



# Shir Notes

The Official Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami Volume 15, Number 2, February 2017. Affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Editor's note:

Owen Delman is back, making up for lost time. See his story on page 5.

## Events of the Month

### Shabbat services at de Toledo High School

Saturday, February 4 - 10:30 am  
Birthday Shabbat

Saturday, February 18 - 10:30 am  
Anniversary Shabbat

### Torah and Shabbat Study

**Saturday, Feb. 11, 10:30 am**  
**Northridge Mobile Home Park**  
Stan Schroeder leads our monthly study and discussion session. Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 or see flyer.

### Afternoon of Contemporary Judaism - Rabbi Ed Feinstein: *Do You Hear Me Now?*

**Sunday, February 12, 1:00 pm**  
**Temple Ramat Zion**

This special afternoon of wisdom and humor is free and open to the community. Call Stan Schroeder at (818) 718-7466 or see flyer.

### Around the Rabbi's Tisch Thursdays, February 16 & 23 7:30 pm at the Vorspan's'

Our 5777 season of Rabbi's weekly discussion begins its second half. Call Rabbi at (818) 888-9817 or see flyer.



President's Day  
Monday, Feb, 20

See article page 8. Rabbi Feinstein

## Rabbi's Column



From time to time I like wasting my time by playing the card game "Hearts" on my computer. But how is that fair? Doesn't the computer know exactly what's in my hand? I've been thinking about this seriously ever since I discovered a setting for the game which asks if I want the computer to go easy on me or hard.

I certainly can't bluff the computer if it's already looking over my shoulder at my cards. Or is the computer trained to ignore what it knows is in my hand so we can play on a level playing field?

Is there a lesson in life here? Doesn't the expression "turn a blind eye" mean that we try to ignore what we already know? Just like the computer? So we might know something about another, but we relate to them as if we don't really know. Is there something you know about your parent, or your child, that you know they don't know you know? And even though we have this information, we are able to tuck it away in our subconscious and, at least outwardly, maintain a civil relationship.

But maybe the computer works differently. Rather than pretending it doesn't know what's in my hand, it actually has two "brains" playing in the game. One brain plays the game. The other brain knows my hand, but doesn't tell the first brain. By not teaming up, the game may continue with the human participant truly playing a game with no cheating by the computer.

Kind of like parents, or two good friends, concealing information one from the other, to prevent a schism from being created. For example, where the mother knows the daughter is dating a man her husband would not approve of, but keeps it from him. This could be a good thing if the father's objections are unfounded.

In life, we are often keepers of information that, if shared, could cause serious ruptures. We could either pretend we don't have such knowledge, or conceal it from others for the sake of peace.

In matters of the "hearts," there are no easy solutions. But during a month with a holiday known as Valentine's Day, it's worth pondering.

### Rabbi David Vorspan

### Afternoon of Contemporary Judaism with Rabbi Ed Feinstein by Stan Schroeder

Congregation Shir Ami is proud to announce that **Rabbi Ed Feinstein of Valley Beth Shalom** will speak to our congregation and Temple Ramat Zion at TRZ Sunday, **1:00 pm (note changed time)** February 12. His topic will be ***Can You Hear Me Now?*** I can attest that Rabbi Feinstein is the most dynamic and entertaining speaker in the community. He speaks throughout the country and we are indeed blessed that he offered to speak to us *pro bono*. Refreshments will be served. See flyer for more information. You won't want to miss this unique opportunity.

Visit our website:  
[www.shirami.com](http://www.shirami.com)

## President's Report



Shalom,

With all the talk of inaugurations and who had more people, I can proudly say that while neither President Obama nor President Trump had to bring in extra chairs, when it came to the **Consecration of our new Board of Directors and Officers**, we did!

Now that the formalities have been taken care of, I want to give a great *yasher koach* to the congregation for the outpouring of linen on **Linen Shabbat**. You set us on the path we will follow on through to the summer. I also want to thank all the Board Members and Officers who have volunteered to help guide Congregation Shir Ami through the next year. Your hard work and dedication will be appreciated.

As we look forward, don't sell February short, just because it only has 28 days. In addition to our **Shabbat Services** and **Torah Study session** we will be co-hosting an **Afternoon of Contemporary Judaism** with Valley Beth Shalom's **Rabbi Ed Feinsten: *Can You Hear Me Now?***

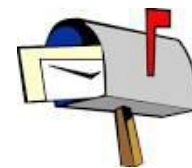
For all the events and programs we do here at Congregation Shir Ami, the Consecration of New Board Members and Officers helps to drive home the point that the events and programs don't happen by themselves. It takes volunteers. So first, I want to thank all those who have volunteered in so many ways. Second, there is always a need for more volunteers. After all, many hands make for light work! When you see something you like to do, volunteer your hands and lighten up.

Looking into the future, it's getting time to get out and walk in training for the Congregation Shir Ami Walking Season. **The Jewish World Watch Walk to End Genocide** is only three months away, followed by our annual **Walk Around Lake Balboa**. So put on your walking shoes and get ready to rumble.

As always, if you have any questions or want to provide your input, please feel free to email me at [JDPistol@aol.com](mailto:JDPistol@aol.com).

Thank you.  
**Jordan Pistol**, President

## Mailbox



Shir Ami Social Action Committee

Dearest Friends,

It was a complete joy seeing the warm familiar faces along with some new ones at the **Linen Shabbat** on Saturday. My heart was overflowing with joy at the outpouring of love and passion you demonstrate for the **Jewish Family Service) Family Violence Project**. You never cease to amaze me with your graciousness and kindness for our program and our wonderful shelter residents.

The linens are beyond lovely and I took them over to the shelter immediately after the beautiful Shabbat Service which I always enjoy immensely. The staff and residents who assisted me in the delivery were overwhelmed that the "kindness of strangers" was yet demonstrated so magnificently by all of you. I wish that you could have seen the smiles on the client's faces as they saw the beautiful items displayed and knowing that folks they will never have an opportunity to thank personally have thought about their comfort and safety.

I'm deeply humbled by you all and most grateful for your ongoing support of our program. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your willingness to continue this tradition and a very special "thank you" to **Fran Kobulnick** for her longstanding efforts in making this tradition so successful.

The staff at the Family Violence Project joins me in thanking you all as well with wishes for a wonderful 2017!!



Warmly,

**Kitty Glass**  
 Community Outreach Coordinator

**CORRECTION!**

## Correction to Our Roster

**Ellen Fremed**  
 New email address: [ellenfremed@gmail.com](mailto:ellenfremed@gmail.com)



# DONATIONS

Congregation Shir Ami wishes to acknowledge the following donations:

## Yahrzeits

Fran Friedman for Rebecca Miller  
 Thelma Goldstein  
 Jacquie Gordon for Revella Katz  
 Fran and Sam Kobulnick for Rose Suckman  
 Paula and Lou Loomis for Morrie Berman and Simon Goldfarb  
 Steve and Marcie Lurie Spetner for Sara Lurie  
 Irving Strassner for Clara Levin and Mabel Mann  
 Harvey and Linda Tapper

## Birthdays

Karen Benson  
 Fran Friedman  
 Jacquie Gordon  
 Joan Magit  
 Fiona Taylor  
 Neal Tober

# Birthdays & Anniversaries

## Birthdays

Nancy Scharf..... 2/1  
 Carol Koransky..... 2/2  
 Michael Easley..... 2/5  
 Esther Perez..... 2/7  
 Bette Delman..... 2/9  
 Lorraine Simansky..... 2/10  
 Karen Benson..... 2/10  
 Sherry Dollins..... 2/12  
 Sima Schuster..... 2/13  
 Elizabeth Raider..... 2/17  
 Frances Black..... 2/21

## Anniversaries

Elizabeth and David Raider..... 2/5 56th

## Congregational News

Get well wishes *rafuah schleimah* to:

**Phyllis Robinson**  
**Lynn Cherney**  
**Fran Kobuknick**  
**Al Simon**  
**Jerry Gort**  
**Laurie Orens**  
**Paulette Pistol**



May they be blessed with a complete recovery in body and spirit.

## Congregation Shir Ami Tribute Cards

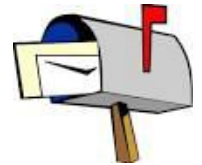
Thanks to **Phyllis Schroeder** for sending your cards celebrating *simchas* and conveying your get-well and condolence messages.

She is creative with individualized, artistic cards that include a message and color graphics. Call her at (818) 718-7466. Minimum donation of \$5 per card is appreciated.



## Mailbox

December 12, 2016



Dearest Friends,

On behalf of the women and child victims of intimate partner abuse served at Jewish Family Service's Family Violence Project, I would like to thank you all so very much for your generous donation of \$500.00 in Target gift cards for our program. This will enable our clients to purchase gifts for themselves during the holiday which is always a treat and the folks are always appreciative of the kindness from the community.

As you know we feel passionate that all women and children deserve to live in violence-free homes and we thank you for joining us in that mission.

Many thanks again for your thoughtfulness and commitment to our program. The staff joins me in wishing you and yours a healthy and happy holiday season.

Warmly,

Kitty Glass  
 Community Outreach Coordinator



A family of services. A family that serves.

### Editor's Note:

*This letter was intended for the January issue, but was not received at that time.*



## Social Action Committee

First, I would like to thank those of you who made our annual Linen Shabbat to benefit the Domestic Violence Shelters we help successful. **Kitty Glass**, Outreach Coordinator for JFS Family Domestic Violence Project, was our speaker and she was appreciative of the linens donated by our Shir Ami family and friends. Kitty brought the linens directly to the shelters after the service. She said that the women were in awe that people who do not know them personally cared so much about them and wanted to help them through this difficult time. I know personally of people who have gone through JFS Family Violence Domestic Program, and they told me that they were always grateful that they were in a safe environment, and that they were not forgotten by others.



This brings me to my request for your help in collecting **\$10 Target gift cards** for the women and children in the Domestic Violence Shelters for Mother's Day. Yes, I know that we gave them Target cards for Hanukkah, but there is a big turnover in the shelters, and there are always new people coming in. I truly would appreciate your help. Please mail your Target cards to me at 5139 White Oak Ave. #13, Encino, CA 91316 give them to a member of our Committee at services or events. If you have any questions, call me at (818) 345-2405.



This year Passover starts on April 10 and we will again collect 5 pound packages of **Kosher-for-Passover matzo for SOVA**, as well as all non-perishable and non-breakable food items in our SOVA barrels. You may also donate new and gently used children's books. Our Committee members will pick up your matzo if you are unable to bring it. Please see the SOVA 2017 Passover flyer in this newsletter.

Looking ahead, the annual **Jewish World Watch Walk/Run to End Genocide** in the Conejo Valley will be Sunday, May 7 (see article on this page), the **Social Action Mother's/Father's Day party at West Valley Healthcare** will be Friday, May 12, and our annual **Walk Around Lake Balboa** to raise funds for a worthy charity will be Sunday, June 4. We hope you will join us for our community mitzvah projects. And, on a very personal note, thank you for your well wishes and prayers, they are very much appreciated.



Shalom,  
**Fran Kobulnick**, Social Action Vice President

## Jewish World Watch Walk to End Genocide

by Rae Wazana



The annual **Conejo Valley JWW Walk to End Genocide** will take place in Thousand Oaks on **Sunday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**. This year the Walk will start at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. Congregation Shir Ami has a Walk Team registered to participate in this event. Our Team co-Captains are **Fiona Taylor** and myself. We encourage you and your friends and family members to join our Team, either as a walker or to support us by making a donation to Jewish World Watch. We are trying to reach our goal of at least \$1,000. In the past, we have been very successful in reaching this goal each year! You can do this by going on-line to the website: [www.conejovalley.walktoendgenocide.org](http://www.conejovalley.walktoendgenocide.org) or call the JWW office at (818) 501-1836.

When **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel** participated in the 1965 Civil Rights March with **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, Rabbi Heschel made this statement. "I felt my feet were praying."



Please help support our Team and Jewish World Watch by "praying with your feet" and **NOT STAND IDLY BY.**

If you have any questions, please call me at (818) 881-5549. Thank you for your continued support to help Jewish World Watch give direct assistance to survivors of atrocities in Darfur, Chad, the Congo, and South Sudan and to help advocate for these victims.

## Operation Gratitude

by Charlene Kazel



Every group needs a leader and **Carolyn Blashek**, founder of **Operation Gratitude**, is the captain of our group of volunteers. She is charming, energetic, and friendly. She started Operation Gratitude out of her home in 2003, operated out of the National Guard Armory in Van Nuys until last year when they moved to their current location in Chatsworth. Since its inception they have sent more than 1,600,000 packages to our troops. We recently packed over 10,000 gifts to be given to first responders in Los Angeles.

The saying is "it takes one to know one", and Carolyn has been the magnet to draw us in as one blissfully happy crew. Carolyn, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being such a wonderful leader. We are happy to follow in your footsteps.



**Uncle Stash's Journey - A Fable**

by Owen Delman

Dear Beryl,

I hope all is well with you, your wife and the three kids. Oops, I can't forget the dogs, Kreplach and Tzimis.



I wanted to answer your question about the ruckus in our little Bet Chavah Temple. Knowing that in the city you don't get our small town newspaper, you aren't fully aware of all the details, though honestly, even our paper didn't have the complete story.

You remember me talking about my Uncle Stash, my mother's brother. I think you even met him on your visit last Pesach. He's the one married to Aunt Patricia, who everyone calls Aunt Patience, because she is very low key, and so sweetly patient -- especially of Uncle Stash. Stash himself is, well ... Stash! He's not quite like anyone else. Everyone loves the guy, but we all know he can be a little goofy at times. Actually, goofy is not really the right word. It's as if he's in a slightly different universe from the rest of us. Rose Schwartz, our long-standing town librarian and unofficial town chronicler, says you should never expect the expected from Stash, but be prepared and watch out when the unexpected occurs. These are words of great wisdom.

Anyway, as you know, it's a tradition in Temple Bet Chavah, like most congregations, to honor the members by assigning the various duties associated with the Sabbath service. For whatever reason, and I can think of a few, Uncle Stash had never been given the honor of carrying the Torah during the service. Previously, he had opened the Ark doors, closed the Ark doors, distributed prayer books, even helped distribute the wine for the blessing. I guess Rabbi Solomon finally felt Uncle Stash had done a credible job so he was on safe ground to grant the Torah honor and had broadly hinted that because it was Stash's 80th birthday, he had a good chance at the Torah honor the coming Shabbat.



For as long as I can remember, my uncle has revered the Torah. In temple, when the ark was open, Stash would sit with a peaceful smile and lovingly look at the Torah with its cover of beautiful gold and silver brocade on a rich blue background as it nestled in its special place of honor. Transfixed, it seemed as if he wasn't sitting with us in temple.

He relished hearing the Rabbi discuss the bible stories and often pictured himself back in those ancient times. He knew if he could hold the Torah for the honor it

would make him feel even more a part of the long history stretching back to Abraham. It was his constant reverie and when he thought about it he would often let out a contented sigh. For the whole week before he hoped to be honored there were great number of sighs as he thought of nothing else.

You probably don't remember Uncle Stash is deaf in one ear? I mention this because it is important to what happened that day. Now, when I say "deaf" I mean "stone deaf". Nothing comes through that left ear -- nothing. He's all right if his good ear is facing the proper direction or if Aunt Patience jabs him in the ribs or whispers loudly in the proper ear "Stash, they're talking to you!" But, other than that, Uncle Stash is "uniphonic".

Anyway, came the big day last Saturday with Uncle Stash and Aunt Patience sitting in their usual places (back row near the wall on the right). He was fidgeting with his talit, winding the tsit-tsit around and around his fingers. "Stash, sit still, whispered Patience."

"I am," he answered indignantly, "it's my fingers that can't stay still!"

Before she could complain again, Rabbi Solomon began announcing those who would receive the honors. Though it was the moment he had been waiting for, because Uncle Stash was to the left of the bima, his bum ear was facing the Rabbi and he was hearing absolutely nothing. He tried to lip read Rabbi Solomon's announcements but he still couldn't follow what was being said so as each name was called Uncle Stash asked Aunt Patience.

"Did he call my name?"

"No, not yet."

"Did he call my name?"

"No, not yet."



With each "not yet" Stash sank a bit lower in his seat.

"Did he call my name?"

"No, not yet."

"Did he call my name?"

"Yes, Stash, he just did. You're going to carry the Torah."

"He did?" And with that he abruptly stood up -- with a huge smile. And we all smiled with him. Many because they knew how important this was for him.

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## Uncle Stash's Journey - A Fable

(continued)

Some, because it was Stash and they knew he might do something out of the ordinary and were curious to see what it might be.

Uncle Stash just stood there looking around, receiving the good feelings of the congregation. Aunt Patience had to get him out of his happy trance and we all laughed when she finally, but gently, said, "Stash, don't you think you should up to the bima?"

Looking like someone who had just won the Nobel Prize, he slowly, almost ceremoniously, made his way up the aisle to the bima acknowledging the good will and congratulations of his fellow congregants. Finally, standing on the platform next to the Rabbi, he beamed down at the congregation, most of whom were enjoying the event as much as he. As Stash was savoring the moment amidst all this mutual beaming, he completely lost track of what he had been called upon to do. It took a healthy jab in his back from Jake, the retired realtor, who had already opened the Ark's doors and now whispered "Stash, the Rabbi is talking to you." Unfortunately, Jake whispered in Uncle Stash's left ear so Stash kept on smiling at the congregation. "Stash," Jake said louder and pulled on Uncle Stash's arm to turn him toward the Rabbi who then carefully transferred the Torah, wrapped in its blue, brocaded cover, to Stash's welcoming arms.

"Wait for the prayers to be finished, then go down the center across the back and up the side. Just be sure to let everyone bless and experience the Torah. Don't rush it." Then, knowing how important this event was for Stash, he smiled and said, "Enjoy!"

Unfortunately, the combination of Uncle Stash's excitement, his hearing problem and a fair amount of just general confusion on his part led to very little of the Rabbi's instructions getting through. He did, however, hear "Enjoy!"

At the proper moment, aided by a two-handed gentle directional push by the Rabbi, Uncle Stash started on his journey around the sanctuary. As was the custom, he was followed by the six other honored assistants of the day plus the Cantor. As they descended from the bima, the Cantor began leading the congregation in singing the traditional prayer which accompanied the Torah's journey.

Unfortunately, still caught up in the moment, Uncle Stash immediately took a wrong turn and didn't go down the center aisle, instead, like a locomotive leading a train of cars, he switched to a side aisle. Those who had been waiting to bless the Torah in the center began quickly shuffling over to meet him at the new location. Soon he made it back to the center aisle, meandered from there toward the other side of the room and then, still in the throes of his moment, decided to come around a second time. By this time he was like a lost, but very happy, puppy -- smiling, singing along with the congregation and completely oblivious to the chaos his now disconnected congo line was causing as the more senior members strained to keep up the pace. Then, because he just didn't want the experience to end and finding himself near a side exit he opened the door and led the still singing group outside.

Unfortunately, the door he had chosen was an emergency exit so Uncle Stash's Torah procession left the temple to the accompaniment not of heavenly trumpets or winged angels, but blaring alarm bells and gongs soon to be joined by sirens from police cars and fire engines



Later, the congregation gathered on the grass in front of the building, along with the police and fire department who had been automatically called, and many curious neighbors, some of whom thought it was another one of those Jewish ceremonies of which they were unfamiliar. "They're always celebrating something. That's nice!"

As for Uncle Stash, he was finally was out of his reverie. And the congregation? It was divided between those who were upset with their routine being disrupted and those who were quite amused at yet another Stash experience. Aunt Patience, temporarily having lost her patience, wouldn't talk to him. In fact, she wouldn't even look at him. Rabbi Solomon, however, who had started laughing during Uncle Stash's second circuit around the sanctuary, was still broadly smiling. Putting his arm over my uncle's shoulders, he said, for all to hear, "Well, it's a good thing Stash wasn't helping Moses -- we all might still be in the desert!" That eased the tensions and many then came up to Uncle Stash to tease him in the most friendly of terms.

continued on page 7



## Uncle Stash's Journey - A Fable

(continued)

Afterwards, Aunt Patience told me on the way to the parking lot she offered to drive the car rather than Stash, saying she wanted to get home before sunrise. But, as she explained smiling, "I was on his wrong side so, of course, your Uncle Stash, didn't hear me. Even if he had, he was still so lost in reliving the carrying of his beloved Torah it wouldn't have mattered."

So, Beryl, that's pretty much the story that was in the local newspaper. There's more to Uncle Stash, of course, because he always seems to get into interesting situations. Like the time he tried to organize a dance marathon or the bake sale that got the hospital involved. But these are things to write about some other time.

Your cousin,  
Schmerl

Like all worthy fables, there is a moral: **"A journey can be successful, even though it may have many wrong turns."**

## Biography of the Month: Jascha Heifetz

by Stan Schroeder

**Jascha Heifetz** was born February 2, 1901 in Vilna, Lithuania. His father **Reuven** was a local violin teacher and concertmaster of the Vilna Theatre Orchestra for one season before the theatre closed down. Jascha took up the violin when he was three years old, and his father was his first teacher. He was a child prodigy, making his public debut at seven in Kovno, Lithuania playing the *Violin Concerto in E minor* by **Felix Mendelssohn**. In 1910 he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory to study under the famed **Leopold Auer**. The Heifetz family sacrificed greatly so that young Jascha could take up studies with Auer in St. Petersburg. They left the comfort of their hometown and paid for his lessons while facing diminished and uncertain economic prospects in a strange city. After being told that Jews could not live in St. Petersburg unless they were students, Reuven enrolled in the Conservatory and became its oldest student (age 40) to get around the restriction.



On October 27, 1917, Heifetz played for the first time in the U.S. at Carnegie Hall and became an immediate sensation. Heifetz remained in the country and became an American citizen in 1925. When he told admirer

**Groucho Marx** he had been earning his living as a musician since the age of seven, Groucho answered, "And I suppose before that you were just a bum."

Heifetz is considered to be one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century. He had an immaculate technique and a tonal beauty that many violinists still regard as unequalled. Since his first public concert on April 30, 1911, he exposed his art to the world through more than two million miles of travel; a prodigious recording program, countless appearances on radio, in several films, in a TV special, and via a vigorous teaching schedule.

In 1939 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer built a Hollywood movie, *"They Shall Have Music,"* around Heifetz. In it, Heifetz—playing himself—came to the rescue of a music school for children by playing an impromptu benefit concert. The fictional school in the movie was loosely based on the Chatham Square Music School in New York. In real life, Heifetz had joined forces to raise money for that school—at a benefit concert he participated in skits and, wearing short pants and a sailor shirt, played in a "student" orchestra conducted by **Arturo Toscanini**.

Heifetz donated his services to the USO during the Second World War, playing for thousands of service men and women around the world—often in dangerous situations. He played for Allied troops in Central and South America in 1943, in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy in 1944, and France and Germany in 1945.

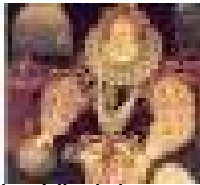
Heifetz was a musical genius and a complex man. In 1953, on his fourth tour to Israel, Heifetz played the **Richard Strauss** violin sonata in recital, despite a last-minute plea from the Israeli Minister of Education. Strauss was "that Nazi composer" to Israelis, and his music was unofficially banned along with that of **Richard Wagner**. A completely insensitive Heifetz was defiant and went ahead with his plans. "The music is above these factors," Heifetz said. "I will not change my program. I have the right to decide on my repertoire." The Strauss piece was followed by dead silence, no applause. The incident caused quite a stir in all the Israeli papers. In Jerusalem someone removed the fuses from the electrical box causing the auditorium to go dark following his Strauss rendition.

Heifetz lived on a four-acre estate in Beverly Hills from the 1940s until his death on December 10, 1987. He taught a twice-weekly master class at USC from 1962 until 1983, arriving in his black and silver Bentley. An icon to the world, particularly Jews, Heifetz epitomized the American dream.

## Some Jews in U.S. History on President's Day

by Stan Schroeder

In 1584, **Sir Walter Raleigh**, a favorite of **Queen Elizabeth I**, received a royal patent to explore the Virginia territory and found a permanent settlement. The queen hoped that the colonists would discover copper, silver, and gold, or at least find a passageway to the Orient. Sir Walter recruited **Joachim Gaunse**, a Bohemian (Czech) Jewish metallurgist and mining engineer, to join the Virginia expedition. Gaunse thus became the first recorded Jew to set foot on English soil in North America.



Invited to England by the Royal Mining Company in 1581, Gaunse completely revamped English methods for smelting copper. In 1584, Britain was preparing for war with Spain and desperately needed copper, a critical element in the production of bronze from which the English manufactured the accurate cannons that gave their warships an advantage over the Spaniards' inferior cast iron cannons. The superior firepower provided by bronze cannonry proved crucial in the English navy's victory in 1588 over the much larger Spanish Armada.

Gaunse's contributions to English bronze manufacture were monumental. Before his innovations, English smelters required a minimum of 16 weeks to purify a batch of copper ore. Gaunse's process reduced that time to just 4 days. As an added bonus, Gaunse found a way to use the impurities removed from the ore in textile dyes. In an age when many still believed in alchemy (the "science" of turning base metals into gold), Gaunse pioneered modern scientific research methods.

"We hear much these days about our 'Judeo-Christian' heritage and its early and enduring influence on our culture," says the *Jewish Press*. But given that only about 2,500 Jews lived in the American colonies in 1776, it continues, "usually those of us who speak of that early dual influence are referring to the Christian Bible with its Jewish roots." Turns out, however, there was at least one influential Jew at the time of the first official Thanksgiving in 1789.

**Gershom Mendes Seixas** was the cantor and spiritual leader of New York City's only synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel, until it shut down operations during the Revolution, and he became the leader of a synagogue in Philadelphia, where he used his pulpit to speak out in support of **General George Washington**. When Washington was inaugurated as president, Seixas was one of the presiding clergy. "This was certainly an act of gratitude by Washington for the preacher's stalwart support during the war," says the *Press*. "It was also, though, an expression of Washington's thinking about the



importance of religious freedom and diversity in the new nation."

And when Thanksgiving became an official holiday that year, Seixas, back at Shearith Israel, preached that Jews were "equal partakers of every benefit that results from this good government" and should try "to live as Jews ought to do in brotherhood and amity, to seek peace and pursue it."



The most fascinating – and influential – of Lincoln's Jewish acquaintances was undoubtedly his Jewish chiropodist, **Isachar Zacharie**. A New York newspaper described him as having "a splendid Roman nose, fashionable whiskers, an eloquent tongue, a dazzling diamond breastpin," and, most important of all for treating a patient with chronically aching feet, "great skill in his profession."

In 1862, Lincoln heard that Zacharie could boast in his résumé of having had feet of Clay – *Henry Clay*, that is, Lincoln's personal and political hero. So the President sent for him to see if the chiropodist could alleviate his aching corns. One newspaper joked, "It would seem that all of our past troubles originated not so much with the head [of the nation] but with the feet of the nation."

Jokes aside, Zacharie worked wonders with Lincoln. He not only retained Zacharie as his physician, but he also found other ways for him to serve the Union as an unofficial envoy to Jewish communities in the South with an eye toward rebuilding their ties to the Union. Zacharie worked hard for Lincoln's re-election in 1864, writing to assure the President during the campaign:

The Israelites, with but few exceptions, will vote for you. I understand them well.... I have secured good and trustworthy men to attend to them on Election day. My men have been all the week seeing that their masses are properly registered—so that all will be right.

Zacharie's efforts predictably aroused a stir among – who else? – his fellow Jews, some of whom took issue with Zacharie's claim that he could "deliver" the Jewish vote as a bloc. "There is no 'Jewish vote,'" the editor of the *Jewish Messenger*, **Meyer Isaacs**, wrote angrily to Lincoln, "and if there were it could not be bought." The fracas threatened to erupt into a political crisis until Lincoln ordered an aide to write a letter assuring Jewish leaders that no one had ever pledged the Jewish vote to the President, and he in turn had offered no inducements to secure it.



## TREE OF LIFE

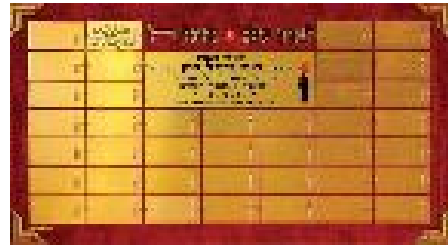


This beautiful Tree of Life, with leaves priced at \$100 and rocks at \$250 (one remaining), makes a perfect way to celebrate family occasions and support Congregation Shir Ami.

The Tree is on a rosewood background and consists of gold-colored leaves and rocks. It is displayed at all Congregation Shir Ami services and events.

For more information or to place an order, call Sherry Dollins at (818) 886-7590.

## Congregation Shir Ami Memorial Board



If you would like to honor the memory of your loved ones by dedicating plaques on our new Memorial Board, please call Sherry Dollins at (818) 886-7590 so she may mail you an order form. The cost of each plaque is \$36.

Each plaque may contain up to three lines of engraving: English name, Hebrew name, and the years of birth and death. Both of our Memorial Boards are displayed at all our services.

## Let the Sun Shine in.....

by Barbara Joan Grubman



I see her name come up on my phone every Friday morning.....it says, "**Fran Friedman**", but the truth is, she is really "**The Sunshine Lady**" and her calls always come at just the right time.

Fran has been calling me since I landed in several hospital emergency rooms and rehabs last spring due to a badly broken leg....which involved my right femur intertrochanteric or in simple terms, my upper leg bone.

Fun, it was not. But then one day, came the call. "This is Fran Friedman and I am the sunshine lady."

Wow...what a feeling. Not everyone is lucky enough to hear from her, although, in contemplation, maybe those of us who do not hear from Fran are the real lucky ones, as nothing has happened to warrant a call from her.

With an uplifting and musical note in her voice, you hear, "It's me, and how are you doing today?"

Today means Friday, as we end our calls wishing each other a good Shabbos and healthy times ahead. In the course of our call, Fran and I talk about such important things as the weather, our family, and our week.



Last week when I spoke to her, she said, "She wanted to do some small thing for the temple" and so hers was the first hand that went up when a sunshine person was needed. It is NO SMALL thing that she is doing. It is a BIG and very important service that Fran performs for our Congregation Shir Ami.

I do look forward to being totally back to normal (whatever that may be) and I will miss my weekly calls from Our Sunshine Lady. Perhaps she will take pity on me and continue to dial my number every Friday morning.

*Editor's note:*

*If you want to be on Fran's list, or know someone who needs her healing energy, call her at (818) 514-6994.*

## Shop at Ralphs - Earn Money for Shir Ami

by Maralyn Soifer

Here is an easy way to earn money for our Temple. We

are now officially a **Ralphs' community agency**. All you have to do is follow these simple instructions to help earn money for Congregation Shir Ami.



1. If you don't have a Ralphs' rewards card already, go to the store or go to website **www.ralphs.com** and select **Order a Ralphs reward card**.
2. Once you have your card, go to the website: **www.ralphs.com** and select **Create an account**
3. If you have an account, your email address is your account ID. If you forgot your password, select **Forgot your password?** and you will receive an email with instructions to reset it. Follow the instructions to enter your email address and create a new password.
4. If you already have a Ralphs' reward card and an account, you will see Account Summary when you login. You can change to our Temple by clicking on **Edit** within **Community Rewards**.

You can do a search for Congregation Shir Ami by putting in the number **92785**. Our congregation will pop up and click on the button next to the name. Click on the button that saves the changes.

5. You should also check the bottom of your receipt when you shop. It should say "**At your request, Ralph's is donating to CONGREGATION SHIR AMI**".
6. If all else fails, call me in the evening at (818) 704-0306. I'll be happy to walk you through it.
7. Start Shopping!

**Make sure that the clerk swipes your card each time you shop. Verify that your receipt shows a contribution to Congregation Shir Ami at the bottom.**

**Important Note: All participants must confirm their selection annually starting in September. On or after September 1, sign into your account and reconfirm Community Rewards selection.**

Congregation Shir Ami  
P.O. Box 6353  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365



Afternoon of Contemporary Judaism  
Sunday, February 12  
1:00 pm (note time change) with  
**Rabbi Ed Feinstein**

Senior Rabbi, Valley Beth Shalom



## *Can You Hear Me Now?*

At Temple Ramat Zion (our co-sponsor)  
17655 Devonshire St., Northridge



In a well known Verizon commercial a technician wearing eyeglasses and a blue uniform asked, “Can you hear me now?” As Jews we proclaim *Sh’ma Yisrael ...* in our daily prayers. Judaism teaches us to *hear* and to be *here*. How can we hear better what God is saying to us?

Rabbi Feinstein serves on the faculty of the Ziegler Rabbinical School of the American Jewish University, the Wexner Heritage Program, and the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He lectures widely across the United States. An engaging lecturer and storyteller, he unites the ancient Jewish love of ideas with the warmth of Jewish humor.

Refreshments will be served. This event is open to the community, all are welcome to attend.

Call Stan Schroeder at (818) 718-7466 for more information.



## Thursdays February 16 and 23, 7:30 - 8:30 pm “Around the Rabbi’s Tisch” at the Vorspans’



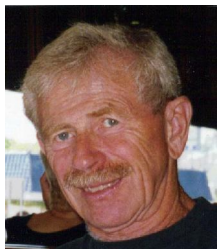
This popular Shir Ami educational series begins the second half of its 5777 season. Come join us for our weekly discussion of Rabbi Vorspan’s selected topics of Jewish interest. We discuss Jewish texts and current events as they relate to Jewish values and our lives as Jews. This is a unique opportunity to learn and share in an informal format around the Vorspans’ dining room table.

The Vorspans’ home is located at 22320 Philipprimm St. in Woodland Hills. Call Rabbi Vorspan at (818) 888-9817 for more information.

## Saturday February 11, 10:30 am: Torah/Shabbat Study at Northridge Mobile Home Park



Stan Schroeder leads a Shabbat study session one Saturday morning a month at 10:30 at the Northridge Mobile Home Park Rec Room, 19120 Nordhoff St. We discuss the weekly Torah portion, the Shabbat prayers that are included in our Contemporary service, and various subjects relevant to Conservative Judaism.

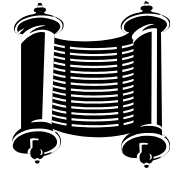


Our next session will be February 11. The Torah reading will be parsha *Beshallah* (Exodus 13:17 - 17:16). The Egyptians pursue the Israelites following their departure and we read about the miracle of the parting of the Sea of Reeds. We are commanded “*la asok b’divre torah*” (to engage in the study of Torah). Join us and fulfill the mitzvah.

Call Stan at (818) 718-7466 for more information.

**Congregation Shir Ami Schedule of Shabbat Services 2016**  
**Conducted by Rabbi David Vorspan at**  
**de Toledo High School, 22622 Vanowen St., West Hills**  
**Services held in library near the front entrance**

**Saturday 10:30 am (unless otherwise noted)**



**January 2017**

Saturday, January 7 - Birthday  
Consecration of Officers  
Saturday, January 21 - Anniversary  
Social Action Linen Shabbat

**February 2017**

Saturday, February 4 - Birthday  
Saturday, February 18 - Anniversary

**March 2017**

Saturday, March 4 - Birthday  
Saturday, March 18 - Anniversary

**April 2017**

Saturday, April 8 - Birthday  
Saturday, April 22 - Anniversary

**May 2017**

Saturday, May 6 - Birthday  
Saturday, May 27 - Anniversary

**June 2017**

Saturday, June 10 - Birthday  
Saturday, June 24 - Anniversary



David Vorspan  
Rabbi



Jordan Pistol  
President

***If you would like more information about our congregation please visit our website at [www.shirami.com](http://www.shirami.com)***

# JFS { SOVA COMMUNITY FOOD & RESOURCE PROGRAM

## Passover/*Chumetz* Food Drive



Help SOVA clients celebrate Passover  
and “eat and be satisfied” all year long.



At this time of year as we are cleaning out our chumetz and purchasing Passover foods, think of SOVA and bring food donations to your Temple/Synagogue. Donation barrels are available.

**Donate your *chumetz* and Passover food between March 20th to April 10th.**

We accept any unopened canned or packaged foods as well as personal hygiene items and gently used children’s books.

**No glass containers please.**

**For more information, call Kathi Dawidowicz at 818-988-7682, x120.**



**JFS { SOVA Community Food & Resource Program, 16439 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406  
Visit our website at [www.jfsla.org/sova](http://www.jfsla.org/sova)**