synagogues when they were approximately the same age and size as Shir Hadash.

In 2014, Rabbi Riter accepted his first Interim role in Jackson, Mississippi, becoming the only rabbi of a full-time synagogue in the Magnolia State. He followed this in 2015-2017, by serving as an interim rabbi for Sha’ar Zahav, a historically LGBTQ synagogue in San Francisco, as they navigated delicate conversations around sexual and gender identity for the congregation.

In addition to the above synagogues, Rabbi Riter served the Coastside Jewish Community in Half Moon Bay 2017-2019, leading monthly services and founding their supplementary religious school.

In 2017, Rabbi Riter expanded his work in leading personal and organizational transitions to include the non-synagogue world. He now regularly coaches and consults on “(re)Building trust in the Boardroom and in the Bedroom” and hosts an 18-minute podcast, “starTEDover...inspiring stories of falling and standing back up, getting knocked over and rebuilding, healing, growing, persevering.”

When not focused on synagogue life or his private coaching practice, Rabbi Riter studies and works with John Wineland, leading men’s groups and coed intimacy programs around the world.

In addition to his rabbinical ordination from Hebrew Union College, Rabbi Riter earned a Bachelor’s Degree from Tulane University in Political Economy, is an ordained Mashpi’ah (Spiritual Director) through the Jewish Renewal Movement, and holds multiple certifications in coaching, nonprofit management, and leadership development.

Rabbi Riter is married to Leslie Bauer and they live in Redwood City with their children, Elias (16) and Orli (11). And, since you’ll mostly see Rabbi Riter via Zoom for the first few months of his time at Shir Hadash, you’ll often see him with his dog Buster sleeping in the background.

We hope you will join us at services, or for one of many opportunities to engage with Rabbi Riter in the coming months. Please watch your mail for invitations and activities.
From Rabbi Riter

Thank you for your warm welcome to Congregation Shir Hadash. I am honored to step into the Interim Senior Rabbi position and guide you through this transition.

Having spoken with many of you already, I know there are an array of feelings as we enter this 18-month period. Perhaps you did not anticipate a synagogue transition or at least not one this year. With everything else in flux in 2020, perhaps you were counting on Shir Hadash to be your source of grounding and consistency.

You might now be anxious because of the upcoming synagogue changes and the ongoing unknowns of Covid.

You might be mourning the loss of Rabbi Aron as your spiritual leader. Though we’re fortunate she will still be with the community in an Emeritus position, it is a distinctly different role than the one she held for the past 30 years.

You might be excited for the possibilities ahead. The disruption of Covid has pushed synagogues around the world to be more creative in how and which programs and services they offer. Moving forward with a similar sense of creativity might be inspiring for you.

Or, this might all feel like too much change and you are now trying to push the brake or yearning for a simpler time just a year ago.

You might have a combination of these feelings and many more.

All of these feelings make sense.

And, all are welcome.

Most of us go through life thinking we are on a linear path from yesterday to tomorrow. Though we experience plenty of events that contradict this notion, we can be thrown off balance when life does not progress as expected.

Bruce Feiler, in his new bestseller Life is in the Transitions, teaches that life is nonlinear. Through hundreds of interviews and thousands of pages of transcripts, he discovers that the average adult experiences a relatively small “disruptor” every 12-18 months. These experiences, both good and bad, change our course a bit: a new job or relationship, a move, or an illness.

Some of these disruptors are so impactful, however, that they become “lifequakes,” changing the course of our lives. Feiler writes, “A lifequake is a forceful burst of change in one’s life that leads to a period of upheaval, transition, and renewal.” On average, we experience 3-5 lifequakes in our lifetime and they last approximately 5 years. Since we generally live in community, it is likely that we or someone in our close circle is in a lifequake right now!

Feiler’s conclusion? “Transitions are coming. Be prepared.”

At Shir Hadash, transitions are coming.

Other than someone new in the Senior Rabbi’s (virtual) office, I don’t know what those transitions will be.

However, my commitment to you is walking this path with you hand-in-hand, honoring you wherever you are on this journey, and helping you make meaning of the transitions that may be ahead.

We have 18 months together. They will be filled with deep discussions and friendly kibitzing. We will discover who we are and explore what is possible. We will experience the full array of feelings.

And, I believe we will come out recognizing that this non-linear path we are on has been one of blessings.
January Services

**NATURE’S NURTUREERS**

**Special Tu BiSh’vat Program with Ma’alot Farms**

**Sunday, January 24, 2:00 PM**

Trees have the amazing ability to nourish species all around them from the largest creatures, like us, to some of the very smallest organisms on the planet.

Come join Rabbis Philip and Shoshana Ohriner as we take a Zoom journey around their homestead, Ma’alot Farms, meet some amazing trees, see the fantastic amount of the life they nurture, and maybe even catch a glimpse of some of the animals that call Ma’alot Farms home.

This permaculture-based farmstead in the Los Gatos area is dedicated to Jewish and secular environmental education and community organizing focused on food justice.

This special program is for adults and children–there is something for everyone to enjoy!

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**Dybbuks, Golems, S. An-sky, & Jewish Legends in Time of Fear, with Gabriella Safran**

**Sunday, Jan. 31, 9:30 AM**

S. An-sky’s play, *The Dybbuk*, a story of possession set in a shtetl (think *The Exorcist* meets *Fiddler on the Roof*), is the foundation of modern Jewish drama. Stanford scholar Gabriella Safran will explore the dybbuk’s roots: in Jewish folklore, the scandalous blood libel trial in Kiev in 1913, and the political passions of Russian-Jewish revolutionaries. In composing the play, An-sky was torn between two Jewish myths, each still modern: the tragic ambivalence of the dybbuk, a lost, wandering soul; and the technological triumphalism of the golem, a robot set in motion by practical kabbalah, and capable of defending the Jews from every harm.

Gabriella Safran, the Eva Chernov Lokey Professor in Jewish Studies at Stanford University, teaches in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. Her biography of the pioneering Russian-Jewish writer, ethnographer, and revolutionary, *Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk’s Creator, S. An-sky*, was published in 2010. She has also written on Russian, Polish, Yiddish, and French literatures and cultures, and is the author and editor of prize-winning books on how Russian novels describe Jewish assimilation, and on the relation between Jewish literature and anthropology.

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**January Services**

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<thead>
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<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<td>FRI  1</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Shabbat Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT 2</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>No Torah Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRI 8</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Family Shabbat Service</td>
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<td>SAT 9</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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<td>FRI 15</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Shabbat Service</td>
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<td>SAT 16</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Shir Shabbat Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT 22</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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<td>SAT 23</td>
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<td>Shir Shabbat Jr.</td>
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<td>Shir Shabbat Service</td>
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<td>SAT 29</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT 30</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Shabbat Shirah: A Special Musical Shabbat</td>
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<td>Shir Shabbat Service</td>
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**Zoom** Live via Zoom. Sign up at shirhadash.org/calendar.
The Temple Garden

As most of you know we have a beautiful area to the side of the Sanctuary where there are garden beds filled with vegetables. In the Shir Hadash Garden this autumn, growing food has been difficult because birds and rabbits have eaten nearly everything that was planted. Nevertheless, there are small quantities of turnips, onions, potatoes, carrots, romanesco, fava beans, and peas that have survived. The food that we have grown, and all of our new crops, is donated to feed the hungry.

Even though it is still winter, the solstice has passed and it is time to start planting again. Peas, lettuce, carrots, swiss chard, spinach, and cabbage all enjoy growing in cool weather and that means there is a lot to do to get ready!

Everyone is invited to partake in the fun of composting, planting and maintaining our garden. All help is welcome whether large or small. See the sidebar for what needs to happen in the first quarter of the year.

The garden is a safe place for a small group of people to work wearing masks at a distance from each other. Buff Levine, our amazing head volunteer gardener, provided this to-do list and will be the point-of-contact if you can help with any of these important tasks. She is happy to give tours of the garden, instruct people on how to get started with the project of their choice, and has also generously agreed to tutor those who are interested in learning how to compost, prepare soil, and plant. Ready to dig in? Please email Buff directly at: buff.levine@gmail.com.

New Coping with Stress Support Hotline

Our Covid Listening Support Hotline was initially set up to provide support to those of us struggling with the immediate stressors and threats that Covid-19 presented. We have now changed its name and focus to the “Coping with Stress Support Hotline.” We invite you to make a confidential phone call if you are struggling with ongoing concerns related to current events, such as the ever-changing Covid-19 risks, political concerns, or uncertainty about the divisiveness in our country.

To reach the confidential hotline, call 408-358-1751, ext. 118. You will be asked to leave your name and number and a few good times to reach you. We will connect you to a qualified volunteer who will provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts and feelings, and together find solutions to help you cope.

BOOK GROUP

The Book of V., by Anna Solomon

Sunday, Feb. 28, 10:45 AM zoom

We will be discussing the Jewish Community Library’s One Bay One Book choice for 2020-2021, The Book of V., by Anna Solomon. In this new novel, rooted in the Book of Esther, three characters’ stories in different time periods overlap and ultimately collide. Lily is a young wife and mother in contemporary Brooklyn, and Vee is the wife of an ambitious young Senator in Washington, D.C., during the early 1970s. Their narratives are interspersed with an imaginative account of the stories of Vashti and Esther, illuminating how women’s lives have and have not changed over thousands of years.

Our book group meets quarterly. Each book is from Book Club in a Box, a program of the Jewish Community Library of San Francisco. Due to Covid-19, they have switched to eBooks. You will need to sign up for borrowing privileges, and then download your copy.

TEMPLE GARDEN TO-DO LIST

- Plant red clover and purple vetch in the future tomato plot.
- Plant flower seeds in areas where there used to be compost piles.
- Harvest turnips.
- Pull weeds and place them on the compost pile.
- Prune the top of the fig tree and rent a chipper to spread chips around the garden.
- Plant seeds in six-packs so they can germinate safely (this could be done at home).
- Make a small portable greenhouse (we have building plans) covered in clear plastic sheeting that fits on top of the raised beds so that tomato seeds can be planted early in the season.
- Sift compost and mix it into the beds.
- Transplant germinated seeds into the prepared beds.
- Place bird netting over the transplanted seedlings.
- Repair the drip system—the tubes have become disconnected over time.
This month, our spotlight is on the Adult Education Committee. Read on to learn more from Sharla Kibel.

Tell us a bit about yourselves and your role on the committee.

Adult education events were one of the draws to me when I became a member way back in 1997. I had the privilege of a Jewish Day School education, but Shir Hadash programming has continued to deepen my understanding of Jewish history, traditions, liturgy, literature, philosophy, peoplehood, peacemaking, and more. The Adult Education committee has a strong emphasis on continuous lifelong learning which has great resonance for me. I have been involved with this committee since 2018 and have been mentored by past chairs, Susan Denniston and Itzik Nir. I had great fun assisting in chairing our retreat in 2019 and was honored to be nominated as chair beginning in July this year. Itzik Nir continues to assist in leadership, and Rabbi Aron has been a huge source of connections and resources for our projects.

Could you briefly describe the goal of the Adult Education committee?

Our goal is to nourish the mind, heart, and spirit of our Jewish community, enriching our lives with intellectual stimulation, spiritual experiences, and a deeper connection with our history and traditions. We aim to bring Jewish values and culture into our everyday lives and build relationships through learning together as a community.

What are the areas that the committee works on? Can you tell us a bit about what you have done in the past year?

We held a wonderful retreat contrasting Judaism and Buddhism at the Land of Medicine Buddha. We have had a number of speakers who joined us from all over the country and the world on Zoom. These ranged from Steven Windmueller discussing Jewish trends in politics to Anat Hoffman who joined us from Jerusalem to discuss challenges to Israeli democracy. We had a panel of Jewish physicians who shared perspective on the ethical issues of managing Covid, and a fascinating series on Scientists and Synagogues where advances in technology have been considered in the light of the ethical challenges they pose. Our forthcoming offerings are on our website, hadash.link/adulted, with a theme of “Transitions and Traditions,” including topics from Jewish folklore to history of Jewish migrations to contemporary forms of Judaism. We have excellent videos and readings from the Hartman Institute that will be the basis of a Spring series contrasting Israeli-American perspectives. Torah Study, Book group, and Introduction to Judaism all offer additional ongoing opportunities for learning and growth.

Tell us a bit about why you are passionate about the Adult Education committee and its work for Shir Hadash.

We have a group that has been inspired by Rabbi Aron’s attention to a wide range of emerging themes. Members identify potential themes, speakers and events, and then work together to bring these to fruition. We have past chairs of the committee who bring great experience and ongoing joy in promoting our shared learning. It is inspiring to get to know significant thinkers, writers, presenters, and performers who bring their gifts to our congregation.

This sounds wonderful! Is there room for others to get involved?

We are eager to get fresh input and new members on our committee where each member engages with potential topics and presenters. Members also support the logistics of convening events and presentations whether in person or on Zoom. Our meetings are posted on the congregational website calendar and open to the community. We expect to meet next in early February, 2021, to develop our visions for the next programming cycle. Anyone with ideas, questions or interest in joining the committee is welcome to contact me at board-adulted@shirhadash.org.

Each month, we introduce one of the many committees at Shir Hadash and learn from members or chairs about the activities and goals of the committee. This way, our entire community can learn more about the many ways to get involved at Shir Hadash and the ways we work together to form an even stronger community.

Lunch & Learn
Tuesday, January 12, 11:30 AM zoom

Our congregants, Dr. Topaz Levenberg and Dr. Steve Jackson, will speak about the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out plans locally as well as the ethics involved in distribution of the vaccine.
Managing Your ShulCloud Account

It’s so convenient on shirhadash.org to view the member directory, manage your own information, and set up donations. Follow the easy steps in the sidebar at the right to get started.

Once you are successfully logged in, you can go to the My Account pages to review and edit your profile, make payments, view the Member Directory and add a household photo for your directory listing, and more.

You may notice that if you view the online calendar while logged in, you will see your personal anniversaries, birthdays, and yahrzeits on the calendar. Don’t worry! Only you will see this and only when logged in. No one else will see these calendar listings—they are private to you.

Need some assistance? Feel free to reach out to office@shirhadash.org.

1. **Go to www.shirhadash.org** in a web browser (desktop or laptop recommended).
2. **In the upper right corner, click “Login.”** A drop down login menu will appear. Don’t enter a username or password; instead, click the words “Forgot Password.” It will take you to a page asking for an email address.
3. **Enter the email address** that is the same as where you receive Shir Hadash newsletter emails. Click “Email Password.” This will send you an email with password reset instructions.
4. **Check your email,** and follow the password reset steps from the email.
5. **Login with your email address** (this is your username) and the new password you just set.
6. **Now that you’re logged in,** a new member-only menu heading called “My Account” will be visible in the main website navigation menu (next to the Change the World heading, or below Change the World if on a mobile phone or a narrow tablet device).

**SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY**

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>No Hebrew School</td>
<td>No Hebrew High School</td>
<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>6:30 Confirmation Class</td>
<td>7:00 Bar and Bat Mitzvah</td>
<td>No Torah Study</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>6:30 Confirmation Class</td>
<td>7:00 Torah Study</td>
<td>9:00 Family Shabbat Service</td>
<td>7:00 Club 456 Virtual Game Night</td>
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<td>9:30 Religious School</td>
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<td>9:30 Religious School</td>
<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>6:30 Confirmation Class</td>
<td>7:30 Ritual Committee Engagement Event with Rabbi Riter</td>
<td>9:30 Torah Study</td>
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<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>9:00 Hebrew School</td>
<td>9:00 Hebrew High School</td>
<td>6:30 Intro to Judaism</td>
<td>7:30 Weekly Board Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 Torah Study</td>
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<td>9:30 Torah Study</td>
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Please visit www.shirhadash.org for the full calendar.

Live via Zoom. Sign up at shirhadash.org/calendar.

Taped in advance. Watch on Shir Hadash TV at shirhadash.org/live.

Google Classroom. Register online, and information will be emailed to you.