Introducing Our Next Settled Senior Rabbi

By now, I am hopeful you have heard the wonderful news that we will be welcoming Rabbi Nico Socolovsky to the Shir Hadash family in July as our next Senior Rabbi. Joining him will be his wife Noga; children Amitai, Nitzan and Guilad; and their dog, Athena. We will be holding a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 6, at 11:00 am, where the focus will be the ratification of the Board approval of recommending Rabbi Socolovsky as our next Senior Rabbi and his contract.

Currently serving as the Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Tikvah in Orange County, Socolovsky brings with him a wide array of experiences and accolades. These skills will surely help Shir Hadash continue to be the vibrant center of Jewish life in our region. He is president of the Orange County Board of Rabbis and the Fullerton Interfaith Ministerial Association. He serves on the board of Hillel and the Jewish Federation, and he is an alternate delegate in the World Zionist Congress.

Rabbi Socolovsky grew up in Buenos Aires and immigrated to Israel in 2002. Since then, he has worked within many different social frameworks: teenagers, immigrants, ex-prisoners, underprivileged families, and others. In 2010, he initiated the Shchuniya, a home for Jewish renaissance, in Haifa, Israel. He also worked with Rabbis for Human Rights, directing the Center for Economic Rights in Hadera, Israel. From 2013 to 2015, he lived in Singapore and served several communities in Southeast Asia.

Rabbi Socolovsky graduated from the University of Haifa with a BA in Educational Management and Jewish Thought, and an MA in Jewish Thought. Following his studies in the Israeli Rabbinical program of the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in both Israel and in New York, he was ordained as Rabbi in Jerusalem in 2013. In 2021, Rabbi Socolovsky became an Executive Scholar in nonprofit management from Kellogg School of Management. He is also a fellow in Hazon’s Clergy Leadership Incubator (CLI) program, dedicated to adaptive leadership and institutional innovation.

Rabbi Socolovsky is dynamic, warm and engaging. He clearly shares the congregation’s commitment to social justice, interfaith work, and youth engagement. His rich experiences, knowledge, spirituality, and personality will surely help Shir Hadash move forward, while also honoring its legacy.

In the coming weeks and months, we will have many opportunities for you to meet Rabbi Socolovsky and his family. I encourage you to visit his blog, Po Ve Sham, at povesham.org. There you will find selected sermons, writings, and videos that will give you a great sense of how wonderful our next Senior Rabbi is.

Our success in recruiting such a talented rabbi is due to the amazing efforts of our Settled Rabbi Search Committee, led by Steve Stein. Our collective heartfelt appreciation goes to Steve and all the congregants on his team who worked tirelessly and diligently to find our next Senior Rabbi. I would also like to acknowledge all those who served in various capacities throughout the entire Rabbinic Transition process.

Now more than ever, I am confident we will journey from strength to strength.

—Andy Altman, President
Shir Hadash—A New Song!

Music is such an integral part of our worship services. Music is one way in which I am able to find my spiritual soul. It is often how I connect to God. This may be the case for some of you, and for others, music is just another vehicle to pray to God.

We know that there are many different styles and compositions of our liturgy. Some music is written specifically for the High Holy Days. Other compositions can be used all year round. Some pieces are meant for choir, whereas others are more congregational. In a recent Shabbat Shirah (January 14 and 15), we were supposed to have my colleague Cantor Natalie Young come and sing with our choir, and introduce our congregation to some new songs. We, unfortunately, had to postpone her visit. But I am happy to announce that she will now be joining us on June 10 and 11, as a wonderful addition to our Volunteer Recognition Shabbat.

And while we are excited about learning new music and bringing new songs to our congregation, we have also decided to put away some music that has been regularly used and is familiar in our congregation.

A few months ago, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion introduced a report on cases of misconduct that had occurred at its school. These included cases of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, LGBTQ+ discrimination, bullying, disrespect, lack of accommodations, and racial discrimination. As an alumna of the college institute, this was a very difficult report to read. I, like many of my colleagues, am heartened that the college created a task force that concluded with this report. And I am saddened for all of my colleagues who were victims of this misconduct. Our schools and institutions should be free of any type of discrimination. As a Jewish institute, it is important for us to turn to the teachings in our Torah to be reminded that there is no place for any type of discrimination.

In the report, six employees were specifically named for allegations. One of the names included was composer Bonia Shur. At Shir Hadash, we have sung a lot of Bonia’s music, including his Kedushah, which we sang every Shabbat morning. As a cantor and musician who has sung Bonia’s music since I was a child, this finding was very difficult to grapple with. I am not alone in feeling anger and disgust. I felt this way, similarly, when the news came out a few years ago about Sh’lomo Carlebach. For me personally, when the news about Carlebach came out, I made a conscious decision not to sing the few pieces that we were singing, including Esa Einai and V’haer Eineinu.

As such, I have made the difficult decision to put a moratorium on the music of Bonia Shur. Over the next few months, we will continue to experiment with new settings of the Kedushah to use in services. Music is one way that we express ourselves in prayer. Unfortunately, at this time, the music is as much a part of our worship as is the composer who wrote it. Maybe someday, we can separate the music from the man. But at this time, I believe a rest from this composer is the correct call.

Music is also healing. I hope that you will join us throughout the year to hear new music, in addition to the oldies-but-goodies. When we find music that is healing, then we can be full of hope, be exhilarated and be uplifted. Together, we will continue to create a new song!
TORAH STUDY

A Year with Martin Buber
Saturdays through June 4, 9:00 AM

The teachings of the great twentieth-century Jewish thinker Martin Buber empower us to enter a spiritual dimension that often passes unnoticed in the daily routine. In A Year with Martin Buber, the first Torah commentary to focus on his life’s work, we experience the Torah portions through Buber’s eyes.

Led by Rabbi PJ Schwartz. Discussions will be based on the text, A Year with Martin Buber, by Rabbi Dennis S. Ross, available on Amazon.

Register for the Zoom link on the temple calendar.

February Services

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<th>DATE</th>
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<th>TIME</th>
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<tr>
<td>FRI 4</td>
<td>Shabbat B’Yachad—In Person &amp; Outdoors</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Shir Hadash Patio</td>
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<td>SAT 5</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
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<td>FRI 11</td>
<td>Shabbat Service—In Person &amp; SHTV</td>
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<td>SAT 12</td>
<td>Shir Shabbat, Jr.</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
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<td>FRI 18</td>
<td>Shabbat Service—In Person &amp; SHTV</td>
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<td>SAT 19</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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<td>FRI 25</td>
<td>Shabbat Service—In Person &amp; SHTV</td>
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<td>SAT 26</td>
<td>Torah Study</td>
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Zoom Live via Zoom. Sign up at shirhadash.org/calendar.
SHTV Live-stream on Shir Hadash TV at shirhadash.org/live.
Caring Committee

We are a congregation that prides ourselves on supporting each other. We have a Caring Committee in place, chaired by Cindy Gordon and Carolyn Kerlin, to help identify and handle the needs of individuals and families in our community.

We have several ongoing programs that operate behind the scenes to: provide meals for members who are ill or in crisis, send caring cards or notes, deliver challah and holiday baskets, and help to provide durable medical equipment. We are especially proud of our Friendly Visitors Outreach Program, which transformed from in-home visits to phone calls during shelter-in-place. With the help of volunteers, we hope to provide caregiver and bereavement support.

Typically, we sponsor a discussion during the Yom Kippur afternoon break, often related to difficult issues such as end-of-life planning or support for caregivers. We have developed expertise in initiating end-of-life discussions. When you next visit the Synagogue Library, take a look at the Life Planning Guide.

Every Spring, we sponsor a Friday evening Caring Committee Shabbat service. This year, on Friday, March 18, we will hold our annual Shabbat service with the theme of “Transitions.” Our Transitional Rabbi, Rabbi Danny Gottlieb, will speak on “Transitions” from Covid. He will also address transition to a new Rabbi among other life cycle transitions.

We love serving on the Caring Committee, which has attracted a lovely group of empathetic people who are always on the lookout for topics that are useful to the members of Congregation Shir Hadash. Several of the Caring Committee members are in helping professions such as health care workers, therapists, and teachers. But don’t let that hold you back from joining us…A good heart is all that is required.

We welcome new members to join us and to share new ideas! We meet every other month and would love to draw on the expertise of our congregation. But if group meetings do not work for you, we encourage you to volunteer for any of our individual programs.

Check your email for our Volunteer Survey in an upcoming February In Tune.

—Linda Wolf, Susan Levin, Cindy Gordon, and Carolyn Kerlin

In the meantime, we’ve heard from four CSH board members in anticipation of Rabbi Socolovsky’s arrival:

“Our Settled Rabbi Search Committee met several outstanding candidates from across the country. Rabbi Nico stood out for his warmth, energy, creativity, love of Judaism and community. We are fortunate to be welcoming not just a new senior rabbi to Shir Hadash, but a wonderful family as well.”

—Steve Stein

“I’m very excited for Rabbi Socolovsky to share his passion for enabling others’ Jewish journeys, and I look forward to the spirituality that he will bring to Shir Hadash.”

—Nazgol Ashouri

“As part of the Settled Rabbi Selection Committee, I am honored to have had the opportunity to learn about and get to know Rabbi Socolovsky for several months. From the very beginning of the process, he has always shown such passion, knowledge, creativity, and dedication to his role as a rabbi, and I am very eager to see what he will bring to our congregation! I look forward to welcoming Rabbi Socolovsky and his family into our community and beginning this new and exciting chapter, together.”

—Leah Brunnings

“We are so excited that Rabbi Socolovsky will be joining our Shir Hadash community. He is a warm, intelligent and engaging leader.”

—Allison Brunner

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregation Shir Hadash Welcomes Senior Rabbi Nico Socolovsky

Sunday, February 6, 11:00 AM
In Person & zoom

We look forward to the final step of Rabbi Socolovsky’s hiring process with a congregational ratification meeting in the Sanctuary on Sunday, February 6, from 11:00 am to noon. Join us in person or via Zoom to view this Board action live. Read more about this event and register on the temple calendar.

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Our Forests Need Us

Do you remember donating to plant a tree in Israel when you were a child, or more recently, to memorialize a loved one? Today the need for trees is right here in our country. Our national forests are in crisis. Wildfires, invasive insects, climate change and disease have left 1 million acres of land in urgent need of tree planting. That’s why the National Forest Foundation has targeted planting 50 million trees across our national forests. Donate $1 to plant a tree in a national forest. For every $1 we invest, the U.S. Forest Service provides $2 of value in project support and implementation.

Trees sustain life. They reduce the impact of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and give out oxygen. Scientists believe that planting trees is an essential climate action.

You can make a difference! Shir Hadash’s Sustainability Committee, in partnership with our social justice committee, SHOC, asks you to help replant our forests. How many trees will you plant? Every tree makes a difference. Use our carbon footprint calculator at hadash.link/co2 to determine how your lifestyle impacts the climate and purchase trees to offset your carbon footprint. Match the cost of a tank of gas. Need more ideas? Consider a gift of trees for special occasions, such as a birthday, bar/bat mitzvah, or a wedding anniversary.

L'dor vador, we are planting trees for our future generations.

The National Forest Foundation and the Jewish group JTree, in collaboration with a variety of Jewish organizations that share a commitment to addressing climate change, have helped us set up a webpage with more information and the opportunity to purchase a tree. Let’s see how many trees we can plant. To donate, go to hadash.link/forests.

To learn more, watch “Protecting the Tree of Life,” at hadash.link/jtree-video, and read “The Torah of the Trees” at hadash.link/hazon-trees.

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Golfing Fun at Topgolf

Sunday, February 6, 3:45 PM
10 Topgolf Drive, San Jose

Club 4,5,6 invites you to swing into the new year with us! Join us for an afternoon of golfing games and fun at Topgolf in San Jose. Meet us at 3:45 pm in front of the venue. No golfing experience necessary, just be ready to have fun! Pick-up in front of the venue at 6:05 pm.

Cost: $20 for two hours of play.

Food is available for purchase at the venue. If your child would like to order anything, please have them bring additional money.

 Masks are required.

This event is sold out. For more information, or to add yourself to the waitlist, please contact Rabbi PJ Schwartz at pischwartz@shirhadash.org.

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A Virtual Tour of Historic Synagogues

Tuesday, February 8, 11:30 AM

The Jewish Museum of Maryland’s newest digital experience is a deep dive into the history of the oldest synagogue in Maryland, including the three unique congregations that worshiped there. Experience stories of Jewish Baltimore from anywhere in the world!

For more information on this Lunch and Learn, contact Allison at allison@shirhadash.org.
NFTYX/SALTY

Be the Change Against Climate Change

Saturday, February 12, 3:00 PM
Shir Hadash Patio

We are very excited to partner with NFTY Central West (CWR) for this NFTY-X social action event focused on climate change. This event is open to all CWR and SALTY 8th–12th graders. Whether you are passionate about social action, want to meet new people, or both: this is the event for you! We will learn about and experience topics ranging from world climate negotiations to ways to repurpose everyday items.

Weather permitting, this event will be held outdoors. Please dress warmly. Masks are required. Individually packaged food will be provided for outdoor eating only.

Teens who are not Shir Hadash members may drive themselves to this event.

For more information about NFTY CWR, visit hadash.link/nfty-cwr. If you have any questions, please email Rabbi PJ Schwartz at rabbischwartz@shirhadash.org.