

# Tri-Valley Cultural Jews:

Your East Bay Secular Humanistic Jewish Community

(925) 485-1049

Tri-ValleyCulturalJews.org

CulturalJews@aol.com

<http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/>

Affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Our mission statement: "A Secular Humanistic community serving those who identify with the Jewish People through family, culture and history, rather than through religion."



## Upcoming Events for May 2012

**Wed., May 2** – TVCJ Planning Meeting 7 pm. 1817 Sinclair Drive in Pleasanton. All members welcome.

**Sunday, May 6:** Jewish Culture School 10:30

**Sunday, May 6:** Philosophers' Café/Culture Chat 10:45 AM - 12:15 pm, Cafe Rumi, 4799 Heyer Ave., Castro Valley. This month's topic, What does it mean – "good for the Jews?"

**Saturday, May 12:** Lag B'Omer picnic at Athan Downs Park, Montevideo and Davona in San Ramon, 10:30 a.m. Bring a dish to share – TVCJ will provide drinks and paper goods. Bring a frisbee, a ball, a kite...

**Sunday, May 20:** Jewish Culture School 10:30

**Friday, May 25 – Monday, May 28:** CSJO conference! If you've never been, you're missing a treat. More information at [csjo.org](http://csjo.org).

**Sunday, May 27:** Shavuot. (no program) Decorate your house with flowers and eat blintzes and cheesecake!

**SAVE THE DATE:** J-West, the west coast gathering of Secular, Humanistic and Cultural Jews. August 3-5 in the East Bay. More information soon!

## Jewish Culture School

April 1 - We practiced the songs we will be singing at Levi's Bar Mitzvah, we made matzah balls for our upcoming community Passover Seder and we practiced the music we will be singing there, as well as the four questions in Yiddish (older group) and Hebrew (younger group). The group of Jews that we briefly studied was the Jews of Central Asia who were fabric dyers; so we made our own matzah covers.

April 22 - We studied about the Jews of Yemen. After watching a video to see how these Jews lived in the isolated mountains of the Middle East, we ground our food like they did and ate the paste on bread similar to naan. It was a big hit. We also learned that the Jews did a lot of embroidery which we tried our hand at and found that we have some pretty good embroiderers in our group.

## **CSJO Conference**

If you've never been to a CSJO Conference, you've been missing a chance to learn, sing, socialize and strategize with people who have the same world-view as you do. You never have to explain - or defend - what kind of Jew you are. There's an amazing intergenerational communication - the teens and young adults hold workshops that grandparents attend, and vice versa. Give yourself a treat this year - attend the conference! Find the brochure on the CSJO website, [www.csjo.org](http://www.csjo.org).

### **Message from the President**

We celebrated Levi's Bar Mitzvah on Saturday. It was a great time to see our whole community come together around this event, along with family who had never experienced a secular Bar Mitzvah before. One of the great things was that Levi got to see the completion of a long term goal; the longest in his life. He has seen how through a series of reasonable steps over the period of about a year and a half, he could achieve a goal, do it well, and enjoy the process. The whole family learned a lot in the process, and Levi got to be the first Bar Mitzvah in TVCJ. I look forward to celebrating many more with this group.

### **Mishpokha (family)**

Happy May birthday to: Rebecca Ireland, Michael Frank, Roxy Frnak and Chri Nakisher

Please let us know any news about your family and if there is anything we can come to and support!

### **Levi Coren's Bar Mitzvah**

### **Bar Mitzvah**

Levi's Bar Mitzvah was on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. First of all, we'd like to thank the wonderful folks at TVCJ for teaching him, supporting him and now coming to this meaningful event. We are so proud of the work he put into it. We sang the songs he chose, helped by the kids from JCS, and listened to a synopsis of the cultural and historical projects, the volunteering and how he sees himself continuing in the Jewish community. We hope more families will participate in the bar/bat mitzvah program at TVCJ. The biggest challenge was trying to explain our bar mitzvah to friends and family. As soon as we said "Levi's bar mitzvah is Saturday", we could see the image in their heads of a big party, thousands of dollars on a band and buffet and all our friends and family, whether Levi knows them or not. We kept saying, 'It's not what you think' and tried to explain our values, to varying degrees of success. Oh well. We appreciated the small close feel of our potluck, which had a wide variety of delicious vegetarian food, a chance to talk with everyone and now a chance to say "thank you!"



## Pesakh

Our annual community Seder was a wonderful occasion, with old and new faces, lots of singing (thanks, Ruthy Seid, for leading!), good discussions and delicious food. We are happy to share copies of our progressive Secular haggadah – just ask.

Shavuot – 50 days after Passover comes the holiday of Shavuot. This is the holiday of the grain harvest and is traditionally a dairy holiday. Why dairy? Well, this is when the animals have milk, after the birth and weaning of their babies in the spring. The traditional reading for the holiday is the book of Ruth, because the seduction of Boaz takes place at the time of the barley harvest. It's an interesting book, showing how Ruth "converted" to being Jewish by emigrating from her homeland, choosing to live among Jews and asserting that she was one. This is very much the model for how we Secular Jews understand how a person becomes Jewish and define who is a Jew. Here's some of our movement's statement on the question:

Who is a Jew? After more than thirty centuries, Jews continue to debate this question.

At stake is the integrity of millions of Jews who do not find their Jewish identity in religious belief or religious practice, but who discover their Jewishness in the historic experience of the Jewish people...

We...believe that the survival of the Jewish people depends on a broad view of Jewish identity. We welcome into the Jewish people all...who sincerely desire to share the Jewish experience regardless of their ancestry. We challenge the assumption that the Jews are primarily or exclusively a religious community and that religious convictions or behavior are essential to full membership in the Jewish people.

...The authority to define "who is a Jew" belongs to all the Jewish people and cannot be usurped by any part of it.

...(I)n the name of the historic experience of the Jewish people, we...affirm that a Jew is a person of Jewish descent or any person who declares himself to be a Jew and who identifies with the history, ethical values, culture, civilization, community, and fate of the Jewish people.



## **Sunday, May 13, 2012: Google and Genealogy**

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

Topic: Google and Genealogy

Speaker: Rich McCartney

Sunday, May 13, 2012

Rhoda Goldman Plaza

2180 Post Street

San Francisco 94115

Doors open 1:00 p.m.

Program begins 1:30 p.m.

This presentation will help you target your Google searches so they bring you better results. Google's tools include a calculator, language translation, phone book, dictionary, and article alert system.

<http://www.sfbajgs.org/>

Thank you,

Janice M. Sellers, Publicity Director

San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society

<http://www.sfbajgs.org/>

Helping Bay Area Jews discover their family histories.

## **Didja Know?**

In honor of the holiday of Shavuot at which we read the story of Ruth, who converted to Judaism by asserting her identity as a Jew, here's a list of some other famous converts to Judaism.

Actress Amy Britt

Author Geraldine Brooks

Actress Nell Carter

Journalist Connie Chung

Entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. (you already knew that)

Politician Lord George Godon

Writer Jamaica Kincaid

Writer Julius Lester

Football player Sam McCullum

Actress Marilyn Monroe

Composer Arnold Schoenberg

Actress Norma Shearer

Actress Elizabeth Taylor (but you already knew that one, too)

Musician Ike Turner (well, you can't be proud of every Jew...)

Musician Jackie Wilson

Baseball player Steve Yeager



### Mulan

Saturday, May 19, 2 pm, Brentwood  
TVCJ/JCS outing to see Brentwood Teen  
Theater's production of Disney's Mulan  
(which Levi and Michelle Coren are in).

Group tickets are \$7. Please email  
marisard@sbcglobal.net if you are interested in  
joining us. I will be ordering tickets together for  
pick up at will-call.

### Who We Are

President	Kevin Coren 925-240-5612
Board Members	Judith Seid 925-485-1049 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Jamie Ireland 510-888-1404
Newsletter	Marisa Castaldini 925-240-5612 Phyllis Looney 925-803-0574 Ed Looney 925-803-0574
Webmasters	Noah King 925-371-8585 Solomon Ireland 510-888-1404
JCS Teachers	Judith Seid, Jamie Ireland
Phone Chair	Phyllis Looney
Family Shabbat/Havdalah Coordinator –	Jamie Ireland
Publicity	open
Movie Coordinator	Wendy Berenson 925-829-0554

**DID YOU KNOW....** You can now choose to "follow" the TVCJ website/blog and automatically receive email notifications and updates whenever we add new and important information. To do so, simply visit our site at <http://trivalleyculturaljews.wordpress.com/> and click on the "Follow" button in the lower right hand corner. You'll be prompted to enter an email address. That's all there is to it, and from now on you'll never miss an important update again.

Tri-Valley Cultural Jews  
1817 Sinclair Drive  
Pleasanton, CA 94588

